

Frequently asked questions about Medals

The following questions and answers cover the topics our Medal Consultant is asked about most often. More information can be found on the Veterans UK and Ministry of Defence websites (links on the right).

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- [Is there a 'Victory Medal' for Second World War Service?](#)
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- [I am a veteran of the Armed Forces of another country, but now live in the UK. Where can I apply for any medals which I may be due?](#)
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ARE THERE ANY MEDALS FOR HOME GUARD AND CIVILIANS FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR?

The Defence Medal was awarded for three year's non-operational service, or 90 days in a Bomb Disposal unit in UK. Home Guard and civilian claims for the Defence Medal require the County and area in which the service was performed as the records are stored under these headings. Contact the Medals Office.

I WAS IN THE MERCHANT NAVY, AM I ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE MEDALS?

Merchant Navy personnel who served afloat during the Second World War and as part of certain post-war operations or campaigns may be eligible to receive campaign medals.

Applications should be made in writing to:

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency

MCA Cardiff, Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff CF24 5JW

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CAN I OBTAIN REPLACEMENTS OF LOST MEDALS?

The Medal Office only issue replacement medals to Service veterans or, if deceased, the member of the family who now holds the medals, under certain strict conditions where the loss is completely outside the individual's control eg burglary, street theft or house fire. Normally a Police report or insurance claim is needed.

Only Second World War medals and those issued subsequently can be replaced, provided that specific criteria are met. The Medal Office is unable to replace medals issued before WW2, such as First World War medals, under any circumstances.

Visit the [MoD medals website](#) for further information.

If you are not entitled to a replacement, you may wish to consider purchasing replica medals from a specialist medal company or reputable medal dealer eg:

Award Productions Ltd

PO Box 300, Shrewsbury SY5 6WP

T: 01952 510 053 F: 01952 510 765 E: award@crowm-lane.co.uk

W: www.awardmedals.com

Toye Kenning and Spencer Ltd

Regalia House, Newtown Road, Bedworth, Warwickshire CV12 8QR

T: +44 (0)24 7684 8800

W: www.thetoishop.com

Worcestershire Medal Service

56 Broad Street, Sidemore, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B61 8LL

T: 01527 835 375

W: www.worcmedals.com

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HOW LONG DO APPLICATIONS/ENQUIRIES TO THE MEDAL OFFICE TAKE?

The Medal Office receives hundreds of applications every week from veterans and their next of kin, applying for medals that have not been issued. The Medal Office also assesses and processes medals (such as the Iraq Medal) for our currently serving personnel. The assessment of medal claims is a skilled and time-consuming task requiring a close reading of the original record of Service and often complex regulations. It is important that each case is assessed totally accurately to ensure that each individual receives the medals to which he or she is entitled.

The Medal Office assesses applications strictly in order of receipt, with only one exception. For veterans aged 90 or over, or for those with a terminal illness, the Medal Office will process your application as a matter of priority. If this applies to you, please write to the Medal Office bringing this to their attention and, in the case of terminal illness, enclose a doctor's note.

As part of the aim to award medals to surviving veterans or their spouses during their lifetimes, the Medal Office is also currently prioritising applications for veterans or their spouses ahead of applications from second generation next of kin.

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HOW DO I ENQUIRE ABOUT AN ONGOING APPLICATION?

All enquiries are handled by the Joint Personnel Administration Centre (JPAC) Enquiry Centre.

Fax: 0141 224 3586

Freephone: 0800 085 3600

Overseas - Civilians: +44 (0) 141 224 3600

- Military: 94560 3600

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'OFFICIAL' AND 'COMMEMORATIVE' MEDALS?

The term 'official' could be used to describe any medals for which Her Majesty, or her predecessors, has given approval. Only these medals are permissible for wear on a Service uniform.

Commemorative medals are those which have been produced by organisations or private medal companies to commemorate particular branches of Service or areas of operations. Examples of popular commemorative medals are the National Service Medal and the British Forces Germany Medal.

Commemorative medals are not issued by the MoD Medal Office and may be purchased from either the private medal company that produces them or from a reputable medal dealer.

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WHAT IS THE VETERANS BADGE AND IS THERE A VETERANS MEDAL?

The Veterans Badge is a lapel badge for UK Armed Forces Veterans who enlisted in HM Armed Forces. There is no qualifying length of Service.

The badge is issued by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency. More details can be found on their website or by calling 0800 169 2277. There is no official medal called the 'Veterans Medal'.

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I HAVE RECEIVED A MEDAL BUT BELIEVE MY RANK TO HAVE BEEN ENGRAVED INCORRECTLY.

All medals are engraved with the substantive rank held by the recipient on the date of qualification, not the rank which may have been attained prior to leaving Service.

When assessing each case and calculating the date of qualification, the rank record from the record of Service is also checked to ensure that the correct substantive rank is engraved on the medal.

The Canal Zone clasp was not approved for 50 plus years and many went to individuals who already had the medal for a later campaign. In these cases it was sometimes necessary to revise the rank to that held with the (now) first campaign.

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I AM A VETERAN OF ANOTHER COUNTRY, LIVING IN THE UK. WHERE CAN I APPLY FOR MY MEDALS?

You are advised to write to the Embassy of that country. You could find their addresses or telephone numbers from a directory enquiries service.

HOW DO I FIND OUT IF ANY OF MY ANCESTORS WERE AWARDED MEDALS FOR THE FIRST WORLD WAR?

After the 1914-18 War, all campaign medals were automatically issued to the medal earner or, if deceased, to the next of kin.

Great War Medal Issue Cards are on fiche and computer at the National Archives in Kew and can be viewed for free. On line they can be seen at a cost of £2 for a block of six cards. The medal cards give number(s), rank, surname(s) and some have one or two forenames, regiment and medals awarded. They sometimes give other information and always include the Medal Roll reference. These medal rolls rarely give much additional information. Where a man was discharged for an unusual reason the reference is also given. Most of these are references to King's Regulations, and many relate to being unfit for military service due to unspecified wounds or sickness.

It is of note that Regimental numbers in The Great War were those allocated to regiments or battalions. As there could be duplications between battalions in the same regiment, and other units, these are often pre-fixed with the battalion number. Men sometimes seem to have retained one number, but often got a new number on moving unit, going to hospital, going into a transit or reinforcement camp, and so on. Some men have collected up to six numbers on their medal cards, and some have used more than one surname. Keeping track must have been a nightmare.

In addition there are cards for awards of the more common medals, such as DCM, MM, MSM and Mention in Despatches. These often give details of the country where the individual was at the time of the action, number, rank, unit and London Gazette reference, sometime with a Registered Paper number and Schedule number. These probably relate to the citation documents, but none seem to have been preserved. As there was a paucity of awards available before the introduction of the Order of the British Empire in 1917, the Meritorious Service Medal, previously for Sergeants, was made available for merit for lower ranks. It was also permitted for non-operational bravery for all non-commissioned ranks, and for this purpose only bars could be awarded. These concessions ceased after the War.

Awards for bravery and merit, and officers appointments and promotions can be found in the London Gazettes which are searchable at www.gazettes-online.co.uk. Searching is rather hit and miss, as known entries sometimes do not materialise. The original documents have been scanned and errors due to blemishes in the paper etc can occur. Note also that spelling of names etc may vary. Try the minimum first eg the surname; then add other details to try to narrow the search. Numbers have proved more reliable than names, but officers did not have numbers in the Great War.

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WHERE CAN I GET INFORMATION ON MEDALS AWARDED TO MY DECEASED FAMILY MEMBERS?

Details of medals awarded to your late family members can be obtained from the Ministry of Defence Medals Office. For more information, please [click here](#).

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CAN I OBTAIN REPLACEMENT FIRST WORLD WAR MEDALS?

The MoD Medal Office is not able to provide replacement First World War medals. You may wish to purchase replicas or original named medals from a reputable medal dealer or a private medal company. [Click here for more information](#).

WHAT ARE THE "LEVELS" OF BRAVERY AND "MENTIONED IN DISPATCHES"?

Citations for third and fourth level bravery awards were **rarely** retained or published for The Great War, and the fourth level were **not** retained for the Second World War. Basically the levels are as shown below. Awards of the DSO, AFC, AFM, Order and Medal of the British Empire, MSM and MID are included only when given for gallantry. Those in brackets are not currently applicable as they are no longer awarded for gallant actions. Older awards, some discontinued and others exchanged for the GC, are very difficult to place into the current four levels of bravery.

	Operational	Non-Operational
First Level	Victoria Cross (Distinguished Service Order)	George Cross
Second Level	Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (Distinguished Conduct Medal) (Conspicuous Gallantry Medal) (Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (Flying))	George Medal
Third Level	Distinguished Service Cross Military Cross Distinguished Flying Cross (Distinguished Service Medal) (Military Medal) (Distinguished Flying Medal)	Queen's Gallantry Medal Air Force Cross (Order & Medal of the British Empire) (Air Force Medal) (Meritorious Service Medal)
Fourth Level	Mention in Despatches*	Queen's Commendation for Bravery* Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air*

* Before 1918 Commanders "mentioned" names in their despatches (MID) to London when reporting on their campaigns. These individuals sometimes received another award, perhaps an Order or Medal, as a result of being "Mentioned" and the mention could be for bravery or merit. Disquiet arose amongst the Service men in the Great War, partly because allies were giving medals to denote their own "Mentions" and some of these were awarded to our own people. Notable were the Croix de Guerre of Belgium and of France and the Croce di Guerra of Italy.

Eventually, in 1919 this led to introduction of a Certificate for a Mention in Despatches (MID) to be issued, signed by the Secretary of State, and in 1921, an emblem of multiple oak leaves in bronze was approved for wear on the Victory Medal; but if that was not held the emblem could not be worn.

In 1943 a new single bronze oak leaf was authorised for MIDs for Service personnel and for King's Commendations for Brave Conduct (KCBC). This also applied to Merchant Seamen and for anyone Mentioned, regardless of the number of times. One emblem was worn directly on the coat after any medal ribbons. A KCBC to other civilians was in the form of a lapel badge, and for civil aircrew there was a badge worn on the pocket to denote a King's Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air, given for both merit and bravery. Later, a silver laurel leaf replaced these badges for civilians, the oak leaf being retained for Service personnel.

In 1947 more detailed rules were issued for the MID, which had moved to the ribbon of the War Medal 1939-45, and the old multi-leaf emblem could be worn on some other ribbons up to 1920. Mentions between the Wars and after 1945 were to be the new single oak leaf emblem worn on the appropriate General Service ribbon. This continued until 1993 when four new emblems were introduced. The MID single oak leaf was retained but in silver; and only for bravery. The meritorious equivalent was the old multiple oak leaf, now in silver, and called the Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service (QCVS). The laurel leaf in silver was retained for the Queen's Commendation for Bravery (QCB); no change except in the name and applicability to the forces. Finally, a new emblem was introduced in the form of a silver RAF eagle in flight to denote a Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air (QCBA). All are worn on the appropriate medal/ribbon, or directly on the coat after all ribbons, if no medal applies for that award.

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WHAT ARE THE SILVER 'WAR BADGES' SOME VETERANS WEAR?

The King's Badge was the only "disabled emblem" which was officially awarded during both the Great War and World War Two, though the designs differed slightly. It was also known as the War Badge and Discharge Badge. It was awarded to Service personnel who were invalided out of the Armed Forces before they could qualify for any medals.

In 1914-18 there was a tendency for young ladies to stop men in the street and present those who were not in uniform with a white feather for cowardice for failing to join up. The idea behind this badge was probably to discourage these ladies from publicly embarrassing wounded or disabled men. These badges, designed to be worn in the civilian buttonhole, were issued on a medal roll type list, and were individually numbered on the back. Some holders of these badges rejoined, and Naval Regulations for wear included instructions on wearing them in uniform.

A similar badge was instituted for 1939-45 but these were not numbered. After the 1939-45 War the issue was taken over by DHSS. It now lies with the War Pensions Agency but they no longer make initial issues. They will, however, replace 1939-45 lost badges after confirming eligibility. Applications should be made for "a replacement King's Badge" and quoting your National Insurance number to:

War Pensions Agency

General Section, Norcross, Blackpool FY5 3YX

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CAN I WEAR MY NATIONAL SERVICE MEDAL?

The National Service Medal is an unofficial medal sold by the company Award Productions Ltd. Contact them at:

Award Productions Ltd

PO Box 300, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY5 6WT

Tel: 01952 510053 Fax: 01952 510765 email: award@crown-lane.co.uk

Website: www.awardmedals.com

The Royal British Legion are co-sponsors of this medal and receive a donation to the Poppy Fund for each medal sold. Since the medal is unofficial it should not be worn. However it often is worn and, if it is, it must not be in line with official State awards. If it is worn it is usually on the left pocket, below any official awards, or on the right lapel.

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CAN I WEAR MEDALS BELONGING TO MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY?

The official position regarding wearing medals other than your own is that they should not be worn. However, it was generally accepted from soon after the Great War that widows of the fallen wore their late husband's medals on the right breast on suitable occasions.

More recently it seems to have become the custom for any family member to wear medals of deceased relations in this way, sometimes trying to give a complete family military history by wearing several groups. Although understandable it is officially incorrect, and when several groups are worn it does little for the dignity of the original owners.

The Legion takes a pragmatic view and our Ceremonial Rules state:

The official rules for wearing medals allow only official awards to be worn. Unofficial purchased medals and foreign medals which do not have the Sovereign's permission to be worn are not allowed. Standard Bearers, Parade Marshals and other officials on Legion duty are bound by this ruling and unofficial medals must not be worn when on Legion duty. The medals awarded to a deceased Service / ex-Service person may be worn on the right breast by a near relative (mother, father, sister, brother, wife, husband, daughter and son). Not more than one group should be worn by any individual. One thing is certain, no action will be taken officially if anyone wears a relation's medals. In the Legion this practice is banned for Standard Bearers and parade officials and as stated above for other members.

Another option is to have the family medals framed so that they can be displayed the whole year round. These displays can include a photo, cap badge and name plate which makes it a very personal display for a family. If you are interested, the following companies offer this service:

Award Production Ltd

PO Box 300, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY5 6WT

T: 01952 510053 F: 01952 510765

El: award@crowm-lane.co.uk

W: www.awardmedals.com

Toy Kenning and Spencer Ltd

Regalia House, Newtown Road, Bedworth, Warwickshire CV12 8QR

T: +44 (0)24 7684 8800

W: www.thetoyeshop.com

Worcestershire Medal Service

56 Broad Street, Sidemore, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B61 8LL

T: 01527 835 375

W: www.worcmedals.com

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HOW DO I GET MEDALS PREVIOUSLY UNCLAIMED?

You may claim any medals which may be due to you by writing to the MoD Medal Office giving your Service number, full name, date of birth, branch of service (if Army please add regiment or corps) approximate dates of Service and full current address. The Medal Office will acknowledge your application in writing. A full assessment of your entitlement to any medals will then take place using your original record of Service. Send your request to:

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA)

(Joint Personnel Administration Centre)

Ministry of Defence Medal Office

G36, Innsworth House

Imjin Barracks

Gloucester GL3 1HW

Veterans also need to supply proof of current address (eg a utility bill). Widows, widowers and legal next of kin (if both the ex-Service person and their spouse are deceased) who wish to claim medals or to check what medals were issued to their deceased spouse/relative will be asked to provide proof of death and confirmation that they are next of kin. All others enquirers must be able to provide a letter of consent from either the person the record belongs to or, if that person is deceased, from their next of kin.

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I THINK I AM ENTITLED TO MORE MEDALS THAN I RECEIVED. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

A full and thorough assessment of your entitlement will have taken place using your original record of Service and the official regulations. Should you wish to challenge the entitlement that has been provided, please write back in to the Medal Office, giving your Service number, full name, full current address and the reference number from your first application.

IS THERE A 'VICTORY MEDAL' FOR SECOND WORLD WAR SERVICE?

No. The 1939-45 War Medal is sometimes mistakenly referred to as the 'Victory Medal', though this is not its official title. The 1939-45 War Medal was issued for 28 days **full-time** Service in the UK Armed Forces anytime during the Second World War.

WHO IS ENTITLED TO RECEIVE MEDALS?

Service veterans are entitled to receive medals in recognition of their Service, if they meet the qualifying criteria. If the Service person is deceased, the immediate next of kin is entitled to receive any medals. In the first instance, the immediate next of kin will be the spouse. If also deceased, it will be the eldest child. If there was no marriage or no children, it could be a sibling or other relation. If a different family member wishes to receive the medals, written and signed permission must be given by the immediate next of kin.

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IN WHAT ORDER SHOULD MEDALS ETC BE WORN?

To find the full details of the order in which medals, decorations and orders should be worn, please [use this link to visit the Just Medals website](#).