

Grenadier Guard Officers

V.C - Medal Awards:

2nd World War – Field Marshall



The Victoria Cross – V.C

The first British medal to be created for bravery, the “Victoria Cross” was instituted in January 1856 by Queen Victoria, with the first recipients being honoured for their gallantry during the Crimean War. The bronze cross, which bears the inscription "For Valour", is cast from the metal of Russian guns captured at Sevastopol during the Crimean campaign. It is awarded: *"for most conspicuous bravery, or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice, or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy."*

Ribbon: Crimson with miniature of the cross, when ribbons are worn alone (Since 1916).



(Naval awards had “Blue” ribbon until 1918).

Field Marshall: GORT, John Standish Surtees V.C., G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O. and 2 bars, **M.V.O., M.C.**, Mentioned 9 times in Despatches, Grenadier Guards and Commands and Staff General Staff. Died 31st March 1946, Aged 59. 6th Viscount Gort. Son of John Gage Prendergast Vereker, 5th Viscount Gort, and of the Viscountess Gort (nee Surtees), of St. Marylebone, London, and Cowes, Isle of Wight. C.I.G.S. 1937-1939; Commander in Chief B.E.F. in France and Flanders, 1939-1940; Inspector-General to the Forces for Training and Inspector-General, Home Guard, 1940-1941; Governor and Commander in Chief Gibraltar, 1941-1942; Governor and Commander in Chief. Malta, 1942-1944; A.D.C. to H.M. King George VI, 1940-1946

The following details regarding the award of the Victoria Cross to Captain & Battalion Major (Acting Lieutenant-Colonel) Viscount Gort, **D.S.C., M.V.O., M.C.**, "for most conspicuous bravery, skilful leading and devotion to duty" are given in the London Gazette of 27th November. 1918: On 17th September 1918, this officer was in charge of 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards during the attack across the Canal du Nord, near Flesquieres. Although wounded he went across open ground under terrific fire to obtain the assistance of a tank, which he led and directed to the best possible advantage. He was again wounded very severely, but after a short rest despite considerable loss of blood, he got up and personally directed a further attack. All ranks were so inspired by his magnificent example of devotion to duty and utter disregard of personal safety that the attack was completely successful. Viscount Gort then organised the defence of the captured position until he collapsed.

The following additional information was taken from English Heritage, which honour's Viscount Gort with a “Blue Plaque” on his residence in Belgrave Square, London SW1.

Gort's outstanding military career spanned both world wars. Besides winning the Victoria Cross and holding the top position in the British Army, he masterminded the heroic defence of Malta during the Second Siege in 1942 and proved to be an able diplomat in Gibraltar and Palestine. His greatest achievement, however, remains his conduct of the withdrawal of the BEF to Dunkirk in 1940, which paved the way for the legendary evacuation by the Royal Navy of 338,000 British and French troops.

John Standish Surtees Prendergast Vereker, 6th Viscount Gort, succeeded his father to the family's Irish title in 1902 and was commissioned in to the Grenadier Guards in 1905. By 1914 he had reached the rank of Captain. Gort fought on the Western Front, earning the Military Cross; he was mentioned in dispatches eight times and also won the Distinguished Service Order and two bars.

In 1937 Gort was made Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), and in 1939, at the outbreak of war, he was given command of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in France, arriving on 19 September 1939. Gort's hands were tied by the French having overall responsibility for the campaign. The rapid German advancement caught the BEF over-extended behind a failing Belgian Army. Gort took the solitary and critical decision to fall back on the Channel ports rather than commit his forces, as he had been ordered, to a renewed counter-attack with the French, who were themselves in some disarray. This single act made it possible for the Navy's ships, and small boats crewed by civilians, to save the major part of the BEF for its return to Normandy in 1944 to help secure the Allied victory in Western Europe.

On his return to England Gort spent a short time as Inspector General of Training before being posted as Governor of Gibraltar (1941–2). Here he extended the airfield, which was to prove invaluable in the North African campaign. Appointed Governor and Commander-in Chief in Malta in 1942, his successful leadership of the besieged island's defence reinforced his reputation as a Commander, and won him promotion to Field Marshal. In 1942, the Maltese were collectively awarded the George Cross.

In 1944 Lord Gort attended the presentation, in Italy, of a V.C. awarded to his son-in-law Major WP Sidney, later Viscount De L'Isle V.C., K.G. The VC ribbon presented to Major Sidney was taken from Gort's own tunic.

Gort's last post was as High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief of Palestine, which he held from 1944–5. He died in Guy's Hospital, London, on 31 March 1946, at the young age of 60 having been created a Viscount of the United Kingdom.