

20-krone coin to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Niels Henrik Abel's birth

This year it is 200 years since the birth of the Norwegian mathematician Niels Henrik Abel, and on the anniversary of his birth, 5 August, Norges Bank will be issuing a commemorative 20-krone circulation coin to mark the event.

Niels Henrik Abel is one of a handful of Norwegian scientists who have won international recognition, although he only lived to the age of 26. He died of tuberculosis in 1829. Abel and the Icelandic author Halldór Laxness are the only Nordic names on this year's list of 47 anniversary events/celebrations in which UNESCO is participating.

In a Norwegian biographical work on Abel, Arild Stubhaug writes as follows:

"Abel made an outstanding contribution in several areas of mathematics. His innovatory views and approaches had a decisive impact on the subsequent development of mathematics as a science. He solved problems that had baffled mathematicians for centuries, and he formulated problems that mathematicians will continue to work on for a long time yet. [...] With the rigour he displayed in his work, Abel – along with Gauss and Cauchy – introduced the focus on proof that is characteristic of modern mathematics."

The best known memorial to Abel is probably Gustav Vigeland's sculpture at Abelhaugen in the Palace Gardens in Oslo, which was unveiled in 1902 on the centenary of his birth. Norges Bank has previously paid tribute to Abel by reproducing Johan Gørbitz's contemporary portrait of 1826 on the 500-krone notes of series IV and V.

The obverse of the coin will bear a portrait of HM King Harald. The reverse shows a section of Abel's work book, featuring a lemniscate (from the Greek *lemniskos*, ribbon). It is shaped like a figure 8, and is a fourth order curve with interesting properties which Abel studied in detail. The other notes from Abel's workbook cannot be linked to any particular mathematical theory.

The coin has been designed by Ingrid Austlid Rise, chief engraver at the Royal Mint.

It will have the same dimensions and alloy as the ordinary 20-krone coin, and will be legal tender. 20-krone coins with the usual design will also be minted in 2002.

Obverse



Reverse

