

## THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER



**The Distinguished Service Order** was instituted on 6 September 1886 by Queen Victoria. The DSO is typically awarded to officers ranked major (or its equivalent) or higher, but the honour has sometimes been awarded to especially valorous junior officers. During the First World War, 8,981 DSOs were awarded, each award being announced in *The London Gazette*.

The order was awarded for "*Distinguished services during active operations against the enemy*". It was a military order and normally given for service under fire or under conditions equivalent to service in actual combat with the enemy. After 1 January 1917 commanders in the field were instructed to recommend this award only for those serving under fire.

Recipients of the order are officially known as Companions of the Distinguished Service Order.

## THE DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL



**The Distinguished Conduct Medal** was instituted by Royal Warrant on 4 December 1854, during the Crimean War, as an award to Warrant Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and men of the British Army for "*distinguished, gallant and good conduct in the field*". For all ranks below commissioned officer, it was the other ranks equivalent of the Distinguished Service Order, which was awarded only to commissioned officers.

During the First World War concern arose that the high number of DCM's being awarded would devalue the medal's prestige. The Military Medal was therefore instituted on 25 March 1916 as an alternative and lower award, with the Distinguished Conduct Medal reserved for more exceptional acts of bravery.

## THE MILITARY MEDAL



**The Military Medal** was established on 25 March 1916 for "*acts of gallantry and devotion to duty under fire*", with retrospective application to 1914. It was awarded to non-commissioned ("other") ranks including non-commissioned officers and warrant officers. It ranked below the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM). Awards to British and Commonwealth forces were announced in the London Gazette.

Both the DCM and the MM attracted a gratuity and the decoration allowance of an extra sixpence a day (about £2.25 today) to veterans with a disability pension. The allowance was only awarded once even if the recipient was awarded more than one gallantry award.

## MENTION IN DESPACHES



A member of the armed forces **mentioned in despatches** (MiD) is one whose name appears in an official report written by a superior officer and sent to the high command, in which his or her gallant or meritorious action in the face of the enemy is described.

Before 1914 nothing was worn in uniform to signify a mention in despatches.

For 1914–1918 the device consisted of a spray of oak leaves in bronze worn on the ribbon of the Victory Medal or the British War Medal.

## THE BRITISH WAR MEDAL



**The British War Medal** was awarded to all officers and men of British and Imperial forces who had served between 5 August 1914, the day following the British declaration of war against the German Empire, and the armistice of 11 November 1918, both dates inclusive, or who had died on active service before the completion of this period.

Eligibility was subsequently extended to cover service in 1919 and 1920 in mine-clearing at sea as well as participation in operations in North and South Russia, the eastern Baltic region, Siberia, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, during the allied intervention in the Russian Civil War.

## THE VICTORY MEDAL



**The Victory Medal (United Kingdom)** was issued to all those who received the 1914 Star or the 1914–15 Star, and to most of those who were awarded the British War Medal. It was not awarded singly.

To qualify, recipients need to have served in the armed forces of the United Kingdom or the British Empire, or with certain recognised voluntary organisations, and have entered any theatre of war between 5 August 1914 and 11 November 1918. While home service did not count, United Kingdom based members of the RAF who were actively engaged in the air against the enemy did qualify, as did those who flew new planes to France. Women qualified for this and other First World War campaign medals while serving in nursing and auxiliary forces in a theatre of war.

It was also awarded for mine clearance in the North Sea between 11 November 1918 and 30 November 1919 and for participation in the Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War up to 1 July 1920.

## 1914 Star



The 1914 Star was authorised under a Special Army Order in November 1917 and by an Admiralty Fleet Order in 1918, for award to officers and men of the British and Indian Expeditionary Forces who served in France or Belgium between 5 August and midnight of 22–23 November 1914.

The former date is the day after Britain's declaration of war against the Central Powers, and the closing date marks the end of the First Battle of Ypres.

## 1914-15 Star



The 1914–15 Star was instituted in December 1918 and was awarded to officers and men of British and Imperial forces who served against the Central European Powers in any theatre of the Great War between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915, provided they had not already received the 1914 Star. The period of eligibility was prior to the Military Service Act 1916, which introduced conscription in Britain.

Excluded from eligibility were all those who had already qualified for the award of the 1914 Star, and those who received the Africa General Service Medal or the Khedive's Sudan Medal of 1910 for campaigns from 4 August 1914 to the end of 1915.