

BRITISH CAMPAIGN MEDALS OF WW1

Campaign medals were issued as follows:

The British War Medal, 1914-1920

The most commonly issued medal. It is impossible to set out all the details of qualification for this medal, but essentially 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. All men who served in the main theatres of war qualified for this medal, as did those who left their native shore for service in, for example, India.

The medal is silver and circular. A truncated bust of King George V is on the obverse, while there is a depiction of Saint George on the reverse. There is a straight clasp carrying a watered silk ribbon. This has a central band of golden yellow with three stripes of white, black and blue on both sides. The blue stripes come at the edges. An attempt was made to draw up a list of bars, but it was found to be an overwhelming task and was abandoned.

6,610,000 British War Medals were issued. The soldier's regiment and number are inscribed around the rim.

The Victory Medal, 1914-19

This medal was awarded to all those who entered a theatre of war. It follows that every recipient of the Victory Medal also qualified for the British War Medal, but not the other way round. For example if a soldier served in a garrison in India he would get the BWM but not the Victory Medal. In all, 300,000 fewer Victory Medals were required than British War Medals. All three armed services were eligible. It is not generally known that Victory Medals continued to be awarded after the Armistice, for the British forces who saw action in North Russia (up to October 12th, 1919) and Trans-Caspia (up to April 17th, 1919) also qualified.

The medal was struck in bronze. On the obverse is a full-length figure of Victory. On the reverse is the inscription "The Great War for Civilisation". There is no clasp, but a ring attachment through which the ribbon is passed. The official description of the colour of the ribbon is "two rainbows with red in the centre". An oak-leaf emblem was sanctioned for those who were mentioned in despatches.

5,725,000 Victory Medals were issued. The soldier's regiment and number are inscribed around the rim.

The 1914-15 Star

A Star similar to the 1914 Star (see below) was issued to all personnel, with certain exceptions, who served in a theatre of war before 31 December 1915 and who did not qualify for the earlier star.

2,078,183 1914-15 Stars were issued. The soldier's regiment and number are inscribed on the flat rear face of the Star.

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 1914 Star sometimes (unofficially) called the Mons Star

This medal was awarded to all officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and all men of the British and Indian Forces, including civilian medical practitioners, nursing sisters, nurses and others employed with military hospitals; as well as men of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Naval Reserve and Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, who served with the establishment of their unit in France and Belgium between August 5th 1914, and midnight of November 22/23rd, 1914.

The decoration consists of a lacquered bronze star, the uppermost ray of the star taking the form of the imperial crown. Resting on the face of the star is a pair of crossed swords, and, on them, is a circular oak wreath. A scroll winds around the swords: it is inscribed with the date "Aug.- Nov. 1914." The ribbon is red merging into white and then into blue.

Note that men who served in Egypt and elsewhere at this time do not qualify for this medal. Note also that men who crossed to France after 23 November do not qualify for this medal, but the 1914-15 Star.

365,622 1914 Stars were issued. The soldier's regiment and number are inscribed on the flat rear face of the Star.

Clasp to the 1914 Star

A bar clasp inscribed "5 Aug. to 22 Nov. 1914" was given to all those who qualified for the 1914 Star and who served under fire. Since the same ribbon is used with the 1914-15 Star, holders of the 1914 Star were permitted to wear a small silver rosette on their ribbon when the decoration itself is not worn. On the medal index cards this is usually noted as the "Clasp and Roses" or "C&R". It was necessary to apply for the issue of the clasp.

The Military Medal

This Medal (MM) was (until 1993) a military decoration awarded to personnel of the British Army and other services, and formerly also to personnel of other Commonwealth countries, below commissioned rank, for bravery in battle on land. It was established on 25 March 1916. It was the 'other ranks' equivalent to the Military Cross (MC), which was awarded to commissioned officers and, rarely, to warrant officers, although WOs could also be awarded the MM. The MM ranked below the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM), which was also awarded to non-commissioned members of the Army.

The medal is silver, circular and the obverse bears the effigy of the reigning monarch. The reverse has the inscription "FOR BRAVERY IN THE FIELD" in four lines, surrounded by a laurel wreath, surmounted by the Royal Cypher and Imperial Crown

Distinguished Service Order (DSO)

This is a military decoration of the United Kingdom, and formerly of other parts of the Commonwealth of Nations and British Empire, awarded for meritorious or distinguished service by officers of the armed forces during wartime, typically in actual combat.

The medal signifying its award is a gold (silver-gilt) cross, enameled white and edged in gold. In the centre, within a wreath of laurel, enameled green, is the Imperial crown in gold upon a red enameled background. A ring at the top of the medal attaches to a ring at the bottom of a gold "suspension" bar, ornamented with laurel. At the top of the ribbon is a second gold bar ornamented with laurel.