

Great War Gallantry Medals

Victoria Cross (VC)



The supreme British award for gallantry in the face of the enemy. Established in 1856 and still awarded to this day. Up to two bars may be awarded in recognition of further acts of gallantry.

633 VC were awarded during the Great War, of which six were issued to The Royal Scots.

All awards of the VC are announced in the London Gazette, with a citation.

The award entitles the man to use the letters VC after his name for official purposes.

Distinguished Service Order (DSO)



First established 1886. Awarded for meritorious or distinguished service by officers of the armed forces during wartime. Typically in actual combat, and usually awarded to those above the rank of Captain. At the time of the Great War, the recipient must have been mentioned in despatches by the commander-in-chief.

Between 1914 and 1916 the DSO could also be awarded to staff officers when they were not under fire or in contact with the enemy, but by 1917 it was once more restricted to those who had served in the presence of the enemy.

On 23 August 1916, a warrant allowed a bar to be awarded as a way of formally recognising further acts of merit.

The award entitled the man to use the letters DSO after his name for official purpose.

Military Cross(MC)



First established on 28 December 1914 for gallantry or meritorious service. Awarded to officers with the rank of Captain and below plus Warrant Officers (NCOs with warrant, at the time this was only a Regimental Sergeant Major). Bars are awarded in recognition of the performance of further acts of gallantry meriting the award.

All awards of the MC were announced in the London Gazette, usually with a citation. Awards made as part of the King's Birthday or New Year's honours were for reasons of meritorious service and do not usually have a citation.

The award entitled the man to use the letters MC after his name for official purposes.

Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM)



First established in 1854 as an award for distinguished service in the field for Warrant Officers, NCO and lower ranks. A bar could be awarded in recognition of each subsequent act of distinguished conduct for which the medal would have been awarded.

All awards of the DCM were announced in the London Gazette, usually with a citation.

Awards made as part of the King's Birthday or New Year's honours did not always have a citation.

The award entitled the man to use the letters DCM after his name for official purpose.

Military Medal (MM)



First established in March 1916 as an award for distinguished service in the field for Warrant Officers, NCO and lower ranks. Bars were authorised for subsequent awards.

The award of an MM was also possible for women.

All awards of the MM were announced in the London Gazette, with no citation. The event for which the award was made was usually some 3-4 months earlier than the date of publication.

The award entitled the man to use the letters MM after his name for official purpose.

Mentioned in Despatches (MiD)



This is the lowest form of recognition that was announced in the London Gazette.

Originally there was no award as such, the literal mention of the individual in the Commander-in-Chief's despatch being deemed sufficient.

Eventually it was decided that an oak leaf emblem could be worn with the ribbon of the Victory Medal, denoting the Mention. The man also received a Certificate carrying his service details and a reference to the despatch in which he was mentioned.

Great War Campaign Medals

1914 Star



Popularly but inaccurately known as the Mons Star. This medal was awarded to all Army personnel who served in France and Belgium between August 5th 1914, and midnight of November 22/23rd, 1914. A bar inscribed "5th Aug - 22nd Nov 1914" was given to all those who served under fire.

Since the same ribbon is used with the 1914-15 Star, holders of the earlier award were permitted to wear a small silver rosette on their ribbon when the decoration itself is not worn.

The soldier's Name, Rank, Number and Regiment are inscribed on the back.

1914-15 Star



This medal was issued to all personnel who served in a theatre of war before December 31st 1915 and who did not qualify for the earlier 1914 star.

The soldier's Name, Rank, Number and Regiment are inscribed on the back.

Simple rule: if a man did not qualify for a 1914 or 1914-15 Star, he did not see service in a theatre of war before 1916.

The British War Medal, 1914 -1920



The requirement was that a member of the fighting forces had to leave his native shore in any part of the British Empire while on service. It did not matter whether he/she entered a theatre of war or not.

For example if a soldier served in a garrison in India he would get the BWM but not the Victory Medal.

The soldier's Name, Rank, Number and Regiment are inscribed around the rim.

The Victory Medal, 1914 -19



This medal was awarded to all those who entered a theatre of war. Every recipient of the Victory Medal also qualified for the British War Medal, but not the other way round.

In all, 300,000 fewer Victory Medals were required than British War Medals. Victory Medals continued to be awarded after the Armistice, for the British forces who saw action in Trans-Caspia (up to April 17th 1919) and North Russia (up to October 12th 1919).

The soldier's Name, Rank, Number and Regiment are inscribed around the rim.

Silver War Badge



Many of the men and women who were invalided out of the Services, following a wound or sickness, were awarded this badge.

It was authorised in September 1916 and applied to soldiers regardless of whether they had served in a theatre of war or not. Thus a soldier could be awarded a SWB but have no campaign medals.

The badges were individually numbered on the reverse side.

There are detailed rolls that give a certain amount of information about the recipient. The rolls of the SWB are held in the National Archives, Kew.

The Volunteer Officers' Decoration (VD)



King Edward VII
Version

First established in 1892. Awarded to efficient and thoroughly capable officers of proven capacity. For long and meritorious service in the part-time Volunteer Force of the United Kingdom.

The qualifying period of service was twenty years. Half of any previous service in the Regular Army also counted towards qualification.

Recipients had to have been recommended for the award by the Commanding Officer of their Corps. Duly certified by the District Military Authorities in which the Corps was located, as having been efficient and thoroughly capable officers. In every way deserving of such a decoration. In order to preserve the purity of the decoration, the name of any person on whom it had been conferred who was subsequently convicted of any act derogatory to his honour as an officer and gentleman, was immediately erased from the registry of individuals upon whom the decoration had been conferred.

The award entitled the man to use the letters VD after his name for official purpose.

Army Long Service and Good Conduct Medal



First established in 1830, for award to soldiers for long service and good conduct. It was the first non-campaign medal of the British Army.

The medal was initially awarded to soldiers in the ranks of the Regular Force who had completed 21 years of service in the infantry or 24 years in the cavalry. From 1870 the qualifying period was reduced and the medal was awarded to Regular Force non-commissioned officers and men who had completed eighteen years of irreproachable service, irrespective whether the service was in the infantry or the cavalry.

It was discontinued in 1930 and replaced by the Medal for Long Service and good Conduct.

