

Military Medals

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New records released for the first time online uncover the courageous women of The First World War, changing the attitudes and perceptions of society

The new 'Military Medals' collection released by TheGenealogist includes an elite band of women who volunteered for front line duty to save wounded soldiers, putting themselves in mortal danger.

TheGenealogist.co.uk has released over 117,000 unique new records of Non Commissioned Officer's and Other Ranks who were awarded the Military Medal in The First World War. As well as the combatants who fought gallantly in battle, within the extensive new collection are listed those brave men and women who did not fire a single shot in the four years of hostilities and who were only concerned with saving lives and rescuing wounded soldiers. The records list all those who were awarded the Military medal in the First World War.

The new records released provide details on women who rescued soldiers from exploding ammunition dumps, carried them out of no-man's land to safety and faced hostile fire every day. They were justly awarded the Military Medal, which was awarded to non-commissioned officers and other ranks for bravery in battle.



Before the First World War, many were of the fervent opinion that the frontline was not the place for a woman. This attitude pervaded the British Army in 1914 and they refused any female volunteers. However, after helping the Belgian Army, the woman volunteers made their mark and gave assistance to the British Army from 1915 onwards.

In the new records we find the daughter of the Earl of Denbigh, the daughter of the High Sheriff of Norfolk and other high society young women who left a life of privilege behind. Many of the women were very able horsewomen who joined up with the romantic idea of riding onto the battlefield and picking up wounded soldiers and bring them back to safety. In reality they drove heavy ambulances but for many it still took them into extreme danger and they thrived on the challenge.

The role of 'stretcher bearers' (along with junior officers) was one of the most dangerous jobs in The First World War and the new Military Medal collection has found records of a number of women from privileged background who risked life and limb saving wounded men in the front line and even out into 'no-man's land' in full view of the enemy. The women were faced with idle gossip, inconvenient marriage proposals and dreadful living conditions as well as the usual dangers of working near the front line. However, their bravery won over both the soldiers at the front and the establishment back in Britain who celebrated their bravery. Their role was a ground-breaking one before women even had the vote.

The comprehensive collection of 'Military Medal' records is not available online elsewhere and provides a great deal of detail for the family history researcher including the actual Medal Card issued and a link to the London Gazette with full details on the heroic deed that earned them the medal.

- See both a copy of the image of their Medal Card and full details how the medal was won
- Full details of the person winning the medal – their rank, regiment, date of medal citation and the details of their heroism in battle
- View the actual medal card they were awarded and their citation in the official government paper (and one of the oldest surviving newspapers)- The London Gazette
- New records covering the entire First World War
- Part of a series of comprehensive 'Military Record' releases in 2014 covering many areas of the First World War
- Unique "SmartSearch" links to the comprehensive range of other military records published on TheGenealogist.co.uk

The records uncover the heroes of 'Hector Munro's Flying Ambulance Corps' set up initially to help wounded Belgian soldiers in Flanders, we find the Military Medal awards for Mairi Lambert Gooden- Chisholm and Elsie De T'Serclaes (the Madonnas of Pervyse) who set up an independent field dressing station just 100 yards from the trenches and Lady Dorothea May Evelyn Feilding-Moore (daughter of the 9th Earl of Denbigh) who was the first female winner of the Military Cross.

As the British Army accepted their role, more women volunteered and the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) became an established part of the medical framework. Women who volunteered had to pay a joining fee and contribute 10 shillings a week for supplies. Some of those stationed in France brought their own cars with them, which were converted into ambulances. During cold weather, the women had to run the engines of the ambulances every hour to prevent them from freezing up.

Mark Bayley, Head of Online Content comments: *"With our military record releases in 2014, we are aiming to cover all aspects of The First World War. Every new record set*

unearths surprises and the Military Medal collection is no different as we discover the female front line heroes of the First World War, on a par with Florence Nightingale from the earlier Crimean War. These unique records consistently provide fascinating tales behind them."

To read about the extreme bravery of the men and women who saved lives and the fascinating stories of the wealthy young women who risked life and limb as volunteers in the line of duty see the dedicated page on TheGenealogist.co.uk/MM. There you will find photographs, stories, statistics and a free search facility.