

Section 1. World War I

The British War Medal was instituted in 1919 and more than 6.5 million medals were struck. There were strict criteria for eligibility for the award. To qualify personnel had to have served for a minimum of 28 days in an active theatre of war.

In 1922 Governor Young wrote to the Colonial Office and to the Army Council asking that members of the Falkland Islands Volunteer Force be awarded the British War Medal. The War Office wrote on 10 July 1923 to the Governor saying that members of the FIVF did not qualify because they did not serve in an active theatre of war as laid out in Army Order 266 of 1919. Thus, no War Medals were to be awarded – this despite the events of the Battle of the Falklands on 8 December 1914, and the fact that nine Falkland Islands-born men had died on active service during World War I.

In 1927 the Falkland Islands' Legislative Council, encouraged by Governor Hodson, passed a resolution on 16 November 1927 asking HM Government to reconsider the decision not to award the British War Medal to members of the FIVF. Hodson wrote a long despatch strongly urging the Army Council to re-consider their decision.

The Army Council were unmoved and declined to award the medal. They wrote to the Secretary of State at the Colonial Office on 29 February 1928:

We are regret that we are unable to depart from the original decision, as conveyed to you in the War Office letter dated 10 July 1923, that the medal cannot be awarded ... I am to add, however, that the Council are not unmindful of the patriotism displayed by the Falkland Island Volunteers in the hour of danger, and are fully cognisant of the valuable assistance they rendered to the Royal Navy, in the early days of the Great War, but as the threatened attack on the Islands did not materialise and the naval battle was fought on the high seas, the Volunteers on shore took no part in the battle.

The decision by the Army Council was greatly resented in the Falklands, but the decision remained unchanged.