

CHAPTER 7

OTHER THEATRES OF WAR

The Crimea

THE Crimean War has gone down in history for the famous Charge of the Light Brigade—though as medal collectors know, the Charge of the Heavy Brigade was just as gallant, and more rewarding for the British; also because it drew attention to the terrible circumstances of the troops and lack of help for the wounded. It was a turning-point in attitudes towards fighting men.

A fine subject for the specialist collector, there were some 275,000 Crimea War Medals issued. Five bars were issued also: Alma, Balaklava, Inkermann, Sebastopol and Azoff, but it was only possible for any one person to obtain four bars.

The last awarded bar was worn nearest to the actual medal, in other words, in reverse order of receiving the bars.

Azoff was a naval battle, the others being land battles and all of great importance.

Medals to soldiers committed to battle on October 25 are valued highly by all collectors, particularly those awarded to the Heavy Brigade (around £40), the Light Brigade (around £100) and the 93rd Foot (around £30).

The Charge of the Light Brigade is so famous that little need be said about it, though the Charge of the Heavy Brigade has been recorded by an eye witness, Mr W. H. Russell of *The Times*:

“All was visible to the men and officers on Mount Sapoune. They sat or stood, French and British, looking down with breathless interest on the scene below. They saw the Russian horse, nearly 3,000 strong, sweep majestically over the rising ground . . . and the little squadrons of the Heavy Brigade, which altogether did not equal a fifth of the force swooping down upon them. As the Russians rolled over the ridge, they instinctively fronted towards the tiny squadrons. They advanced down



15. *British Crimea Medal 1854-56*

the hill at a slow canter, which they changed to a trot at last nearly halted. The first line was nearly double the length of ours, and it was at least three times as deep. The trumpets rang out through the valley, and the Greys and Enniskilliners went right at the centre of the Russian cavalry. Turning a little to their left so as to meet the Russian right, the Greys rushed on with a cheer that thrilled every heart. The wild shout of the Enniskilliners rose through the air at the same instant. As lightning flashes through a cloud, the Greys and Enniskilliners pierced through the dark masses of Russians. The shock was but for a moment. There was a clash of steel, and a light play of sword blades in the air.



16. *Sultan of Turkey's Crimea Medal 1854-56—Sardinian version*

In another moment we saw them emerging with diminished numbers and in broken order, charging against the second line. In less than five minutes 700 British swordsmen had beaten 3,000 Russian horse.”

Small wonder that collectors pay high prices for medals to those men. The same goes for the Guards at Inkermann, firmly placed in British history by the famous painting by Robert Gibb ‘Saving the Colours: the Guards at Inkermann’. At Alma it was the Highland Brigade which distinguished itself so greatly: “The Highlanders coming up in succession from the right, smote each column in flank as it passed its front, while every moment the rigid line of red coats and black bearskins and busy rifles crept closer and closer . . .”

Naturally medals to the units which achieved such distinction are very expensive, but medals to soldiers who fought hard and well are still available for as little as £5.

Collectors of this campaign can also obtain Turkish Crimea Medals. This award has three different obverses, in which the national flags are

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placed in different order and the words in the exergue read: 'Crimea 1855' (British); 'La Crimée 1855' (French) and 'La Crimea 1855' (Sardinian).

New Zealand Medal 1845-1847 and 1860-1866

Queen Victoria's head appears on the obverse of this scarce medal with a wreath on the reverse with the words, 'New Zealand—Virtutis Honor'. It was authorized in 1869. It is unusual in that while no bars were issued the dates of service of the recipient were engraved inside the wreath. So far 28 different dates have been recorded, and the medal was also issued undated.

It went to soldiers and sailors engaged against the Maori uprising between 1845 and 1847, and for the later Maori campaign which lasted six years from 1860 to 1866 when the Maori warriors were finally crushed. The undated medal is the only one commonly met with—fetching around £11. The other medals fetch anything from £25 to well over £100. The medals were named by impressed capitals.

Known dates:

1845-46	1861-65
1845-47 (probably Navy only)	1861-66
1846-47 Navy only	1862-66
1846 Navy	1863
1847 Navy	1863-64
1848 only one known to Army	1863-65
1860 Navy	1863-66
1860-61	1864
1860-63	1864-65
1860-64	1864-66
1860-65	1865
1860-66	1865-66
1861	1866
1861-63	Undated
1861-64	

Canada

Riel's Rebellion in 1885 gave rise to the North West Canada Medal. No British troops took part in the campaign which was awarded to

COLLECTING MILITARY MEDALS

Canadian troops by the Canadian Government. Fierce fighting took place in the area of the Saskatchewan Rivers and a bar—'Saskatchewan'—was issued for these engagements. The medal shows Victoria's head on the obverse and on the reverse it has a maple wreath with the words: 'North West Canada' and the date '1885'.

The Canada General Service Medal was issued for the period 1866–70, but was not authorized until 1899. It was awarded to British soldiers and Canadian militia during the Fenian Raids of 1866–70, and the famous Red River expedition in 1870.

Three bars were issued:

Fenian Raid 1866
Fenian Raid 1870
Red River 1870

The crowned and veiled head of Victoria is depicted on the obverse. The reverse design shows the Canadian flag inside a maple wreath. The medal ribbon was later also used for the Canada Medal (1943) the first Canadian decoration for 'meritorious service above and beyond the faithful performance of duties'.

Tibet

The Tibet Medal (1903–04) is rare to British troops and was awarded to troops engaged in the Tibet Mission who were at Siliguri between December 13, 1903 and September 23, 1904. The reverse shows the hilltop fortress of Lhasa with the legend 'Tibet 1903–4' below. One bar—'Gyantse'—was issued for a battle which was fought between May 3 and July 6, 1904. The naming on these medals is by engraved script and unofficial bars exist. Issued in both silver and bronze, they are all rare.

British North Borneo Medals 1897–1937

Forces employed by the British North Borneo Company were awarded company medals which had the authority of the British Government. The Medal for Punitive Expeditions 1897–8, has the arms of the Company with a Jacobean shield and a six-oared galley on the obverse. The design is supported either side by a wild man of Borneo. The reverse shows the British lion and the flag of the colony.

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They were issued with three bars:

- Punitive expedition (1897)
- Punitive expeditions (1897–98)
- Rundum (1915–16)

The Medal for Tambunan (1899–1900) has an obverse design of the company's coat of arms and a reverse showing the company's flag. It was awarded to forces taking part in the Tambunan expedition and for capturing Mat Saleh's fort.

The Rundum Medal (1915–16) was issued with bar 'Rundum' but those with previous medals wore only the bar 'Rundum' to their existing medal. Only 113 such medals were awarded.

A General Service Medal was also issued and was awarded up until 1937.

General Service Medal 1918–62

This medal underwent six changes to its obverse design, all having a common reverse design of the winged figure of Victory.

1. King George V. Legend: GEORGIVS V BRITT: OMN:
REX ET IND: IMP.
2. King George V. Legend: GEORGIVS V D.G. BRITT OMN
REX ET INDIAE IMP.
3. King George VI. Legend: GEORGIVS VI D.G. BR. OMN.
REX ET INDIAE IMP.
4. King George VI. Legend: GEORGIVS VI DEI GRA: BRITT:
OMN: REX: FID: DEF.
5. Queen Elizabeth. Legend: ELIZABETH II DEI GRA: BRITT:
REGINA: F.D.
6. Queen Elizabeth. Legend: ELIZABETH II DEI GRATIA
REGINA F.D.

Bars awarded:

- Kurdistan
- Iraq
- N.W. Persia
- S. Persia
- Southern Desert: Iraq.



17. *United Nations Service Medal 1950-*

Northern Kurdistan
Palestine
South East Asia 1945-46
Bomb and Mine Clearance 1945-49
Bomb and Mine Clearance 1945-56
Palestine 1945-48
Malaya
Cyprus
Near East
Arabian Peninsula
Brunei

Modern Medals

Medals were issued for the Korean War 1950-53, the British issue being in cupro-nickel and the Canadian issue in silver. The two scarce medals of this war are the South African issue and the Southern

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Rhodesia issue. Most commonly met with is the United Nations bronze award.

The current General Service Medal came into being in 1962 and is used for all three arms of the fighting forces. The bars awarded so far are:

Borneo
Radfan
South Arabia
Malay Peninsular
South Vietnam

SAMPLE