

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 King 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 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 (OCA).

There were four meetings during the year, all taking place in London. In addition, there was one meeting of the Sub-Committee on the selection of themes for new United Kingdom coins.

First World War

In 2014, The Royal Mint initiated a programme of coins to mark the centenary of the First World War with the intention not only of honouring the servicemen and women who lost their lives during the conflict but also of acknowledging the wider impact the war had on society, technology and culture. Extending over the five years of commemoration, the programme will run through to the end of 2018 and designs have continued to be examined by the Committee. Its work has benefitted enormously from the help of Professor Sir Hew

Strachan, an eminent historian of the First World War, who has continued to give of his time generously in advising on the content of the programme and the detail of the designs presented. As well as £2 coins which will enter circulation over the five-year period on the theme of the Armed Forces, and a crown piece series directed at telling the story of the broader impact of the war, a series of five-ounce and kilo coins have also been issued as part of the programme.

During the year, the Committee continued to examine designs connected with the programme. In reaching the end of the five-year period, it looked at coins to be issued in 2018 to mark the end of the conflict.

Christmas Coin Programme

For the first time, The Royal Mint has issued coins on the theme of Christmas. Designs for the first in the series, taking the nativity as its subject, were reviewed by the Committee. With imagery connected with the theme being very well known, the challenge for the artists was to arrive at a solution that was original and coherent within the narrow confines presented by the silver coin. Of the options presented, one by Gregory Cameron was selected which employed a woodcut style, lending the design a quality that was well received by collectors in the lead-up to Christmas 2016.

Portrait of Britain

The idea behind the Portrait of Britain series is to create an ongoing record of the buildings and landscape of the United Kingdom. For 2017, Downing Street, Westminster Abbey,

Hampton Court Palace and Edinburgh Castle were chosen as the subjects and in keeping with the style of the artwork from previous years, dramatic perspectives were employed to create distinctive views. The addition of colour to the final coins has also been a defining feature and the Committee was pleased to see this sustained in a tasteful way in the latest four coins.

King Canute

One of the more well-known kings of the late Anglo-Saxon period was Canute, and January 2017 marked the 1000th anniversary of his coronation. The designs submitted by the several invited artists represented a variety of approaches, from the inevitable pictorial scene of an inundated monarch sitting on a throne on the seashore, to more schematic ideas based on the coinage of the time. It was this latter approach, devised by Lee Jones of The Royal Mint's Engraving Department that caught the attention of the Committee with a modern treatment of a design style built up with individual curves and pellets as would have been employed 1000 years ago.

Commemorative Coins

Designs for a number of other commemorative coins were examined by the Committee, including those for The Queen's Beasts and Britannia ranges of bullion coins. The increased numbers of projects that have come before the Committee have been handled with the same degree of care and attention to detail as ever.

Medals

The remit of the Committee includes making recommendations to a number of government departments on the design of official medals and seals. Projects arise with less frequency than for the coinage but are nonetheless a fairly regular element of the Committee's work.

There were no requests from other government departments to commission new designs for official medals during the year.

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 was one meeting of the Sub-Committee, the focus of attention being the programme for 2019 but consideration was also given to themes stretching out several years from now.

Membership

Two new members were recruited during the year, Dame Julia Peyton-Jones, former Director of the Serpentine Gallery, and Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the National Portrait Gallery. Both bring knowledge of art and design and a sensitivity to the subject matter, but more than this, their awareness of artists currently working in Britain and their highly attuned sense of what constitutes good design will be of enormous benefit to the Committee in the years ahead.

The Chairman of the Committee, Lord Waldegrave of North Hill, has continued to devote time and energy to the work of securing the best quality designs for the nation's coins and medals and his commitment is warmly acknowledged by The Royal Mint, HM Treasury and the other government departments for which the Committee provides advice.

Kevin Clancy
Secretary to the Committee

Membership of the Committee at 31 March 2017 (with dates of appointment)

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

Mr Phil Baines
Lettering and graphic designer
(May 2016)

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

Dr Nicholas Cullinan
Director, National Portrait Gallery
(June 2016)

Mr Hughie O'Donoghue RA
Painter
(January 2015)

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

Dame Julia Peyton-Jones
Former Director, Serpentine Gallery
(June 2016)

Professor Jane Ridley
Historian
(January 2015)

Lieutenant Colonel Mike Vernon
Secretary, Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood
(September 2014)

Mr Edmund de Waal OBE
Ceramic artist and writer
(April 2012, re-appointed April 2017)

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

Professor Nicholas Mayhew
Numismatic Consultant to the Committee
(January 2010)

Mrs Anne Jessopp
Director of Consumer Business division of The Royal Mint Limited

Dr Kevin Clancy
Secretary to the Committee

Mr Gordon Summers
Technical Adviser to the Committee