



highest award for civilian gallantry is the George Cross instituted by King George VI in 1940. Other gallantry awards include the Distinguished Service Order, the Military Cross, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Distinguished Service Cross and the Queen's Gallantry Medal. Medals are also issued to recognise meritorious or long service and almost every establishment within British society has such an award. There are also campaigns or war medals, which recognise active service and recently these include medals for service in Northern Ireland, the Falklands and the Gulf Wars. Similar medals are also awarded for service under the auspices of the United Nations and NATO. Finally there are commemorative medals such as the recent Jubilee Medal marking the 50 year reign of Queen Elizabeth.

The Saudi honours and awards system whilst not as old as that of the United Kingdom similarly provides recognition by the state of the achievements of its nationals. The initial awards were instituted by King Saud in the mid-1950's with the Orders of King Abdulaziz and Social Services.

These became obsolete with the accession of King Faisal and the awards system operating today began in 1971 with the institution of a new Order of King Abdulaziz and a series of four medals to acknowledge meritorious service by civilians and the three military services. Following the death of King Faisal the Order of King Faisal was established 1976 in his memory and subsequently a series of a dozen medals recognising the various roles of the uniformed services of the Kingdom were instituted.

In 1980 the Saudi authorities instituted the Holy Mosque Medal to recognise the service of those who in 1979 participated in the liberation of the Holy Mosque in Mecca following its seizure by militants. Service in the Gulf War of 1991 was recognised by



Above: John Freel, a former chairman of the RGBB, received an OBE for services to British business and community interests in Saudi Arabia in the New Years Honours list in 2002.



the award of the Liberation of Kuwait Medal, the award of which was extended to all participating nations within the coalition to liberate Kuwait. After the Gulf War various key British personnel were recognised by the Kingdom. Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and John Major were honoured with the award of the senior class Order of Abdul Aziz. Also honoured with membership of the Order were General Sir Peter De La Billiere, Commander of the British Forces and Sir Alan Munro, the British Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

More recently in 1999 the Saudi authorities authorised the issue of a Centennial Medal to commemorate the 100th Hijri anniversary of the re-capture of Riyadh by King Abdul Aziz. Finally the latest addition to the Saudi award system is the issuance of a service medal to recognise the services of the various Saudi personnel involved in the administration and supervision of the Hajj.

In concluding the systems of honours and awards, whilst seeming complex, serve a very simple purpose - that of acknowledging and rewarding service, whether great or small to the nation.



Pictures:
Left-
Combat Medal,
Liberation of Kuwait
Medal,
Order of Abdul Aziz
Fourth Class,
Medal of Merit.

Top Centre -
Order of Abdul Aziz
Third Class

Middle Right -
Order of Abdul Aziz
Breast Star

Lower Right -
Order of King Faisal
Sash Cross