

FIRST RHODESIAN MEDALS: 1890, 1893, 1896, 1897



(i)

Pictured (i) is the obverse of the British South Africa Company Medal. In the four 'campaign' medals of the 1890s, the following are common to all:

- the obverse with Queen Victoria's head;
- the suspender with roses, shamrocks and thistles;
- the ribbon: 1.40 inches (3.55cm) wide with four yellowgold and three dark blue stripes.



(ii)

Pictured (ii) are the clasps mentioned in this paper. The 'Matabeleland 1893' clasp is extremely rare and is not shown.

1. Mashonaland 1890 Medal



Mashonaland 1890 Medal, obverse (L) and reverse

1st June 1890 to 12th September 1890.

Sanctioned as per Colony of Southern Rhodesia Government.

Instrument of promulgation: Gazette Notice No. 267 of 30th April 1926. (see below)

DESCRIPTION

Obverse: The crowned and veiled head of Queen Victoria with legend 'Victoria Regina'.

Reverse: A charging lion with an assegai sticking in its chest, in the background a mimosa bush; in the foreground, a native shield and assegais. Above there is no wording but below appears 'British South Africa Company'.

Size: 1.45 inches (3.68cm) diameter.

Metal: Silver.

Suspender: Silver, swivel type, flat and composed of representations of roses, shamrocks and thistles.

Clasps: "Mashonaland 1890". "Matabeleland 1893". "Rhodesia 1896". "Mashonaland 1897".

Ribbon: 1.40 inches (3.55cm) wide with four yellowgold and three dark blue stripes.

Designer: R. Caton Woodville.

Manufacturer: Heaton and Company, Birmingham, England.

Naming: Engraved in London and Southern Rhodesia between 1928 and 1946. Several different styles, perhaps five.

Colony of Southern Rhodesia

Government Gazette No. 267, 30th April 1926

It is hereby notified that His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to approve of a medal with clasp inscribed "Mashonaland 1890" being awarded to the Colonial Forces who were engaged in the expedition which marched into and occupied Mashonaland in September 1890, on the following conditions: -

- (1) The Medal, which will be designated the "Mashonaland 1890 Medal" will be in silver, and similar to that sanctioned by Her Late Majesty Queen Victoria, to be granted by the British South Africa Company for military operations in Matabeleland, 1893, but with the superscription "Matabeleland 1893" omitted from the reverse.
- (2) The riband will be identical with that of the Matabeleland War Medal, 1893.
- (3) Members of the Pioneer Corps and escort of British South Africa Company's Police who have already been awarded the medal granted for operations in Matabeleland 1893, or Rhodesia 1896; will surrender that medal and receive in lieu thereof the "Mashonaland 1890 Medal" with clasp, "Mashonaland 1890", and "Matabeleland 1893", or "Rhodesia 1896" respectively. Those members who were not entitled to the medal granted for operations in Matabeleland 1893, or Rhodesia 1896, will receive the "Mashonaland 1890 Medal", with clasp "Mashonaland 1890".
- (4) Provided claims are approved by the competent authorities, the medal with clasp will be granted to all officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and others who actually served on the establishment of the Pioneer Corps or British South Africa Company's Police and who entered Mashonaland between the 1st June and 12th September 1890.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ISSUE

- (1) The cost of the decorations will be borne by the British South Africa Company, and the administration thereof carried out by the Government of Southern Rhodesia.
- (2) Applications for decorations must be submitted on the prescribed forms, which should be addressed to: -
 - a) The Secretary to the High Commissioner for Southern Rhodesia, Crown House, Aldwych, London, W.C.2. by those resident in the British Isles and other countries (exclusive of those in (b);
 - b) The Chief of Staff, Southern Rhodesia Forces, P.O. Box 368, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, by those resident in Rhodesia and South Africa; from whom forms may be obtained.

[D.R. Forsyth's note: It is strange that no mention of the 1897 Medal is made in this Notice.]

2. Matabeleland 1893 Medal



Matabeleland 1893 Medal, obverse (L) and reverse

16th October 1893 to 24th December 1893.

Instrument of promulgation: Army Order No. 202 of December 1896. (see below)

DESCRIPTION

Obverse: The crowned and veiled head of Queen Victoria with legend 'Victoria Regina'.

Reverse: A charging lion with an assegai sticking in its chest, in the background a mimosa bush; in the foreground, a native shield and assegais. Above there is the wording 'Matabeleland 1893' and below appears 'British South Africa Company'.

Size: 1.45 inches (3.68cm) diameter.

Metal: Silver.

Suspender: Silver, swivel type, flat and composed of representations of roses, shamrocks and thistles.

Clasps: "Rhodesia 1896". "Mashonaland 1897".

Ribbon: 1.40 inches (3.55cm) wide with four yellow-gold and three dark blue stripes.

Designer: R. Caton Woodville.

Manufacturer: 'Apparently' Heaton and Company, Birmingham, England.

Naming: Some hand engraved, others indented for Imperials, but the Rhodesian and Colonial Forces had several different styles of engraved naming, the more common being small block capitals, with a variety of abbreviations for regiments or units.

Army Order 202 of 1 December 1896

A.O. 202. British South Africa Company's Medal for operations in Matabeleland 1893.

1. The Queen has been graciously pleased to approve of a medal being granted by the British South Africa Company to all officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the Regular Forces, Bechuanaland Police and British South Africa Company's forces who were employed in connection with the operations in Matabeleland within the country west of Iron Mine Hill, north of Palla Camp and east of the boundary of the German possessions in South West Africa, between 16th October and 24th December. The grant of the Medal to the officers and men of the Regular Forces will be limited to those who had official sanction to be present.
2. Her Majesty has further been pleased to permit the Medal to be worn by such officers, non-commissioned officers and men on the left breast when in uniform.
3. (Preparation of rolls)

SELECTED DOCUMENTS

13 May 1895 Letter from the War Office to the Colonial Office:

With reference to your letter of the 1st ultimo (2884) relative to the issue by the British South Africa Company of a Commemorative Medal to the forces which took part in the late operations in Matabeleland, I am directed by the Secretary of State for War to acquaint you, for the information of the Marquess of Ripon, that the Queen has approved of the Medal being granted to the British South Africa Company's forces, the officers and men of the Bechuanaland Police who assisted in the operations being referred to, and to such officers of the Regular Forces as had official permission to be present.

I am to request that, with reference to War Office letter dated 14th February 1895 (68/SA/1929) a design of the Medal may be sent to this Department when ready.

Ralph Thompson

29 July 1896 Letter from the Colonial Office to the High Commissioner for South Africa:

14883. With reference to your despatch No. 83 of 19th February, I have the honour to inform you that the Queen has approved of the design of the Matabele War medal submitted to the War Office by the British South Africa Company. The Company enquired whether clasp should not also be issued, but the War Office replied that no clasps were approved for attachment to the Medal and that consequently none should be issued.

E. Fairfield

3. Rhodesia 1896 Medal



Rhodesia 1896 Medal, obverse (L) and reverse

24th March 1896 to 31st December 1896.

Instrument of promulgation: Army Order No. 96 of July 1897. (see below)

DESCRIPTION

Obverse: The crowned and veiled head of Queen Victoria with legend 'Victoria Regina'.

Reverse: A charging lion with an assegai sticking in its chest, in the background a mimosa bush; in the foreground, a native shield and assegais. Above there is the wording 'Rhodesia 1896' and below appears 'British South Africa Company'.

Size: 1.45 inches (3.68cm) diameter.

Metal: Silver.

Suspender: Silver, swivel type, flat and composed of representations of roses, shamrocks and thistles.

Clasps: "Mashonaland 1897".

Ribbon: 1.40 inches (3.55cm) wide with four yellowgold and three dark blue stripes.

Designer: R. Caton Woodville.

Manufacturer: Name unknown, a private mint in Birmingham, England.

Naming: In London, Salisbury, Bulawayo and Gwelo apparently under contract. The Imperials Medals were mostly impressed but some were engraved. The Colonial and Locally

raised forces had a variety of types of naming, viz large thin capitals, some straight, some sloping lettering and in some cases the engraver added his personal mark such as an 'X' at the start and at the end of the naming. Re-issues and late issues apparently named by electric stylus and not of the same standard as the original issues. Many abbreviations of Unit or Regimental titles are found.

Army Order No. 96 of 1 July 1897

A.O. 96 Medals – British South Africa Company's Medal for operations in Rhodesia, 1896.

1. The Queen has been graciously pleased to approve of a Medal being granted by the British South Africa Company to all officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the Regular and other Forces, who were employed in connection with the operations in the provinces of Matabeleland and Mashonaland, known as Southern Rhodesia, between the 24th of March and the 31st of December 1896, both dates inclusive.
2. The Medal will be of the same design as that for operations in Matabeleland in 1893, but will bear the inscription 'Rhodesia 1896'. Those already in possession of the Medal for Matabeleland 1893, who were employed as stated in paragraph 1, will receive a clasp only, inscribed 'Rhodesia 1896'.
3. The grant of the Medal or clasp to officers of the Regular Forces will be limited to those who had official sanction to be present.
4. Her Majesty has been further pleased to permit the Medal to be worn by such officers, non-commissioned officers and men on the left breast when in uniform.
5. (Preparation of rolls)

SELECTED DOCUMENTS

24 April 1897 Letter from the War Office to the Colonial Office:

I am directed by the Secretary of State for War to acquaint you, for the information of Mr Chamberlain, that the Queen has signified her approval of the proposal of the British South Africa Company to issue a Medal to the officers and men engaged in the recent operations in Rhodesia.

Lord Lansdowne [Secretary of State for War] proposes to publish, at an early date, an Army order on the subject and, with a view to embodying therein the conditions qualifying for the grant, it is necessary that the precise area in which the operations were carried on should be defined – together with the dates within which all active operations took place.

The claim of any individual officer or man will depend on whether he was in the sphere of operations between the dates so specified.

In the meantime, it is suggested that the British South Africa Company should take steps to have the die for the new Medal as well as for the clasp prepared in order that the issue of the decorations may be delayed as little as possible.

R.H. Knox

3 January 1899 Letter from Sir R. Martin to Mr H.W. Just

I cannot say that I expected the Cape Boys to get the 1896 Medal, as I thought Carrington had decided not to recommend them and, for several reasons, I agreed with him. Robertson's men were called 'Cape Boys' but there were also Colenbrander's Boys, a mixed lot of Cape

Boys and other Natives. Then there were also 'boys' with Laing's Column, who got terribly cut up in the Matoppo [sic], and 'boys' with all sorts of other Columns. They must all have Medals. 'Entre nous' I think it would have been difficult to have found all the 'Boys' that Colenbrander drew pay for. Robertson's Boys were so insubordinate and behaved so badly before they were discharged that it was in my opinion a question if any claim they had to the Medal ought not to be forfeited. So I think under the circumstances it was better not to give any Medals to Cape Boys.

E.R. Martin

7 February 1899 Letter from Sir F. Carrington to War Office

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter 68/SA/2144 of 1st instant, enclosing copy of letter from the Colonial Office with Medal Rolls for operations in Matabeleland and Mashonaland in 1896 and, in reply to the questions contained in the enclosed letter, I beg to say that I am of the opinion:

- 1. That the Detachments of Cape Boys known as 'Robertson's' and 'Colenbrander's' should receive the Medal issued by the British South Africa Company.*
- 2. That the white men who served as officers in those Detachment are also deserving of the Medal.*
- 3. That the Natives whose names appear on pp 78-79 of the enclosed Medal Roll, as belonging to the Belingwe Column Corps [Laing], should be given that Medal.*

The work done by these Corps during the campaign quoted was to my satisfaction.

The Medal Roll is returned herewith.

Fred. Carrington Major-General

4. Mashonaland 1897 Medal



Mashonaland 1897 Medal, obverse (L) and reverse

24th March 1896 to 31st October 1897.

Instrument of promulgation: Army Order 95 of 1 July 1898 (see below)

(Also, Government Notice No. 168 of 23 August 1898)

DESCRIPTION

Obverse: The crowned and veiled head of Queen Victoria with legend 'Victoria Regina'.

Reverse: A charging lion with an assegai sticking in its chest, in the background a mimosa bush; in the foreground, a native shield and assegais. Above there is the wording 'Mashonaland 1897' and below appears 'British South Africa Company'.

Size: 1.45 inches (3.68cm) diameter.

Metal: Silver.

Suspender: Silver, swivel type, flat and composed of representations of roses, shamrocks and thistles.

Clasps: Nil.

Ribbon: 1.40 inches (3.55cm) wide with four yellowgold and three dark blue stripes.

Designer: R. Caton Woodville.

Manufacturer: Name unknown, a private mint in Birmingham, England.

Naming: In London, Salisbury, Bulawayo and Gwelo. Engraved in at least eight known styles. Most common medium Roman Capitals. Re-issues and late issues apparently by an electric stylus. Many abbreviations of Units or Regimental titles found.

Army Order 95 of 1 July 1898

A.O. 95 British South Africa Company's Medal for operations in Mashonaland 1897.

1. With reference to Army Order 96 of 1897, the Queen has been graciously pleased to approve of the grant of the Medal for operations in Rhodesia, between the 24th March and the 31st December 1896 being extended to those employed in the subsequent operations in Mashonaland up to the 31st October 1897 inclusive.
2. Those officers, non-commissioned officers and men who are already in possession of, or entitle to, the British South Africa Company's Medal bearing the inscription 'Matabeleland 1893' or 'Rhodesia 1896' will receive a clasp only, inscribed 'Mashonaland 1897'.
3. The grant of the Medal, or the clasp, to officers of the Regular Forces will, as heretofore, be limited to those who had official permission to be present.
4. Rolls in duplicate of those entitled to the Medal or the clasp should be forwarded to the Under Secretary of State, for transmission to the War Office, and should be made out in the form prescribed.

SELECTED DOCUMENTS

31 May 1898 Submission to Queen Victoria by the Secretary of State for War:

It is most humbly submitted for Your Majesty's gracious approval.

That the grant of the British South Africa Company's medal for the operations in the provinces of Matabeleland and Mashonaland between the 24th March and 31st December 1896 be extended to those employed in the subsequent operations in Mashonaland up to 31st October 1897, inclusive; that those who are already in possession of the medal for 1893 or 1896 receive a clasp inscribed 'Mashonaland 1897', and that, for those who served in the operations in 1897 only, the inscription on the reverse of the medal be altered to 'Mashonaland 1897'.

By Your Majesty's most humble and most devoted Servant,

Lansdowne

App^d Victoria R.I.

Gerry van Tonder

01 August 2017

Source: *British South Africa Company Medal Roll 1890, 1893, 1897, 1897* by D.R Forsyth (Johannesburg, 1980)