ORDER OF ST. JOHN/RED CROSS - JOINT WAR ORGANIZATION AWARDS

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This small article on five awards of the joint Red Cross/Order of St. John organization is an excerpt from a book on Medals and Regalia of the Order of St. John that I am close to completing. The aim of publishing extracts in journals such as JOMSA is to receive feedback from members advising of errors or being able to receive additional material. For example, in this article I have not been able to provide an illustration of the Agriculture Fund Badge. I have also not mentioned the Penny a Week Fund which will feature in the book. Each time I have a section of the work finished, another scrap of information comes to light. I am hoping to complete the work early next year.

Order of St. John/Red Cross -
Joint War Organization Award
The Joint War Organization Award was used in both World War I and World War II for personnel who served in Military Hospitals. In joint organization awards, the Red Cross organization takes precedence in war time and St. John in peace time. This ruling was agreed on in 1916.

The badge is suspended by a ring from a brooch bar in the form of a scroll bearing the name of the St. John County or Country which issued the award. Approximately 11,000 were awarded.

Obverse: In the upper half of the Medallion is the Badge of the Order in white on black and below this in a circle is the Red Cross Badge on a white background. On a border around these in brass letters on white enamel is ST. JOHN AMBULANCE · WAR · SERVICE.

Reverse: The name and number of the recipient. Some examples only have the recipients number.

Suspension: The medallion hangs from a cord and is designed to be worn around the neck. The cord is colored red, white and blue with the colors entwined.

Naming: On the reverse, but not always named.

Shape/Size: Oval shape with a top bar denoting the Country or District of the Recipient. 30mm x 26mm.

Metal: Brass (with enamel)

Ribbon: No ribbon but suspended by a red, white and blue cord.

Order of St. John/Red Cross -
Central Work Rooms Badge
The Central Work Rooms department was set up in 1915 under the Presidency of the Countess of Gosford. Its main objectives were to register, regulate, train and coordinate the activities of the various working parties already in existence. These working parties were producing bandages, garments, dressings etc. for hospital supplies. By kind permission of the Royal Academy some of the galleries at Burlington House were placed at the disposal of the Central Work Rooms Department, and these Rooms were opened on 22 October 1915.

The badge was instituted in 1915 and appears to have been discontinued in 1919. From the text of the award it is uncertain whether the award was a Red Cross Award or a joint BRCS and St. John award. Given that the award denotes the badge of both organizations the likelihood is that it was a joint service award.

The badge was awarded to members of the Central Work Rooms, Headquarters only, who completed 100 half days (300 hours) within four months. Members of work parties not working at the Central Work Rooms at Burlington House,
London W1, on completion of 100 half days (300 hours) within four months qualified for the Central Work Rooms Certificate.

Obverse: The Joint Badge of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John on separate shields, enameled. The Red Cross shield is Red & White while the St. John shield is black and white. The two conjoined shields are attached to an ornate ring at the top which forms part of the suspension.

Reverse: Plain except for the makers’ mark of J. R. GAUNT LONDON.

Suspension: Ring

Naming: Unnamed

Shape/Size: Two lozenge shaped pendants 1" by 11/16” (26mm by 25mm)

Metal: Gilt on Bronze

Ribbon: White silk ribbon ¾” (19mm) wide bearing 3 equally spaced red stripes each approximately 1mm wide.

Top Bar: A red enameled bar with the words CENTRAL WORK ROOMS in gilt capital lettering on two lines with a gilt border.

Order of St. John/Red Cross - Central Hospital Supply Service

This badge was worn by members of the Central Hospital Supply Unit of the Red Cross and St. John and was one of many joint Red Cross/St. John services during WWII. This service coordinated the efforts of the individuals and work parties who produced bandages and other hospital soft goods for the service. It carried out the task previously undertaken by the Central Work Rooms of WWI. The badge has a horizontal pin on the reverse and at the top of the reverse has a makers mark of J. R. GAUNT LONDON.

The Executive Committee of the BRCS and SJAB in March 1939 considered the advisability of a scheme for the organization of hospital supply depots in time of war. It was felt that if war was to come then as in 1914 there would be a rush of volunteers ready to help. Numerous work parties were formed and though they were without definite plans it was felt that the organization’s existence was justified. Once material was received, it was made up into items that would be in most demand. Volunteers came from many walks of life, and apart from Red Cross and St. John members, included volunteers from the Women’s Voluntary Service, political parties, the British Legion, and many not connected with any organization.

In January 1940, in only 5 months the CHSS had produced over 295,130 garments, surgical dressings and other articles from material provided by the War organization. During WWII, between 1940 and 1941 nine allocations of 1,159,339 yards of material were made and nearly 50,000 pounds of wool.
Order of St. John/Red Cross - Agriculture Fund
On 1 November 1939 a committee was appointed to arrange an appeal to the agricultural community on behalf of the Lord Mayors appeal for the Duke of Gloucester's Red Cross and St. John fund. The committee completed its preliminary work by May 1940. Commencing that month a general appeal was made public to rural landowners, farmers and land workers and who were associated with the land for their cooperation.

Collections of “Rural Pennies” presented a number of problems, the most difficult being the large ground to be covered and the fact that groups were scattered over a wide area, while the size of the organization was quite small. By the spring of 1944 the organization had grown considerably in size with 59 County organizers, who were assisted by 633 Area secretaries and 97,094 other helpers.

With contributions from Scotland and Northern Ireland the fund received the sum of 8,313,175 Pounds. Replicas of Florence Nightingale lamps were presented to County Committees and other bodies whose work for the appeal was outstanding.

A permanent memorial to the services of all who took part in the appeal is to be seen in Windsor Great Park. When the Agriculture Fund had reached 5,000,000 pounds, five red oaks were planted, one each by the King, the Queen, Princess Elizabeth, Princess Margaret and the Duke of Norfolk. After the fund had closed the King commanded that four more red oaks be planted, the whole forming a cross.

On the site is a plaque bearing the following inscription:

Through God’s great grace, through strength of English Oak
We have preserved our faith, our throne, our land,
Now with our freedom saved from the tyrants yoke
We plant these trees. Remember why they stand.

War Organization of the British Red Cross and Order of St. John - WWII Certificate for War Service
The Certificate for WWII Service (below) is 7.6” wide and 10” high, on thick white paper bearing a watermark that appears to be Goat. The Badge of the Red Cross and St. John War organization at the top of the certificate is of blue, red and gold. The two signatures at the bottom are those of George R.I. Sovereign Head of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem and Elizabeth R, President of the British Red Cross Society.