



BANK OF ENGLAND

News release

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The Fiver - Honoured At Last

The Bank of England £5 Note Exhibition 3 February - 27 March 2003

After more than 200 years of being creased and crumpled at the bottom of pockets, purses and wallets, the Bank of England fiver is being honoured with a two-month exhibition illustrating the key developments in the note's amazing history.

Opening at the Bank's Museum in Bartholomew Lane, London EC2, on 3 February, the exhibition will highlight details of the life of the £5 since it was first introduced in 1793. It could have been a very small exhibition – in 1793 Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger thought it would be advisable to withdraw all notes of very small value. But that was not to be and, although the fiver may be the Bank's lowest-value note, it certainly wins the prize as the longest continuously-serving denomination.

As with all other Bank of England notes at the time, the first £5 notes were white, and remained basically unchanged until 1957 when, to the horror of some, the first coloured fiver was introduced. In Parliament, it was described as being akin to stage money!

Amongst the exhibits is Harry Eccleston's £5 note, featuring no less a person than Arthur Wellesley, the Iron Duke himself. This was part of a coordinated pictorial set of notes by Eccleston, the Bank's first in-house artist-designer. Introduced in 1971, the design was issued for some 19 years until June 1990 when a new £5 note replaced it, featuring George Stephenson and his steam-powered locomotive, Rocket. As one paper urged at the time: "Get a Rocket in your pocket and give Wellington the Boot."

Other exhibits include the Bank's latest £5 note - the 'Fry fiver', introduced in May last year, featuring Elizabeth Fry the social reformer.

Women's Portraits on the World's Banknotes

To accompany Elizabeth Fry, we have included a selection of banknotes from around the world, kindly loaned from the Raymond Lloyd collection. These notes carry fascinating portraits of other famous women in world history.

Note to Editors

The Museum and this exhibition are open from Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm. Entry to the Museum (entrance in Bartholomew Lane, EC2) and the exhibition, is free. Closed weekends, Bank and Public Holidays. Photographs illustrating the main exhibition are available at www.newscast.co.uk

Key Resources

A Brief History of the Bank of England £5 Note - Museum Exhibition Flyer

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100114080129/http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/news/2003/5FlyerAW.pdf>