

**Minutes of the 19th Meeting held at the Royal Mint at 4:30
p.m. on Tuesday, 16 October 1923.**

Present:

Mr. R.A. Johnson, C.B.E., Chairman;

The Earl of Crawford, K.T.;

Mr. G.F. Hill;

Mr. Oswald Barron;

Mr. F. Derwent Wood R.A.;

Mr. H.W. Chaswell, Secretary.

In attendance for Item 2 —

Mr. G.R. Buckland, Home Office.

Do. [Ditto] for Item 3 —

Mr. A.C.C. Parkinson, Colonial Office.

Sir Cecil Harcourt Smith sent a message of regret for unavoidable absence.

1. The minutes of the 18th meeting of the Committee, which had been circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

2. Great Seal for Northern Ireland — The amended design by Sir Neville Wilkinson and Mr Cecil Thomas was brought before the Committee. The Chairman stated that he had seen the artists who were unwilling to accept the Committee's suggestion that the off-hind leg of the horse should not break into the border, but had embodied the other suggestions in the modified design. After full discussion the Committee considered that further amendment was essential and desired that the artists should be asked to meet the Committee and explain their point of view.

3. Bronze badges for Native Chiefs in Uganda — The design submitted by Mr E. Carter Preston was considered. The Committee considered the design most successful but noted that the bird embodied therein differed in several ways from that in the colored drawing supplied by the Colonial Office. They suggested that the artist should be asked to say what ornithological authority he had for his more graceful and elongated particulars. When his reply had been received it might be left to the Colonial Office to say whether the design was sufficiently accurate. They also recommended that the tall plant on the right of the design be omitted and that the artist's initials be placed in a less prominent position.

4. New Penny for Jersey — The Chairman stated that he had received an application from the States of Jersey for reminting a quantity of pence. He proposed to suggest that this would open a suitable opportunity for reconsideration of the design of the reverse. The Committee approved and suggested that a suitable design might be prepared in the Royal Mint by the adaptation of the Great Seal of William the Conqueror or of one of the effigies of the King as he appears on the Bayeux Tapestry. The Chairman undertook to go into the details to bring suggestions before the next meeting of the Committee.

5. Plaquettes of London — The Committee then viewed 81 designs submitted in the Open Competition for the Commemorative Plaquettes of London to be exhibited and placed on sale at the British Empire Exhibition 1924. After detailed consideration a first choice of sixteen designs was made. After further consideration the Committee agreed unanimously that prizes should be awarded to the following designs, provided that the technical authorities at the Royal Mint agreed that suitable plaquettes could be produced from them:—

(1) The National Gallery & St. Martin's Church. " Westminster Abbey & the Houses of Parliament. The Tower. The Tower Bridge. The Tower Bridge with Lion.

A decision as to what order of merit the above should be placed in, and as to the desirability of reproducing any other of the designs, was left over for consideration at the next meeting.

The Committee rose at 9 p.m.

(Signed) R. A. Johnson

(Note in margin: "Eric Baddeley")

Commentary & Analysis

What is this document? These are the official minutes of the 19th meeting of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee (RMAC), held on 16 October 1923. The RMAC was (and remains) the body responsible for advising the Crown on the artistic design of British coins, medals, and related items. These minutes span pages 92–93 of what appears to be a bound register kept at the Royal Mint.

Item 2 — Great Seal for Northern Ireland This is a significant moment in the early history of Northern Ireland, whose devolved institutions had been created only two years earlier by the Government of Ireland Act 1920. Designing a new Great Seal was a symbol of constitutional identity. The dispute over the horse's hind leg breaking the border reflects the classic tension between artistic intent and heraldic convention — borders on seals traditionally contain the imagery strictly within a defined field, and the Committee was upholding that convention. The artists — Sir Neville Wilkinson, Ulster King of Arms, and sculptor Cecil Thomas — evidently pushed back strongly.

Item 3 — Bronze badges for Uganda chiefs These colonial "chief's badges" were a common instrument of British indirect rule — prestige objects given to recognized local leaders as symbols of authority delegated by the Crown. The concern about ornithological accuracy of the bird is revealing: it shows the Committee took documentary fidelity seriously even in minor colonial commissions, likely because a misrepresented bird could undermine the authority the object was meant to convey. E. Carter Preston was a prominent Liverpool sculptor and medalist.

Item 4 — New penny for Jersey, as a Crown Dependency, had its own coinage distinct from mainland Britain. The suggestion to use the Bayeux Tapestry as a design source for a Jersey coin is historically apt — Jersey is geographically and culturally far closer to Normandy than to England. William the Conqueror's connection to both the island and the tapestry

made this a creatively rich idea. It is a good example of the Committee thinking historically and iconographically rather than just administratively.

Item 5 — London plaquettes for the 1924 British Empire Exhibition

The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley (1924–25) was one of the largest imperial spectacles ever staged. Commissioning commemorative plaquettes of London landmarks for sale there was a deliberate act of cultural promotion. The five prize-winning subjects (the National Gallery, Westminster Abbey, Parliament, the Tower, Tower Bridge) represent a fairly conventional Victorian-Edwardian vision of London's identity — imperial, historic, gothic. The fact that 81 designs were reviewed and the Committee sat until 9 p.m. suggests this was the weightiest item on the agenda.

Paleographic notes The hand is a fluent, educated Edwardian cursive. A few readings are uncertain: "Caswell" vs. "Chaswell" for the Secretary; "Parkinson" for the Colonial Office attendee. The phrase "off-hind leg" (the rear left leg of the horse) is a precise heraldic/anatomical term, confirming the Secretary had some specialist vocabulary.