

A Guide to the Wearing of  
Orders, Decorations, Miniatures and Medals  
with Dress other than Uniform

Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood  
St. James's Palace  
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# A Guide to the wearing of Orders, Decorations, Miniatures and Medals with Dress other than Uniform

## 1. Introduction

Members of the various Orders of Chivalry and all persons who have been awarded Decorations and Medals may, should they wish to do so, wear their Insignia on those occasions when the person responsible for the function deems it fitting for Decorations to be worn. This booklet gives guidance on the wearing of Orders, Decorations, Medals and Miniatures with full Evening Dress, Dinner Jacket, Morning Dress, Lounge Suit, Day Dress and Overcoat. It supersedes all previous instructions on this subject.

The occasions when Decorations may be worn can be divided into two categories:

(a) **When The Queen or a Member of the Royal Family who is a Royal Highness is present**

The host should ascertain from the appropriate Royal Household whether it is desired that Decorations should be worn.

(b) **On all other occasions**

The host should decide whether the nature or importance of the occasion makes it appropriate for Decorations to be worn and then issue instructions on the invitation cards. Even so, on all such occasions the wearing of Insignia is entirely at the discretion of the holder.

## 2. General Points

- When gentlemen are wearing full Evening Dress, Knights and Dames may wear a maximum of four Stars. The precedence of position of each Star (looking at the wearer) is shown below:

<i>Four Stars</i>	<i>Three Stars</i>	<i>Two Stars</i>
1	1	1
2 3	2 3	2
4		

The lowest Star is positioned approximately six inches above the waist.

- When gentlemen are wearing Dinner Jackets, Knights and Dames may wear one Star only.
- At all times in civilian dress gentlemen may wear only one Neck Decoration. This is suspended from a miniature width ribbon of the relevant Order (supplied at the time of Investiture) hanging close up below the knot of a bow tie or three-quarters of an inch below and in front of the knot of an ordinary tie.
- Members of one Division of the Order of the Bath or of the British Empire who are later promoted into the other Division should continue to wear both items of Insignia. Only the post-nominal initials of the senior award should be used. Members who are promoted within the same Division and members of the Order of St. Michael and St. George and of the Royal Victorian Order who are promoted may wear only the senior Insignia. The junior Insignia should be returned to the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood.

- Ladies who hold more than one Badge of either the Order of Merit, the Order of the Companions of Honour, the Royal Victorian Chain or who are a Dame or a Companion/Commander of an Order may wear only one of these Badges at any one time: usually this will be the senior or second senior Badge held, depending on whether Stars are being worn.
- The Royal Victorian Chain, the Order of the Garter, the Order of the Thistle, the Order of Merit, the Companion of Honour's Badge and the Baronet's Badge are never worn in Miniature.
- Miniatures should only ever be worn in the evening. However certain Royal Household staff wear miniatures during the daytime as part of their livery.
- Holders of only one Order, Decoration or Medal should not wear both the full size Insignia and the Miniature at the same time. However if a person holds more than one Miniature then he or she may add the relevant Miniature to his or her medal bar, even when the full size Decoration is being worn. For example a CBE who holds no other Decorations should wear the full size Neck Decoration, but no Miniature. If, however, the CBE also holds Campaign Medals the full size CBE should be worn and a Miniature CBE may also be added to his or her miniature medal bar.
- Orders, Decorations and Medals usually worn on the left side of the outer garment should be mounted on a medal bar. They may either be mounted in the Ordinary (or Loose) Style, with the Insignia hanging freely from its ribbon; or in the Court (or Royal) Style, with the Insignia firmly secured to a frame covered in the relevant ribbon. The style of mounting used is entirely at the discretion of the wearer.
- Ladies who are entitled to wear one Miniature should purchase the Miniature Badge suspended from a bow.
- Ladies who are entitled to wear more than one Miniature should have their Miniature Badges mounted on a medal bar in the same style as worn by gentlemen. Similarly if a lady has more than one Decoration, Medal and fourth or fifth Class of an Order mounted on a Bow, each item should be removed from its Bow and mounted on a full size medal bar in the same style as worn by gentlemen.
- The ladies' Badges of the Order of Merit, the Order of the Companions of Honour, the Royal Victorian Chain and the first, second and third Classes of an Order are never mounted on medal bars.
- For Services of the Orders of Chivalry the only Insignia that should be worn is that of the Order in question. However, if a member of the fourth or fifth Class of an Order, or a Medallist of an Order, has his or her Insignia mounted on a bar with other Decorations or Medals, then it is permitted to wear the whole medal bar.
- Holders of Decorations awarded for military service who later receive a civilian award should have all their Decorations mounted together on the same medal bar which should be worn on all occasions when it is customary for Medals to be worn.

## 2. Full Evening Dress (White Tie)

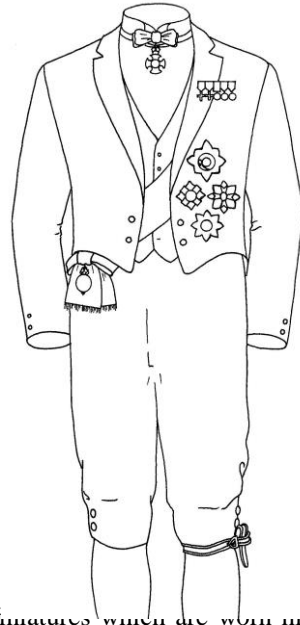
On occasions when it is desired that Decorations be worn, invitations should state “Evening Dress – Decorations”.

### (i) **Knights and Ladies of the Garter; Knights and Ladies of the Thistle**

Ladies wear one full Sash passing from the left shoulder to the right hip from which is suspended the gold Sash Badge. Gentlemen wear one Evening Sash across the front of the waistcoat from the left armhole to the right hip from which is suspended the gold Sash Badge. Up to four Stars may be worn on the left side. Ladies wear the Garter fastened around the left upper arm. Gentlemen in evening breeches wear the Garter around the left knee.

In addition Gentlemen may wear one full size Neck Badge. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. Ladies may wear one full size Badge of either the Order of Merit, the Order of the Companions of Honour, the Royal Victorian Chain or the second or third Class of an Order positioned below the

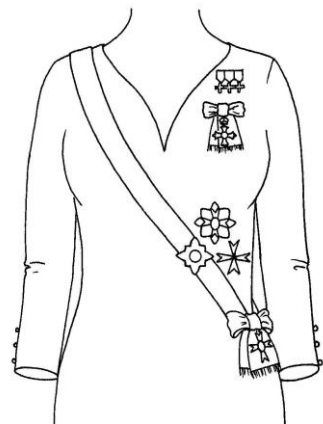
Miniatures which are worn high on the left side. Collars are not worn.



### (ii) **Knights and Dames Grand Cross**

Ladies wear one full Sash passing from the right shoulder to the left hip from which is suspended the Sash Badge. Gentlemen wear one Evening Sash across the front of the waistcoat from the right armhole to the left hip from which is suspended the Sash Badge. Up to four Stars may be worn on the left side.

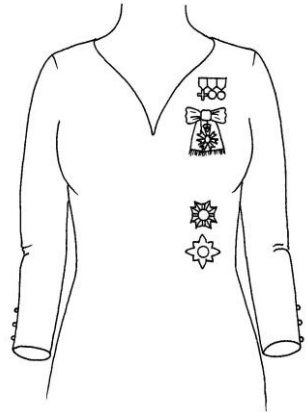
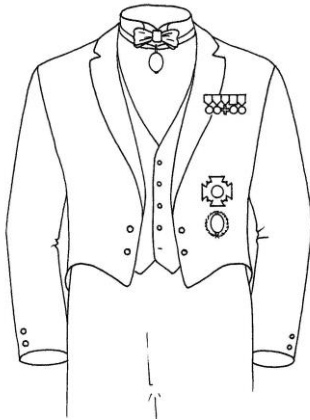
In addition Gentlemen may wear one full size Neck Badge. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. Ladies may wear one full size Badge suspended from its Bow of either the Order of Merit, the Order of the Companions of Honour, the Royal Victorian Chain or the second or third Class of an Order positioned below the Miniatures which are worn high on the left side. Collars are not worn.



positioned below the Miniatures which are worn high on the left side. Collars are not worn.

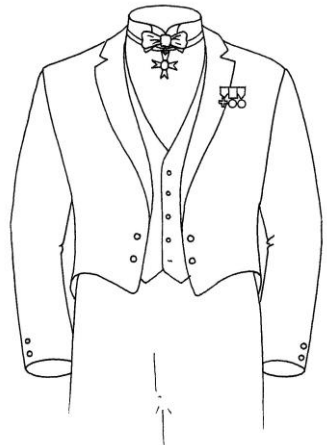
**(iii) Knights and Dames Commander**

Up to four Stars may be worn on the left side of the coat or dress. Gentlemen may wear one Neck Badge, usually of the senior British Order held. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. Ladies may wear one full size Badge of the Order of Merit, the Order of the Companions of Honour, the Royal Victorian Chain or the second or third Class of an Order suspended from its Bow positioned below the Miniatures which are worn high on the left side. If the Knight or Dame also holds the third Class of an Order, he or she should wear that Neck Badge or Breast Badge in place of the more senior Badge, whilst continuing to wear the senior Star.



**(iv) Companions and Commanders**

Gentlemen may wear one Neck Badge, usually of the senior British Order held. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. Ladies may wear one full size Badge of the Order of Merit, the Order of the Companions of Honour, the Royal Victorian Chain or the second or third Class of an Order suspended from its Bow positioned below the Miniatures which are worn high on the left side. The Badges of Companions of the Distinguished Service Order and the Imperial Service Order are worn in Miniature on a medal bar and not as a Neck Badge or a Breast Badge.

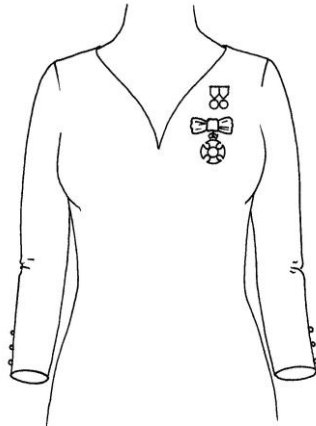


(v) **Lieutenants, Officers, Members and Medallists**

The Badges or Medals are worn in Miniature on the left side.

(vi) **Order of Merit, Order of the Companions of Honour**

Gentlemen may wear one Neck Badge, usually of the senior British Order held. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. However the Order of Merit and Companion of Honour's Badge are not worn in Miniature. Ladies may wear one full size Badge suspended from its Bow positioned below the Miniatures which are worn high on the left side.



(vii) **Baronet's Badge**

Only one Neck Badge may be worn, usually the Baronet's Badge if held. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. However the Baronet's Badge is not worn in Miniature.

(viii) **Knight Bachelor**

Only one Neck Badge may be worn, usually of the senior British Award held. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. A second, larger, Badge may be purchased and worn in the same manner as the Star of an Order on the left side either with or without the Neck Badge, depending on whether other Neck Badges are held.

(ix) **The Royal Victorian Chain**

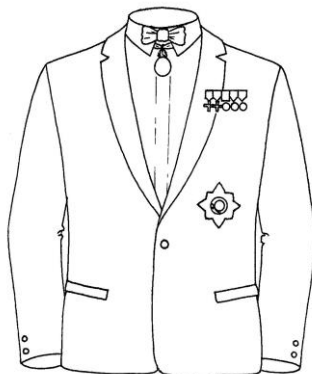
The Chain is worn by gentlemen around the neck in the place of a Neck Badge. It is adapted for wear by ladies on a Bow of the ribbon of the Royal Victorian Order and worn on the left side below any Miniatures. The Royal Victorian Chain is not worn in Miniature.

### 3. Dinner Jacket (Black Tie)

On occasions when it is desired that Dinner Jacket (rather than full Evening Dress) with Decorations is to be worn invitations should state “Dinner Jacket – Decorations”.

(i) **Knights of the Garter, Knights of the Thistle, Knights Grand Cross**

One Star only may be worn – usually that of the senior British Order held. Neither Collar nor Sash may be worn, but if no other Neck Decorations are held, the Badge should be removed from the Sash and worn around the neck suspended from a miniature width ribbon of the relevant Order. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. The Garter is not worn. If the Knight holds the Badge and Star of more than one Order, he should wear the Star of the senior Order, the Neck Badge of the next senior Order and all other Badges in Miniature.



(ii) **Ladies of the Garter, Ladies of the Thistle, Dames Grand Cross**

One Star only may be worn – usually that of the senior British Order held. Neither Collar nor Sash may be worn, but if the Lady does not also hold the Badge of the Order of Merit, the Badge of the Order of the Companions of Honour, the Royal Victorian Chain or the second or third Class of an Order, the Badge should be removed from the Sash and attached to a Bow of the relevant Order. The Badge on the Bow is worn on the left side of the dress positioned above the Star and below any Miniatures which are worn on a medal bar high on the left side. The Garter is not worn. If the Lady or Dame Grand Cross holds the Badge and Star of more than one Order, she should wear the Star of the senior Order, the Breast Badge of the next senior Order and all other Badges in Miniature.



The Garter is not worn. If the Lady or Dame Grand Cross holds the Badge and Star of more than one Order, she should wear the Star of the senior Order, the Breast Badge of the next senior Order and all other Badges in Miniature.



(iii) **Knights and Dames Commander**

One Star only may be worn on the left side of the coat or dress as in (i) and (ii) above. Gentlemen may wear one Neck Badge. Ladies may wear one full size Badge of the Order of Merit, the Order of the Companions of Honour, the Royal Victorian Chain or the second or third Class of an Order suspended from its Bow positioned below the Miniatures on the left side. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar high on the left side. If a gentleman is a Knight Commander of more than one Order or holds other Neck Badges, he should wear the Star of the senior Order, the Neck Badge of the next senior Award and all other Badges in Miniature. Correspondingly, ladies should wear the Star of the senior Order, the full size Breast Badge and Bow of the next senior Award and all other Badges in Miniature.

(iv) **Companions and Commanders**

Gentlemen may wear one Neck Badge, usually of the senior British Order held. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. Ladies may wear one full size Badge of the Order of Merit, the Order of the Companions of Honour, the Royal Victorian Chain or the second or third Class of an Order suspended from its Bow positioned below the Miniatures which are worn high on the left side. The Badges of Companions of the Distinguished Service Order and the Imperial Service Order are worn in Miniature on a medal bar and not as a Neck Badge or a Breast Badge

(v) **Lieutenants, Officers, Members and Medallists**

The Badges or Medals are worn in Miniature on the left side.

(vi) **Order of Merit, Companion of Honour**

Gentlemen may wear only one Neck Badge, usually of the senior British Order held. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. The Order of Merit and Companion of Honour's Badge are not worn in Miniature. Ladies may wear only one full size Badge suspended from its Bow positioned below the Miniatures which are worn high on the left side.

(vii) **Baronet's Badge**

One Neck Badge is worn, usually the Baronet's Badge if held. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. However the Baronet's Badge is not worn in Miniature.

(viii) **Knight Bachelor**

Only one Neck Badge is worn, usually of the senior British Award held. Miniatures are worn on a medal bar on the left lapel above the breast pocket. If the Knight Bachelor is not also a Knight of an Order a second, larger, Badge may be purchased and worn in the same manner as the Star of an Order on the left side either with or without the Neck Badge.

(ix) **The Royal Victorian Chain**

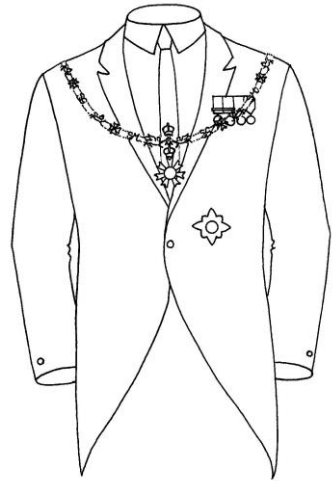
The Chain is worn by gentlemen around the neck in the place of a Neck Badge. It is adapted for wear by ladies on a Bow of the ribbon of the Royal Victorian Order and worn on the left side below any Miniatures. The Royal Victorian Chain is not worn in Miniature.

## 4. Morning Dress

The occasions when Orders, Decorations and Medals are worn with Morning Dress may include special official public functions, Religious Services connected with the Orders of Chivalry or Memorial Services. In each case the organiser of the function or Service should indicate whether the wearing of Decorations would be appropriate.

(i) **Knights and Ladies of the Garter, Knights and Ladies of the Thistle, Knights and Dames Grand Cross**

Normally only one Star may be worn on the left side of the coat approximately six inches above the waist and, for ladies, in a corresponding position on the outer garment. Exceptionally, instructions may be given by the Royal Household for up to four Stars to be worn, in which case they should be worn in the same pattern as shown in Section 1. The Sash is not worn. Collars with Badges attached are worn with Morning Dress on official Collar Days or when ordered for a special occasion. Collars may be attached to the coat or dress either with small gold safety pins, or with appropriately coloured thread. A full size medal bar may be worn on the left side if appropriate.



(ii) **Knights and Dames Commander**

Normally only one Star may be worn on the left side of the coat approximately six inches above the waist and, for ladies, in a corresponding position on the outer garment. Exceptionally, instructions may be given by the Royal Household for up to four Stars to be worn, in which case they should be worn in the same pattern as shown in Section 1. The associated Neck Badge or, for ladies, Breast Badge on its Bow, is not worn. A full size medal bar may be worn on the left side if appropriate.

(iii) **Companions and Commanders**

Gentlemen may wear one Neck Badge, usually of the senior British Order held. Ladies may wear one full size Breast Badge on its Bow on the left side: if worn with full-size medals, the Badge is worn below the medal bar. The Badges of the Distinguished Service Order and the Imperial Service Order are worn either mounted on a medal bar, or as a single medal on the left lapel.

(iv) **Lieutenants, Officers, Members and Medallists**

The full-size Badge or Medal, whether worn singly or mounted on a medal bar, is worn on the left side of the coat or outer garment. If a lady's Badge is worn singly it should hang from the Bow on which it was presented. If it is worn with other Decorations it should be worn mounted on a medal bar in the same style as worn by gentlemen. Since the year 2001 lady members of the armed forces and of some other uniformed services have been presented with Insignia mounted in the style worn by gentlemen: it is perfectly correct to wear these with civilian dress.

(v) **Order of Merit, Companion of Honour**

Gentlemen may wear one Neck Badge, usually of the senior British Order held. Ladies may wear one full size Breast Badge on its Bow: if worn with full-size medals, the Breast Badge is worn below the medal bar.

(vi) **Baronet's Badge**

One Neck Badge is worn, usually of the senior British Award held.

(vii) **Knight Bachelor**

One Neck Badge is worn, usually of the senior British Award held. Alternatively a Breast Badge may be purchased and worn instead of, but not in addition to, the Neck Badge in the same position as the Star of an Order.

(viii) **The Royal Victorian Chain**

The Chain may be worn, by gentlemen, in place of a Neck Badge. It is adapted for wear by ladies on a Bow of the ribbon of the Royal Victorian Order and worn on the left side below any medal bar.

## 5. Lounge Suit

There are some occasions such as Remembrance Sunday, Church Services or Regimental gatherings at which those attending are requested to wear Medals with a Lounge Suit. On such occasions neither a Sash, its Badge, a Star, nor the Royal Victorian Chain should be worn. Gentlemen may wear one Neck Decoration under the collar and a medal bar; ladies may wear the corresponding Breast Badge mounted on a Bow on the left side of the dress below any medal bar. A Knight Bachelor may wear only his Neck Badge and a medal bar. The optional Knight Bachelor's Breast Badge may not be worn. On some occasions in the evening, perhaps when other guests are wearing Dinner Jackets, it may be more appropriate to wear Miniatures.

Appropriate strips of ribbon, unattached to any Insignia, may be worn on all occasions with all forms of civilian dress at the discretion of the wearer. If worn, they should be sewn onto the coat or mounted on a medal bar and worn on the left side.

## 6. Overcoat

Only those full size Orders, Decorations and Medals normally mounted on a bar may be worn on an overcoat, together with one Neck Decoration for gentlemen and one corresponding full size Breast Badge on a Bow for ladies.

## 7. Commendations

The silver emblems given to recipients of The Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct, The Queen's Commendation for Bravery, The Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air and The Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service may be worn, at the discretion of the holder, directly on the outer garment in the position that a medal bar would be worn. If worn at the same time as a medal bar the emblem(s) should be worn so as to appear at the right hand end of the medal bar when looking at the wearer. The Badge given to recipients of The Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air may be worn, at the discretion of the holder, directly on the outer garment immediately below any medal bar or medal ribbons that are worn. In civil airline uniform the Badge is worn on the panel of the left breast pocket.

Members of the Armed Forces who have received Queen's Commendations should wear the appropriate emblem mounted on the ribbon of the relevant Campaign Medal as laid down in Services' Dress Regulations.

## 8. The Wearing of Foreign Orders, Decorations and Medals

No person in the service of the Crown may accept and wear the Insignia of any foreign Order, Decoration or Medal without the permission of The Queen (and it is The Queen's wish that any of Her Majesty's Subjects should not accept and wear foreign Insignia without permission). If such permission does not accompany the foreign Award, then application should be made to the Head of Protocol at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London SW1A 2AH. In the case of members of the Royal Household, Her Majesty's Private Secretary may grant permission direct to the individual concerned. If permission is granted the foreign Insignia should be worn in the style laid down by the country concerned and not adapted to conform to British regulations. For example, some countries give ladies Neck Decorations: these should not be altered to be worn on a bow.

Permission, if granted, will be either:

### (i) **Restricted**

Allowing the Insignia to be worn only on particular occasions associated with the country concerned, such as those attended by the country's Head of State, Ambassador or Minister of State. On occasions when those with Restricted Permission are permitted to wear foreign Orders, Decorations and Medals it is customary for the foreign Insignia to be worn as the senior Award, with the foreign Insignia taking precedence on the medal bar or, if appropriate, replacing any British Sash and Badge, Star or Neck Decoration.

### (ii) **Unrestricted**

Allowing the Insignia to be worn on any occasion when British Orders, Decorations and Medals are customarily worn. On particular occasions concerning the foreign country's Head of State, Ambassador or Minister of State the regulations are as shown in paragraph (i) above. Thereafter with Unrestricted Permission foreign Insignia may be mounted permanently on the medal bar (full size and miniature) of the holder. Therefore the medal bar will

comprise, from left to right, British Orders, Decorations and Medals in order of precedence; Orders, Decorations and Medals given by Commonwealth countries of which The Queen is Head of State in order of date of award; Orders, Decorations and Medals given by Commonwealth countries of which The Queen is not Head of State in order of date of award; Orders, Decorations and Medals given by other foreign countries in order of date of award.

## 9. The Wearing of Medals by Next of Kin

A custom has arisen in recent years of the next of kin of deceased servicemen and servicewomen wearing the Campaign Medals and other Decorations awarded to their forebears – usually on the right side of their outer garments. It must be stressed that this is an entirely unofficial practice and carries no form of official approval.

## 10. Wearing Medals on the Right Side

The only Medals which carry official approval for wear on the right side are the Royal Humane Society Medals, the Stanhope Gold Medal, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution Medal and the Order of St John of Jerusalem Life Saving Medal. If more than one of these Medals is held, they should be mounted on a bar and worn, on the right side, in exactly the same manner as those Decorations and Medals worn on the left side.

## 11. Unofficial Medals

Any medal which has been issued or sold by any organisation without the Sovereign's permission (which is given on the recommendation of the Honours and Distinctions Committee of the Cabinet Office) is to be regarded as unofficial. Unofficial medals may not be mounted with official Orders, Decorations and Medals. The recent practice of wearing unofficial medals mounted on a separate medal bar carries no form of official approval.

## 12. Emblems for Everyday Wear

Members of all Classes of the Order of the Bath, the Order of St. Michael & St. George, the Royal Victorian Order and the Order of the British Empire and holders of the Royal Victorian Medal and the British Empire Medal may purchase Emblems for everyday wear. The Emblems are available from:

Toye, Kenning & Spencer Ltd.

Regalia House

Newtown Road

Bedworth

Warwickshire CV12 8QR

Tel: 02476 848800

Website: [www.thetoyeshop.com](http://www.thetoyeshop.com)

email: [info@toye.com](mailto:info@toye.com)

Members of the Armed Forces and other Uniformed Services such as the Police and Fire Brigades should consult the Dress Regulations of their respective Services for instructions on how to wear Orders, Decorations and Medals when in uniform.

### 13. Order of Wear

The following is an abbreviated list showing the order in which Orders, Decorations and Medals should be worn in the United Kingdom, certain countries of the Commonwealth and in the Overseas Territories. A copy of the complete list may be found online at [www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/56878/data.pdf](http://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/56878/data.pdf). Alternatively a printed copy may be obtained by applying in writing to the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood, St. James's Palace, London SW1A 1BH.

The Victoria Cross

The George Cross

#### *British Orders of Chivalry*

The Order of the Garter

The Order of the Thistle

The Order of the Bath

The Order of Merit (immediately after Knights and Dames Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath)

The Order of St. Michael and St. George

The Royal Victorian Order (Classes I, II & III)

The Order of the British Empire (Classes I, II & III)

The Order of the Companions of Honour (immediately after Knights and Dames Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire)

The Distinguished Service Order

The Royal Victorian Order (Class IV)

The Order of the British Empire (Class IV)

The Imperial Service Order

The Royal Victorian Order (Class V)

The Order of the British Empire (Class V)

Note: The above applies to those Orders of similar Classes. When the Miniature or ribbon of a higher Class of a junior Order is worn with that of a lower Class of a senior Order, the higher Class Miniature ribbon should come first, e.g. the Miniature or ribbon of a KBE will come before a CB and a GCMG will come before a KCB.

Baronet's Badge

Knight Bachelor's Badge (immediately after Knights Commander of the Order of the British Empire)

#### *Decorations*

Conspicuous Gallantry Cross

Member of the Royal Red Cross

Distinguished Service Cross

Military Cross

Distinguished Flying Cross

Air Force Cross

Associate of the Royal Red Cross

The Order of St. John

*Medals for Gallantry and Distinguished Conduct*

*Campaign Medals and Stars* (including authorised United Nations, European Community/Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation medals in order of the date of the campaign for which they were awarded.)

Polar Medal

Imperial Service Medal

*Police Medals for Valuable Service*

*Coronation and Jubilee Medals* (in date order)

*Royal Household Long and Faithful Service Medals* (in date order)

*Efficiency and Long Service Decorations and Medals*

*Commonwealth Members' (of which The Queen is Head of State) Orders, Decorations and Medals* (in date order)

*Other Commonwealth Members' Orders, Decorations and Medals* (for which permission to wear has been obtained, in date order)

*Foreign Orders, Decorations and Medals* (for which permission to wear has been obtained, in date order)

