

2012: Two Olympic 50p designs accepted

COIN IT IN

MINT CONDITION

SINCE Britain's coins were decimalised exactly 41 years ago today, there have only been 16 previous designs of the 50p coin.

The 50p, 20p, 10p and 5p coins are all made of cupro-nickel, a blend of copper and nickel.

There are about 845 million 50p coins in circulation.

A smaller 50p coin was released in 1997 weighing just 8g - a little over half as much as the previous 13.5g.



A PART-TIME silversmith said it felt like winning a gold medal when two of his designs were chosen to be made into 50p coins to commemorate the 2012 Olympics.

Jonathan Olliffe beat competition from 30,000 designs submitted by the public to represent 29 Olympic and Paralympic sports on the back of the 50p piece.

The 25-year-old's drawings - showing a gymnast with a ribbon and a swimmer submerged in water - will now feature on about six million new coins this month.

Mr Olliffe, of Early Road, Witney, said the honour felt "very special".

The former student at Oxford and Cherwell Valley College said: "I couldn't quite believe it when I found out I'd got two winning designs, I had to read it again to make sure it was true.

"I do feel part of history.

"I went to the Royal Mint to collect our prize and we were shown around the museum and they had a draw with 29 holes in it ready for our designs to be placed inside and kept their forever.

"I feel like I have done something that

Chris Walker

will always be seen now.

"It feels like I've won a gold medal, but this is the closest I'll ever get to gold at the Olympics."

Mr Olliffe, who produces bowls and vases, sent in the hand-drawn designs in April last year and had to wait more than 18 months to find out he had won.

As a prize, the former Wood Green School pupil was given two five-foot high replicas of his 50p coins and two regular sized ones made of gold.

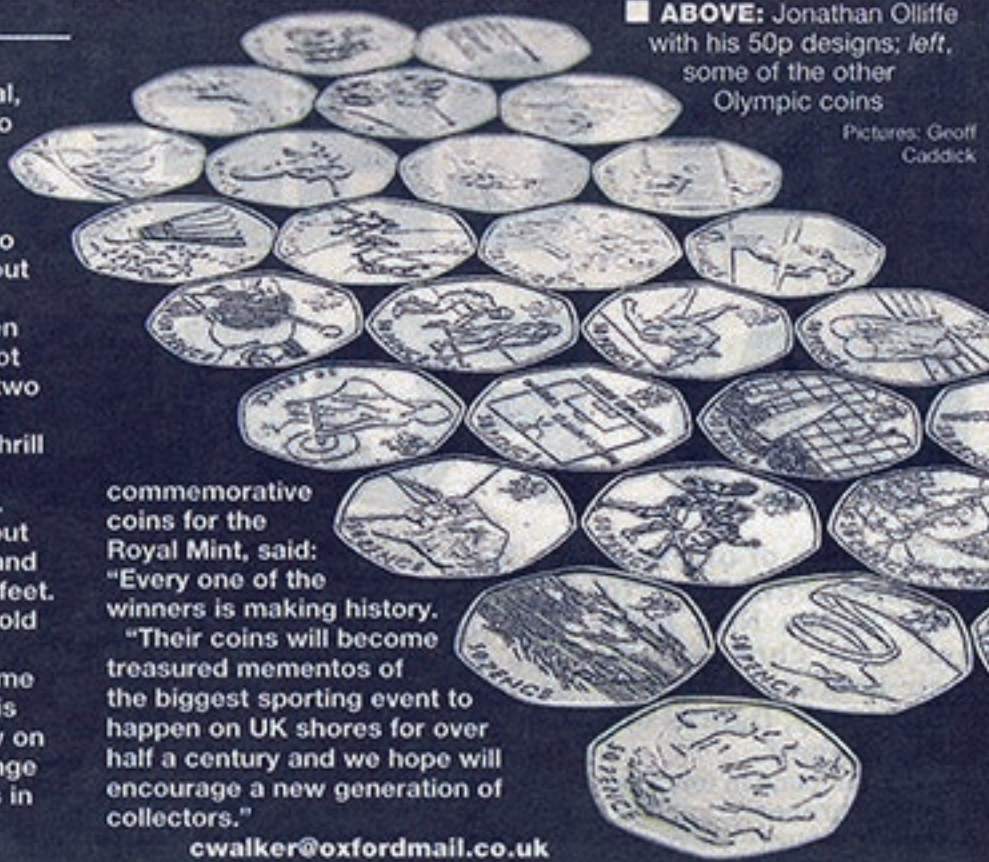
Mum, Anne, 61, said: "It's a real thrill to have my son involved in the Olympics. We're very proud of him.

"At school he always struggled, but when he got to secondary school and did artwork he suddenly found his feet.

"I think he feels like he's won a gold medal himself."

Mr Olliffe, who also works part-time as a carpet and blind fitter for Denis Green's in Witney, said: "From now on I'll be constantly checking my change to see if I have got any of my coins in my hands."

Dave Knight, director of



■ ABOVE: Jonathan Olliffe with his 50p designs; left, some of the other Olympic coins

Pictures: Geoff Caddick

commemorative coins for the Royal Mint, said: "Every one of the winners is making history.

"Their coins will become treasured mementos of the biggest sporting event to happen on UK shores for over half a century and we hope will encourage a new generation of collectors."

cwalker@oxfordmail.co.uk