

Great Britain: Great Exhibition: Queen Victoria & Prince Albert / Council Medal

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Form: Circular

By: W. Wyon (obv) & J.F. Domand after H. Bonnardel (rev) / Royal Mint

Date: 1851

Ref: BHM: 2461; Eimer: 1455; Fearon: 302.4; Laidlaw: 1214;

Variations:	Size	Metal	Mass	Value
	89 mm	Copper-Bronze		\$2,000

Edge: Plane. Impressed round the lower edge: "COUNCIL MEDAL OF THE EXHIBITION" and round the upper edge the name of the recipient.

Obverse: Within a beaded border round the rim, conjoined bare heads of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, left, she laureate. Pair of Dolphins below, trident on right. Legend above: "VICTORIA D:G: BRIT: REG: F:D: (rose) ALBERTUS PRINCEPS COMITIS" and below: "MDCCCLI." Signed, divided by the date: "W.WYON RA. (left) ROYAL MINT (right)."

Reverse: Within a beaded border round the rim, Britannia standing upon a raised platform arms extended holding wreaths in tribute to Commerce (God Mercury) and Industry (Goddess Minerva). Draped flags of different nations behind. Objects symbolising industry left and right. Legend: "EST ETIAM IN MAGNO QUAEDAM RESPUBLICA MUNDO". In the exergue: "MDCCCXLI." Signed at the foot: "H. BONNARDELL INV. (left) DOMARD SCULP.(right)".

Notes: The Great Exhibition of 1851 was held inside an enormous structure of iron and glass known as the Crystal Palace specially built for the event in Hyde Park, London. The exhibition ran for five months, from May to October 1851, during which six million visitors attended the gigantic trade show where the latest technology and displays of artefacts from around the world were on display.

The idea of the Great Exhibition originated with Henry Cole, an artist and inventor. He obtained the support of Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria, and the two of them organised the event which, because of its huge success, became the forerunner of many such exhibitions in the second half of the 19th century.

South Africa was represented by sixty exhibitors from the colonies of the Cape and Natal. Agricultural products, fruit, wool, minerals, animal skins, elephant tusks, ostrich plumes and eggs, and sea elephant oil were on display. There were also exhibits of native culture.

The Council Medal was the most prestigious prize award conferred for the Great Exhibition. Of the approximately 17,000 exhibitors, only 174 Council Medals were awarded of which 80 were British awards and 94 foreign awards. The council comprised the chairmen of each of the panels of jurors. The exhibition was divided into thirty different classes, each with a panel of jurors tasked with awarding the prize medals (Laidlaw 0493) in their class.