

Synopsis

'British Military Medals' traces the history of medals and gallantry awards from Elizabethan times to the modern day and it features an expert account of their design and production. Campaign and gallantry medals are a key to understanding - and exploring - British and Imperial military history, and to uncovering the careers and exploits of individual soldiers. For over 200 years these awards have marked the wars, campaigns and battles fought by British and Imperial forces across the world. In this accessible and wide-ranging account, Peter Duckers provides a fascinating insight into the origins and long tradition of these awards. His work is a guide for collectors and for local and family historians who want to learn how to use medals to discover the history of military units and the experiences of individuals who served in them. Medals are a link with the men and women who were actually present in some of the famous - and not so famous - actions in British military history. They convey the excitement of a direct connection with the past. In a series of succinct and well-organized chapters the author explains how medals originated, to whom they were awarded and how the practice of giving medals has developed over the centuries. From the earliest medals of Elizabethan times up to those awarded in the present day, medals have much to tell us about the life histories of their recipients and the armed forces in which they served.

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Customer Reviews

Peter Duckers has been a collector of British campaign and gallantry medals for many years and now specialises in awards to the Indian Army. He is a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, a Fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society, a member of the Orders and Medals Research Society, the

Military Historical Society and the Indian Military Historical Society. He is the curator of the Shropshire Regimental Museum at the Castle, Shrewsbury.

i was pleased with this publication for reference purposes. there were less coloured photographs of the medals and ribbons than i thought and i wish the writer would think about this on next edition as it helps in identification. a great aid.

I am no stranger to the subject of British medals. Not only do I have several of my own from a former career in uniform, I have studied the subject and I also occasionally write for television on military matters. Consequently, I am continually, frustrated by the basic errors seen on both the small and large screens. How many films depicting events "during" WW2, for example, show British personnel wearing medals struck to commemorate victory over Axis forces when the medals were struck after the war was over. Similarly, on British television, in the very first episode of the final series of the popular "Soldier Soldier" the Commanding Officer was talking of his men "fighting and dying in the Falklands" and yet he was not even wearing the medal for that particular campaign! My other pet hate is the increased use of the word "military" to encompass all armed forces - including Naval and Air Forces, when the word actually refers to ground troops - i.e. soldiers. Within British awards, there is the Navy Cross, Air Force Cross and Military Cross available separately to each of our different services although members of the Royal Marines, which are part of the Royal Navy, will be considered for the MC simply because their fighting role is similar to that of the army. Whilst I am, therefore, disappointed with the title of this book, I am also confused by a significant amount of the content - such as the inclusion of certain civilian awards - WRVS (Women's Royal Voluntary Service), civil service, colonial police, prison service and others which are certainly not armed fighting units. Some of the information is incomplete such as the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) medal with no mention of the post nominal letters "UD" (Ulster Decoration) being used by officers of that regiment in the same way as "TD" (Territorial Decoration) is used by officers of the Territorial Army. Elsewhere, we are left wondering what is meant by the author's choice of words. The use of "Others never did." At the end of one photo caption is a good example. Similarly, we are informed that the present day Army Long Service and Good Conduct medal with Queen Elizabeth II head was introduced in 1930 and is still issued today. I don't think Queen Elizabeth was on the throne in 1930. Yes, I know what the author "meant" to say, but I am commenting on what is said and his introduction of ambiguity. Nevertheless, much of what is written is very refreshing. Unlike other books about British medals, we have some additional information over and above basic data.

Although (again!) not a 'military' medal, I learned that a medal was issued to the crew of the Carpathia for their work in rescuing survivors of the Titanic disaster. I also discovered the Tayleur Medal awarded for life-saving between 1861 and 1875 - instituted from funds raised to benefit survivors of the ship Tayleur which sank in 1854. The second part of the book's title reads; "A Guide for the Collector and Family Historian." I wonder how many people have inherited perhaps an obscure medal (or medals) and wonder why they were awarded. With so few medals being depicted in this book and even fewer ribbons shown in colour, I fear the researcher is unlikely to find the answer here. Altogether, therefore, considerable confusion on a number of fronts, insufficient illustrations and yet occasional significant new "additional" information which I have not seen recorded in books on similar subjects. NM

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