

NAMING OF MEDALS
'PIP, SQUEAK and WILFRED'
'MUTT AND JEFF'

PIP, SQUEAK and WILFRED' are the nicknames given to the trio of campaign medals issued to members of British and Empire forces who took part in the Great War, viz: 1914/15 Star, British War and Victory Medals. The medals themselves are not gallantry medals and as such have only a small monetary value because of the large number issued (two million medals were issued in the case of 1914/15 Star and a further five million each for British War Medal and the Victory Medal). Many people will have a set of these medals in their families' possession and may wonder why they are known as 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred'.

Pip, Squeak and Wilfred were characters in a comic strip which first appeared in the *Daily Mirror* on 12th May 1919. The author of the script was Bertram J. Lamb and the artist was Austin B. Payne. The naming of the characters in the strip is due to Payne's wartime batman who for unknown reasons was known as 'Pip-Squeak'.

Pip was a dog, Squeak a penguin and Wilfred who did not appear until later in the series was a rabbit. Pip and Squeak were portrayed as being Wilfred's parents and there was a supporting cast of a Russian bomb maker and his dog 'Popski'. Another jaded and elderly penguin known as 'Auntie' made an appearance.

The comic strip was extremely popular and became a craze in the 1920's. The issue of the medals coincided with the start of this craze and they soon became known as Pip, Squeak and Wilfred. Only soldiers who served prior to 1st January 1916 received all three campaign medals. So a large number of veterans only received the British War and Victory Medals – these two on their own were christened 'MUTT AND JEFF'. I knew this phrase was cockney rhyming slang for 'Deaf' and a term often given to a pairing of a short and a tall man, though it could mean two men of widely dissimilar characteristics. My research, however, reveals that Mutt and Jeff, like Pip, Squeak and Wilfred were also comic-strip characters; probably a precursor to film characters Laurel and Hardy, they were two working-class everymen -- drinking, gambling, and getting in hot water with their wives.

In 1907, a *San Francisco Chronicle* cartoonist named Bud Fisher (Harry Conway Fisher) began drawing a daily comic strip called 'Mr. Mutt'. A short time later, he added the diminutive Mr. Jeff, and 'Mutt and Jeff' was born. Mutt was a tall, lanky man with a penchant for the horses, while Jeff looked like the Monopoly man after a rough weekend. Mutt and Jeff were affable losers -- the guys in the cheap seats at horse races on a Wednesday afternoon. The boys started out as an amusing side strip in the *Chronicle* sports pages, but by 1915 Mutt and Jeff were a national phenomenon in the USA and beyond. Fisher launched himself full-throttle into a life of fame and fortune (he once owned 50 thoroughbreds), but he quit drawing the strip. He 'supervised' a woefully underappreciated team of illustrators and writers until his death in 1954. The most prominent of the illustrators was Al Smith, who worked on the strip from 1932 to 1980. The strip ended in 1982. Many people consider 'Mutt and Jeff' to be the first daily newspaper comic strip. There you go!