

ORDERS OF CHIVALRY

The Most Noble Order of the Garter

- Motto: Honi soit qui mal y pense (Shame on him who thinks this evil)
- Date created: 1348
- Level: Knight/Lady of the Garter
- Post nominal letters: KG/LG
- Remarks: Limited to 25 Knights

The Order of the Garter is the oldest and most prestigious of the meritorious orders. The Order was founded by Edward III in the 14th century. The origins of its name and motto are obscure. The chapel of the order is St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle.

The Most Ancient and Noble Order of the Thistle

- Motto: Nemo me impune lacessit (No one provokes me with impunity)
- Date created: 1687
- Level: Knight/Lady of the Thistle
- Post nominal letters: KT/LT

The Order of the Thistle has ancient roots, but was only established on a statutory basis by James II in 1687. It is limited to 16 Knights (women were admitted in 1987), all of whom must be Scottish.

The Order of Merit

- Date created: 1902
- Level: Member of the Order of Merit
- Post nominal letters: OM

This order was created by Edward VII to recognise nationally distinguished contributions in science, art, music, literature and public life. There is also a military division which is used to award exceptional military leaders in time of war. The order is limited to 24 members.

The Royal Victorian Order

- Date created: 1896
- Levels: Knight/Dame Grand Cross (Post Nominal Letters: GCVO)
Knight/Dame Commander (Post Nominal Letters: KCVO/DCVO)

Commander (Post Nominal Letters: CVO) Lieutenant (Post Nominal Letters: LVO) Member (Post Nominal Letters: MVO)

Given for services to The Queen and other members of the Royal Family. There is also a medal, the Royal Victorian Medal, with three grades, gold, silver and bronze. The chapel of the order is The Queen's Chapel of the Savoy.

Other awards are made by The Sovereign on the advice of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and the Secretary of State for Defence and include:

The Most Honourable Order of the Bath

- Motto: Tria Juncta in uno (Three joined in one)
- Date Created: 1725
- Levels: Knight/Dame Grand Cross (Post Nominal Letters: GCB) Knight/Dame Commander (Post Nominal Letters: KCB/DCB) Companion (Post Nominal Letters: CB)

The Order of the Bath is another order with ancient roots. It takes its name from the ceremonial bathing that preceded investiture in medieval times. The order was formally established in 1725 and is awarded to state servants (including members of the Armed Forces). It has a military division and a civil division. The chapel of the Order is in Westminster Abbey.

The Order of St Michael and St George

- Motto: Auspiciis Melioris Aevi (Token of a better age)
- Date Created: 1818
- Levels: Knight/Dame Grand Cross (Post Nominal Letters: GCMG) Knight/Dame Commander (Post Nominal Letters: KCMG/DCMG) Companion (Post Nominal Letters: CMG)

This order was created in the early part of the 19th century to reward service in Malta and the Ionian islands. It has since evolved to encompass any members of the Diplomatic Service and those who render service to UK interests overseas. The chapel of the order is in St Paul's cathedral.

The Order of the British Empire

- Motto: For God and the Empire
- Date Created: 1917
- Levels: Knight/Dame Grand Cross (Post Nominal Letters: GBE) Knight/Dame Commander (Post Nominal Letters: KBE/DBE) Commander (Post Nominal Letters: CBE) Officer (Post Nominal Letters: OBE) Member (Post Nominal Letters: MBE)

This order was instituted by George V to recognise all levels of service to the country during the first 'total' war. It has evolved to embrace service and achievement in all

fields. The Order has a military division and a civil division. The chapel of the order is in St Paul's Cathedral. The British Empire Medal has not been used in the United Kingdom since 1993.

The Order of the Companions of Honour

- Motto: In action faithful, in honour clear
- Date Created: 1917
- Levels: Companion
- Post Nominal Letters: CH

This order is similar to the Order of Merit in that it is awarded to people who perform important service to the nation in select fields. Its membership is limited to 65 companions

Other Awards

The Imperial Service Order was created in 1902 with one level of award - Companion - and a medal for civil servants. The Companion award ceased to be used in the United Kingdom in 1993, but the Imperial Service Medal continues to be awarded to civil servants who have completed 25 years of service in a non-managerial grade.

The Distinguished Service Order was created in 1886 and has only one level of award - Companion. It is awarded to officers of the armed forces for gallantry and leadership in action. It can be awarded to officers of the Merchant Navy in time of war.

The appointment of Knight Bachelor (to men only) originates from the medieval period and recipients are called 'Sir' but have no post nominal letters. There is no equivalent appointment for women (the DBE is awarded instead).

Summary of post nominal letters

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Order	Est.	Levels					
Order of the Garter	1348	K/LG	-	-	-	-	-
Order of the Thistle	1687	K/LT	-	-	-	-	-
Order of the Bath	1725	GCB	K/DCB	CB	-	-	-
Order of Merit	1902	OM	-	-	-	-	-
Order of St Michael And St George	1818	GCMG	K/DCMG	CMG	-	-	-
Royal Victorian Order	1896	GCVO	K/DCVO	CVO	LVO	MVO	RVM
Order of the British Empire	1917	GBE	K/DBE	CBE	OBE	MBE	BEM
Order of the Companions of Honour	1917	CH	-	-	-	-	-
Distinguished Service Order	1886	-	-	DSO	-	-	-
Imperial Service Order	1902	-	-	ISO	-	-	ISM