



THE NEW YEAR'S HONOURS LIST

KBE? OBE? CBE? What do these honours mean and how do you receive one? Here is an explanation of a very British tradition.

The Queen's Honours' List is a tradition started by Queen Victoria in 1860. Today the Honours List is published twice a year: at New Year and in mid June, on the date of the Queen's official birthday.

The Honours can be given for a variety of reasons but are there to acknowledge anyone who has made a difference to the UK in their field. This could include people in voluntary and local services, the arts and media, sport, education, as well as politics, business, the armed forces and not forgetting awards for bravery for both military and civilian service. For example, famous people awarded an Honour in June 2016 included: Billy Connolly, Julie Walters, Ed Sheeran, JK Rowling and the Ireland Rugby Union Captain, Rory Best.

Anybody can nominate someone for an Honour (www.gov.uk/honours/nominate-someone-in-the-UK). The central committee, run by the Cabinet Office Honours and Appointments Secretariat, approves or rejects, and decides the level of Honour, all of which can take a significant amount of time.

Over 1000 names appear on each list, and the lists can also include citizens from 15 Commonwealth countries in-

cluding: Australia, Canada and Jamaica. Honorary awards for foreign nationals are recommended by the Foreign Secretary. Previous recipients have included: Bill Gates, Bob Geldof and Bono.

So, what are the different levels of Honour? Many refer to the British Empire, although of course this does not exist anymore. Here are the main ones.

Knight/Dame (KBE – Knight of the British Empire for men or DBE – Dame of the British Empire for women) – Awarded for making a major and inspirational contribution, usually at national level. The holder typically will use the title of 'Sir' if male in front of his first name and 'Dame' if female, for example, Dame Sarah Brown.

Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) – Awarded for having a prominent but lesser role at national level, or a leading role at regional level. The holder uses the letters CBE after his or her name, for example, Mr John Smith CBE.

Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) Awarded for having a major local role. The holder uses the letters OBE after his or her name, for example Miss Jane White OBE.

Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) Awarded for an outstanding achievement or service to the commu-



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nity, with a long-term significant impact. It allows the holder to put the letters MBE after his or her name, for example Mr Harry Jones MBE.

Once an offer of an award has been made and accepted, recipients are invited to an Investiture ceremony usually at Buckingham Palace, where they are presented with their medal either by the Queen or another senior member of the royal family. The word ‘investiture’ comes from the Latin word for dressing, or robing, in reference to the formal dress, which the recipient wears.

During the ceremony, the member of the royal family places the medal (called insignia) on the honourees and congratulates them on their honour. The recipient then kneel on a special velvet investiture stool and the Queen lays a sword blade on the knight's right shoulder and then his or her left shoulder in a ceremony known as Dubbing. Each member of the royal family has their own ceremonial sword, except for the Duke of Cambridge who usually uses the Queen's sword. I am reliably informed that the sword is deliberately kept blunt to avoid any accidents!



Victoria Rennoldson, Founder of Perfect Cuppa English, regularly gives talks and writes about British life and culture. Perfect Cuppa English is an English language consultancy service for individuals, which helps expats with bespoke English language and British Culture courses. Victoria@perfectcuppaenglish.co.uk; www.perfectcuppaenglish.co.uk



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