

MEDALS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

A number of new awards were introduced during and immediately after the First World War. Here are the most common, which are relevant to those who served, as listed on this website. Individuals who earned other specific decorations will have that award pictured on their Record Sheet.

It is also possible that some of the men listed served in the Home Guard during the Second World War, perhaps qualifying for the Defence Medal, which may therefore be found with family medals.

In November 1917, the **1914 Star** was announced, for award after the war to all those who went to France or Belgium by 22 November 1914 – essentially the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and almost exclusively the Army. It is 50mm high by 45 mm wide, bearing a central scroll to the obverse (front) with the date **1914**, and two smaller scrolls above and below, with **AUG** and **NOV**.



A sew-on **Bar** with the dates **5TH AUG.-22ND NOV. 1914** was authorised in 1919 for award to those who came under fire between these dates, for wearing on the Star's suspension ribbon. Entitlement to this Bar was denoted by a silver rosette on the ribbon alone.

The uniface Star was struck in 'Tombac bronze', an alloy of copper and zinc, and has the recipient's details impressed in the flat reverse (back) – number, rank/rate, initials, surname, unit/service; (no number for officers). It was worn on a 32mm wide red, white and blue watered ribbon through the Star's ring suspension.



In 1919, the **1914-15 Star** was announced, for award to all those in any branch of the services who entered an operational theatre by 31 December 1915 and did not qualify for the previously instituted 1914 Star. As well as those who went to France and Flanders, this new Star was earned by participants in the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign and in diverse theatres such as Egypt, Iraq, East Africa and South-West Africa. The two Stars were mutually exclusive.

This uniface Star was also struck in 'Tombac bronze' and is of similar design to the 1914 Star and suspended from the identical ribbon. However, the central scroll bears the dates **1914-15** and the two smaller dated scrolls are omitted.

The recipient's details were impressed in the reverse, as on the 1914 Star.

The **British War Medal** was announced in 1919 for award to those in all the services who completed 28 days mobilised service before 11 November 1918, generally outside the UK. It was automatically awarded to all recipients of either of the Stars, above. It was also awarded to those on garrison duty in India and Malta. The end date was later extended to include mine-clearance duties and the Allied Intervention in Russia into 1920.



This 36mm diameter silver medal has King George V's head profile facing left on the obverse and a classic 'mounted' scene on the reverse, with the dates **1914** and **1918**. The recipient's details were impressed in the rim of the medal. It was worn on a 32mm ribbon through the straight bar suspension.



The British issue of the Allied **Victory Medal**, authorised in 1919, was the 'standard' 36mm in diameter and struck in a 'yellow bronze' alloy of copper and zinc, then lacquered. It was to be awarded to all those who earned either of the Stars, and to most recipients of the British War Medal (but not those on garrison duty abroad). The 14 Allies agreed to have a common 'rainbow' ribbon on a medal to celebrate victory in the war, with most adopting a version of 'winged victory' on the obverse, as here.

The British issue has the raised words **THE GREAT · WAR FOR · CIVILISATION 1914-1919** over four lines on the reverse. The recipient's details were impressed in the rim of the medal.

The gilt-effect medal is worn from the colourful and wider-than-normal 37mm ribbon threaded through the ring suspension.

Though the Allies had agreed not to add any embellishments to this common ribbon, in January 1920 Britain authorised wearing a single bronze oak leaf spray, worn diagonally, to denote one or more **Mentions in Despatches** (which were published in the *London Gazette*) up to 10 August 1920. The 'Mention' was also confirmed in the form of a named certificate, about modern A5 landscape in format.



Authorised from 12 September 1916, the **Silver War Badge** was issued to those who had served, but were discharged before the end of hostilities, whether through wounds, other injury, sickness or just no longer fit, for wear in plain clothes to denote their service. Issues continued up to December 1919.

This 33mm diameter circular badge with pin-brooch fixing had the King's cipher – **GRI** (for *Georgius Rex Imperator*, Latin for George, King [and] Emperor [of India]) – circumscribed with **+ FOR KING AND EMPIRE + SERVICES RENDERED**. Each badge is individually numbered, but is not named; this is an issue number and does not directly relate to an individual's regimental or service number.

In late 1918, a bronze Memorial Plaque, circumscribed with the words **HE + (or rarely, SHE +) DIED + FOR + FREEDOM + + AND + HONOUR +**, was announced, for issue to the nominated next-of-kin of all those who died as a result of war service. This large (120mm diameter) uniface plaque was individually cast with the embossed name of the individual in a rectangular panel. It was accompanied by an individually named 'parchment' memorial scroll.

The distribution of these medals by post in card boxes to surviving recipients, and posthumously to next-of-kin, took place from 1919 to the late 1920s.



Specific decorations, such as the Military Cross or Royal Red Cross, would have been presented at a Royal Investiture wherever possible.