

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.

Five meetings were held during the year, some of which took place as online conference calls because of the travel restrictions imposed in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic, but it was possible to hold the September, December and March meetings in person. In addition, there were four meetings of the Sub-Committee on the selection of themes for new United Kingdom coins, split evenly between an online format and face-to-face meetings. A new scheduling system was introduced that will entail a shift to holding six meetings of the main design Committee a year. Levelling out the flow of work will flatten peaks in the workload of design and production departments at The Royal Mint as well as benefiting the Committee. Over the course of the reporting year the Committee examined designs for over 25 themes, some of which required the selection of more than one design.

COMMEMORATIVE COINS

The Committee typically examines designs about a year to 18 months in advance of their being issued, which means, necessarily, a number of projects that came before the Committee during the reporting year, 2021–22, relate to coins that will be released in 2023 and sometimes later. The following report provides a flavour of the range of themes that have been considered and some of the design challenges with which members grapple in making recommendations to Government departments.

A recurring question for the Committee is whether, when honouring the life and achievements of an individual, designs should focus on an image of the person in question or instead seek to convey the meaning of the coin through other imagery or lettering. When the subject of commemorating Mahatma Gandhi was put forward the Committee was acutely aware of the global recognition attached to his image and designers were not dissuaded from adopting this approach. In attempting to encapsulate the magnitude of his achievements, and the legacy he left, it was judged in this instance, however, that a lotus flower, the national floral emblem of India, would be a more timeless symbol, surrounded by one of Gandhi's most well-known quotations, 'My life is my message'. The publicity surrounding the launch of the coin involved the Chancellor of

the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, who is also *ex officio* Master of The Royal Mint; one of several instances in which he took a keen interest in the nation's coinage.

Designs for the 50th anniversary of Pride UK were reviewed by the Committee at its meeting in June 2021. Artists from the LGBTQ+ community were invited to submit designs and the one selected, particularly in its pad-printed form showing an overlapping pattern of rainbows, conveyed what was thought to be an uplifting message through an attractively framed composition. The United Kingdom coinage has sought in recent years to highlight aspects of Britain's social history and, increasingly, engaging with representatives of relevant communities has helped the Committee to select designs generated from perspectives of understanding and respect.

The desirability to reflect on the coinage the diversity of what Britain has been and what it currently is has also been achieved by making use of the Britannia series. That there was scope within the identity of Britannia as a symbol of Britain to put forward new interpretations has been established for some time but this year the idea was given an original dimension by placing three images of Britannia in a single design, conveying distinct stages of womanhood. For the Committee, the requirement was to ensure each portrait, from young to older, was handled with dignity and the profile format provided a way of achieving precisely this outcome.

Inspired by a much more traditional aspect of British culture, working in partnership with Historic Royal Palaces, the Committee examined designs on the theme of Royal Tudor Beasts. Heraldry has been part of the language of the British coinage for hundreds of years and for this series a point of reference was selected in the form of the group of ten carved stone heraldic beasts that line the Moat Bridge at Hampton Court Palace. They have been adapted into coinage designs by David Lawrence, whose skill as an illustrator has, in the last five years or so, translated extremely well, making him one of the most prolific and versatile artists currently working with the Committee.

When the idea of honouring some of the great cities of the world was put forward as a potential theme for a series of United Kingdom coins, there immediately arose questions involving what period of time to choose to depict the cities and what source of reference imagery might best be used. Answers to these questions were ultimately resolved in favour of a historical view and employing, as far as possible, contemporary engravings. The challenge, though, for the designers and for members of the Committee, was to ensure the original engraved image would translate sufficiently clearly to the surface of a coin. London was selected as the first in the series and, after a number of revisions, an attractive balance was achieved between the rich detail of a densely built cityscape and a readable coin design.

OFFICIAL MEDALS

The remit of the Committee includes making recommendations to a range of Government departments on the design of official medals and seals. No new medal projects came before the Committee during the year, but it was necessary for revision work to be completed on the new Border Force and Immigration Enforcement Service Medal.

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SELECTION OF THEMES

The Sub-Committee examines proposals for the programme of commemorative and circulating coins to be issued in forthcoming years, making recommendations through the main Committee to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. During the year there were four meetings of the Sub-Committee, the focus of attention being the programme for 2022 through to 2024. An important consideration for the Sub-Committee in selecting themes is that, where possible, they reflect the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom.

MEMBERSHIP

The variety and number of projects placed before the Committee has been handled with the same degree of care and attention to detail as ever.

Baroness Gisela Stuart took over as Chair of the Committee from Lord Waldegrave of North Hill in March 2021 and she has since presided over the Committee's complex and sensitive deliberations, combining a collegiate spirit with clear leadership when required.

The year witnessed several changes of membership. Having served for an initial term of five years, Dr Nicholas Cullinan stepped down from the Committee to concentrate on the demanding programme of rebuilding and development at the National Portrait Gallery. We had to say farewell to Edmund de Waal just before the end of the reporting year, who had served as an influential member for ten years. We are in the process of finding replacements for both. Sir Thomas Woodcock retired as Garter Principal King of Arms during the summer of 2021 and the Committee is honoured to have as his replacement his successor as Garter, Mr David White. After several years Professor Nicholas Mayhew stood down as Numismatic Consultant to the Committee and his role has been filled by the respected numismatist Dr Shailendra Bhandare of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Members of the Committee give of their time freely and a deserved note of appreciation is extended to them for the professionalism and imagination they bring to the Committee's work.

Membership of the Committee, and supporting advisors, at 31 March 2022

(with dates of appointment and reappointment)

Baroness Gisela Stuart

CHAIR
(March 2021)

Professor Phil Baines

LETTERING AND GRAPHIC DESIGNER
(May 2016, reappointed March 2021)

Mrs Blondel Cluff CBE

CHAIR, NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND
(March 2014, reappointed March 2019)

The Rt Hon Lord Parker of Minsmere GCVO KCB

LORD CHAMBERLAIN
(April 2021)

Mr Hughie O'Donoghue RA

PAINTER
(January 2015, reappointed March 2021)

Professor Jane Ridley

HISTORIAN
(January 2015, reappointed March 2021)

Lieutenant Colonel Mike Vernon

COMPTROLLER OF THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S DEPARTMENT
(September 2014) Usually deputises for Lord Parker

Mr David White

GARTER PRINCIPAL KING OF ARMS
(July 2021)

Dr Shailendra Bhandare

NUMISMATIC CONSULTANT TO THE COMMITTEE
(September 2021)

Mrs Anne Jessopp

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE ROYAL MINT LIMITED

Ms Nicola Howell

CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER OF THE ROYAL MINT LIMITED

Ms Caroline Webb

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER OF THE ROYAL MINT LIMITED

Dr Kevin Clancy

SECRETARY TO THE COMMITTEE

Mr Lee Jones

TECHNICAL ADVISER TO THE COMMITTEE