

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, being charged on behalf of HM Treasury and other government departments with the recommendation of new designs for UK coins, official medals and seals. 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 four meetings in the last year, all taking place in London, one at the Art Workers' Guild and three at Cutlers' Hall. In addition, there were two meetings of the Sub-Committee on the selection of themes for new United Kingdom coins.

Triennial Review of the Committee

In March the findings of a Triennial Review of the Committee, which had been conducted in accordance with Government guidance for reviewing NDPBs, were published. The review concluded that there continued to be a government demand for the heraldic, typographic, technical and design advice provided by the Committee. It recognised that the services delivered by the Committee remained necessary for the conduct of government business and that it ensured the quality of the themes and designs for United Kingdom coins and official medals. Whilst considering the governance of the Committee the review recommended that the Committee should make minor adjustments to its current control and governance practices to improve its transparency.

Commemorative coins

The centenary of the start of the First World War will be commemorated in Britain and in many other countries. It will be marked through the coinage with the issue of two-pound coins for circulation as well as a significant programme of commemorative coins. At the heart of the programme will be the intention to honour the service men and women who lost their lives during the conflict but it is hoped that the wider impact of the war on society, technology and culture can be conveyed.

The first to be issued was a two-pound coin focusing on the beginning of the war which sought to capture the mood of the time in the summer of 1914 when thousands of young men responded to the government's propaganda to join the armed forces. The experienced coin and medal designer John Bergdahl had the idea of using the famous recruitment poster of Lord Kitchener accompanied by the words **YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU** and it seemed to the Committee to be the most arresting way in which to symbolise the start of the conflict. The design has attracted a great deal of publicity and it has been one of the most popular coins of recent times. In the summer of 2014 the first in a five-year series of crown pieces will start to be issued, to be followed by five-ounce and kilo coins.

The 300th anniversary of the death of Queen Anne falls in 2014 and The Royal Mint Limited will be issuing a crown piece. In looking at which of the designs submitted as a result of the limited competition should be taken forward, the Committee was made aware of the coinage of Queen Anne's time and the design eventually selected, by talented sculptor Mark Richards FRBS, makes use of a profile portrait inspired by the beautiful effigy of the queen on her coins.

A further circulating two-pound looked at by the Committee relates to the 500th anniversary of Trinity House. A briefing session for the artists was held at Trinity House, an elegant building that overlooks the Tower of London, and they were able to absorb at least a little of the rich history of the organisation. Its role in keeping the waters of Britain safe through the system of lighthouses and navigational aids is something we all take for granted, and in their winning design Joe Whitlock-Blundell and David Eccles sought to capture the identity of the organisation through the powerful image of a lighthouse lens.

Two years ago Britain was ablaze with excitement about the coming of the Olympic Games to London. In the summer of 2014 another major world sporting festival will come to Britain in the shape of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games. The coinage has honoured the Games on two previous occasions and in this instance graphic designers Alex Loudon and Dan Flashman, from the design agency Tangerine, have captured beautifully the Scottish character of this year's Games as well as the energy of athletic achievement. It was a far from straightforward selection process for the Committee but the result is a dynamic design which uses the fifty pence shape with real flair.

For many years a number of countries have been issuing coins on the theme of the Chinese Lunar Calendar and last year approval was granted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the release of the first United Kingdom coins celebrating this ancient tradition. One of the challenges for the artists involved in preparing designs was to incorporate, if possible, a British element and, as it transpired, the British-born Chinese artist

Wuon-Gean Ho has succeeded extremely well in doing just that. The year in question is the Year of the Horse and the Committee was very taken with the subtle reference in the design to the Uffington Horse carved into the chalk hills of Oxford. She is a wood engraver of some distinction and she will bring to the remaining coins in the series an intelligence and admirable attention to detail.

The designers of some of the coins for this year have never designed a United Kingdom coin before, a pattern which continued with the commemorative Britannia design for 2014. Jody Clarke is a member of The Royal Mint Design Department and the Committee felt he had met the brief extremely well in bringing up to date an age-old symbol of Britain, setting her in an elegant pose and preparing a model with clarity and style.

Alongside the Lunar Calendar coins stands the Portraits of Britain series in looking out primarily to an international market. The intention with the series from the start was to capture the popular character of aspects of Britain while retaining the dignity and quality expected of the United Kingdom coinage. After re-briefing the series, Royal Mint designers Laura Clancy and Glyn Davies arrived at the innovative solution of applying a subtle watercolour treatment to the surface of the coins, deliberately atmospheric in character, to convey a sense of an autumnal London.

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, and what has emerged are designs at times innovative, at times classic and at times moving. In particular, the coins for the First World War show every prospect of becoming a monument to a profound moment in British life.

Medals

The remit of the Committee includes making recommendations to a range of government departments on the design of official medals and seals. Projects come with less frequency but are nonetheless a reasonably regular element of the Committee's work.

The design of a new medal for the Honorary Police of Jersey came before the Committee in September and a design, showing a map of the island and three ceremonial truncheons, by distinguished silversmith Christopher Lawrence was recommended by the Committee and approved by the island's authorities.

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 to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. During the year there was one meeting of the Sub-Committee, the focus of attention being the programme for 2015 as well as a number of projects that have subsequently already received considerable publicity. One of the most important of its recommendations was in relation to the introduction of coins to celebrate the Chinese Lunar Calendar, the first time that such coins have been approved for issue in the United Kingdom. Other matters under consideration have included ideas for coins in 2016 in particular but also themes stretching out several years from now, further details of which will be released in due course.

Membership

Due to the pressure of other commitments Jana Khayat's term on the Committee came to an end in February 2014. Mrs Khayat served on the Committee for six years and over that time her insightful and well-judged interventions at meetings earned her the deep respect of her fellow members. She also gave up her time to be a member of the Theme Selection Sub-Committee for several years, ample evidence of her commitment to public service.

A recruitment process was initiated in the autumn of 2013 to find a replacement for Mrs Khayat which generated a very strong short-list of candidates. The interview panel unanimously recommended for appointment Mrs Blondel Cluff, a lawyer by training who has just taken up the post of Chair of Heritage Lottery Fund London. The Chairman and other members look forward to working with her in the coming years.

Members give of 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 the Chairman, in particular, has been able to give to the work of the Committee has not gone unrecognised.

**Members of the Committee
At 31 March 2014
(with dates of appointment)**

Lord Waldegrave of North Hill
Chairman
(January 2011)

Professor Sir David Cannadine
Historian
(September 2004, re-appointed September 2011)

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

Mr John Maine RA
Sculptor
(September 2004, re-appointed September 2011)

Mr Stephen Raw
Lettering artist
(January 2005, re-appointed January 2012)

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

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

Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Matheson LVO
Secretary, Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood
(April 2013)

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