

The Obverse Portraits on Medals of Queen Victoria

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The *Medal Year Book* (MYB) provides a valuable service by showing a number of obverse portraits of sovereigns from Queen Victoria to our present Queen. Four different portraits of Queen Victoria are shown in MYB 2006 (this edition is the source for all MYB references), but these are only the principal types. In fact there were 18 portraits used on official medals during her reign and there were others on unofficial issues.

My object is to list and illustrate the portrait busts and heads on the official medals, note some of the medals on which they were used, and where possible identify the designer or engraver. I propose to confine the study to the official issues and concentrate on the portraits on the obverse, not the lettering unless it is directly relevant to the design. In this note the term 'coronet' is used to indicate the alternate fleur-de-lis and cross design, as on the heraldic coronet; 'tiara' describes the headband with elevated design and 'diadem' the jewelled headband. Where so many portraits have to be considered, it is useful to name them and I have included the names which were used in my research. One interesting point made by the Royal Mint is that there was a greater variety of portraits for Queen Victoria than for any subsequent monarch, even the long reign of our present Queen.



Figure 1: The Young Head by Wyon (Regina).

The starting point must be the Young Head by William Wyon, RA, Chief Engraver at the Royal

Mint at the time. This classic portrait was first shown with the China 1842 medal and then used on a number of medals which were issued retrospectively: the Military General Service 1793-1814 (MGS), Naval General Service 1793-1840 (NGS) and the Army of India Medal. Medals issued for campaigns after 1842 also used the Young Head: Scinde, Candahar and Cabul, Jellalabad Flying Victory, the Sutlej 1846 and the Punjab 1849. After Wyon's death in 1851 the design remained in use on medals such as South Africa 1834-53, India GS 1854, Baltic, Crimea, Indian Mutiny and the Second China War. This is generally known as the Wyon Young Head.



Figure 2: The Young Head by Wyon (Vindex).

There are two versions of the Wyon Young Head. The first shows Wyon's signature on the truncation of the actual portrait (Figure 1) and was used with the legend 'VICTORIA REGINA'. On the MGS and NGS medals the date 1848 is included below the portrait, whilst the Crimea Medal shows 1854. The second version (Figure 2) has a different shape to the lower part of the Queen's neck and the signature is in the field immediately below the portrait. This was used with the legend 'VICTORIA VINDE' as on the First Afghan War medals.

There is a third Wyon Young Head but this is the coinage head designed in 1837 and used from 1838 until 1887. In this the Queen is portrayed wearing a simple fabric head band, one ribbon

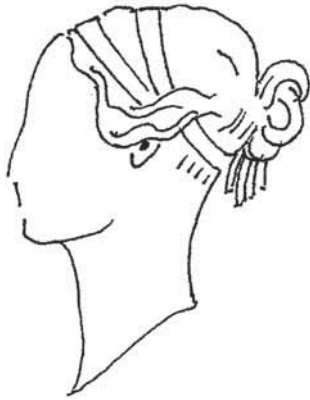


Figure 3: Coinage Head, Jubilee 1897.



Figure 4: Sea Gallantry Medal Head.



Figure 5: Board of Trade Head.



Figure 6: Chignon Head (L.C. Wyon).



Figure 7: Oakleaf Head (RNLI).



Figure 8: New Zealand Bust.



Figure 9: Ashantee Head (L.C. Wyon).



Figure 10: Empress Bust.



Figure 11: Afghan Bust.

behind the ear and two across the head (Figure 3 is the author's drawing). The portrait was used on only one medal, the reverse of the 1897 Diamond Jubilee issue for Mayors and Provosts. The portrait rests on a floral spray with the date 1837, the year of the Queen's accession and was more appropriate for a Jubilee than the 1842 issue. The Royal Mint has advised that there are some variations between this portrait and the original because G.W. De Saulles re-engraved part of the medal.

A separate design but based on Wyon's portrait was used with the Board of Trade Foreign Services Medal, specifically intended to reward foreign citizens who had saved British lives. The medal later became the Sea Gallantry Medal for Foreign Recipients (MYB No 68). This shows a more prominent nose, fuller face, heavier chin and a different hair style (Figure 4). The medal was authorised in 1839 but without suspension and the portrait may have been designed to coincide with the provision of a suspension in 1854. It was engraved by Leonard Charles Wyon, William's son and also an engraver at the Royal Mint, and should perhaps be termed the 'Sea Gallantry Head'. I have grouped this medal with the next one because of the connexion with the Sea Gallantry Medal.

A further young head, this time by Benjamin Wyon, working privately, was used for the Board of Trade Medal for Saving Life, instituted in 1855. This was a large medal which was not intended to be worn, but it was later reduced in size and fitted with suspension. This shows the Queen's head with much fuller features and wearing a laurel wreath and single head-band. The ribbons of the laurel circlet are shown at the back of the head. The name 'B. WYON sc' appears immediately below the portrait. I have referred to it as the Board of Trade Head and my simplified drawing is at Figure 5.

In 1857 when the octagonal Arctic Medal (MYB No 320, p 284) was instituted, a new young head was sculpted (Figure 6). This shows a diadem instead of a tiara, the line of the chin and neck differ from the previous designs, and the Queen's hair is dressed differently, in a 'chignon', and I therefore call it the 'Chignon Head'. This portrait was engraved by L.C. Wyon and seems to have been used only on this medal.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) Life Saving Medal (MYB No L4, p 309) has a portrait obverse engraved by L.C. Wyon (Figure 7). This shows a fuller face and heavier chin than the original Young Head, the hair covers most of the ear and in addition the Queen wears a circlet of oak leaves and acorns in her hair. The oak leaf circlet

seems to have been used only with this medal and I refer to it as the 'Oak Leaf Head'. MYB tells us that the design was first used as late as 1862. In the strict sense this should not be included with official medals, but the unique design and the national status of RNLI led me to stretch a point.

A new portrait was produced in 1869 (Figure 8) and used for the New Zealand and Abyssinian Medals, and also the Royal Household Faithful Service Medal which was instituted in 1872. This shows the Queen wearing a coronet showing two fleurs-de-lis between three crosses formly surmounting a plain veil. The Queen wears a simple pearl necklace and pendant without any Stars or Orders. The signature 'A.B. WYON sc' appears beneath the Queen's shoulder. The brothers Joseph Shepherd Wyon and Alfred Benjamin Wyon had established their own workshop in London and this was one of their early commissions. I refer to this as the 'New Zealand Bust'.

The medal for the Ashantee campaign was authorised in 1874 and a new portrait was produced, designed by L.C. Wyon (Figure 9). This time the Queen is shown wearing a diadem and a very austere veil which covers the ear and follows the line of the back of the head and neck. The Queen, now 55 years of age, is shown with a much fuller face and thicker neck. This portrait was used with Ashantee 1873-74, Egypt 1882, North West Canada 1885, East and West Africa 1892 and Central Africa 1895. I refer to this as the 'Ashantee Head'.

In 1876 a second Arctic Medal was authorised. This was a circular medal and the obverse portrait showed a crowned and veiled bust by George Gammon Adams (Figure 10). The crown is small, set towards the back of the head and rests on a veil which has 'feathering' at the front and side (this may be the 'widow's cap' which the Queen often wore). The veil is drawn well behind the ear. The sculptor's signature appears on the truncation of the shoulder. This same portrait was used for the Empress of India Medal, 1877. I refer to this as the 'Empress Bust' in order to avoid any confusion between the two Arctic Medals.

A further five years elapsed before, in 1881, a new portrait bust was designed for the Afghanistan Medal 1878-1880. The Queen wears a large crown surmounting a plain, narrow veil drawn back behind the ear. She wears her necklace and pendant, and the star and sash of the Order of the Garter are clearly shown (Figure 11). This portrait was engraved by L.C. Wyon, after a design by Joseph Edgar Boehm. It appears to have been used only with this medal and I refer to it as the 'Afghan Bust'.



Figure 12: Jubilee Bust.



Figure 13: Vounteer Bust.



Figure 14: BSA Bust.



Figure 15: Brock Portrait.



Figure 16: Bowcher Bust.



Figure 17: Sceptre Bust.



Figure 18: De Saulles Bust.



Figure 19: St. John Bust.

1887 was Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee year and a medal was struck which showed a new portrait bust (Figure 12). This retained the small crown, balanced rather precariously on the head, but the veil has a 'ruffed' forward edge before being drawn back behind the ear. A pearl necklace, the Garter sash and Royal Family orders complete the lower part of the bust. The overall impression is of a rather stretched design and it is similar to the Jubilee coinage portrait. The signature 'C. EMPTMEYER' appears below the bust. Clemens Emptmeyer is believed to have engraved the portrait from a model designed by Joseph Edgar Boehm. MYB No 293, page 265, records that the obverse was designed by Boehm and the reverse by Emptmeyer. It may be, however, that both obverse and reverse were Boehm designs, engraved by Emptmeyer. The same basic design was used for the Diamond Jubilee of 1897 and it is therefore reasonable to call this the 'Jubilee Bust'. A larger, 'commemorative', version of this medal was struck by the Royal Mint for sale to the public.

In 1894 a long service medal was authorised for the Volunteer Force and a new portrait was used on the obverse (Figure 13). The engraver was G.W. De Saulles. The Queen wears a plain veil surmounted by a small crown. Her body and head both face directly left and the veil crosses the front of the shoulder which reaches almost to the rim of the medal. As well as the Volunteer Force Long Service Medal, the portrait was used for the Cape of Good Hope General Service Medal, issued in 1900 to mark the campaigns in the Cape from 1880 to 1897. I refer to this as the 'Volunteer Bust'.

The British South Africa Company issued a medal in 1896 for award to troops who fought against the Matabele in 1893, and it was later extended to reward service in its other campaigns. The obverse portrait reverts to the coronet, showing a fleur-de-lis between two crosses formy appearing from beneath a plain veil. This is drawn back behind the ear and forms a small triangle (Figure 14). There seems to be no signature or initials but it is believed that R. Caton Woodville was the designer. It was struck in Birmingham. I refer to this as the 'BSA Bust'.

When the India Medal was instituted in 1896, the obverse design was entrusted to Thomas Brock. His portrait is similar to the preceding one but there are differences (Figure 15). The coronet sits more naturally and is more detailed, the drapery of the veil has no 'triangle' behind the ear and part of the Queen's right shoulder has been included. The Garter star is clearly visible. In addition Brock has

included his initials 'T B' below the portrait and it is fair to refer to this as the 'Brock Portrait'.

In 1897 Frank Bowcher, then a freelance engraver, designed a medal for the Diamond Jubilee. This was not for official issue but the central portrait was used with the Royal Niger Company's Medal (Figure 16). The design shows a small crown and lace veil but with the addition of a laurel wreath. This bust was used only on the Niger Company medal and is the only portrait by Bowcher used on official medals. Perhaps it is fair to give this the name of its designer – the 'Bowcher Bust'.

In 1899 the issue of the Queen's Sudan Medal gave rise to yet another portrait of Queen Victoria. G.W. De Saulles was the engraver and the distinctive design shows a half-length portrait with a small crown and veil. The Queen holds a sceptre upright in her right hand (Figure 17). The initials 'D e S' appear on the right, between the bottom of the veil and the letter 'X' of 'imperatrix'. This design was also used with the East and Central Africa Medal. I refer to this as the 'Sceptre Bust' because it is the only design which displays this item of royal regalia.

The Boer War, 1899 to 1902, resulted in the authorisation of the Queen's South Africa Medal and again the designer/engraver was G.W. De Saulles (Figure 18). The obverse portrait shows the Queen facing directly to the left but her body is turned partly towards the viewer. She wears a lace veil, surmounted by a small crown and a pearl necklace with pendant. The sash and star of the Garter are prominent. The artist's signature appears at the base of the portrait. This design was also used for the Mediterranean Medal and the China 1900 Medal. I refer to this as the 'De Saulles Bust', first because he signed it in full and also because it would be inappropriate to name it after only one of the medals.

The Service Medal of The Order of St John was authorised in 1898, having first been proposed in 1895. This shows a portrait which was almost certainly engraved from a bust sculpted by the Queen's fourth daughter, HRH Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, and which had been exhibited at the Royal Academy (Figure 19). The Queen faces to the right, the only portrait in which this occurs. The design is simple to the point of being austere, since the Queen wears neither jewellery nor insignia. The medal was first struck by Elkington and early awards showed the initials 'E & Co' below the near shoulder, but these were later removed. I refer to this as the 'St John Bust' and it is interesting to note that this portrait is still in use on the Service Medal of the Order of St John.

For ease of reference a summary of the above

designs is listed at Annex A.

There are possibly other portraits used for the obverse of official Victorian Medals and I should be very pleased to learn of them. Certainly there were different designs on unofficial and semi-official medals; shooting and local life-saving medals for example, but these have been specifically excluded from this study.

I hope that in this short note I have illustrated the most important differences in the obverse portraits of Queen Victoria on the official medals, perhaps made them a little more interesting and indicated the richness and variety of their design.

There are almost certainly errors or omissions and I shall be most grateful for any further information which members may be able to provide.

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Annex A: Queen Victoria Summary of Obverse Portraits on Official Medals

Fig	Date	Portrait	Example Medal	Designer/Signature
1	1842	Wyon Young Head (Regina).	China	W. Wyon. On truncation
2	1842	Wyon Young Head (Vindex).	Cabul	W. Wyon. In the field
3	1842	Coinage Head.	Jubilee 1897	No Signature
4	1839	Sea Gallantry Head.		L.C. Wyon. On truncation
5	1855	Board of Trade Head.		B. Wyon. Below truncation
6	1857	Chignon Head.	Arctic	L.C. Wyon
7	?	Oakleaf Head.	RNLI	L.C. Wyon. Below neck
8	1869	New Zealand Bust.	New Zealand	A.B. Wyon. Below shoulder
9	1874	Ashantee Head.	Ashantee	L.C. Wyon
10	1876	Empress Bust.	Empress of India	G.G. Adams. On truncation
11	1881	Afghan Bust.	Afghanistan 1878	L.C. Wyon. After Boehm
12	1887	Jubilee Bust.	Golden Jubilee (Diamond Jubilee 1897)	C. Emptmeyer. Below bust After Boehm
13	1894	Volunteer Bust.	Volunteer Force L. S.	G.W. De Saulles
14	1896	BSA Bust.	Matabeleland	R. Caton Woodville
15	1896	Brock Portrait.	India 1895	T. Brock. Initials below neck
16	1897	Bowcher Bust.	R. Niger Co	F. Bowcher
17	1899	Sceptre Bust.	Queen's Sudan	G.W. De Saulles. Initials
18	1899	De Saulles.	QSA	G.W. De Saulles. In full
19	1898	St John Bust	O St J Service	HRH Princess Louise