



A unique German phenomenon that blossomed during World War II, War Badges ("Kriegsabzeichen"), allowed an observer to determine the level of experience of a particular soldier at first glance. Though they were in existence before 1918, the number of German War Badges dramatically increased during the war and by 1945 there were over 40 different patterns. These were often subdivided into classes, distinguished by the metal type (Gold, Silver, and Bronze), and/or by having a boxed number on the obverse of the Badge.

All three branches of the Wehrmacht awarded War Badges. They were generally composed of a wreath of Oak or Laurel leaves surrounding a symbol that represented the branch and service, with a German Eagle clutching a swastika surmounting the award. They were constructed in a variety of methods, which are thoroughly discussed in the Badge Construction Techniques page.

Qualification badges were different than War Badges in that the former only required the mastering of a skill, usually not requiring combat experience. Though again the three branches of the armed forces issued Qualification badges, the Luftwaffe had the most notable and visually impressive repertoire.

The Heer and SS, constituting the bulk of the land armies of the Reich, shared the badges that are covered in the following pages. The land battle badges were earned only after enduring the closest, most personal and brutal form of warfare; Infantry Combat. Some badges required that infantry "see the white" in the enemies eyes. They were prestigious and worn only by the Wehrmacht legions of battle hardened veterans. Numbered Badges were very difficult to attain, they were earned only after extensive and proficient action.

These awards also covered the new weapons used during World War II. Panzer Badges were created to decorate both blitzkriegs attacking tank crews and defensive tank hunting personnel. The numbered badges were highly esteemed, and were reserved for the most skilled and lucky armor aces.



The Infantry Combat Badge, more commonly referred to as the Infantry Assault Badge, was designed by C. E. Junker of Berlin and instituted on December 20, 1939 by Generaloberst von Brauchitsch. The initial class was instituted in silver and decorated foot infantry who participated in combat action earning a degree of experience that qualified them for the badge.

A separate class, in Bronze, was instituted on June 1, 1940. The Bronzed class had criteria similar to the requirements the Silver. There was, however, one notable distinction; The status of the troops, bronzed meant motorized Panzer troops, silver meant foot infantry.





Manufacturing and Technical information

The Infantry Assault Badge consists of an oval wreath of oak leaves, made up of four leaves on each side of the arch. Every oak leaf has two acorns, one on each side of the base of the leaf. Centered at the bottom of the badge is a ribbon tied around the wreath, with five raised pellets in a vertical position at the center of this ribbon. The Badges most distinguishable feature is the K98 rifle positioned diagonally across award. The butt of this rifle, positioned on the right, is slightly below the wreath. It leans to the left, with its fixed bayonet protruding through the last of the four oak leaves. The rifle sling forms a loop, hanging from the stock to the butt. Surmounting the wreath is the national emblem; an eagle with down swept wings clutching a swastika in its talons. The badge has intricate detailing from the eagle down to the bolt on the rifle.



The Infantry Assault Badge measures 46mm across and was slightly convex with either a solid or hollow back, and could be die stamped or cast. The reverse had a vertical pin with a hinge that was attached to the back of the eagle, with a retaining "C"

clip which retained the clip. The method of attachment for the clip varied, some were welded or soldered while others had a more elaborate scheme where the pin sits in a recessed location the edges of which are crimped in order to hold the hinge in place (pictured above in the Bronzed version).

Though the majority of Infantry Assault Badges are unmarked, manufacturer marked pieces are often found. Below is a list of manufacturers that have been determined to be genuine makers of this badge,

FZS	Fritz Zimmerman und Sohne, Ludenscheid
BSW	Gebruder Schweiger, Wien
S.H.u.Co.	Sohni, Heubach & Co
WH	Walter & Henlein
JFS	Josef Feix Sohne Gablonz
A	Assmann und Sohne, Ludenscheid
C.W.	Carl Wilde, Hamburg
R.S.S.	Richard Simm & Sohne, Gablonz
R.S.	Rudolf Souval, Wein
F.O.	Freidrich Orth, Wein
WH	Hermann Wernstein, Jena-Lobstadt
F.L.L.	Friedrich Linden, Ludenscheid
C.E.	Junker, Berlin
AS	Adolf Schilze, Grunwald

H.A.	Hermann Aurich, Dresden
GWL	Gerbruder Weger, Ludenscheid

The award was also available in a lapel pin miniature version to be worn whilst in civilian clothing.

Due to the many different makers of this badge, it is not unusual to find slight differences between them. Early Infantry Assault badges that were stamped had a heavy plating of the correct finish applied to them. As the new restrictions came into effect and the lower quality metals were used, a silver or Bronze "wash" was applied to the badge, which did not take long to wear off leaving the grayish metal exposed. For a more detailed study of the subject please visit the Badges Construction Techniques page.

Presentation, Wear and Documents

Both Infantry Assault Badges were awarded in recognition of combat action. Authorized through the regiment commander, awards of the Infantry Assault Badge were made on the field and issued with an award document. This award document was of the standard type and included information on the recipient, such as date, unit and name but as with most Third Reich documents no mention of the merit that earned the badge. The award itself came in a brown paper envelope with the name of the award printed on it. As with most war badges, it was worn on the left breast pocket. There was no provision for the Badge to be worn on the gray coat



Award Criteria

The silver Infantry Assault Badge was awarded to enlisted men, officers, NCO's of rifle companies (not in Motorized Infantry Divisions) and Mountain Troop companies. As mentioned above on June 1, 1940, the Bronze Infantry Assault Badge was instituted for Motorized Infantry regiments. To view the story of a recipient, please see the [Rudolph Hillebrand Award](#) criteria was as follows:

SILVER AWARD:

1. To have taken part in three or more infantry assaults.
2. To have taken part in three or more infantry counter-attacks.
3. To have taken part in three or more armed reconnaissance operations.
4. To have engaged in hand to hand combat in an assault position.
5. To have participated on three separate days in the restitution of combat positions.

BRONZE AWARD:

1. To have taken part in three or more motorized infantry assaults.

2. To have taken part in three or more motorized infantry counter-attacks.
3. To have taken part in three or more motorized armed reconnaissance operations.
4. To have been engaged in hand to hand combat in motorized assault positions.
5. To have participated on three separate days, in the restitution of a motorized combat position.

The attacks had to take place on different days, in the event that they took place on one day only one "credit" was earned.



Infantry Assault Recipient
Oberst Heinz-Oskar Laebe of
GR.Rgt.44. Received the
Knights Cross on March 7,
1944, and Oakleaves on April
29, 1945.

The Infantry Assault Badge can be called the quintessential symbol of the German Army during the Third Reich period. Being one of the very first German military awards of World War II, the IAB is an example of the new design style of that time. The confident-looking new national emblem, the K-98 rifle extending beyond the border of the oak-leaf wreath and the material-sparing cut-through design communicate a level of modernism that is very different than the style of its Imperial Era predecessors. This article will explore both the silver and bronze classes of the IAB based on the badge manufacturer, and will attempt to show the similarities and differences between badges, thereby helping to educate the

collector about the IAB, and different manufacturing styles of the Third Reich period.

The following paragraphs represent a translation from a well-known book titled "Medals & Decorations of The Third Reich" by SS Obersturmbannführer Heinrich Doehle, Under State Secretary of the Chancellery of the Head of State and State Chancellor.

THE INFANTRY COMBAT BADGE

The Infantry Combat Badge was established on December 20, 1939 as a recognition of combat action as an infantryman. Awarded by the Army commander-in-chief upon the recommendation of the infantry company commander.

The Infantry Combat Badge in silver will be awarded to officers, NCOs and enlisted men of rifle companies not in Motorized Infantry Divisions, and to Mountain Troop companies who from January 1, 1940 completed the following:

1. Combat in three (3) assaults,
2. in the front lines,
3. armed with hand weapons during the assault,
4. on three different combat days.

The badge is awarded for counter-assaults, assaults of particular importance, patrols and patrolling activities resulting in combat, and hand-to-hand combat. Criteria also includes the soldier or individual personally and single-handedly destroying an enemy tank.

All of the above can be placed into the Classification as number 5 and the Infantry Combat Badge can be given as a special award under the qualification as in number 1 above. Through Army General Order of June 1, 1940, the awarding of the Infantry Combat Badge is to include the motorized infantry regiments. The color of the badge is bronze.

The badge will be authorized through the regiment commander. The recipient will receive an award document and the badge will be worn on the left breast.

On June 1, 1940 a bronze version of the badge was issued and this was given to all members of Motorized Infantry units under the same qualifications as above.

The first issuance of the badge took place in April of 1940, a Lieutenant and a Corporal being the first recipients of the badge.

There are literally hundreds and hundreds of variations of the IAB, both bronze and silver, both marked and unmarked. New types are being constantly discovered. This article will focus on some of the marked ones, since they are more easily referenced. Several

unmarked badges will be displayed as examples to show manufacturing techniques or other aspects of the IAB.

STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS

Several manufacturers initially produced the IAB, among them the firms of Rudolf Souval, Vienna and Steinhauer u. Luck, Ludenscheid, not to mention CE Juncker. Because of this there are variations in the size of the badge but for most collectors and historians, the following dimensions are considered 'official'—

Height	61-63mm
Width	46-49mm
Eagle on top of wreath	19mm wide, 27mm tall.

DISCUSSION OF VARIATIONS

No other badge made during the Third Reich period demonstrates the same variety of manufacturing techniques as the Infantry Assault Badge. Materials range from the early: solid-backed tombak or stamped nickel-silver; to the later: kriegsmetal and zinc. Manufacturing techniques range from solid-backed heavy badges, to lighter stamped out variations. The IAB also sports the widest variety of pin-back badge attachment mechanisms.

The average dimensions of a badge featured in this article are:

Height:	62.72 mm
Width:	47.56 mm
Rifle length:	62.33 mm
Eagle width:	20.68 mm
Weight:	25.77 g

Infantry Assault Badges with "the most"

The heaviest badge is the "L/56" -marked Funcke & Bruninghaus zinc badge that weighs 37.8 grams and feels like it's made out of stone. The tallest badge is the Franke & Co. (FCL) specimen with a height of 64.2 mm. The widest badge is the "L/56" -marked Funcke & Bruninghaus badge measuring 48.77 mm.

Infantry Assault Badges with "the least"

The lightest badge is a 7.65 gram unmarked stamped specimen that has the look and feel of a tinnie. The IAB that is shortest in height is the badge marked "S.H. u. Co. 41" that measures 60.1 mm tall. The smallest in width is the "Wernstein"- marked badge in silver that measures 45.7 mm.

Weight Variance

Although there are definite variances in the size dimensions of an IAB, the most variance exists in the weight of a badge. This variance in weight results from the following:

1. Material (type and thickness)
2. Die form
3. Attachment mechanism
4. Plating
5. Finishing work (filing edges, etc.,)

The weight of an IAB should at the most be used as a secondary indicator of authenticity. For example, badge #55 and badge #56 were made by the same manufacturer with the same dies and with an identical attachment mechanism. Yet badge #55 weighs 32.8 grams and badge #56 weighs 21.8 grams. Their size dimensions are almost identical yet the weight varies by over 10 grams! Both badges are made from zinc of a similar composition. The reason for their weight difference comes from the thickness of the material from which they were cut. Another, less significant factor in the weight difference is the plating of both badges. There are multiple weight variances that exist just within groups of badges that come from one manufacturer. The "Fritz Zimmermann" badges are a great example of this weight variance.

Finding the Manufacturer of an Unmarked Badge<

It is always a small victory when a collector matches an unmarked badge to a particular manufacturer. The criteria for this match can be:

1. Die characteristics
2. Attachment mechanism construction

The best criteria for matching unmarked badges to makers is the die characteristics. In this article, one prominent match has come to light. Unmarked Bronze IAB #11 was made by the same manufacturer that created Silver IAB #4 that is marked "L/10" the

Lieferanten number of the Deschler firm. The details that ensure a match are:

1. Details of the eagle's feet
2. Beard under the eagle's beak
3. Shape of the acorns on the wreath
4. Almost identical size dimensions
5. Filled-in material to the right of the wreath retention band at the bottom of the badge

Numbers

A special type of zinc IABs have raised numbers on their reverse. These badges are struck from a single piece of zinc (including hinge and catch) and have very distinctive die marks on the reverse (ejection circles and rectangular form lines). There is speculation that these numbers were actually die numbers. This would make a lot of sense because if a die started to wear down or break, it would be easy to identify which one was damaged. The first article featured the numbers 3 and 4. Since then, the numbers 1 and 2 have been found.

Also, there is possibility that these badges were manufactured by the Assmann firm. The ejection marks, straight lines around the hinge and catch, and the style of numbers used, very strongly resemble the reverses of wreaths encountered on late-war Assmann Paratrooper and Observer badges.

"MK"

This manufacturer is still shrouded in a bit of mystery. Their earlier badges are marked with the stylized initials "MK" in a triangle. Their later badges are marked with "M. K. #" where the numbers documented in these articles so far are: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7. What's interesting is that all of the dies for these badges are similar on the obverse, but subtly different on the reverse. This means that a master die was used to create all of these numbered dies.

Anomalies

Frank & Reif made the Infantry Assault Badge, at least in silver. The one featured in this article, has the company's name misspelled. It's spelled "Fank & Reif, Stuttgart". Since F&R would have immediately stopped production upon seeing this defect, the badge displayed here is extremely rare.

Crests (or other symbols)

These are by far the strangest marks encountered on any badges.
Up to this point, no information has surfaced about these marks.
The badges are executed with very high quality.



Infantry Assault Badge - Silver

Maker: "L / 21"

Height: 61.39 mm

Width: 47.35 mm

File length: 61.25 mm

Angle width: 20.09 mm

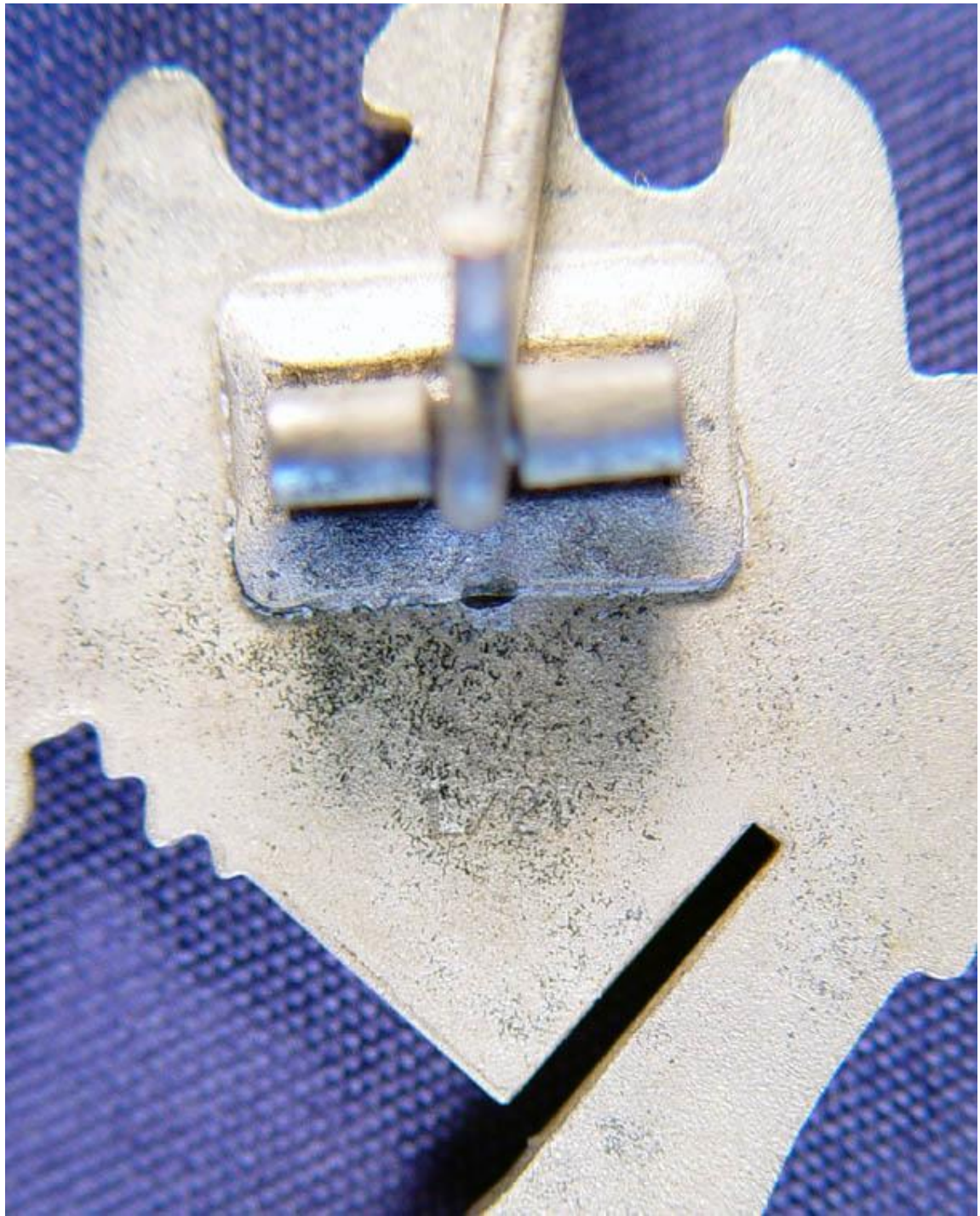
Angle width: 9.41 mm

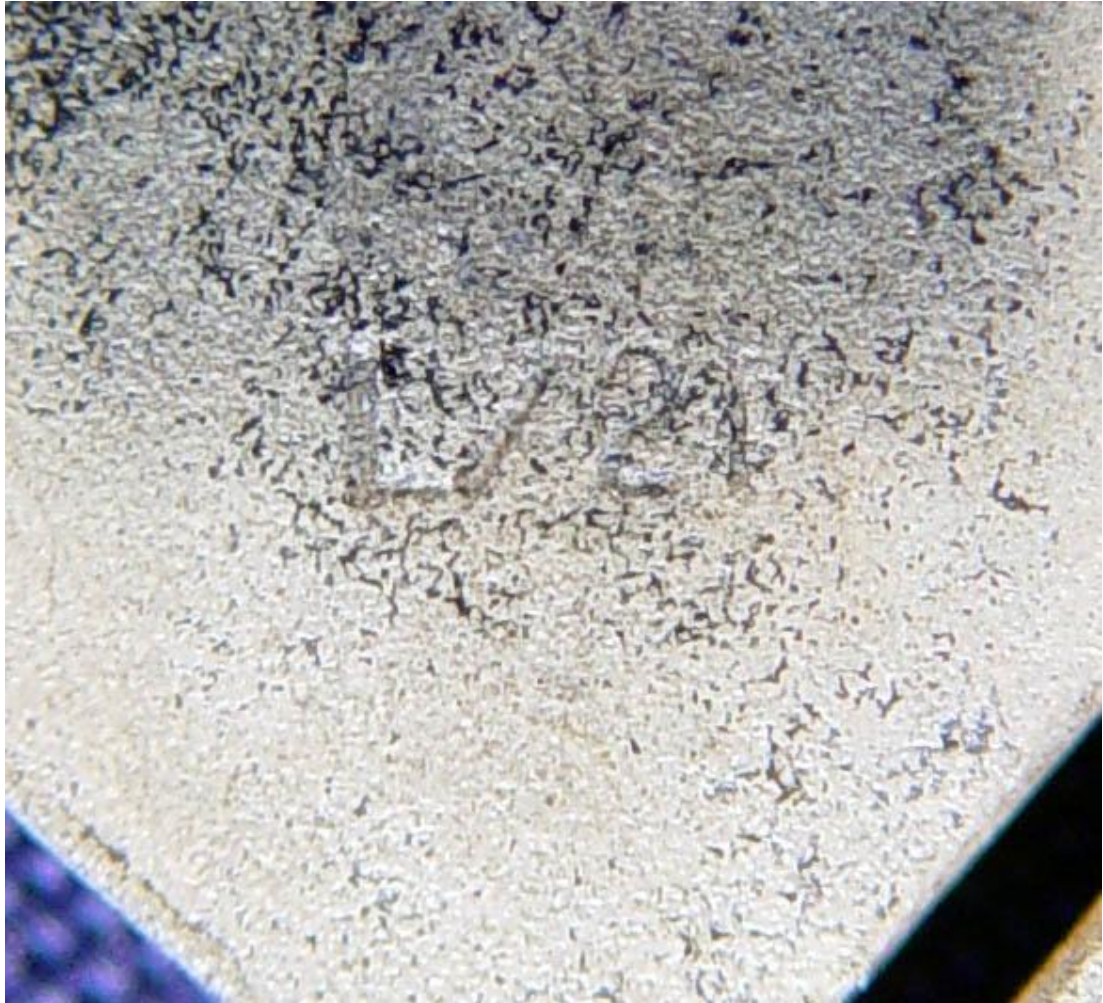
Length from hinge to catch: 45.81 mm

Weight: 29.1 g

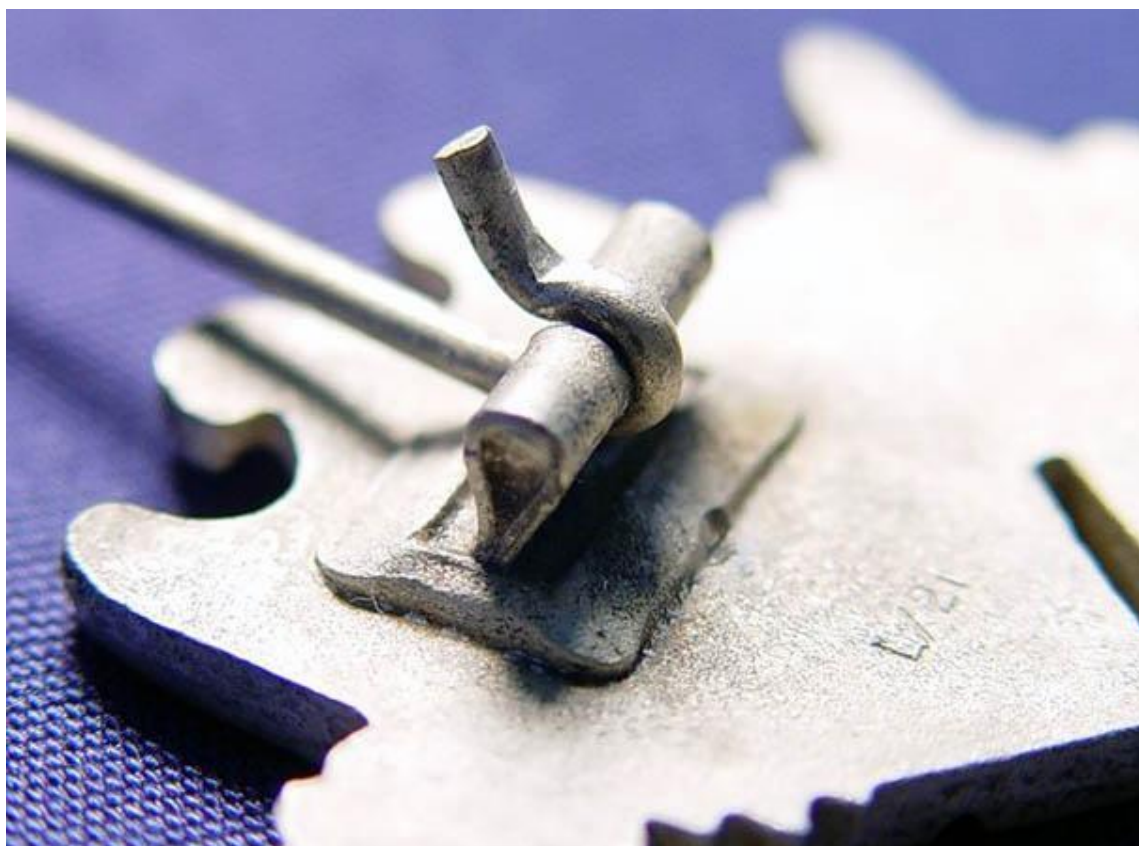












Infantry Assault Badge - Silver

Maker: Fritz Zimmermann

Height: 63 mm

Width: 49 mm

Pin length: 62.5 mm

Angle width: 20.8mm

Pin width: 8.9mm

Weight: 22.8g





Infantry Assault Badge - Bronze

Maker: R.S. & S.

Height: 62.6 mm

Width: 47.6 mm

Pin length: 62.3 mm

Pin width: 19.8 mm

Pin width: 4.5 mm

Pin thickness: 3.5 mm

Weight: 31.8 g



Infantry Assault Badge - Bronze

Maker: GWL

Height: 62.4 mm

Width: 46.7 mm

File length: 62.4 mm

Angle width: 20.0 mm

Reath thickness: 2.5 mm

Weight: 26.0 grams









General von Brauchitsch instituted the General Assault Badge on January 1st, 1940. The badge, designed by the firm of Ernst Peekhaus of Berlin, was to be awarded to those German soldiers who participated in infantry attacks but were not part of infantry units and therefore did not qualify for the Infantry Assault Badge

Manufacturing and Technical Information

The General Assault Badge consisted of an oval disk that measured 53mm by 42mm and was 6mm wide. The disk had raised edges and fine pebbling in the background, with and wreath of oak leaves made of 5 parts laid on each side. This oak leave wreath begins at two acorns located at the base of the badge. The protruding stick grenade and bayonet separate the first two wreaths, while acorns fill the last two separations. The center feature consists of a Wehrmacht Eagle clutching a swastika in its talons. The eagle surmounts a crossed bayonet and a stick grenade, which as mentioned above protruded into the oval disk.

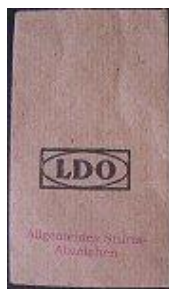
The reverse may either be solid or hollow, with a pin and catch serving as the device that held the badge to the uniform.

As with most badges the quality of detail in the General Assault Badge is mostly standard, but the quality of materials was not always the same and as a result some of the badges have lost their finish with the passing of time, yielding a gray appearance. For more information on the construction of the General Assault Badge please see the Badge Construction Technique page.

Solid back General Assault Badge (click on images to enlarge)



Hollow back General Assault Badge with envelope from the Mark Schroeder collection. Note that the reverse of the envelope reads "The Manufacturer is responsible for the quality of this decoration and is under control of the Präsidiatkanzlei. The manufacturer is obligated to exchange this item if it is found defective"



Presentation, Wear, Documents

The award was most often presented in plain paper packets, that varied in colors, with the name of the award printed on the outside, or in a simple cellophane packet.

As with most badges, the General Assault Badge was worn on the left breast pocket of the tunic as p. The badge was presented with an award document that had the details of the recipient, but no official mention of the deed that earned the award.

Award Criteria

The General Assault badge was presented to engineers (who it was originally designed for), as well as members of the artillery, anti-tank, and anti-aircraft units that served along with the infantry in the conduct of an assault. Also eligible were medical personnel who treated battlefield wounded. In addition, the badge was presented for the single-handed destruction of eight tanks or armored vehicles until the institution (in March of 1942) of The Special Badge for Single Handed Destruction of a Tank. Specific criteria was as follows,

- The recipient must not be eligible for the Infantry Assault Badge.
- To have taken part in three infantry or armored assaults on three different days.
- To have taken part in three infantry or armored indirect assaults on three different days.
- To have been wounded while fulfilling the second or third requirement.
- To have earned a decoration while fulfilling the second or third requirement



General Assault Badge 25, 50 Class



As the war went on, the high command recognized the need for a higher grade of this decoration to be presented to the increasing number of seasoned veterans, and on June 6th 1943, four new grades were introduced. The badge would now be presented to veterans in 25, 50, 75 and 100 classes. The first two are rare but attainable, meaning that they come for sale at

regular dealers from time to time, while the latter two are rare in the extreme.

The 25 and 50 badge were similar in style, design and construction. They consisted of an oval wreath of oak leaves similar to the unnumbered badge but larger, measuring 58mm by 48mm with a width of 7mm. At the base of the oval is a box, measuring 10mm by 8mm, with another box measuring 8mm by 6 mm inside of it. In the smaller box was the Arabic number "25" or "50", depending of course on the grade. The central design was blackened, while the wreath was silvered.

The central motive was again the eagle clutching a swastika on its talons, surmounting a crossed grenade and bayonet. This center design has a black oxidized finish, and was from a different striking which was held on the oval by way of four ball rivets.



General Assault Badge 75, 100 Class

These badges were slightly different than the ones described above. In this case, the oak leaves wreaths constituted the inner and outer edge of the oval that measured 56mm by 49mm, and was 7.5mm in width. The box at the base of the circle measured 10mm by 8mm, but the inner box measured 9mm by 7mm, a slight difference. Inside the box were the numbers "75" or "100", depending on the grade.

The central design was the familiar eagle clutching the swastika surmounting the bayonet and grenade. In this case the eagle is slightly larger, and the bayonet and grenade are crossed at a different angle. The central design was blackened, while the wreath was in this case gilded. The eagle and bayonet/grenade are secured onto the oval by four rivets.





Award Criteria

The numbered awards had the same criteria as the single badge, and was presented in progressive order as the veterans gained more experience. There was retrospective credit given for service in Russia accumulated as follows,

- Eight months service equaled 10 actions.
- Twelve months service equaled 15 actions.
- Fifteen months service equaled 25 actions.

Tank Assault Badge

Panzerkampfabzeichen



The Tank Combat Badge, or Panzer Badge, had first existed in the German Army during World War I, and was later issued again after the Spanish Civil War.



World War I Badge



Spanish Civil War Panzer Badge

The Wehrmacht Tank Battle badge was introduced on December 20, 1939, in order to recognize the achievements of Panzer personnel who took part in armored assaults. It was designed by Ernst Peekhaus of Berlin, and was instituted by order of Generaloberst von Brauchitsch. On June 6th, 1940, a separate class of the badge, in Bronze, was added in order to recognize the crews of armored vehicles other than tanks (half tracks, assault guns, etc).



Panzer Badge in Silver

Manufacturing and Technical Information

The panzer badge consists of an oval with a wreath composed of five single oak leaves on one side and four on the other (the tank threads covers one). At the base of the oval is a tie, and on top is the Wehrmacht eagle, which has downspread wings and is clutching a swastika in its talons. In the center of the badge is a tank that passes from left to right (viewers perspective). As mentioned above, the left track of the tank goes into the wreath of oak leaves, and the area under the tank is grooved and made to look like grass.

The reverse of the badge has three variations, the badge could either be hollow backed, flat, or semi-dished. The hollowed backed variation showed the imprint of the obverse, while the flat was just solid (pictured here). The semi-dished version has a slight indent that shows part of the outline of the tank. The badge was attached to the uniform via a hitch and hook, which were affixed to the reverse and had a couple variations. There was the conventional soldering of a small rectangular medal bar (pictured here), as well as the more rare type in which a circular ball hinge was inserted into the body of the badge.

The badge was constructed with great detail throughout, but while the early types were silver/bronze plated the later versions had only a silver wash over zinc, and therefore the finish tends to fade.



Panzer Badge in Bronze

Presentation, Wear, Documents

The badge was presented in a paper packet with the name of the award printed on the outside, but it was not uncommon to have the presenting officer pin the award right on the tunic of the recipient. The award document that was awarded with it was the common type that had the particulars of the recipient (rank, name) and the authorizing signature of an officer. As with most War Badges, the Panzer Badge was worn on the left pocket tunic.



Award Criteria

The award criteria was as follows,

- To have taken part in three armored assaults in three different days.
- To have been wounded in the course of an assault.
- To have earned a bravery decoration in the course of an assault.

As mentioned above, the Silver class was presented to tank commanders, gunners or radio operators while the bronze class was presented to the Panzer-Grenadier regiments, tank assault crew, armored recon units, and medical personnel who went into battle in armored vehicles. The award was authorized through the Panzer Division commander.

Tank Badge 25, 50, 75, 100

As the war continued it became apparent that the single Panzer Badge was no longer adequate to recognize the growing number of veterans with years of experience, and in June of 1943 four new classes of the award were introduced for 25, 50, 75 and 100 engagements. These new badges consisted of an award that was similar to the unnumbered Panzer Badge, but with a box showing the Arabic number of the class at the base of the wreath. The badge was slightly larger for the 25 and 50 type with the 75 and 100 being larger still. The wreath in the case of the 25 and 50 was silvered, while in the 75 and 100 class it was gilt. The center of the badge (the tank) was made of a separate striking and chemically darkened in the case of the 25 and 50 class, while in the 75 and 100 class the tank was silvered. The reverse has several variations, and could either have a slim or wide pin. The numbered Panzer Badges were all made with exceptional quality, and were highly respected among the troops.

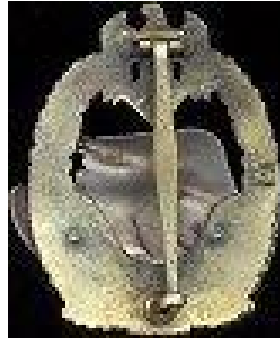


Panzer Assault Badge 25

50 Engagements



75 Engagements



100 Engagements



The tank destruction badge in silver was instituted by Hitler on March 9, 1942 to honor individuals who single handedly destroyed an enemy tank with hand held explosives. This award was made retroactive to the beginning of the invasion of the Soviet Union (June 22, 1941).

As individuals earned multiple badges, it became evident that a higher class was needed. Therefore on December 18, 1943, a gold class was instituted to signify the single-handed destruction of five tanks.

The tank destruction badge consists of a blackened 43mm X18mm Panzer Mk IV tank attached to a 33mm X 88mm silver ribbon. The tank is attached to the ribbon by three prongs bent over a small oblong metal plate, and covered with black cotton. The silver ribbon includes a 4mm black cotton stripe running horizontally 2mm from the upper and lower edges of the ribbon.

The gold award is the same with a few notable exceptions. The ribbon is made of gold cello or gold bullion wire, and the early awards include a silver wash on the tank. Later awards use the blackened tank of the silver class.



Presentation, Wear and Documents

Upon presentation, the badge was pinned to the right sleeve of the recipient in a ceremony and was later sewn on the uniform by the individual.



The silver badge was worn on the upper right arm of the tunic with subsequent awards being attached directly below the first one until four were attached at one time. On the award of a fifth badge, the four were taken off the uniform and replaced with a single gold badge. On the award of a sixth badge, a silver class was attached below the gold class. The process repeated itself until a tenth badge was awarded, then the silver badges were replaced by a second gold badge. Again, the process continued until the fifteenth award, then the twentieth, and so on.

The highest number of awards given to a single man were twenty-one, awarded to Oberstleutnant Gunter Viezenz (pictured to the left).

Award Criteria

The tank destruction badge was awarded to soldiers who destroyed an enemy tank single handedly by a hand held weapon. Anti-tank units were not eligible for this award.

Silver Award: The single handed destruction of an enemy tank by use of hand held weapons such as a hand grenade, panzerfaust, satchel charge, etc.

Gold Award: The single handed destruction of five enemy tanks using hand held weapons such as a hand grenade, panzerfaust, satchel charge, etc.



The Close Combat Bar was instituted on November 25, 1942, by Adolf Hitler, in order to recognize the courage of the German soldier in hand-to-hand combat. This award was completely independent of the Infantry Combat Badge. The badge designed by Wilhelm Ernst Peekhaus of Berlin (his name preceded by FEC can be found on the reverse of some examples), and was instituted in three classes, bronze, silver, and gold.



Manufacturing and Technical information

The badge is die cast and generally manufactured in zinc, though examples in tombac or aluminum are also found.. It is slightly convex, with the center piece consisting of the national emblem surmounting a crossed bayonet and hand grenade. This piece is cut out and backed with a flat square of blackened steel (magnetic), crimped in place on the reverse.

The pin is always broad in the center and tapering at the end. The bar varies in length from between 95 to 97.5mm, and in height from between 25 to 27mm (according to the Juncker, JFS and F&BL types).

Known makers are :

- Juncker of Berlin (particularity, the back plate is not magnetic)
- Gebr der Wegerhoff of L denscheid (GWL)
- Josef Feix & Sohn of Gablonz (JFS)

- Funcke & Brunninghaus of L denscheid (F&BL)
- Friedrich Linden of L denscheid (FLL)
- Rudolf Souval of Wien (RS)
- ArbeitGemeinschaft Metal und Kunststoff of Gablonz (AGMuK)
- Hymen & Co of L denscheid (H&CL L/53)
- No mark

Presentation, Wear and Documents

Presentation of the badge was made by the company, Battalion or Regimental Commander (or equivalent). On March 26, 1944, Adolf Hitler reserved the right to personally present the close combat bar in gold as "the highest infantry decoration". On August 30, 1944, the gold class recipients were automatically presented the German cross in gold and were permitted to spend 21 days at home.

The Close Combat Badge decoration was to be worn 1 centimeter above the ribbon bar or mounted group. When more than one grade was presented to the same individual, only the highest grade was to be worn (though the recipient kept all grades in his possession).

An award document was given to the soldier (different types exist, it depending on the unit), and there was an entry in his Soldbuch attended with a detailed list of his combat days (unit, date, location).

The close combat bar was presented in a cardboard box or in celluloid .

Below is Hpt. Erhard LISS, 5./Sturm.Rgt.195 Ritterkreuz on April 30, 1945. He wears among other decorations the Silver Close Combat Bar . (Coll.Calero)



Award Criteria

The badge was presented based on the number of combat days as follows,

- Bronze class for 15 combat days
- Silver class for 30 combat days
- Gold class for 50 combat days

Criteria for a combat day was as follows,

All combat days in which the soldier had the opportunity to be close enough to "see the white of the enemy's eyes", use close combat weapons to assault the enemy man-to-man and be victorious.

Days in which the soldier was part of a mayor attack or assault, reconnaissance attack, defense of a position, or single messenger run.

These actions could take place in the front line or in the rear (against Partisans).

The initial combat days were established taking in count the uninterrupted time of engagement on the Eastern front since June 22 of 1941, or in Africa since March 26 of 1943 :

15 months = 15 combat days

12 months = 10 combat days

8 months = 5 combat days

This decoration was also awarded posthumously, in which case both decoration and certificate were sent to the next of kin. The Division commander was also able to authorize the award to a wounded soldier who, because of permanent injury, would no longer have the opportunity to complete the minimum days, provided he completed the following,

Bronze Class - 10 days minimum

Silver Class - 20 days minimum

Gold Class - 40 days minimum

The Close Combat Bar was also awarded to members of the Luftwaffe, though it would later be replaced by the Luftwaffe Close Combat Bar (Few is known about this badge, and no picture exists of its wear).

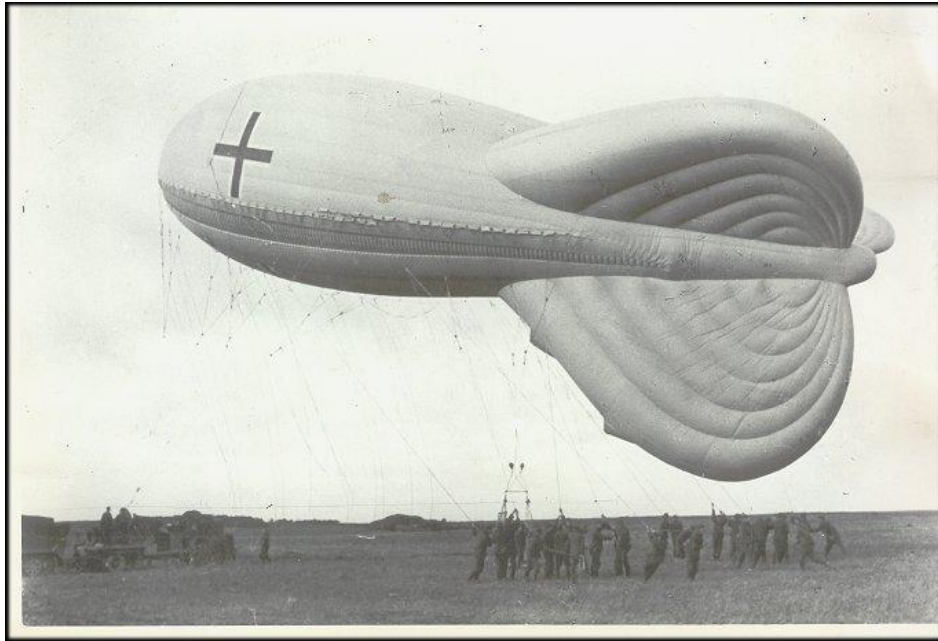
This article is not complete without a mention of the gold bar presentation. According to Manfred Dörflinger's book on this subject, about 600 gold bars were awarded. The bar was in every respect the same design as the other classes, but gilded - a special fire-gilded badge does exist. This badge was presented during an official ceremony, directly by Hitler then by Himmler and Guderian.







Heer Balloon Observer Badge was instituted on July 8, 1944 to recognize the service of officers and men who placed themselves in great danger observing from balloons. Hanging 300-500 feet above the ground in a gas filled balloon, observers made easy targets for Allied pilots. Balloon use declined significantly as the war progressed and the Luftwaffe lost air superiority.



A balloon crew in action

Manufacturing and Technical information

The badge consists of a wreath of oakleaves and acorns surmounted by the national emblem. An observation balloon floating at a 45° angle is featured in the center. The front of the balloon extends to the outermost right edge of the wreath. Original examples are die-struck.



Presentation, Wear and Documents

Present knowledge suggests this badge was awarded in very small numbers or not at all. Trial strikes did occur, but if production took place it was in extremely small numbers. These factors make the Heer Balloon Observer badge one of the rarest awards of the Third Reich. Documents were issued to individuals who qualified for the badge before the end of the war. It is highly unlikely, due to the late institution of this badge and the limited use of balloon observing, that any awards or documents were issued for the gold grade.

THE ARMY BALLOON OBSERVER'S BADGE

(Ballonbeobachterabzeichen des Heeres)

A Comprehensive Study

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Introduction

The Army Balloon Observer's Badge has proved to be one of the most interesting badges of all the military badges in the Third Reich era of Germany. It has been equally challenging to

produce factual evidences to prove if the badge was produced for the troops in finished form during WW II or if it was never produced at all. From the very first reference book published on the topic of German military awards of the Third Reich era the coverage of this badge has been sparse at the very least. All succeeding reference books to date have added little new information about this badge. This is due to little or no factual information being available and each new author relying on the same information used from the pervious authors to make his presentation. All authors relied primarily on information supplied by one pioneer researcher of the last century, namely, Dr. Phil. Kurt-Gerhard Kleitmann. His lifetime work resulted in the formation of his "Institute for the Scientific Research Study of Orders and Awards". The Institute housed a vast amount of information dealing with orders, medals and decorations of the world. His worldwide recognition came from his many books, articles and opinions he wrote during a span of over 45 years. He was an honorary member of numerous collecting associations to include the prestigious Orders and Medals Society of America. He was even bestowed the honor of the German government Service Cross of the Bundesrepublik of Germany. Sadly, despite all the accolades he received, he was not factual about the information he authored concerning the Army Balloon Observer's Badge. History will judge his errors and have the final word as to weather his errors were a mistake or a deliberate act of misrepresentation of the facts. In any event, the now accepted record should be corrected and hopefully I can show the errors of the past have caused a gross distortion of the truth concerning the possible production and awarding of this badge. Much discussion and investigation has been exerted by this author, as well as a great many other researchers and collectors, in an effort to produce conclusive evidence that will paint a true crystal clear picture showing the true facts at the conclusion of this investigate report.

SOLVING THE MYSTERY

In many cases speculative rumors, fabrications, and fairy tales, over an extended period of time, tend to be accepted as facts. That is true unless someone brings the true facts together and challenges the established accepted truth about a subject. The history of the Army Balloon Observer's Badge, and it's place in the history of Third Reich military awards, is just one example where no factual proof exists to support the belief that this late war military award was ever produced or was issued to the troops during WWII. This lack of factual information has caused this badge to be the subject of continued debate ever since the late 1960's. Various examples of the badge have been produced

over the years and all in very small numbers. One of the more prolific manufactures of post war badges was the firm of Rudolf Souval, Vienna, Austria. They produced an early reproduction that was a cast solid back version of the Balloon badge. To date, of all badges I have seen, three distinctly different variations have been listed as original badges produced during the last few months of WWII. I hope to put to rest the ongoing controversy surrounding these badges by taking all factual evidence known and let it stand as the basis for the acceptance or non acceptance of this badge in the history of WWII German military decorations and awards.

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE ARMY BALLOON OBSERVER'S BADGE

In the late 1960's, I first encountered examples of Army Balloon Observer's badge on my first trip to Europe. Up until this trip and after having collected Third Reich orders, medals and other decorations for near twenty years, I had never heard of the Army Balloon Observer's Badge much less seen one. However, I purchased a total of six sets of each class of this badge from two separate dealers on this trip. I found them in England and they were bronze die struck badges and had the "beard or hump" on the left side of the wing of the eagle. At my first meeting with K. G. Klietmann, noted German researcher and historian, I first learned about this badge and its history. He told me explicitly that the badge never reached the production stage, but the Reich's Orders Chancellery had approved an accepted design for the badge. He gave me a photograph of the design matrix and said that only one example had survived the war and it was in the hands of the original designer of the badge. I later learned that the designer was Ellmar Lang. Dr. Klietmann's statement was printed in one of his books and in magazine articles he wrote, which I will cover later. His information was enough to convince me not to add these badges to my collection as original period badges. On other trips I was again offered these badges, but declined to purchase them due what I found out about them from Dr. Klietmann. At that time, I had examples of all but a few of the known Third Reich military and political orders, medals, badges and decorations. (See Exhibit No. 1)

-EXHIBIT NUMBER 1-

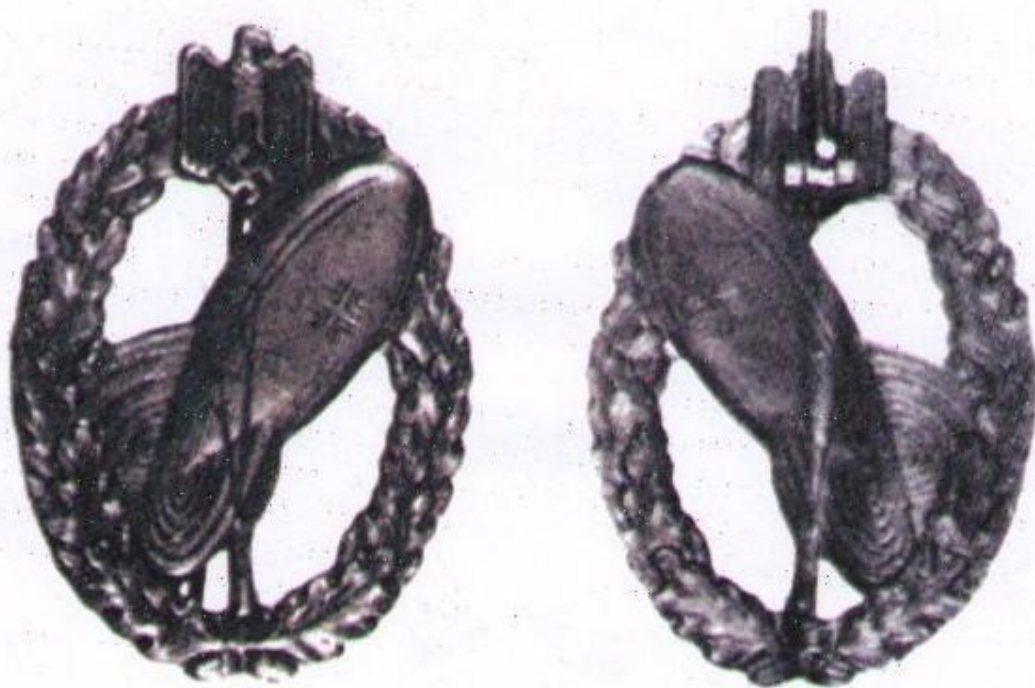


THE FIRST ENGLISH REFERENCE ON THIRD REICH ORDERS AND MEDALS

It was also in late 1968 that I added the first modern detailed reference book, printed in the English language and dealing with the subject of Third Reich orders and medals, to my reference library. It was a book entitled ORDERS, DECORATIONS, MEDALS AND BADGES OF THE THIRD REICH, (Including the Free City of Danzig). Two pioneer authors, David Littlejohn and COL. C. M. Dodkins, both from England, authored the book. The book was produced by another pioneer collector and publisher, R. James Bender, San Jose, California. Mr. Bender had produced three other books by that time, both dealing with Third Reich collectibles. They were AIR ORGANIZATIONS OF THE THIRD REICH, THE WAFFEN-SS and DAGGERS, BAYONETS & FIGHTING KNIVES OF HITLER'S GERMANY. A man who would continue writing reference books into the next century authored the latter. His name was Major John R. Angolia. I will cover his contribution to our subject later in my report.

Collectors in American, and the throughout the collecting world, welcomed the book by Dodkins and Littlejohn. Up until their book, the only guidebook on the subject available here in America was a paper backed book published in 1958, NAZI DECORATIONS AND MEDALS – 1933 -1945, by James A. Sawicki. Mr. Sawicki was one of the pioneer American collectors of the day. No mention was made about a "Army Balloon Observer's Badge" by Sawicki in his book. It was in Dodkins and Littlejohn's book that the Army Balloon Observer's Badge was first featured. Oddly, the photograph they presented was not the photograph of the badge Dr. Kleitmann has shown me earlier in the year, but was of a completely different badge that I immediately recognized as being one of the reproductions then on the market. They listed the date of institution of July 8th, 1944, and stated that it came in three classes, bronze, silver and gold. In their acknowledgments and credits they dedicated their book to none other than Dr. K. G. Kletmann. It was in this book that the false information, the photograph of a badge other than the original matrix, which fostered the mystery surrounding this badge to this day. The seed of false information planted in this book only grew with each new reference book that followed. (See Exhibit No. 2 and 2-A.)

-EXHIBIT NUMBER 2-



-EXHIBIT NUMBER 2-A-



THE BOOK THAT NEVER WAS DID NOT LIST THE ARMY BALLOON OBSERVER'S BADGE

On my first trip to England in 1968, I met an old gentleman in a military relic shop, in the antique district of Islington, who was selling a British Commando knife to the owner of the shop. I waited until he had sold his knife and followed him out to the street. I asked him if he had any other war relics and he said that he had once owned most of all the medals that was awarded by Nazi Germany, but had sold all of them long ago. He informed me that he was a former officer in the British Intelligence Service and all he had left of his collection was a scrapbook that he had compiled during the war. He said that he had made detailed hand-drawn sketches, which he colored with watercolors, of all the medals and badges that he had encountered up to and through 1945. He further stated that he lived only a few blocks from the shop and agreed to let me look at his book. We walked the few blocks to his apartment and he produced the most fascinating manuscript I had ever seen. He agreed to sell me the book, which I still have today, and it is a one of a kind masterpiece of hand-drawn art. He had sketched, to actual size, every medal and badge he had in his collection. He, however, did not have a drawing or any mention of the Army Balloon Observer's Badge in his book, although he had listed every other known badge from the Third Reich era. Of the total number of badges and medals he had sketched and colored the last few drawings were never colored, and tend to lend to the nostalgia of this most unusual record of the medals his enemy produced during WWII. When the war ended for him so did his work on his project.

THE MYTH GROWS

In 1976 the next step in the evolution of modern reference books, recording the history of orders, medals, badges and other decorations produced during the Third Reich era, came when LTC. John R. Angolia produced the first of his two-volume set of books, FOR FUHRER AND FATHERLAND. The first volume covered all the military awards of the Third Reich. Volume 2 was published in 1978 and covered the civil and political awards. I was personally involved with his project in that I contributed extensively by providing information, photographs and other information to Mr. Angolia.

From the middle 1960's I had been compiling information and photographs for a planned book project of my own. I had traveled extensively throughout the United States and Europe gathering information, visiting museums, conducting interviews with not only knowledgeable fellow collectors, but with living participants of World War II, both allied and former enemies alike. However, due to personal priorities taking precedence over producing a book, I sold my personal collection that had been a major part of my life for so many years and abandoned my book project. Not to see all my years of work go to waste, I turned over all my information and photographs to John R. Angolia when I found out that he was planning to produce his own reference on the subject. He incorporated my research with his to produce the FOR FUHRER AND FATHERLAND series.

ANGOLIA CONTINUES TO EXPAND THE MYTH

The mystery is further perpetuated with Angolia's coverage of the badge. As I knew the badge as pictured by Dodkins and Littlejohn was not the same badge that Kr. Klietmann had in his files in 1968, I never added that particular badge to my collection. I had also seen reproductions of the badge being sold as early as 1965, but they were crude cast badges that I later found out were made by the firm of Rudolf Souval, Vienna, Austria, under the direction of Ludwig Umlauf. Angolia most likely acquired one of the reproduction badges or a photograph of the one he featured in his book from Dr. Klietmann or Christopher Farlowe. His photographs depicted the same version of the Army Balloon Observers Badge as was featured by Dodkins and Littlejohn. Klietmann was also given credit for assisting Angolia with his book, as was my old English friend, Christopher Farlowe. I had purchased copies of the Army Balloon Observer's Badges from Chris as well as the notorious Luftwaffe Sea Battle Badge, Luftwaffe Tank Battle Badge, and the Luftwaffe Close Combat Badge. Angolia featured all these badges as being original WWII produced badges. I never knew that Angolia was planning on featuring these as originals until after his book was published. The majority of all experienced collectors and researchers are aware that these badges featured in FOR FUHRER AND FATHERLAND, are reproductions and regard them as such.

DR. KLEITMAN ADDS MORE CONTROVERSY THAN FACTS

In 1981, Dr. Klietmann published a book, AUSZEICHNUNGEN

DES DEUTSCHEN REICHES, 1936-1945. On page 123 he wrote that he had only seen one badge that was owned by the designer. He took or obtained a photograph of that badge. I never had a copy of this book at the time; thus having no knowledge of the "new" information Dr. Klietmann had presented to the collecting world. I was now concentrating on collecting United States aviation wings and Soviet Russian orders and medals of WWII. It was also during this time that I was involved and concentrating on a new business venture and having serious health problems. All this prevented me from keeping up with the happening in the field of Third Reich medals. (See Exhibit No. 3.)



FORMAN AND AILSBY ADD TO THE CONFUSION

The next two reference books on Third Reich orders and medals to gain my attention were Christopher Ailsby's COMBAT MEDALS OF THE THIRD REICH, published in 1987. The other was Adrian Forman's first book in his now three volume series, FORMAN'S GUIDE TO THIRD REICH GERMAN AWARDS...AND THIER VALUES published in 1988. I always tried to add all new books to my reference library, as they become available. However, with these two new books, I little more than gazed through them before placing them on the bookshelf in my library, never reading either seriously until 1997. It was in the spring of 1997, while home-bound after undergoing a heart transplant and looking at months of recuperation that I had more than enough time to catch up on my reading. I also resumed my research and upgrading my files to wile away the hours being forced to remain at home to recuperate from my many months of surgery and hospital care.

THE INTERNET AND THE WEHRMACHT AWARDS AND DECORATION FORUMS

I became involved with the wonderful medium of the Internet during my retirement and recuperation and became an active member of the Wehrmacht Awards and Decoration Forum. One of the most interesting topics to be discussed was the Army Balloon Observer's Badge. Recalling my experiences with this badge and the early reproduction badges produced over 30 years ago, which are now cherished by many collectors today as original, I turned to my research files and memory to enable me to interject my thoughts on the forum about this badge. My memories were not enough to factually present and interject my views and opinions into the discussion. Fortunately, I had my reference library and photographic files to rely on to make my case. So I began to review what the various authors had written about the Army Balloon Observer's badge over the past 30 years. After reviewing the material I had, I quickly realized that a major problem faced me. I had to overcome the many jumbled and twisted facts, intertwined with false information and speculation, to show that what many thought were original items of the war years or were nothing but post-war reproductions or "wolves in sheep's clothing". Despite countless debates occurring over a period of nearly a year, the debates yielded little or no progress in determining what was original or

reproduction or what was fact or fantasy. I decided to try to reach an acceptable conclusion based on documented facts alone. If this could be done, I knew it would erase a 30-year or older mystery. I knew the task would be a monumental one and no matter what conclusion I reached at the end of the investigation, not everyone would agree with. Yet, by using only documented facts, logic and conducting an unbiased investigation, I could then hope to achieve an acceptable conclusion. I have my opinions, and others will have theirs, but opinions are not allowed anymore than hearsay evidence in a court of law. The forum isn't a court of law and this report won't be binding ordinance. I am sure that at the conclusion of my investigation the mystery will be solved. At the very least, everyone can better understand the true history of this award and decided for themselves if the badge was produced or not during the war years.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE ARMY BALLOON OBSERVER'S BADGE

On July the 8th, 1944, the High Command of the German Army, OKW, authorized the introduction of the Army Balloon Observers Badge to award officers and men of the field artillery balloon observer units while on active front-line duty. Together with the procedural instructions this authorization was published in the "Allgemeine Herrresmitteilungen" (General Army Commutations) with date of August 7th, 1944. The badge was to acknowledge the extremely hazardous duty of directing artillery fire and observation while observing from a two to three man gondola hanging from a gas filled balloon. Cables suspended the balloons on the ground to heights from 300 to 1000 meters. Although the German artillery units had been using balloon observation units throughout the war, the troops did not have a distinctive qualification badge to indicate their proficiency and specialized duty. Up until the date of institution of a special badge in recognition of their service the War Merit Cross was awarded for their bravery. The criteria for the bestowal of the Iron Cross did not apply to the balloon observers. The majority of the Army Balloon Observer units were stationed on the Eastern Front especially in the later years of the war until 1945.

For the Officers and men serving in the Army's Balloon Observer Battalions during World War II it was a very dangerous duty in the best of conditions. These observers perched in gondolas hanging from gas filled balloons in heights sometimes ranging as high as 1500 feet in the air. Their primary duty was to act as artillery spotters for the artillery units. In the early days of the

war the Luftwaffe provided adequate protection for the observer units. However, as the war progressed, and the Luftwaffe no longer ruled the skies over the battlefields of Europe, the danger increased and the observer units became prime targets from not only ground fire, but from enemy aircraft. This duty subjected the officers and men to ever increasing danger.

DUTIES OF THE ARMY BALLOON OBSERVER AND CRITERIA FOR ITS AWARD AS DESCRIBED BY THE FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE ARMY'S RECONNAISSANCE/OBSERVATION STAFF OF THE GENERAL OF ARTILLEY.

A member of this daring unit best describes the duty of an Army Balloon Observer. He was a former artillery officer and regimental commander, Oberst and Kdr. Of Pz. A. R. 93, and a German Cross in Gold winner. His name was Oberst A. D. Hans Joachim Froben. The following is the translation of the text as it was published in the Deutsches Soldatenjahrbuch (The German Soldiers Yearbook), in the early 1980's. Oberst Froben also described his service to Dr. Klietmann for his 1981 book, *AUSZEICHNUNGEN DES DEUTSCHEN REICHES, 1936-1945*. This translation does not make a claim to professional accuracy, but faithfully reflects the contents of the article. The following is just as it was published and was translated for me by my friend and fellow researcher, Bernhard H. Holst, who is also an expert translator.

"Alone at a height of 900 –1,500 feet was the balloon observer in a wicker basket with a strapped on parachute. The basket hung just below a balloon, which was first charged with 1,500 cubic meters then 600 cbm of highly flammable gas with the valve release cord and the parachute ripcord fastened in close proximity to the edge of the basket. The observer surveyed a large area by day and by night, in windy and cold conditions for many hours. He himself was visible from afar and practically invited enemy fighter attacks and artillery fire. Even though friendly anti-aircraft gave protection; sudden enemy action was to be anticipated. In extreme cases the observer was perhaps able to use the parachute, but some observers were wounded while descending or were caught by his crashing and burning balloon.

Of course the balloon filled with flammable gas was not a modern reconnaissance means, but had the advantage over a fast moving plane to be able to survey a larger area from one point and was practically unnoticeable during the night. It is

noted here that the western allies used balloons in 1939/40 and the eastern enemy until 1945.

The importance was the observations on strength and direction of the enemy; road and rail traffic; troop, armor and material concentrations and more. The shortest route to higher command transmitted these observations. The observer directly supported friendly forces by: continuous reports of movements on the battlefield, occasionally in operations against partisans, ranging shots by own artillery on recognized enemy artillery and mortar positions, armor concentrations and others. Observers could not even see many of these targets on the ground.

During the first years of WW II there were no special recognition for these performances which were equally appreciated by higher command and the troops in the field. Because the criteria for the bestowal of the Iron Cross did not apply to the balloon observers, only the War Merit Cross, introduced for less exciting war service, could be received. Thoughts about the introduction of a special distinctive badge were made early on but did not proceed further because no one thought of a long duration of the war and the number of possible recipients was also very small. I relinquished command of Pz.A.R. 93 in September of 1943 to assume a position on the staff of the "General der Artillerie" (general in charge of all artillery matters) namely that of Director of Group III (Reconnaissance/Observation Branch of the several branches making up the artillery arm). My Predecessor, Oberst Meredikes, among other matters asked me to pursue a distinctive badge for the balloon observers. The growing air superiority of the enemy caused more dangers to the observers and it was high time to do something for them.

Once I understood the many chores of my assignment within such a large staff I sought out the applicable office for the creation of new distinctions and found it in the Group P 5 of the Herrespersonalamt (army personnel office). Soon I had the opportunity for personal contact with the director of that group. During the conversations he suggested that a respective formulation be worked up. He believed that a performance badge (Leistungsabzeichen) would be authorized even for only the small group, of eligible personnel.

Now I had to envision what bestowal criteria for the performance evaluation of balloon observers on active front line duty were to be. Because I myself had no experience as an observer I effected the detachment to my staff of an experienced officer, Oberleutnant Uhde who was soon presented.

As a result of our consultations and calculations we established criteria based on a point system. Thereby the importance of the observer reports and the targets engaged for the high command, and for the troops directly supported as well as the personal effort of the observer, were evaluated. Duration of the observation mission and the exposure to enemy planes or artillery played a role also. For example, every enemy target engaged and every four hours observation duration recorded were valued at one point. The first evacuation by parachute during a combat mission for compelling reason, brought ten points and every subsequent one five points were received. Three grades of the badge were established: Grade I in Bronze for twenty points, Grade II in Silver forty-five points and Grade III in gold seventy-five points. Only the highest grade awarded was to be worn on the left breast, if applicable to the left of the Assault badge. All this was brought into agreement with the awards section and it was able to judge this aspect: artillery commanders (division/corps level), commander of the observation battalion or the battery commander. Basis for the evaluation was to be the Balloon diaries kept up at platoon level. The applications for the award were to be made to the "General der Artillerie" in the OKH. From there the award document and the badges were then to be sent directly to the applying formation.

On July 8th, 1944, the OKH authorized the introduction of the Balloon Observer Badge in recognition of the performance by the observers while on active front-line duty. Together with the procedural instructions this authorization was published in the "Allgemeine Herrresmitteilungen" (General Army Commutations) with date of 7. August, 1944. The efforts to establish a visible recognition of the commitment of the observers in the balloon baskets were thereby concluded.

The manufacture of the badge was entrusted by orders and awards group to a jeweler in Dresden. Of two samples presented to me I selected one for the final manufacturer, twenty to forty of each grade was to be made. Repeatedly badges were bestowed by the "General der Artillery" and the respective documents were sent out. If actual badges were delivered, I do not know because I was reassigned to the command of an artillery regiment in early 1945."

At this point in the investigation, one must ask themselves some serious questions. Is the award document pictured in Dr. Klietmann's book and Adrian Foreman's books the same document, stamped with the unit seal in the same place and position, and signed by the same person? The small number of

badges apparently ordered to be manufactured was so small was the likelihood of any substantial number of them to have survived the war, if actually produced possible? All evidence seems to indicate that no badges were sent to recipients by the time of the officer in charge of ordering the badges, Oberest Hans Joachim Froben, was reassigned to combat duty in early 1945, but only award documents were issued. Therefore, was it possible for the "jeweler in Dresden" that he said was commissioned to produce the small quantity of badges to have geared up to produce the badges, go through the required steps leading to the production of the badges in the time of 44 days? From the information supplied by former Oberst Hans J. Froben, he seems to indicate that no badges were sent to recipients by the time of his reassignment to combat duty in early 1945, but only documents were issued. If his time schedule is correct, and we take January 1, 1945 as the date of his departure for combat duty, it gives a maximum of 44 days for the "jeweler in Dresden" to complete production of the badges. Could all this be accomplished in 44 days to have the badges ready to be shipped to the OKH for distribution to the troops?

THE DIFFERENT DESIGN FLAWS OF THE BADGES

FEATURED IN VARIOUS REFERENCE BOOKS – 1968 - 2001

There is no dispute that the Army Balloon Observer's Badge was instituted on July 8th, 1944. There is no dispute that awards of the badge were made during the weeks and months after the badge had been officially instituted. Known presentation documents (Urkunde's) and entries in the service man's identification and personal record books, "Soldbuchs", attest that the awards had been made. The major disputes arose over when the awards were made and did the recipient receive a badge as outlined in the criteria for awarding the badges. When was the badge designed, approved and awarded during WWII and what does the design look like? When were the recipients officially awarded their citation? Were all three classes of badges, as outlined in the statutes, awarded and produced? Opinions and speculation can't be allowed to influence the investigation, but only rational factual evidence is to be considered. I have been opinionated from the beginning due to my first hand knowledge gained over 30 years ago, but I will discount it first and not show anything except documented facts. I know that I will be accused of being bias, and truthfully and guess down deep I am. However, I will try my utmost to only show factual and documented evidence. I always say that facts

and good hard evidence can't be biased. I ask no more from anyone and if I accomplish my goal, everyone can understand the true factual story of one of the most controversial awards instituted and awarded by the German Army during WWII.

As stated earlier, and as Exhibit No. 1 shows, Dr. Kletmann said that this badge was the original design approved by the Reich's Orders Chancellery prior to the end of the war. Note the design of the eagle and how the head rises well above the neck and wings. However, the left wing is slightly wider than the right wing. (See Exhibits No. 1, close up of the eagle.) In Dodkins and Littlejohn's book the design of the eagle's head changes to appear that the eagle's left wing is the same heights as the right and the beak appears to be looking at the "beard or hump" on the top of its left wing. (See Exhibits No. 3 and 3-A) John R. Angolia used the same photographs in his 1976, 1985 and 1987 revisions. (See Exhibits No. 2 and 2-A)

Another change can be observed with Forman's presentation in his 1988 2nd Edition book. The "beard or hump" is just beginning to develop and the eagle's head appears to be looking at the flaw. Also, the left wing is beginning to look underdeveloped as compared to the right wing. In 1981, Dr. Kleitmann presents yet another photograph of the Army Balloon Observer's Badge that is the possible key to understand the "beards or humps" on some of the other badges. It appears that when the photograph of this badge was taken, the camera was held at an angle that allow the shadow of the badge to be captured giving an illusion of a "beard or hump" on the left wing of the eagle. Furthermore, this photograph is not the same photograph that he said was than taken of the original matrix. I did not see this photograph when visiting Dr. Kletmann in 1968, nor did he mention that it existed. Finally, when John Ormsby and I wrote the text for the Clay Publication Group series MEDALS & DECORATIONS OF HITLER'S GERMANY, 1981, we used a photograph of a Army Balloon Observer's Badge of the "bearded badge" used by Angolia. It was the only photograph of a badge we had and it was, after all, the badge we featured was thought to be original at this point in time. (See Exhibit No. 2 and 2-A.) Finally, to really understand the mystery of the different badge designs one must look at the 1988 1st edition of Adrians Forman's book. FORMAN'S GUIDE TO THIRD REICH GERMAN AWARDS.AND THEIR VALUES. Here the first red flag was raised that would be a high water mark in the study of the various design differences used over a 33 year span of covering the Army Balloon Observer's Badge. Forman used the original Kletmann photograph that in the beginning Kletmann said was the only known example of the badge to survive the war. If this

was the case, why did Dr. Klietmann provide photographs of different badges and why did Forman suddenly change in his next two updates of his book to the later Klietmann supplied badge designs? It appears that Forman wasn't aware of the photograph of the second badge that Dr. Klietmann displays first in a German publication in 1955 and again his book published in 1981. He probably didn't have the photograph of the new badge until after Klietmann introduced it to the world in 1981. I am just speculating as to Forman's reasons for changing photographs and I can't use it in the final determination of the facts. It does, however, give us something to think about. Klietmann changed his original story of only one badge surviving the war to a small number of badges having been made. He knew about the second badge in 1968, but neglected to tell me. He as much told the collecting world, "Here a second badge is with its new design." All he accomplished was to throw more doubt on all the existing reproductions with the "beard or hump" on a deformed left wing. That new photograph was really the second red flag, but it was wrapped around the flagpole until we seriously began to look at the history of the badge. It was Mr. Otto Spronk who unfurled the flag and now we can see things that was camouflaged and right under our nose all along.

As I said in the beginning, I would not introduce speculation, but would allow creditable circumstantial evidence to be entered as creditable evidence to this report. Since I am not a professional photographer, I consulted Mr. Otto Spronk, noted collector and researcher in the field of Third Reich history. He is also a professional photographer of many years' experience and his input into this investigation is that of a professional "expert" witness. I don't think anyone in our hobby can impeach his credentials. Mr. Spronk and I have looked closely at the photograph of the second badge Dr. Klietmann introduced as an original period badge or designing original. I have no doubt that this second badge was exactly as Dr. Klietmann purported the badge to be in 1981. If you will look closely at the photographs of this badge, especially the enlarged photograph, you will see a perfectly proportioned German National eagle. The wings are correctly designed with no "beard or hump" on the left wing. Most importantly, it does not have a deformed left wing. What is seen is that the photograph is of the original design matrix that was approved by Dr. Doehle sometime in late 1944 or early 1945. The photograph that Dr. Klietmann first said was the original designed matrix that was in the hands of the designer probably was the original design reject by Hitler. It was sent back to the designer, Ellmar Lang as proved in the letter to Lang from the OKW on July 26, 1944. (See Exhibit 5.) The second designing matrix would be the only original badge Dr.

Klietmann ever seen and he was probably was right again and the man who had it was most likely Ellmar Lang, the designer whose original design was not approved by Hitler.

Oberkommando des Heeres

M.Qu.OKH., den 26. Juli 1944

PA / P 5 / 1. Staffel

Herrn

Blisar Lang,

Zeichner

Aachen.

Ludwigsallee 7

In der Anlage wird eine Probefertigung des vom Führer gestifteten "Ballonbeobachterabzeichen's" übersandt. Dieses Muster hat dem Führer bereits zur Entscheidung vorgelegen, jedoch nicht seine Zustimmung gefunden. Sie werden deshalb gebeten, einen neuen Entwurf anzufertigen, bei dem folgendes zu berücksichtigen ist:

- 1.) Äußere Form und Größe entsprechend den "Kampfabzeichen" des Heeres. Trageweise ebenfalls linke Brustseite.
- 2.) Größe des Ballons kleiner als auf dem anliegenden Abzeichen, damit der Eichenkranz nicht gedrückt und in seiner Schönheit gestört wird.
- 3.) Herstellung in 3 Stufen, da es sich um ein Leistungsabzeichen handelt. Eine rein bronzene, silberne und goldene Ausführung muß jedoch abgelehnt werden, da es sonst zu Vergleichen mit den Stufen des Verwundetenabzeichens führen würde. Unter Umständen läßt sich vielleicht der Ballon aus verschiedener Legierung herstellen.

Das beigelegte Probeabzeichen kann als Anhalt dienen.

Um Mitteilung, ob Sie in der Lage sind, sich an der Ausführung eines Entwurfes zu beteiligen, wird gebeten.

Heil Hitler!

-1-Anlage

J. J. J.
Oberst

Now we come to the beard, hump and deformed left wing that appears on all the other badges purported to be original issued badges. The next question is how did the deformity occur and why was it allowed to pass inspection by the inspectors of the Reich Order's Chancellery?

I again bring in the expert testimony of Mr. Otto Spronk. His explanation of how the deformity became part of the "bearded" badge was because of the way the photographer who made the photograph took the picture of the second badge. Klietmann said in his 1981 book that the example of the badge he featured was an example of an original badge. By featuring this badge, there is no doubt that he had photographs of two of the designing matrixes. The "beard" on the badges I have as examples of original period badges, and the copies later made from them, were caused by a mistake in creating the die. If you will look at the enlarged photograph the original Klietmann photograph, you can see that this photograph was made by angling the camera to the left of the badge thus producing a shadow under the beak. This shadow was incorporated into the die when the producer of the die thought the shadow was part of either the oak leaf wreath or the way the eagle was designed. Granted, this is a hypothesis, but no other logical explanation has been introduced that can show a different cause for the deformed die. Using logic again, no producer of Third Reich medals or badges would make such a gross error in designing a die even at this late date of the war. As the firm producing the badge had to submit a final product to the Orders Chancellery for approval prior to production, it is also not logical to assume that the Orders Chancellery officials would have accepted such a monstrosity. Therefore, the other evidence will more than substantiate these hypotheses and let it be accepted as creditable circumstantial evidence to be considered in the final analysis of that total sum of evidence.

EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THAT THE ARMY BALLOON BADGE WAS PRODUCED AND ISSUED

Unfortunately, I have not found any documented factual proof that the badge was produced. I have a lot of opinions and speculation, but I won't use opinions and speculation and will not enter them into the report. I will allow the two distinctly different designed badges with the "beard or hump" deformed left wing be admitted into evidence on behalf of the proponents that these badges are original war time produced badges. The photographs will speak for the proponents of the badges. After all, one picture is worth a thousand words, or so the old saying goes. (See Exhibits 6 and 6-A and 7 and 7-A)





**FACTUAL EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THAT THE ARMY BALLOON
BADGE WAS NOT PRODUCED AND ISSUED**

What occurred in the months between the date of the institution of the Army Balloon Observer's badge of July 8th, 1944, until the end of the war in May of 1945, is crucial in establishing if the Army Balloon Observer's Badge was produced and awarded

or not. The badge would have to go through the same process as any badge before production could be undertaken. Regulations first had to be written, instituted, and then distributed to all potential designers. Next, a design drawing, matrix proofs and samples were to be submitted to the Reich's Orders Chancellery for approval. After these steps had been taken, the proofs were submitted to the particular branch of service to which the badges were made for to receive their stamp of approval. Once this was done, mass-production by a firm or firms was undertaken. The final step came with the distribution of the badges to the troops. All these steps were required for a badge to make the long process from the drawing board to the recipients' uniform.

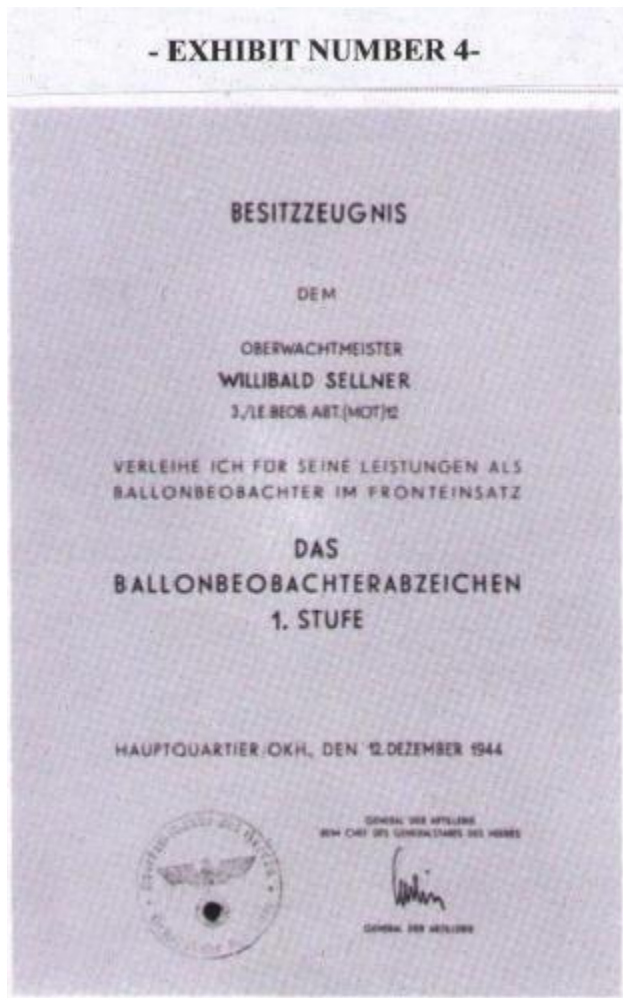
With the Army Balloon Observer's Badge, some factual and documented information is available concerning the design and possible production. However, equally missing information must be found and pieced into the overall picture by using logical deductions to fill in the missing gaps. I will be the first to say that some of the actual facts may never be uncovered to produce a 100% factual report. We will have to rely in some cases on circumstantial evidence, a preponderance of such evidence, to fill in the missing parts of the story. However, in the end I am positive that a logical story will evolve.

Here is a chronological list of the documented facts that dealing with the design and possible production of the badge.

The Army Balloon Observer's Badge was officially instituted by the High Command of the German Army (OKH) on July 8th, 1944. Awards in certificate form, entries in Soldbüchs, including some awards with an official presentation documents (Urkundes) were reported to have been made. Also, a veteran report of former Oberleutnant Alfred Uhde, said that he received the document in late 1944, but no badge.

1. A case in point is the document awarded to Willibald Sellner, December 12, 1944. (See Exhibit No. 4. And 4-A) However, this is the only such documentation that I have seen and it is credited to Dr. K. G. Kleitmann. In the German text, by Nimmergut, "DEUTSCHE ORDEN UND EHRENZEICHEN BIS 1945, Volume 4, page 2329 - 2331, you can read additional information about this badge. A most interesting photograph of a blank Urkunde is featured on page 2230; top left of the page. If you will compare exhibit No. 4 and 4-A you will see that the documents are the same. They are

the same except for the one Dr. Klietman presented in his 1981 book is filled out to Willibald Sellner. The swastika in the stamp has been obliterated in the Klietmann presentation. However, on the blank document, the stamp is placed in the exact and identical location on the document with no obliteration of the swastika. Finally, the signatures on both documents are signed EXACTLY the same way. Need I show more or say anything that any logical minded person needs to see to decide at this point concerning what we have with the two documents? They are one in the same with the name blocked out and the swastika obliterated to not violate German law regarding the display of the banned emblem of the Third Reich or a deliberate forgery.



2. The badge was not ready in July to be presented to the troops. It has been verified, as of July 26th, 1944, that the Reich's Orders Chancellery had not approved the badge design. The High Command of the Army had notified the designer of the badge, Ellmar Lang, Acchen, that the design he had submitted had been rejected by Adolf Hitler. He was given suggestions on how to improve the design to meet Hitler's requirements. Two samples had been submitted by the designer, Ellmar Lang to Oberst Froben, and Froben department rejected one design and choose the other and ordered "twenty to forty of each grade" to be produced by "a jeweler in Dresden". He left his position as Director of Group III (Reconnaissance/Observation Branch of the several branches making up the artillery arm) in "early 1945" and no badges had been received at that time. (See Exhibit No. 5.)

3. No additional documentation as of late December shows than an approved design had been sent to the designer, Ellmar Lang. Only the two documents dated December 12, 1944 indicates that the award, not the badge had been bestowed. However, the document to Willibald Sellner is in serious question as being an altered document. It must be seriously debated as to weather it can even be considered valid and creditable evidence. Another fact that is documented is when Dr. Heinrich Doehle, President of the Reich's Orders Chancellery was ready to go to press with his 1945 edition of his book DIE AUSZEICHNUNGEN DES GROSSDEUTSCHEN REICH – ORDEN, EHRENZEICHEN, ABZEICHEN. No approved design for the badge had been submitted at that time because he did not have a photograph or drawing of the badge in his manuscript. However, he lists all the criteria to be met for the awarding the badge.

4. Probably the most important piece of evidence that I enter is based on the preponderate of circumstantial evidence and logical deduction. Dr. Klietmann wrote in his 1981 book, AUSZEICHNUNGEN DES DEUTSCHEN REICHES, 1936-1945, that a firm in Dresden produced the badge. He obtained that information from Oberst A.D. Hans Joachim Froben. English author Christopher Ailsby, in his 1994 book, WORLD WAR 2

GERMAN MEDALS AND POLITICAL AWARDS, also wrote that a firm in Dresden produced the badges. During a conversation about this badge, according to Chris, the firm was supposed to have been Glaser and Sohne, Dresden, Borngass 5, Germany. However, a major problem arises with this story because the entire city of Dresden was completely destroyed on February 13th, 1945 by British bombers. The entire city was reduced to rubble as a result of the aerial bombing, which lasted without letup until February 16th, 1945. The firm of Glaser and Sohne was completely destroyed and was not rebuilt until 1945. It did revert back to private ownership in the 1990's and is still producing orders and decorations to day. If Glaser produced the badges as reported by Christopher Ailsby or for that matter, any firm located in Dresden, then they had from January 1st, 1945 until February 13th, 1945 in which to go through all the required steps necessary to have a badge ready for production. Therefore, using simple logic it will show that the Army Balloon Observer's Badge never got to the production stage in the maximum of 44 days in which they had to accomplish the task if given January 1, 1945 as the date Oberst Froben left his position in the OKH.

5. The hidden truths and the speculations that still tend to cloud what the exact approved design of this badge looked like may be erased by looking at the design of the 1957 reissue of the Army Balloon Observer's Badge. Logic dictates that the Bundesrepublic of Germany had to have had access to the Order's Chancellery archives to obtain the design of the Army Balloon Observer's Badge to reissue it in 1957. Today's researchers trying to obtain these records are faced with a major obstacle. Otto Spronk stated the following during one of our discussions about this problem. He said, "I think without some extensive archive-research it would not be possible to find the date of approval and maybe the design drawing from which a die would have been made. In the years after the fall of the Wall the Germans reorganized their archives. All Nazi-time related archives are now in Potsdam, near Berlin, and not in Koblenz anymore. The Military-archives are still in Freiburg, but all archives are still suffering from the moves and many of the old archivists who knew their stuff did not move to

Potsdam. Now no one can find anything anymore. It will take some 30 to 50 years, maybe more, before they will have an easy access again." It appears that most of the work they are doing involves rearranging all the archives from both the former Democratic Republic of Germany and the Bundesrepublik.

The lack of ability to obtain the original records of the approved design of the badge can be solved another way. If we take the designing matrix, the second Klietmann badge, and look at the design features found in it and look at the same features in the 1957 reissued badge, we can get a very clear picture of what the original design looked like. By simply looking at the design of the badge from a point below the national eagle and with the incorporated swastika, a much clearer picture is revealed. Therefore, look at the four pictures below and make note of the similarities of the badges. No. 1. The first picture is of a badge that is in the Bob Hritz collection. No. 2. This is a picture is of the badge in the R. F. Honts collection. No. 3. The third picture is of a 1957 re-issued badge. No. 4. This badge turned up in Russia this year and is the first of its kind I have encountered. The oak leaf wreath is basically the same design on all four Badges. The Gondola and support cables are basically of the same design. The number and location of the acorns on the wreath are just alike. Also, please observe the third acorn on the outer area of the wreath on each side of the wreath. These are extending lightly outward from the wreath more so than on the 1957 badge. Look at the stabilizing fins of the balloon in all three pictures. The design is the same.

No. 1. The first picture is of a badge that is in the Bob Hritz collection.

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A. The oak leaf wreath is basically the same design on all four Badges.

B. The Gondola and support cables are basically of the same design.

C. The number and location of the acorns on the wreath are just alike. Also, please observe the third acorn on the outer area of the wreath on each side of the wreath. These are extending lightly outward from the wreath more so than on the 1957 badge.

D. Look at the stabilizing fins of the balloon in all three pictures. The design is the same.

1.



2.



3.

ARMY BALLOON OBSERVER'S BADGE 1957 VERSION



4.



E. Observe the differences between the two badges pictured below.

E. Observe the differences between the two badges pictured below. Look at the height of the wings, the heads of the eagles, the width of the wings and the "hump or beard" that in or is not on the badge on the top. It is of the designing matrix, exhibit No. 3. Please observe the contour of the top of the eagle's wings and note which one has the most detail. Finally, observe the wreaths and determine if the wreath on the left differs from the badge on the bottom. That badge is the type found in the Christopher Ailsby and Bob Hritz collections.



Look at the height of the wings, the heads of the eagles, the width of the wings and the "hump or beard" that in or is not on the badge on the top. It is of the designing matrix, exhibit No. 3. Please observe the contour of the top of the eagle's wings and note which one has the most detail. Finally, observe the wreaths and determine if the wreath on the left differs from the badge on the bottom. That badge is the type found in the Christopher Ailsby and Bob Hritz collections.

A major hidden truth for over 55 years can be found in Dr. Heinrich Doehle's, 1945 edition of DIE AUSZEICHNUNGEN DES GROSSDEUTSCHEN REICH – ORDEN, EHRENZEICHEN, AZEICHEN. No approved design for the badge had been made at that time because he does not have a picture or drawing of the badge in his book. One must ask why didn't he incorporate a photograph of the Army Balloon Observer's Badge in his coverage of this badge? The answer is simple. He didn't have one because the designer, Ellmar Lang had not produced an acceptable design as late as January 1945. However, he lists all the criteria to be met for the awarding the badge. This is probably the most important fact hidden for over 55 years until Klaus Patzwall published Doehle's 1945 book in 2000. The collector's world must understand that up until Patzwall published Dr. Doehle's book, it was a book filled with important information unknown for over half a century. This hidden information made it possible for the fairy tales stories that were told years ago in the 60's to be accepted as fact and the reproductions of the badges to be produced. Thanks to Otto Spronk's keen observation for pointing these truths out to me as they are the needle in the haystack used to puncture a hole in the last balloon of the Army Balloon Observer Unit. That balloon had been filled with hot air and launched by the fakers of fairyland over 40 years ago. The collecting community had no documented information to refute the false information until the information now found in Doehle's now published book. Add the information supplied by Oberst A. D. Hans Joachim Froben and a clear picture will remove all doubt that has surrounded this badge for over 50 years. The information in Froben's book, AUFKLAERENDE ARTILLERIE (Reconnaissance Artillery), published in 1972 by Schild Verlag, Munich, and the detailed information published in its entirety in the German Soldiers Yearbook in the 1980's, is invaluable in understanding this once complicated story.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I end this report with a feeling that I have presented much more factual information, condensed into this one report, than

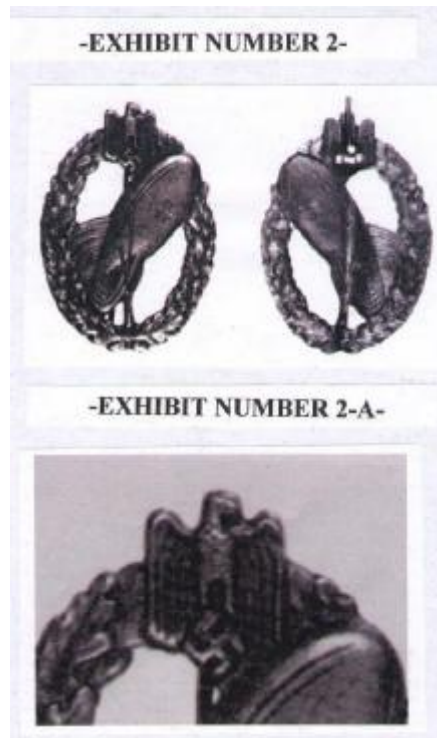
has been written before on this subject. Only the reader will be the final judge as to the creditability of my report. I know some will want to cling to the premise that their badge is like the master of illusions said it was in 1976 when he wrote, "The Army Balloon Observer's Badge ranks among the rarest of war-time decorations." I would agree if I owned either one of the badges Dr. Klietmann presented to the collecting world. However I don't know if either of the two are in any collection anywhere today. Were they designing matrix photographs from the archives of the Reich's Orders Chancellery? Was the second badge an issued badge? Did they survive the war? These are questions left unanswered in this report, but the haunting questions for those collectors owning examples of this badge should be, "Is mine real? Is that badge with the "bearded" eagle and a left wing, that looks like it was injured by flying shrapnel during the bombing of Dresden, a badge produced during WWII? I know some are asking themselves "Do I own a 40 year old illusion of what might have been?" For me, I have my opinions; speculations and my mind made up. I will keep them to myself and leave the questions anyone may have about this badge for them to answer. I only hope that the answer will be based on the factual preponderance of the evidence as presented in this report.

EXHIBITS

1. Klietmann photograph of the designing matrix from 1968. Personal files of Author.



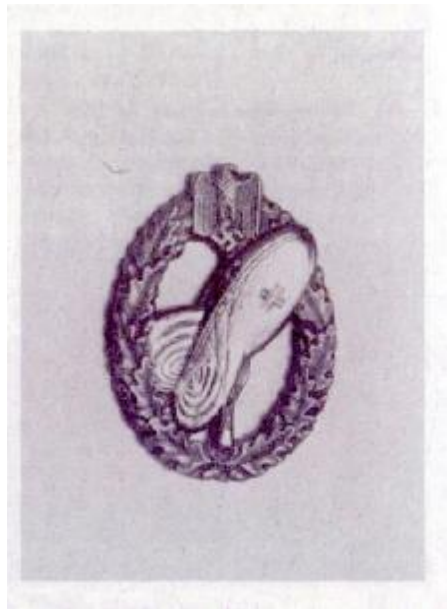
2.-2A. The Clay Group, Volume 1, Number 1. R. Clay Teppenpaw,



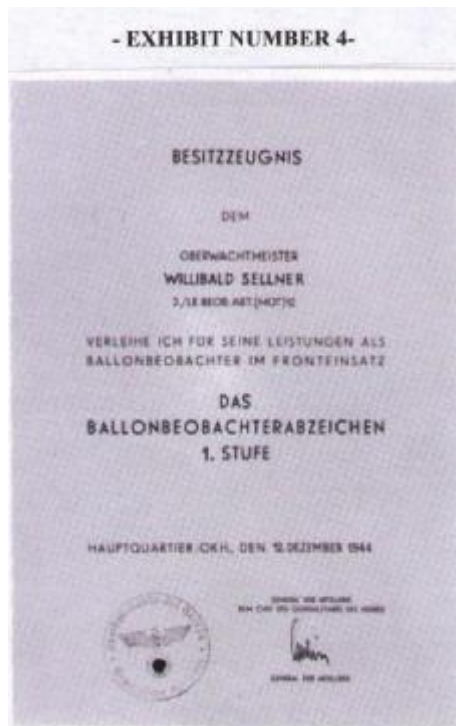
Publisher, page 48, John Ormsby and W. C. "Bill" Stump Authors.

(NOTE: photographs of the badge depicted was used by Dodkins and Littlejohn for their book Orders, Decorations, Medals and Badgers of the Third Reich and John R. Angolia for his three editions of For Fuhrer and Fatherland.)

3. Auszeichnungen Des Deutschen Reichs, 1936-1945. Dr. Kurt G. Kletmann, Berlin, 1981, page 122, photograph of his second reported example of an original badge.



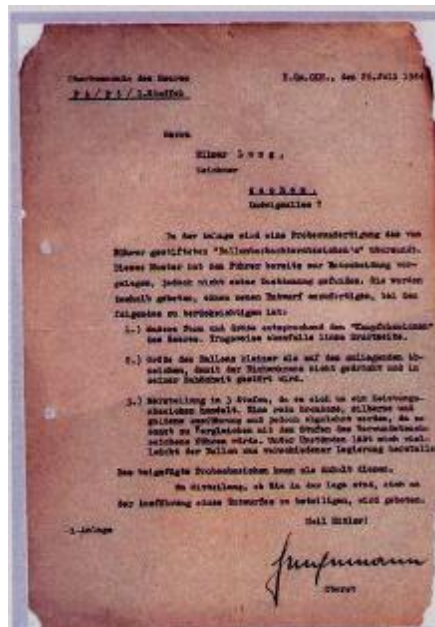
4. Auszeichnungen Des Deutschen Reichs, 1936-1945. Dr. Kurt G. Kletmann, Berlin, 1981, photograph of the presentation urkunde award to WILLIBALD SELLNER, 3/LE BEOB. (MOT) 2 for the 1. Class badge.



4.A Deutsche Orden und Ehrenzeichen Bis 1945. Volume 4, Page 2330, photograph of unissued urkunde for the Army Balloon Observer's Badge.



5. Letter from Oberkommando des Heeres to Ellmar Lang, dated July 26th, 1944. Compliment of the Otto Spronk Photographic Reference files Collection.



6. Type one of The Army Balloon Observer's Badge, Obverse photograph. RH Honts Collection.



7. Type two of The Army Balloon Observer's Badge. Bob Hritz Collection.



7.A Type two reverse photograph of the Bob Hritz Badge.



8. Type three of the Army Balloon Observer's Badge from Russia. Photograph credit Borgir, Russia.



8.A Type three reverse photograph of the badge from Russia.
Photograph credit Borgir, Russia.





On January 29th 1936, it was determined that volunteers from I./RGG (1st Batl. Regiment "General Göring") would make up the cadre of the first paratrooper training class. Later, in March of that year, the Luftwaffe opened its first jump school at Stendal (Borstel) under Capt. Immans. The first training course consisted of 24 volunteers, and lasted for two months (May 4th to July 3rd). The first jump licenses (Fallschirmschützenschein) were awarded the day after the course was completed (July 4th, 1936), with Major Bruno Bräuer receiving license number one (1). The first paratrooper badges (Fallschirmschützenabzeichen (Luftwaffe)) would not be awarded until November 5th of that year.



The first training class, also known as Ausbildungskommando Immans, prior to the commencement of the first course on May 3rd, 1936.



Members of one of the first Luftwaffe paratrooper training classes from August, 1936. Notice the first model (M36) jump smocks and the straight bar (precursor to the gull) rank insignia on the sleeve.

Copyright Eric Queen
Collection 2004



One of the very first paratrooper qualification badge documents awarded to Oskar Holzwarth in December of 1936 (just weeks after the badge was officially instituted). This document, as well as the Army paratrooper badge document, were in the large DIN-A4 format. Holzwarth attached his photo to the upper

left corner of the document. Notice
the white tabs and piping of RGG
(Regiment "General Göring")

Copyright Bob Queen
Collection 2004

On October 4, 1936 the Army ordered the institution of its own parachute company, a Fallschirm Infanterie Kompanie. The call went out for volunteers in early March 1937, and on April 1st men who had passed both the psychological and physical exams (only 7 out of each 30 volunteers passed) began arriving at the "Albrecht der Bär" barracks in Stendal. The army did not have a training facility of its own, thus they utilized the already established Luftwaffe facility at Stendal/Borstel (under Olt. Bassange) exclusively. Actual jump training commenced in early June 1937, and only 3 out of each 7 trainees passed the jump course.



Above is group 9 at the Stendal/Borstel training barracks in June of 1937. Notice that at this time, the Army did not have paratrooper equipment of its own and thus were issued helmets, smocks, etc. from existing Luftwaffe stocks. The men in this photo are wearing the 1st model M36 (double zipper) Luftwaffe jump smocks, as well as both M36 (2 reinforced slots per side) and M37 (1 non-reinforced slot per side) Luftwaffe helmets. Of note also is the wear of the very rare 1st model jump pants (with 3 snaps) clearly visible on the man seated at far

left. Walter Ruemmler is seated at far right. Copyright Eric Queen Collection 2004



Members of the Fallschirm Infanterie Kompanie prior to a training jump in early 1938. Notice the Luftwaffe instructor checking their parachutes.



Members of the Fallschirm Infanterie Batl. in the summer of 1938. Louis Helwig is at far left in the back row, and Konrad "Koni" Poerner is next to him (to his left)

On June 1st, 1938, the Fallschirm Infanterie Kompanie was officially expanded (per order HM38 No.286 dated March 15th 1938) to the Fallschirm Infanterie Bataillon. In addition to the Nachrichten Zug and the Pionier Zug, there were 4 infantry companies (the 4th being "heavy" (machine guns and mortars)) under Major Heidrich and Capt. Prager. 1st Company (under Olt. von Brandis), 2nd Company (under Olt. Huebner), 3rd Company (under Lt. Pagels) and 4th Company (under Olt. Pelz). On November 4th, 1938, the Fallschirm Infanterie Bataillon moved from Stendal to their new barracks (the Rosalies Kaserne) in Braunschweig.



In early fall of 1938, the FIB printed an information brochure called "Bekleidung und Ausrüstung eines Fallschirmschützen des Fallschirm Infanterie Bataillons" (Clothing and Equipment of the Paratroopers of the Fallschirm Infanterie Bataillon) Werner Stueber, who was one of the first members of the FIK, receiving badge number 41 on Sept.01, 1937, was the model for the photos in the brochure. Copyright Eric Queen Collection 2004



On January 1st, 1939 the Fallschirm Infanterie Bataillon is transferred to the Luftwaffe (per order OKH No.4840/38 g. AHA/In 2 IX dated December 30, 1938) and forms the nucleus of II./Fallschirm Jäger Regiment 1 (the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th companies). On February 2nd, 1939 order Der R.d.L. u. Ob.d.L. No.7045/38 g.K.IV, 1b is signed authorizing the wear of the Fallschirm Jäger Rgt.1 sleeveband. Luftwaffe uniforms were not issued to the former members of the FIB until after the Prague mission (mid/late March 1939), thus on occasion you will find photographic evidence of the

FJR1 sleeveband being worn on the army uniform. This training photo is one such case. Although somewhat out of focus, you can clearly see the sleevebands being worn on the Infantry M36 field tunics.



A hand sewn NCO version of the Fallschirm Jäger Rgt.1 sleeveband.

On September 1st, 1937, Generaloberst Frhr. von Fritsch, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, authorized the Army paratrooper qualification badge (Fallschirmsch tzenabzeichen (Heer)) for members of the Fallschirm Infanterie Kompanie. The first badges were awarded later that month, in the afternoon of September 10th, by Hauptmann Zahn and Olt.Pelz during the fall maneuvers at Mecklenburg. A little over 170 badges were awarded on this day, and Generalleutnant Roese (who signed the badge award documents) personally awarded badges to Hauptmann Zahn and Olt.Pelz.



Formal award document (Verleihungsurkunde) for the Army paratrooper badge. These documents were awarded only twice, on September 01, 1937 and December 18, 1937. All members of the FIK / FIB who completed/passed the jump course after these dates, were given the badge and the license, but not the formal award document. A total of approximately 400 documents were awarded. The document is in the DIN A4 format and is signed by

**Generalleutnant Roese, Inspekteur Der
Infanterie.**

The jump license (Fallschirmsch tzenschein) was awarded to all trainees who successfully completed the 6 jump training course. The first licences were awarded one week before the first badge award documents (August 24th, 1937), and the second group of licenses were awarded on the same day (December 18th, 1937) as the second and final group of badge award documents. Here is one of the first Army jump licenses, awarded to Walter R mmler on 24.8.37. There was also a Fallschirm Infanterie Bataillon version of the license which had a variant national emblem and font.



Members of the Fallschirm Infanterie Kompanie in late fall 1937 showing off the badges they had recently been awarded.



Studio portrait of an Army paratrooper wearing the Army paratrooper badge on the Infantry Waffenrock.

Members of the Fallschirm Infanterie Bataillon continued to wear their original issue Army paratrooper badges after the transfer to the Luftwaffe on 1.1.39. On December 18th 1943 all former members of the Fallschirm Infanterie Bataillon were officially awarded the Luftwaffe version of the paratrooper badge, but very few opted to wear it in place of their original Army badges.



Studio portrait of a former Army paratrooper (now member of II./FJR1) taken at "Gordon Studios" in Den Haag (where II./FJR 1 were quartered in private houses right after the taking of the rail and road bridges at Moerdijk, on May 10, 1940) This photo is dated May 30th, 1940 (Mei 30, 1940) and was taken a short time after the Iron Crosses were awarded for this operation.



Another studio portrait of a former Army paratrooper still wearing his original issue Army paratrooper badge on his Luftwaffe 2nd model Fliegerbluse. Circa 1941/42.



Portrait of former army paratrooper taken on May 24, 1940, in a studio in Den Haag. He is wearing the EKII which he was just awarded for the Moerdijk operation.

The Badge - First Pattern

The first Army Paratrooper badge produced by CE Juncker of Berlin was what is referred to today as the 1st pattern badge with cut out talon. The badge was die struck in aluminum and had an anodized finish. Unique features of original 1st pattern badges are the absence (in nearly all cases) of the flat die plate (or beard) under the Wehrmachtadlers beak and the existence (in all cases) of the early CE Juncker stamp on the reverse of the diving eagle.



The particular example above came from the estate of Army Paratrooper Bruno Risse and, as you can see, is somewhat anomalous because the die plate has only been partially tooled away. On the close up of the makers mark on the reverse of a 1st Pattern badge, notice the Leaning L and Angular S, characteristic of an early Junckers stamp.

Talon reinforcement

Juncker made a reconfiguration to the die in an attempt to reinforce the fragile talon (which tended to sheer off during the die strike process) This reconfiguration achieved its initial goal, but was short lived due to the fact that the resulting product was esthetically unacceptable. Copyright ©2004 Eric Queen Collection



Obverse



Reverse



Close up of talon reinforcement

2nd Pattern

Upon realization that the die of the 1st pattern badge could not be successfully reconfigured, a new die was designed and produced. The talons on the diving eagle were now slightly enlarged and held close to its body (not extended like the first pattern) thus greatly reducing the likelihood that they would be sheered off during the strike process. Another new feature was the existence of the flat die plate (or beard) which extended from the Wehrmachtadlers beak to its right shoulder. It is assumed that this measure was taken to reinforce the beak area, and perhaps to save the time needed to do the delicate tooling to this area after the strike. The 2nd pattern, just like the 1st, featured only an anodized finish.

The major noticeable difference when looking at the reverse of the 2nd pattern badge (in comparison to the 1st pattern) is the lack of a makers mark. In nearly all cases these badges were not marked (as of the writing of this article, the author has only seen one (1) 2nd pattern badge with the CE Juncker stamp thought to be original) Other features (barrel hinge, "C" form catch from round stock wire, domed rivets remain the same) 2nd pattern badges were produced with both pointed and rounded tip pins. Dimensions of these badges were approximately 55mm x 42mm and weighed approximately 12.5 grams.



Obverse



Reverse

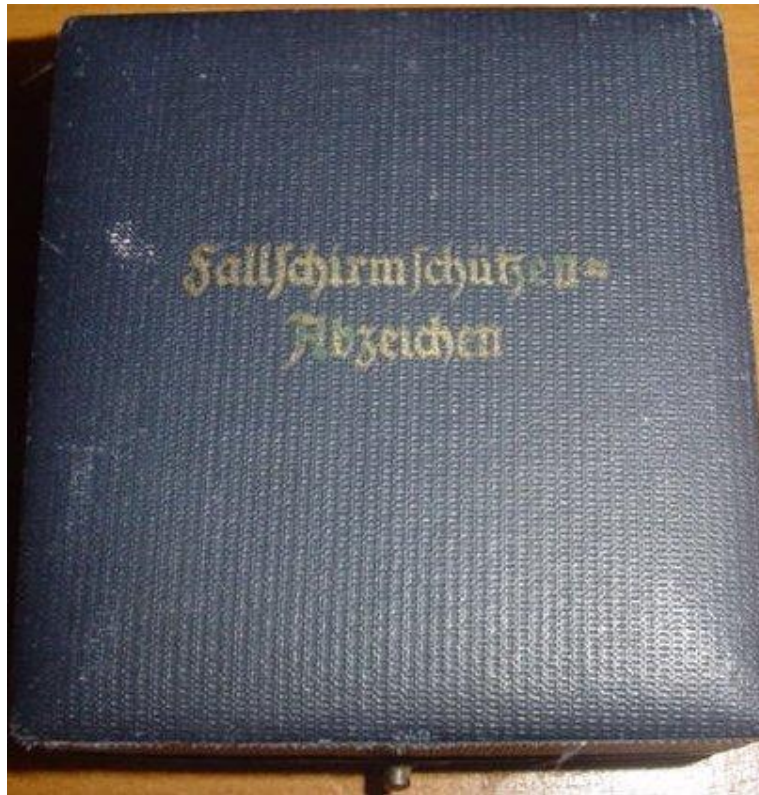


Talon area



"Bearded" eagle.

Below - original presentation box for the army paratrooper badge. All originals, still in the hands of the surviving recipients, observed by the author have been exactly the same (wording, texture/color of cloth). Presentation cases with the wording "Fallschirmschuetzenabzeichen des Heeres" are pure fantasy in the opinion of the author.



Silver

Members of the Fallschirm Infanterie had the option of purchasing a badge in 800 fine silver from local jewelers. These badge were also manufactured by CE Juncker of Berlin, and were of extremely high quality and detail. Both FIK (struck from the 1st pattern (reinforced talon) die) and FIB (from the 2nd pattern die) were produced. After the order was placed (with the jeweler), the jeweler would send the persons details to Juncker with the order. The reverse typically had the persons Name, Rank and Unit engraved on the reverse, along with a number. These numbers corresponded to the control number on the paratrooper badge award document, OR the control number on the paratrooper license.

Johannes Schilling (# 154) placed his order for this badge with a jeweler in Braunlage (near the Harz Mountains) in late 1937. Notice the only marking which should be found on the reverse in the 800 (800 parts genuine silver 200 parts alloying agents) stamp. Notice also the tapering of the pin and the placement of the "C" form catch.



The FIB version badges (struck from the 2nd pattern aluminum dies) were slightly heavier than the FIK version (weighing 35 grams compared to the 30 grams of the FIK version). Neither version of the badge featured the flat die plate (or beard) under the Wehrmachtadlers beak.

Fallschirmfunker Uffz. Willmann was a member of the Nachrichten Zug (communications platoon) of the Fallschirm Infanterie Bataillon.



1937 Cloth

Pictured below is a 1937 cloth badge machine embroidered on dark blue/green oval. As of this writing, photographic evidence of this badge being worn by members of the FIK/FIB does not exist. The author is making the tentative assumption that these were produced prewar based on two things. 1. Interviews with surviving members of the FIK/FIB. 2. The existence of one of these badges glued into a prewar photo album.

Original examples have been observed with both black and light brown backing material.

Below - 1937/38 model badge in cloth in unissued condition



Eric Queen Collection

[Click on image to enlarge this used example;](#)



1943

The Army Paratroopers Badge (now called Fallschirmschützenabzeichen des Heeres) was re-instituted on June 01, 1943 with the formation of the 15th (Fallschirmjäger) Kompanie of Brandenburg Regiment 4 (on April 01, 1943). The badge was produced Feinzink by CE Juncker of

Berlin with the same dies used to manufacturer the 2nd model badge in aluminum. Dimensions were the same as the 2nd pattern badge in aluminum and the weight was approximately 29.5 grams.

Notice that the 1943 pattern badge, like the 2nd model aluminum, was also unmarked. There were some differences, however. Both the barrel hinge and "C" form catch were first affixed to a flat plate (oblong for the barrel hinge and circular for the "C" form catch) then adhered to the reverse of the wreath (not to the reverse of the wreath directly as with the aluminum badges). The finish used on these post reinstatement badges was an "economy wash", similar to what was used on other mid-war badges. Notice the "bubbling" on the reverse of the diving eagle, which is characteristic of know originals



Soldbuch issued to
(BRANDENBURGER)
Uffz. GEIER. Notice he is
wearing the 1943 pattern
badge in the photograph.
Credit: Private Collection



1943 Pattern badges were
produced with "C" form
catches made from both
round and flat stock wire.
Credit: Bob Hritz
Collection

1943 Cloth



As early as 1941 and right up until the end of the war, partisans carried out guerrilla operations behind the operational lines of the Wehrmacht. In their efforts to check these insurrectionary groups, German armed forces faced a new form of combat - one fought against irregular troops that attacked rear areas and logistics lines and then retreated into forests or mixed in with the civilian population. Although they depended on them, the Partisans were very often ruthless against their own people, stealing from them in order to survive. Add to this the fact that the native population often suffered retributions at the hands of the Germans for the acts of these fighting civilians, and very people the partisans were supposed to be fighting to liberate habitually turned against them.

All combat theatres experienced this type of fighting to some degree, from the the Soviet Union, Balkan and Adriatic coast to Italy and France. Virtually all branches of the German Armed Forces were utilized in controlling this form of terrorism. Anti-partisan warfare was not only entrusted to the to the Army, security troops (Sipo, SD), Feldgendarmerie and Police units, but also to the Waffen SS (Karstjäger, SS polizei regiment), Luftwaffe, and even Kriegsmarine coastal troops.

Initially, overall control of Anti-Partisan forces rested with the Army, but in October 1942 command was handed over to the Waffen SS. In June 1943, the SS Obergruppenführer und General der Polizei von dem Bach-Zelewski was named chief of the anti-partisan warfare. In February 1944, Hight SS Polizei Chiefs (H.SS.P.F) were placed in each military country (Eastern front, Italia and Balkan,) in order to represent the authority of Heinrich Himmler.

Battles against partisans were particularly fierce and few prisoners were ever taken. The German men that fought the partisans regarded them as little more than bandits and criminals (they were called "Banden"), but knew that some were well organized. They also knew that when engaged, the partisans put up a bitter fight because they had nothing to lose. If captured, they would most likely be shot or hanged as traders and saboteurs, and they knew this.

In order to recognize the difficult task of the German Forces fighting these armed gangs, and the courage displayed in doing so, the Anti-Partisans badge was instituted on January 30, 1944 by Adolf Hitler. Three classes existed; Bronze, Silver, and Gold for respectively 20, 50 and 100 combat days.





Above is Partisan Badge in Bronze, below in Silver





Manufacturing and Technical Information

The badge was composed of a skull and crossed bones surmounted by a sword, with five heads of the Hydra (whose tail is seen wriggling down the blade), an ancient Greek Mythological snake-like creature. The terrifying sea-living Hydra was characterized by the fact that even though one head was cut off, a new one would grow in its place - just like the omnipresent partisan groups. The sword has a swastika sun wheel and it is surrounded by an oak leaves wreath. It was manufactured in zinc and two main types were manufactured; solid and semi hollow. Variants of the semi hollow type exist, with large or thin pin, different catch system, and with or without silhouetted heads of the snakes.

Presentation, Wear, Documents

The badge was delivered in a dark green box with burgundy velvet lid and white satin top. It was to be worn on the upper left pocket, below the EK1.

An award document was presented with the badge (several variants exist), and the pertinent information was entered in the individual documents.

It is worth noting that few pictures are known showing this badge worn. According to veterans, it was not really appreciated by the soldiers, and its wear and entry in the Soldbuch could cost them life at the end of the war when captured.



A captured Anti-Partisan badge recipient walks down a road somewhere in Italy, 1945

Award Criteria

Heinrich Himmler was in charge of the conditions of attribution. Ground combat personnel needed to accumulate 20 combat days for a Bronze medal, 50 combat days for Silver and 100 for Gold. Luftwaffe personnel required respectively 30, 75, and 150 operational flights in connection with an anti-partisan action. An operational flight was any sortie flown in support of anti partisan operations. If the aircraft was shot down by partisans, the sortie counted as three. A special grade, in gold with diamonds, manufactured by C.E. Juncker, also existed but was

never presented. Heinrich Himmler reserved the right to award himself the gold badge.



The Heeres-Flakabzeichen was instituted by the OKH on July 18, 1941 and was designed by the firm of Ernst Wilhelm Peekhaus of Berlin. Members of flak batteries, sound-locator crews, and searchlight crews in a support role were also qualified to earn the award.

Manufacturing and Technical information

The badge consisted of an 88mm flak gun surrounded by a wreath of oakleaves and a national emblem at the top. Eight leaves make up the wreath, four per side, with an acorn positioned between each leaf. The 88mm gun faces right and the barrel extends beyond the right side of the wreath. Original examples have excellent details and were produced in a single piece unlike their Luftwaffe counterparts. The badge was solid backed or semi-hollow with a thin vertical pin and retaining clasp on the rear. Any die struck badges should be looked upon with suspicion.





Presentation, Wear and Documents

Authorization of the award was given by commanders holding the rank of General der Artillerie or higher. Regulations stated it was to be worn on the left breast pocket. If worn in conjunction with the General Assault Badge, it was to be positioned to the left.

The standard document was printed in a variety of styles and contained the date of authorization, name, rank, and unit of the recipient. The signature of General grade officer and official service stamp were at the bottom.

Award Criteria

The Heer Flak Badge was awarded via a point system, with 16 being the requisite. Four points were awarded to the battery credited with downing an enemy aircraft without support. If other batteries assisted only two points were awarded. Searchlight or sound locator crews, working in conjunction with flak batteries, which were credited with a first detection, were awarded one point. The award could also be given, regardless of points, for bravery or merit in conducting an anti-aircraft mission.

Officers, NCO's and enlisted men were eligible for the award. It was bestowed upon unit commanders once half the men under their command had received it.

Unlike its Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine counterparts, the Heeres-Flakabzeichen was awarded for attacks on air targets only. Crewmembers who participated in a sufficient number of ground assaults were awarded the General Assault Badge. When the badges were worn at the same time the Heer Flak Badge was worn to the left.





Before the sniper badge was introduced, unit sniper's were awarded with Iron Cross. The ongoing conflict in the east with its threat of soviet snipers made it necessary to create a badge visually distinguishing skilled and successful German (counter-)snipers in their units.

On August 20th, 1944, approximately one year after the first discussion on the introduction of such award had begun and then was suspended, the Führer instituted a special sniper's badge (Scharfschuetzen-Abzeichen) for the Army and SS-Verfügungstruppe (later changed into the Waffen-SS). The badge was to honor the marksman with his rifle, his success in the aimed single shot and at the same time being a motivation to show higher performance in the future.

Manufacturing and Technical information

The badge consists of an oval gray fabric shield which usually measures approx. 70 mm in height and 55 mm in width. The oval shield has a 2mm wide may-green surrounding border. Located in the center is a black eagle's head looking to the right with white chain stitching on its body. The eye and closed beak are stitched in orange/brown thread. The lower half of the badge shows two larger oakleaves both touching the shield borders left and right near the center of the badge. Below the left oakleave is a small oak and opposite of it a smaller additional oakleave. The fibers/veins of the oakleaves are may-green in color.



Regulations:

1. The sniper badge is to be awarded by the next superior having the authority of at least a Regimental commander upon written request of the unit leader, to designated and trained snipers. The receiver of the award is to be presented with an award certificate and the award is to be entered into his personal papers.
2. The badge is to be divided into 3 grades and is to be worn on the lower right sleeve. In case a soldier is wearing a specialist's badges or will receive one next to the sniper's badge the same is to be worn below the sniper's badge.
3. It will be awarded:
 - Grade I - for a minimum of 20 enemy kills, starting from Sept. 1st, 1944 (badge without specific surrounding)
 - Grade II - for a minimum of 40 enemy kills, starting from Sept. 1st, 1944 (badge with silver cord)
 - Grade III - for a minimum of 60 enemy kills, starting from Sept. 1st, 1944 (badge with golden cord)
4. For each successful kill the unit has to be given a report and confirmation of minimum one witness. The unit will issue sniper lists based on these reports. An extract of this list is to be passed on to the new unit along with other personal papers upon transfer. A retrospective accreditation of kills (prior to Sept. 1st, 1944, the Author) will not be allowed in order to evade unnecessary paperwork. It is being suggested to honor the previous achievements by awarding Iron Crosses.

Around December 1944 / January 1945 the regulations changed: From now on, following the will of Adolf Hitler, all soldiers engaged in ground combat, were qualified to be awarded the sniper badge. This included the Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine.

Presentation, Wear and Documents

According to the award regulations the certificates had to be organized by the awarding units on their own. Towards the end of the war this led to simple typewriter written award certificates only bearing the official wording, stamp of the issuing unit and the signature and rank of the unit's commanding officer.

The badge was to be worn on the lower right sleeve of the tunic above the cuffs. According to the Kriegsmarine regulation dated January 3rd, 1945 an awarding unit was to request 2 badges for each sniper from the OKM Mar Wehr/ Tr II vk. However, after

all German snipers in Soviet captivity were executed at once the Oberkommando order that before becoming a POW one had to remove and conceal the badge.

Remark:

Due to the fact that the badge was issued late in the war, to a limited number of personnel, that it was not produced by the other well-known badge firms and that it was usually destroyed or thrown away before captivity or after May 1945, the badge is considered by many collectors as extremely rare and it's differently manufactured versions make it critically acclaimed in terms of fakes. There are a lot of fakes in circulation of which some do not go in line with the images shown in contemporary literature such as the Marineverordnungsblatt dd. 03.01.1945 or the Allgem. Heeresmitteilung and Deutsche Uniformen Zeitschrift 10/1944, page 3). Others are not produced from old wool mtrl and make use of modern dyes. A completely woven 4-colour example is regarded as 100 pct. post May 1945 production.



This badge has its roots in the drastic developments that motorized warfare underwent in the years prior to World War II, and the fact that highly mobile forces became of vital strategic importance in the success of the Wehrmacht (and all armies involved in the war). The badge was created to recognize both civilian and military drivers who distinguished themselves during combat and who took exceptional care in maintaining their vehicles under the most harsh of conditions. The "Kraftfahrbewährungsabzeichen" was instituted in three grades (Bronze, Silver, Gold) on the 23rd of October 1942 and was made retroactive to 01.12.1940.

Manufacturing and Technical Information

The design of the badge was created by a Waffen-SS enlisted man, and it is rather unusual for a Third Reich decoration in that there is no Swastika to be found on the badge. The design of the badge is simple and consists only of a steering wheel surrounded by laurel leaves. It was presented affixed to a piece of cloth, round or even diamond shaped, in the basic color of the uniform (black, green, blue, etc). The badge is always hollow stamped and is manufactured in either iron or zinc (late

war pieces are made from zinc). After it was stamped, the correct finish was applied.



Presentation, wear and Documents

The badge was worn in the middle of the lower left arm sleeve of the uniform. Whenever there was a so called drivers distinction (Armeltätigkeitsabzeichen) it had to be worn 2 cm above this distinction.



This picture above of Peter Himbert shows the correct placement of the Driver Proficiency Badge. The photo was taken shortly after he was awarded the Iron Cross 2nd Class. For more pictures and documents of this recipient please visit the Peter Himbert page in the Recipient Gallery

An award document accompanied the badge and these can vary from from very nice preprinted examples towards machine typed field documents. An award notification was made in the persons papers such as Wehrpass and Soldbuch.



Field typed
award
document
for the
Driver's
Badge in
bronze.

Click on
image to
enlarge

(Photo
Courtesy
Angel
Farr)



Official
document
for the Silver
grade.

Click on
image to
enlarge.

(Photo
Courtesy
Angel
Farr)



Soldbuch
entries
for the
Bronze
and
Silver
Driver's
Badge.

Award criteria

In the case of a military award the badge was rendered by the unit commanding Office, for civilians the badge was authorized by the Minister of the Interior.

The service areas where strictly described for award of this badge and were as follows,

I) Service from 01.12.1940 in the following areas;

- Occupied Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria, Rumania
- Areas to the north of the old Russian border (before the attachment from the Baltic states to the USSR).
- Finland, Norway (north of the Polar circle or in Lappland)
 - Africa

II) Merit in the above mentioned areas under hard conditions, and these are further specified as follow :

- Motorcycle dispatcher : 90 days of service
- Drivers from armed vehicles : 120 days of service
- Drivers from miscellaneous vehicles : 150 days of service (especially close to the fighting forces such as staff drivers)
 - Drivers from supply vehicles: 165 days of service
 - Drivers attached to different commando units of the Wehrmacht: 185 days of service

The following candidates were eligible for the badge :

1. Drivers attached to the Wehrmacht (any branch)
2. Drivers (non Wehrmacht personnel) who provided service for the Wehrmacht.

Foreign volunteers could be awarded this badge, but allied troops were excluded. Posthumous awards were not allowed.

With the date of 09.03.1944 the Oberkommando des Heeres added further operational areas to the award criteria as follows,

- From 01.06.1943: Sicily
- From 01.07.1943: Sardinia and Korsika
- From 01.08.1943: The Italian half island south from the line Ancona - Piombino.
- From 09.09.1943: Albania

Another expansion of the operational areas was made by the Oberkommando des Heeres on 16.05.1944;

- From 01.02.1944 : all the backwards areas from Heeresgruppe Nord in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania;

The last expansion was made public on 23.09.1944, again by the OdH

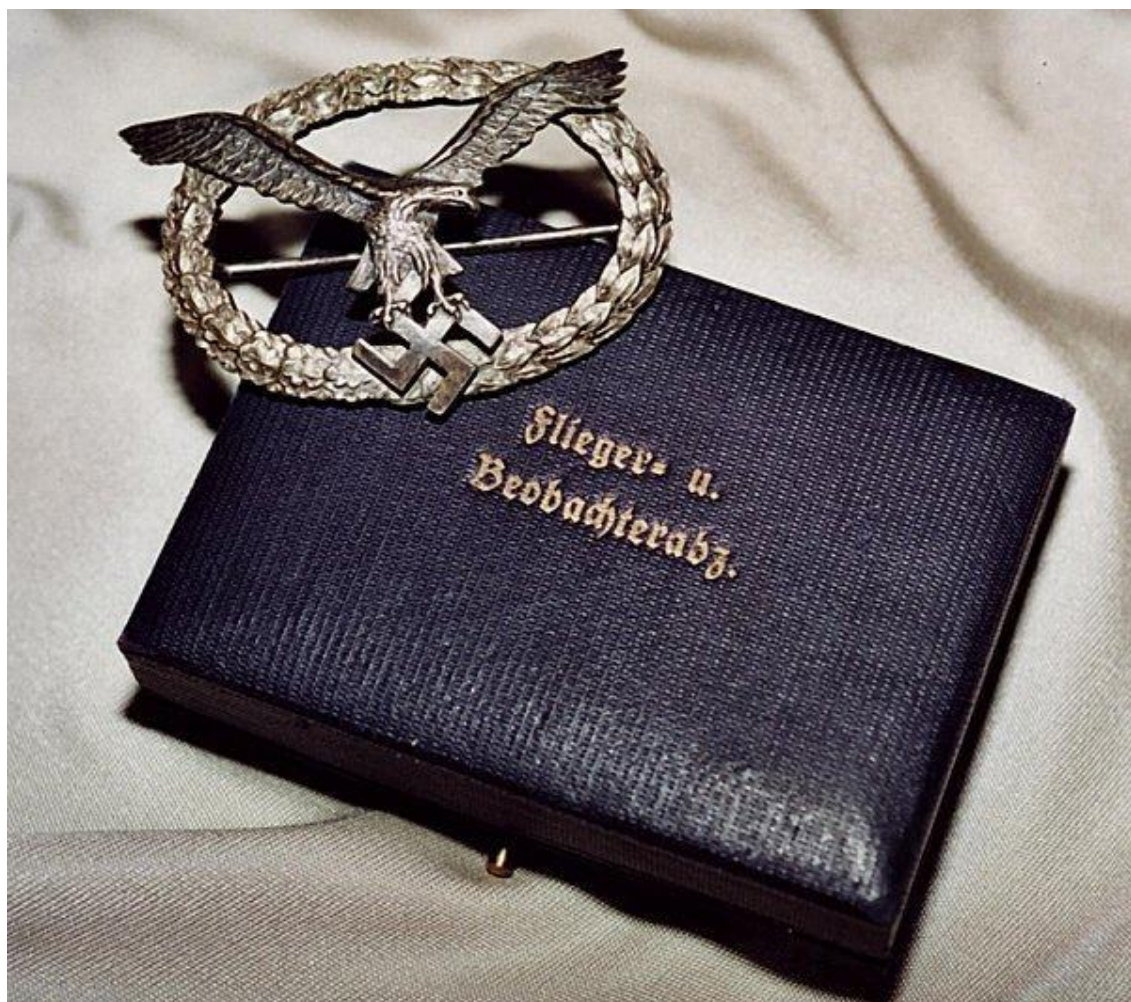
- From 01.06.1944 : all the backwards areas on all fronts as been approved by Heeresgruppen Befehl

Exceptions could be made for the required service time providing the nature of the service rendered was exceptional noteworthy or under extremely difficult terrain or climate conditions. Once a person qualified for the badge he was expected to maintain the level of performance, any driving conviction or vehicle neglect would result in the award being withdrawn.



The Luftwaffe Air Crew badge, one of the earliest flight related badges, was used in the infancy of Germany's air program to reward pilots and crew members of the German Air Sports Association. This Association served as a cover to the banned German Air Force until April 1st, 1935, when the Luftwaffe gained official sanction (in spite of the Versailles treaty). Though it is difficult to ascertain an institution date for the badge, known references state that it was used since 1933.

On January 19th, 1935, the Air Crew Badge became the official Pilot-Observer badge of the Luftwaffe, but later that same year, in November, it was replaced by a newer version and removed from circulation. As a result of its short, half-clandestine life, this is one of the rarest of all the badges of Luftwaffe badges. The example pictured below is an original example of this extremely rare award from the Pieter Verbruggen Collection.





The pilot badge was instituted on august,12, 1935 by order of Reichsmarchall Hermann Goring (references are found in the "Luftwaffen Verordnungsblatt" of may, 23, 1935).



Design

The pilot badge takes the form of a massive swooping eagle clutching a mobile swastika in it's talons. The eagle is superimposed on a wreath of half laurel (left) and half oak leaves (right). The wreath imagery is carried over from the Imperial flight badge series. The Luftwaffe pilot badge portrays an image of unbridled aggression and ferocity.

Materials, Construction and Finish

As with most Third Reich items, the pilot badge can be found in materials of different quality. Aluminum, nickel-silver, plated tombak, plated alloy and lacquered zinc were all used. Pre and early war versions tend to be executed in high quality nickel and tombak, while the mid to late war pieces tend to be of the alloy and zinc variety. Aluminum was used in the late 1930's, but was rather quickly deemed unsuitable. Original aluminum badges are prized for their rarity and pristine finish. Pin assemblies are normally nickel or nickel plated tombak on earlier badges. Later types often have pins and hinges made of steel or alloy.

The eagle and wreath are struck from an appropriate metal and always display good detail. Many early and high quality versions are made using a technique called die forging, which involves metal stock being heated until red hot and malleable. The raw material is then struck with an open die under tons of pressure. The resulting image is then removed and cooled. This process creates intricate patterns and multi-dimensional designs without undue wear on the toolings. The result is a crisp, detailed image with quite prominent die strike lines. The cooling process often renders small fissures in the image known as "cold shuts". The fissures look like tiny folds or cracks and are often only apparent under magnification. The components are hand finished, which can render a slightly different outline to badges by the same maker. This feature is most obvious in the wingtip feathers, talon/swastika area and wreath.

All pilot badges, even those made of inferior materials, are of a multi-piece, two rivet construction. The size and shape of the rivets vary with the maker and quality of the badge. High quality versions tend to have small, symmetrical precision rivets. Cheaper types use larger button rivets or even ones that are "squashed" into place. The high quality product of one maker, Gebrüder Wegerhoff of Ludenscheid (GWL), has countersunk rivets with a tiny hollow "divet" in the center. A feature to look for on higher quality pilot badges is the presence of solder neatly built up around the base of the rivet where it attaches to the back of the eagle. This was often done to stabilize the rivet

and give a better surface for riveting. This is a quality touch not normally found on restrikes and reproductions.

High quality pilot badges are almost always found with neatly soldered barrel hinges and catches formed from stout wire. The catches are neatly finished on the free end and are soldered directly to the wreath. Again, high quality GWL badges are a notable exception. They have small block hinges and catches that look like a tiny claw. Cheaper pilot badges often have hinges and catches attached with soldering plates of various designs. This technique was used to expand the surface area of the soldering point on components made of inferior, lead based alloys. The pin on virtually all original pilot badges is the needle type. On high quality versions, it is soldered directly into the barrel hinge, while on cheaper versions it can be found looped through the hinge in a shepherd's crook shape. The tip of the pin is normally pointed or finished in a dome-like shape.

Regardless of quality, the pilot badge is always finished with a dark, oxidized eagle and silver wreath. On high quality badges made of nickel silver or nickel silver plated tombak, the eagle is chemically darkened and the wreath is chemically frosted in a matte silver. The highlights of the wreath are often burnished to a shine, leaving the frosting behind in the recessed areas. The result is an exceptionally attractive badge with a pronounced three dimensional look. Cheaper badges use thin plating and lacquer washes to achieve the appropriate colors. These badges, while acceptable products, pale in comparison to their high quality counterparts.

Dimensions

The specifications* for the pilot badge were mandated upon its creation in 1936. They are:

- Wingspan of eagle: 65mm
- Height (and width) of swastika: 15-16mm
- Thickness of eagle: 2.5mm
- Width of wreath: 42mm
- Height of wreath: 53mm
- Thickness of wreath: 2.5mm

*These dimensions vary slightly from badge to badge and maker to maker.

Specific Makers

The pilot badge was produced in comparatively large numbers by many different firms. I have geared my comments toward the more attractive and collector-desirable high quality badges. As the quality of materials declined, most makers tended to continue using the same dies in conjunction with cheaper pins and finishes.

Some of the more commonly encountered or desirable types are:

C.E. Juncker

Juncker badges are arguably the best, and certainly one of the most desirable pilot badges. The early high quality versions can be found in two distinct patterns. The first, produced from 1936 to approximately 1939, has a very flat eagle and thinner wreath. The space between the eagle's legs is often pierced in order to give a three dimensional look. The second pattern has a more massive eagle and thicker wreath. The second pattern is the most commonly encountered high quality Juncker pilot badge. Both styles have small, neatly finished dome rivets that often include a small flat spot on the top. These rivets also frequently have a dark copper color on badges that were worn. The hinges are of the barrel variety and typically measure in the neighborhood of 13.2 mm. The catches are formed from thick round stock and are soldered directly to the wreath. When worn, the hinges and catches display the same copper color found on the rivets. The finish of original high quality Juncker badges is exceptionally fine and delicate. The darkening of the eagle looks almost like the bluing on a gun as opposed to the thick, black oxide finish of other makers. Similarly, the silver frosting on the wreath is very thin and subject to wear. It is difficult to find an original Juncker pilot badge with all of its finish intact!

Juncker pilot badges are almost always marked in one of two ways. The first version is the letters "CEJ" inside a rectangle. This is the earlier mark and is only found on the first pattern badge. The second marking is:

C.E. Juncker
Berlin SW

Note the full stop periods after the C. and E., but not after the S and W. Also, the Juncker maker stamp uses distinctive stylized lettering that make the various strokes look almost like tiny triangles. This is especially noticeable in the "L" of Berlin.



High quality Juncker badges have a look and feel that is unmistakable. This goes for all of their high quality badges in the aircrew series. Once you've handled and really examined an original, you will never be fooled by a fake. The C.E. Juncker firm was the Tiffany and Company of German badge production. Consequently, Juncker badges look more like high quality jewelry than pieces of military insignia.

Note: Juncker also produced the very first pattern of aircrew badge. This piece has a horizontally oval wreath and a large gangly looking eagle. Because it is actually the precursor of the Combined Pilot Observer badge, it will not be covered.

J(I)MME

The Berlin firm of IMME , often written JMME in keeping with the German practice of switching these two letters, also made very high quality pilot badges. Their products are virtually identical in pattern to the C.E. Juncker pilot badge. The construction is

somewhat different in that the eagle is more vaulted and the wreath has a slightly more vaulted, thinner profile. JMME rivets are very tiny, and their high quality products have barrel hinges, needle pins and thick wire catches.

JMME badges have a very thick, frosty silver finish on the wreath and an oxidized eagle that is finished a bit like a Juncker. Their badges are typically marked "JMME" or "JMME & (u) Sohn Berlin". Original JMME badges are very high quality articles.



Wilhelm Deumer

Like JMME products, the pilot badges made by the Wilhelm Deumer firm of Ludenscheid look very much like those of C.E. Juncker. The distinguishing feature of a Deumer badge is a thicker, more durable finish and a tiny hand done cut out between the legs. High quality versions have barrel hinges, needle pins and wire catches. Again, high quality is the key. These badges are normally marked :

W. Deumer
Ludenscheid

Gebruder Schneider, Wein (BSW)

The Austrian firm of BSW made unique and particularly attractive pilot badges. Sometimes called "squat eagles", they have a small, delicate look. Assembled with tiny precision rivets, BSWs also have a long narrow barrel hinge and a very different catch. Formed from a piece of stout wire, the catch is neatly soldered into the wreath at a right angle. BSW badges have a shiny silver finish and darkly burnished eagle. It should also be noted that the two outer sections of the barrel hinge are finished in silver, but the inner section is darkened along with the pin. High quality BSW finishes are tough and have held up well over the years. BSW pilot badges are incused with either the famous clover leaf insignia, or the firm's name written out in tiny letters.

The high quality BSW pilot badge embodies what I like about Third Reich badge collecting. The light, airy feel of their product is distinctly Austrian. Note the difference between it and the massive, definitely Prussian-looking Juncker badge.





F.W. Assmann und Sohn

This firm churned out all manner of regalia for the German government. As such, their pilot badges have a slightly more "mass produced" feel. The early pieces are still of very nice quality, but they don't compare to a Juncker or other high end maker. High quality Assmanns have distinctive die and construction characteristics. Compared to a Juncker badge, the wreath has a more concave appearance and the eagle is slightly less three dimensional. Also, the pattern on the wreath has a smooth, less "cut" appearance. The rivets are the most distinctive feature of an Assmann badge. Often called "cupcake" rivets, their profile looks like the top of a cupcake. The rivets are also slightly countersunk and have concentric "spin" marks on them ending in a tiny nipple at the very top. This style of rivet disappeared as the war progressed. High quality Assmann badges have barrel hinges, needle pins and wire catches. They are also invariably marked with the incused, stylized "A" typical of Assmann products.



Assmann Badge



Gebrüder Wegerhoff, Ludenscheid (GWL)

GWL pilot badges are perhaps the most visually distinctive. They have a unique die pattern that gives the eagle a slightly chubby look compared to other makers. The wreath is highly detailed and multi-dimensional. The back of a GWL pilot badge is what really sets it apart. As mentioned above, GWLs have block hinges and catches that look like a tiny claw formed from flat metal stock. GWL pins are the Shepherd crook type and the rivets have a distinctive countersunk appearance with a small divet in the center. The finish of a GWL pilot badge is exceptionally attractive and is what makes them a very desirable addition to any collection. The eagle is oxidized in a rich caramel-bronze color and the wreath has a very frosty silver appearance. A GWL finish is durable and has held up well over the years. High quality GWL pilot badges are always marked with the firm's logo, the letters "GWL" enclosed in a circle. The logo has a "break" in the circle at approximately the 7 o'clock position which is probably the result of a slightly defective stamp. Like a Juncker badge, high quality GWLs command a premium on today's market.



OM

Nobody knows exactly what OM stands for, but their pilot badges are very high quality and quite desirable. OM badges have a distinctive look to the talons of the eagle. While most other makers used patterns that make the eagle look like it is actually clutching the swastika in it's talons, OM eagles have talons that look one dimensional...almost like two three pronged forks. OM badges also have a small circular cut out between the eagle's legs. OM badges have barrel hinges and wire catches, and are deeply marked with the letters "OM" in small incuse relief script. Original OM pilot badges are very rare and valuable.

Some other original pilot badge makers are:

- Berg & N
- Paul Maybauer, Berlin (PM)
- MuK

Wear

The badge was worn on the upper left uniform pocket, below the Iron Cross 1st Class. Eligible to receive it were all those who completed pilot training.

Below is Walter Sumpf, who flew with KG100 and was a late war RK winner. The picture is neat because it is so wrong! He is wearing both a pilot and pilot observer badge! His Knights Cross is actually a converted Iron Cross 2nd Class.

Miscellaneous

Cloth pilot badge

The pilot badge was also authorized in a cloth sew-on version. Judging from period photos, this was a popular option. Cloth badges for enlisted personnel are done in machine woven thread, while those for officers are made of wire bullion. Both types are most typically found with Luftwaffe Blue-grey cloth backings.



“Round wreath” pilot badge

Here we go! I'll don my armor now. Many reference books and dealer catalogues refer to a version of the pilot badge that has a completely round wreath. Various explanations for this odd feature are often discussed. I have heard these badges referred to as prototype pieces, items made in Axis allied nations and even jet pilot badges! In reality, nobody knows for sure why these badges exist or if they are genuine. I'm a Luftwaffe nut, and have been since childhood. I have NEVER seen a photo of this badge being worn. I'll be the first to admit that a lack of photographic evidence isn't necessarily a reason to condemn something, but it does make you wonder. Additionally, reproductions of “original” round wreath badges definitely exist. My advice: stick with a known maker and pattern...it is much safer. Having said that, I would love to see or hear concrete evidence which supports the originality of the “round wreath” badge. I would be especially interested in seeing period photos of one being worn.

Imperial pilot badge

Imperial era pilot badges are often seen in Third Reich period photos. Many veterans of the First World War proudly wore their Imperial flight badges, often in conjunction with a Third

Reich era version. Imperial pilot badges exist in different styles according to kingdom and service. The most common type, however, is the Prussian pilot badge. The design of a Prussian pilot badge consists of the familiar oak and laurel wreath surrounding an aircraft in flight over a pastoral scene. The wreath is topped with the Imperial crown and has the image of a tied ribbon at the base. Different construction styles exist, including stamped, two piece hollow types and one piece "massive" versions. The pin construction on actual WWI era badges is of the wide, drawn variety, while badges made during the 1920s and 30s tend to have Third Reich style needle pins. Imperial pilot badges are often made of 800 silver, but also exist in higher silver grades and non-silver alloy. Imperial flight badge collecting is a fascinating field, but it suffers from lack of good reference material. Proceed with caution!



Axis allied pilot badges

Tradition held that German pilots were allowed to wear the aircrew qualification badges of allied nations alongside their Luftwaffe versions. This practice was especially common among German pilots serving in the Balkans, North Africa and Italy. Two examples of Axis allied pilot badges are the:

- **Italian Pilot Badge:** The design for this badge consists of a long, slender, stylized eagle surmounted by a crown and clutching a fascia (bundle of sticks) in its talons. These badges can be found with a variety of maker marks, but are normally gold colored, die struck and pin backed. Period photos show that German pilots typically wore this

insignia above one of their tunic pockets. As a side note, Italian pilot badges can be used to track Italy's fortunes in WWII. After Italy's surrender and official withdrawal from the war in 1943, some Reggia Aeronautica (Italian Air Force) pilots chose to "soldier on" with their German counterparts, while others chose to support the Allies. The pilots in the first category often snipped the Imperial crown from their pilot badge, while those in the second category left the crown, but removed the fascia (the fascia being the symbol of Mussolini's black shirt movement). Since German military personnel were forbidden to wear Italian insignia or awards after the surrender, the Italian pilot badges worn by Luftwaffe members more often than not have the crown and fascia intact.

- Bulgarian pilot badge: The pilot badges issued by the Kingdom of Bulgaria are, in the author's opinion, among the most attractive aircrew insignia ever made. Of a multi-piece construction, the Bulgarian pilot badge consists of an oval, stamped, silvered front plate with a separately applied gilt eagle. The edges of the oval have a wreath pattern with an Imperial crown (also gilt) at the top and a bow at the bottom surmounted by a shield with a rampant lion motif in the center. The obverse of the badge has exceptionally fine enamel work in the form of sky blue "rays" and a red background to the crown and shield. The reverse has a very shiny, rounded silver backing plate and a screw back attachment. The example in my collection, and the other originals I have seen, have cyrillic markings in a circle on the shiny backing plate and on the brass nut for the screwback.. The Bulgarian pilot badge was typically worn on the lower left tunic pocket.



Cases

The pilot badge was presented in a blue hinged box with the typical spring loaded stud fastener. The interior is comprised a blue or purple silk padded lid and a blue flocked, fitted insert in the bottom. The lettering on original case s can vary slightly in wording, but is always gold in color.

Reproductions and Restrikes

This is always a difficult topic to discuss because of the new fakes that seem to constantly flood the market. The best advice I can give is to look for the characteristics associated with known original versions of the maker you seek. Needless to say, any hand cast pilot badge should be dismissed out of hand. All originals were made with heavy industrial dies. Also look for overall quality. Early pilot badges stand out in this area. In my opinion, restrikes made from original dies pose the most serious threat to the collector of Luftwaffe pilot badges. Because the original toolings are used, these badges have die characteristics identical to an original. Luckily, restrikes almost always fall down in quality or in the subtleties of construction, marking and finish. Again, if you know what an original is supposed to look like, you're ahead of the game. Some of the more well known reproductions are:

Pfleuger & Voss:

This mark can be found on many fake badges, including Luftwaffe pilot badges. Pfleuger & Voss DID NOT make badges during the Third Reich era. These are fakes, don't touch them.

L/58:

L/58 is the infamous LdO mark of Rudolph Souval. Souval restruck pilot badges along with numerous other items. Post war Souval pilot badges are typically executed in zinc, have the L/58 logo on the back in tiny incuse relief and have a cheap, non-standard pin and catch arrangement. Often the eagle is attached to the wreath by bent wires instead of rivets. I have also seen pilot badges matching the Souval die characteristics executed in high quality materials. To the best of my knowledge, Souval did not make pilot badges during or before the war, so anything with Souval markings or die characteristics should be treated with great suspicion.

C.E. Juncker "SW 68":

Beginning in the 1980s, pilot and other aircrew badges bearing an SW 68 version of the Juncker logo began to appear on the market. These badges are normally in mint condition and do not share the commonly accepted Juncker die characteristics. The known original Juncker aircrew badges I have observed DO NOT have the number 68 included in the SW portion of the logo. In all fairness, the jury is technically still out on these pieces. In fact, recently an experienced German collector encountered a veteran acquired example of a Juncker aircrew qualification badge that DID have the "SW 68" logo. I would still advise caution with these however.

The latest and greatest:

Recently I've run across a series of very disturbing pilot badges that I believe are 100% bogus. The more commonly encountered one has an eagle that is identical to the early pattern Juncker badge, ie, flat and with cut out legs. The wreath seems to be struck from some kind of a modern alloy and has a very flat, one dimensional look. The wreath also doesn't match the die characteristics of an original first pattern Juncker badge. The eagles on these pieces are, unlike an original Juncker, heavily oxidized and dark. The wreaths typically have an odd frosted appearance. Although the quality of these badges is exceptionally high, the pin, hinge and catch differ slightly from an original Juncker piece. These items are marked with the correct CE Juncker logo. To make matters worse, I have seen badges with eagles matching the die characteristics of other original makers attached to the SAME wreath, hinge, pin and catch! I have also seen Luftwaffe observer badges with this wreath. It is my opinion that these badges belong to a series of fakes made from high quality castings of original eagles, which

are in turn attached to a universal die struck wreath. The casting captures the detail of the original and also the maker mark. The Juncker version I have seen has a slightly pitted, porous look to the entire surface of the eagle, even the edges and back. The casting has also picked up some of the heavy die marks. Be very careful of these!

FAKE PILOTS BADGE

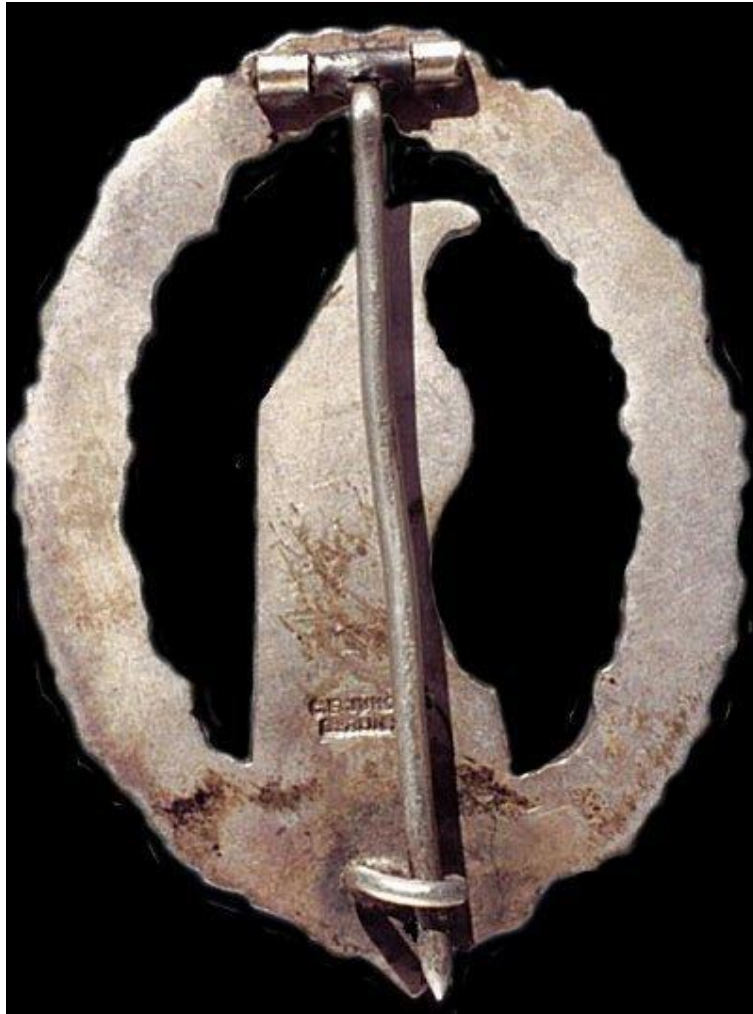




Flyer's Commemorative Badge (Flieger-Erinnerungsabzeichen)

The Minister of Aviation and the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe instituted the Flyer's Commemorative Badge on March 26, 1936. The badge was awarded to personnel honorably discharged from their flying duties and included pilots, observers, air gunners and paratroopers.





Manufacturing and Technical Information

The Flyer's Commemorative Badge features an eagle perched atop a large rock surrounded by a wreath of oak leaves. The wreath was polished silver and the eagle was oxidized to give it a darkened appearance. Wartime photos show badges with and without the area near the eagles legs and tail cutout.

Awards of this badge took place before the outbreak of war only and can be produced in both 800 Silver and aluminum. Lower quality wartime badges were produced as replacements or duplicates and were not official award pieces.

This badge is one of the more rare Luftwaffe Qualification Badges produced. As with all medals time should be taken to familiarize yourself with known examples and their manufacturing characteristics.

Presentation, Wear and Documents

The award was authorized for wear with any uniform on the left breast. Miniature versions were also allowed on civilian attire. At the present time we are searching for more information about the presentation and documents for this award. If you have any information please contact me via email.

Award Criteria and Statistics

The minimum requirements necessary for active personnel, reserve personnel and holders of the First World War flying badge to qualify for the Flyer's Commemorative Badge was four years of service; all others needed a minimum of fifteen years service. It was possible to receive the award if one was disabled due to a flying related accident. In the event of death in an aircraft accident the award would be presented to the next of kin.



Herman Göring, replacing the Aircrew Badge that had existed since 1933, officially instituted the Combined Pilot-Observer Badge on January 19, 1935. As the name implies, the badge was to be awarded to personnel who qualified as both pilot and observer.





Assmann badge

Manufacturing and Technical Information

The badge's measurements and design are identical in every respect to the Pilot's Badge. It consists on an eagle in flight clutching the swastika, surrounded by an oval laurel and oak leaves wreath. The difference between the Pilot-Observer and the Pilot's badge is that the eagle is polished silver and the wreath finished in gold. The eagle is soldered to the wreath by 2 round rivets, and sometimes has a space between the claws while others not.



Assmann
second style



Assmann
early oval
wreath



CEJ Thin
Wreath



CE Juncker
thin wreath



C.E. Juncker
2nd style.



Juncker thin
wreath
aluminum



BSW
Cloverleaf



W. Deumer

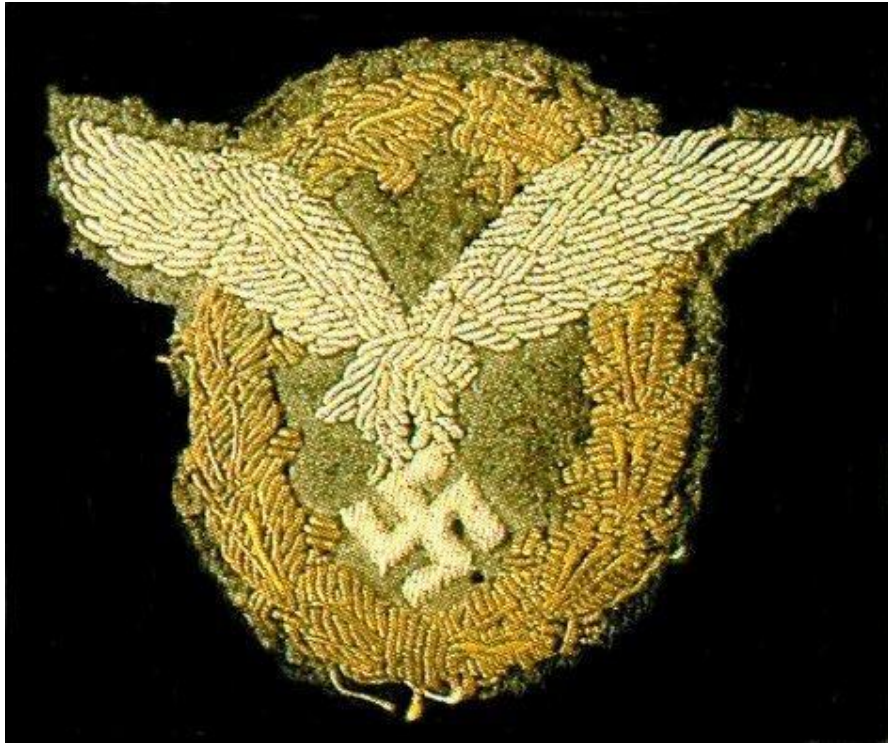


IMME
(named)



GWL

As the other Luftwaffe badges, it was manufactured in tombak, aluminum, and zinc. A cloth version existed, with embroidered bullion or cotton threads (pictured below). and a Pilots-Observer Badge with Diamonds was also awarded.



OFFICER'S BULLION SUMMER TUNIC CLOTH P/O

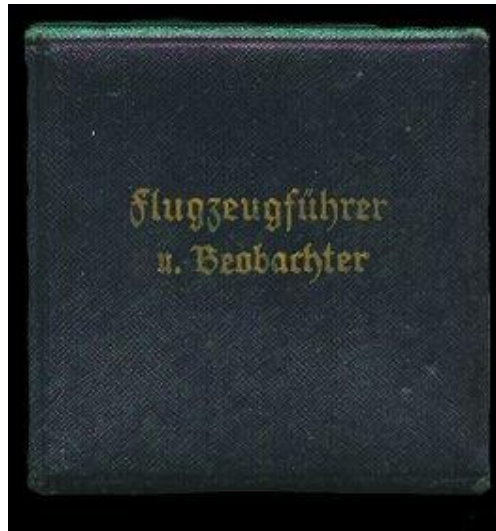




Presentation, Wear, Documents

The badge was rendered in a presentation case covered with simulated dark blue leather with the designation printed in gold letters on the lid (pictured above). The inner lining varied according to the manufacture, from satin and velvet to floccage and paper. It was entered in the "solbuch" and a document accompanied the award.

As with most War Badges, the Pilot-Observer Badge was worn on the uniform upper left pocket.



Award Criteria and Statistics

As mentioned in the introduction, the award was presented to all Luftwaffe personnel who qualified as both a pilot and an observer. It was also awarded in special cases to foreigners in recognition of special services to the Luftwaffe, and was usually presented to attaches from Axis Allies nation upon their return to their home.



The rare and exotic pieces of the Third Reich come in many forms and guises. The orders and decorations of this period of history and the personages to whom they were awarded, hold a particular interest for me. Some of those bestowal's now, at best, are conveniently forgotten and, at worst, denied leaving the collector with many perplexing questions. Certain pieces simply jumped out of the pages. Their beauty and historical importance inspired me to try and track them down and then, if at all possible, incorporate them into my collection. A veteran collector of antiques once told me, "The rare of a period will always be the very rare of the present and the ultra rare of the future. If you are lucky enough to acquire them, they act as a magnet for other rare pieces, you put them in your cabinet and they breed". This statement, in part, I have to agree with, albeit I have not as yet been able to achieve a breeding programme!



Luftwaffe Pilot-Observer Badge with Diamonds, this badge belonged to Hermann Goring

The recipients of these awards are varied, encompassing the colorful to the colorless, spanning all nationalities, rewarding the moguls of business or the leaders of nations. To such people, on opposite plains, are Henry Ford who received the Grand Cross of the German Eagle and Hermann Goring, who literally collected awards of every type from every country and sources that he could. Once the Weimar Republic's ineffective ban on foreign decorations was dropped in 1933, Hermann Goring's fascination for decorations was intensified. German diplomats abroad were asked to supply information on the highest foreign orders, many of which he later requested and subsequently received. In his collector's zeal, he fully ignored proper German channels and often displayed a total disregard for tact. When awarded a high order by the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg, her government requested that he did not make the fact public because of protests at home. Completely unconcerned, Goring immediately had his photo taken proudly displaying his new order, which he then had published in a Berlin newspaper.

On 12 January 1943 Hermann Goring celebrated his 50th birthday, an occasion of such importance that officials and organizations were asked to contribute suitable presents. The

official gift from the city of Potsdam was a specially designed cabinet for his collection of decorations.

Possibly one of my favorite exotica is the Combined Pilot's and Observer's Badge in Gold with Diamonds. I first came across the badge in "Orders, Decorations, Medals and Badges of the Third Reich" by David Littlejohn. The badge in question was attributed to a private collection in England. The owner was Eric Campion and the story of his acquisition was as interesting as the piece itself. "It had been returned to England by a British officer with an order for destruction. He went to Hatton Garden and sold the piece to a notable jewellery house, instructing them to break it up. The management telephoned Mr Campion who visited them post haste. He subsequently purchased the badge and was incidentally told that the officer was disposing of a large quantity of important medals which had also belonged to Goring. He sold them to the various large medal dealers in the city. Mr Campion followed the trail and bought the awards from the relevant dealers. These items remained with him till he parted with the Combined Pilot's and Observer's Badge in 1982. The other awards have now been bequeathed to the country and form part of a permanent exhibition at the RAF Museum at Hendon.

Goring's obsession with his decorations seemed to be based for the most part on his love for representation and show, rather than on their prestige value. His persistent need to emphasize his position and power was also reflected in his practice of awarding personal decorations to friends and loyal staff. He conceived this award during the summer of 1935, with the first bestowal taking place on 11 November 1935. It is noteworthy that both the inception and first presentation predate the introduction of the Combined Pilot's and Observer's Badge, which was introduced on 26 March 1936. During the war, on 19 October 1939, Goring raised the badges' status to that of an official decoration. Furthermore, the badge was produced in Austria by the Viennese jeweler, Rudolf St biger. The construction of it is quite unique as the whole badge was hand produced.

There are two forms of the award, the male and female design. The male design is constructed in two distinct manners. The first being the one formally presented, produced in gold and platinum, beset with real diamonds. The second form being the official dress copy, produced in silver and beset with synthetic stones. This was also produced by the same jeweler. Whether the dress copy was awarded with the presentation piece is unsure. In a letter from Hans Rudel dated 1 January 1982, he

told me that he had only received the awarded type. It could be possible that due to war economies the silver gilt form was going to become the presentation piece but I must stress that this is purely supposition. Needless to say, both forms are extremely rare.

The Presentation Piece

The wreath is cast and then hand finished in the same design as that employed on the Pilot's Badge. It measures 52.5 mm by 41.5 mm with a width of 7.5 mm and a depth of 3 mm. The general appearance of the eagle differs from that of the Pilot's Badge, the wings being enlarged. The wingspan measures 65 mm, while the depth of the left wing is 12 mm and the right 15 mm. The eagle is constructed to allow the stones in the wings to have light coming from behind, enhancing the fire of the diamonds. The edges of the feathers are all slightly pebbled. The upper parts of the wings are highly polished, which compliments and enhances the appearance of the fletching. The general appearance of the eagle is larger. The legs are finely detailed and are spread with a gap between them. There are 36 diamonds in the right wing and 31 in the left. A total of 19 are inlaid in the eagle's body. The outside of the swastika is slightly pebbled. It measures 12 mm across and the individual arms are 3 mm wide. Eighteen small diamonds are inlaid in the arms of the swastika. The whole of the eagle's frame is constructed in platinum while the wreath is made in 22 ct gold. The weight of the badge is 20 gms.

The reverse of the wreath is flat and has a matt finish with a thin barrel hinge at the apex. The pin is of a thin, needle type and is retained in a unique holder that acts as a safety catch.

The eagle has a 3 mm flat frame running round the edge of the wing and the body, which is employed to strengthen the structure of the eagle. The wings have a strut of similar construction running across them, which is covered by the wreath. On to this is attached a screw post that fits through individual holes drilled in the wreath securing the eagle to the body of the wreath. The eagle is held on to the wreath by two massive screws.

In correspondence with the firm of Rudolf St biger, his son indicated that they produced 70 of these badges. On the first of them, only the shop number was scratched on the reverse of the badge in the position of the hinge. After 1938, when Austria became part of the Greater German Reich, they placed

their logo on the reverse of the eagle. This information gives one a good clue to the period and therefore the person to whom a badge was possibly awarded.

Official Dress Copy

The wreath is cast and then hand finished in the same design as that employed on the presentation badge. It measures 52.5 mm by 41.5 mm with a width of 7.5 mm and a depth of 3.5 mm. The general appearance of the eagle differs from that of the presentation badge. The wings are slightly smaller and the wingspan measures 62 mm. The depth of the left wing is 11mm and the right 12.5 mm. The eagle is solid with holes drilled into it, into which are set the stones. This also allows the stones in the wings and body to have light coming from behind. The design of the fletching and how the individual feathers are placed on the wing is also different in this badge. The edges of the feathers are all slightly pebbled. The upper parts of the wings are highly polished, which compliments and enhances the appearance of the fletching. The general appearance of the eagle is stylized, the legs are spread with a gap between them. There are 32 stones in the right wing and 38 in the left. A total of 16 are inlaid in the eagle's body. The outside of the swastika is slightly pebbled. It measures 12.5 mm across and the individual arms are 3.5 mm wide. Seventeen small stones are inlaid in the arms of the swastika. The whole of the eagle's frame and the wreath is made of silver. The wreath is then gilded. The weight of the badge is 43 gms.

The reverse of the wreath is flat and has a polished finish with a barrel hinge at the apex. The pin is of a broad blade type and is retained in a large C form hook. Stamped into the wreath at 2 o'clock in large capital letters is, IMI. Also just beneath this are four incused oblong boxes that contain the standing pelican, the silver mark for Austria, R.St., the mark for the maker and W, the mark for Wien. These marks are repeated on the broad blade pin.

The eagle has a flat reverse and is highly polished. The wings and the body show the individual holes drilled in them. The eagle is held on to the wreath by two massive open rivets.

The Female Class

This badge is identical to the awarded type, being produced in real diamonds set into an eagle constructed of platinum, which in turn is mounted on to a gold wreath. The insignia is about

one third of the size and mounted on a bar. This thin bar has 5 small diamonds set into it on either side of the wreath. The remaining part from the diamonds to the tip is highly polished. On the reverse is a long needle pin.

The only recipient of this exclusive award was; Flug-Kapitänin Hanna Reitsch. The lady was a test pilot to the German airforce, who flew everything from a V.1. to the Gigant. She also held the unusual honor as a woman to have had bestowed upon her both the Iron Cross Second Class and First Class of the 1939 series, receiving the Iron Cross Second Class on 28 March 1941 and the Iron Cross First Class on 5 November 1942.

In correspondence with her, she stated that she received only the described bar and not the normal award type, nor did she receive a dress copy.

These badges were possibly the most exciting flying badges of any country. Apart from their obvious beauty, the rarity and the people to whom they were awarded, notably Hermann Göring himself, they also rewarded some of the bravest of the Luftwaffe pilots. The first award of the badge was presented to the chief of the Luftwaffe General Staff, Generalleutnant Wever, on 11 November 1935 and led to the award of 60 other persons. (As yet discovered to date.)

The Known
Recipients were;

ANTONESCU, Ion
ANGERSTEIN,
Karl
DÄNITZ, Karl
HIMMLER,
Heinrich
BALBO, Italo
DIETRICH, Sepp
HARTMANN, Erich
Von BLOMBERG,
Werner
FRANCO,
Francisco
HARLINGHAUSEN,
Martin
Von
BRAUCHITSCH,
Walter
GALLAND, Adolf
HORTY, Niklos
BAUMBACH,
Werner
GÖRING, Hermann
JESCHONNEK,
Hans
BODENSCHATZ,
Karl
Ritter Von GREIM,
Robert
KORTEN, G nter
BAUR, Hans
GRAFF, Hermann
KELLER, Alfred
Von BELOW,
Nicolaus
GOLLOB, Gordon
KESSELRING,
Albert
CHRISTIANSEN,
Friedrich
Von GABLENS,
Carl - August



SS-Oberstgruppenführer Josef 'Sepp' Dietrich

KAMMHUBER,
 Josef
 KASTNER -
 KIRDORF, Gustav
 PARANI, Albert
 STUDENT, Kurt
 LOHR, Alexander
 PELTZ, Friedrich
 TRETTNER,
 Heinrich
 LENT, Helmut
 PFLUGBEIL,
 Johanus
 UDET, Ernst
 LOERZER, Bruno
 ROMMEL, Erwin
 VALLE, Ugo
 Baron von
 MANNERHEIM,
 Carl Gustav Emil
 RAMCKE, Bernard
 WEVER, Walther
 MÜLDERS, Werner
 Von
 RICHTHOFEN,
 Wolfram
 REITSCH, Hanna
 MUSSOLINI,
 Benito
 SKORZENY, Otto
 MILCH, Erhard
 SPERRLE, Hugo
 NAVRATIL,
 Frederick
 NOWOTHY,
 Walter
 STUMPFF, Hans-
 Jurgen
 von MANSTEIN,
 Erich
 RUDEL, Hans -
 Ulrich
 SCHNAUFER,
 Helmut



Flug-Kapitänin Hanna Reitsch

French

Recipients;

General

VUILLEMIN

General d Astio de

la Vlgérie Colonel

MORAGILIA

Colonel de

Geffriur

Commandent

(Mejrr)

PETITJEAN

Capitaine

SCHMIDLEIN

Many misbelieves have been constructed around the award of the Combined Pilot's Badge with Diamonds and why some of the officers had been awarded the badge. The Combined Pilot's and Observer's Badge was authorized to be awarded in special cases to foreigners, in recognition of special services rendered to the Luftwaffe. An honorary presentation of this badge was normally made too foreign attach,s upon their return to their home station. It is interesting that one of the first honorary awards of the badge was to Benito Mussolini, who was awarded the badge in April 1937. The citation clearly states that it was for, 'Das Goldene Flugzeugf hrer und Beobachter-Abzeichen'. This gives rise to the assumption that the citation was for the Combined Pilots Badge with Diamonds. This is incorrect as it was conferred upon Mussolini on 28 September 1937 by Grring, who personally pinned it to his tunic. Andrew Mollow, in a letter to 'Guns, Weapons & Militaria' in December 1981 entitled, 'Mit or Mitout Diamonds?', Said, "In pointing out the error in Chris Ailsby's article on the Order of the German Eagle, David Littlejohn has contributed to a basic misunderstanding which exists concerning the Luftwaffe Pilot/Observer Badge". David Littlejohn refers to the Pilot/Observer Badge in Gold and Diamonds awarded to Benito Mussolini in September 1937. Whereas most post war publications on German orders and medals refer to only two classes or categories of this badge, I believe there were three.

The basic badge with silver eagle on an upright gilt metal wreath was awarded to Luftwaffe aircrew on successful completion of their flight training.

As a special personal award, Grring introduced sometime in

1935 a Pilot/Observer Badge in Gold and Diamonds. This badge was awarded to prominent members of the Luftwaffe, most or all of whom had been at one time or another qualified pilots.

The third class of this badge was a version in which both the eagle and wreath were in solid gold. This badge G ring awarded to foreign heads of state such as King Boris of Bulgaria and Benito Mussolini and a very few eminent Germans such as the Reichsf hrer of the SS, Heinrich Himmler'.

This poses an interesting question as to whether there was such an animal as the Golden Pilot and Observers Badge and was it upgraded to the diamond award, as those named eventually received the award with diamonds, and was this form used to reward friendly nations' politically appointed air personnel? As yet, a gold badge produced in gold has not been observed.

The criteria for the award was that each recipient must be the holder of a pilot's license. This pilot's license could have been either in the civil form, to encompass single engine airplanes and even to have allowed the consideration of the holder of a glider pilot's license. This would have qualified them for the badge. This explains the entitlement of the badge for some of the more unusual bestowal's namely, Himmler and Dietrich. It is also believed that Dr. Fritz Todt was a recipient of the award but this has yet to be fully confirmed. Upon the death of the holder, the badge had to be returned to G ring's personal office. This was the case with General Korten who was mortally wounded in the bomb plot attempt of 20 July 1944. After his death, the badge was not immediately returned and G ring's office was most indiscreet in requesting its return before his body was cold in its grave.

Hansen-Nootbar recalls one argument between D nitz and G ring which ended when G ring unpinned the diamond studded pilot's decoration from his exquisite uniform and handed it to D nitz who, to the delight of the officers watching them, unpinned the U-boat decoration from his own service blue jacket and handed it to G ring. It was a typically nimble and appropriate response.

Von Puttkamer gives a shorter version of this episode in his memoirs, implying that from then on D nitz made his way successfully with G ring. One is left wondering about the incident. Was it the force of G ring's personality and intelligence or the aura of his power and the long established position he held in the Nazi hierarchy or loyalty to the F hrer perhaps, that

caused Dönitz to respond as he did and humor and get along with the Reichsmarschall in public, while privately regarding him as a national disaster. For, when he and Hansen-Nootbar were alone they referred to Göring as, 'the grave digger of the Reich' or 'the fat one'. Whether this symbolic gesture actually constituted the award of the two badges to the two personages is doubtful but undoubtedly Dönitz was awarded the badge. It is less likely that Göring received the Submarine Badge with Diamonds from Dönitz.

The design of the box for the presentation badge is uncertain and it is possible that it was just a jeweler's case which transported the badge to the award ceremony. The box in which the female badge was awarded was again only a jeweler protective one. The dress copy came in a white simulated leather box, measuring 86mm by 86mm and 27mm deep. It was hinged and had an ornate bronze clasp. The inner lid liner was a light blue watered silk and the base was a royal blue velvet with a raised plinth on which the badge rested. The front of the box had the maker's logo stamped upon it as did the base.

When we turn to the subject of reproductions and reproductions of these badges in particular, we must first address the question, why is there a necessity for reproductions in the first instance. As with any other hobby, the pressure to obtain rare pieces by collectors pushes the unscrupulous dealer or collector to any lengths to satisfy the demand.

There are very good quality fakes being produced at the moment being fashioned in white gold and diamonds. The wreath is in yellow gold. The most noticeable difference is in the line of the trunk of the eagle's body. It is pronounced and runs similarly to that of the dress copy. The set of the fletching over the eagle's legs, which produce its trousers, is also slightly different, as is the fletching that covers the eagle's wings. The head on the awarded piece is chiseled from the platinum, while in the fake it appears to be set with diamond Chipping's. All these minor points when added together in the construction of the fake badge give a discernible difference. This can be fairly classed as the Rolls Royce. Another type encountered has only four feathers at the tip of the left wing, instead of six. The diamonds were artificial stones and the badge was not constructed of gold. The most common fake is an Austrian made Luftwaffe pilot's badge with 17 paste stones set in the swastika. On the examples that I have examined these are very poorly set. The reverse shows that the eagle has been hollow

stamped as has the wreath. The eagle is attached to the wreath by two crude rivets. The pin is of the square type with chamfered edges and on to the upper side are stamped bogus marks. These can be, as in one example examined, '16, a coffin shaped lozenge with a bird incused, 800 in a box and L L 6'. The other example had just 800 in a box.

One of the most interesting stories about this type of badge came to my attention when Richard Kimmel wrote to me from America with a photograph of a Pilot's Badge, the swastika being set with stones. He stated that, "This piece was bought by a lady as a present for her son while she was on holiday in England. She had obtained it along with a Pour le Mrite at a fund raising sale held at the Imperial War Museum in London, when they had tried to raise money to repair the roof that had been damaged by fire". This great treasure had returned with her to America where it later turned up at a dealer, who was situated in a Flea Market at New Brunswick. Richard subsequently bought it. His question to me was, "Is it original?" The general appearance of the badge told all. Firstly, if the Imperial War Museum had required finance, it would have been insured. It is also a war memorial to commemorate the dead of the first world war. I put it like this; if the White House had fire damage would the President sell something from the Oval Office? However, wishing for the great rarity clouds the impressionable collector's vision. The old saying, 'If wishes were horses, beggars would ride', many fake pieces with spectacular stories would become original. One must face reality, if there is doubt then usually the piece is bad. When we visited America, I viewed the great treasure and sure enough, it was as bad as first perceived. But, the collector's view was still hopeful, "The jury is still out on this!" If I was facing the death penalty, I would still hope for a reprieve but am quite sure I would not get any life insurance. The historical and factual credibility of the story that accompanies a piece and is intended to give provenance to that piece, has to stand up. The gullibility of the collector who wishes to obtain the great rarity at less than a bargain price, is a victim of his own greed. I do not think I have to elaborate upon this further, the connotations will be clear on both sides of the Atlantic.

JUNCKER - PILOT BADGES

C.E. JUNCKER is one of the most prestigious badges and decorations MANUFACTURES of the III Reich.
This firm's address in Berlin was Alte Jacobstrasse n.13.

This firm was authorized to produce decorations from the beginning of the Nazi regime.

Highly-trained and experienced jewellers and artisans worked in the Juncker factories producing very high quality dies with careful hand finishing and excellent details.

After the Spanish Civil War, C.E. Juncker produced a stunning series of Spanish Crosses that were beautifully detailed and hand-finished. Throughout the war, and even after having their primary factory bombed out in December 1944, the quality of Juncker decorations never diminished, always in compliance with the strictest standards of the " LEISTUNGS GEMEINSCHAFT DEUTSCHER ORDENSHERSTELLER " (LDO).

Initially the decorations were stamped with the CEJ initials, inside a rectangle,

Then with mark C.E. JUNCKER
BERLIN S W

And in the end C. E. JUNCKER
BERLIN SW68

With the institution of Luftwaffe pilots badges in 1936 , C.E. JUNCKER manufactured a beautifully designed badge, that collectors refer to as the 1st pattern, adhering to the characteristics and the details required by LDO , marked by the CEJ in a rectangle logo.





Measurements of this example:

- wreath mm 53,1 x 41,8
- weight gr. 29,40

In the above example, from Ian Burtonshaw's collection (Skip), we notice all the necessary characteristics of an original piece:

- Characteristic vaulted and thin wreath;
- Material is classic Tombak, from which both the wreath and eagle are produced. The wreath is silver in colour showing natural patina, and eagle covered with artificial patina to simulate the look of aged silver. Also notice the sharply detailed and well-defined claws. This incredible detail diminishes with subsequent versions of the Juncker Pilot's Badge;
- The hole between the legs is present on some 1st pattern Pilot's badges and absent on others. This hole can take different shapes from badge to badge.
- The swastika surface is usually highly polished except for the top arm next to the claws, where it seems the polisher could not reach the same level of shine. This missed area is encountered on most badges of this type.
- The neatly punched rivets on the reverse of the wreath are slightly flat on top.
- The "C" catch at the bottom reverse of the wreath is sometimes lengthened for better pin retention.

-The serrated edge of the feathers on the right wing made by hand, so small differences may be encountered from example to example.

Subsequently, an identical badge to the 1° pattern was produced, but with the application of the new factory mark:

C.E. JUNCKER
BERLIN S.W





Measurements of this example:

- wreath mm 53,10 x 41,80
- weight gr.31,10

This badge is still attributable to pre-war construction and possibly at the war's beginning.

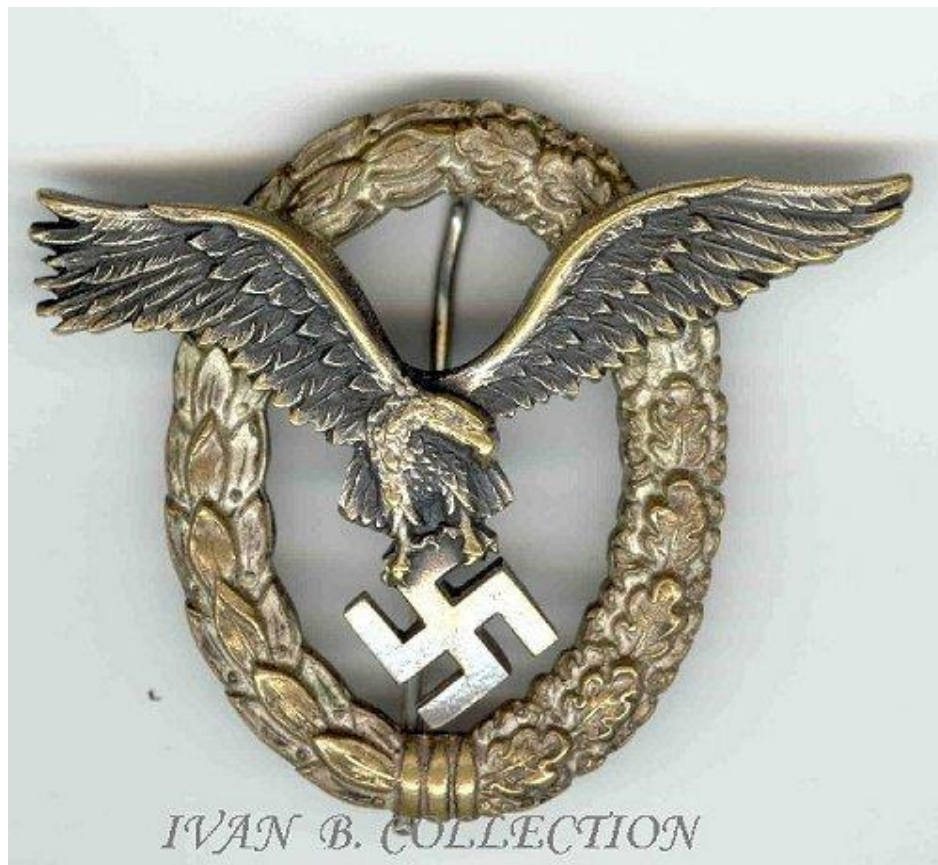
In the above example, we notice:

- The space between the legs; this space was created to give a three-dimensional appearance to the badge. This space can be of various sizes and heights, but not too high, which is the trait of the so called "wedgie" eagle reproductions. The measurements are identical to the CEJ-marked example. The weight varies based on the amount of silver plating on the wreath.
- In both examples there is a strong copper composition in the "Tombak" metal, as shown by the colour of the rivets and the catch.
- The silver plating is present on 90% of the wreath.

- The maker's mark was hand-applied with a punch in the cooling phase of the eagle material. The depth of the maker's mark is based on the power applied by the engraver.
- The cut-out are around the left wing's fathers is less deep, but still has the 6 points.

Subsequently, a 2° pattern was produced with very different characteristics from the first pattern, and was produced probably in beginning of the war .

The wreath becomes much thicker and the badge's weight increases considerably, with collectors calling it the "heavy type". This type of badge had a completely different design of both the eagle and wreath with new dies for both.





In this example we notice:

- the new design;
- again, the polish of the swastika;
- Also the strong copper presence in the material used in manufacture;
- hallmark maintains the classical visible characteristics in the marks Juncker - "L" twist, "R" paunchy, etc.
- in the photo of the reverse, I wanted to emphasize the catch, with the characteristic pyramidal bevel of its tip, the rivets - the right one is slightly bigger - with the flat top.
- outside claws do not have the separate curved and pointed portions.
- feathers of the right wing are less deep cut but still have the characteristic six points.

The last type of Juncker Plot's Badge was made from non-ferrous metal and is referred to as the 3rd pattern. It was made from the early to middle war period. The design is again changed on this type when compared to the 2nd pattern, but not as drastically as from

the 1st to the 2nd. The thickness of the wreath is nearly the same as for the 2nd pattern.



In this example we notice:

- the copper composition of the metal is decreased, giving more of a ferrous colour to the wreath and rivets;
- the rivets are of a more rounded shape and are surrounded by a thin indented circle;
- the left claw has disappeared leaving a small artefact on the arm of the swastika;
- the feathers on the right wing are shaped similarly to the ones on the 2nd pattern;
- the type of hinge used has also changed.

At some time between the production of the 2nd and 3rd pattern badges, with a 2nd pattern eagle with a 3rd pattern wreath were produced. One does find badges with characteristics from both types.

In the late war period, the last type of Pilot's Badge produced by C. E. Juncker was constructed entirely from zinc, both eagle and wreath.





In the above example photo, which was kindly supplied by Kai Winkler from his web site, we notice:

- design of eagle and wreath similar to the 3rd non ferrous type;
- hook and hinge are typical of C.E. Juncker later types.



Variants:

First pattern badges with the Juncker logo featuring the screw-back attachment and without the hinge or the catch, are very rare. Below is an example of a badge from Detlev Niemann's site (and with his approval).

Vi sono anche alcuni esemplari di secondo tipo, marcati e non, costruiti in alluminio . Hanno le stesse caratteristiche ma i rivetti sul retro sono di qualità inferiore nella loro finitura in confronto con il materiale in tombak, proprio per la difficoltà di lavorazione a mano dell'alluminio. Di seguito vediamo un esempio non marcato gentilmente concesso da Kai Winkler.

Some 2nd pattern examples exist that are made from aluminium. They share many characteristics with their Tombak counterparts except for the rivets, which are rougher on the aluminium specimens. This speaks of the difficulty in working with aluminium.



The Observer Badge was one of the first badges for which Reichsmarchall Göring gave specifications for. Although these provisions were published on November 27, 1935, the badge was not actually instituted until March 26, 1936.

Manufacturing and Technical Information

The badge consists of an oval, slightly convex, silver plated wreath of oak and laurel leaves (the right laurel, the left oak). An oxidized old-silver plated eagle in a watching attitude is riveted to the wreath. The reliefs are highly polished. It was manufactured first of all in tombac (buntmetall), aluminium then zinc. The measurements varied according to the manufacturer.

As the others Luftwaffe qualification badges, several firms manufactured this one.

The known manufacturers are:

- C.E. JUNCKER BERLIN: The badge exists in light or heavy version.
- ASSMANN: In tombac or zinc, with the mark "A" in relief or stamped.
- OM: In a square stamped
- GWL: in a circle for Gebr der Wegerhoff L denscheid
- P.MEYBAUER BERLIN
- Unmarked



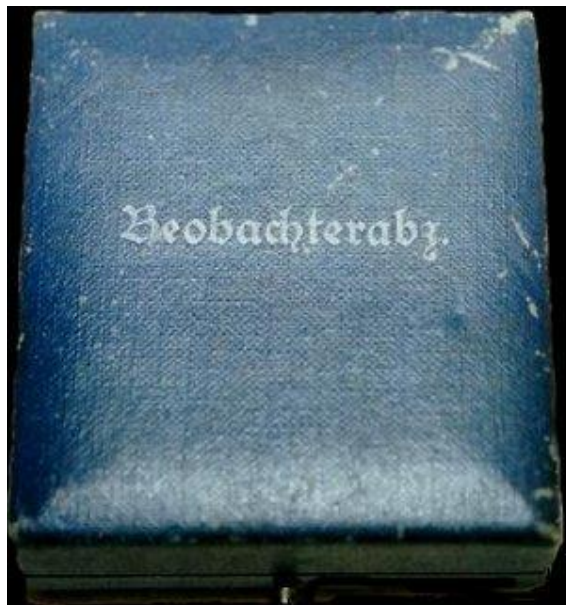
Luftwaffe Observer Badge

The pin assembly system depends on the manufacturer. The pin is a thin needle vertical one. Regulations prescribed that an embroidered version was authorized. This version was

exactly the same size as the metal badge, with the eagle embroidered in oxidized silver, the wreath in silver, and the swastika in dull aluminum.



Observer badge Cloth



Presentation, Wear and Documents

The badge was worn on the upper left breast pocket and was delivered in a dark blue box as pictured above. The upper lid is lined in blue and the lower lid with a blue velvet and "Beobachterabz." is printed on the box in silver letters. The attribution was entered in the personal documents (soldbuch), and a certificate was delivered to the recipient.

Award Criteria and Statistics

The badge was awarded after completion of two month qualifying service, after five operational flight as observer, or if the recipient was wounded while posted as observer (prior to the completion of the 5 flights). The number presented is unknown to the authors at this time



Pictured above is This is Oblt Karl Bentz, who went on to receive the DKiG as a recon observer and later pilot,

Luftwaffe Air Gunners & Flight Engineer's Badge
Fliegerschützenabzeichen Für Bordschützen Und Bordmechaniker

On June 22, 1942, the Air Gunner's and Flight Engineer's Badge was instituted. The badge was worn by all Luftwaffe air gunners, flight engineers, and aircrew meteorologists, who completed two months training or had participated in five operational flights. The badge could be awarded sooner if the recipient was wounded during an operational flight.





Air Gunner's and Flight Engineer's Badge; Berg & Nolte,
Ludenscheid

Manufacturing and Technical Information

Quality examples were initially made in Tombak, but most examples found will be constructed of zinc or kreigsmetal. The silver plated wreath is in the shape of an oval, with a slightly convex design. On the front of the badge, the wreath is covered half with oak leaves and the other half in laurel leaves. In the center of the wreath at the bottom is a swastika. Mounted in the center of the wreath is an eagle in flight, diving to the left. Most badges were produced with the eagle in the same metal as the wreath. While seldom encountered, some versions may have been constructed with an aluminum eagle on a zinc wreath. The eagle is darkened, finished in alt-silver, deep blued, or anodized black. The highlights of the wreath and the swastika are polished. Some examples exhibit a cut-out upper arm of the swastika.

The top arm of the swastika was cutout early in the war and

was generally left filled in as the war progressed. The eagle's rear claw/talon should be clearly defined on originals. Many post-war fakes omitted this feature.

The following is a partial list of makers and is not exhaustive:

Assmann
B&NL
BSW
Deumer
Imme (JMME)
Juncker
Unmarked





Air Gunner's and Flight Engineer's Badge; Gebruder Wegerhoff,
Ludenscheid

The reverse of the badge incorporates an attaching device consisting of a hinge assembly, a vertical pin, and a catch. Many types and styles were utilized from manufacturer to manufacturer. Different assemblies can even be seen from a single manufacturing firm. The eagle is attached to the wreath by two rivets protruding through the wreath. On many examples, a manufacturers hallmark can be seen stamped into the rear of the eagle.

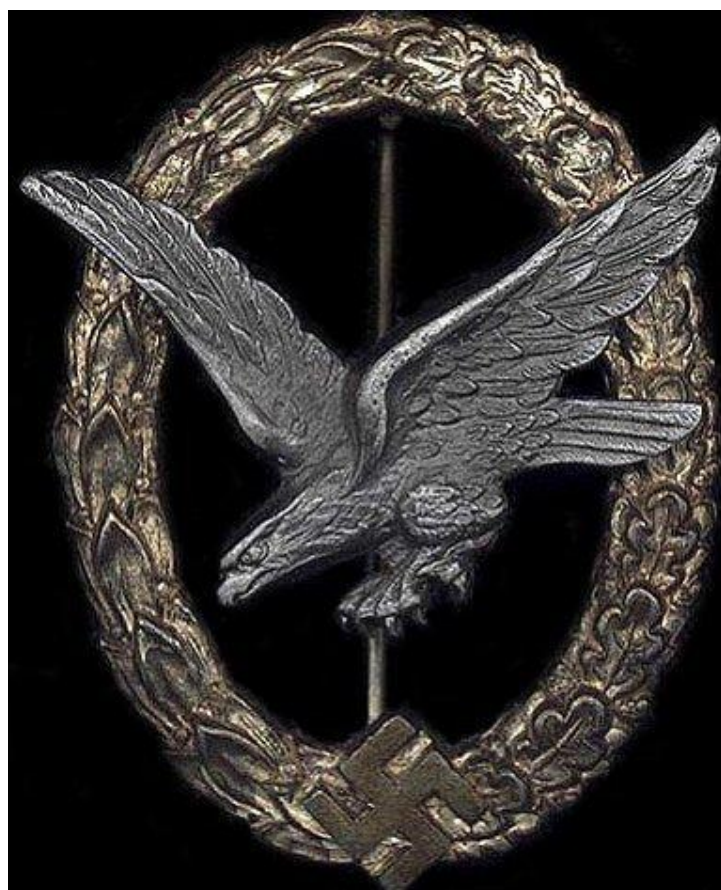


Air Gunner's and Flight Engineer's Badge; F.W. Assmann & Sohn , Ludenscheid

While measurements vary from badge to badge, approximate characteristics are as follows:

- Wreath -
 - Height - 53mm
 - Width- 40mm
- Eagle Wingspan - 42mm
- Weight - 30-40g

Cloth versions of this badge were made. Overall dimensions are similar to the metal version. Also, as the war neared an end, Radio Operator/ Air Gunner's badges were often modified to an Air Gunner's and Flight Engineer's badge style by removing the lightning bolts (blitzbündel) with a file. The Air Gunner's and Flight Engineer's badge is generally identifiable by the distinct, separated, rear protruding talon of the eagle. A modified Radio Operator/ Air Gunner's badge generally shows the talons tightly together.





Flat wire catch applied to Oval mounting plate; C.E. Juncker,
Berlin SW68



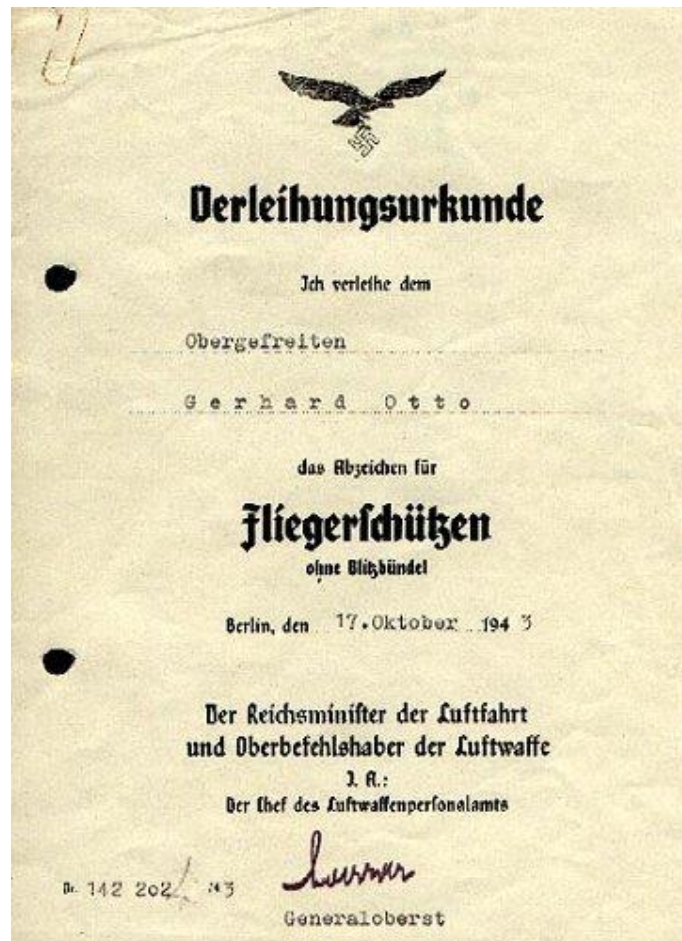
Flat wire catch applied to Circular mounting plate; C.E. Juncker,
Berlin SW68

Presentation, Wear and Documents

The Air Gunner's and Flight Engineer's Badge was awarded in a dark blue case. The interior had a blue satin upper lid lining, and blue flocking in the lower base. The two halves were hinged in the rear and secured by a spring tension pin/ catch device. Across the exterior lid was embossed Luftwaffen= Fliegerschützen= Abzeichen, or Bordmechanikerabz, in silver lettering. The badge was to be worn on the recipient's left side, on or near the pocket, and below the Iron Cross 1st Class.

Each recipient of the Air Gunner's and Flight Engineer's Badge had an entry made in his Soldbuch. An additional Award Document was presented at a later date.





Presentation Case - Award Document

Award Criteria

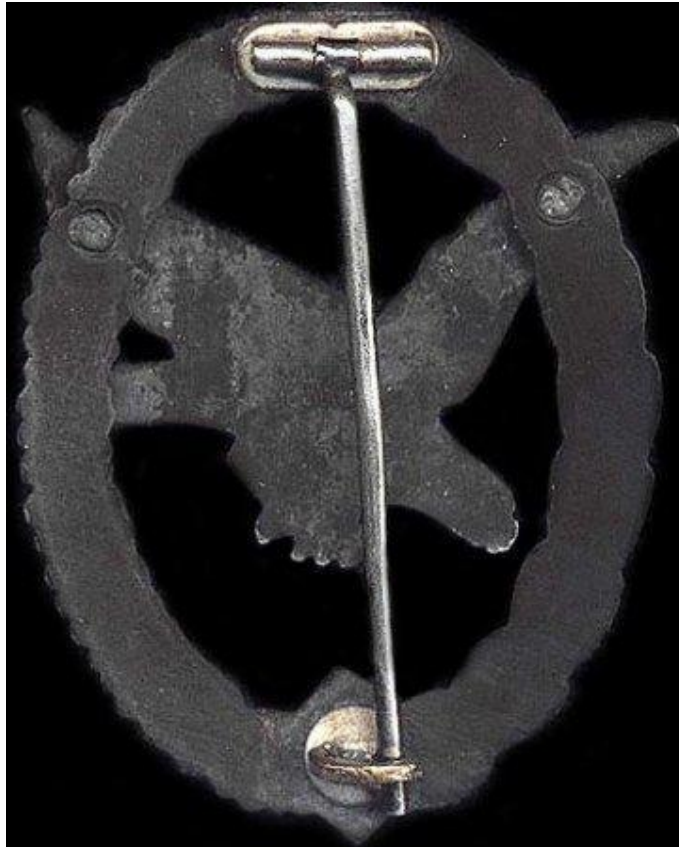
Personnel who completed two months of training or participated in five operational flights were qualified to receive the Air Gunner & Flight Engineer Badge. If the recipient was wounded during an operational flight the badge could be awarded earlier.



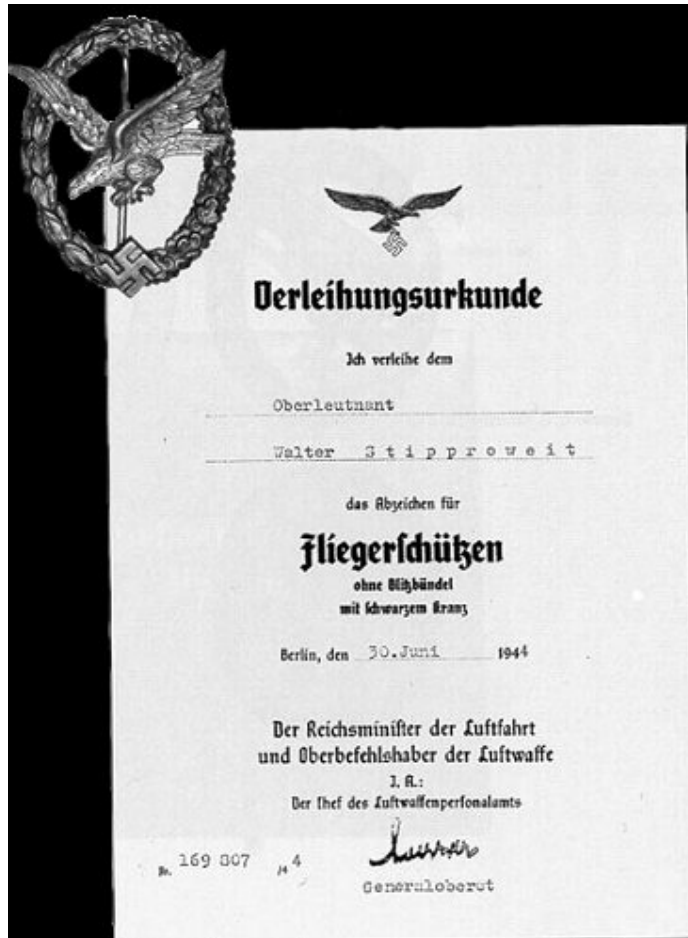
Unqualified Air Gunner's/ Flight Engineer's Badge (Fliegerschützenabzeichen mit Schwarzem Kranz)

On April 25, 1944, the Unqualified Air Gunner's and Flight Engineer's Badge was instituted. The badge was presented to personnel, acting in the capacity of gunners, who had taken part in a minimum of ten combat flights. The number could be lowered if the recipient was wounded during one of the flights. This lowering of the requirements was an obvious dire attempt to man the aircraft, as most of the qualified gunners had succumbed to the fortunes of war.





Unqualified Air Gunner's and Flight Engineer's Badge; Wilhelm
Deumer, Ludenscheid



The design of the badge was identical to the 1942 pattern, with the exception that the colors of the wreath were reversed - i.e. - a black wreath and a silver eagle. It is unlikely that the badge was ever produced in any other metals than zinc or kreigsmetal. No special presentation case was designed. However, unique award documents (while rare) do exist.

Award Document for Unqualified Air Gunner and Flight Engineer. Interesting to note that the recipient was an Oberleutnant. As gunners usually were Enlisted Men, it is conceivable that the recipient may

have been an Officer in some other branch of the Luftwaffe (Signals, Administration, etc.), but was transferred into the Flight branch, who was in desperate need of manpower at this critical time of the war.

The Air Radio Operator & Air Gunner badge

The Air Radio Operator & Air Gunner badge was instituted on January 19, 1935 and dedicated at first (before the institution of the gunner badge) to radio and gunner qualified personnel. Personnel had to success the training course and to participate at least at 5 operational flights.



Manufacturing and Technical Information

The badge was oval shaped and slightly vaulted surrounded by a silvered wreath composed of laurel and oak leaves with a swastika on the base. On the precocious models, the swastika upper branch is cut out. The old silver oxidized eagle is fixed to the wreath by two small round rivets. The eagle clutched in its claws two crossed lighting bolts which could, depending the manufacture, be more or less detailed and cut out or not.

The employed metal varied all along the war from aluminum and tombak, to a silver-nickel called "Neusilber", zinc, and pot metal.

Though initially a cloth version was not authorized, one was later introduced and was found in both bullion and silver wire embroidery.

The following maker's list is not exhaustive and the sizes are only representative of badges observed.

Maker	Mark	Metal	Dimensions		
			Eagle (in mm)	Wreath (in mm)	Weight (in Grams)
ASSMANN L DENSCHIED	A	Tombak	41.2	53.4 x 43.5	40.6
ASSMANN L DENSCHIED	A	Neusilber	40.4	53.2 x 42.8	38.2
ASSMANN L DENSCHIED	A	Zinc	41.1	53.0 x 41.7	25.4
JUNKER BERLIN	C.E.JUNCKER BERLIN S.W.	Neusilber	40.9	52.4 x 41.2	24.4
JUNKER BERLIN	C.E.JUNCKER BERLIN S.W.	Tombak	41.8	52.3 x 41.2	23.6

JUNKER BERLIN	C.E.JUNCKER BERLIN S.W.	Tombak	41.8	52.7 x 40.9	30.3
JUNKER BERLIN	C.E.JUNCKER BERLIN S.W.	Silver 800		52.0 x 41.2	24.15
JMME	JMME & SOHN BERLIN	Tombak			
JMME	JMME	Neusilber	41.8	52.8 x 40.3	39.5
DEUME R	W. DEUME R L DENSCHIED	Tombak			
DEUME R	W. DEUMER L DENSCHIED	Zinc	42.5	53.5 x 41.0	27.5
BERG & NOLTE L DENSCHIED	B & N L	Tombak			
BERG & NOLTE L DENSCHIED	B & N L	Zinc	43.1	52.9 x 41.1	30.5
BR DER SCHNEIDE R WIEN	B S W	Tombak			
UNMARKED		Zinc	43.3	53.6 x 41.8	

Presentation, Wear, Documents

The badge was presented in a dark blue box of which several variants exist, with velvet, cloth or flocage lid. The letters on the top are always golden.

A certificate was presented to all personnel who received the badge which was worn, as with most war badges, on the lower left breast, below the Iron Cross.

Award Criteria

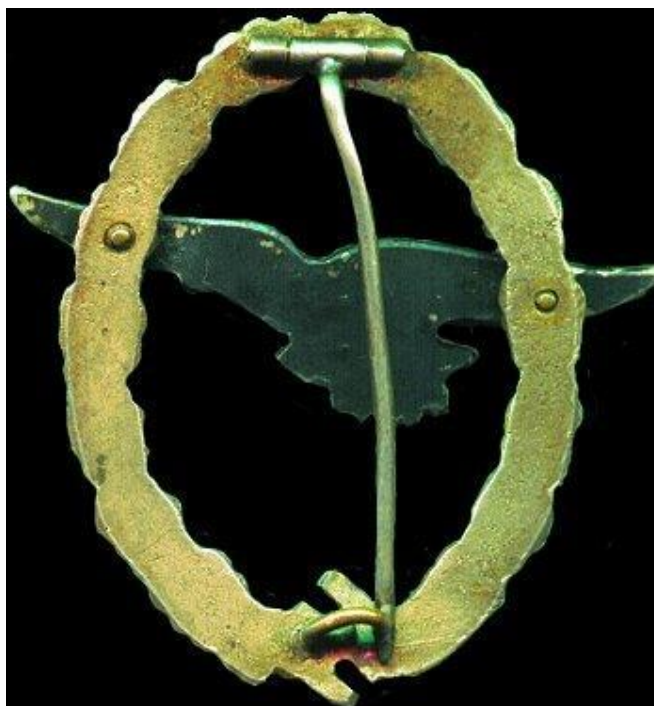
As implied by the title, the badge was presented to Air Gunners and Radio Operators and mechanics who completed two months training or five missions. The criteria was shortened if the soldier received a wound in action.



Glider Pilots' Badge

Segelflugzeugführerabzeichen

One of the most rare of the Luftwaffe badges, the glider pilot badge was instituted on December 16, 1940. It was awarded to pilots who successfully completed the glider training course.



Glider pilot badge undoubtedly manufactured by the firm JUNCKER, without mark, in tombak.

Manufacturing and Technical Information

The badge was compromised of a silvered oak leaves wreath with a swastika at the base. The upper and the lower branches of the swastika may be cut out or solid. A dark oxidized eagle is riveted to the wreath by two tiny round rivet, the eagles' wings are widely spanned with its legs bent close to the body. The claws are generally well detailed and hand finished, and the ridges are burnished.

The fastening system depends on the manufacturer, though it is typically a round barrel hinge soldered to the wreath as with all Luftwaffe badges.

On lower quality Glider Pilot badges there is a hinge and hook attached with soldering plates. The round needle pin and the hook are also soldered to the wreath.

The badge was manufactured in aluminum, nickel-silver alliage, tombak, or zinc.

It seems that a precocious manufacture existed, who built the badge with the same design but with a larger eagle.

The badge was also available in a cloth version (pictured further down the page).



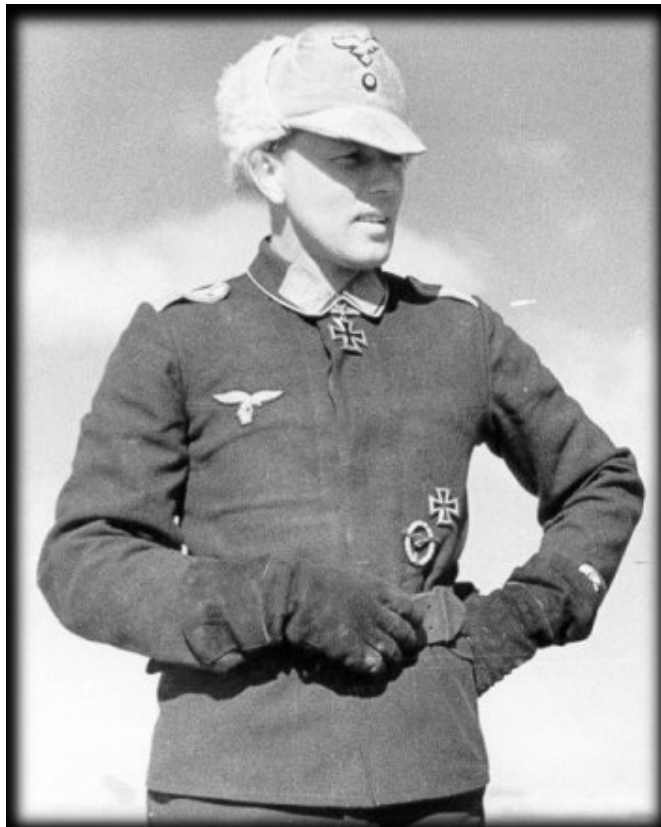
The following is list of known manufacturers :

- C.E.JUNCKER BERLIN

- G.H.OSANG DRESDEN
- W.DEUMER L DENSCHIED
- BSW
- No maker mark

Characteristics of an unmarked Juncker type badge:

- Wreath : 55.3 mm X 41.7 mm
- Wreath : 55.3 mm X 41.7 mm
- Cross : 11.4 mm
- Hinge : 12.3 mm X 2.5 mm
- Eagle : 15.1 mm X 52.6 mm





Presentation, Wear, Documents

The badge was presented in a dark blue box whose bottom lid was composed of a blue velvet or blue flochage. The top lid was composed of violet blue silk or blue paper, with the name of the award stenciled in silver on the out part of the top lid.

A certificate was presented to the pilot and the rewarding of the badge was entered in the Soldbuch.

The award was worn on the uniform upper left pocket. Only a few pictures exist showing its wear, one of which may be seen to the right.

Award Criteria and Statistics

The badge was presented to all Glider Pilots who completed the required training course and became certified. Statistics on this badge were unavailable at the time of this writing, if you have any further information on this badge, please contact us at, info@wehrmacht-awards.com.

Knight of the Reich - Feldwebel Willi Schaedler



At the time of the Cholm Battle he was still a Gefreiten and as shown on the picture he is a Unteroffizier. You can see here that is wearing the Iron Cross 2nd Class ribbon, and you can

also clearly see that he is wearing the cloth version of the Glider's badge.

Unteroffizier Willi Schaedler (born 18.06.1908 Rheindahler). He was a GO 242 pilot who flew a supply mission into the famous Cholm pocket, landing there on May 2nd, 1942 (the pocket was released on 05/09/1942). The owner of the picture, Stijn David, has a photocopy from his "einsatzbericht " and a official document stating that he was involved in the Cholm pocket battle (he is also mentioned in the book "Die deutschen Lastenseglerverbände 1937 - 1945"). For his efforts in this battle, he received the Iron Cross Second Class on the day of the release of the pocket, and the Cholm Shield on 10/31/1942. He also qualified for one day of the Infantry Assault Badge.

His decorations were as follows,

- Glider pilots badge : 05.10.1941 (Award document number : 86369 / 41)
- Iron cross 2nd class : 07.05.1942 (Cholm Battle)
- Cholmshield : 31.10.1942
- LW air to ground support clasp in Bronze : 19.11.1943
- LW ground combat badge : 08.03.1944
-

His highest rank was Feldwebel (promoted on 31.05.1944) .

It is very interesting to see that he received a Flight clasp (this is highly unusual for a Glider pilot , most of them did never reach this).

He took part in the following battles (page one out off his Flugbuch).

- Training in 1941 Trausitten (Königsberg) , Langendiebach, Eschborn with Lastensegler DFS 230 , later Go 242 in Parchim.
- First mission from Riga in to Cholm , 1942.
- Later that year he transferred to Poltawa and Saporosche, from there "einsatz im gebiet Westlich von Stalingrad " (not in Stalingrad itself).
- At the end off 1943 again a change and transfer to the Kertsch area (Krim), from there missions to the Kubanbrückenkopf (he was encircled for 4 weeks with other troops).
- After this again to bases in Saporosj, Lemberg and Milek (Poland).

- In April 1944 followed the mission to bring supplies to the encircled 1 Panzer-Armee (which he could leave with a small transport plane Fiesler Storch).
- From the base in Milek he transferred again to Buzau (Rumania), Groswardeien, Debrecen (Hungaria) , Plattensee (There his unit was disbanded).
- He received a holiday and after this he was to see action with an Infantry Unit (with Marschbattalion 707).
- He was made a prisoner off war on 12/12/1944 by the Americans near Schlestadt (Elzas), 7th Armee , from which he spent 3 years in prison camps.



The anti-aircraft combat badge institution was ordered on January 10, 1941 by Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring. It had been designed by W.E. Peekhaus of Berlin in the summer of 1940.



Manufacturing and Technical Information

The badge consists of an 8.8cm anti aircraft gun, surrounded by an oak leaves crown , surmounted by a soldered or riveted Luftwaffe eagle. On the reverse there is a thin needle round pin. In most cases, a rounded cut out portion can be observed under the gun barrel.

The badge was fabricated in tombac later in zinc.

- Height : 56.3mm to 56.9mm
- Wide : 43.5mm to 46mm
- Eagle : 39.9mm to 40.9mm
- Weight : 26g to 41.8g

On January 1941, the firm C.E.Juncker of Berlin was in charge of production, then other firms followed. Other makers are:

- BREHMER MARKNEUKIRCHEN G.B.(Gustav Brehmer Markneukirchen)
- C.E. JUNCKER BERLIN SW (this type exist with no mark)
- A (Assmann & Sohn) W in a circle (Werstein Jena)
- WH (Walter Henlein) G
- WL (Gebr der Wegerhoff L denscheid)
- No maker's mark, some in zinc



Presentation, Wear, Documents

The badge was presented in a cardboard dark blue box marked with gold letters "Flak = Kampfabz" or "Luftwaffen = Flak = Kampfabz". The upper lid is dragon blue silk or paper, the down portion is of blue velvet or flocage. It was worn on the left uniform upper pocket. It was presented with a certificate and its attribution was registered in the personnel documents (Soldbuch, Wehrpass).



Award Criteria

This badge was awarded in recognition for anti aircraft or ground combats, up to the institution of the ground combat badge. All air defense artillery personnel (including radar control units and search light units) were eligible for the badge. The attribution was based on points addition, and 16 points were necessary. They were earned as follows

- 1 point - First detection of incoming aircraft by means of 150cm or 60 cm search lights by acoustical means, and following the aircraft to another search light team.
- 2 points - Participation in the downing of an enemy aircraft my means of ground based fire (AA batteries primarily, but it could also be Machine gun or rifle fire). Participation in the downing of an enemy aircraft by means of blinding the aircraft with search lights.

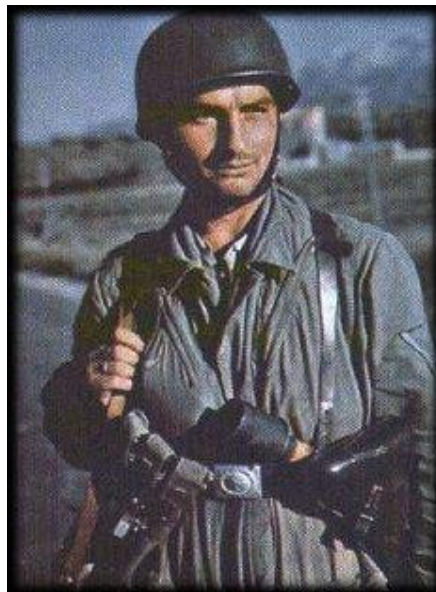
- 4 points - Same action as above, but without participation of other batteries.

The badge could also be presented for single meritorious actions or distinctive leadership. The Battery Commander could be awarded the badge if the half of his Battery crews were already decorated.

The conditions of attribution changed during the war. Indeed, the badge was awarded for 3 shot down aircrafts or for 5 combat actions (even without shot down aircraft).



On April 1, 1935, the Landespolizeigruppe General Göring was redesignated Regiment General Göring, becoming a part of the Luftwaffe until 23 Sep 1935. Parts of this unit (I. Jäger-Bataillon/RGG and 15. Pionier-Kompanie/RGG) were transferred to Döberitz Jan 1936 for parachute training. These troops were to be the cadre of the future German paratroopers and were separated from the unit March 1938.



In order to recognize these daredevil pioneers, the Paratrooper Badge was instituted on November 5, 1936 by the Reichsminister der Luftwaffe and Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe (registered in the Luftwaffe "Verordnungsblatt"[16 Nov/n°475610612]).

Manufacturing and Technical Information

The badge consists of a diving gilded eagle, clutching the swastika in its claws, that is riveted to the wreath by two tiny round rivets (except the GWL model). The wreath is formed with laurel leaves on the left side and oak leaves on the right, and is bright silvered or dark silver oxidized with the ridges burnished.

The fastening system is typical of the Luftwaffe badges. It consists of a thin needle pin (end rounded or pointed), a barrel hinge soldered to the wreath and a soldered "C" form hook. Some manufacturers badges have a special hinge form (at least GWL, BNL, ASSMANN). The badge was constructed in silver-nickel alliage, tombak and zinc.

The following characteristics are only indicative and in relation with the badges observed:

Height: 52.1mm to 53.9mm
Width: 41;8mm to 43.3mm
Eagle: 49mm to 50.7mm
Weight: 20.11gr to 43.98gr

Several manufacturers made this badge. Their name or logo is generally engraved on the reverse of the eagle. The following non exhaustive list is in my knowledge:

- C.E. JUNCKER BERLIN SW
- IMME & SOHN BERLIN
- W.DEUMER L DENSCHIED
- G.W.L. (Gebr der Wegerhoff L denscheid)
- G.H. OSANG DRESDEN
- P. MEYBAUER BERLIN
- B&NL (Berg & Nolte L denscheid)
- A (Assmann)
- J.F.S. (Josef Feix & Sohn)

A cloth version with embroidered bullion wire, cotton thread, was authorized to be worn on the uniform only until 42 (though in spite of regulations, it continued to be worn until the end of the war.





Presentation, Wear, Documents

The badge was worn on the uniform upper left pocket, or on the equivalent place on the flight jacket (Fliegerbluse) or gala uniform.

The badge was presented on a dark blue box with the inscription "Luftwaffe=Fallschirm=Sch tzenabz." in golden letters. A certificate was also presented. Different award document forms existed; it was firstly in DIN A4 format, then in DIN A 5.

Award Criteria

The conditions changed all along the war. From 41 to 44 progressively any specialist (riflemen, administration, doctors) was authorized to wear the badge after performing jump training.



Hauptmann Friedrich WANGERIN, awarded the Ritterkreuz on
10/24/1944



The Luftwaffe Ground Assault Badge was designed by Professor von Weech of Berlin and instituted by Hermann Goring on March 31, 1942 to honor Air Force personnel that took part in ground military actions. Individuals who were previously awarded the General Assault Badge, Infantry Assault Badge or the Tank Assault Badge, exchanged them for this badge at this point.

Manufacturing and Technical information

The Ground Assault Badge consists of a Luftwaffe eagle flying above a storm cloud, which generates a lightening bolt that strikes rough ground. In most cases, the Luftwaffe eagle is a separate, stamped nickel piece and is riveted on top of an eagles' outline on the badge. This can either be done by three domed rivets, two domed rivets, or one flush rivet. On some late war badges, the eagle is cast as an integral part of the badge itself, with no need for a separate piece. The eagles' wings protrude outside the wreath of oak leaves that surrounds it. These badges were produced with both silver and darkened wreaths

At the base of the badge there is a tie which has on each side a single half oak leaf rising into the seven bunches of three oak leaves that make up the wreath. The bunches end tip to tip at the badges apex. The wreath is separated from the storm cloud by three voided areas located on each side and above the cloud.

The badge measures 56mm by 43mm and the width of the wreath varies between 7 and 7.5mm. The eagle has a wingspan of 41.5mm and the height of the eagle including the swastika is 21mm.





The reverse of the badge is flat and can carry a variety of hinges. There are three separate types. The first is a conventional hinge that is let into the back of the badge and then has a piece of the badge turned over at each end. It usually has a broad bellied pin. The second type consists of a conventional hinge, which is soldered directly onto the badge. The third has a hinge that has the integral hook cast in the badge during manufacture. The second and third type, have needle pins held by a shepherds hook attachment, or a barrel attachment, which includes a "C" shaped hook attached to the badge by a plate, or recessed into the badge.

Presentation, Wear and Documents

The Luftwaffe Ground Assault Badge was awarded in either a black leatherette box with a silk liner and blue velvet base, or a paper packet. An authorizing document was presented with it, and the proper annotations were made in the soldiers' Wehrpass and Soldbuch.

As with most Wehrmacht War Badges, the decoration was worn on the left side of the uniform.

Award Criteria

The award was presented to Luftwaffe field divisions who were engaged in combat along side their comrades in the land armed forces. There were twenty-two fully equipped Luftwaffe field divisions, among them the famed and elite "Herman Goring" division, who were under the direct command of the Goring himself until July of 1944. The Divisions were controversial as many in the Wehrmacht command thought them



a drain of precious resources that could have been better utilized if employed in the ever retreating Heer forces. Even though there were skeptics, it must be stated that the better trained Luftwaffe divisions gave a good account of themselves in land combat alongside their brothers at arms.

In order to receive the Ground Combat Badge, the following criteria needed to meet,

- Involvement in three separate engagements on separate days.
- Being wounded in an engagement.
- Being awarded a decoration in an engagement.
- A member killed in an action was automatically awarded the badge.

Paratroopers and assault gunners could also receive this award provided they met the above criteria.

Luftwaffe Assault Badge 25, 50, 75 and 100 Class

As the war continued, a need to decorate the Luftwaffe ground aces arose and on November 11, 1944, the Luftwaffe numbered badges were introduced. These badges were slightly larger and included a box at the base of the badge with the number that represented the number of attacks the recipient has participated in. Paratrooper and gun assault units could also receive the number badges if they meet the criteria. Due to its late institution these badges are extremely rare, in fact there is debate as to whether or not they were ever actually presented.



On the 3rd of November, 1944, Herman Goring created new decorations for the men of the Luftwaffe, one of which was the Luftwaffe Close Combat Clasp, with the order translated below,

"The Reichsmarschall des Reiches and Commander of the Luftwaffe.

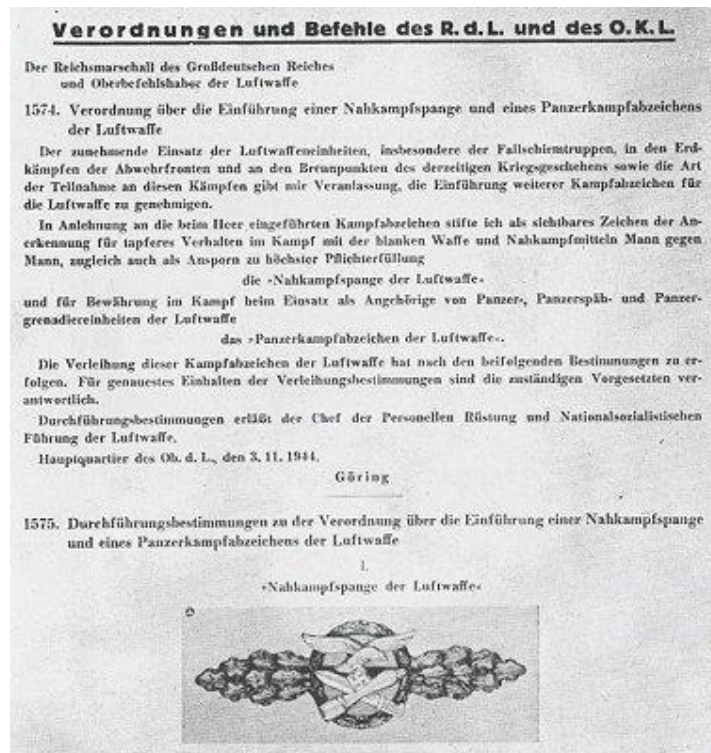
1574. Statutes for the introduction of a close combat clasp and Panzer combat award of the luftwaffe.

Due to the increasing frequency that Luftwaffe troops, esp. Fallschirmjaegers, are involved in ground combat on all fronts and Brennpunkten (hot spots) and in view of the kind of combat they are involved in, I have decided to introduce a number of new kinds of Luftwaffe combat badges.

To compliment the Armies version, I institute as a visible award for courage in close combat, using small arms and close combat means, and as a incentive to devotion to duty "the Luftwaffe close combat clasp" and for having proved oneself in combat as a member of a panzer, panzerrecon or Panzergrenadier unit of the Luftwaffe "The Panzer combat award of the Luftwaffe"

The award of the Luftwaffe combat badges is to go according to the supplied statutes. The responsible superior officers are to be held accountable for the following of these statutes.

Manufacturing style will be dictated by the chef of the Personnel, equipment and NS leadership of the LW. HQ of the Ob.D.L.
3.11.44"



Manufacturing

The basic shape of Close Combat Clasp was that of the Operational Flying Clasp minus the swastika at the bottom of the wreath. The eagle clutched a swastika, which had directly underneath it a bayonet and a hand grenade crossing each other. The Oakleaves wreath varied in color depending on the class of the award (Bronze, Silver, Gold), but the eagle was always oxidized silver.



Presentation, Wear and Documents

The badge was to be worn directly above the left breast pocket, and if the recipient was wearing a ribbon bar, it was to be 1cm above said device.

One of the earliest Bronze awards was presented to Obergefreiter Albert Mählmann of the Herman Göring Division on the 19th of December, 1944. The next month, Hitler presented the first Gold award to an NCO.

No information is currently available to the author on the documents of this badge.

Award Criteria

The badge was divided into three classes as follows,

Class I – Bronze, earned after 15 days of close combat, reduced to 10 days if the candidate had been wounded

Class II – Silver, earned after 30 days of close combat, reduced to 20 days if the candidate had been wounded.

Class III – Gold, earned after 50 days of close combat, reduced to 40 days if the candidate had been wounded.

Because the award was instituted so late in the war retroactive serviced was recognized as follows,

Eight Months of Service – five Combat days credit.

Twelve months of service – ten combat days credit.

Fifteen months of Service – fifteen combat days credit.

Luftwaffe personnel who received the Gold class were entitled to a twenty-one day furlough, a rare luxury in the fifth year of the war.



On November 3, 1944 Reichsmarshal Goring instituted the Tank Battle Badge, more commonly known as the Luftwaffe Panzer Badge, to honor the panzer troops of the Luftwaffe field divisions. Until this time qualified Luftwaffe personnel were awarded the appropriate Heer Panzer Badge.

The order called for two basic forms of the badge. The first style consisted of silver oak leaf wreath and Luftwaffe flying eagle with a black tank in the center. These badges were awarded to tank commanders, gunners, drivers, radiomen, repair crews and their medical personnel.

The second style was identical to the first except the oak leaf wreath was now black. Panzer grenadiers, armored reconnaissance units, and the medical personnel attached to them were all eligible for this style.

Manufacturing and Technical Information

The Luftwaffe Panzer Badge consists of an oval wreath composed of eight oak leaves on the left and, due to the tank protruding from the center, only seven oak leaves on the right. A ribbon is positioned on the base of the wreath and a Luftwaffe flying eagle is to be found at the top.

Presentation, Wear, and Documents

The badge was presented in a paper packet with the name of the award printed on the outside. The award document that was to be awarded with it was the common type featuring the recipients name, rank, unit, and the authorizing signature of an officer. The Luftwaffe Panzer Badge was worn on the left pocket of the tunic and (as with all badges) could be worn on civilian clothes in miniature stickpin form.

Award Criteria

Both badge styles were awarded for three combat engagements on three different days. As mentioned above the silver wreathed versions were awarded to panzer crews, repair crews, and the medical personnel attached to them, while the black

wreathed version was awarded to panzer grenadiers, armored recon units, and their medical personnel



Collector Warning

Due to their late institution these awards are exceptionally rare. Be wary of purchasing an example unless you have handled known originals.

Numbered Luftwaffe Panzer Badges - 25,50,75,100

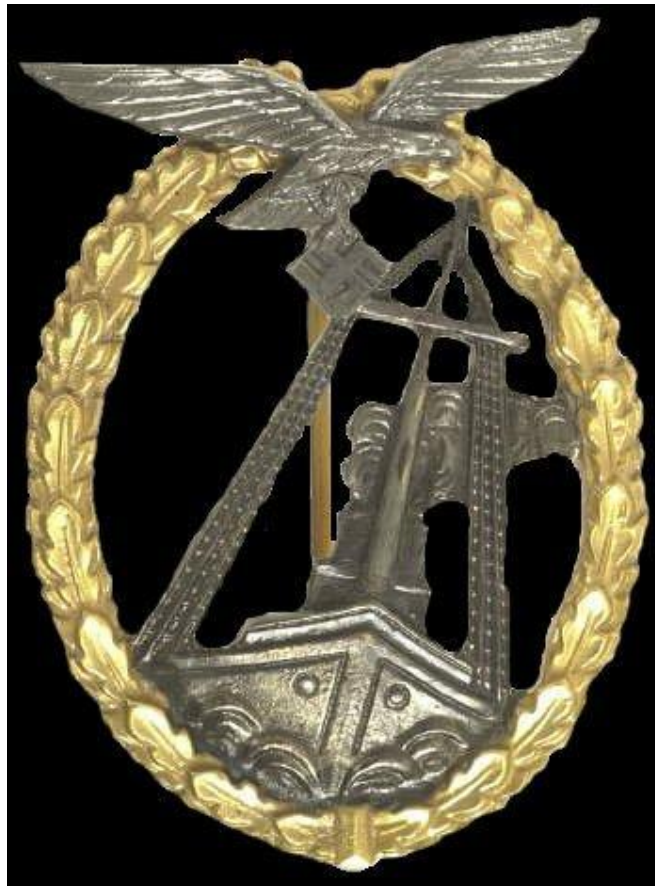
On November 10, 1944, just one week after the introduction of the standard Luftwaffe Panzer Badge, Reichsmarshal Goring introduced four new classes of panzer badge for 25, 50, 75, and 100 engagements. These badges were larger than the original badge and featured a small box containing the appropriate engagement number at the base of the wreath.

WARNING: These badges are extremely rare, if not impossible, to find. It is highly unlikely anything but trial samples were produced.



Instituted on 27 November 1944, by order of Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, the Sea Battle Badge was the last instituted Luftwaffe war badge. Since the Germans had no aircraft carriers or an air branch of the navy, all personnel who performed air related functions fell under control of Göring and the Luftwaffe.

The Sea Battle Badge was to be awarded to crews of Luftwaffe supply ships, air/sea rescue launches, and other special surface vessels. All military, official, and civilian Luftwaffe personnel were eligible. It could not be awarded under conditions that would entitle the participant to be awarded one of the war badges of the navy, or to aircrew personnel.





Award Criteria

This badge was awarded based on an accumulation of days at sea, with a day being equal to 10 hours at sea. Award criteria were as follows:

1. Leaders and crews of supply ships and other Luftwaffe surface craft.
 - a. 60 days sea in the North or East sea, between 5 and 20 degrees longitude and south of the 60th degree of latitude, or
 - b. 20 days at sea in the Mediterranean, including the Aegean and Black Sea.
2. Leaders and crews of air/sea rescue launches
 - a. 20 days at sea with a minimum of one rescue attempt or a three hour sea

- duration each day.
- b. 10 sea days with a successful rescue.

Technical Information

The intended badge was to be a gilt wreath, with the Luftwaffe eagle and swastika at the top in silver with a sea vessel in the center in dark metal, tilted 30 degrees to the right. As is the case with all war badges, it was to be worn on the left breast pocket. An award citation would accompany the badge.

Although the badge was officially authorized as well as pictured and described in the Luftwaffe Verordnungs-blatt, there is no factual information that the badge was ever actually produced, with the exception of one or two prototypes. Purported award papers exist, but there is no evidence that the badge was awarded in conjunction with the documents.



To recognize the type and number of operational flights undertaken by aircrew and certain other Luftwaffe personnel, the FRONTFLUGSPANGE (literally "Front Flight Clasp") was progressively introduced from January 1941.

Commonly referred to by collectors as Flight Bars, Operational Flying Clasps or Squadron Clasps, these badges consist of a central device encircled by a wreath of laurel leaves set between two 'wings' of oak leaves. In most designs, the ubiquitous swastika is set at the base of the wreath. Clasps measure around 7.5cm x 2.5cm (3" x 1"). The central device distinguishes between the types of flight undertaken. The color of the clasp, with the exception of the center which is usually blackened, identifies the number of flights achieved. Thus, the BRONZE clasp was awarded for 20 flights SILVER clasp was awarded for 60 flights GOLD clasp was awarded for 100 flights.

Note that a flight was considered "operational" if the enemy was engaged or enemy airspace was penetrated by a given distance. If the number of hours in the air was exceeded by a given amount a single 'sortie' could also be counted as more than one flight towards an award of the Operational Flying Clasp.

THE FIGHTER CLASPS



Day Fighter Clasp - Bronze

The central device of the upward pointing winged arrow denotes the award for Short Range Day Fighter. The winged arrow pointing downwards indicates Long Range Day Fighter and , prior to April 1944, Air to Ground Support.



Day Fighter Clasp - Bronze - Reverse View

The reverse of this clasp highlights the typical construction, pin and catch to be found on these awards. The wide tapered pin is almost always encountered, albeit with some variation in shape and colouring - late war clasps by "RS&S" are an exception with a needle pin and ball hinge. Note the absence of a maker's mark on the above example the majority of clasps, particularly those of early manufacture, were unmarked. When encountered, some of the makers to be found are:

- G.H. Osang
- Dresden
- R.S. & S.
- R.S.S.
- R.K.
- F & B.L.
- BSW (within a cloverleaf)
- M. Kunststoff

- Gablonz
- C.E. Juncker
- Imme & Sohn

The material / metals used in the construction of these awards were those used for other German military awards of the period. Readers are directed to Andy Hopkins' scholarly article "Badge Construction Techniques" on this website.



Case for the Fighter Clasp in Bronze



Clasps were presented in a small, dark blue, rectangular case with the designation of the award imprinted on the lid in gold. These cases measure around 9 x 4 x 1.5cm. Note the materials commonly used to line the case: white silk for the lid and cream colored flocking to form the base. Late in the war, clasps were shipped in simple paper envelopes, similar to other awards of the period.



A document accompanied the award of a clasp. Here is the document for the Bronze Fighter Clasp awarded to Unteroffizier Rudolf Langenstroer, a pilot who flew with JG4. Note the attractive illustration of the clasp at the top. This is the usual DIN A5 (15 x 21cm) sized document.

This Hoffman postcard of fighter ace Hannes Trautloft shows the regulation positioning of the award on the tunic. Readers will note that Colonel Trautloft's clasp differs from that illustrated above please read on!!



The Bomber Clasp



Bomber Clasp in Gold



The central device of the winged bomb denotes the award for crews of Heavy, Medium and Dive Bombers. The clasp illustrated is a high quality award manufactured by G.H. Osang of Dresden. Note that clasps were also embroidered in silver wire (officers) and cotton threads (other ranks) as a private purchase option - these are very rare on the collector's market.



The above document for the Gold award of the Bomber Clasp was awarded to pilot Oberfeldwebel Karl Müller who won the Knight's Cross in October 1942 as a member of KG2.

The Transport and Glider Squadron Clasp



Transport / Glider Clasp in Silver



Here the central device of the Luftwaffe eagle flying to the right denotes the award for Transport and Glider Squadron aircrew. Note that in this design the swastika is carried by the eagle, unlike all other clasps where it features at the base of the laurel wreath.



The document awarded to Leutnant Franz von Tesmar, a pilot (and adjutant) in a Transport squadron, winner of the German Cross in Gold and the Goblet of Honor.

Reconnaissance, Air-Sea Rescue and Meteorological Squadron Clasp



Reconnaissance Clasp in Gold with "Star" Pendant



The central device of the eagle's head facing to the right denotes the award to Reconnaissance, Air-Sea Rescue and Meteorological flyers. In this unmarked example note the "star pendant" attached to the basic bar ... as operational flights quickly began to exceed the 110 represented by a Gold award, it became necessary to recognize these achievements by enhancing the badge. Introduced in June 1942, the pendant represents the completion of the following numbers of operational flights:

- Transport and Glider Squadrons - 500 Dive Bomber
- Long Range Day Fighters, Air to Ground Support Squadrons - 400
- Bomber, Air-Sea Rescue, Meteorological Squadrons - 300 Reconnaissance
- Night fighter Squadrons - 250

The other feature of this badge to note is that it is manufactured from zinc alloy. These badges are very commonly found with the original color wash faded, or indeed, non-existent, having been absorbed over time by the base metal. Author Adrian Forman describes these as "crude", and certainly they command less money on the collectors' market. However, they generally maintain a solid standard of construction with sharp detail and serve to inform today's generation of the extreme demands on resources which occur in a war economy - if anything, they are historically interesting!



The document of the Reconnaissance award in Silver to Leutnant Theodore Wagner, an Observer in an Air-Sea Rescue squadron. Leutnant Wagner won the German Cross in Gold and Goblet of Honor.

The Air to Ground Support Squadron Clasp



Air to Ground Support Squadron Clasp in Silver



Created in April, 1944, the central device of the crossed swords denotes the award to Air to Ground Support Squadron flyers the "Schlachtflieger". Formerly, these personnel were awarded the clasp with the inverted winged arrow (see above). This Osang produced zinc clasp is rather special - it has most of the original finish intact!



Air to Ground Support Squadron Clasp - 1957 model



In 1957, along with other WW2 military awards, the West German Government authorised the wearing of clasps of modified design (read - omission of swastika) by Luftwaffe veterans. Note the construction of the badge - all 1957 awards are said to have been manufactured by the one firm - Steinhauer and Luck.

The Night Fighter Clasps



Night fighter Clasp in Gold



This is the rare document for the Night-Fighter Clasp with the usual illustration appearing at the top. The device of the winged arrow is that of the Day Fighter clasp but note the blackened wreath, denoting the Nachtjäger. Arrow up ... Short Range Night Fighter Squadrons. Arrow down ... Long Range Night Fighter Squadrons. The recipient was Hauptmann Heinrich Wohlers who won the Knight's Cross in December 1943. He scored 29 night victories before his death in March 1944. At the time of the award he was the Gruppenkommandeur of IV./NJG4. He later became Geschwaderkommodore of NJG6.

The Numbered Pendant



Bomber Clasp in Gold with "400" Pendant



The ever-increasing numbers of flights accomplished by Luftwaffe airmen warranted yet another modification to the Operational Flying Clasp. The numbered pendant was introduced in April, 1944. Bars were produced commencing with the number "200", with increments of "100". Most readers will know of the special "2000" pendant won by Stuka ace Hans-Ulrich Rudel - there were many incredible achievements by other pilots/aircrew within this range. The clasp illustrated is a fine example of the Bomber Clasp in Gold produced by Kunststoff , Gablonz, in zinc alloy.



Luftwaffe airmen undertook rigorous periods of instruction to qualify as pilots, observers, pilot-observers, wireless operators, airgunners, flight engineers or glider pilots. Upon completion of this specialist training they were entitled to wear a badge which reflected their specific qualification. Amongst collectors of

German militaria there is general agreement that these badges are works of art both from a design and a manufacturing perspective. Original examples are highly valued and vigorously pursued. Readers can access comprehensive information about each of these at the Luftwaffe Badges section of this site.

When nestled in the hand of an enthusiast, these badges frequently stimulate reflection on the exploits and bravery of the men who served in the Luftwaffe. 'Household' names such as Rudel, Hartmann, Galland, and Schnauffer may be evoked, or a general image of the Luftwaffe flyer may be formed in the 'mind's eye', perhaps an image representing the many thousands of airmen who served their country. "If only this badge could talk" is an often heard phrase.

Unfortunately, in the vast majority of cases, the identity of the original owner of the badge will be unknown and its link with specific historical events has been lost, forever. However, a closer, more intimate association with contemporary events is possible through a study of the documents which accompanied the award of qualification badges to airmen ... the Luftwaffe Verleihungsurkunden ('award or conferment certificates').

An example of the certificate which accompanied an award of the Pilot Badge in 1943. It reads:

Award
Certificate

I award
(rank and
name of
recipient)
the Badge
for

Pilot

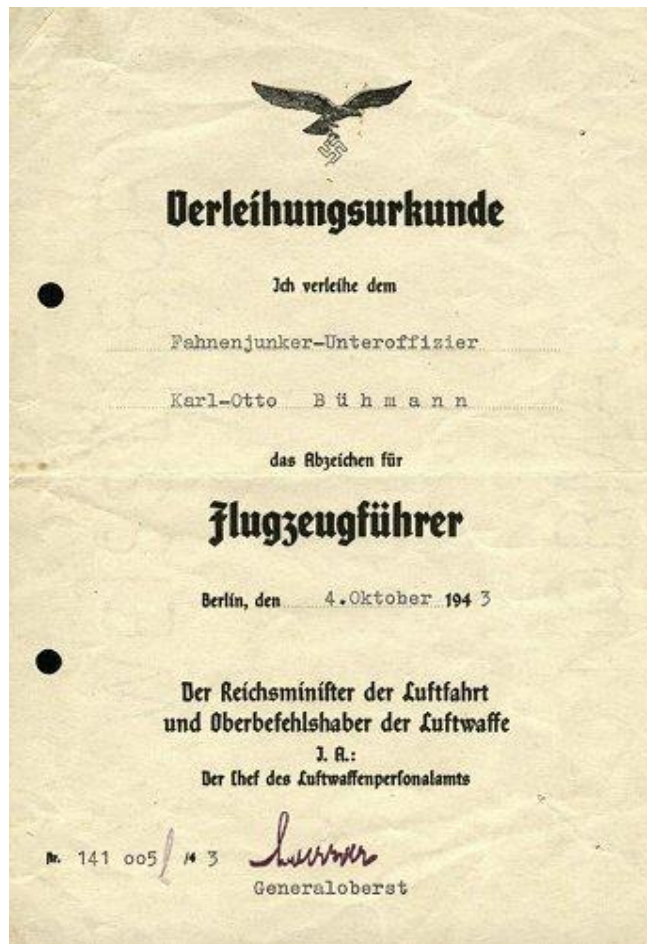
Berlin,
(date
certificate
signed)

The
Minister for
Aviation
and
Commande
r in Chief of
the
Luftwaffe

per order
of
the Chief of
the
Luftwaffe
Personnel
Department

certificate
number
and
facsimile
signature of
the then
incumbent

-
Generalobe
rst Bruno



Loerzer

These certificates are found in two sizes:

A4 - 210mm x 298mm (1935 to early war)

A5 - 150mm x 210mm (mid to late war)

Both within and between the "large" and "small" documents, there are observable differences:

I) The style of the Luftwaffe eagle:

A 1938
dated, A4
size Pilot
Badge
document



A 1943 dated,
A5 size Pilot
Badge
document



II) The Style of the Lettering,

A 1940 dated, A4 size Pilot Badge document





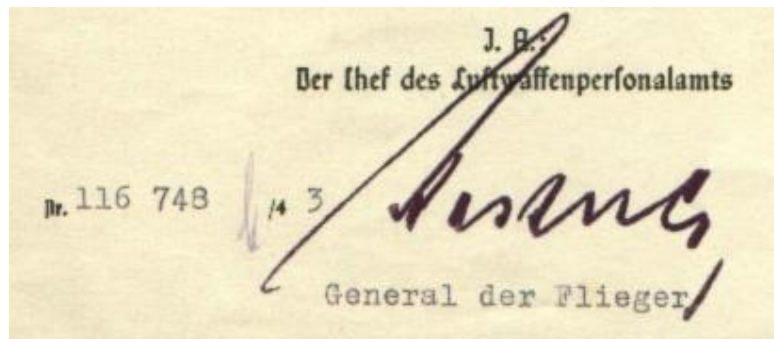
Aircrew Documents - a Research Project

Some sense of the value of collecting / examining documents may be gained by exploring the outcomes of an informal research project conducted by members of the Wehrmacht Militaria Discussion Forum.

In December 2000, Chris Boonzaier (Germany) requested that collectors who owned or had access to Pilot Badge documents provide the numbers and date to be found thereon. Members enthusiastically responded by sending a range of data which enabled increasingly rich and valuable discussion. The scope of Chris's initial posting was significantly expanded when Francois Saez (France) provided details of a Flugzeug - Beobachter (Pilot-Observer) Badge document, asserting its relevance to the thread thus:

graduates of all categories of aircrew received documents from the RLM (Reichs Air Ministry) which were sequentially numbered at any given time this number represented the total number of graduates with an aircrew-related qualification since the inception of these awards in 1935.

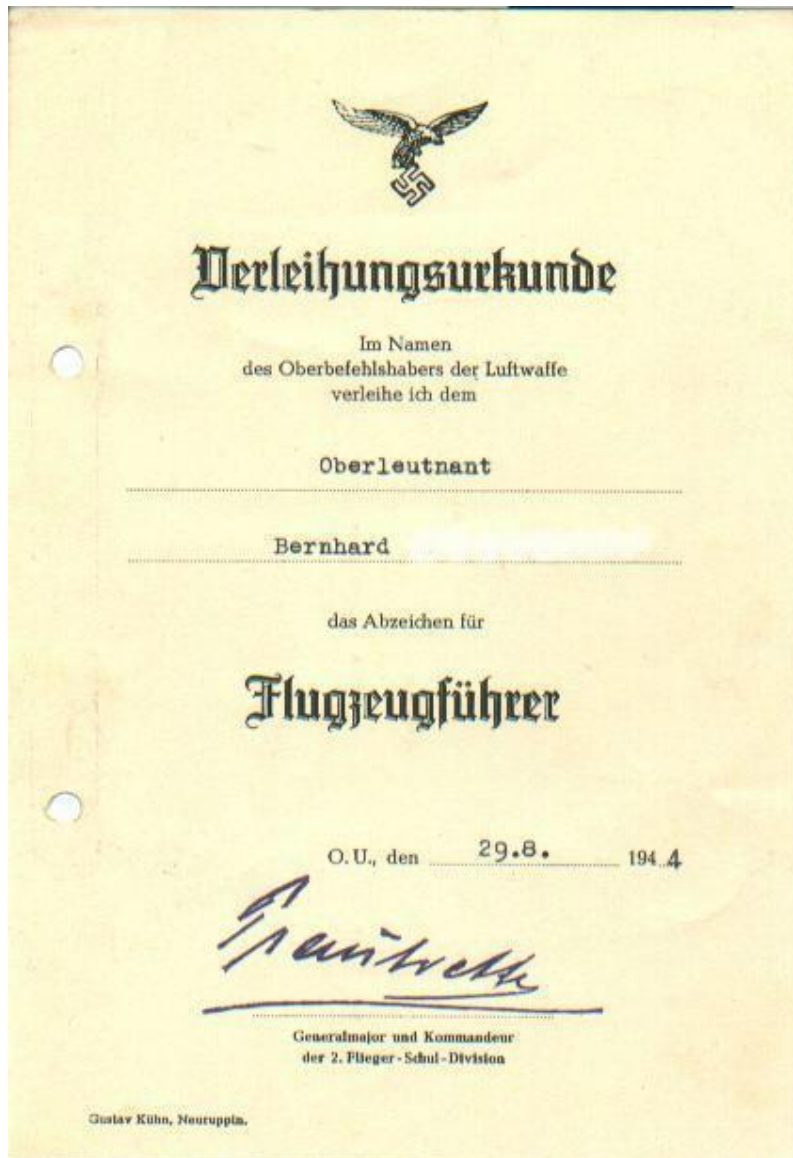
From this shared information it is clear that the number appearing on a document is not an indicator of the numbers of persons who had qualified for that particular badge up to that time, but that it represents the total of awards to all categories of aircrew.



Detail from a February 1943 dated Air Gunner Badge certificate. One gets a sense of how many airman had achieved a qualification by that time of the war!

Further data and discussion led to the observation that the certificates for the Retired Pilot Badge and the Paratroop Badge bore a different numbering system.

The date on the certificate is the date it was signed by the Chief of the Luftwaffe Personnel Department - this date may differ from the actual presentation or graduation day by up to 15 days.



From around mid-1944, certificates ceased to be issued from the RLM and became the responsibility of training units. These documents are not numbered and may show further variations in wording and lettering styles. One also sees the emergence of field-made and typed documents.

Forum contributor Mike Kenny (Australia) has generously compiled data from over ninety-five Luftwaffe documents into a spreadsheet (MS Excel format). This extremely valuable resource may be accessed by clicking on this link:

Luftwaffe Documents Spreadsheet

From this spreadsheet one can roughly estimate the number of Luftwaffe personnel who gained a qualification from 1935 to around mid-1944.

- Take note of the number on the listed Flieger-Erinnerungsabzeichen (Retired Pilot Badge) document dated November 1943 number "403". This pointer to the rarity of a much discussed award may be invaluable to the vigilant Luftwaffe badge collector!
- The first certificate on Mike's list was issued in 1935 and is numbered "30" - readers may examine this document in Forman's guide (reference below).
- Though the sample of documents is small, it is interesting to note the ranks of airmen at the time they gained their qualification.
- Note that very few Glider Pilot Badge documents were included ... a rare item!
- The Unqualified Air Gunner Badge (Fliegerschützenabzeichen ohne Blitzbandel mit schwarzem Kranz) was introduced in April 1944. Not surprisingly only one certificate is documented in the spreadsheet - this document is pictured in Detlev Niemann's book (see reference below). An even rarer non-RLM issue certificate for the Unqualified Air Gunner Badge is featured in the relevant section of this article.
- The word "Zweitschrift" typed at the top of a certificate indicates that it is a copy, issued as a replacement for the original. These documents bear both the original date and the date of reissue.

LUFTWAFFE CASES

All German forces were proud of their own badges, and in particular Luftwaffe and its ambitious commander Hermann Goering.

For this reason luftwaffe badges were always issued in special presentation cases.

The present article doesn't presume to be exhaustive and wishes to support the collector who wants to have a good knowledge on the various types of presentation cases, the system of construction and variations during the period till May 1945.

Externally all boxes are blue , the airforce colour, with various gradations, that go from a light blue to a dark blue .

During the course of the war the quality of the badges diminished.

This is also true of the presentation cases. Early models were well finished, using high quality materials, later poor material was needed, even cardboard with three foldsa simple inscription, printed in black ink.

On the cover of the box the type of badge that it contained is inscribed. This also supports the theory that badges were also delivered in boxes without the inscription on the external superior part.

Such descriptions on the cover are usually in gold, engraved with die. In some cases the inscription is found in silver colour.

The following photoshows a stamp used for these inscriptions (in this specific one the die was for the airgunner, photo courtesy of Detlev Niemann)



Inscriptions on the cover can vary for every badge.

The early models show single line inscriptions,



Subsequently, inscriptions were made on two or three lines, generally with the initials in capitals but in some cases not.

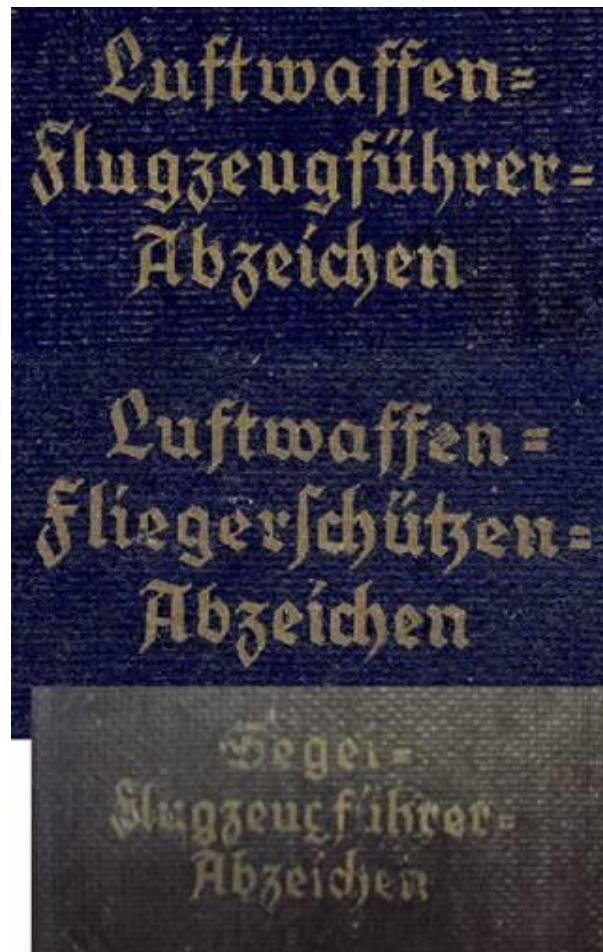
Without an exactly progression, these cases with 2 or 3 lines were used for badges in tombak types or zinc types . What characterises the period were the materials used inside the cases.

Fallschirmschützen-
Abzeichen

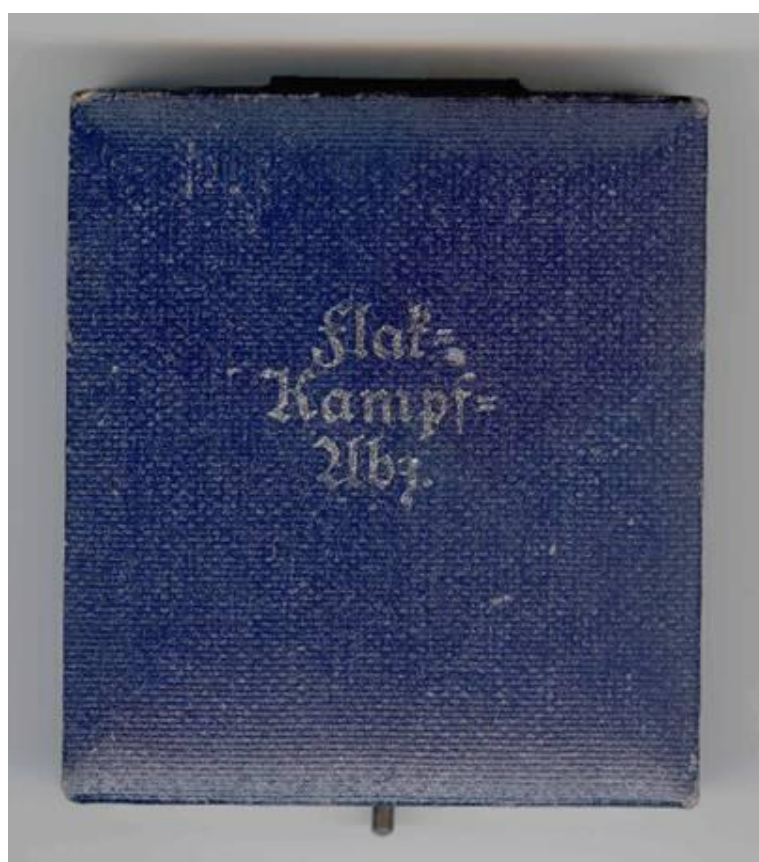
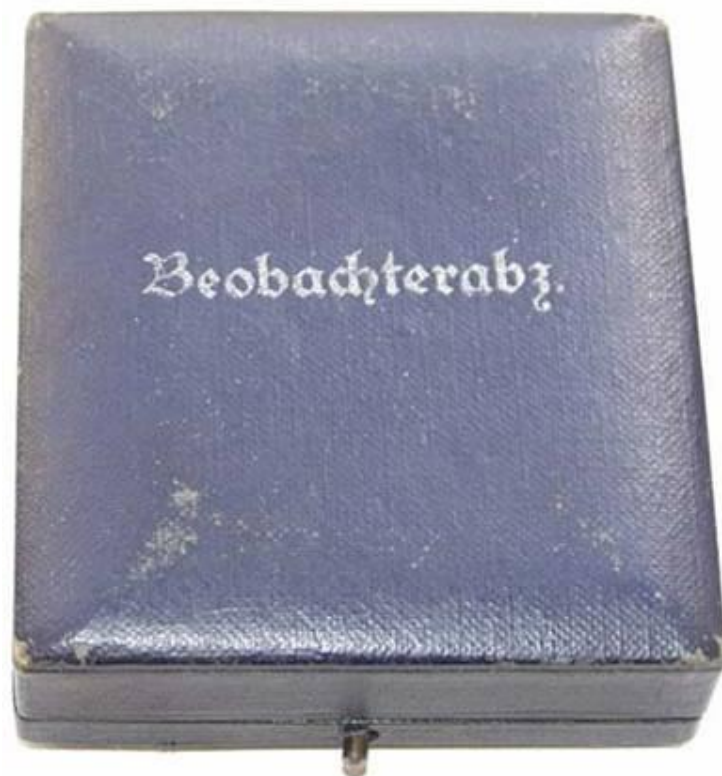
Luftwaffen
Flugzeugführerabz.

Bordfunterabz.
(Flieger-Schützenabz.)

Flugzeugführer- u.
Beobachter-Abzeichen



As mentioned before, inscriptions on some cases were in gold or in silver colour , we cannot be certain if these colours were used for all LW badges but it is clear that silver colour was used for the observer and flak badge cases.



On some types of presentation cases, the edging of the case is embossed along the perimeter.



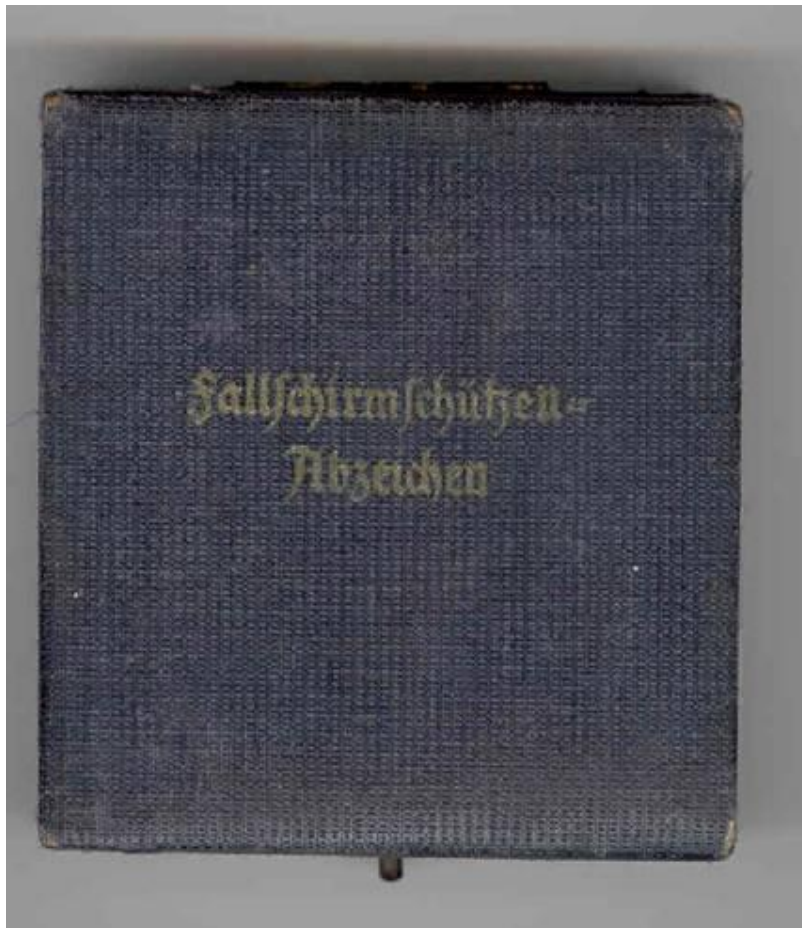
The sample above is one of the first presentation cases produced for gunner , note its inscription.

There were various firms producing it, unfortunately a list doesn't exist but we can assume that production was also carried out by firms that produced the badges, for instance Deumer, Meybauer, Juncker, etc. however these are no marking either on the inside or outside of the cases. It's possible to find boxes with small papers glued on the back with the name of the manufacturer.

Cases are with a zipper and a frontal button. The so-called "halb-etui" cases without frontal button and without zipper (used after halves the war period) are not present in Luftwaffe cases, present

instead in other decorations, as for instance German Crosses or Iron Crosses.

The following box, built in the first period, contained badges of the Deumer Firm. These characteristic boxes were produced for the pilot, pilot-observer, para, airgunner, flak and observer badges.

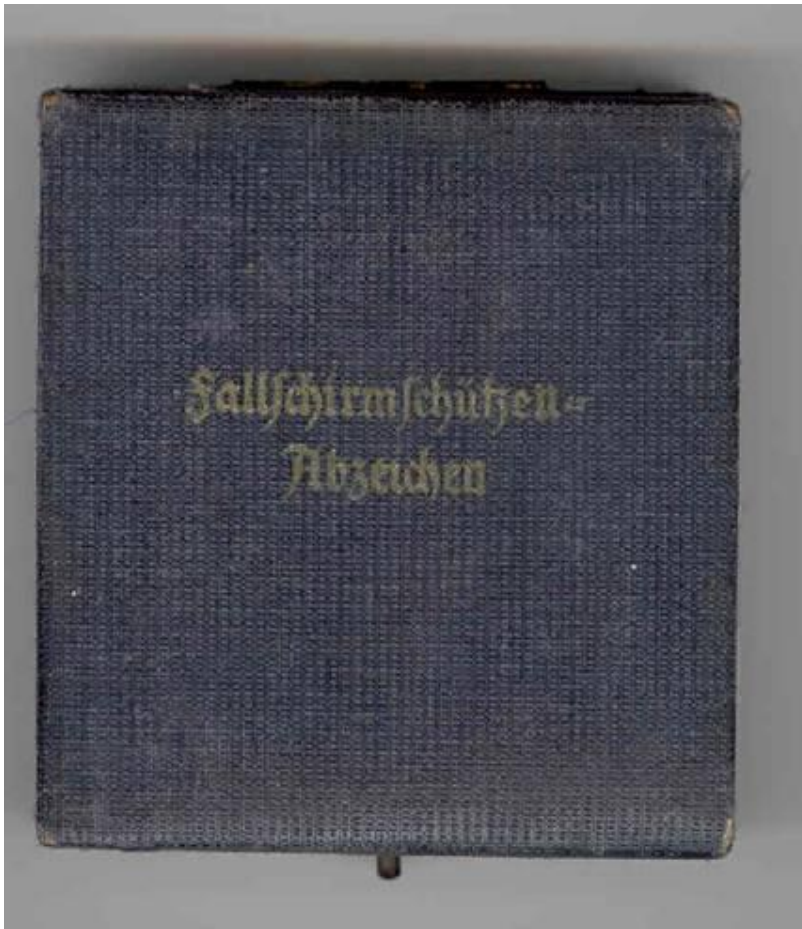


The box is composed of various pieces including :

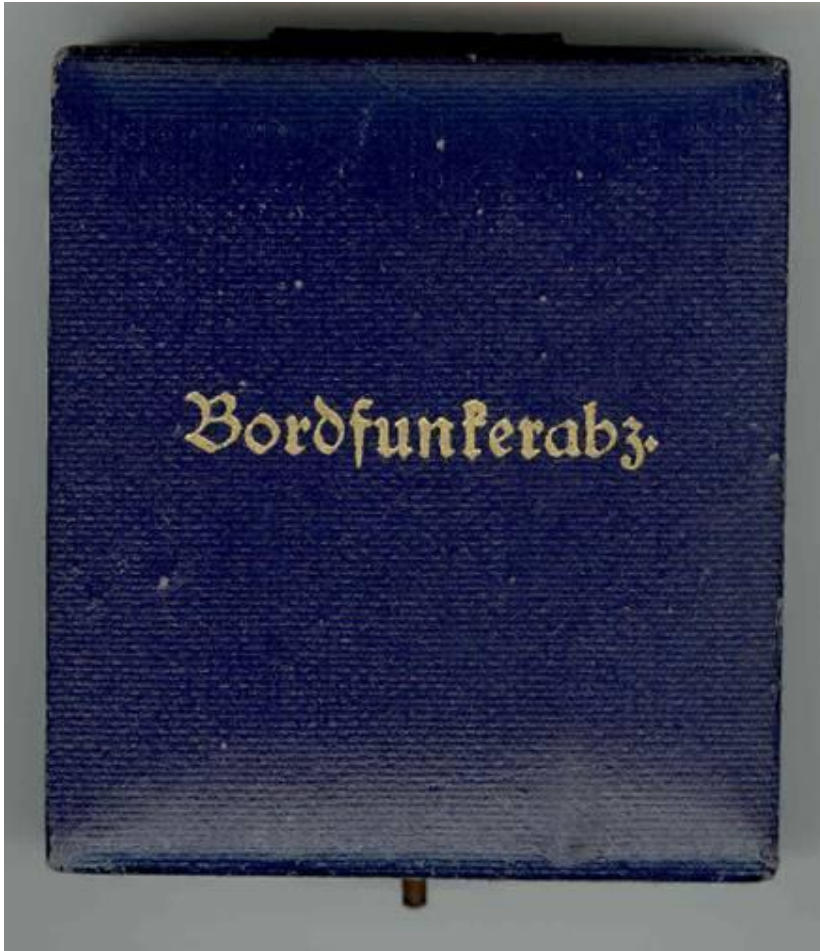
- The inferior part
- The inside badge support
- The cover
- The inside lining of the cover.

The external material covering of the two parts and the sides is in the same. The material used can be:

- in cloth, blue fabric colour,

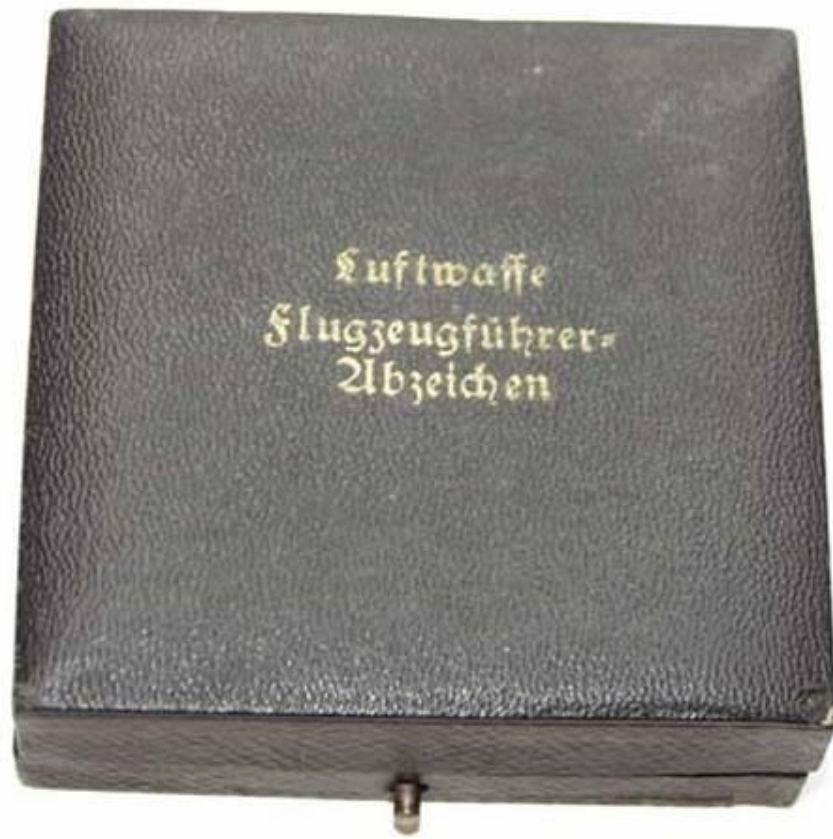


- in paper with tonality from dark blue to electric blue ,



- or navy blue imitation leather.

Flugzeugführer -
Beobachter -
Abzeichen



Boxes covered outside in cloth are the most desirable. There were produced during the pre-war and early period of war and are elegantly finished and the cloth covers the external and inside sides of both parts of the box. A piece of material is also brought over to the inside on the plain part of the box.

The same workmanship and finish is also present for paper covered boxes. These boxes were produced the whole period under consideration. Excellent cases of very good quality were produced, an example of this being the " BORDFUNKER " case.

The covering was fixed with animal glue, as can be seen from the photo below.

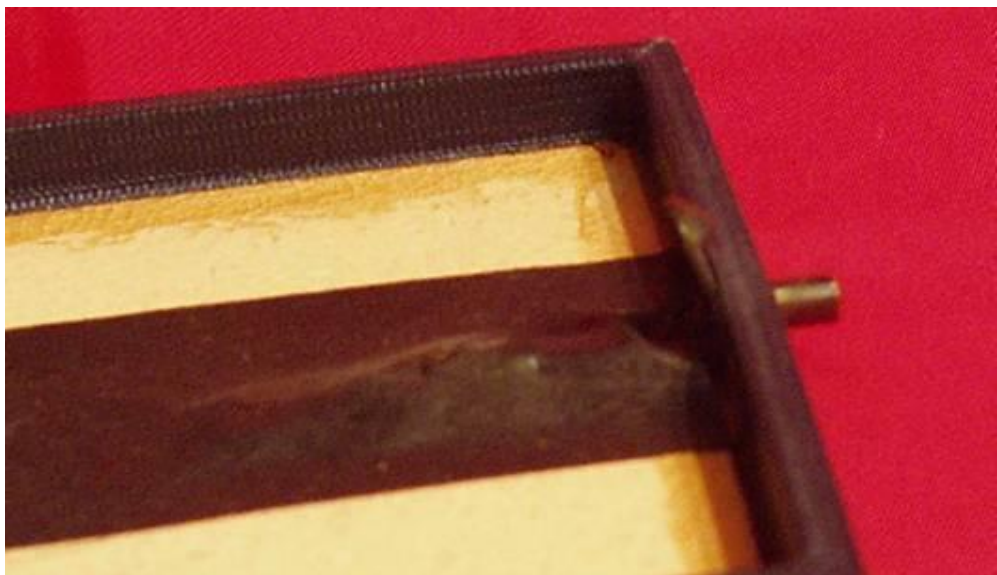


The material used for the frame of the two parts is generally in soft wood or pressed cardboard.

The closing mechanism is a central hinge, of various possible dimensions or two small side hinges, this last type however was rarely used.



In front, the closing is formed from a button to rubber band, not in brass. Generally the top part of the button is a semicircle , but can also be triangular , as for when the case with double zipper. The slot closing, it inserts into a small metallic plate positioned inside the cover, it is also possible to find the joint directly in the wood of the cover.



The inside base on which the badge was inserted is in wood for the first pre-war period and begin of war, with flat form.

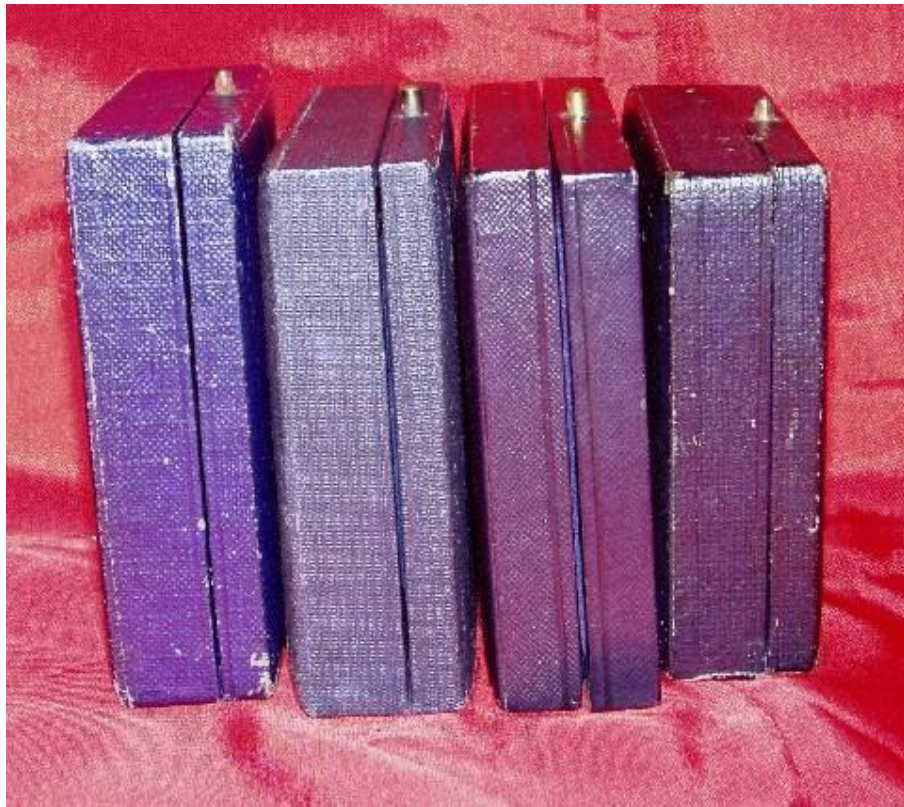


later, was produced in cardboard with vaulted or flat forms .



The inside base is of thick cardboard and it was produced by a firm, currently unknown, which branded this component in relief with the letters "KB" and the code which related to the contents (badges) of the box. This was necessary because case dimensions could vary from firm to firm, for the same type of badge.

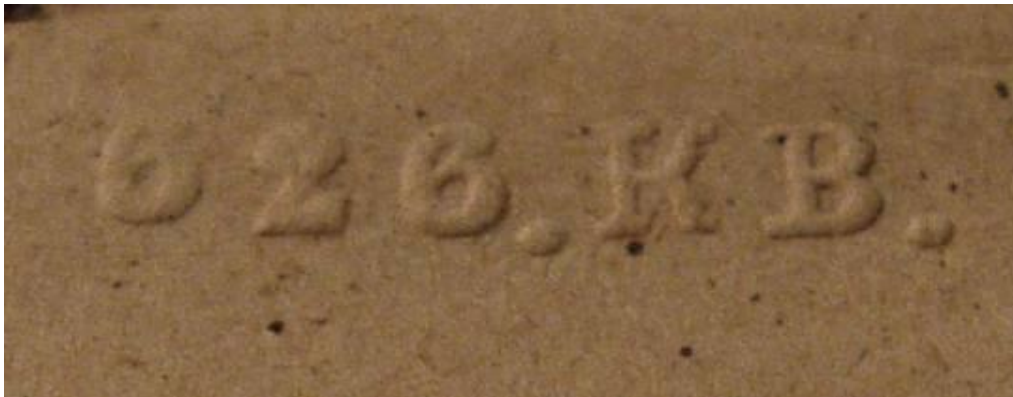
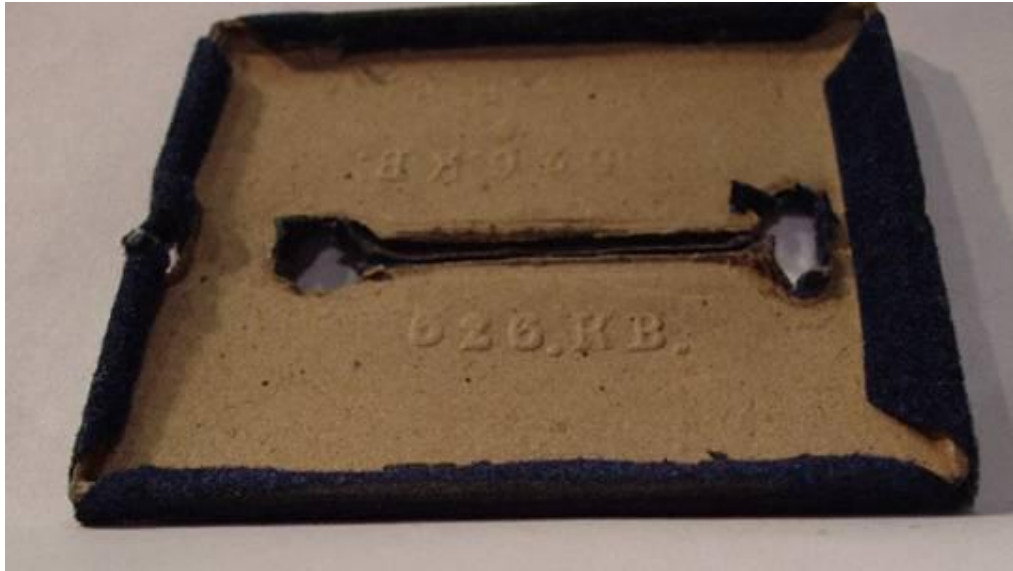
The following illustrates, that these are airgunner badge boxes of different dimensions proving the need for the production of different sized inside bases.





Here are codes that relate to different badges:

- code KB 626 for observer boxes, pilot, para, glider and flak
- code KB 630 for airgunner
- code KB 631 for clasp LW



Base were covered in three different types of material:

1. blue velvet in various shades , glued. In cases of early manufacture, with a wood base , velvet is very thick, with or without a cut in the hollow insertion. While for the example cardboard , these may also be found with less thick velvet and with a cut in the hollow insertion . In this last example, a small strip of blue paper was inserted, glued to the base so as to avoid seeing the raw base of the box, which would otherwise have been visible, as illustrated by some of the photos included in this article.



Following, blue velvet with large weft:



2. blue synthetic material , this was used during a large part of war period, but was not as valued.



3. In boxes produced during the second half of the war, material was replaced with pressed cardboard (stratified), light blue colour and combed giving a similar impression to velvet. The big drawback when worn, was lost of color , smooth of the combed surface reveding the brown colour of the cardboard. Such system has been used for all the types of LW badges but it is particularly clear in pilot-observer cases, as in the following photo



It's possible to find a rare version with combed cardboard and dark red velvet under the cover . The following example is for para badge, shows this .



Having to respect the elegance that these boxes had to give to the badge, in this "red" version, the strip of paper type skin under is a "brick-red" colour.

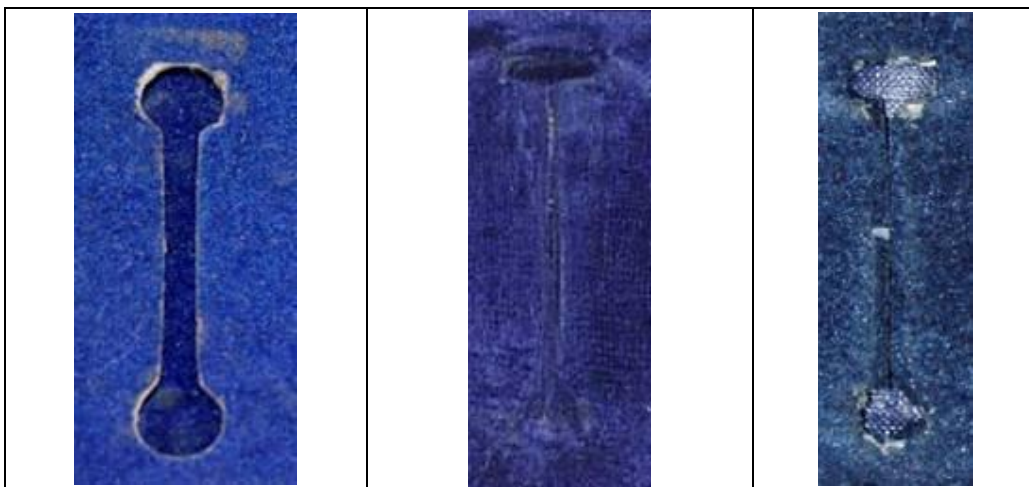


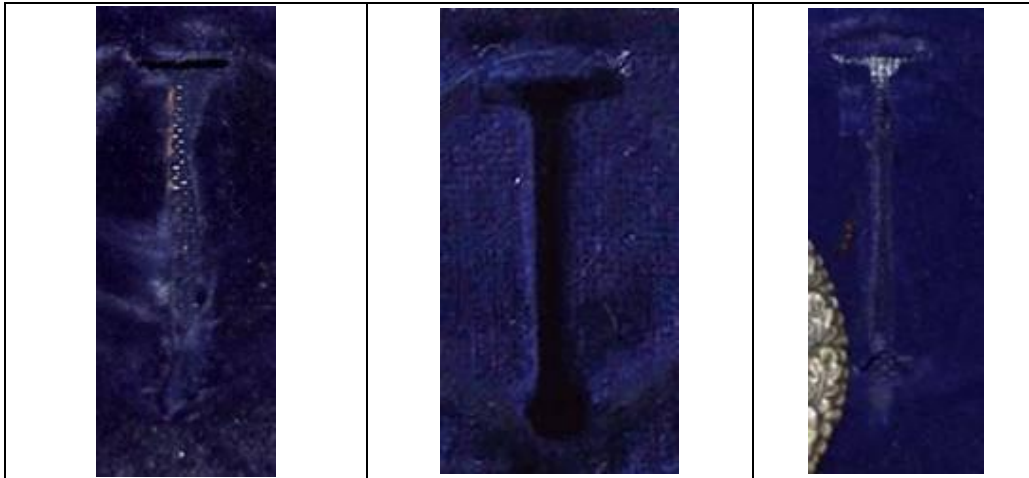
A rare version of case has the inside base covered in velvet and raised to "hillock" to give more prominence to the badge. also a white frame is present on the inside sides. This type of box is known, till today, to have been used for Pilot badges.



The inside white frame is also present in late boxes with the inside of combed cardboard. There are also boxes with a blue coloured frame.

The hollow in the base where the badge was fixed the badge can have various forms, this is depended on the hinge type and the hook.





To cover the hinge, inside the box, a strip of cloth was applied in blue satin of various shades. In later versions, such cover was replaced by the combed cardboard versions as mentioned earlier. It is even possible to find satin hinge covers and cardboard combed for the base and under the cover, as in the following example.



The inside part of the cover was generally lined with satin, in the same colour as the velvet that covered the hinge, stuffed with

cotton



A version with inner combed cardboard, also the inside was covered with this material (without stuffing).



It is possible to find boxes lined with velvet and with the inside cover lined in combed cardboard, as in the following case of a box for FLAK. (Courtesy of major.plm)



Alternatively with base in cardboard and covered in velvet.





The German Navy (Kriegsmarine) fought the duration of the war with a significant inferiority in the number of surface ships. The battleships groups they did possess found themselves at the disadvantage of having to fight against the odds, and were sunk fairly early in the war. This surface disadvantage was counteracted by the wide use of submarines, and indeed u-Boats caused grave difficulties in Allied shipping reaching the English Island. For a while, it looked as if their goal of bringing England to starvation would be achieved. However, with the development of radar and the uncoding of enigma, the fortunes of war turned against these brave men.

Though most famous, U-boat and Battleship crews were obviously not the only warriors in the Kriegsmarine arsenal. There were a significant number of Kriegsmarine personnel employed in other venues, such as coastal defense, anti-aircraft duties, e-boats (fast attack boats), and escort ships. At the end, these landlocked sailors found their glory defending on the ground and desperately evacuating the Eastern territories as the Red Army poured into Europe.



At the direction of Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, commander in chief of the navy, the Fleet War badge was instituted on April 30 1941 to recognize the sea actions of the German Navy, mainly in actions against England. The designer as well as the principal maker was, Adolf Bock of Berlin. Even though the badge was instituted in 1941, it was awarded for actions prior to that date.

Manufacturing and Technical information

The High Seas Fleet War Badge is highly detailed and easily recognized by its silver German battleship coming head on at full steam plowing through the center of the Badge. The battleship is surrounded by a gold wreath that has, at its base, a ribbon tied in the form of an X with an acorn in the top and lower V formed by the tie. There are 8 bunches of two oak

leaves that make up the wreath, with a single acorn at the tip of each leaf alternating on the outside and inside. At the top of the Badge is the national emblem with wings spread, clutching a swastika in its claws. One will note the high detail in the battleships guns, windows, and waves created as it passes through the water. From the base to the tip of the eagles' head measures 57mm and the width is 44mm. The eagles' wingspan is 31mm and width of the wreath is 7mm. The back of the badge is flat with a dished shape and black in appearance. The hinge, pin and hook assemblies are also black. Some known makers of this badge are Adolf Bock, Schwerin and Friedrich Orth.





Presentation, Wear and Documents

The badge was presented in a case or gray envelope with the name of the award stenciled on the front. The case was dark blue with an unmarked exterior. The interior was lined with a bright flocking on the top and bottom of the case. It was presented with a standard award document.

The High Seas Fleet Badge was worn on the lower left breast pocket below the Iron Cross 1st Class, if that award was owned by the recipient.

Award Criteria

The Fleet War Badge was awarded to crews of battleships, cruisers and other naval ships serving in combat areas, including those killed in action. For personnel serving on

battleships or cruisers, the award came through the commander of the task force. For other naval personnel the award came through naval headquarters. The criteria for receiving the award is as follows:

- 12 weeks service on a battleship or cruiser, with proof of distinction and good conduct.

The number of weeks could be reduced if the following conditions were met;

- If the recipient wounded or killed during the voyage.
- If the cruise was successful.
- For participation in "Rawalpindi" and "Jan Mayen".



Introduction

The Schwerin produced Kriegsmarine High Seas Fleet War Badge is considered by many collectors to be the premier High Seas Fleet badge because of its good detail and, for early tombak badges, high quality fire-gilt finish. This article provides the reader with a very detailed examination of the Schwerin High Seas Fleet (HSF) Badge, including its characteristics and interpreted flaws, interpreted die-wear with time, badge construction and finishing and maker's mark characteristics. For readability, an informal Type classification is introduced and used based on the observations discussed in the main text.

The main aim of this article is to carefully examine the characteristics of genuine Schwerin HSF badges so that the reader will not be fooled by any modern reproduction, some of which are also illustrated and briefly discussed. The author hopes that the reader will not be greatly distracted by the introductions of types, whether a specific feature is a die flaw or a die characteristic, or the author's interpretation of early versus late production badges.

A detailed study of seven (7) Schwerin HSF badges have been used as the basis of this article, comprising four (4) tombak and three (3) zinc examples. An eighth badge, a late addition to the study set of another tombak example, has been referenced in relevant sections. Numerous other images of genuine badges have been viewed by the author and, where appropriate, included to aid the discussion. No nickel-silver badges have been observed by the author. Given the institution date of the award (mid 1941), the author believes that nickel-silver versions of the badge are unlikely to have been produced, although the possibility of their existence cannot be totally discounted.

None of the badges in the study set can be documented as having been directly Kriegsmarine veteran acquired, although one badge allegedly came from the estate of a German veteran (Badge#2, the "Markgraf" named example) and the author has seen other examples, sharing the same characteristics as those in the study set, which have been attributable to German veterans. Careful examination of badges featured in references/articles by Angolia, Ailsby, Niemann and IMM (Issue #65), among others, indicates that all of these published examples also share the same characteristics as outlined below.

One main assumption has been carried throughout this discussion, being that the highest quality badges with the heaviest fire-gilding were the earliest produced and that the zinc badges were the last produced. The author would like to draw attention to the difference between when a badge may have been produced and when a badge may have been awarded, hence the possibility that some early badges may be obtained from veterans who received their awards mid-war or later. The main assumption is strongly supported by evidence of die deterioration and repair as discussed below. The actual number of production runs (batches) is unknown by the author, as is the number of badges per batch or the total number of High Seas Fleet badges produced by Schwerin.

The article is divided into sections for convenience, however the reader is strongly encouraged to start at the beginning and read through each section sequentially to avoid missing the introduction and explanation of important points. The sections are listed on the top-left menu.



Introduction

As with all aspects of collecting in this field there are a wide number of opinions as to what is genuine and what is reproduction, however, it is believed that this article, which is based on personal experience and contact with established collectors, represents the current accepted view. It is not however, intended to provide a comprehensive answer to all questions and it is anticipated that it shall be modified from time to time as and when new information comes to light or current views change. Any comments or additional information is most welcomed for inclusion and can be forwarded to the author.

The following notes are intended to act as a guide to provide a better understanding of what to look for when trying to determine the originality of any Schwerin naval badge. As always there are exceptions to the general rules and these have tried to be identified within the text. It is also proposed that this article shall be read in conjunction with and supported by more detailed individual articles on each of the particular war badges.

Contents

- 1.0 Badge Construction
- 2.0 Manufacturer Naming
- 3.0 Arrangement of Hinge and Catch Assemblies
- 4.0 Main Pins
- 5.0 Hinge Pins
- 6.0 Catches
- 7.0 Finishes
- 8.0 Copies

1.0 Badge Construction

Schwerin are considered by many to be the premier manufacturer of naval badges due to the good detail and high quality fire-gilt finish on their early badges. They were also the only manufacturer to make all of the naval award badges, which were instituted, manufactured (in large scale production) and awarded during the Second World War.

The badges were made from two basic materials:

“Tombak” badges (Early War Period 1939 – 1942). These badges are commonly referred to as being Tombak or Brass and are manufactured from a copper based alloy.

“Zinc” badges (Late War Period 1942 - 1945). These badges are commonly referred to as Zinc or Fine Zinc and are manufactured from a zinc based alloy.

It is believed that the switch from tombak/brass to zinc occurred sometime towards the end of 1942 following the introduction of metal regulations(1). This is also supported by the fact that original 2nd Pattern E-boat badges, which were instituted in January 1943 are only to be found in zinc.

With the exception of the U-boat clasps, which can be found with two different reverses, Schwerin badges were produced in two basic forms, either dished (concave) or flat backs.

Dished Reverse

- 1st Pattern E-boat
- Destroyer (Very Slight)
- High Seas Fleet

Flat Reverse

- 2nd Type E-boat
- Blockade Breaker
- Coastal Artillery
- Auxiliary Cruiser
- Minesweeper

- U Boat

The use of the concave reverse allowed the manufacturer to produce a “high” profiled obverse whilst maintaining economic use of metal and avoiding excessive badge weight.

Occasionally vaulted badges are found, this was usually been done by the recipient in order to provide a better fit on the uniform and is a good indication of an actual worn piece. As these badges are not easily bent, vaulted pieces often exhibit tell tale marks where a vice or grips have been applied.



2.0 Manufacturer Naming

With the exception of the U-boat badge, which has stamped marking, there are two basic styles of raised lettering, used on Schwerin badges.

Type 1 – This style is similar to the font “Times New Roman” (e.g. – SCHWERIN) and is found on the following badges:

- 1st Pattern E-boat
- Destroyer
- Coastal Artillery
- Auxiliary Cruiser
- U Boat Clasps



Type 2 – This style is similar to the font “Arial” (e.g. – SCHWERIN) and is found on the following badges:

- 2nd Type E-boat
- High Seas Fleet
- Blockade Breaker
- Minesweeper



An important point to note is the raised lettering on original badges when looked at closely is always uneven in that individual letters appear to be different sizes, inclined, or not level with each other. This is attributed to a die manufacture process where the naming was formed by assembling individual letters rather than the use of pre-formed words.

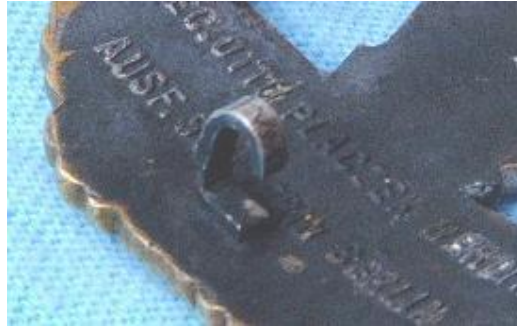
It is also interesting to note that the position of the naming on the back of the badges can vary up or down slightly. As the naming on each particular badge is exactly the same it is not believed that different dies were used in manufacture. The variation in position is attributed to slight differences in alignment of the front and back dies during a particular production run. In most cases it is believed that all of the relief of the badge was contained within the obverse die with the reverse die being relatively flat. The actual extent of naming also varies from badge to badge and is noted as follows:

U-boat – (stamped naming)	SCHWERIN BERLIN 68	
U-boat Clasp (1st Type)	ENTW PEEKHAUS BERLIN	AUS. BERLIN BERLIN SW68.
U-boat Clasp (2nd Type)	ENTWURF PEEKHAUS	AUSF. SCHWERIN BERLIN 68
Auxiliary Cruiser	SCHWERIN . BERLIN	
Coastal Artillery	SCHWERIN BERLIN	
Destroyer	SCHWERIN BERLIN 68	
1st Pattern E-boat	SCHWERIN BERLIN 68	
2nd Type E-boat	FEC.W.E.PEEKHAUS BERLIN AUSF.SCHWERIN BERLIN 68	
High Seas Fleet	FEC. ADOLF BOCK AUSF. SCHWERIN . BERLIN	
Blockade Breaker	FEC. OTTO PLACZEK BERLIN AUSF. SCHWERIN BERLIN	
Minesweeper	FEC. OTTO PLACZEK BERLIN AUSF. SCHWERIN BERLIN	

3.0 Arrangement of Hinge and Catch Assemblies

With the exception of the U-boat badge and some of the U-boat clasps, there are two basic arrangements of hinge and catch assemblies, which are used on Schwerin Naval Badges. The use of these different arrangements is basically dependent on whether the badge is of Tombak (early war) or Zinc (late war) manufacture.

Tombak Badges – On these the catches are always attached directly to the back of the badge, the hinge block assembly being laid on its side with the actual hinge facing towards the centre of the badge. It is also common to find striations on the block end of the hinge parallel to the hinge axis.



Zinc Badges – Due to the need to change to a zinc-based alloy after the metal regulations were introduced, it became more difficult to attach the fittings to the back of the badges. To get over this problem the catches were always fixed to the badge with the addition of a small circular plate (which increased the surface area to aid attachment). For the same reason the hinges, although a slightly different type, were for all intents and purposes rotated through 90o becoming “upright” when compared to Tombak badges. It should be noted that in some instances the small circular catch plate may become obscured by the soldering process and is not always easily seen.

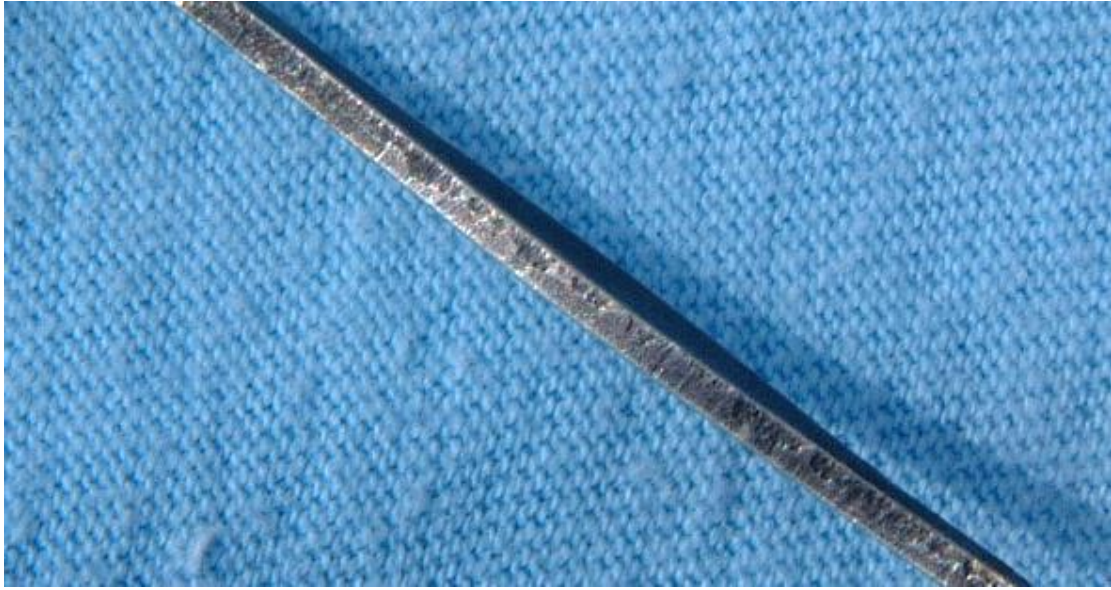


With the exceptions of the U-boat badges mentioned above all marked Schwerin badges should exhibit this characteristic and those that do not should be viewed with caution, either being a fake or have had the standard arrangement replaced for whatever reason.

4.0 Main Pins

Depending on the actual award, Schwerin badges were fitted with either vertical or horizontal main pins. Preference was made to the use of a vertical main pin, however horizontal main pins were used on badges where their design would not hide a vertical main pin when attached to the uniform by the award loops. Badges with horizontal main pins are also always fitted with a small hook located on the top of the reverse. This was done to ensure that the top of the badge was held neatly in place.

With the exception of some of the U-boat awards the main pins on both Tombak and Zinc badges are of the plain "coke bottle" type, die struck out of sheet metal. This process causes the appearance of shear marks on the side of the pin, which can be easily seen when viewed at closely.



Another characteristic often seen is a small flat spot or dimple at the hinge end of the pin. Most pins also have the ends turned up where they extend beyond the catch and are usually non-magnetic although steel (magnetic) pins have been found on some late produced Zinc badges.



Although the pins are not easily bent with finger pressure, it is not uncommon to find badges where they have been re-shaped. As with vaulting this was usually done by the recipient in order to improve

the fit to the uniform and is also a good indication of an actual worn piece.



Needle pins were not used on any Schwerin badge and if found should be viewed with caution either being an indication of a fake or at the very least a replacement.

5.0 Hinge Pins

Tombak Badges - These are usually found with the hinge pin having a slightly domed head. With the exception of the U-boat badge (smooth domed) these pins generally have some small flaw or fault on the head in the form of raised imperfection/line or nipple. Now and again hinge pins with flat heads found, some of which exhibit a cross hatching effect.



Zinc Badges - These are fitted with a hinge pin that does not have any domed head, being finished flush with the side of the hinge block.



There is however at least one known example of a Tombak badge, which was found to have been fitted with an original "zinc type" flush mounted hinge pin. It should be noted that this is not the norm and was perhaps one of a small number of badges, which were produced during the transition period from Tombak to Zinc.

6.0 Catches

Again with the exception of the U-boat awards there are two types

of catches encountered on these badges both of which are manufactured from non-magnetic flat wire (rectangular in cross section).

Type 1 – These are of a true “C” shape and have been noted on early manufactured Tombak badges where they are attached directly to the badge.



Type 2 – It is thought that these catches were a development of the Type-1 being well formed with a curved top and a flat bottom and were introduced to in order to aid attachment. They are found on both late manufactured Tombak badges where they are attached directly and on all Zinc badges where they are attached with the aid of a base plate.



Although there is no documentary proof that Type-1 catches were only used on early Tombak badges and the Type-2 on later Tombak badges this speculation is supported by a recent study of the

Schwerin High Seas Fleet Badge (ref. Schwerin HSF article by Mike Kenny). This being the case any change over from the Type-1 catch to the Type-2 catch is likely to have been made sometime between late 1941 and mid 1942. This is supported by the fact that the 1st Pattern E-boat badge (manufactured mid 1941 to late 1942) can be found with both types of catches. It is also noted that this change over must also have occurred a reasonable time before the switch from Tombak to Zinc (late 1942) as the Type-2 catches are quite commonly found on Tombak badges.

7.0 Finishes

The actual finish used varies depending on the individual award but they all generally comply with the following basic rules.

Tombak Badges – The finishes applied to these are extremely good and stand the test of time very well with any deterioration being caused by normal wear and tear / rubbing of the surface over the years. The order of the manufacturing process and application of finishes is believed to be as follows:

1. Production of the bare metal badge.
2. Hand finishing of small cutouts and edges, attachment of hinge, main pin and catch etc.
3. Application of a silver plate finish to areas where the "dark oxidised silver" is to be applied.
4. Application of dark "silver oxidised finish".
5. Application of fire gilding direct to the obverse brass wreath. (It is common to see this finish spilling over onto the reverse side of the wreath also).
6. Burnishing of highlights on fire gilding e.g. swastikas, wreath highlights.

Zinc Badges – These badges generally do not hold their finish well and it is quite rare to see them without significant deterioration, the 2nd pattern E-boat being a classic example of this. It is also common to see small pimples or bubbles occurring underneath the finish. This is due to the breakdown of the base metal over time, resulting in the release of small particles of "gas" which cause this effect. Although a good indication of an original Zinc badge there are some copies around which try to mimic this. (Note that this effect should never be seen on a Tombak badge).

8.0 Copies

Due to the desirability of these badges, especially the Tombak pieces, they have become a main target for forgers in recent years and numerous copies can now be found in circulation ranging from awful to very good. However, as with most copies and fakes there are essentially two basic types, these are:

“Cast” Copies – These have been cast from an original badge and therefore exhibit the correct style of naming on the reverse. The copies can be quite convincing especially if of a Zinc badge where the finish is not expected to be good. Usually irregularities are found with the pins / catches and lack of sharpness in the detail on the front or in some of the naming on the reverse. Inevitably the metal used on the copy is of a better quality than the original zinc badge often weighing more with none of the tell tale bubbling. Obviously due to the casting process they are also usually slightly smaller in dimensions when compared to the original.

“Die” Copies – Due to the increase in value and demand of Third Reich medal and badges manufacturers are now able to invest more money into the production of purpose made dies. High quality metal copies of Tombak badges are the most common seen today and pose the major threat to the beginner. It should be noted that all Schwerin award badges have been copied this way.

It is proposed that these copies are to be dealt with individually in more detail but generally all of them tend to exhibit some common differences in one or more of the following areas:

1. Pins - On copies these tend to be the wrong shape and have excessive tapering on both ends. They are also relatively easy to bend with finger pressure.
2. Hinge Blocks - When viewed from the side these appear to be made of thin metal wrapped around a small central core.
3. Hinge Pins - The heads of these are smooth and more rounded when compared to an original. Some of these also have a slight flat spot to the top
4. Hinge & Catch Assemblies - These sometimes do not follow the correct arrangement.
5. Naming - The lettering is sometimes bigger than on the original and usually found to be relatively uniform in appearance. Copies are also sometimes named in the wrong style (font)

6. Metal - Copies are generally made of quality metal even those of late issue badges such as the 2nd E-boat and U-boat clasps. Due to the metal used they are sometimes quite significantly heavier than the originals.

7. Finishes - The application and colour of finishes is also often found to be lacking but this is something that is difficult to describe and really only becomes obvious through experience of handling and viewing both copies and originals.

E-Boat 2nd COPY



E-Boat 2nd ORIGINAL



The following photos of the 2nd Pattern E-boat illustrate some of these common differences:

1. Copy is made of quality metal not zinc alloy as original
2. Copy has wrong arrangement of hinge / catch for a zinc badge
3. Main Pin has excessive tapering
4. Naming too uniform although at first glance looks good.

2nd E-boat Copy 2nd E-boat Original

The following photo is a copy of a 1st Pattern E-boat and again shows the excessive tapering of the main pin, round head to hinge pin (with flat spot) and very faintly the hinge block, which is made of thin metal wrapped around a small central core.



It should be noted however that copies tend to continuously evolve with particular deficiencies being modified and corrected once they become known and generally accepted by the collecting fraternity. In light of this the collector should not just rely or focus on one particular aspect in order to determine authenticity but should view the badge as a whole taking all characteristics into account.

>1.0 Badge Design and Institution

The High Seas Fleet War Badge was designed by Adolf Bock and instituted by Grand Admiral Raeder on 30, April 1941. Criteria for which the badge could be awarded include;

- 12 weeks service on a battleship or cruiser
- Participation in a successful cruise
- Being wounded while on a cruise
- Serving on a ship lost at sea
- Service for the High Seas Fleet for which no other war badge could be awarded.

The badge was authorized for wear below the Iron Cross First Class on the left breast pocket.

The badge features a front-on (bow) representation of a battleship of the Gneisenau/Scharnhorst class cutting through swell at speed. The battleship is circled by an oval-shaped oak leaf wreath with a "X" tie at the base and a left-facing national eagle superimposed on the wreath above the ship. The eagle clutches a

swastika, which is joined to the range finder of the ship. The obverse of the wreath and eagle are gilt finished whereas the battleship and the reverse of the badge are finished in a matt dark grey. The reverse of the ship and the wreath are concave however the reverse of the eagle's wings are flat.

Ship Terminology

In discussing the characteristics of the badge, it will be useful to define some terms for the areas of the battleship represented on the badge. These features are illustrated below and include, from bottom to top;

- 1. Hull, including
 - a) the waterline
 - b) armour plating (technically it could be argued that the line connecting to the deck should actually connect to the waterline)
 - c) port and starboard portholes (upper and lower rows)
 - d) anchors
 - e) bowline
 - f) water flow through ports
- 2. Main deck line
- 3. Anton (forward) 28 cm turret with
 - g) Electronic range finders
- 4. Bruno (raised) 28 cm turret with;
 - g) electronic range finders
- 5. Port and starboard secondary armament 15 cm turrets
- 7. Superstructure
- 8. Bridge deck
- 9. Main Bridge (with 5 windows)
- 10. Rangefinder
- 11. Port and starboard anti-aircraft fire controllers ("wobblypots")
- 12. Observation deck with h) port and starboard machine gun emplacements
- 13. Searchlight and deck
- 14. Upper observation deck (fo'c's'le)
- 15. Mast arms
- 16. Rotating foretop cover with rangefinder (prior to the fitting of radar).



2.0 A Brief Summary of Badges in the Study Set



The seven study badges have been ordered in what is interpreted to be their sequence of production, from the earliest (top left) to the latest (bottom right). This interpretation is based on badge composition, badge finish, die-flaws and interpreted die wear/deterioration with time. The reader is referred to later sections for the significance of the variations mentioned in the badge summaries.



Badge 1 - Interpreted to be the earliest example in the study set. Tombak badge with a heavy fire-gilt/dark grey finish resulting in a very fine sandpaper-like finish. Burnished swastika and "X" wreath tie. All 5 bridge windows well defined. Relatively small main wreath die-flaws. Sharp impression of the main deck line on the concave reverse of the badge. Laid-down box hinge with large domed-head hinge pin.



Badge-C - Tombak badge, heavily worn fire-gilt/dark grey finish. Burnished swastika and "X" wreath tie. The left-hand bridge window #1 is almost totally absent. Relatively small main wreath die-flaws. Smooth impression of the main deck line on the concave reverse of the badge. Semi-circular arrangement of raised dots are clearly visible approximately 11.64 mm below the "S" in Schwerin. Laid-down box hinge with large domed-head hinge pin. This is one of the few Schwerin badges the author has seen on which the hinge pin head is located on the left hand side of the hinge. The eagle's wings have been bent back towards the

reverse of the badge for better fit on the uniform by the wearer (ie hand-vaulted). This badge is a late addition to the article, hence it is not numbered, it is not imaged in full and it has been included mainly for the "Bridge Windows" section. It's detailed dimensions are also provided in Section 9.



Badge 2 - Tombak badge, heavy fire-gilt/dark grey finish. Burnished swastika and "X" wreath tie. The left-hand bridge window #1 represented by a slit with a faint impression of the original window area in the background. Relatively small main wreath die-flaws. Smooth impression of the main deck line on the concave reverse of the badge. Laid-down box hinge with large domed-head hinge pin.



Badge 3 - Tombak badge, medium to heavy fire-gilt/dark grey finish. Burnished swastika and "X" wreath tie. All 5 bridge windows are well defined however bridge window#1 is in a slightly higher position than on Badge #1 and #2. Slightly larger obverse left hand main wreath die-flaw compared to Badge#1 and #2. Smooth concave impression of the main deck line on the reverse of the badge. Laid-down box hinge with large domed-head hinge pin.



Badge 4 - Tombak badge, light fire-gilt/dark grey finish resulting in a smooth finish. Non-burnished swastika and "X" wreath tie. All 5 bridge windows are well defined and in the same position as Badge#3. Same sized obverse left hand main wreath die-flaw

compared to Badge#3, slightly enlarged obverse right hand main wreath die-flaw compared to Badge#3. Smooth concave impression of the main deck line on the reverse of the badge. Laid-down box hinge with cross-hatched flat-headed hinge pin. Triangular profile on the open end of the catch. This badge has 6.8 pencilled on the reverse, possibly representing the original price of the badge in RM (see Section 4, Image#9).



Badge 5 - Zinc badge, thick gilt finish, heavily silver plated and (?chemically?) darkened reverse with large scale bubbling. Windows are well defined however there are indications that the obverse has been "double" struck. Smooth concave impression of the main deck line on the reverse of the badge. Hinge with integral thin baseplate and hinge pin neatly trimmed on both ends. Catchplate used.



Badge 6 - Zinc badge, thin gilt finish, relatively thinly plated and (?chemically?) darkened reverse compared to Badge#5, windows well defined. Smooth concave impression of the main deck line on the reverse of the badge. Hinge with integral thin baseplate and hinge pin neatly trimmed on both ends. Catchplate used. Note that this badge shows evidence of pitting following interpreted salt-water exposure.



Badge 7 - Zinc badge, gilt finish
95%+ unworn but "faded" to grey,
relatively thinly plated and oxidised
reverse, bridge windows well
defined. Smooth concave
impression of the main deck (bow)
on the reverse of the badge. Hinge
with integral thin baseplate and
hinge pin neatly trimmed on both
ends. Catchplate used.

BADGE#1



BADGE#2



BADGE#3



BADGE#4



BADGE#5



BADGE#6



BADGE#7



BADGE#1



BADGE#2



BADGE#3



BADGE#4



BADGE#5



BADGE#6



BADGE#7



IMAGE#2



BADGE#1



BADGE.C







Informal Type Classification

The author hopes that the reader will not be diverted by the introduction of "Types" from the true reason for this article, that being to distinguish genuine variations in authentic badges and to detect reproductions.

In order to aid the readability of this article and for any future discussions based on this article, an informal Type classification is proposed as follows;

Type-1 _



Badge#1 is an example of a Type-1 badge, which is characterized by the sharp main deck line impression on the reverse and the absence of interpreted die reworking. The maker's mark on this type is commonly found higher up from the base compared to later types. Die wear is evident on some interpreted later Type-1 badges in the region of the left hand bridge window. Type-1 badges are made from tombak and have a very heavy fire-gilt finish. The author believes that this type of badge was produced during the earliest production run(s). Badge-A and Badge-B are also Type-1 badges.

Type-2



This Type is also made from tombak but is characterized by a smooth concave reverse, as opposed to the sharp main deck line impression on the reverse of Type-1 badges. Type-2 badges have been subdivided, based on die wear and interpreted repair, into the following subtypes;

Type-2a - This Type is characterized by a smooth concave reverse. Indications of preliminary die reworking are apparent in the bridge window region, however very early examples such as Badge-C reveal no indications of reworking in this region and the left hand bridge window is so worn as to be almost totally absent. Like Type-1 badges, Type-2a badges are made from tombak and have a heavy fire-gilt finish. It is common to encounter the finish more thinly applied on obverse of this type, resulting in much of the tombak being exposed with relatively minor wear. Badge-C and Badge#2 are examples of this Type.

Type-2b - The Type is essentially the same as Type-2a, however further die reworking is evident in the bridge window region. Die reworking is also evident in the Anton turret region. Like Type-2a badges, Type-2b badges are made from tombak and have a heavy fire-gilt finish. This Type is represented by Badge#3.

Type-2c - The Type is essentially the same as Type-2b however, unlike Type-2a and -2b badges, some Type-2c badges have a very light, almost frugal, fire-gilt finish. The intensity of the fire-gilt effect is subdued compared to earlier Types, however the gilt color tends to be brighter and more yellow on these badges. In either case, the quality of the finish remains very good. Minor variations in the hinge/pin/catch assembly are likely in this type, particularly in the hinge pin where flat and/or crosshatched hinge pin heads are commonly encountered. The author believes that this type was the final Type of tombak badge produced prior to the change to zinc. This Type is represented by Badge#4.

Type-3 -



This type is represented by Badge#5. The die-characteristics are very similar to Type-2c examples however the badge material used is zinc and the hinge/pin/catch assembly has been changed to accommodate the new badge basemetal by the introduction of hinge and catch base plates. Type-3 badges have a very thick grey/silver plated finish, particularly on the reverse which is prone to bubbling, and the gilt (not fire-gilt) finish looks thickly painted on.

This Type is believed by the author to represent the initial run(s) of zinc badges when Schwerin may have been trying to retain a high quality finish on their zinc badges, on par with their earlier tombak examples.

Type-4



This type is represented by Badge#6 and Badge#7. Die characteristics are similar to Type-3 badges with only relatively minor further die deterioration. The development of a large die-strike induced shear gash on the left hand edge of the bridge deck is evident (see flaws below). Type-4 badges are only finished with a light plating or a wash. Both the finish and the zinc alloy used for this type seem to be variable in quality, ranging from poor to fair. This type of badge has not aged well compared to earlier Types.

4.0 Badge Die Flaws and Characteristics

For the trained eye, genuine Schwerin HSF badges are one of the easiest badges to detect and to distinguish from reproductions out of the entire Schwerin Kriegsmarine War Badge series due to numerous die flaws and die characteristics. Die characteristics are defined as those traits imparted by the die that are characteristic to Schwerin produced HSF badges. Die flaws are defined as interpreted faults that developed in the Schwerin HSF badge dies during production.

Close examination of the badges in the study set indicates that the original HSF dies were susceptible to damage during badge production. There are characteristic die-flaws which are evident on the highest quality (earliest) examples and these die flaws are observed to be more apparent on later (lower quality) zinc examples, indicating that the dies deteriorated with time. Periodic die repair is also indicated and is mentioned below where observations suggest. Based on these observations, the author firmly believes that Schwerin only ever employed one (1) set of dies for production of their (marked) HSF badges. As Schwerin has maintained one set of dies for the production of both tombak and zinc badges, there appears to be no logical requirement for a second set of dies. The author would, however, welcome evidence in the form of Kriegsmarine veteran awarded Schwerin HSF badges to dispute this belief. The author has not seen evidence of unmarked Schwerin HSF badges, although evidence to the contrary would also be welcomed.

The premise that Schwerin employed only one set of obverse/reverse dies is based on several observations. The two main observations are;

- 1) the consistency of the maker's mark (discussed separately below) regardless of the badge base metal and type of finish and, more importantly;
- 2) two main die flaws observed on the wreath, regardless of the badge base metal and type of finish.

Further evidence for a single set of dies is observed in the consistency of other badge details across all 4 badge types, such as the majority of the wreath and the eagle, the form of the waves and other ship details and die-characteristics for which no evidence of die deterioration has been observed. In other words, at least 95% of all Schwerin HSF badge details remain consistent between all four informal badge types. The author feels it would have been

impossible for 1940s technology to reproduce a second set of dies this accurately, let alone accurately reproduce the minimum four sets of dies which would be required to explain all the minor observed variations between the four subtly different but genuine Schwerin HSF badge Types observed to date.

The two main wreath die flaws are present on the inner edge of the obverse wreath at the 10:30 and 01:30 positions as circled in Image#3. They are in line with the mast arms, which may be significant as the distances between the pointed ends of the mast arms and the wreath are short, possibly resulting in high stress points in the obverse die. The flaws consist of small triangular protrusions which are easily visible with the naked eye and are usually apparent on small or poor quality images. These two die flaws have been observed on all genuine examples of the badge by the author regardless of the quality of the material or interpreted period produced (early, mid or late war, tombak or zinc basemetal). It is therefore interpreted that these two die flaws were formed very early, possibly during pre-production/trial strikings.

These triangular flaws, particularly the obverse left die flaw, are less pronounced (smaller) on the highest quality badges (Type-1) compared to poorer quality badges (Types-3 and -4) indicating deterioration of the dies with time. The apparent enlargement of the triangular protrusions with time is why the author believes they are die flaws rather than die characteristics.

The triangular protrusions are rough in profile and show evidence of shear marks on the edges, so variations in hand finishing are not believed to be the reason for the difference in the size of the flaws observed between early and late badges. Further, if the flaws were a hand finishing effect they are more likely to have been totally removed rather than left partially intact.

It is unlikely that the dies would have been created with the two obvious main die-flaws, so it is possible that there is at least one genuine badge which does not have these two die flaws. Whether or not this initial badge was actually fully finished and awarded is entirely unknown. If anybody is aware of a Schwerin marked HSF badge which does not show the two main die flaws but conforms to all other genuine characteristics described, then the author would appreciate seeing images.

Other FLAWS include;

- Similar but more subdued flaws which are present along most of the inner edge of both sides of the wreath.

- Irregularities in the five bridge windows, discussed separately below.
- Irregularities in Anton turret details, discussed separately below.
- The upper left and right hand rows of portals show evidence of die wear and repair. Due to the numerous combinations of unworn, worn and repaired portholes observed by the author, these variations have not been documented. Some variations in porthole details are almost certainly associated with the thickness of the applied finish infilling and obscuring individual portholes.
- On Type-4 zinc badges, the obverse upper rim of the left hand of the deck immediately below the searchlight reveals an irregularity. This flaw appears to have deteriorated with time but the author is unsure if a die repair was effected ([Image#4](#)).
- On some Type-4 zinc badges, the obverse indentation of the superstructure immediately left of the search light reveals "flashing" not observed on early tombak badges ([Image#5](#)). Occasional die misalignment may also explain this particular feature. The term flashing is used in the scale modelling sense, ie excess material.
- On Type-3 and -4 zinc badges, the obverse right (reverse left) arm of the yard arm has a distinctly triangular profile due to flashing on top of the mast arm when compared to Type-1 and -2 tombak badges ([Image#6](#)). This strongly indicates die deterioration with time.
- On Type-4 zinc badges the obverse right hand inner edge of the deck below the bridge windows reveals a jagged "V" shaped gash or tear in the badge due to the shearing process of the die striking ([Image#7](#)).
- The top right hand inner feather of the eagle exhibits evidence of die flaw development and subsequent reworking ([Image#8](#)). The initial flaw is interpreted to have been repaired prior to Type-2b badge production and further die reworking is interpreted prior to Type-2c badge production.

Some die CHARACTERISTICS include;

- The reverse of the best quality (Type-1) badges are concave but reveal a relatively sharp impression of the main deck line. On subsequent Types, the reverse impression of the bow remains concave but is smooth ([Image#9](#)). The author's interpretation is that the early sharp bow impression on the reverse die was rounded off prior to later tombak production runs. The reason for this is

speculative but may have something to do with many Type-1 badges showing some evidence of double-striking whereas double-striking on the smooth backed Type-2 onwards badges is much less common. The reverse die, with the sharp impression, may have somehow caught on the badge and moved it slightly prior to a second application/striking of the die (or an "aftershock"/rebound from a single die strike), resulting in the commonly observed double striking and requiring the removal of the sharp edge.

- On some early badges, for which the maker's mark is situated relatively high above the bottom of the badge, a semi-circular line of raised dots is visible (Image#10). These raised dots are consistently located approximately 11.75 mm (± 0.25 mm, depending upon measurement accuracy) directly below the "S" in Schwerin and result from negative points in the reverse die. The dots are present on most Type-1 badges, they are present but less obvious on Type-2 badges and have not been definitely observed on Type-3 and -4 badges to date. Additionally, the raised dots may have been removed from some badges whilst bevelling the edge of the badge in the hand finishing process for some badges. The reason for the dots is unknown but, given their alignment parallels the lower edge of the badge and, speculating, may have been used to align the dies. The consistency in the distance between the maker's mark and the dots, combined with the fact that the raised dots are found on both Type-1 and Type-2 badges, is further evidence that the same basic reverse die was used for both Types of badges, even in the absence of the sharply impressed main deck line on the reverse of Type-2 badges.

- Due to "flashing", there is very little separation between the range-finder (immediately below the swastika) and the searchlight deck (Image#11). The obverse of this flashing reveals a "pebbled" or grainy surface texture.

- The obverse right-hand edge of the eagle's wing shows additional "flashing" (Image#12). On some badges the flashing is not as pronounced, possibly due to minor differences in die alignment from one strike to the next.

- The deck between the searchlight and the bridge windows extends further to the obverse left than to the right, giving this region an asymmetric appearance. This is best illustrated when viewed from the reverse (Image#13).

- The obverse left secondary armament gun barrel reveals more "flashing" than the gun barrel on the right (Image#14).

- The eagle is "bearded", in that the space between the eagle's beak and neck is not silhouetted ([Image#15](#)). Additional flashing is present on zinc Type-4 badges, indicating die deterioration with time.

-Where the eagle's wings merge with the outer edge of the wreath, the profile formed is a square or "U" shape ([Image#16](#)). This is significant as on most reproductions, the same area is much more "V"-shaped. The reverse left hand merge is more U-shaped on tombak badges but squared on zinc badges, possibly indicating minor die reworking.

Double-striking is apparent from the obverse features of some badges ([Image#17](#)) and should not be cause for major concern. On the contrary, it is likely to be a good sign that the badge has indeed been die-struck. Double-striking effects in the region of the eagle are common on early (Type-1) tombak badges which have the reverse main deck line sharply impressed. Double-striking effects have also been observed on genuine zinc badges.

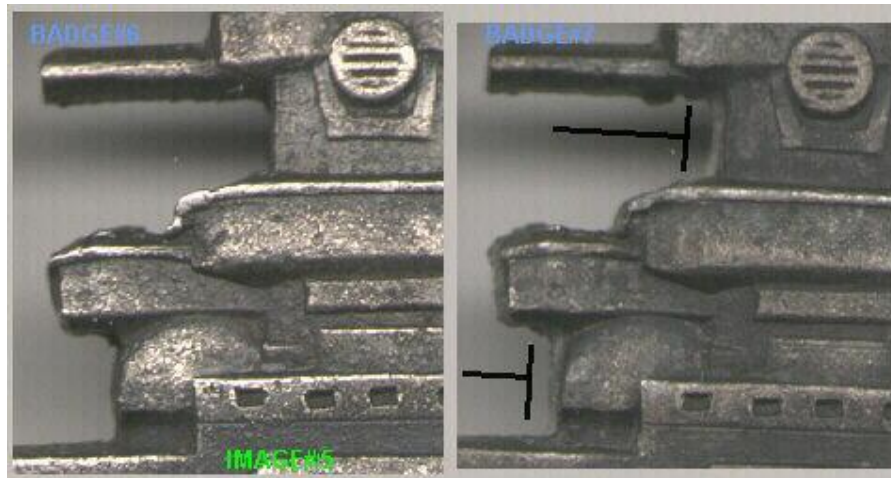
As with the introduction of Types, the reader is encouraged not to be distracted by the definition of die flaws and characteristics or whether a particular feature is a "flaw" or a "characteristic", but rather to identify the features described by the die flaws and characteristics as a means of determining whether a given badge is authentic or a possible reproduction.



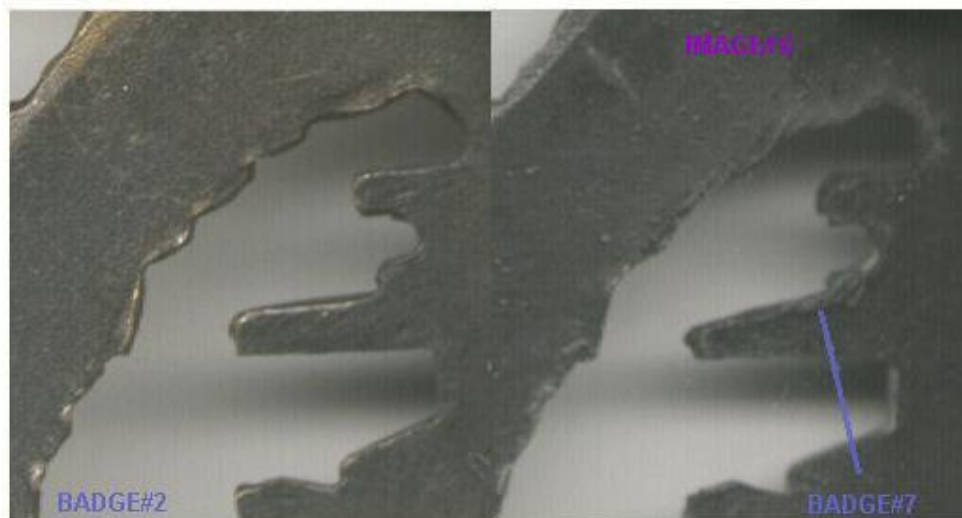
The two main die flaws, located on the inner edge of the obverse wreath at the 10:30 and 01:30 positions, are circled. Note the enlargement of the flaws on the zinc example (Badge#7) compared to the tombak example (Badge#1).



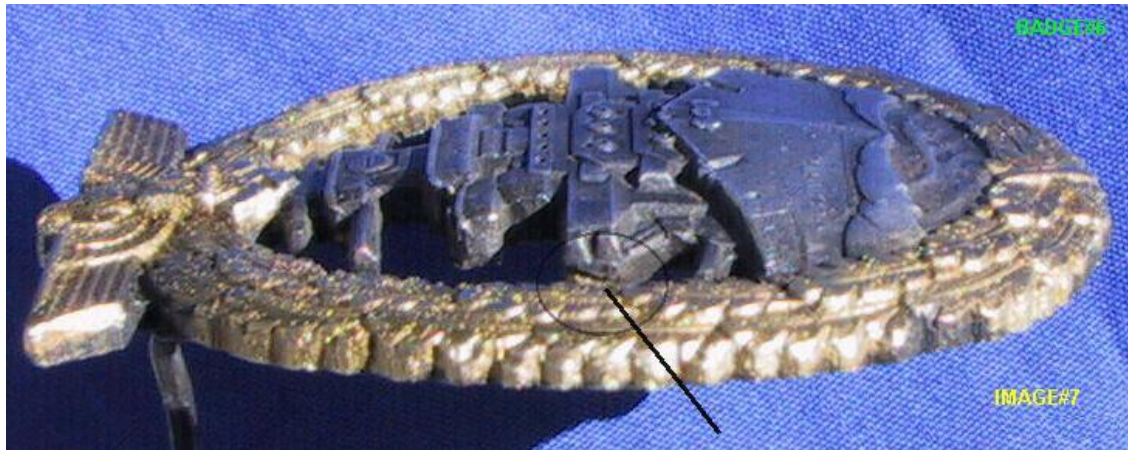
The circled area on Badge#6 highlights an irregularity on the rim of the left hand of the deck immediately below the searchlight. A similar irregularity is present on Badge#7 (another Type-4 badge) but the irregularity is not developed on Badge#5 (a Type-3 badge) or on tombak badges.



Additional "flashing" to the left of the superstructure is highlighted by the vertical bars.



The reverse left arm of the yard arm on zinc Badge#7, to which the blue line is pointing, has a distinctly triangular profile due to flashing on top of the mast arm when compared to tombak Badge#2. This strongly indicates die deterioration with time.



Although poorly imaged, the obverse right hand inner edge of the deck below the bridge windows reveals a jagged "V" shaped gash or tear in the badge due to the shearing process of the die striking. Both Type-4 badges (#6 and #7) exhibit this tear. The flaw can not be observed from obverse or reverse scans - hand examination is required.



BADGE#1

Properly formed
upper right hand
feather.



BADGE#2

A rounded imperfection
partially formed.



BADGE#3

The top feather
reworked (right pointer).
Note the new/additional
curved notch (left
pointer).



BADGE#4

The top feather is curved
indicating further
reworking.

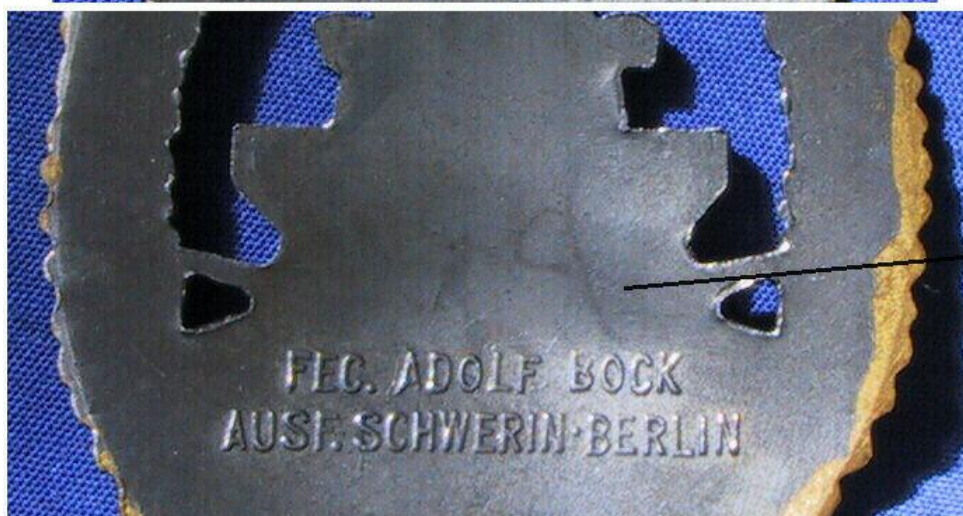


BADGE#5



BADGE#1

Sharp main deck line impression.

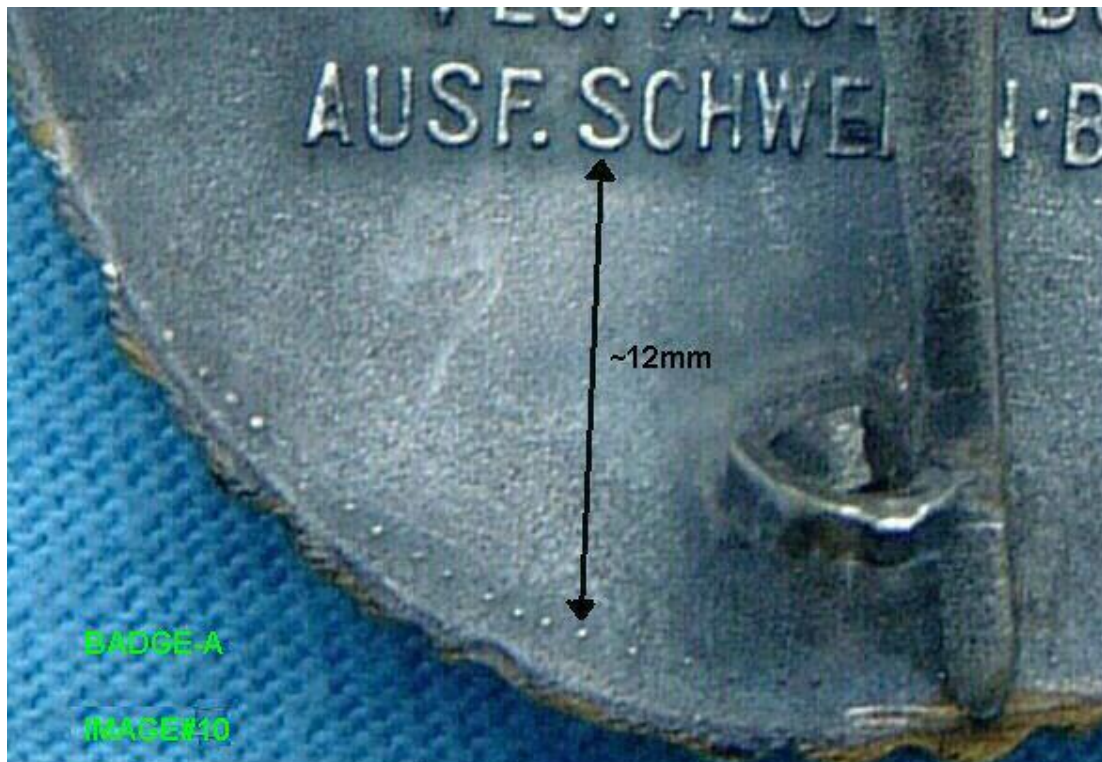


BADGE#4

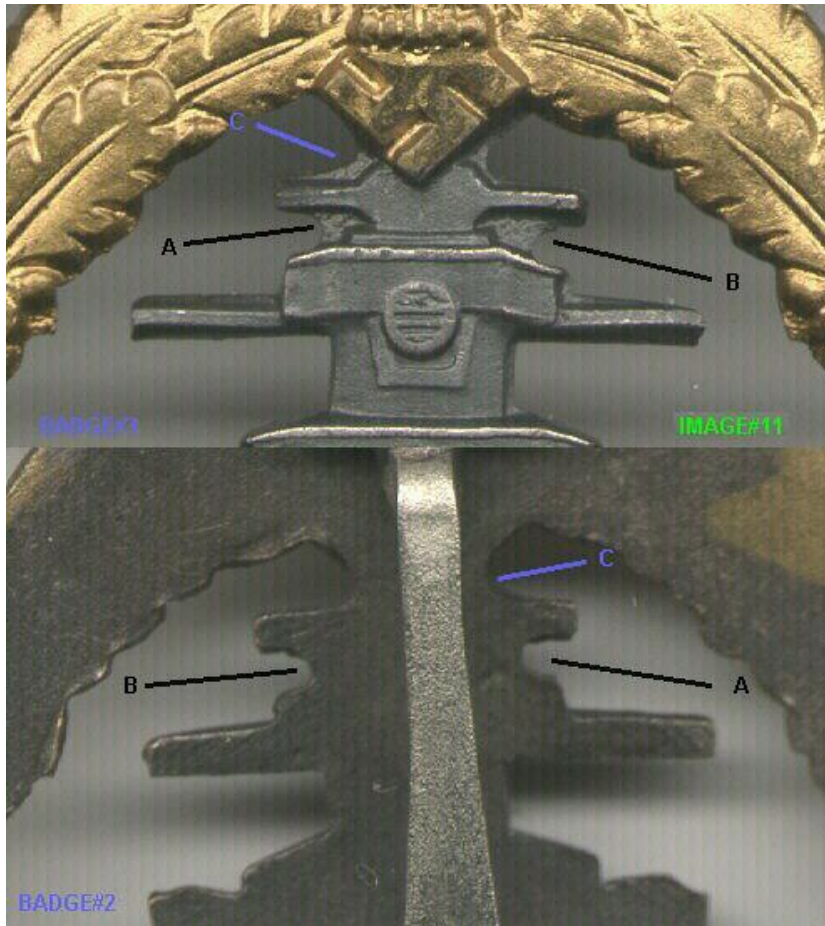
Smooth / concave main deck line.

Note also 6.8 pencilled on the back of this badge, possibly representing the original price in RM.

IMAGE#9



A semi-circular line of raised dots is consistently located approximately 11.75 mm (± 0.25 mm, depending upon measurement accuracy) below the "S" in Schwerin and result from negative points in the reverse die. The distance of 12 mm for Badge-A is as quoted by the owner of the badge. On Badge-A, the dots extend left to right from the reverse 07:30 to the 04:30 position.

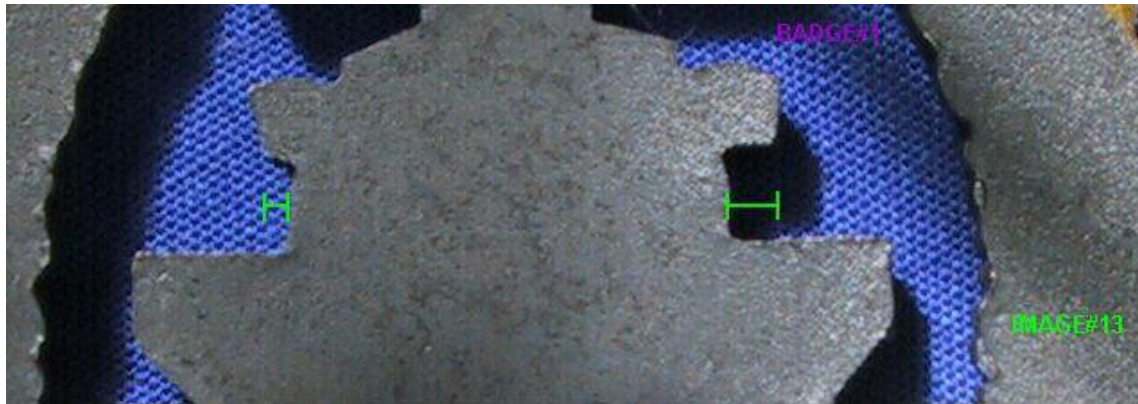


The lines point to the areas of "flashing" with a grainy surface evident on the obverse.

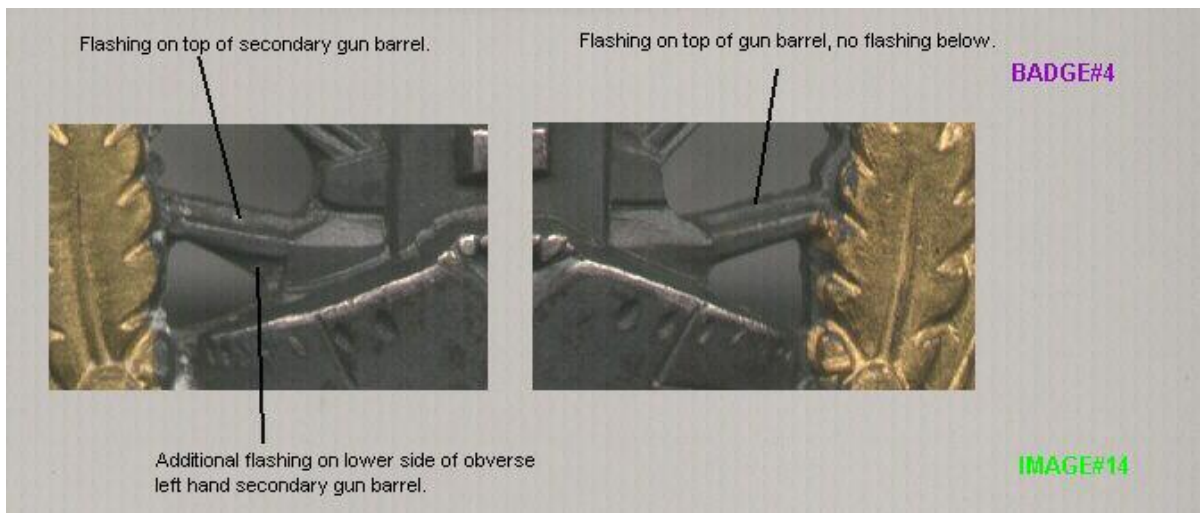
The majority of the "flashing" is present below the rangefinder (A & B) however some flashing is also present above the rangefinder (C).

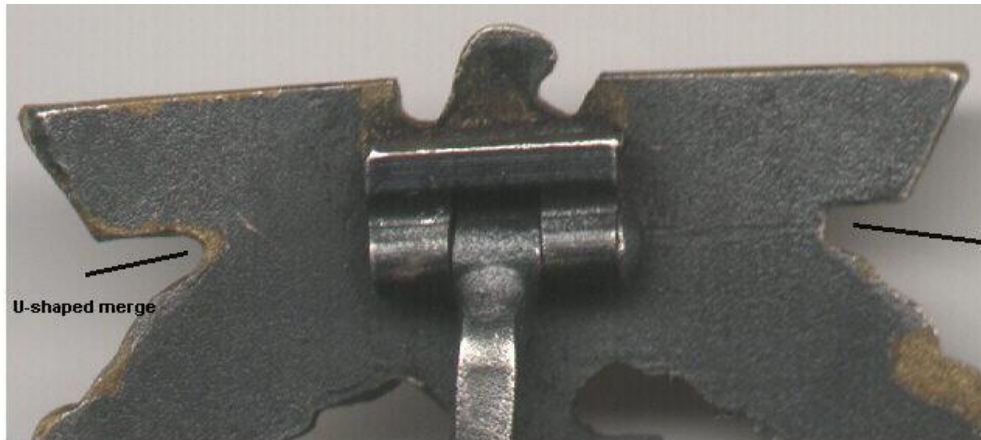


The flashing is typically found on the edge of the obverse right hand wing however the amount of flashing has been observed to vary, possibly due to die misalignment.



The width of the green bars illustrates the degree of asymmetry of the superstructure adjacent to the "wobblypots" and below the observation deck.





BADGE#1



BADGE#7

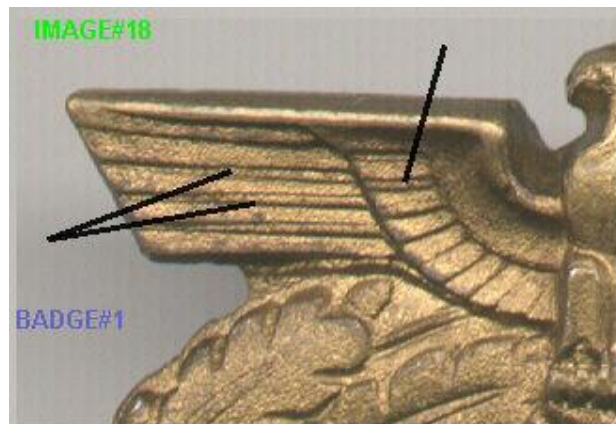


REPRO#5

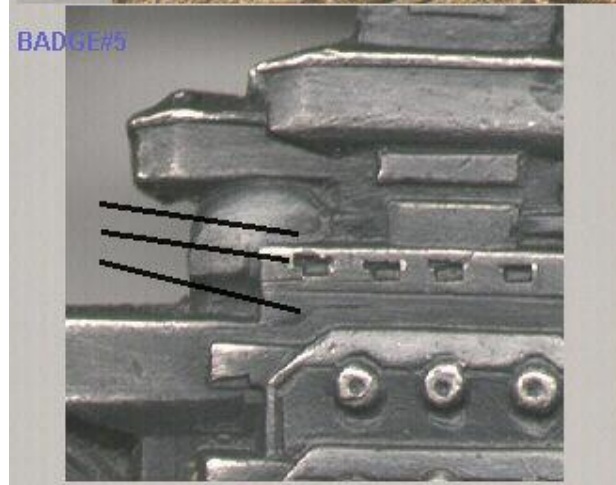
4-bridge window type

V-shaped notch

IMAGE#16



Double-striking on the obverse left hand wing of the eagle of tombak Badge#1.



Double-striking in the obverse centre of zinc Badge#5, including the rangefinder, bridge windows and bruno turret features.

5.0 Bridge Windows

Given the confusion caused by the wide circulation of a recent reproduction which is commonly encountered with only 4 bridge windows (the left-most window being absent) rather than the designed 5 bridge windows, the author feels that a dedicated bridge window discussion is necessary.

The left hand bridge window (window#1) indicates strong evidence of die deterioration and subsequent die repair based on the following observations. Early Type-1 tombak badges show 5 neatly struck bridge windows. Most late production zinc badges (Types -3 and -4) also show 5 neatly struck bridge windows however the exact location of window#1 varies slightly between Type-1 and Type-4 badges, with the latter being very slightly higher on the bridge than the former!

The author believes that the key to understanding these differences lies in the examination of late production Type-1 badges and early Type-2 badges. In Image#18, Badge#1, Badge-A and Badge-B are all Type-1 examples. Window#1 on Badge#1 and Badge-A are properly formed however window#1 on Badge-B is almost totally worn away, resulting in virtually no negative relief. Window#1 on Badge-C (an interpreted Type2a example) only exhibits a very tiny impression in the top left hand corner of the otherwise totally absent Window#1. Window#1 on Badge#2 (also Type-2a example) looks more like a slit, however there is a fainter rectangular shaped impression surrounding the slit and this faint impression is in the same position as on the Type-1 badges (this badge also exhibits double-striking in the bridge window region however so the interpretation of the faint outline of the original bridge window may be incorrect). The nature of window#1 on Badge#2 suggests that a preliminary die repair had been effected during early production of Type-2a badges. Badge#3 (Type-2b) has a properly formed left hand window but, and very importantly, the window is situated very slightly higher up on the bridge than on Type-1 badges, indicating a more substantial/permanent die repair. The window remains in the same location for Type-2c tombak and all Type-3 and -4 zinc badges.



BADGE#1

Window#1 is long and well formed



BADGE-A



BADGE-B

Window#1 virtually absent



BADGE-C

Window#1 almost totally absent.



BADGE#2

Window#1 is a poorly defined slit - double-striking is also evident.



BADGE#3

Window#1 is well defined but in a different location to window#1 on Badge#1



BADGE#4

Windows are well defined

Given the brittle nature of the Schwerin HSF dies, as evidenced by the numerous die flaws outlined above, the author believes that the small positive protrusions on the die used for the bridge windows (producing a negative or lower relief impression on the badge) were prone to both wearing down and chipping/breaking off. The fact that zinc (later production) badges retain the same characteristic main die flaws as outlined above, yet have properly formed windows in different positions to the earliest badges, is strong evidence that the HSF dies were repaired in the bridge window region. Further, the author believes that die repairs, and specifically die repairs to the bridge windows, occurred more than once.

The good quality reproduction with only 4 bridge windows is likely to have been reproduced (cast) using one of the genuine tombak badges with a heavily worn window#1, such as Badge-C. This reproduction is further discussed below but it can be easily distinguished if all other information presented in this discussion is taken into account. It should be noted that the author believes that the missing window #1 on the reproduction has now been added but fortunately the maker's mark remains incorrect and the badge still lacks many of the die characteristics and flaws found on genuine badges.

Two other important bridge window characteristics worth noting on genuine badges are that the windows are not perfectly aligned and each window is rotated slightly counter-clockwise.

Anton Turret

On the earliest tombak HSF badges (Types -1 and -2a, Badges #1 and #2), the detail on Anton turret is relatively basic and comprises the main turret housing, rangefinders, a recessed line distinguishing the gun housing and the two outer barrels represented by circles in raised relief.



BADGE#1

Central gun is a small raised semi-circular dome. There is almost no projection above the recessed horizontal line.



BADGE#4

Central gun is formed by an incised (low-relief) semi-circle which projects well above the recessed horizontal line when compared to Badge#1.



BADGE#5

Central gun is represented by a large raised semi-circular dome which significantly overlaps the horizontal recessed line.

IMAGE#19

The central gun barrel comprises a small raised semi-circular dome, located immediately above the point of the bow. On Type-2b and -2c badges (Badges #3 and #4), the raised dome representing the central gun barrel is no longer present, with the gun barrel being depicted by an incised (low-relief) semi-circle. Additional incised detail has also been added to the left of the left gun barrel and to the right of the right gun barrel, indicating that between striking Badges #2 and #3, the dies were reworked.

Further die re-working is evident between Types -2c and -3 (Badge#4 and Badge#5). On Badge#5, as well as the other zinc badges, the extra detail to either side of the left and right gun barrels is either only very faintly present or absent and, more importantly, the central gun barrel is represented by a large dome which significantly overlaps the straight horizontal recessed line distinguishing the gun housing.

6.0 Hinge, Pin and Catch Assemblies

Although the HSF badge is primarily discussed in this section, the following observations may be applied to most Schwerin badges with raised markings. Exclusions include U-boat Badges and U-boat

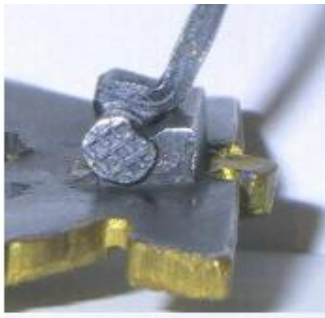
Combat Clasps. The reader is encouraged to refer to Mr Rob Hudspith's "Schwerin Naval Badges" forum article for images of some of the features described in this section.

The author has only observed tombak HSF badges (Types -1 and -2) with laid-down box hinges, wide-bellied ("coke-bottled") main pins and catches attached directly to the reverse of the badge. On tombak HSF badges, the hinge pin is located on the lower/bottom end of the hinge. The blocky top end of the hinge typically shows striations parallel to the long axis of the hinge.

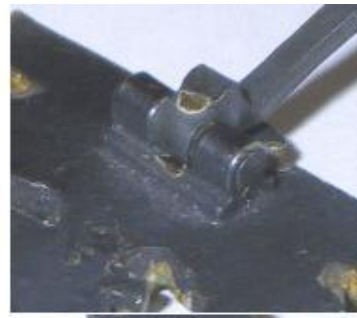
The hinge pins show minor variation. A large dome-headed hinge pin (with a small flat spot on the tip of the dome) is normally found on the highest quality tombak badges (Types -1, -2a and -2b) whereas interpreted later tombak badges (Type-2c) may employ a flat-headed hinge pin, with or without crosshatching. On almost all tombak HSF badges, the hinge pin head is on the right of the hinge, however on two genuine examples (including Badge-C) the hinge pin head has been observed on the left side of the hinge. The hinge pins employed on Type-1 and -2 badges remind the author more of nails that have had their ends trimmed off. Some examples of other types of tombak Schwerin war badges have been observed with only round wire stock hinge pins, trimmed on both ends, however these are not the norm and are more likely to be found on fairly late production tombak badges. This type of hinge pin has not been observed on HSF badges by the author but there is a good possibility that genuine tombak HSF badges (most likely Type-2c) were produced in this fashion. Many Schwerin badges employing either the domed head or flat head hinge pin reveal an elongate scratch mark on the reverse of the badge where the hinge pin head has scored the back of the badge when being put in place. This score is normally partially obscured by the plated finish, indicating that the hinge pin was in place prior to finishing.



Badge#1 - dome-headed hinge pin with flattened top, typical of earlier tombak examples.



Badge#4 - flat-headed hinge pin, in this case also cross-hatched, found on later tombak examples.



Badge#5 - hinge pin flush with the edge of the hinge - typical zinc Schwerin construction.

The hinge, pin and catch may be constructed from nickel-silver or tombak. Most main pins encountered are nickel-silver or a similar high quality silver coloured non-magnetic metal. Steel/iron (magnetic) main pins have only been noted by the author on some Type-4 zinc badges however a Schwerin zinc Destroyer Badge with a Type-3 finish has also been encountered with a steel main pin.

The main pin, for both tombak and zinc badges, is die struck with strong shear marks on the side of the pin extending from the top to the base of the pin (the base of the pin being the side closest to the badge when the main pin is in the closed position). A characteristic of all main pins on Schwerin badges (with the same badge exclusions as above) is that there is a roughly rectangular (sometimes more triangular) "dimple" at the hinge end of the main pin. This is believed to have been formed on a jig when the 90 degree bend was formed at the hinge end of the main pin. Scoring, parallel to the length of the main pin, is also observed in this area on some zinc examples. This feature is absent on most reproductions however it appears that more recent reproductions have attempted to replicate it.

The tips of most main pins (the section extending beyond the catch) are turned up by approximately 15 to 20 degrees. This angle may vary on well worn badges and angles as low as 5 to 10 degrees are not uncommon. On some heavily worn or obviously wearer altered examples, the main pin is straight. Needle pins have not been observed on genuine Schwerin HSF badges, nor have they been observed on any genuine and unrepaired Schwerin Kriegsmarine War Badge.

Type-3 and Type-4 zinc Schwerin badges typically employ a hinge comprising three near-equal segments, the outer two of which are integral with a thin (approximately 1 mm) base plate. The hinge pin comprises round wire stock, neatly trimmed on both ends. The catch is mounted on a very thin circular base plate, not directly to the back of the badge. On some badges this circular plate may be partly or totally obscured by solder.

The author has only encountered flat-wire "C" catches on genuine Schwerin badges (with the same badge exclusions as above). The catches are typically constructed from nickel-silver or tombak and are rectangular in profile. Steel (magnetic) catches on Schwerin badges have not yet been encountered by the author. On the early tombak pieces (Type-1 and Type-2a), the catch has a true "C" form however on later tombak badges (Type-2b and Type-2c) and zinc badges, the base of the "C" has been flattened. This is interpreted to reflect either a change in soldering techniques or a deterioration in the quality of the solder used as the war progressed, with the flattened "C" catches designed to produce a greater surface area for bonding. Deterioration in solder quality and the need for larger bonding surfaces is interpreted to have ultimately led to catch base plates being employed. Catch base plates have only been observed on zinc examples, not on tombak examples. Some catches on later production tombak badges (Type-2c) have what appears to be a triangular profile on the curved over (open, non-soldered) ends of the catch, as though the non-soldered end of the catch has been pinched and at the same time a wedge-shaped profile formed. Unlike the main pins, catches on Schwerin badges do not typically exhibit shear marks on their edges.



Badge#1 - rounded "C" form catch, as found on earlier tombak examples.



Badge#4 - "C" catch with flattened base but no catchplate, as found on later tombak examples. Note also the triangular or wedge shaped profile on the open (non-soldered) end of this catch.



Badge#5 - "C" catch with flattened base set on a thin round catchplate, as found on zinc examples only.

Variations from the above observations may be due to genuine variations not yet viewed by the author, repairs (period or recent) or, more likely, may be indicative of a reproduction. A good indication of a reproduction Schwerin naval badge is the use of a laid-down box hinge in combination with a catch set on a base-plate as this combination has not been observed on any genuine Schwerin naval badge by the author to date.

7.0 Finishing

The best quality Schwerin HSF badges feature very heavy and relatively dark fire-gilding and a heavy dark grey finish on the obverse of the ship and on the reverse. The finish has the texture of very fine sandpaper and often obscures fine details on the eagle, ship's bow and on the wreath.

Some later (Type-2c, Badge#4) tombak HSF badges reveal a much finer fire-gilding which is more yellow than gold in colour. Both the fire-gilt and dark grey finishes appear to be thinly applied on these later tombak badges, resulting in a smooth finish which reveals more detail than is apparent on the heavily fire-gilded examples. The fire-gilt effect, when looked at in direct sunlight, is much more subdued when compared to earlier, heavily fire-gilded examples.

Conversely, these interpreted later tombak badges appear much brighter than the earlier heavily fire-gilded examples. The overall finish is still of very good quality however.

The swastika and the "X" wreath tie on early, heavily fire-gilded tombak examples are burnished. It is not uncommon to find the swastika and "X" wreath tie on later tombak badges (Type-2c) unburnished. No burnishing has been observed on zinc badges to date.

Heavily worn tombak badges reveal a silver finish underneath the dark grey ship and on the reverse. This silver finish does not appear to have been applied to the obverse gilded area of the wreath however.

Gilded (non fire-gilded) tombak badges may have been produced but the author has not handled one. Most reproductions are made from good quality basemetals which are easy to work with (commonly not tombak but "white" metal) to imitate genuine Type-1 and Type-2 tombak badges. These reproductions are commonly NOT fire-gilded as the process involves serious health risks, however fire-gilding is still being carried out in some parts of the world and the author understands that some reproduction badges (not necessarily Schwerin HSF Badges) are now being finished this way.

Zinc badges were typically only gilded, not-fire gilded. Type-3 zinc badges have a very heavy/thick silver underfinish applied to the obverse of the ship and to the reverse of the badge, resulting in these badges today often being encountered with highly "bubbled" reverses as seen on Badge#5. The author feels that Schwerin may have initially been trying to maintain the high quality finish associated with tombak badges. Type-4 zinc badges were only finished with a thin wash and, as evidenced on Badge#7, it is possible to find genuine badges on which the original finish is still almost 100% present but "faded" to grey. From the author's experience, Type-3 zinc badges are much less common than Type-4 badges and were probably only produced for a relatively short time.

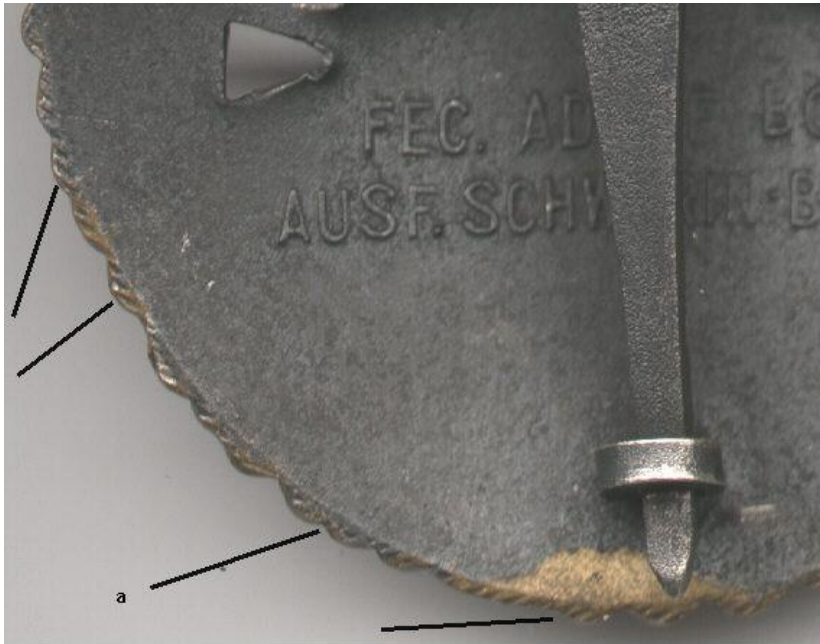
Hand Finishing

Most badges reveal hand filing around the outer edge of the reverse of the badge ([Image#20](#)). The hand filing produces a bevel on the reverse edge of the badge, such that the reverse of the badge and the edge of the badge do not meet at 90 degrees. This hand filing is interpreted to have removed the semi-circular dot arrangement described above from some examples. On badges with heavy

finishes applied, these hand filing marks may be partially or totally hidden under the finish.

The striking of the triangular cut-out sections between the secondary guns and the main deck reveals rough edges on the back of the badge in this area ([Image#21](#)). These rough ridges are within the concave region of the badge and it is interpreted that effective hand finishing was not able to be performed in this region due to the concave nature of the reverse of the badge. Some badges (eg Badge#5) however indicate that an attempt to remove these rough ridges was made.

The left hand reverse of the bridge deck reveals striations oriented at approximately 45 degrees ([Image#22](#)). This effect is present on early and late badges to a greater or lesser degree. Similar, but more subdued striations, are present on the reverse edges of the superstructure on the right hand bridge deck and on the right hand mast arm. This effect may be the result of very consistent hand-finishing or may actually be present on the reverse die and as such they may actually be die characteristics.



BADGE#1

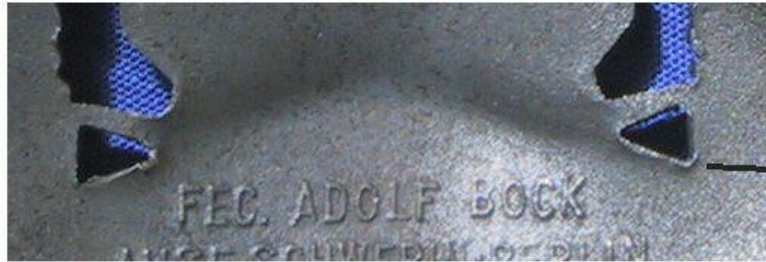
Hand filing/finishing marks on the edges of the badges are highlighted by the pointers.

Note that the marks on each badge highlighted by the "a" pointer are at different orientations, indicating that these marks were not imparted by the die.



BADGE#3

IMAGE#20



BADGE#1

Raised ridges surrounding triangular cut-outs. No hand finishing apparent.



BADGE#4

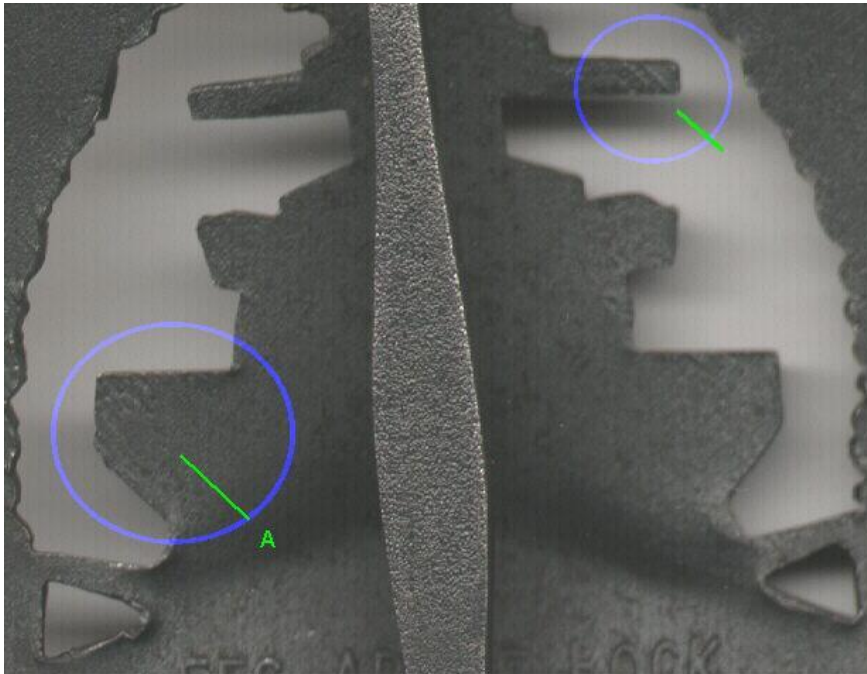
Rough raised ridges surrounding the triangular cut-outs. No hand finishing apparent.



BADGE#5

Large and rough raised ridges surrounding the triangular cut-outs. Filing or grinding hand finishing marks are readily apparent.

IMAGE#21

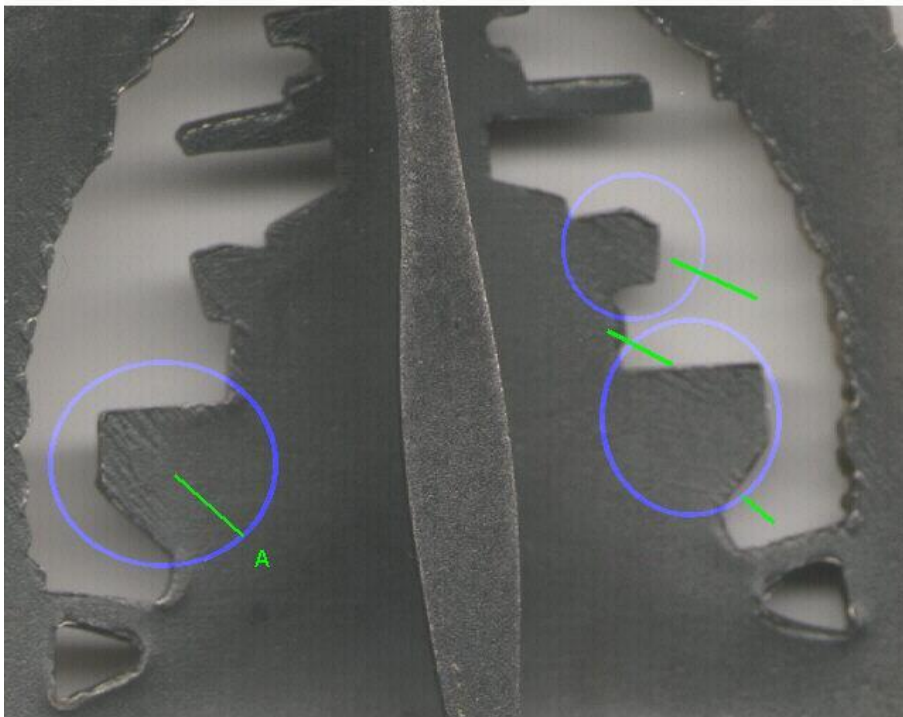


BADGE#1

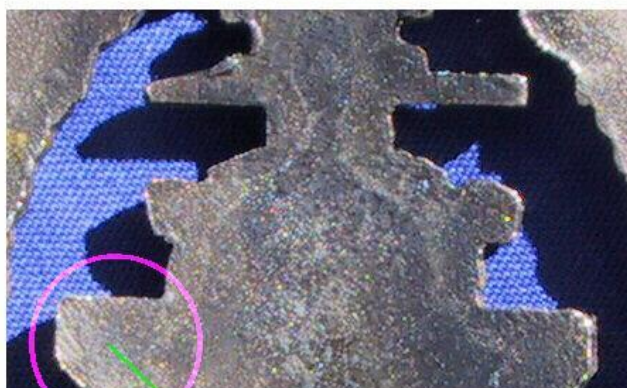
The circles highlight the striations.

The green lines associated with each circle are drawn roughly parallel to the striations.

The striations associated with "A" are the largest and most apparent, however they are not present on all badges and are only weakly formed on others.



BADGE#3



BADGE#7

8.0 Maker's Marking

The Schwerin HSF badge has two lines of text in relief (ie raised above the back of the badge), centred in the reverse lower concave part of the badge, reading as follows;

FEC. ADOLF BOCK

AUSF. SCHWERIN . BERLIN

"FEC" is an abbreviation of the latin "fecit" and in this case means designer and refers to the designer Adolf Bock. "AUSF" is an abbreviation for "Ausführung" and in this case means made under contract by Schwerin of Berlin. Note the position of the periods following FEC and AUSF and the dot at half letter height between SCHWERIN and BERLIN. An enlargement of the marking on Badge#1 is presented below as Image#23.



The lettering on both the tombak and zinc badges is approximately 2.0 mm high, with the height of individual letters varying by up to 0.1 mm. The upper line is approximately 19.2 mm long and the lower line is approximately 25.0 mm long. As the lettering was formed onto the convex reverse side die (ie a negative impression was made in the die), there should be no significant variation in the maker's mark, except for minor die wear as indicated below.

Variation in the location of the marking is, however, readily apparent when comparing the study badges (see the table below and Image#24). The author believes that the variation in the location of the maker's mark is due to minor misalignment of the dies between strikes and/or runs. The consistent form of the maker's mark from Type-1 through to Type-4 badges, combined with the semi-circular dots found on Type-1 (sharply impressed main deck line on the reverse) and some Type-2 badges (smooth concave reverse), is strong evidence that Schwerin only ever used 1 reverse die.

Like the HSF badge itself, the Schwerin maker's mark is also very characteristic (see Image#23 above). Close inspection of the

letters reveals that they are NOT neat and perfectly aligned. Points to note are;

- In FEC, the F is rotated slightly clockwise and sits slightly higher relative to the E.
- In ADOLF, the triangular recess within the A becomes less distinct (closer to the level of the raised A) in later (zinc) strikings, the O is shorter than both the D and L, the L sits higher than the F. On earlier examples, the lower horizontal stroke of the L clearly extends to the left of the vertical stroke whereas on later zinc examples this extension is more difficult to discern. The left "leg" of the A, below the horizontal stroke, gives the appearance of being slightly longer than the right "leg".
- In BOCK, the curved upper right portion of the B is weakly formed even in early examples and on some zinc examples the entire upper 1/3 of the B is almost absent, indicating die wear with time. The K sits higher than the C and the K is rotated slightly clockwise.
- In AUSF the S rises slightly below the U and the F.
- In SCHWERIN, the W, R and N sit slightly higher, the I is slightly shorter and the E sits slightly lower. The N is rotated slightly clockwise.
- In BERLIN, the B is very slightly rotated clockwise, the E and I are shorter and the L is longer and sits slightly lower than the R.

Careful examination of the letters in the maker's mark indicates that repetitive letters (B, C, E, F, I, N and R, with the A, L and S being possible exceptions) are extremely similar in form, if not identical. This suggests that the maker's mark was formed using a set of character punches rather than each letter being hand formed in the reverse die. The use of individual letter punches would explain why the maker's mark has so many characteristics, as summarized above.

Of further interest to Schwerin badge collectors, the maker's marks on Schwerin Blockade Breaker and Minesweeper Badges appear to have been formed using the same set of character punches as used for the High Seas Fleet Badge maker's mark. Of even more interest, based on detailed examination of the characteristics of the maker's marks, it is evident that the maker's marks on the Schwerin Blockade Breaker and Minesweeper Badges (both flat-backed badges) are EXACTLY the same. This indicates that the same flat reverse die was used for both of these badges, even though the badges are of different shape! The maker's marks on these two

badges have also been observed to be located in different positions on genuine examples of these badges.

9.0 Weights and Measurements

The table below summarizes the weights and measurements of the seven HSF badges incorporated into the study. Weights were determined using Acculab CDR150 digital scales (0.1g resolution) and measurements (in millimeters) were determined using steel verniers calipers.

Measurement / Badge	1	C	2	3	4	5	6	7
Badge Material (T = tombak, Z = zinc)	T	T	T	T	T	Z	Z	Z
WEIGHT (g)	32.2	32.1	31.8	33.6	34.4	30.6	31.3	26.8
BADGE DIMENSIONS (mm)								
Badge Height ¹	56.74	56.98	56.96	56.96	57.00	57.10	57.00	56.91
Badge Width	43.85	43.84	43.90	43.90	44.00	44.10	44.12	44.06
Badge Vault ²	6.17	6.10	6.30	6.40	6.40	6.50	6.35	6.10
Wreath Width ³	7.11/ 6.44	7.00/ 6.52	7.00/ 6.52	6.85/ 6.50*	7.05/ 6.40	7.00/ 6.54	7.02/ 6.58	7.00/ 6.48
Wreath Thickness ³	2.50/ 2.54	2.53/ 2.52	2.47/ 2.52	2.56/ 2.60	2.64/ 2.67	2.74/ 2.68	2.77/ 2.72	2.47/ 2.39
Eagle's Wingspan	30.97	30.82 ⁸	31.13	31.12	31.00	31.13	31.08	31.06
Height of eagle's left wing ⁴	4.63	4.68	4.68	4.66	4.72	4.80	4.86	4.79
Eagle's Thickness (chest)	3.34	3.32	3.38	3.36	3.39	3.39	3.45	3.20
Width of the rangefinder	10.00	10.02	9.95	9.62	9.80	10.03	9.90	9.68
Width of the Mast Arms	17.57	17.55	17.50	17.37	17.46	17.66	17.66	17.78
Width of the deck below the bridge windows	24.58	24.68	24.70	24.78	24.80	24.92	24.78	24.71
Maker's Mark distance to Base of Wreath ⁵	14.20	13.64	13.05	11.40	13.17	12.78	13.23	13.24
HINGE DIMENSIONS (tombak badges)								
Hinge Length	8.22	7.98	8.70	8.82	8.37	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hinge Width	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.96	5.02	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hinge Height	2.66	2.70	2.70	2.56	2.64	N/A	N/A	N/A
Width of Flat Section	1.55	1.52	1.78	1.64	1.60	N/A	N/A	N/A
Length of Central Segment	2.90	2.80	2.72	2.70	2.78	N/A	N/A	N/A
Striations on Flat Section (Yes/No)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hinge Pin Type (head diameter) ⁶	D 2.96	D 3.02	D 3.04	D 3.04	FX 3.39	Tr	Tr	Tr
HINGE DIMENSIONS (zinc badges)								
Baseplate/Segmented Length	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8.33	8.52	8.56
Baseplate Width	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.00	4.20	4.08
Baseplate Height	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	~1.0	~1.0	~1.0
Segmented Barrel diameter	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.62	2.85	2.76
MAIN PIN								
Length of main pin ⁷	50.00	49.80	49.50	49.50	49.50	50.00	51.00	51.00
Width	3.91	3.90	3.90	3.94	4.04	4.00	4.00	4.00
Thickness (at widest point)	1.50	1.41	1.46	1.46	1.56	1.50	1.56	1.44
Magnetic (Yes/No)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
CATCH								
Width	1.80	1.83	1.88	1.90	1.98	1.91	1.86	1.75
Thickness	1.00	1.09	1.04	0.94	1.08	1.08	1.09	0.95
Catch Plate Diameter	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6.06	6.02	6.00
Round "C" (R) or base of "C" flat (F)	R	R	R	F	F	F	F	F

¹ From the top of the eagle's head.

² Measured at the bow of the ship, excluding hinge/pin/catch.

³ obverse left/right hand sides, adjacent to the bridge window level (* - the 6.85 mm is less than all other badges and may denote a measurement error)

⁴ obverse left hand side

⁵ From the bottom of the maker's mark

⁶ D = Domed head, F = Flat head, X = Cross-hatching, Tr = hinge pin trimmed both ends.

⁷ Including barrel segment, excluding 90° bend in the main pin.

⁸ Hand-vaulted - measurement not representative.

As can be seen, there is little variation in badge dimensions but significant variation in badge weights and some variation in the

hinge, pin and catch assemblies. Of interest is that the dimensions of the interpreted earliest tombak badge (Badge#1) are slightly smaller than the later tombak badges and that there is a general trend of increasing dimensions with time. This is interpreted to reflect general die wear with time. Zinc Badge#7 (the interpreted latest badge) is slightly smaller and significantly lighter than earlier zinc badges, possibly due to the use of poorer quality basemetal which was also prone to a higher degree of shrinkage upon cooling than the alloy used for the earlier zinc badges.

10.0 Reproductions

All badges in this section do not exhibit the main characteristics of genuine Schwerin HSF badges as described above and are therefore believed by the author to be reproductions.

All reproductions viewed by the author can be determined fairly easily, even from poor quality images, by first checking for the two main die flaws in the wreath and then examining both the maker's mark and the hinge/pin/catch assembly. The badges pictured and described below are by no means a comprehensive review of Schwerin HSF badge reproductions. Although the 4-bridge window reproduction is discussed, the author feels that there are significantly better reproductions now in circulation, as evidenced by Repros #3, #8, #9 and #10. Only relatively basic observations have been made about the reproductions and the reader is encouraged to refer back to the detailed descriptions and images of genuine badges in order to make their own more detailed comparisons of any badge they are evaluating.

Although not pictured, good quality casts of original badges are known to exist which share most of the die characteristics of original badges, including the two main wreath die flaws, but the details are poor or blurred and the dimensions and weight will not match those of original badges. Pockmarking associated with bubbling during the casting process is usually apparent. The hinge/pin/catch assemblies on these badges will also usually differ from the two main types of hinge/pin/catch assemblies found on genuine badges. These cast reproductions should be fairly easy to distinguish when examined by hand.



Repro#1

[Repro#1](#) appears to be a poor quality cast reproduction. Generally poor/blurry detail on the obverse. The main flaws on the wreath are not present. The gilding appears to be a light wash and incorrect in colour. The hinge/pin/catch assembly is incorrect. The badge does not appear to be highly concave. The maker's mark appears to be near correctly formed however the lettering is much thicker than on genuine badges.



Repro#2 & #3

The quality of both the detail and the finish on these reproductions are fairly good. Further, it is possibly that [Repro#3](#) is a more refined version of [Repro#2](#). The main flaws on the wreath are not present. The hinge/pin/catch assemblies are similar to a genuine tombak badge. The lettering of the upper line in the maker's mark is larger than the lettering in the lower line. The lettering also appears to be neatly aligned, unlike on genuine badges. Where the eagles wings join the outer edge of the wreath, the join is a fairly sharp "V" shape on one side but slightly more "U" shaped on the other, whereas on genuine badges it is a wider "U" shape on both sides. The weight and dimensions of [Repro#3](#) are as follows; 37.5 g, 56.5 x 43.5 mm. The weight is heavier than a genuine badge by at least 3.9 g. The dimensions however, are similar to an original although slightly narrower by less than 0.5 mm and slightly taller by at least 0.4 mm.



Repro#4

Although not a good image, [Repro#4](#) is of fairly good quality and shares many characteristics with [Repro#2](#), in particular the different sized lettering in the maker's mark. The two main flaws on the wreath are not present. The hinge is similar to those encountered on zinc badges but on the reproduction it appears to be significantly longer. The reproduction does not look to be made of zinc however. The main pin is also incorrect in shape however the catch is close to that of an original. It is not apparent in the image, but another example of this reproduction

employs a catchplate.

There is no flashing below the uppermost rangefinder, nor is the triangular flashing present above the obverse right yard arm as it is on genuine zinc examples. Irregularities are also present in the reverse profile of the wreath, particularly where the eagles wings join the outer edge of the wreath. On the reproduction, the join is a fairly sharp "V" shape whereas on genuine badges it is more "U" shaped.



Repro#5, #6 & #7

[Repro#5](#), [Repro#6](#) and [Repro#7](#) are images of the recent and relatively common "4-window" reproduction which continues to fool many collectors. The main distinguishing feature is obviously the absence of bridge window #1 (the leftmost bridge window), however as bridge window #1 can also be absent on genuine badges other features of this reproduction should be noted. The detail on the remainder of the badge is relatively poor, particularly on the portholes, Anton and Bruno turrets, the range-finder above the bridge, the searchlight, the eagle's feet and the inner row of eagle's feathers. The wreath detail is not sharp and two main flaws on the wreath are not present. The hinge/pin/catch assembly is a fairly accurate representation of a genuine tombak badge's hinge/pin/catch assembly, however the attachment of the main pin to the hingeblock produces a sloppy fitting compared to genuine badges. The maker's mark is extremely uneven compared to genuine badges (see closeup). The finish on the badge, although not apparently fire-gilded, is good.

Detlev Niemann has kindly supplied the basic measurements (height - 56.09 mm, width - 43.59 mm) and weight (35.38 g) for one of these reproductions ([Repro#7](#)). When compared to original measurements, the reproduction is smaller than the smallest (earliest) genuine badge discussed, in the order of 0.65 x 0.26 mm (h x w). When compared to genuine Badge#2,

which is the period of genuine badge from which the reproduction was probably cast, the reproduction is 0.87 x 0.31 mm (h x w) smaller. The reproduction is also significantly heavier than the heaviest genuine badge, by approximately 1 gram, and approximately 3.6 grams heavier than genuine Badge#2. An additional example (not pictured) of this type of reproduction has been reported as weighing 40.8 g, which is 6.4 g heavier than the heaviest genuine example in the study set and 9.0 g heavier than Badge#2.



Repro#8

Although not a good image, this badge is believed to be a high quality reproduction ([Repro#8](#)). There only appear to be 4 bridge windows however the detail on the obverse is fairly good in general. It appears that the two main die flaws have been reproduced. The hinge, hinge pin and catch (possibly too thin) appear to be well reproduced, along with what can be seen of the main pin.

The maker's mark is incorrect as all the letter's are quite regular and relatively "chunky" when compared to the marking of a genuine badge. The length of the lower line also appears to be longer than that of genuine badges by several millimetres.

There are no rough edges on the reverse of the badge, particularly around the triangular cut-out sections formed by the secondary armaments. There are irregularities in the reverse profile of the badge compared to genuine badges, particularly on the superstructure above the bridge windows (eg upper range finder and yard arms). Irregularities are also present in the reverse profile of the wreath, particularly where the eagles wings join the outer edge of the wreath. On the reproduction, the join is a fairly sharp "V" shape whereas on genuine badges it is more "U" shaped. These irregularities in the profile of the reproduction are not believed to be due to hand finishing, in fact hand-finishing

marks are not apparent on the reproduction.



Repro#9

This badge is believed to be a high quality reproduction ([Repro#9](#)). All 5 bridge windows are present and the detail of the obverse is in general good. There appear to be only 2 slats on the searchlight though and the inner row of eagle's feathering appears to be poorly defined. The two main die flaws do not appear to be present. The hinge, hinge pin and catch appear to be well reproduced, along with what can be seen of the main pin.

The maker's mark appears to be well reproduced, although the letters in the upper line appear to be larger than those of the lower line. The lettering is relatively straight compared to genuine badges however. The form of the W in SCHWERIN on the reproduction appears to be lopsided and the S appears misshapen and angular. The A in AUSF does not appear to have the horizontal stroke.

There are minor irregularities in the profile of the wreath, the most noticeable being the very small triangular cut-outs compared to genuine badges. The triangular cut-outs also lack the rough ridge on the reverse of the badge. Indications of hand finishing appear to be absent. On the reproduction, where the eagles wings join the outer edge of the wreath, the join is again a fairly sharp "V" shape. It is possible that this is an improved version on the "4-window" reproduction.



Repro#10

This badge ([Repro#10](#)) is believed to be a high quality reproduction and is very similar to Repro#8. All 5 bridge windows are present and the detail of the obverse is in general fair to good. The two main die flaws do not appear to be present. The hinge/pin/catch assembly appears to be well reproduced. The dimple at the hinge end of the main pin is present, however the strong striations which have only been

observed on later zinc badges are not parallel to the length of the main pin.

The maker's mark is incorrect as all the letter's are quite regular and relatively "chunky" when compared to the marking of a genuine badge. The period at half letter height between SCHWERIN and BERLIN is missing.

There are minor irregularities in the profile of the wreath. The triangular cut-outs also lack the rough ridge on the reverse of the badge and the cut-outs appear slightly oversize. Indications of hand finishing appear to be absent and the finish does not appear to be fire-gilt. Where the eagles wings join the outer edge of the wreath, the join is near correct although more angular than on genuine badges. This is the first reproduction the author has seen with the join at the base of the eagle's wing near correct.

The size of this repro has been reported as 56.5 x 43.5 mm, which is slightly smaller than genuine tombak badges. The weight is given as 26.1 g, which is considerably lighter than the lightest genuine tombak example in the study set by 5.7 g.



Repro#11

Although a full image of the obverse is not available, this badge is believed to be derived from a fair quality cast ([Repro#11](#)). All 5 bridge windows are present and the detail of the obverse is good however the two main die flaws do not appear to be present and thick flashing is apparent on the left hand side of the ship, in line with the Bridge Deck. The most obvious indication that this badge is a reproduction is the use of square, rather than round, portholes! In addition, the two portholes forward (closest to the bowline) of the armour plate line in the both port and starboard upper row of portholes are absent. The bowline is a single straight line, rather than being formed by two upwardly diverging lines, and the central anchors, near the top of the bowline are more representative of a

set of "skull and crossbones". Strangely, the lower part of the letters ".SCH" appear to be impressed in reverse on the wave located on the obverse right hand side of the badge, just below the waterline of the ship.

The hinge is a good reproduction however the hinge pin head appears badly misshapen, the shape of the main pin is incorrect and a catchplate has been used in combination with a laid-down box hinge. The dimple at the hinge end of the main pin does not appear to be present. An attempt has been made to reproduce the hand-filing and bevelling on the reverse outer edge of the wreath.

The maker's mark is incorrect and the letter's are relatively "chunky" when compared to the marking of a genuine badge, however the letters are not aligned evenly unlike some other reproductions.

The bevelled edge on the reverse of the wreath is present, simulating a genuine hand-filed finish however the badge does not appear to be highly concave like originals and the triangular cut-outs lack the rough ridge on the reverse of the badge. The finish does not appear to be fire-gilt. Where the eagles wings join the outer edge of the wreath, the join is near correct although more angular than on genuine badges. The asymmetry of the superstructure in the "wobblypot" region is also well reproduced.







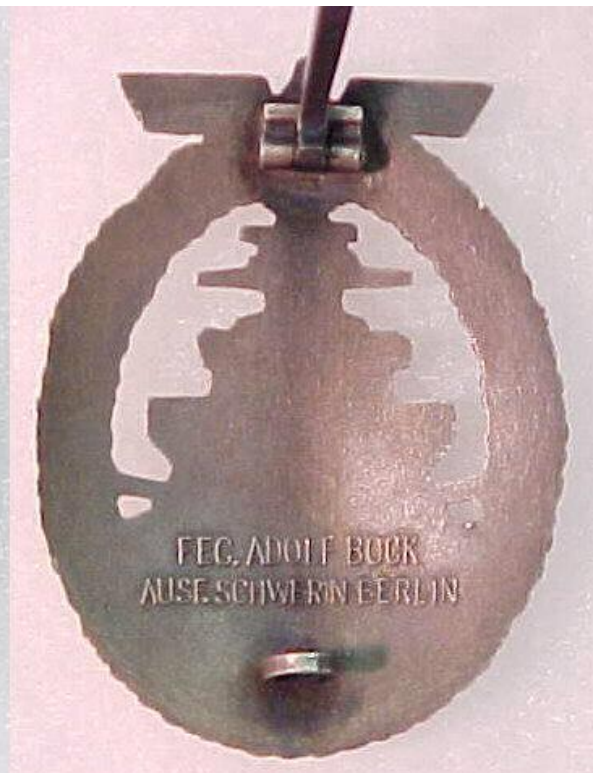




FEC. ADOLF BOCK
AUSF. SCHWENN-BERLIN



FEC. ADOLF BOCK
AUSF. SCHWERIN-BERLIN







FEC. ADOLF BOCK
AUSE. SCHWERIN-BERLIN

Destroyer Badge Zerstörer-Kriegsabzeichen

The destroyer war badge was instituted on June 4th 1940 by the Oberbefehlshaber der Kriegsmarine, Grand Admiral Raeder. Its creation being motivated by a need to decorate crews of the destroyers who had just fought in the Narvik campaign.





Manufacturing and Technical Information



The badge was designed by Paul Carsberg of Berlin. It is composed of destroyer side-view negotiating a rough wave. The ship and the waves are oxidized silver with a gold oak leaves wreath surmounted by the national emblem surrounding the vessel. The badge was constructed in bronze and zinc. It measured 54mm from base to top and 45mm across, with the wreath measuring 7mm. Generally the attachment system consists of a horizontal pin with a small hook securing the badge.

Various makers manufactured this badge, the following list is not comprehensive:

- Schwerin of Berlin
- Gebr der

Wegerhoff of
L denscheid
- Steinhauer
& Luck of
L denscheid
- Juncker of
Berlin
- Josef Feix &
Sohn
- Rudolf
Souval
- Friedrich
Orth
- S.H.u.Co.
- Godet
- So called
"French
version" with
no mark

A cloth
version exists
and was
authorized to
wear on the
uniform.

Presentation, Wear and Documents

Initially the badge was presented in a blue box with blue velvet base and a white lid. Later in the war it was presented in a normal brown packet.

The award was worn in the left side of the Naval uniform beneath the Iron Cross if that award was held. The badge was presented with a document of which various variants exist and the attribution was entered in the Soldbuch.

Award Criteria and Statistics

Though the badge was initially only supposed to be for Narvik participants, in an order dated 22 October 1940, the award was extended to all Destroyers, Torpedo Boats, and E-Boats crew

members (for the last two this was only true up to the introduction of their own distinctive badge).

The badge could be awarded in the following conditions:

- Participation in at least 12 operational missions.
- Participation in 3 separate engagement with the enemy.
- For special achievement or heroic action.
- Service on a sunk ship as result of enemy action.
- For being wounded during an engagement with enemy.



The E-boat Badge was first instituted on May 30, 1941 and was designed by Wilhelm Ernst Peekhaus of Berlin. In 1941, the E-Boat offensive was stepped up and until that time E-Boat crews had received the same badge as the Destroyers.

Manufacturing and Technical Information

There are 3 known versions and they are referred to as, first type, second type and third type. Some of the known makers for the first type are Schwerin, second type: AS, AS (in a triangle), R.K., R.S., Schwerin, W.E. Peekhause, and for the third type: Mourgeon (Paris).

First Type: The badge is recognized by an E-Boat plowing through the sea. The boat has the appearance of coming through the wreath, from right to left, with the nose of the boat stopping at the center of the wreath. The boat is finished in silver, the sea is blue-black with the wave crests being burnished silver. The oak wreath which is finely gilded consists of seven bunches of 2 oak leaves with an acorn at each intersection of the oak leaves. At the bottom of the wreath, a tie is formed with a raised central band with a smaller edge to each side. At the top center of the wreath, the national emblem, a stubby winged eagle clutching a swastika also finely gilded. The reverse of the wreath is flat, with the reverse of the boat being scalloped in the more desirable cases. When a horizontal pin is used a small hook can be found at the top of the badge. This is to help secure the badge to the uniform. If the badge has a vertical pin the reverse is normally flat. The badge was usually presented in a blue box with a blue flock base, with white silk lid liner. The name of the badge was stenciled in silver on the upper lid of the box. This badge is

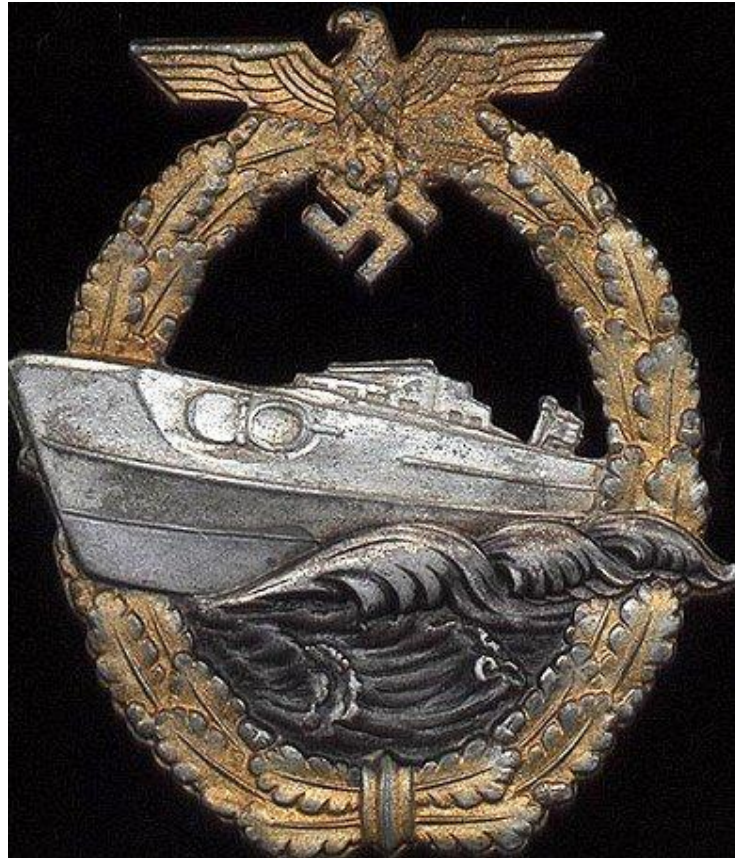
considered rare because of its discontinued use soon after its inception. Measurements are 57 mm from the base to the top of the eagle's head and 45mm across the badge. The eagle's wingspan is 23.5mm and the height of the eagle including the swastika is 14mm. The wreath measures 7.5 mm across.





Second Type: This type was designed again, by Wilhelm Ernst Peekhaus of Berlin in conjunction with Korvettenkapitan Rudolf Peterson and introduced into service in January 1943. It is not fully understood why the change in design other than the second type has a more modern looking E-Boat. On this type badge the wreath is flatter and the leaves are smaller and more delicate. The eagle at the top of the badge has a longer wingspan, the swastika will be either solid or open and hangs beneath the wreath. At the bottom of the wreath the tie has a more pronounced center band. The main difference between the first and second type is the E-Boat, a more modern one, cuts through the sea and actually goes beyond the left side of the wreath. The sea forms three waves that roll up on the side of the boat giving the appearance that the boat is moving fast. The third wave cuts through the right side of the wreath. The reverse has either a horizontal or vertical pin along with the maker's mark. If a horizontal pin is found there will also be a tiny hook at the top of the badge for attaching the badge to the tunic. The badge measures 60mm from bottom to top of the eagle's head and 53mm from tip of the boat to edge of the wave. The eagle's wingspan measures 36.5 mm with the

height of the eagle and swastika being 20mm. The wreath measures 8mm across. The award was presented in a blue box with blue flock base with white silk lid liner.





Third type: The French firm, Mourgeon in Paris, constructed the Third type. Its design is more like the First type. The reverse is silver, hollow struck and has a French pin and hinge. The badge measures 55mm from the base to the top of the eagle's head and 41mm across. The eagle's wingspan is 27mm, and height of the swastika and eagle are 14mm. The wreath measures 7mm across.

Presentation, Wear and Documents

The badge was wrapped in tissue paper and presented in a buff box in two parts with the edges stapled. The award was made through the E-Boat Captain with an award document and was worn on the left breast pocket beneath the Iron Cross First class or similar award.

Award Criteria

The award was presented to German crews for the achievements of successful attacks against enemy shipping. In

case of death the award was presented posthumously. Besides good conduct and distinction the award criteria is as follows;

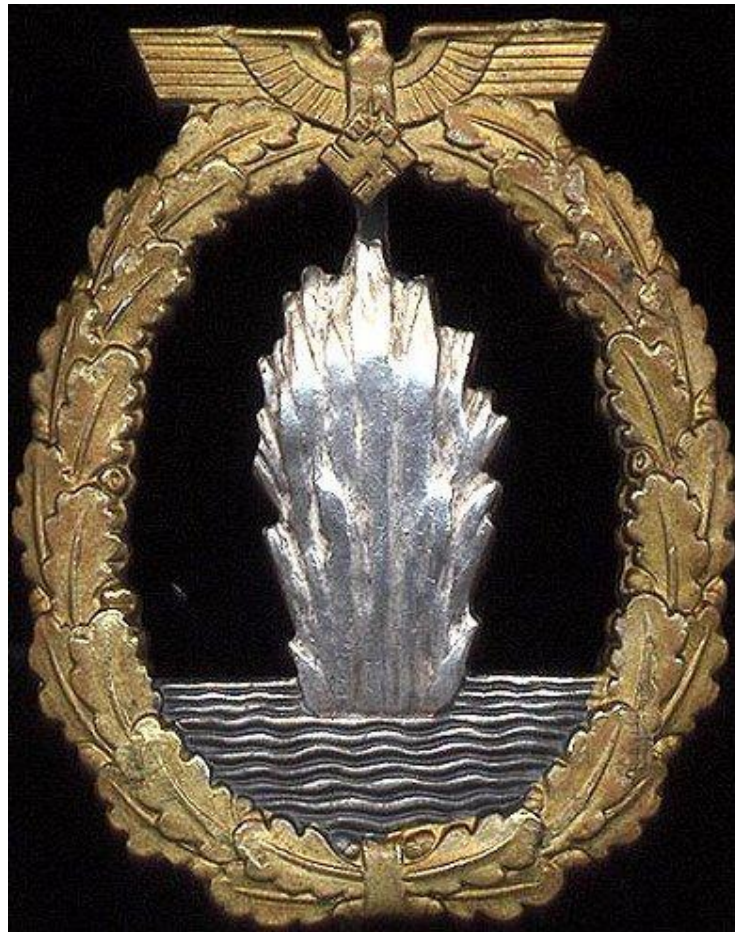
- I. A minimum of twelve enemy actions.
- II. When the mission was particularly successful and the individual displayed leadership or was killed in action.
- III. Special circumstances of being wounded in action or survivors of ships sunk by enemy action.
- IV. To have performed a heroic action for which no other decoration was presented.



The Commander-in-Chief of the Kriegsmarine, Grand Admiral Raeder to recognize the dangerous and successful operations of the minesweepers, escort vessels, and sub-chasers, instituted the Mine Sweepers badge on August 31, 1940.

Manufacturing & Technical Information

The Minesweeper Badge was designed by sculptor Otto Placzek of Berlin and featured a large silver water funnel in the center of the badge. A gold wreath of oak leaves surrounds the water funnel with the national emblem at the top, wings outspread clutching a swastika. Examples of the Minesweeper Badge can be found in both tombak and zinc. It is not uncommon for zinc examples to lose their finish overtime, which results in a dull gray appearance. Pin attachment style varied by maker but examples can be found in both vertical and horizontal configurations. The premier maker of Minesweeper Badge's was Schwerin, Berlin. Due to their high quality craftsmanship early quality tombak versions by Schwerin can easily cost twice as much as any other manufacturer.





Presentation, Wear, and Documents

The badge was presented with an award document and worn on the left breast. Miniature versions in both 9 & 16 millimeter were authorized for wear on civilian clothing.



Award Criteria

The award was made through the ships commander. The following requirements were necessary to receive the badge:

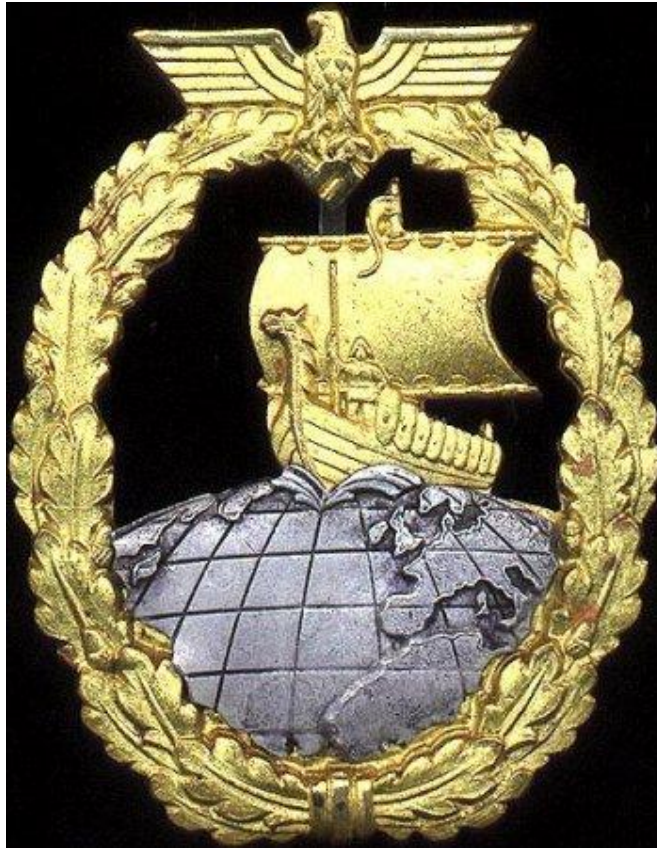
- Participation in three operational engagements
- Excellence for performance over a six month period (if other criteria not met)
- Hazardous duty in a mined area
- 25 days of escort duty

Awards could also be presented to soldiers, who were wounded during the course of action, sailing on a ship that was sunk in action, or if the operation was exceptionally successful.



Merchant ships were regularly used by the Kriegsmarine to

assist its contingent of u-boats, destroyers, cruisers, and battleships in the destruction of Allied shipping. These merchant ships or "Auxiliary Cruisers" were outfit with a variety of anti-ship weapons and patrolled shipping lanes throughout the world. On April 24, 1941 Grand Admiral Raeder ordered a special badge be introduced to recognize the bravery and heroism of the men of these vessels.

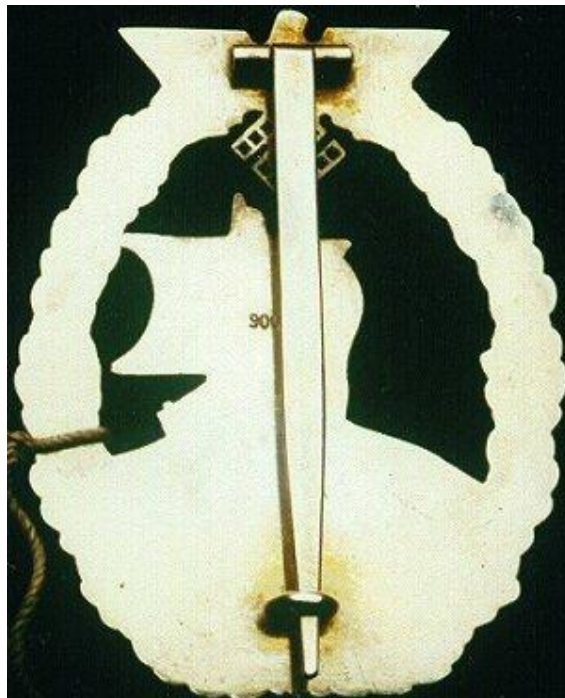
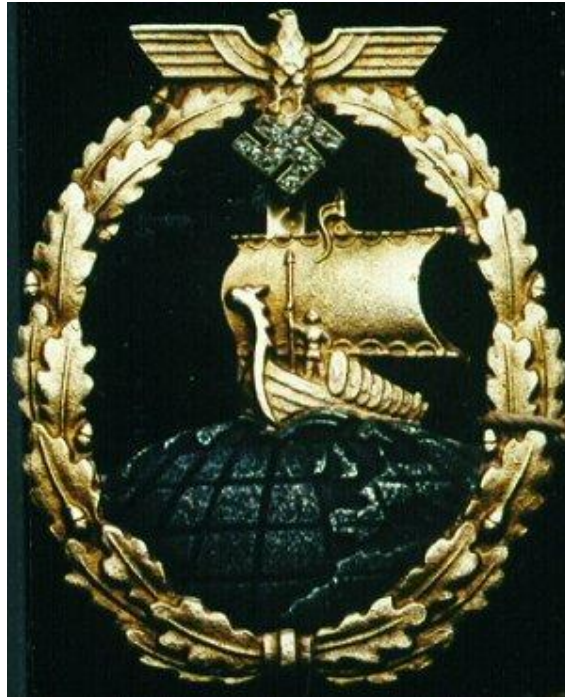




Manufacturing and Technical information

The Auxiliary Cruiser Badge, designed by Ernst Peekhaus of Berlin, portrayed a Viking ship sailing on the Northern hemisphere of the globe surrounded by a wreath of oak leaves. The wreath, eagle, and ship are gilt and the globe area is gray. Versions were produced in silver, tombak, and zinc. The globe could be an integral part of the badge or a separate piece, which was held in place by a single rivet.

A special presentation version was produced with diamond-inlaid swastikas. The only known recipient of the diamonds version is Kapitän zur See Bernhard Rogge, commander of the cruiser "Atlantis", to whom the badge was presented in January 1942 by Grand Admiral Raeder (Kapitän Rogge was awarded the Oakleaves to his Knights Cross on December 31, 1941).



Presentation, Wear and Documents

The badge was worn on the left breast. Like most Wehrmacht awards, there was no one standard award document for the Auxiliary Cruiser Badge and reference sources state that many

different styles exist. The author welcome any further information on this topic.

Award Criteria

The badge was awarded for completing a “successful long distance voyage by the crew of an auxiliary cruiser or supply ship”*. It could also be awarded for distinguished leadership while taking part in these voyages. Any person wounded during the voyage automatically received the award.

* Some auxiliary cruisers/supply ships were at sea almost two years without returning to Germany. Patrolling unfriendly waters for such periods of time and safely returning home can no doubt be considered remarkable.



The Blockade runner badge was instituted on April 1, 1941 in order to reward the ship members who participated to attempt or actually break the allied sea blockade.



Manufacturing and Technical information

The badge was designed by Otto Placzeck, Berlin, and it featured a ship with a large national emblem on its bow. The ship is shown cutting a chain which border the entire badge. The badge was dark gray colored and the eagle is silvered.

The Blockade Runner's Badge was manufactured in either tombac or in zinc by several different manufacturers, the best known of which is Schwerin, Berlin.

The badge was worn on the left breast pocket. When awarded, it was accompanied with a miniature pin badge which was worn on the lapel of civilian wear.



he Blockade Runner lapel pin



An SS Recipient

Presentation, Wear and Documents

It was presented in a box of which two major variants exists; A little box the badge and its 16mm miniature, and a large one for the badge and its 30mm stick pin. The outside box is made of simulation leather, the inside with dark blue velvet or flochage and lining.

The badge was presented with a document of which several types exist, and the award was entered in the personal documents (Wehrpass, Soldbuch).



With the outbreak of the Second World War and the rapid fall of Belgium, Holland and France, in 1940. Great Britain had to stand alone against the new modern German Army (Heer), Air force (Luftwaffe) and Navy (Kriegsmarine) . Standing alone and in need of large amounts of food stuffs, war materials etc., the only available option was the shipment of goods by sea. This engagement between our countries gave birth to two words linked whenever the Second World War was mentioned, the "Convoy" and the "Wolf pack".

Manufacturing and Technical Information

The "U" boat badge was instituted by the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Grand Admiral Raeder on 13th October 1939. The design of this badge follows an earlier award badge adopted at the end of the First World War. These awards all follow the same basic design of a wreath of gilded oak leaves encompassing a submarine. The First World War types have the boats bow on the right side and the flag to the stern on the left. The Second World War types have their bow facing left, with a deck gun and a flag to the back of the conning tower. Above the imperial type is the crown, whereas above the Third Reich type is the national emblem of the eagle and swastika.



These badges were originally made of gilded brass or heavy tombak etc., but as the war dragged on later awards were made of fine zinc with a gilt wash that usually fades leaving the badge a gray color. At this point it is worth noting that on some badges the swastika was cut out. This was done on both early and late made badges. The badge was attached to the tunic by means of a pin, hinge and hook which was either soldered or cast into the badge when it was constructed, either horizontally or vertically and the pin could either be a round needle pin or a broad bladed pin. So far we have seen the following makers marks on these awards:\

Solid swastika.

- 100 on the underside of the pin Schwerin.
- F.o. Centre of U boat
- 3 on the pin top side
- 5 on the pin top side.
- RK in a circle at the Centre of U boat.
- L/56 in Centre of U boat.
- R.S. in Centre of U boat
- W to the base of the badge under the hook.
- WH
- BSW
- B & N L
- L/13
- L/53

Cut out swastika.

- F.o. Centre of U boat
- Berlin 68 Centre of U boat
- GWL in a circle at the Centre of U boat

Presentation, Wear and Documents



It was to be worn on the left breast of all service and dress jackets, jumpers and shirts. Embroidered versions also exist in golden yellow cotton/bullion thread on a blue woolen base cloth. The award can be encountered in a number of packets and boxes, the commonest are a paper packet of either blue or buff brown, with the award logo to the front and the makers name to the back. Other awards can be found in card or occasionally a case of high quality hinged simulated leather with a silk top lid, a flocked base and with a cut out to take the pin.

All badges were issued with a citation, which incidentally are quite hard to find. Most have the "U" boat badge design to the top.

Award Criteria

The badge was earned by a minimum of two engagements or sorties against the enemy, waved if wounded at the discretion of the boat commander, and as such was and still is a highly regarded and sought after award. It therefore could not be awarded to any desk jockey (A

complaint many a "Tommy" made about their awards i.e. The Burma Star, etc.).

Reproductions

As always these badges have been reproduced. One of the commonest has the makers name "Schwerin Berlin SW." These early fakes are made in brass but lack detail right to the extent of no propeller to the "U" boat. This error has now been corrected so you can now find Schwerin badges that are reproductions with and without propellers. One of the latest has the makers name of "Frank and Reif, Stuttgart." to the back. Fortunately this firm did not make the badge, so any with this mark are clear copies. The reproduction makers have also used most of the original makers marks with that of "Schwerin" being the most common. One reproduction badge has even been seen with the makers mark of "JMME" a renowned maker of Luftwaffe badges. So extreme care should be taken when buying this and indeed any badge.

REPRODUCTIONS



Grand Admiral Dönitz instituted the submarine combat clasp in bronze on May 15, 1944, in order to reward the courage of the U-boat troops that had been in a desperate struggle to turn the tide in the battle of the Atlantic for five years. The Badge existed in two classes as a Silver class was instituted later that year on November 24, 1944.



Wilhelm Ernst Peekhaus of Berlin submitted the design of the badge which was composed of a laurel wreath surrounding a submarine, surmounted by the national emblem. In each side there were 3 rows of oak leaves with two crossed swords at the base of the wreath emphasizing the military nature of the decoration.

Both classes of the badge were manufactured in zinc, then bronzed or silvered. The main manufacturer was Schwerin of Berlin which name was impressed on the reverse. It seems that Rudolf Karneht and Friedrich Linden also manufactured this badge but no examples are known by the author. The colour varied according to the quality and the age. Schwerin manufactured two types of badges, one of which has a semi-hollow wreath back side. The hook is rounded and catch and pin are hollow.

Award was determined by recommendation of the U-boat commander based on the number of sorties and/or personal bravery demonstrated. It was then approved by Grand Admiral Dönitz.



Dimensions:

Width: 76-77mm,
Height: 15-16mm,
Height of the wreath: 24mm
Weight: 19g





The coastal artillery service was the Kriegsmarine branch responsible for protecting the Reich's coastal borders from both air and sea attack.

On June 24, 1941 Grand Admiral Raeder instituted the War Badge of the Coastal Artillery to reward the actions of both individuals and crew members.

Manufacturing and Technical Information

Designed by Otto Placzek of Berlin, the badge consists of two rows of oak leaves in the form of a wreath. Inside the wreath is a coastal artillery piece with the ocean in the background. Centered at the top of the badge is an eagle with downward facing wings at its side clutching a swastika. Original examples have 15 full oak leaves per side with two partial leaves at the top near the national emblem. The wreath and national emblem are finished in gold while the remaining areas have a gray finish. As the war progressed and material quality declined the finish wore off more quickly, giving a gray overall appearance to many examples.



Presentation, Wear and Documents

The badge was presented in a titled envelope and was worn on in the middle of the top most tunic pocket. Upon receipt of the badge each recipient received an award document and notation was made in their Soldbuch/Wehrpass. Documents vary in size and style from decorative examples featuring a likeness of the badge to hand typed field made examples.



Award Criteria and Statistics

Individuals had to display significant leadership qualities or any single act of "merit in action" for which no other award was given. Crew members badges were issued using a points system, with eight points resulting in the award. Gun crews which downed an aircraft unassisted were given two points. If assistance from another crew was necessary only one point was awarded. Searchlight crews, fire-control personnel, sound-

locator crews, and radio operators were also entitled to the award but only received half a point for each first detection. It could also be awarded posthumously for death in action or accident on duty.

The award was initially intended for members of the coastal air defense force, but not long after its institution it was expanded to include crew members of guns positioned against naval targets.



On November 19th, 1944, Admiral Dönitz instituted the Marine Combat Clasp to be presented to Navy personnel for meritorious actions which were not covered by existing decorations. It was necessary to perform actions five times in excess of the requirements for a basic war badge. The badge was intended to be worn above the left pocket.

Because this badge was created so late in the war, it is rare in the extreme. A 1957 version was also instituted.



The K-Verbände, also known as the Small Battle Units, were formed in April 1944 under the command of Konteradmiral Heye. Probably best known for their use of the small midget submarine types such as Neger, Biber, Molch etc, the K-Verbände also use diverse other weapons systems such as the Sprengboote, small speedboats packed with dynamite and

driven directly to their targets. These were not suicide weapons (though nearly so!) as it was intended that the operator dive overboard at the last possible moment and be picked up by a control boat.

On 30 November 1944 a special range of awards was introduced for the K-Verbände by Grossadmiral Dönitz. The introduction order read as follows.

1) In recognition of the dashing attacks carried out with success by the Kleinkampfverbände, I institute for the soldiers of the K-Verbände, Bewährungs and Kampfabzeichen in the following form.

- 1st Grade Embroidered Sawfish.
- 2nd Grade Embroidered Sawfish with One Sword.
- 3rd Grade Embroidered Sawfish with Two Swords.
- 4th Grade Embroidered Sawfish with Three Swords.
- 5th Grade a Bronze Clasp.
- 6th Grade a Silver Clasp.
- 7th Grade a Gold Clasp.

The insignia up to the 4th Grade will be worn on the upper right arm level with the position of the Clasp above the ribbon bar.

2) The criteria for the award is general merit and fulfillment of requisite conditions.

3) The insignia is awarded in my name by the commanding



1st Class



3rd Class

admiral of the K-Verband.

Dsnitz

Berlin, 30 November 1944

The awards were designed by Ottfried Neubecker and the first 4 grades consisted of an embroidered sawfish on a blue wool circular patch. Original examples may be encountered in machine embroidered yellow cotton thread, hand embroidered cellean thread, or hand embroidered bullion wire.

Mention should also be made of the Probationary level of this award, which consisted of the same Sawfish emblem, but without the circular rope motif in the center.

Grade 1 consisted of a sawfish lying over a circle of rope, knotted at its base. This was awarded for some minor act of merit or proficiency such as planning a successful action.



4th Class

Grade 2 consisted of an identical patch, but with a single sword lying at an angle of 45 degrees from low right to high left. It was awarded for gallant participation in a single action, either solo or as a member of a raiding party.

Grade 3 followed the design of grade 2 but with two Swords. Awarded after participation in a second action

Grade 4 had an additional third Sword. Awarded after

participation in third action.

Grade 5 was a Bronze metal clasp with the Sawfish lying on a horizontal length of intricately knotted rope. Awarded after participation in four major actions.

Grade 6 was as for Grade 5 but Silver. Awarded after participation in seven major actions.

Grade 7 was as for Grade 6 but Gold. Awarded for participation in ten or more major actions.

The metal clasps are not known to have been actually issued, though awards were certainly made "on paper".

The vast majority if not all of those metal clasps in circulation are those produced as part of the 1957 de-Nazified series of awards. Some of these have early wartime type hinges and pins and may be found with a variety of spurious markings (L/56, L/12, L/18 to name but three).

Fortunately there is an easy way to detect these copies. In the only verified original piece yet noted, sold by Hamburg Dealer Detlev Niemann in 1998, it is clear that the fins of the Sawfish are not ribbed, but smooth. This is the original pattern piece from which all others would be copied.

The postwar type has the Sawfish fins lightly ribbed.



In the U-Boot Archiv in Cuxhaven is the postwar Bundesmarine a tunic donated by an officer who had served in the K-Verbände in WW2 as well as the Bundesmarine. On the medal ribbon bar can be seen the miniature metal Kleinkampfmittelverbände clasp. Although the metal clasps seem to have been bestowed on paper, there is no evidence as yet to suggest that any were every actually issued. No award documents seem to have been produced for these awards, though original Soldbücher with entries for the lower grades in cloth are known.



Only a handful of award certificates have been encountered and these are invariably of the typewritten form, local produced from sheets of plain paper and typical of very late war awards, not the official printed blanks which would be used for most military awards.



A wide variety of awards that recognized particularly successful or arduous campaigns were presented to the men of the Wehrmacht during World War II. This line of decorations highlights battles that ranged from the successful 1936-39 Spanish expedition (the Kondor Legion) to the last desperate defensive battles. In these last days of the war, men often resisted in isolated, bypassed pockets where determination overshadowed reality.

The actual characteristics of the pieces varied as much as the battles they immortalized, and the quality can be said to reflect the changing fortunes of war; The first campaign award presented, the Spanish Cross, was an exquisite piece of craftsmanship while the cufftitles and shields created in the waning days of the conflict were crudely put together by the encircled forces.



The use of Cuff Titles in Germany originated in the 19th century, but up to World War II they had only been used to denote membership or elite status in military units and paramilitary organizations. This form of recognition was first used to denote participation in campaign after the Spanish Civil war, but in the Second World War it was the Campaign Shield that was initially used for this purpose.

By July 1942 there were three Campaign Shields and as the war went on the number of campaigns to be commemorated increased. Being that there was an obvious limit to the number of space-consuming shields that an individual may wear, Germany turned to Cuff Titles, instituting several of them as officially recognized campaign awards.



On 3 June 1939, members of the German Army (Heer) who had performed service in the Spanish Civil War were honored in a ceremony hosted by the Commander in Chief of the Army (Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres), General von Brauchitsch. The

ceremony took place on the famed parade field at Doberitz. The men standing on the field that day had formed the Army contingent to the 'Legion Condor'. Having just returned from Spain, entering the port of Hamburg on 30 May 1939, following a victory parade in Madrid, as well as an official welcome back to Germany by Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, these men were now to be recognized by their own arm of service.

Earlier, Göring had announced that the Führer had created a special award badge for the Condor "legionnaires". This, of course, is what collectors know as the Spanish Cross. As the Luftwaffe had made up the bulk of the Condor Legion, the award took on characteristics that left no doubt as to the preeminent role the flyers played in the three-year effort on behalf of Franco and his Nationalists. The Legion Condor, conceived in July 1936 as a small air transport detachment on loan for the express purpose of transporting Franco's Nationalist Army stranded in Spanish Morocco, had grown substantially by early 1937 to include all arms of the Wehrmacht (except the Waffen SS). In addition to the large Luftwaffe contingent, the Legion Condor also included a Kriegsmarine group – the Legion Condor "North Sea Group"- comprised of a staff, technicians and two pocket battleships, as well as an Army group, called simply "Gruppe Imker" (beekeepers). The Imker (or "Drohne" as it was also referred to by its code name) at its height was comprised of three Panzer (tank) Kompanien, a Nachschub/Transport (Supply/Transport) Kompanie, and a Nachrichten (Signals) Kompanie. Its initial commander was Oberstleutnant Walter Warlimont of the German General Staff. However, its later commander, and the one most associated with "Drohne", became Oberst von Thoma.

In addition to awarding participants the Spanish Cross in one of its seven versions, the name "Legion Condor" and its honors/traditions were also to be preserved within the Luftwaffe by the awarding of a traditions cufftitle – "Legion Condor". The traditions were bestowed to a squadron of bombers, a flak artillery regiment and a signals detachment. While it can be assumed that all participants, regardless of arm of service, who met the criteria for the Spanish Cross received an badge, it was a logical consequence of both the Luftwaffes' actions in establishing its traditions cufftitle, as well as longstanding practice (dating back to the late 1700s) of bestowing traditions cufftitles within the German Army, that the Heer should also bestow similar recognition of its service. Consequently, by an order dated 21 June 1939, Heeresverordnungsblatt 39B/262, the Commemorative Cufftitle for the Imker-Verbande was

established. The units selected to carry the traditions cufftitle were the Panzer-Lehr-Regiment, the Nachrichten-Lehr Regiment, and the Versuchs-Abteilung (Experimental Battalion). It was at the ceremony at Doberitz that von Brauchitsch presented these three units with the traditions cufftitle.

General Description:

The cufftitle features a madder red, or Kapprot, background with a metallic gold thread machine woven inscription "1936 Spanien 1939" in an old style calligraphy. The entire length of the cufftitle is bordered top and bottom by a machine woven border in the same gold metallic thread. This border sets in slightly from the outer edge of the cufftitle. The colors that make up the cufftitle reflect Spain's national colors or red and gold. For this reason alone, the cufftitle is unique among Third Reich cufftitles, which otherwise usually are confined to blacks, silvers, dark blues, dark greens, whites or browns – although Heer cufftitles tend to display a wider variance in color selection than do the other services. It is interesting to note that Spain only adopted the red and gold colors as national colors at the end of the Spanish Civil War. It should also be noted here that the term 'cufftitle' is an English language generalization for two types of insignia that were defined in the German military by the terms Armelstreifen (stripes), and Armelbänder (bands). It is only the cufftitles bestowed as campaign or battle awards that qualify as 'bands'. As a commemorative award, the Spanish Civil War title is technically an Armelstreifen although it can also be found referred to in reference books categorized as a "campaign cuffband", as it is a rather unique cross between the two.



Detailed Description of Characteristics:

The "1936 Spanien 1939" cufftitle is an exceedingly rare item for the collector. There is little if any solid evidence that it was manufactured in more than one style. Additionally, due to its unique styling, very likely limited production, narrow issuance,

restrictive wear regulations, and short-lived significance as a battle or traditions decoration prior to the war – a war that saw a plethora of other cufftitles and cuffbands instituted - any variations from what is described here, as a rule should be very carefully considered as being a post war reproduction. Its rarity is an advantage to collectors, as most encountered will be reproductions or fakes.

Obverse: The German kapprot color of the cufftitle is a madder red. Madder, an old world dye from the root of the Eurasian Madder plant, is distinct among the other reds used by the Wehrmacht. Some sources variously will refer to it as a bright red or wine red, but it is a deeply toned, medium red, with an almost 'royal' quality to it. The material on which the title is machine woven is a high quality, single ply cotton fabric. Upon close inspection (under magnification), one will observe two distinct weave patterns within the fabric. The center of the band, that is the portion containing the woven lettering, has a distinct diagonal weave running from upper left to lower right. The second weave pattern is featured on the outer edges. Here one observes a cross-hatching weave very similar to the effect seen in waffenfarbe pipings used on Third Reich Heer silk-rayon insignia. The reason for the different weaves appears two-fold. First, the cotton band required finishing on the edges so as not to unravel. Secondly, it is from these edges that the gold wire thread of the lettering anchors on the reverse and the gold wire woven line of the top and bottom borders are also contained within this 4mm wide cross-hatching.



The regulation states a width of 32mm, however with 50 years

of moisture and aging, cotton shrinks. Consequently, one should expect to see from between 30mm – 32mm in width. A measurement greater than 32mm would be grounds for very careful consideration. The cufftitle will have a starched feel to it, a product of the combined effects of aging to the cotton and gold wire thread. However, it is a supple article of cloth and if hung over the index finger, should readily go limp. While these cufftitles were manufactured and cut from rolls for issue, an approximate full length would be about 40-45 cm. Since it was authorized for wear on the greatcoat, it would be feasible to find slightly longer lengths. The example shown is 36 cm. and shows signs of having been sewn on, with the ends trimmed and folded under.

The cotton band was finished on the edges with gold metallic thread woven bands 2mm in width. The thread, due to aging, will appear a tarnished gold today. Any specimen with something other than gold metallic thread is most likely a reproduction. The bordering lines are inset from the edges another 2mm. The weave of the border lines is vertical and tightly done. Under magnification, they should appear to be well imbedded in the cotton cloth.

The lettering "1936 Spanien 1939" is of an old style calligraphy, similar to old English or Gothic text. The letters are woven into the cotton in the same metallic gold thread and, due to the lettering style, vary individually in height when measuring from highest point to lowest point as shown below:

1 – 15mm
9 – 14mm
3- 13mm
6 – 15mm
S- 18mm
p- 15mm
a- 10mm
n- 10mm
i- 14mm
e-10mm

The weave again is tight, only this time displays a waffle pattern. The spacing between the letters is uniform between any two adjacent letters (or numbers) in the same word. This space should measure 1mm. The spacing between word and dates is 5mm between the '6' and the capital 'S' and 4mm between the lower case 'n' and the '1'. The overall length of the text of the cufftitle is 14.1 cm.



Reverse: The first impression one has when looking at the reverse of an original "1936 Spanien 1939" cufftitle is that the title, itself appears in reverse negative. In other words, the gold lettering of the obverse/front is now appears as red cotton. Setting off the letters in this manner are the gold metallic threads, which on the obverse, form the background. These gold metallic threads run vertically and almost the full length of the cufftitle. They are secured (machine woven) into the red base cloth only at the top and bottom approximately 4mm from the edge where they enter or depart from front to back or visa versa. Otherwise these threads are loose and appear wavy, slightly distorting the negative images of the lettering.



This negative image however, does not apply to the gold borders on top and bottom of the band. These remain gold, but are not mirror images as they appear on the obverse/front. The reverse construction of the bordering lines is unique. The measurement from the top or bottom of the gold metallic threads that form the title lettering to the edge of the band is 4mm. Working from the inside outward, the red cotton base

cloth measures approximately 2mm. Next is a 1mm wide series of gold metallic thread loops, running vertically the full length of the cufftitle. Another 1mm of red cotton base cloth is exposed and completes the distance remaining to the edge of the band. This 1mm of base cloth exhibits the same cross-hatching as seen on the front edges.

Issue and Wear

No documentation surfaced by way of this research that would establish the number issued to each recipient authorized to wear the cufftitle. Its use was rather restrictive, being authorized only for the uniform coat (meaning overcoat but also possibly the service blouse), the parade and dress uniforms (same uniform, but differentiated by the being graded for wear) and the ornamented coat/piped blouse. This information is recorded in the authorizing order and would indicate a more formal intent for wear presentation. Also, given the nature of the demonstration (Lehr) units authorized to wear the cuffband, this seems to make sense. Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that members of the designated traditions units received one for every uniform they were required to maintain and for which it was authorized. Thus, at least two and possibly three, with officers possibly having requirements for as many as five would be a fairly accurate conclusion. Coming as it did in mid-1939 with the invasion of Poland months away and that it was only authorized for roughly two small regiments, production was probably not extensive, nor would the award have been widely recognized.



Photographic evidence of it in wear is exceedingly rare, but a couple current of references do show photographs. However, by regulation it was to be positioned on the right sleeve, about 7.5 cm above the straight cuff or about 1 cm above the French-style cuff. It was not for permanent wear and once the bearer transferred he was no longer authorized to wear the cufftitle. No evidence has surfaced of any kind of award document or Soldbuch entry being made, however of the two, the latter would be more likely to be discovered as having taken place.

The photograph below was recently acquired in to a collection and illustrates the cufftitle being worn by a young Panzer Gefrieter on his parade Waffenrock (courtesy Eric Queen).





The cufftitle mounted on a Panzer Waffenrock from the 7th Panzer Regiment.



Adolf Risen, formerly of Feldherrnhalle was one of the first replacements of 8./FJR1. He jumped near Chania, Crete with 8./FJR 3. Picture shown was taken at a photographer's studio near Chania. Risen would not survive the war, being killed at Monte Cassino in 1944.



The Battle

The battle for the Island of Crete began on May 20, 1941. A succession of factors drew the war to this Mediterranean island

in a spectacular fashion. The previous month, as part of the continued effort to knock the British out of the war, the Germans had concluded the campaign in Greece, ejecting the British and Commonwealth forces from the peninsula. However, the British had successfully withdrawn substantial numbers of troops between 24 April and 1 May, many evacuating to nearby Crete. The island, always important to the British, now took on added significance for each side. For the British, Crete provided a naval base in the eastern Mediterranean from which to continue to attack German shipping transporting men and materiel to North Africa. For the Germans, gaining possession of the island would provide them a base from which the Luftwaffe could operate in support of Rommel's *Deutsches Afrika Korps*. Rommel's hastily undertaken offensive between March and May had run its course and his forces were in need of supplies and refitting. However successful he had been in driving the British back, he had failed to take the British port of Tobruk and his *Afrika Korps* was now over extended. The port stood in his rear and astride his ever-lengthening lines of communication. He needed Tobruk both to eliminate the threat to his lines and to use it as a logistics base to support his continued drive toward Egypt. Seizure of Crete would greatly assist him in this endeavor. Rommel pushed hard for the attack on Crete. The attack was set for the end of April (although postponed for two weeks due to supply and troop marshalling problems) by *Fuhrer Directive No. 28* and was code-named *Operation Mercury (Merkur)*.

The campaign for Crete took longer than anticipated. What was designed as a *coup de main*, took several weeks - time that the Germans could ill afford. While not widely recognized at the highest levels, time was becoming the hidden enemy of the German strategy. This was especially true regarding the planned attack on the Soviet Union. Each diversion of forces to areas in the Balkans, Mediterranean and North Africa were taking precious weeks out of the intended attack East. The attack had already been postponed for the diversionary campaigns in Albania and Greece.

Therefore, the key to attacking Crete was speed. This meant rapidly massing combat forces and quickly overwhelming the enemy. As an island, Crete would have to be assaulted from the air. This meant surprise was important for German success. Surprise would both minimize the troops' exposure against the island's defenses and quickly achieve the mission objectives, thereby reducing German casualties. A period of bombing and strafing by the Luftwaffe in the days preceding the

assault were undertaken to reduce the defenses. The next two phases of the German plan sought to mass quickly on the enemy by using the Luftwaffe's airborne/ Fallschirmjäger forces in parachute and glider assaults to attack and seize key airfields and ports on the first day. The principle objectives were Maleme Airfield and Canea, Crete's capital city with its port in Suda Bay, and the Ritimo and Heraklion airfields. These objectives would secure the means to introduce additional Heer forces - in the form of an elite mountain infantry/Gebirgsjäger division - by airland and sea transport on the second day. These forces were to expand the airhead and, in conjunction with the Fallschirmjäger, defeat the remaining enemy and secure the island.

The actual attack employed the largest use of airborne forces in history up to that point in time. About 600 aircraft of the XI Flieger Korps delivered approximately 10,000 Fallschirmjäger by parachute assault, 750 by glider borne assault, and another 5,000 troops by airlanding. The Kriegsmarine (which had no real German Naval units participating, but rather used captured Greek transport vessels from the previous month's campaign) under Admiral Schuster, brought in an additional 7,000 troops in by sea. The ground combat units that participated included the 1., 2. 3. and 4. battalions of the Luftlande-Sturmregiment (Meindel), the 1., 2. and 3. Parachute Regimenter of the 7. Flieger Division (Sassmann) and the 5. Gebirgsjäger Division (Ringel) – the latter comprised primarily of the 85. and 100. Gebirgsjäger Regimenter, the 95. Gebirgs Artillerie Regiment, and the 95. Motorcycle, Pionier, Panzerjäger, and Aufklärungs bataillionen. Forces that served in the vicinity of Crete are reported to have included II Abteilung Panzer Regiment 31., Schützen Battalion 55. (Mot), and Heeres Flakabteilung 609. An additional 500 bomber, fighter and reconnaissance aircraft of the VIII Flieger Korps supported the operation beginning 14 May with the bombing of Allied positions and installations throughout Crete. German forces were under the overall command of General der Flieger Kurt Student, commanding the XI Fliegerkorps.

Fallshirmjäger
search a captured
defender on Crete



The 42,500 British, Commonwealth and Greek defenders, led by New Zealand Major General Bernard Freyberg (commander of the 2nd New Zealand Division), gave a good accounting of themselves. In addition to having the advantage of the rough natural terrain, the Allied forces were greatly assisted by the fact that ULTRA had discerned the German plan and thus, they were able to position their forces to advantage. However, the bulk of the defenders were troops that had just withdrawn from Greece, and had been forced to leave the bulk of their equipment behind. These soldiers were unorganized, poorly equipped, and harried as a result of their defeat from the previous month. On the other hand, the original garrison on Crete of 5,000 British soldiers were well armed and equipped – even possessing about twenty tanks and armored personnel carriers – and provided the backbone of the overall stubborn defense. A relatively weak showing by the RAF complicated the British effort further. Unlike the RAF, the Royal Navy owned the Mediterranean and gave outstanding support throughout the battle. Lastly, the island also had an active partisan force that caused the Germans some additional challenges and assisted the British efforts by keeping the Germans off balance, fighting in all directions and sustaining casualties.

The battle was a costly victory for the Germans. In all, German

casualties were extensive, especially from the airborne assault and from the stiff resistance that met the initial airlandings of the Gebirgsjäger. The loss of surprise, as well as the stubborn British defense and a valuable contribution from the Royal Navy, which sunk a flotilla of German reinforcements, severely pressed the Germans for two weeks. Although the Fallschirmjäger captured Maleme Airfield on the second day, significantly improving their situation and allowing badly needed reinforcements from the Gebirgsjäger, it took the next eleven days at a cost of 5,000 men killed in action and the loss of 271 transport planes, in addition to the destroyed flotilla, for the Fallschirmjäger and Gebirgsjäger to prevail. In comparison, the defenders suffered 3,500 killed and wounded and 11,800 taken prisoner. Another 14,000 defenders were successfully evacuated, but the Royal Navy lost three cruisers and six destroyers sunk and one aircraft carrier, three battleships, six cruisers and nine destroyers damaged by relentless Luftwaffe attacks.

By 1 June 1941 the island was securely in German hands and the battle ended. While the Wehrmacht won the tactical victory over the Allies, it suffered heavily to claim the battle's laurels. Operationally, the island never completely yielded its intended advantage of extending Germany's air umbrella. Events and decisions elsewhere (the Soviet Union), as well as continued Allied naval superiority in the Mediterranean Sea and rapidly growing supremacy in the air, largely marginalized Crete. The most telling loss was at the strategic level. From this point on, Germany abandoned large-scale airborne operations. General Student called Crete "the grave of the German paratrooper force". And it was. The Allies on the other hand, were gearing up to leverage that same capability – a capability they would use most convincingly for the remainder of the war. In fact, a comprehensive captured German report on the Crete operation was the foundation for an Allied study toward planning the airborne assault on D-Day.

The Germans, all the way through the end of 1944, made several much smaller scale parachute assaults but these either failed, were undertaken only as special operations or were so small as to be incapable of having a decisive role. Of course, the Allies had to continue to take into account the possible employment of German paratroopers in an airborne role. But, Germany's decision was a clear self-admission that its means to absorb the costs associated with such risks would in the future limit its undertakings. The Fallschirmjäger continued to display astounding tenacity and extraordinary skill wherever they were

employed for the remainder of the war, earning their place as some of the most respected and capable soldiers in the history of modern warfare. Likewise, the Gebirgsjäger continued to be employed on every front as some of the Third Reich's most capable soldiers.

General Cufftitle Description

The > KRETA < cuffband was instituted on 16 October 1942, about five months following the conclusion of the battle (Army/Heer Regulations/Verordnungs Blatt 1942, Directive 23, page 457, No. 874; Air force/Luftwaffe: 1942 Directive 40, page 1403, No. 2519; Navy/Kriegsmarine: 1942 Publication 29, page 831, No. 721 and 1942 Publication 36, page 1000, No.901). The cufftitle was considered an award and was given to personnel who made a parachute or glider landing on to the island of Crete between 20 and 27 May, took part in the air campaign over Crete, or were in active service at sea in the Crete theater of operations up to 27 May 1942. The award title was made of yellow-gold embroidery on a white to slightly off-white background of a cotton cloth. The designers of this particular cufftitle seem to have been particularly influenced by Greek culture for their design, as the colors of white and gold are reminiscent of the state colors from ancient Athens. The embroidery consists of the word "KRETA", executed in a Roman style font, the title word being bracketed at either end by what is described in most references as 'Acanthus leaves'. In fact, the 'leaves' are more accurately described as an Acanthus 'design'(which indeed draws its inspiration from the Acanthus bush). This design – referred to as an 'acanthus' - was widely used in ancient Roman and Greek architectural design as a decoration atop columns and other sculptures. The Acanthus (acanthus hiburtus) bush itself, is a thorny plant found in a number of countries throughout Asia. One has to wonder if the designer of the cufftitle saw some symbolism between the battle for Crete and the thorn of the Acanthus bush.



Obverse Detailed Description

The uniform width of the band is 33mm. The cotton-linen material of the standard issue cufftitle shows a distinct diagonal weave pattern. The cotton is a matt off-white and the weave is tightly made, displaying a diagonal brick-like pattern that runs horizontally along the length of the band, with no fussing of the material. Undoubtedly, variations were made from other types of material, but that described is the standard, original issue and as such, is unmistakable. The band is bounded top and bottom for the full length with a gold-yellow, 3mm wide Russia braid or soutache' chord. The positioning of the braid is virtually tangent to the top and bottom edges of the base cloth. Soutache' is the standard material used in many Wehrmacht cufftitles, some Luftwaffe cufftitles, on overseas caps of the Heer, and on various insignia of all of the branches of service of the Wehrmacht. The ends of the Russia braid/soutache' where the cufftitle has been cut from a roll and has frayed, will usually show the white inner cotton threads over which the gold-yellow silk-rayon outer thread had been wrapped. Each of the borders is machine sewn in place, usually with a gold-yellow thread to match the color of the Russia Braid. Due to the quality of the materials and the quality of the manufacture, these borders are sewn on very straight.

The letters in the title are machine embroidered in gold-yellow cotton thread. The quality of the machine stitching of the embroidery is obvious but, upon close scrutiny will in many places look slightly ragged along the vertical edges of the letters. The height of all the letters is 14 mm. The width of the letters is not uniform, with the vertical strokes (on the 'K', 'R', 'E', and 'T') being uniformly 4 mm wide and flaring at the Roman-style endings to 5mm. Diagonal strokes (on the 'K' and 'R') are typically 2-3mm wide, flaring to 5mm on the Roman-style ends. The construction of the diagonal strokes on the 'A' however, have the introductory stroke, or left diagonal, 2-3mm wide and the ending stroke, or right diagonal, 4mm wide, each again, ending in a 5mm wide Roman-style flare. The only curvature occurs on the 'R' and it is not of uniform width, varying from a narrow 2mm at top through a 3mm wide bend. Due to the nature of the machine embroidery, as previously mentioned, one will find these dimensions vary slightly from example to example. However, the variance is typically less than 1mm, so anything exceeding these by more than that, should be looked at more closely and taken in to consideration with other factors in determining originality.

The Acanthus designs that bracket the title word are done in the same gold-yellow thread as the title. These are 25mm at the widest points measured vertically (the outside ends) and 10mm

at the narrowest (inside ends). At the widest horizontal width, the design is 10-11mm. The designs consist of six spiked acanthus leaves arranged horizontally with three on top and three on bottom, which enclose a fan-like acanthus flower. Two vertical "S" scrolls connect the bases of the acanthus leaves on the insides. Most references refer to two styles of this overall design: the "seven - leaf" version and the "nine - leaf" version. Several points should be made in this regard. First, the true leaves in the design are the spiked leaves that bracket the overall design top and bottom. These are not what are being counted to distinguish between the two styles of cufftitle. Second, the collector jargon that distinguishes the seven and nine leafed variations is referring to the count of the petals on the interior fan-like design. As already indicated, this is actually a representation of the flower found on that variety of Acanthus plant. Lastly, none of the references I have seen over the years picture the nine-leaf version, although most refer to its existence. In preparing to write this article, I sought out anyone who might have an example of the nine-leaf version so as to include a picture of in this article and none surfaced. It is my personal opinion that the nine-leaf version does not exist as an issue piece. Rather, it is probably collector folklore at worst or the result of a one-time observation of a privately purchased cufftitle in a collection at some point at best. Anyone having an example or photo that clearly establishes this version is encouraged to share it on the Forum. The photo below shows another cufftitle obverse and reverse together.



Reverse Detailed Description

The reverse of the >KRETA< cufftitle shows two inward folds of base cloth, one at the top and one at the bottom. These folds are approximately 12-13mm deep and unfinished along the inner edges. As a result, the base cloth is usually frayed, displaying a number of loose threads. This is not an indication of a reproduction. Visible along the top and bottom edges of these folds is the underside machine stitching, usually in gold-yellow thread, but sometimes white, tan or a light grayish-

tan. The ends of the cufftitle, if the example under study is full length, will show a single vertical machine stitch usually in the same thread color as above. This stitching established the length to be cut from a roll as well as served to bind the ends from unraveling. Frequently, cufftitles removed from uniforms will no longer be long enough to retain this, as the full-length version had plenty of excess to ensure a proper fit around the various cuff circumferences it was applied to. Uncut, a full-length >KRETA< cufftitle will measure approximately 44-45 cm.

When one pulls open the folds, the reverse machine embroidery of the title word and acanthus designs are completely visible. The reverse lettering looks somewhat like a negative image, the white threads of the base cloth generally covering much of the surface of the gold-yellow machine embroidery seen in full on the obverse. Some >KRETA< cufftitles were issued later in the war bearing an RbNr. Otherwise, markings typically should not be present.



Wear and Regulations

The >KRETA< cufftitle was authorized for wear by all branches of the Wehrmacht for those members who met the qualifications, save for the Waffen SS who had no role in the battle. Criteria for award followed these general guidelines:

- Participation in a parachute or glider assault on Crete between the 20th and the 27th of March 1940
- or...participated in air operations over Crete
- or...participated in operations at sea around the island before 28 May 1942. This included Heer/Army personnel that were delivered to the island by boat on 19 May 1942.



Former Army
Fallshirmjäger Ernst
Claus of 6./FJR 1
wears the KRETA
cufftitle on his
fliegerbluse in an
early 1944 studio
portrait.



Gerhard Broder of
1./ FJR 1 wearing
the KRETA
sleeveband on the
tropical four
pocket tunic



A German Cross
winner and Kreta
cufftitle recipient
poses for a
picture.

Typically, a single example of the cufftitle was presented to the awardee. However, depending on where the award was made, such as in a training replacement unit, an awardee might receive up to three to attach to an array of uniforms. The cufftitle is almost universally seen affixed to only three kinds of uniforms, these being the service dress of the branch of service (Luftwaffe, Kriegsmarine or Heer), the overcoat/mantel and the combat dress. In all cases, the regulations prescribed wear on the bearer's left sleeve, with the title to the front half of the sleeve and sewn approximately 15 cm above the lower edge of the field and service tunics, 7.5 cm above the cuff if worn on dress tunics and 1 cm above the open French cuffs on overcoats and officer private purchase field and service uniforms. Attachment to the uniform could be done by machine or by hand. Hand sewing was by far the more common method. Officers in particular were entitled to an orderly, one of which whose duties was to maintain the officer's uniforms. This would have included sewing on rank at promotions, sewing on battle awards or seeing to it that uniforms received the appropriate loops for badge type awards. As such, hand sewing was common. When the recipient had earned more than one campaign cufftitle, the older award took precedence and was sewn above the new award. Reference books hold a number of photographs of Luftwaffe personnel in particular that were

awarded both the >KRETA< and the AFRIKA campaign awards. The picture below is of a set, attached together properly and taken off a uniform.



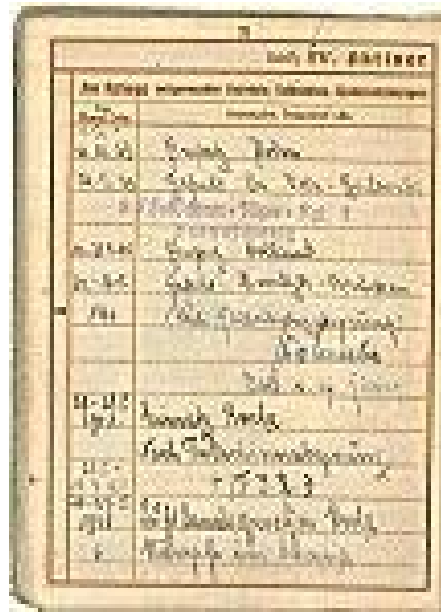
Award Documents

An award document, or Urkunde was issued with the >KRETA< cufftitle and, as a campaign award, an entry was usually made in the soldier's Soldbuch. This Soldbuch entry usually can be found recorded using one of several phrases. The example below shows the typical phrase: Armelband "Kreta", with the quotation marks in proper German grammatical style, having the lead set of quotes below the K and the trail set above the T.

Another typically encountered entry (although finding a Kreta entry at all is relatively rare) is the phrase: Erinnerungsband "Kreta" (roughly translated as remembrance band Kreta). Dates of entry will vary, but should not show as having been made before the date of institution. The bulk of Soldbuch entries will show as the award of the cufftitle being made in late 1942 and throughout 1943. Some were made as late as 1944.



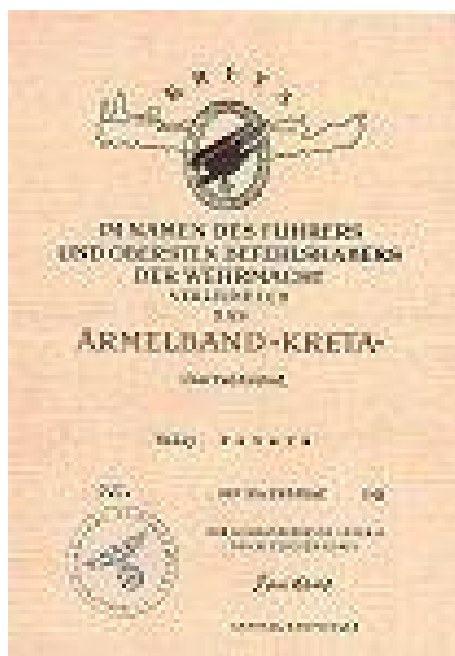
The soldier's Wehrpa would also be annotated to note the individual's participation in the battle or service connected with the campaign. This would be found on pages 32 and 33 of the pre and early war Wehrpa and on pages 30-33 on the late war Wehrpa. Sometimes typed sheets of paper listing the battles were glued in. Below is a photograph of the page from Army paratrooper Gotlieb Moeck's Wehrpa. Note the entry "Einsatz KRETA nach fallshirmabsprung" against the 20-28 May 1941 entry, documenting that Moeck actually participated in the airborne assault.



Since each service had members who qualified for the award, variations of the award document do exist. Standard document sizes are referred to by DINA format and there are generally four accepted standard sizes. DINA3 is the largest and runs 298mm wide by 420mm long. DINA6 is the smallest and runs 105mm wide by 150mm long. To date, I am aware of branch of service specific award documents for the Luftwaffe and the Heer, as well as generic versions used by each branch. Even though the Kriegsmarine was the first branch of service to institute the award in 1942, I was unable to come across an award document version specific to the service for this article. Dates on award documents run from late 1942 all the way through 1944. Some of these were done after the death of the awardees - who may have never received one for various reasons (particularly if killed in action on Crete), or whose original may have been lost. These documents were sent to the next of kin.

A version exists for Fallschirmjäger who participated in the campaign. It is the most common version found, since the bulk of the troops who participated in the campaign were paratroopers. It bears a sketch of the Luftwaffe paratroopers badge set above an outline sketch of the island of Crete, the word "KRETA" imposed above. This version is always done in a combination of brownish-red and black ink (the words Armelband Kreta being in brownish-red) and will bear either an actual, facsimile, or stamped signature of General der Flieger

Student. The dates most were awarded were 11 Februar 1943 and 20 Mai 1943. While there were exceptions, these are rare.



The Gebirgsjäger also had a version. Pictured below, it was DIN A5 (150mm by 210mm) and equally if not more ornate than the Fallschirmjäger version. Bordered by a nearly continuous frame formed of three lines (thin, thick, thin) with a single oak leaf at each corner broken at the top by a compact diorama sketch of mountains, 2 sailing ships and 2 Ju-52s (all either sailing or flying to the viewer's left), and having a facsimile of the >KRETA< cufftitle in banner style centered and about 2/3 down from the top – all done in reddish-brown or sepia-colored ink – the Gebirgsjäger version is very ornate for an award document and highly collectible. A Major Vitale, prior to October 1942, will have signed many. Others will be seen signed by a battalion or regiment commander. The word "KURASCH" is found printed at the center bottom in small letters and is probably the firm who was made responsible for printing this special version.



The 12. Armee also had its own version. This Army, formed around 1940 and having, taken part in the Western and Balkans campaigns remained in the Balkans but was re-designated Armee Gruppe E in late 1942 or early 1943. The 12. Armee Urkunde for the >KRETA< cufftitle was in DIN A5 format.

The award pictured below was made to Feldwebel Hain and is rare indeed, as so few armored personnel took part in the battle. Hain was a member of Schützen Regiment 55 and assigned to its reconnaissance unit.



Another version was done for flight personnel and signed by Generalfeldmarschall von Richthofen over a generic signature block.

A final version worth noting was the field made version. It is safe to say that just about every combat award at some point required or had a field version of the document made. This was usually just a typed piece of paper measuring about 130mm high by 210mm wide. The verbiage varied, sometimes following closely that found on the actual document. Sometimes it contained the word "Besitzzeugnis" in its make up, indicating 'in the possession of', or "zur Verleihung," indicating the right or act of awarding. Other information on field made documents usually seen is the individual's name, his unit, the date time group of the transmittal and award (including the hour the transmission was made in some cases), and the signature blocks of both the rendering officer (the adjutant most frequently) who will have initialed or signed the document, as well as the commanding officer on whose behalf the rendering officer is acting. The latter is usually a highly placed commander such as a Division, Corps or Army commander.

Fakes and Reproductions

As most references on Third Reich collecting state, to try catalog the array of fakes confronting the collector would be a

work in itself. The >KRETA< cufftitle is no exception. Fortunately for the collector, the >KRETA< cufftitle as described above is for all intents and purposes the rule and what one should look for when purchasing an original example. Original cufftitles do come on the collecting market, but are fairly scarce. While variations do exist (mostly private purchase or crude POW-made versions), the collector should be cautious about any that do not meet the points described above. A known variation was done on white wool with hand embroidery in cotton gold-yellow cotton thread, but one should not expect to see such on the market as the few known examples are mostly in private collections. The >KRETA< cufftitle was a state award which qualifying members of participating services were entitled to. As such, the state award met a specific standard. Due to its inception in late 1942 and the relatively small number needed (perhaps less than 100,000 were actually produced based on the total size of the force that participated in the campaign being about 30,000), it was awarded and issued throughout most of the remainder of the war and was available in necessary quantity. There was not a particular need for different variations, or a continuing demand by those qualified to receive it, since it was an award for a discrete event that was not repeated and the population of survivors obviously dwindled as the war progressed.

Reproductions began at the end of WWII for the GI souvenir hunter and collector interest back home. Some of these fakes, which were not really meant to fool 50 years ago, are still available today. Fortunately, they were poor likenesses of an original and so are fairly easy to spot today if one does not get caught in the trap of seeing something that looks fifty years old and rationalizing that it was an original, private purchase, variation. Others were made for Hollywood movies toward the end of the war and well in to the 60's. These are generally very crude likenesses to an original and look like something one would expect as a movie prop. Still others have been made for years for German veterans' organizations and handed out at reunions, for example. For this reason alone a collector must be very cautious of any >KRETA< cufftitle that does not meet the description above and comes with a "got it from the German vet who earned it" story attached to it. Not that these gents are on the take. Rather, some do not remember, some do not recognize the difference from what they received in the war and what they were given at the "five-year reunion" and relatives, who would not know the difference have passed some on as well. Some veterans continued to serve their country honorably in the Bundeswehr. In the 1950's the German government

recognized the contribution, sacrifices and battle honors that these and other Germans rendered and earned. By 1957 the Bundeswehr had adopted many uniform accouterments similar to the US Army. Of these, one of the most noticeable was the wearing of stacked ribbon bars in an order of precedence. The photo below shows an example bearing a ribbon for the >KRETA< campaign award.



Modern fakes are the ones most meant to deceive – and they are widely available on the market. Some points, which should help discern these reproductions, are listed below.

1. The cufftitle looks too clean and new and not made of the materials described above. Originals will have aged over 50 years and will not be white-white, some actually looking off white.
2. Stiff feeling – the band does not go limp when hung over one's extended finger.
3. The tattered ends of the Russia Braid show a nylon-looking interior material.
4. The band glows brightly under a black light
5. It is made of white felt or white denim-looking material.
6. The cufftitle is wider than the measurements described above.
7. The embroidery is crude and does not meet the specifications above.
8. The letters are connected/strung together by a single thread (either on the obverse or reverse) where the forger has allowed the machine doing the embroidery to run non-stop.
9. The embroidery, as seen from the reverse, looks almost white rather than mostly gold-yellow with white edges.
10. The embroidered title and Acanthus design are visibly bowed top and bottom along the length of the embroidery. A thin linen tissue cloth backs embroidery.
11. The entire cufftitle is backed with linen tissue cloth.
12. The Russia braid is sewn too low on the white cloth band.
13. The ends of the cufftitle, if full length, do not have the vertical stitching.

14. The spiked leaves or the petals of the flower in the Acanthus design are not well defined because they are bunched too closely.
15. The double "S" scrolls that run vertically on the inside edges of the Acanthus design are not "S's" but circles with dots inside.
16. The thread used in the embroidery and the soutache' shine rather than exhibit a dull cotton sheen.

Fake award documents and Soldbuch entries exist as well, although not as frequently seen as the fake cufftitle. One should have some familiarity with award documents in general to help detect the fakes, but the descriptions above should help. As well, a thorough knowledge of the battle history, unit history, and whereabouts, ranks and titles of personalities helps significantly. It all ought to make sense and should be researched before a purchase is made. For example, an award made before institution or rendered to a unit that did not participate would be cause for concern. Likewise, anything to the Kriegsmarine will be exceptionally rare and should be thoroughly researched. Forged Soldbuchs are even more difficult to detect but unfortunately are being done more and more. The same note of knowing one's history as well as gaining some experience recognizing proper entries is applicable here as well.

Pictured below are a series of scans of a commonly found, rather good quality fake. This reproduction cufftitle features some, but not all of the points listed above.





METZ 1944

The Metz 1944 cuffband is easily amongst the most obscure battle honors of the German Wehrmacht in World War II. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the cuffband developed in the last six months of the war and at a point of time where the battle for Metz was overshadowed by more significant battles. Secondly, the number of Wehrmacht members who were eligible for the award was very small. Additionally, from a collecting standpoint, authentic examples are excessively rare and so, seldom come up on the collector network for informed discussion. Lastly, there is a general lack of published history about the events that resulted in its institution as a battle decoration of the Wehrmacht. While author Anthony Kemp published a book in 1981 entitled *The Unknown Battle Metz, 1944* - which was almost unique in its effort to bring to light the fight between the American XX Corps and an odd assortment of German units that opposed one another between September and November 1944 – the work has had little follow up by other historians and only briefly mentions the cuffband. In fact, only Kemp himself has updated his own work in the recent writing published through Heimdal entitled *Metz 1944, One More River to Cross*. These two works largely represent the extent of information readily available to collectors today about the battle. There is scant information that has come to light beyond the official institution order and some veteran accounts. The result is that over twenty years later, Kemp's initial characterization of Metz as an unknown battle remains an appropriate characterization of the Wehrmacht's battle honor, the Metz 1944 cuffband, as well.

THE BATTLE

Part 1: HISTORICAL MILITARY POINTS ABOUT METZ

Metz is a city with a long history of fortification. Deriving its modern name from the Latin word "Mediomatrica ", it was named by the Romans, who first fortified it due to its importance as a military outpost and crossroads for its legions. Metz has been associated with warfare ever since. It is known to have been successfully taken by the Huns in the 6th Century, which was probably the only successful conquest up

until its capture by the Americans in November-December of 1944.

Metz is situated between two rivers, the Moselle and the Sielle. This geographical fact saw it grow quickly in importance as a hub and crossing point for commercial and military traffic. Initially a city in its own right, for more than 1500 years Metz was continuously rebuilt, expanded and improved as a fortified area, so much so that its identity as a city faded and yielded to a formidable reputation as a fortress. Sometimes ahead of developments in warfare and sometimes behind them...but almost always under French or German ownership...the history of Metz's fortification was a reflection of current military thoughts on defense throughout its expansion. Technological advancements such as artillery, high explosives and electronic communications all impacted the nature and structure of Metz's fortifications, gradually expanding them in size and sophistication. Improvements in the mobility and logistics systems went hand in hand toward the ability of armies to sustain the conduct of campaigns. As a result, Metz transformed from the role of fortifying for the sake of its own preservation, to one of fortifying an area in order to deny terrain essential for the passage of armies. At the height of this latter role, around the beginning of WW I, a fully equipped Metz garrison was estimated to properly require and army of 250,000 men to capture it. The Imperial German General Staff considered its possession to be the equivalent of 120,000 men. The French would have certainly tested these theories had not the Armistice rendered such an undertaking unnecessary.

By the early summer 1944, the Wehrmacht had shown little inclination or forethought toward using it on such a grand scale. In fact, after the fall of France in 1940, Metz was stripped of many of its guns and equipment. It was allowed to atrophy in many respects, such as maintenance of communications systems. Metz itself was garrisoned as a "college town" of sorts, having both Heer and Waffen SS schools located within its environs. These facts notwithstanding, Metz was still a formidable maze of forts, observation posts, connecting entrenchments and tunnels that could quickly be obstructed to provide a would-be defender with a robust position. With the Allies' breakout from the Normandy beachhead and the introduction of an Allied army in the south of France that threatened the Saar region of Germany, Metz once again became a focal point.

the Atlantic Wall and that which remained was in need of repair – many pieces were without gun sights for example. In spite of such challenges, extensive written plans of the forts existed and in a few brief weeks, through improvisation and energy, the Germans were able to get much of what remained in to some kind of working order. Eventually, these same plans would greatly assist the Americans in reducing Metz, fort by fort.

Built to withstand the heaviest of siege artillery and positioned on terrain highly unfavorable to armored forces, Metz was, nevertheless a battleground for infantry, as the events of late 1944 were to again show.



Illustration 2. Aerial view of one of Metz's many formidable forts. Note the restrictive terrain that approaches the fort from all sides, making the use of armor difficult. In the end, the Americans had to use close quarters combat and repeated assaults to capture each one (Heimdal Publications).

Part 2: BACKGROUND TO THE BATTLE

For the hard-fought attackers and defenders in the Battle of Metz, it is unfortunate that their stories have remained largely overshadowed by two other great battles that punctuated the beginning and end of the capture of the fortress city. Were it not for Operation Market Garden in September 1944 and the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944, the battle for Metz, from September through November 1944, would certainly have taken on greater notoriety. Therefore, it is important to digress for a moment and arrange the Metz sector into the wider perspective of operations across the Western Front in order to understand why it was accorded less importance.

The extent of the collapse of the German front following the

breakout from the Normandy beachhead in July 1944 caught the Allies by surprise. It was a catastrophic defeat for the Wehrmacht, and masses of troops were killed or captured. The materiel losses were on an even more massive scale. Prior to the invasion of Europe, the post-breakout planning had foreseen a more cohesive German front behind the Normandy peninsula and had envisioned that the Allies would need to pause on the Seine River in the face of such an effort, in order to build up logistics for the advance into Germany. This was not just a purely "supply" calculation of the "troops-to-task" requirements, but an operational calculation that recognized an attack into the heartland of the Reich could not be accomplished solely over the beachhead, but would require the capture of actual ports. Post invasion planning did not anticipate or rapidly adjust for the contingencies that developed. German resistance had successfully denied the Allies capture of sufficient key port facilities. Cherbourg was not lost to the Americans and functioning on their behalf until early August 1944. But Brest, Dieppe, Dunkirk and Antwerp were still in German hands by the end of August 1944. Antwerp in particular was long seen as the key port for sustaining the drive in to Germany.

However, with the overwhelming success of the breakout, the Allies found themselves rushing headlong east toward the frontier of Germany. The pace of events put them about a month ahead of D-Day calculations in terms of time and distance, but not logistics or troop strength. Additionally, the wholesale destruction of the rail network in France by the Allied air forces, that so successfully hampered the Germans' reinforcements during the Normandy campaign, now caused sustainment problems for the Allies as they pushed across France. The result was an over dependence on trucks to haul supplies over lengthening lines of communication (the famed "Red Ball Express"). The Germans however, also severely challenged, were now at least falling back on their own lines of communication and, in a relative sense, were able to see things as improving.

By the end of August 1944 while the OKW and its subordinate commander in the west, Oberbefehlshaber West, Generalfeldmarschall Model hastened to stabilize the front by reforming both Heeresgruppe B - which contained the majority of forces in contact with the Allies - and Heeresgruppe G - which was facing the recent introduction of the Third US Army - the Allies, and the US Third Army in particular, had come to a halt. The combined result was an operational pause across the Western Front. Along all sectors, both sides hurried to gather

the means to undertake the battle for the Reich.

At the beginning of September 1944 the Wehrmacht's command and logistic issues were huge burdens to effective operations. Because of the complete collapse of its forces in Normandy and the lack of preparation to the West Wall, the German high command found themselves short of troops and short of a plan. Aggravating the circumstances, the Führer filled the void with his own strategy. In March 1944, Führer Order Number 11 had defined the duties of fortress commanders. In essence, it required fortress commanders to allow themselves to become surrounded if necessary, hold terrain to the last man, or surrender only on approval of the Führer himself. By 3 September 1944, this order translated in to a strategy of holding everywhere in order to buy time to strengthen the West Wall. As Patton's spearheads had reached Verdun and were pointed directly at the Saar, Metz was designated a Führer fortress. The German command was forced to comply and went about organizing a defense.



Illustration 3. General der Infanterie von Knobelsdorf, commanding general of 1. Armee which was responsible for Metz.

The forces positioned for the defense fell under the German 1. Armee. By 1 September it was the strongest German army on the Western Front – a relative statement, as it was drastically short of troops, artillery, tanks and ammunition. What few

reinforcements could be made available to this front (at this time Germany had about 700,000 soldiers fighting in the west and about 2.5 million in the east) went to the 1. Armee, as the German High Command was convinced (incorrectly) that the Allies' main drive in to Germany would come from Patton in the south. Command of 1. Armee was taken over early in September 1944 by General der Infanterie von Knobelsdorf, replacing General von der Chevallerie, who was sent in to retirement. This change occurred as the Allies were resuming their advance. In the face of the recent American successful Lorraine Campaign, von Knobelsdorf could only draw the conclusion the Patton's Third US Army would continue to drive toward the southwestern frontier of Germany as the Allied main effort. Consequently, he organized his resources to firm up the Moselle River line.

Part 3: THE BATTLE OF METZ 1944

A description of the battle for Metz from the German perspective can be broken down in to three phases that generally correspond to the three months the battle was fought – September 1944 through November 1944 (although some sub-forts did not surrender until early December). It should be noted that the Metz 1944 cuffband was instituted for the defensive success the Germans enjoyed during only the first phase of the battle. The three phases were:

Phase I: 6 –25 September – Repulse of Third US Army

Phase II: 26 September to 2 November – Tactical Stalemate and Reorganization

Phase III: 3- 22 November – Collapse of the Metz Defense



Illustration 4. "The man can fall but the flag cannot". Mural from one of several SS training Kasernes in Metz. All armies use similar methods to motivate and inspire its soldiers during training. For the Wehrmacht defending Metz, such motivation had been ingrained over a decade of organizational pride and professional achievement in war (Heimdal Publications).

Phase I:

By 5 September 1944 Oberbefehlshaber West, Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt, in a report estimated that the equivalent of four and a half German divisions were positioned in the Metz vicinity. These division equivalents spanned the range of the quality Germany had to draw upon this late in the war. They included everything from school and garrison troops, to Waffen SS formations, battle-spent regiments, Volksgrenadier units and Volksturm. Also present were the usual NSDAP organizations, such as Reichsarbeitsdienst units and party structure bureaucrats found throughout the Reich. The bulk of the military forces were arrayed within and to the east of Metz, but units had been positioned in the key western defenses as both a screening force and a first line of defense. Most notable of these was the so-called "Officer Candidate Regiment", whose combat achievements would largely be responsible for the institution of the Metz 1944 cuffband. In all about 25,000 troops were in, around and actively involved in the defensive area of Metz.

On 6 September, American armored cavalry elements of the US XX Corps, making a renewed, broad-front reconnaissance in the direction of the Moselle for Third US Army ran in to troops of the 17. Waffen SS Panzergrenadier Division, Gtz von Berlichingen, northwest of Metz. This division had been heavily attritted during the breakout from the Normandy beachhead and was still in the process of attempting to withdraw to the east side of the River Moselle for refitting. In fact, the bulk of what remained of the division was already east of the river and what the Americans ran in to was its rear security. It has often been stated that the Metz 1944 cuffband came about due to Waffen SS "students" who so tenaciously defended the city. There was an SS signals school in Metz – whose members did in fact fight later in the battle – but this belief probably has its origins as much in the tenacity and skill the rightful Heer claimants to the cuffband - the Officer Candidate Regiment whose prowess was every bit as authentic as any Waffen SS unit - as it does in the fact that it was elements of the Waffen SS from the 17. Waffen SS Panzergrenadier Division, Gtz von Berlichingen with whom the Americans first made contact. Thereafter, many American

units that found themselves confronted with a tenacious opponent, would claim they were up against the SS.



Illustration 5. In the aftermath of a reconnaissance meeting engagement, members of the 111. Panzer Brigade inspect captured M8 armored cars from the US 42nd Cavalry Squadron (Heimdal Publications).

On 18 September, Panzer elements again met US reconnaissance forces in the vicinity of Lunneville. Making contact with German forces that were “thought not to be there” rather surprised the Americans, who quickly concentrated their spread out units. Believing the Germans to be disorganized, several hasty attacks were mounted in the next few days in order to take advantage of that belief and thus, seize a bridgehead across the Moselle River. However, the late summer lull caused by the Allies’ logistics situation had worked to the Germans’ advantage and provided the Wehrmacht time to establish a defense.

During this first phase of the battle, the Americans attempted three attacks to remove Metz as an obstacle to their advance in to the Reich. All three were extraordinarily bloody fights, but two were clearly German victories. The third held only moderate success for the Americans in that it gained a small foothold across the Moselle, but which could not be immediately exploited.

In the first attack the US 5th Infantry Division (part of the US XX Corps and the primary antagonist for the majority of the battle) attempted to seize a bridgehead north of Metz at a town called Dornot. The second attempt came in the middle – a

frontal assault. Both were stiffly resisted by repeated and successful German counterattacks. In both instances, it was the Officer Candidate Regiment that bore the heavy work, exhibiting the well-indoctrinated and proven battle tactic of immediate counterattacks against an enemy who had gained ground. The third attempt by the Americans was made south of Metz and succeeded in the small bridgehead across the Moselle, at Arnaville. This attack found a seam between the III SS Korps and the XLVII Panzer Korps. However, the nature of the terrain, the tenacity of the German defenders, the heavy casualties – all compounded by an already constrained allied logistics effort and half-hearted support for the attack itself by Allied Command – found the Americans barely holding on and unable to decisively exploit the success. However, this limited success would eventually contribute significantly to the capture of Metz.

Phase II:

As September ended, the German command was faced with the choices of abandoning or holding Metz. It was a foregone conclusion that the next large Allied push would be to seize crossings across the Rhein River. But the OKW continued to believe (erroneously) that the main thrust across the river and in to the Reich would come from Patton's Third Army. Local German commanders had clearly determined from the successful repulse of the Dornot bridgehead attempt and stiff resistance made in other locations that they had now caused the Americans' XX Corps to temporarily go over to the defense in the vicinity of Metz – halting the Third US Army, if only temporarily. Naturally, the tenuous bridgehead the Americans had achieved south of Metz was a concern, but based on these beliefs, the determination was made that Metz was to continue to be held. Consequently, the corresponding decision made by General Blaskowitz, Armee Gruppe G, was to direct General von Knobelsdorf to have 1. Armee reinforce the shoulders around Metz against the American advance. This was accomplished by stripping forces from the north to reinforce in the south. Unfortunately, simultaneous with this reorganization came an overall reduction of the forces available for the defense of Metz. The OKW needed forces elsewhere as well.



Illustration 6. Two German officers confer in a village somewhere in the vicinity of Metz. While Patton's Third Army stalled in front of the fortress, other Allied formations continued to push to the east north and south of Patton. German Panzer forces did not show up in great numbers for the Metz battles, however, when they did, they were skillfully employed and frequently decisive to the outcome in the Germans' favor. This picture also illustrates the condition and experience of the German small unit commanders. Both of these officers are clearly veterans of multiple battles. One is in tropical dress and wears the Iron Cross First Class. The Panzer officer's face clearly shows the strain of long combat. It was not infrequent by this time of the war that German units were in ceaseless combat for four to six months without rest or refit (Heimdal Publications).

The most significant part of this reorganization and reduction was the disbandment of the Officer Candidate Regiment. Since the bulk of this ad hoc unit consisted of trained and experienced NCOs and soldiers whose battlefield achievements had earned them admission to the Fahnenjunker der Infanterie Schule in the first place, they were needed to populate combat divisions on other fronts with their experience and leadership abilities. Both Operation Market Garden earlier in September 1944 the secretive mustering of forces for the Ardennes Offensive were the main reasons.

Simultaneous with the Germans' deliberations, occurred what was intended to be a surprise attack made by the US XII Corps (the other corps in Patton's Third Army) to outflank Metz to the distant north. It was successfully detected and countered by General von Manteuffel's 5. Panzer Armee, forcing now the entire Third Army over to the defense. So far, the Germans were showing themselves capable of mastering the circumstances – however adverse and tenuous they were. For von Knobelsdorf and 1. Armee, the extent of that successes to date now brought them a two-week stalemate which in turn bought time to further reorganize the defense of Metz.

During the stalemate phase, American activity in the Metz area of operations continued in the way of small attacks and patrolling. However, the most significant activity was an intensive XX Corps training program to develop and instill techniques, tactics and procedures that would successfully reduce the fortress' defenses. Many were experimented with and tested during patrolling. These would prove to be valuable lessons, for the American command had decided that the only way to take the fortress city was to successfully place a force in its rear – to the east – and reduce the fortress east to west, fort by fort and take the city block by block.



Illustration 7. American Infantry enters one of the Metz forts during the reduction process. The month long lull during much of the month of October was not a period of inactivity for either side. US Infantry units used the time to develop and train on tactics to successfully seize such fortifications. In some cases, the graduation exercise was an actual attack on such a fortification (Heimdal Publications).

Phase III:

United States forces achieved a tactical surprise when they initiated a new offensive on 3 November 1944. While the Germans were fortunate to have directed reinforcements to the exact spot the Americans directed their initial attack – between the 19. Volksgrenadier Division and the 416. Volksgrenadier Division – the defenders were nonetheless steadily reduced. The tactics developed over the previous month paid off for the Americans and the outer defenses gradually fell away. On 14 November a new German commander was appointed, Generalleutnant Heinrich Kittel. Kittel was a defensive expert from the Eastern Front. Capable and seasoned, he nonetheless had been given the impossible to achieve. Accordingly, by 17 November, the XX Corps' relentless attacks found them poised to enter the city of Metz itself. As the defenses diminished to a series of isolated battles at forts that could still hold out, ad hoc battle groups were declared at each location. The troops that comprised these Kampfgruppen were a mixed bag of defenders. General Kittel, isolated by the nature of the combat, set up a headquarters in the Mundra Caserne on the Ile Chambiere, one of the islands on which the city was formed. By 21 November, he was wounded and captured by US soldiers in the basement of a tobacco factory that was being used as an aide station. Asked to surrender his forces, he correctly refused, noting that he had already relinquished command to Oberst von Stüssel, who was fighting elsewhere in the defenses, and thus he, Kittel, had no authority to act in such a capacity. It would take another three weeks to subdue the remaining pockets barricaded in the various forts.



Illustration 8. Kittel's last headquarters. It was in the basement of a nearby building where Kittel was receiving medical care for his recent wounding that US Army forces found him. Having passed command prior to admitting himself for medical attention, Kittel would correctly refuse the American demand

that he surrender Metz and all forces defending the city. The ferocity of battle is evident in the damage to his headquarters (Heimdal Publications).

By the time Metz was declared clear of German resistance, a new threat to the Allied advance had materialized with a surprise winter offensive through the Ardennes.

With the defenders of Metz killed, captured or dispersed to other units and other fronts, and given that the war's end was a mere 5 months away, it is no wonder the Metz 1944 cuffband remains such an obscure award even at the time of its institution.



Illustration 9 and 10. The final surrenders. The strain of the hard combat and surrender are evident on the face of Oberst Vogel as he surrenders Fort Plappeville, 7 December 1944. The NCO and city official to his rear likewise show their anxiety. The American officer's indirect salute seems to indicate a degree of disgust. A few day later (right) after a massive bombing, Fort Jean de Arc capitulated. Accepting the surrender is Brigadier General Hartness (Heimdal Publications).

AUTHORIZATION, ISSUE AND WEAR OF THE CUFFBAND

The Metz 1944 cuffband was authorized by an order dated 28 December 1944. Allied operations in the city of Metz successfully ended shortly before this F hrer announcement. However, only the period from 27 August 1944 to 25 September 1944 qualify it as a combat decoration, as this was the extent of the existence of Kampfgruppe von Siegroth, which bore the brunt of the initial fighting that successfully repulsed Third US Army in the early fall of 1944.

The order implicitly defined the Metz 1944 cufftitle as both an cuffband and an cufftitle – that is, both an award and a traditions insignia – since it was awarded as a combat decoration and subsequently issued as a traditions service award to those who qualified.

As a Combat Award:

Any member of the Wehrmacht authorized to wear it as a combat award had to have been either a member of Kampfgruppe von Siegroth or had to have operated independently within the defensive sector assigned to Kampfgruppe von Siegroth. In both instances, a minimum of seven days in the specific defensive area was required. However, if the individual was wounded or killed in action, regardless of the minimum time served in the defensive area of Kampfgruppe von Siegroth, the cuffband was authorized as a combat decoration.



Illustration 11. Generalmajor von Siegroth, under whose name the cuffband was officially awarded.

The cuffband was made available to all branches of the Wehrmacht, to include officials, as well as to NSDAP members as long as the prerequisites were met. No doubt this unusual step was due in part to the nature and variety of the forces gathered together for the defense of Metz. It is probably as likely that the extension to party members in particular was as much an effort to put an honorable face on the wholesale abandonment of Metz by party members just prior to the battle, as it was that any NSDAP member possibly might actually have qualified for the award. Research to date has not uncovered an award to any other than members of the Heer.

Application for the decoration was made through the company commander by means of a proposal list. The list was to be in two copies and forwarded to the General Inspector for the Army Leadership Schools for Infantry Officer Candidate School VI (VI. Schule f r Fahnenjunker der Infanterie). In the case of party officials who might qualify, it can be assumed that such application would not go to a military company commander, but straight from the appropriate party branch to the General Inspector of Schools. Application for the award was established for a period beginning 31 January 1945 and was to have been extended only to 1 June 1945. All applications ceased for all intents and purposes on 8 May 1945, with the unconditional surrender of Germany. However, as with some combat decorations, it is possible that awards of this cuffband continued for several weeks after the surrender.

As a combat decoration, the number possibly eligible for the award probably did not exceed 4,000 – i.e., the initial strength of the 462. Division - of which only approximately 1,800 were

officer candidates, and another 1,500 NCO candidates. Within a month, all of these personnel were reassigned throughout the Wehrmacht. The cuffband award was primarily meant for the officer candidates. Next of kin were authorized to receive the award on behalf of the deceased and one example of the award and one copy of the award document were to be forwarded.

As a Traditions Award:

The Metz 1944 cufftitle was also designated a traditions award. It was authorized in the same directive/order to all officers, noncommissioned officers, officials, men (in essence all cadre and headquarters personnel) and students of Infantry Officer Candidate School VI, Metz. This authorization was only extended during the period of assignment. Once a member of the staff or cadre was transferred, the cufftitle was to be removed. Upon graduation, students as well were to remove the cufftitle. Presumably, it was turned in to the supply organization within the school for later reissue.

Rarity of the Cuffband:

The Metz 1944 cufftitle must rank as amongst the rarest of combat awards of the Third Reich. Consider a few of the significant factors attributing to this. First, it was instituted with just over 120 days remaining in the war and was thus, only in production and supply for a very short period of this time – and almost certainly in only one form. Second, the units eligible were ad-hoc, in some cases ill-defined, and existed for a period of roughly less than 90 days – in the case of the Officer Candidate Regiment as a battle formation, less than 30 days. Tracking these recipients down and making an award – even a single piece of the several a recipient was authorized – was a difficult proposition by February 1945.

Additionally, School VI was relocated when combat operations forced the school's disbandment. It relocated to the city of Meseritz, which ended up in the Soviet occupation zone/East Germany immediately after the end of the war. The exact date of the relocation was not able to be determined, but even if it took place once Metz was under siege in the early fall of 1944, the school could not have lasted more than six or seven months until the end of the war. It is possible the earliest the school was relocated coincided with the disbanding of the Officer Candidate Regiment during the battle at the end of September 1944. It seems more likely that it was relocated once Metz became untenable in late November 1944. It is reasonable to

think the school was functioning again in Meseritz by January-February 1945.

Considering the late December 1944 order instituting the cuffband, it is also most probable that it was available for issue around February to March 1945. A former member of the Metz school, in an excerpt from a letter dated 9 September 1957 stated that no awards were made before 21 January 1945. However, not enough of the letter was available to research in order to determine the significance of this date, but it may be indicative of when either the school was again functioning in Meseritz, or it could indicate when awarding may have begun.

An officer course was roughly a six-week course, with some newly commissioned officers going on to various specialty schools. Therefore, the number of Meseritz officer classes entitled to the cufftitle, probably numbered only three or four before the end of the war. If one assumes about 1,500 candidates per class and a cadre of a less than two hundred, roughly about 6,000 overall would have been eligible and thus, the number available for issue might have been between 6,000 and 30,000, given that multiple examples of cufftitles/campaign awards were issued for an array of uniforms on which it was authorized to be worn. But, there were probably fewer officer candidates made available in the last three months of the war and the production run this late in the war – regardless of the number ordered - was probably much less 30,000.

Only an extremely small set of individuals of the Waffen SS, NSDAP, Volksturm and battlefield replacements of other Metz defenders - if in fact there was anyone qualified at all from these "eligibles" – could possibly have ever received the award. Thus, based on all of these constraints, facts and assumptions, the overall production run of cuffbands/cufftitles had to have been relatively small. As a guess, under normal conditions, the run might have been only between 5,000-10,000 machine embroidered examples. Given the conditions already mentioned, and its scarcity to collectors today, it seems probable something on the order of 5,000 embroidered examples were ever produced and submitted in to supply channels – fewer ever distributed – and much fewer survived the last sixty years.

There is hardly any photographic evidence to even substantiate that it was produced, issued and worn. However, two pictures in Gordon Williamson's and Thomas McGuirl's book, German

Military Cuffbands, 1784~Present, shows two of the only known photographs substantiating that it in fact was. One, on page 59 shows Generalmajor von Siegroth in a Knights Cross presentation ceremony in March 1945 (von Siegroth was a colonel during the actual battle, so was promoted shortly thereafter). The Ritterkreuzträger is Fahnenjunker Oberfeldwebel Willi Schm ckle and his award was made on 15 March 1945. Schm ckle was assigned to 6. / Fahnenjunker Regiment 1241 at the time of awarding. Generalmajor von Siegroth is the only individual wearing the cuffband in the photo. He would obviously wear it as a campaign award but at the time may have still been in charge of the school. The second picture, on page 60, clearly shows an officer candidate in what also clearly looks like a school training environment. The cufftitle is mounted on his overcoat. The overcoat and the picture setting are evidence that it was issued to students in the winter of 1945 at the relocated Schule VI f r Fahnenjunker der Infanterie.

Fewer than a half dozen authentic examples from collections were able to be studied for this article. Each example observed conformed to the standard presented here. There will be those that will argue out of want that this-or-that variation is authentic – and thus, that many more examples in fact exist. But, to date, no research can substantiate any such variation beyond hypothesis, or deduction...and no strong case can be made for either given the circumstances of the Metz 1944 cufftitle's creation, institution and awarding.

Order of Battle:

There is no substitute for information concerning order of battle for the serious campaign award collector. This has been emphasized in previous cuffband articles. Knowledge of which units fought and who comprised their leadership is invaluable toward establishing authenticity of not only award documents but also of the less substantial stories that often amount to the provenance of an actual award. The nature of the ad-hoc formation of many of the units defending Metz and their continuous reorganization and changing leadership complicate the task for establishing clear command relationships for study of the Metz 1944 cufftitle. It is additionally indicative of how the Germans, forced by manpower shortages and setbacks on all fronts by this point in the war, drew on every resource, no matter how ill-suited to the task. Uncharacteristically, the German defenders were not thorough in keeping battle

logs. Again, this was a function of the conditions under which the Germans threw the defense together. To the extent that records were kept – and now survive – they are far from complete. Nonetheless, some detail has been able to be reconstructed and is provided here.



Illustration 12. Sinnhuber.



Illustration 13. Standartenführer Kemper.

Oberbefehlshaber West

Generalfeldmarschall Model (also in command of Heeresgruppe B) – later, prior to the start of the battle, Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt

Heeresgruppe B

Generalfeldmarschall Model (demoted back after giving the Commander in Chief position to von Rundstedt.

Heeresgruppe G

Generaloberst Blaskowitz

1.Armee

General der Kavallerie von der Chevallerie – later General der Infanterie von Knobelsdorf. (In August 1944, prior to the start of the Metz battle, this army was comprised of no more than 9 infantry battalions, 2 batteries of artillery, 10 tanks and an odd assortment of anti-tank and reconnaissance units, having been badly decimated in the Allied breakout. However, the reinforcements Model had pushed hard for when he was OB West, began to arrive just a couple weeks ahead of the renewed Third US Army attack toward the Moselle River).

LXXXII Armeekorps

General der Artillerie Sinnhuber

XIII SS Panzerkorps (having the "Panzer" designation in name only and no Waffen SS forces assigned to it at this point in time)

Generalleutnant Priess

Echelons below corps changed command relationships several times during the battle. Thus, at various times, the SS Korps commanded Heer units and visa-versa. They are listed here in numerical order.

3. Panzergrenadier Division (elements along the Moselle River by 2 September 1944)

5. Panzergrenadier Division (elements along the Moselle River by 2 September 1944)

17. Waffen SS Panzergrenadier Division , "Götz von

Berlichingen" (refitting in 1. Armee area of operations)

19. Volksgrenadier Division

Oberst Karl Britzenhayer

416. Volksgrenadier Division

Generalleutnant Kurt Pflieger

462. Division (Initially only a garrison headquarters staff responsible for the various schools and replacement units vicinity Metz).

Generalleutnant Walter Krause (designated also as Fortress Metz Commander on 2 September 1944). Initially only a headquarters and staff, it was responsible for the various schools, training and replacement operations as part of Wehrkreis XII in Wiesbaden. Composed initially of about two infantry training battalions and miscellaneous specialists, by 3 September it was able to form the equivalent of three regiments, totaling about 14,000 men. As the battle plan developed, it tended to bare the brunt of the command and control of all forces operating in the immediate Metz defenses. For a period of time after 7 September, it fell under the III SS Panzerkorps .

One regiment was formed by the Officer Candidate Regiment, Military District XII – Oberst von Siegroth

One regiment was formed around the 1010. Sicherheits Regiment – this regiment had retreated from France and was comprised mostly of weak, elderly and convalescents - Oberst Richter

One regiment was formed out of the NCO School of Military District XII – Oberst Wagner

1217. Division

Oberst Anton

Likewise, the echelons below divisions changed command relationships from time to time. These commands were not initially fighting units, but training organizations.

SS Nachrichten Schule, Metz. This unit was joined by two Heer replacement battalions and fought on the east bank of the

Moselle, south of Metz.

Standartenführer Ernst Kemper

SS Nachrichten Bataillon „Berg“

Ersatz und Ausbildungs Bataillon „Voss“ (mostly elderly and infirm)

Fortress Machinegun Battalion

Fortress Infantry Battalion

Reicharbeitsdienst Bataillon

Volksturm



Illustration 14. The Metz 1944 Cuffband (Scott Pritchett collection) on the top and mint example of the cufftitle on the bottom (Courtesy Greg Domain Collection).

DESCRIPTION

The Metz 1944 cuffband is typical in both materials and construction style of a number of different Heer cufftitles. As such, it is very similar to the standard Gro deutschland and Infanterie-Regiment List cufftitles, except in color arrangement and lettering style. Thus, it generally follows the more prevalent style of a thick wool band with embroidered title, bordered top and bottom by silver-grey soutache/Russia Braid. It has a black base cloth background. One source

attributes the color selection to possibly reflect the traditional silver and black colors of the city of Metz. Since all other Heer cuffband awards exhibit a degree of heraldry or symbology in their motif, this seems likely as the reason for these colors being used, as there is little if anything else in the appearance of the Metz 1944 cuffband that illustrates traditions or symbols.



Illustration 15. A close up study of the embroidered numbers. Note the direction of the thread strokes on each number. This does not vary on any of the known originals inspected during the research of this article. (Frank Heukemes Collection).

OBVERSE

The band measures 34mm wide, with top and bottom 3mm wide soutache' running its length. The soutache' should be machine stitched along its length and positioned completely tangent to the edges of the base cloth. The thread used in the machine stitching will be of a silver-white color. The Latin script title "Metz 1944" extend a length of approximately 12mm from lowest left foot of the "M" to the right most tip of the cross arm extension on the last "4" across the center of the length of the cuffband. The letters are embroidered in a silver-white cotton thread. A key aspect of the embroidery of the letters/numbers is that the stitching runs horizontally on vertical stokes and vertically on horizontal strokes. There is usually a visible shade

of color difference between the soutache' color and the letter/number embroidery color, the latter being more white. The ends of a full-length (about 44 cm) cuffband should have a vertical white line of machine stitching about 3-5mm from the ends. This is typical of full-length Heer cufftitles and cuffbands and served to delineate the length of a complete band when cut from a roll or production length of cloth. It may also provide some additional tacking to the ends of the soutache'.

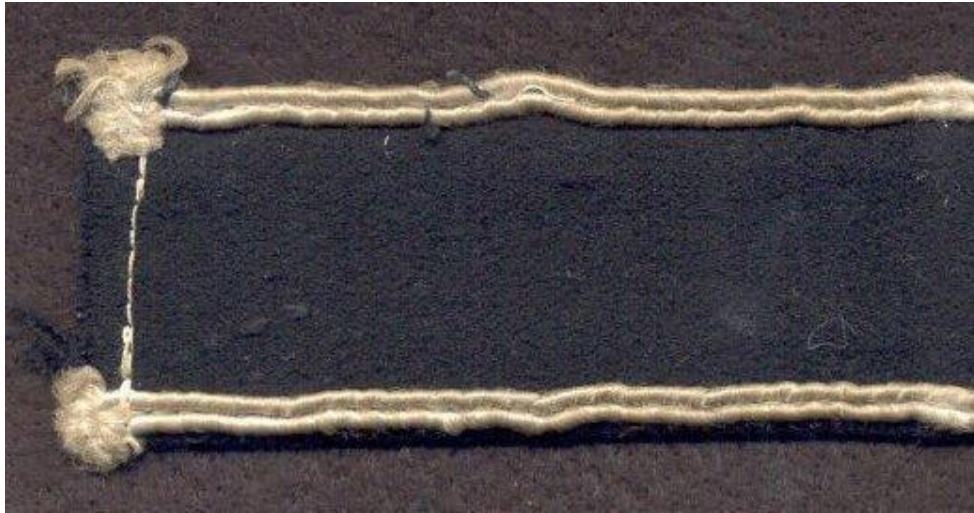


Illustration 16. A close up study of the end of an original Metz 1944 cuffband. It clearly illustrates the vertical stitching that typically finishes the ends of a complete cuffband. It is possible that an original may not have these present as, when trimmed to fit around the sleeve of the variety of uniforms for which it was authorized, the length of the band could be trimmed ahead of application if the circumference of the sleeve was small. Additionally, original bands removed from a uniform cuff post-war are often cut leaving the folded under ends sewn to the sleeve (Scott Pritchett collection).

REVERSE

The backside of the letter embroidery is a mirror image of the front. One of the only differences can be the underside stitching thread from the machine bobbin that secures the top stitching in place. This will frequently show through between the top embroidery thread in a yellowish color. Another difference is that the thread slack that makes the embroidery of the letters able to be done continuously without finishing each letter, stopping the machine, cutting the thread and restarting the next letter will be seen running between the letters/numbers. This single thread indicates where the formation of the letters and numbers started and finished. For

example, on the "4"s the last stroke to finish off the number appears to always be the cross arm. The embroidery typically starts at the back of this part of the number and finishes at the forward point, then jumps to the next number at the back end. This small detail is something that would not vary on a production run made off the same series of embroidery machines, but could vary based on the type machine model used.



Illustration 17. The reverse of the letters/numbers embroidery. It is almost a mirror image of the obverse. Note the connecting threads between the letters and numbers that are indicative of how the embroidering needle skipped from figure to figure. Also note the white basting thread along the bottom turn up edge. This thread may or may not be present on an original cuffband today, depending on its wear and tear over the past sixty years, since the thread is so loosely applied (Scott Pritchett collection).

The silver-white stitching that secures the soutache' to the edges of the cuffband mentioned above, shows through on the reverse in straight machine stitching about 1.5mm in from the edges. The folded over portion of the base cloth typically doubles over on to the back, extending about 1 cm or more, both top and bottom, inward toward the centerline of the reverse. As well, the vertical machine stitching along the ends will usually show if the cufftitle is in full length.

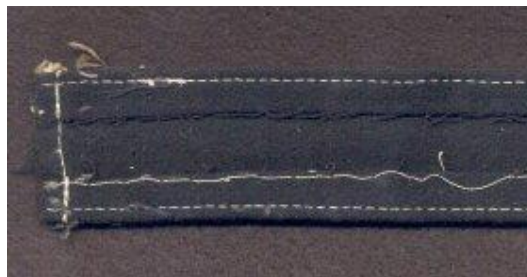




Illustration 18. A close view of the backside embroidery that clearly illustrates how well it is executed on an original band. Note that on this example little of the basting thread sometimes present on the turn up remains. The nature of the red substance/stain on the embroidery is not determined (courtesy Frank Heukemes collection). Below is an additional close up of the reverse of a mint cufftitle. While the folded over portions of the band material are deeper than the previous example, this is an original cuffband. The basting thread is pristine, both top and bottom as would be expected on a mint, unissued example (Courtesy Greg Domain Collection). Lastly is the reverse end of yet a third example which illustrate the vertical finishing stitching found on full length examples (Scott Pritchett Collection).



Illustration 19. A similar close up of the reverse embroidery of the numbers (Frank Heukemes Collection).

AWARD DOCUMENTS

As with all military awards made, an award document, or *Bestizzeugnis*, accompanied The Metz 1944 cuffband. Completed award documents are excessively rare to non-existent. However, two incomplete example styles have been pictured in articles and references. Again, relying on Gordon Williamson's and Thomas McGuirl's work, these two styles are pictured on page 61. The first type is merely the official template, which in fact could have been used in its exact format. However, award documents were most frequently printed professionally in variations. These were directed and approved by a headquarters. That headquarters could be about any level, depending on what level of commander could approve the award, but usually divisions and above. These templates were found in published regulations. Therefore, accompanying all *Verordnungsblatt* (regulations) setting forth official awards was a generic format example of how the award document would be set up and worded.

The guidance set out in the *Heeres Verordnungsblatt* of 1944 was as follows:

Bestitzzeugnis

In Namen des F hrers

wurde dem (Dienstgrad) (prompt for rank)

(Vor und Familienname) (prompt for full name)

(Truppenteil) (prompt for unit)

das Armellband „Metz 1944“ verliehen

(Ort und Datum)

(prompt for location of issuance)

(Dienststempel)

(prompt for official unit seal)

von Siegroth

Generalmajor

The cuffband was to be issued in all cases under von Siegroth's signature, so all printed versions were to reflect his signature block. The format for this document was DIN A 5.

A second known example was a more ornate variation of the regulation template, featuring a German fracture type font throughout. The information was identical to the template, but styled differently. This variation was also published in an article some 15 years ago by Herr Andre H sken. It is shown here again.



Illustration 20. An ornate version of the Metz award document. The regulation specified DIN A 4 size. It can be assumed with some degree of confidence that this version may have been intended as the official printed version as translated from the regulation. The filled in rank, unit, location and presentation date, along with von Siegroth's signature (facsimilie?) are all indicative of an intent to present this document in February 1945. As stated above, February 1945 may have been the earliest date where awards were rendered (Illustration courtesy Toby Rowan).

Likewise, an appropriate entry should have been made in the Soldbuch and Wehrpass of each recipient. It is possible that the Soldbuch for officer candidates attending Schule VI f r Fahnenjunker der Infanterie could also have had an entry reflecting the issue of the school uniform accouterment on page 22. Research in the form of veteran written recollections indicate that such entries were made. However, locating actual entries, like locating examples of the award document, seems unlikely and none turned up by this research effort.

WEAR

Research does show that campaign awards (including campaign shields) could be issued to awardees in multiples, sometimes up to five. This practice would account for the authorized display on different uniforms. By regulation, the Metz 1944 cufftitle was

authorized for wear on the left arm of the Waffenrock (parade dress), the Mantel (overcoat), the service and field service uniforms. Because by regulation the award was authorized by qualified party members, it was also authorized on party organization uniforms. It was positioned 12-15 cm above the lower edge of the uniform cuff or 1 – 1.5 cm above the top edge of the turn back French cuff.

REPRODUCTIONS

The Metz 1944 cuffband has been reproduced for decades. There are probably many more fakes available than originals. However, because originals are so rare, fakes are seldom convincing. Two of the most common errors are constructing the cuffband in the completely wrong materials or in the wrong styles. For example, a cuffband that is constructed in BeVo, flat wire embroidery, or RZM style would be completely wrong. Another common error of the worst fakes is the incorrect formation of the letters and numbers. For example, a common fake that surfaces frequently has open number "4"s versus the correct closed-pointed "4". Some fakes combine many of these errors together. Pictured below are two post-war examples that illustrate these points well.



Illustration 21. Post-war flat wire embroidered reproduction (top) and an example (bottom) of a fake that is machine woven, even in the replication of the Russia braid. Note that besides the construction styles being incorrect, that the lettering and numbering is wrong as well (Courtesy Peter Wiking).



Illustration 22. A variation of the top example from the previous illustration. The main difference between the two is the styling of the letters and numbers. This is another example from a private collection that does not conform at all to the accepted standard. It may in fact be a post war reproduction. It is done in the flatwire embroidery more commonly associated with SS/SA cufftitles. While the owner/collector believes it to be an authentic wartime example, it could be that this variation was made specifically for the SS and NSDAP. However, this notion is

pure speculation. Given that the regulation authorized qualified members of such organizations to receive the award, perhaps such a style was made or prototyped for such an intended purpose. However, as noted earlier, no evidence of such awards actually being made has surfaced. It is most likely this version is yet another post-war fabrication (Courtesy Peter Wiking).



Illustration 23. The reverse of the flatwire embroidered example (Courtesy Peter Wiking).



Illustration 24. Detailed view of the flatwire embroidery of the letters. Note the seven rows of wire that forms the cuffband borders (Courtesy Peter Wiking).



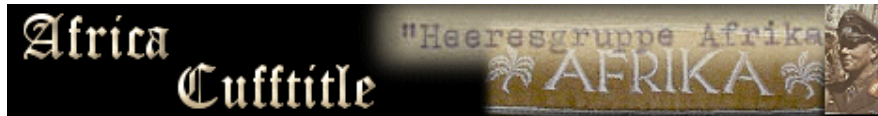
Illustration 25. Detail of the flatwire embroidery of the numbers (Courtesy Peter Wiking).



Illustration 26. Magnified view of the end of the flatwire embroidered cuffband (Courtesy Peter Wiking).



Illustration 27. A BeVo style Metz cuffband believed to be a reproduction. Although well made in general by capturing the BeVo style, it lacks the defined "salt and pepper" reverse of a genuine SS BeVo manufactured cufftitle. It is reminiscent of those reproductions that appeared as early as the 1970s on the collector's market.



Germany's war in North Africa began on 12 February 1941 with the arrival of Rommel's staff (Aufklärungsstab Rommel) in Tripoli, Libya and ended two years later on 13 May 1943 with the final surrender of Heeresgruppe Afrika in Tunisia. The intervening twenty-seven months of combat operations, and the almost 300,000 Wehrmacht soldiers who fought the battles and campaigns, chronicle a unique part of warfare in WWII. The desert campaigns that swept across the expanses of North Africa and see-sawed back and forth on land, at sea and in the air were hard fought between enemies who, despite the intensity of the combat, still managed to display a peculiar chivalry that was unknown on other war fronts – even between the same foes. North Africa was a complex theater.

While the Deutsches Afrika Korps (DAK) and Rommel typically tend to embody the forces that fought in this theater, the war in North Africa was in fact a Wehrmacht effort undertaken by the combined armed services of the Heer (not all of which was part of the Afrika Korps), the Luftwaffe, and the Kriegsmarine. To detail all the battles and campaigns is beyond the scope of article, and would be a work in itself. Numerous books have been written on the this theater are still widely available to the collector-historian. However, some background is needed in order to set the context for appreciating the unique awards and insignia that came to represent the laurels of the Wehrmacht soldier, sailor and airman who fought in this theater, one of which was the AFRIKA cuffband.



CAMPAIGN HISTORY

The armistice with France in 1940 left England alone against the Axis powers. The Germans' options for carrying the war to the British isle were limited to amphibious and air attack. However, with the abandonment of OPERATION SEA LION - the amphibious invasion of the island - and the Luftwaffe's faltering air campaign in the Battle of Britain, Germany began looking for other means to pressure the English and drive them out of the war. The different branches of the Wehrmacht developed varying estimates of the situation and thus, held differing opinions of how this might be done. One of several courses of action widely considered was supporting the Italian army in North Africa with an armored force. But the Italians, out of pride, an unfounded confidence, and an unrealistic assessment of their capabilities, initially shunned any German support. While providing German forces also evinced little enthusiasm by the OKW, by August of 1940 the OKH had decided make its own determination regarding the status of the situation in the theater. General Ritter von Thoma made a reconnaissance and, by October 1940, was reporting back that conditions were not good for Germany to provide even limited support to the Italians. In the mean time, the idea of carrying the war into the Mediterranean was seized upon by the Kriegsmarine. Gro admiral Erich Raeder made a forceful case for reinforcing the Italians, as much to prevent them from controlling the Mediterranean as to push the British out. The level of involvement, which continued to be planned on a small scale – satisfying neither the OKH nor the OKM – became overshadowed by the planning for the invasion of the Soviet Union and mired by the Italian's unannounced invasion of Greece (see the article on the KRETA cufftitle for more on this campaign). Inevitably, and without a coherent, unified strategy, events in the Mediterranean Theater began to draw in German forces. The Luftwaffe, in particular, was sent in December 1940 to occupy bases in Italy in order to attack British shipping and ports, such as the strategically important island of Malta. Simultaneously, on 10 December 1940, the British began a surprise counteroffensive against the beleaguered Italians from Egypt. In just seven days the Italians were completely routed and in rapid retreat west through Libya. By 19 December 1940, the Italians were emphatically seeking German assistance to save the situation. Again, it was the Luftwaffe, in the form of the X Fliegerkorps, who led the German response. By early January 1941, as Tobruk fell to the British-Commonwealth forces, the Germans decided to make a large commitment of troops in order to block the British advancing to Tripolitania and

prevent a complete Italian collapse. By 14 February, the first of Rommel's panzer troops were arriving in Tripoli. However, the British conquered Cyrenaica by 8 February, leaving only a thin line of beaten Italian troops between them and the port of Tripoli. With barely a pause to pass in review before Rommel and the Italian command as they disembarked in Tripoli, the lead elements of the 5. Leichte Division moved east to make contact with the British. The lengthy search for a way to carry the fight to the British finally ended with the first contact between Aufklärungs 3 and 33, which formed "Advance Unit Wechmar", and a troop of the British Dragoon Guards. The British lost in this initial, losing 5 vehicles and one soldier killed. The Germans suffered no casualties, and even managed to capture a few British vehicles.

Most of the next sixteen months of the war in North Africa were characterized by both sides being locked in to a back and forth series of operations across the expanses of Cyrenaica, Libya and Western Egypt. It was warfare fought around lines of communication and battles that surged and ebbed around supplies and combat losses.

There were a number of interesting aspects to the fighting. Throughout the war the Allies were able to read all of the German's traffic through ULTRA - an advantage the Germans were neither aware of nor able to enjoy in reciprocation until late 1941 when German signals personnel were able to intercept and read allied communications. The German advantage only lasted until the summer of 1942 when the Allies were able to destroy this intercept unit. But the Germans' superior ability to mass the various arms of service in combined arms operations often offset or dominated the British's ability to read Rommel's plans. Another point of interest was that whereas Rommel's career, rank and span of command only increased in stature, regardless of the see-saw fortunes of battle, the careers of multiple British commanders ended with each failure to best Rommel. And, although a somewhat insignificant footnote, but perhaps nonetheless interesting to the collector-historian, the Germans tended to name battles after the main terrain feature or city around which the main fight occurred. The British tended to name battles as operations, independent of locations, by using code words. Thus, the German's "Battle of Sollum" in June 1942, was the British's "Operation Battleaxe".

Rommel's early success convinced him that he had caught the British off balance. Consequently, in a series of lightening strokes he drove his combined German and Italian forces east to capture El Agheila, Benghazi and El Mechilli, reversing in just

under two weeks what had taken the British almost two months to achieve. By 12 April 1941 he was attacking Tobruk, an important port of supply for British forces. However, Rommel's lines of communication had become stretched. For over a month he besieged the port, unable to seize it in a series of attacks that sought to find a weakness in its defenses. By mid May, the British, under Wavell counterattacked in Operation Brevity and, later in June, a second attack came with Operation Battleaxe. It was in this latter battle that Rommel forever linked the German 88mm with fame as a direct fire, anti-tank gun.



Exhausted and depleted, neither side was able to continue offensively and, from July 1941 to November 1941, each side hastened to refit and reorganize. It was during this period that the 5. Leichte Division upgraded to a full panzer division, becoming the 21. Panzer Division. As it was to usually turn out, Rommel was ready first. However, with the advantage of ULTRA the British, now under Cunningham (Wavel was relieved after the failures of Operations Brevity and Battleaxe), preempted his attack by launching Operation Crusader on 17/18 November 1941. The Germans came to know this period as the "Winter Battles", and for nearly a month outfought the British forces who repeatedly failed to mass their armor against the

outnumbered panzers. Battles at Sidi Rezegh, Belhamed, El Duda and Fort Capuzzo, as well as continued assaults against Tobruk marked this period of fighting in the North African war. Once again Rommel saw an opportunity to strike the British when they were off balance. This time he collected the Afrikakorps and attacked past the British 8th Army in an attempt to strike a fatal blow to their lines of communication and rear areas. However, rather than the 8th Army withdrawing forces away from the front, Auchinleck - its new commander who had relieved a shaken Ritchie - counterattacked to recover the terrain they had lost to the Germans. Refusing to be outflanked and rolled up, Rommel decided to withdraw to El Agheila but was not aggressively pursued by his adversaries. Unfortunately, as he would demonstrate on several occasions, Rommel left German and Italian forces behind. This time at both Halfaya and Bardia, where they were eventually forced to surrender, in spite of a bravely fought defense.

These disappointing results followed the German-Italian forces in to 1942 marked the beginning of another period where each side tried hurried to resupply and refit forces. Again, Rommel was ready first and this time conducted a successful attack that took the Axis forces, by the end of January 1942, to Gazala, a point roughly half way between the Axis base of operations in Tripoli and the Allies' base in the Nile Delta. But here again Rommel could move no farther, hobbled by supply problems that were aggravated as much by events elsewhere, such as the British retention of Malta and the severe first winter on the Eastern Front, as by events in his own area of operations. It was not until 26 May 1942 that the German-Italian forces were again on the attack. The Axis plan was slow to develop primarily because Rommel, using the Luftwaffe, the 90th Light Division and the Italian Ariete Armored Division, was unable to quickly defeat the Free French forces defending Bir Hacheim in his rear. But he drove the combined German-Italian forces relentlessly and, by late June, was turning the British out of the Gazala Line of defense. Tobruk, ever the thorn in Rommel's side, presented itself again as an objective that must be seized. This time Rommel was finally successful and accepted the surrender of the South African commander on 21 June 1942.

Almost immediately, Rommel issued the order to attack in to Egypt toward the Nile Delta for what he saw as perhaps his best chance to finish the British and Commonwealth forces. This move forced the Luftwaffe to move east with him, taking the British at Malta - the most significant threat to Rommel's supply lines - out of its range. Simultaneously, Luftwaffe forces in

Sicily were reassigned and shifted to support the Germans' thrust in to the Soviet Caucasus. Yet, this moment found Rommel at the height of his achievement: in command of Panzerarmee Afrika and, at 50 years of age, promoted as the youngest Feldmarschall in the Wehrmacht. Relentlessly pushing his troops (the 21. Panzer Division was down to less than 1,000 troops and 23 tanks for example), he defeated a British Commonwealth force much larger than his exhausted Panzerarmee at Mersa Matruh. The only thing remaining in front of Rommel was an as yet unevaluated piece of terrain in a narrow neck of land between the sea and an intractable patch of desert known as the Quatara Depression. This was the El Alamein Line. For the next four months, between July and October 1942, both sides fought around this static position. However, as in the past, the fighting was characterized by the cyclic build up of forces (Rommel received the 164th Light Division, the Ramcke Brigade and gliders to augment his overworked Ju-52 transport force) and another change of command on the Allied side (Auchinleck was replaced by Montgomery).



It was during this period that Rommel's health suffered significantly, so much so that his battle command also suffered at times through hesitation and a lack of his characteristic drive. His illness eventually forced him to return to Germany on 23 September 1942 to convalesce. But Rommel returned on 25 October 1942, two days after Montgomery opened his El Alamein offensive. Morale in Panzerarmee Afrika remained high – particularly with Rommel's return - and the Germans continued to best their adversary for a week, albeit at a high price. The British were grinding the Germans down. With the aide of ULTRA (which in particular was reading the German and

Italian logistic reports), and a significant superiority in numbers of men, artillery and tanks, Montgomery pressed the attack, knowing full well that Rommel's forces would eventually give out before his own. By the night of 2/3 November 1942 the Panzerarmee was on the verge of withdrawing, but stopped when confusing communication signals led Rommel to believe he had been ordered to hold at all costs. The British, reading the same signals, drew the same conclusion and slowed their attack, expecting renewed stiffness in the German's battle line. However, by 4 November Kesselring convinced Rommel that he had read the order incorrectly, and the retreat was on. Three days later the Allies executed Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa and the Germans were now faced with converging attacks. Again, German skill coupled with Montgomery's plodding advance contributed to Rommel fighting a brilliant withdrawal to the eastern Tunisian border. Halting throughout November 1942 at El Agheila, Buerat and Hom, Panzerarmee Afrika was also assisted by the fact that Operation Torch had been executed too far to the west to immediately bring pressure on the Germans facing Montgomery. But retreat was all Rommel could do, as his dwindling forces repeatedly sought defensible terrain.

After finally abandoning Tripoli in January 1943, the Panzerarmee arrived at the Mareth Line early in February 1943. The Germans had won the race to defend Tunisia. Additionally, within two days of the Torch landings, the Germans' 5th Panzer Armee began arriving in Tunis under the command of Generaloberst von Arnim. Feldmarschall Kesselring assumed overall command of the theater, but because of the awkward and complex command structure also became the de facto ground commander of the two armies in Tunisia (with Panzerarmee Afrika now being renamed as the 1st Italian Armee). The final phase of the German's war in North Africa now began. The first combined action between the two armies took place in mid-February at Sidi Bou Zid where the Americans were given a sharp defeat. As compensation for a rapidly deteriorating supply situation, the Germans now at least enjoyed interior lines of communication between the forces fighting east and west against the converging Allies. However, the lack of unity of command within the German forces began to have an impact. At odds with one another, von Arnim's and Rommel's disagreements resulted in delays the Germans could ill afford. The compromise that was eventually worked out gave Rommel command over von Arnim's forces and the German victory at Kasserine Pass. But the delays brought about by the debate over command and strategy allowed the Allies time to coordinate. Subsequent efforts by the Germans, hampered by

supply, disadvantaged by ULTRA and pressured by overwhelming Allied numbers became little more than delay tactics. Rommel was brought out of the collapsing North African war (as were many highly experienced senior officers) and returned to Germany on 9 March 1943. Generaloberst von Arnim assumed overall command and General von Vaerst took over 5th Panzer Armee.

The tenacity of the German soldier prolonged the fight in to May 1943. On 6 May, the Allies began a powerful attack towards Tunis and the German front split open. Bizerte fell to the Americans on 7 May and Tunis a day later to the British. In a poignant irony, the last transmission sent to the OKW from German forces in North Africa was sent by the last commander of the Afrikakorps, General Cramer. By this point in the war, the Afrikakorps was but a small part of the overall German forces engaged - but still its heart and sole nonetheless. This message read: "Ammunition expended. Arms and equipment destroyed. In accordance with orders received the Afrikakorps has fought itself to a condition where it can fight no more. The German Afrikakorps must rise again. Heia Safari." Shortly thereafter, on 13 May 1943, the war in North Africa ended.

AWARD INSTITUTION

The AFRIKA cufftitle was instituted on 15 January 1943 per Allgemeine Heeresmitteilungen No. 60, dated 27 January 1943. As a campaign decoration, it was considered an award and all branches of the Wehrmacht who met the requirements were entitled to receive the award. While campaign awards (Armeeband) and unit and traditions (Armeeband) titles tend to be referred to collectively as cufftitles amongst the collecting community, as a true combat award, "Armeeband" (cuffband) is the proper name for the AFRIKA title. It should be noted that pictures of Waffen SS soldiers wearing the cuffband are almost invariably Wehrmacht members who had transferred from the Heer, Luftwaffe or Kriegsmarine in to the Waffen SS after serving in the North African theater, although sources indicate that a small detachment of the Allgemeine SS were stationed in Tunis.

To be eligible, a member had to have served in North Africa for at least six months. However, if the individual was wounded in action, the six-month time requirement need not apply.



Soldbuch entry and photo from the book belonging to Luftwaffe Oberfeldwebel Paul Beckmann. Beckmann served much of his career with II/Jagdgeschwader 53 "Pikas". On 20.7.1942, during the El Alamein battles, Beckmann suffered multiple bullet wounds forcing him to spend the rest of the war in hospitals recovering. Of interest is that Beckmann had only arrived in North Africa on 17.7.1942. His award of the AFRIKA cuffband on 1.5.1943 is an example of the time requirement for service in theater being waived for wounding. Beckmann served three days!

Individuals who were incapacitated through acquiring one of the many diseases prevalent to men fighting in the harsh desert environment, only had to meet a three-month time requirement. The requirements were modified several times. First, effective 7 July 1943 by authority of Allgemeine Heeresmitteilungen No. 544, individuals who were members of Heeresgruppe Afrika that fought the final phases of the North African campaign were to receive the award if they had served at least four months in theater. The basic criteria were again modified on 1 July 1944 with the issuance of Allgemeine Heeresmitteilungen No. 27. This new criteria made eligible those individuals who had already been awarded the Iron Cross, German Cross in Gold, or who had their name entered in to the Honor Roll of the German Armed Forces. While no direct reference has been found regarding any higher awards also being considered as grounds for automatic bestowal of the AFRIKA cuffband, it would seem to make sense that receiving the Knights Cross would also qualify the recipient. Perhaps the relative rarity of the awarding of the KC with respect to the lesser valor awards made it not worth mentioning or was considered as taken for granted in the crafting of this regulation. The final modification came in Allgemeine Heeresmitteilungen No. 576, dated 21 October 1944 and established that no further awards would be made after 31 October 1944. However, this order allowed exceptions to be made for prisoners of war and in cases, upon written request, on behalf of servicemen missing in action whose remains had been recovered.

Although instituted 15 January 1943, it is unlikely that more than a handful of awards were issued in North Africa before the general surrender on 6 May 1943 and the final capitulation on 13 May. The few short months between institution and capitulation would have been insufficient for the manufacture and distribution to North Africa of the cuffband. This would certainly have been made all the more difficult by the tenuous supply line through the Mediterranean and the challenges faced by the German forces in their final weeks of battle. Earliest known awards show as having been made in May 1943 and these seem to have all been made to Luftwaffe personnel who were probably members of Luftwaffe units stationed in or already evacuated to Italy and Sicily, as the award documents show a facsimile of Fieldmarshall Kesselring's signature, who at the time was the Supreme Commander of the Southern theater. However, in the eighteen months that followed the end of the North African campaign, the approximately 100,000 men who had served in the theater and were located in Europe at the time of the surrender were tracked down by the OKW and, those eligible, received the award. These men were, for the most part, wounded or ill veterans who had by this time been transferred to other units in other theaters. Others were on leave, being unable to return to their units fighting their last battles in Tunisia, or who had earlier been transferred out of North Africa. The awards were usually made under the name of Army Group Africa (Heeresgruppe Afrika). These former members were tracked down all the way through 1944. Below is an example of an officer who arrived in theater as a replacement, served, was wounded, returned to Germany to heal, and was later tracked down and notified of the award of the AFRIKA campaign cuffband.



Wehrpa photo of Leutnant Paul Holm who served in North Africa from 27.1.1943 until March 1943, when he received multiple wounds that sent him back to Germany to convalesce. Holm served with Marschbataillon Afrika 35 and Feld Ersatz Bataillon 33, part of the 15th Panzer Division. The first was a logistics and support unit and the second was a field replacement unit that was responsible for both the transfer and sustainment

training of replacements. That Holms service with in these types units still put him in direct action against the enemy reflects the nature of combat in North Africa.

Orden und Ehrenzeichen			
Art des Ordens etc.	Verleihen am (Datum, Jahr)	Verleihen durch (Verleihung etc.)	Verleihung der Dienststelle
Leibniz-Orden	25.8.44	Hamburg-Wandsbek	
Preuss. Kgl. Orden	20.11.43		
Litauen			
Reichs-Kriegs-Verdienst-Orden			
Offiziers-Kriegs-Verdienst-Orden			
Offiziers-Kriegs-Verdienst-Orden			

Wehrpa entry from page 23 of Holm's book showing the award of the "Afrika band" on "19.1.44". The entry is on the last line. At the time of awarding, Holm was temporarily assigned to a Festungs Stammtruppen on the coast of France, following his convalescence.



Bescheinigung, or certification document, stating that during the combat in Normandy Holm lost all his equipment and private articles also the citation for the "Afrika" Cufftitle and infantry assault badge. The certificate counts as a preliminary certificate and is to be attached to his Soldbuch until replacement citations are demanded, dated 27.8.1944, Kampf Kommandant Amiens.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The AFRIKA cuffband design follows the general pattern of the majority of cuffbands/cufftitles designed and worn by the Heer, and many of those designed and worn by the Luftwaffe, in that it features a title word in machine embroidery on a length of cloth between two strands of Russia braid. There were no style differences for rank, although it can be assumed that officers, who were responsible for their own uniforms and generally were able to provide for private purchase fabrications, were most likely to have examples executed in higher quality materials. In particular, the AFRIKA cuffband features a central title word - "AFRIKA" - embroidered in Roman-style block lettering between to stylized palm trees - with the entire length of the top and

bottom edges of the cuffband bordered in Russia braid. As a cuffband that all branches of the Wehrmacht were entitled to wear - but that the Luftwaffe and Heer were the main recipients of - it makes sense that its general design and construction would follow those developed by these two branches of service. A full length, or unissued cuffband, will measure approximately 45 mm long, but many available to collectors will be shorter, particularly if removed from a uniform. This shortening usually occurs because the individual removing the cuffband did not take the time to cut through the threads that join the ends along the vertical. In some cases, the cuffband was actually sewn in to the sleeve seam, making a neat removal all the more complicated. The width of the cuffband will measure 33 mm, which is standard for many issue cuffbands/cufftitles. However, a collector should not be concerned if the actual width varies slightly, as cloth measurement can involve some 'eyeballing'.

Original examples of the AFRIKA cuffband are moderately scarce on the collector's market. Given that approximately 100,000 veterans of the North African campaign were in service on the continent at institution, that about 125,000 to 150,000 Wehrmacht, Heer and Luftwaffe soldiers were taken POW and that about 3,400 were missing in action, one can conclude that during the roughly eighteen to twenty months of official production, perhaps less than a million were produced to cover an immediate/known demand of about 500,000. Many available to collectors today are in fact unissued pieces, indicating that in any case, the total of the production runs had to have exceeded the requirements. Additionally, manufacturers could not have accurately forecasted the termination of awards in late 1944, so production initially would not have been constrained by this fact.

It should be noted for collectors that the Luftwaffe instituted a similar, but purely Luftwaffe cufftitle for its members that were serving in North Africa. This cufftitle features white Latin lettering on a dark blue backing in either cotton or silver embroidery. It is a unit cufftitle denoting service with a unit performing service in or over the North African theater and, as such, should be considered a piece of insignia. The Luftwaffe AFRIKA cufftitle was authorized in March 1942.



Photo of a pilot, in tropical dress, wearing the Luftwaffe unit/service recognition cufftitle - AFRIKA.

Similarly, the Kriegsmarine seems to have developed its own unofficial version for wear, even though the standard, award issued piece was authorized for this service. Perhaps because the award issue version was a tan color, it affronted the sensibilities of the traditions-bound Kriegsmarine and led some members to obtain these unofficial awards in a color combination that coordinated better with the navy blue uniform. Alternatively, it may have been that these unofficial awards came about ahead of the official piece, as photographic evidence tends to show them in wear in the Mediterranean. Examples followed to same basic design of the standard award issued piece, having the dual palm trees with the AFRIKA text - except in gold cotton thread machine or wire hand embroidery - motif and soutache braid on a navy blue background.



Reproduced photo of a Kriegsmarine officer wearing the unofficial AFRIKA cuffband in machine embroidered gold thread on navy blue.



Close up of a version of the Kriegsmarine unofficial cuffband, AFRIKA reproduced from a publication. Note that while more crudely executed than the official Wehrmacht award piece discussed in this article, it still follows the cuffband motif of the authorized version exactly.

The description that follows is for the standard issue AFRIKA cuffband. Legitimate variations are covered toward the end of the article, but are few indeed.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE OBVERSE



The width is 33mm. The camelhair cloth (Kamelhaar Ausf hrung) is medium tan in color and smooth in appearance and touch. As in most Heer cufftitles, the designers seem to have relied on a degree of symbolism in selecting the materials and motif. From the choice of camel hair, the colors used, the suggestion of the DAK symbol in the palm tree, to the style of lettering selected, the design of the cuffband tells its own story.

The standard issue piece has the Roman lettering executed in a silver-gray, machine embroidered cotton thread. The quality of the machine embroidery is moderately high, but generally not of a superior quality. However, the execution is tight and should show some slight curvature to the relief on the letters. Close observation will generally reveal some jaggedness to the letters since the tightness of the weave tends to pull at the camel hair base cloth. The vertical strokes of the letters are embroidered with stitching that runs horizontal. The horizontal strokes have the embroidery running vertical and the embroidery of the curved stroke of the 'R' will fan from vertical on the ends to horizontal in the middle. A characteristic of the flared ends on all of the letters of an original example, are that

they are embroidered very straight to the horizontal or vertical. Letter measurements at their tallest and widest measurements average closely the dimensions as shown below:

A	16mm tall x 18 mm wide
F	16mm tall x 11 mm wide
R	16mm tall x 11 mm wide
I	16mm tall x 4 mm wide
K	16mm tall x 19 mm wide
A	16mm tall x 18 mm wide

The two palm trees bracketing the title word 'AFRIKA' are executed in the same silver-gray cotton thread. The trees should be mirror images of one another, the left tree - as seen by the viewer - bending over to the right, and the right tree bending to the left. Each tree features five curved palm leaves - two on either side of a central leaf - fanning out from a curved trunk. The overall dimensions of the palm trees measures 18mm tall by 17mm wide at their largest dimensions. The leaves are each serrated along both edges and are embroidered such that the center seams appear hollow.



Close up of the palm tree.

The Russia braid or soutache' that lines the top and bottom edges of the cuffband along the entire length is silver-gray in

color. Original, standard issue cuffbands will invariably have this braid accurately, straight machine sewn and tangent to the edges of the base cloth. The machine stitching is typically very straight but may be biased/off center toward the inside edges of the Russia braid. Russia braid is 3mm wide.

The ends of this cuffband, like most, are an important, but often overlooked area when inspecting for originality. If the collector is fortunate enough to have a full-length example, it will usually show a finishing stitch along the cut edge running horizontally between the lengths of Russia braid. However, the cut ends, regardless of length will usually show some degree of unraveling, with the soutache braid unraveled to show the fluffy, off-white, cotton interior.



Note the last remnants of the vertical machine stitching that denotes the end of the full length cuffband - where it would have been cut from a roll of cloth bands.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE REVERSE



The edges of the base cloth are folded over on to the reverse to a depth of about 7mm to 10 mm. The cut inside edges of this

folded portion will not necessarily be cut completely straight. The cut edges also may or may not have a loose basting stitch to secure the fold over to the reverse. Showing through the fold is the machine stitching from the front that secures the Russia/soutache braid.



Another example cuffband - showing typical wear and tear to the reverse from being worn.

The machine embroidered lettering and palm trees as seen from the reverse of the cuffband are a mirror image of the front. The color of the embroidery shows white rather than silver-gray due to the under stitching of the embroidery. Lengths of thread left over from the embroidery, with free running ends, are commonly seen and are not indications of reproductions.



Close up of the palm tree and lettering in reverse.

AWARD DOCUMENTS

The award of the AFRIKA cuffband was accompanied by an award document, or "Besitzzeugnis". In some cases, such as prisoners of war, this is all that was received. A portion of these latter cases were actually received through Red Cross mail while the recipient was in a POW camp in either the US, Canada or England. Like most award documents, the document for the AFRIKA cuffband was issued in a variety of formats. However, while none are easily available today for collectors, at least four styles will be encountered. These range in style from the plain text message format - the most scarce of the three - written on half sheets of paper, regulation formatted

but completely unit typed, to the more formal, preprinted documents, with or without the image of a palm tree - the former being the most desirable and the latter being the most common version.



Konvolute/grouping of an AFRIKA cuffband and telegram notification to a Gefreiter Josef Durcheck, a former member of Panzergrenadier Regiment 104 of the 21st Panzer Division sent on 14.1.44 to who must have been his next of kin, Herrn Michael Durcheck.

Photo of the recipient and completely typed AFRIKA award document rendered to an Oberleutnant Edmund Schaefer. Schaefer began his career as an enlisted soldier in Schutzen Regiment 115 of the 15th Panzer Division, which later went on to become one of the two panzer divisions to comprise the famed Deutsches Afrika Korps (DAK). The document is typed in 'regulation format'. This practice was not uncommon, especially towards the end of the war or during periods when units were in action and supplies of preprinted documents were not easily obtained. All service's regulations (in this case it would have been the "Heeresmitteilungen") were



published, compiled and annually updated in a record book. These record books of regulations would have been present in most all units. When a new award was entered in to the regulations, a basic format for the wording of an award document was included. It was from these formats that clerks found the correct reference for hand-typing award documents.

The entries made on the document could be either type written or hand written, with typing being the more common method. In all cases, the award document, at a minimum, announced the command in whose name the award was being rendered, the name of the recipient, his rank, the date of authorization/awarding and the signature and title of the authorizing officer. The ranks of the officers that signed (including facsimilie signing) AFRIKA award documents varied from Feldmarschall to Konteradmiral to Hauptmann and included both commanders, acting commanders and staff officers (most usually the adjutant if a staff officer). In most cases, the award document also included some reference as to the location from which the award was given. Since the vast majority of these awards were made after the surrender in North Africa, these locations are typically within Germany or other battlefronts.

It is important for the document collector to acquire reference materials on order of battle. This helps validate some of the information recorded on the document. Many of these references will also have "by name" information on commanders and staffs that assist in verifying the probability a particular officer would be signing the document. For Heer units, Roger James Bender's and Richard D. Laws' 1973 publication, *Uniforms, Organization and History of the AFRIKAKORPS* is, in my opinion, by far the best source for determining what units served in North Africa. Similar resources on the Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine are more problematic, although there are some long out of publication books on either that one can find from time to time. However, information on the Fallschirmjäger units that made up the Ramcke Brigade, which fought in North Africa

from late 1942 until the surrender in 1943 can be found in several books, for example Hitler's Sky Warriors by Christopher Ailsby. They can be listed most here, as they were not numerous. The units included: Bataillon Koch (1st, 2nd Parachute Regt.), Bataillon Huebner (2nd Bataillon, 5th Para Regt.), Bataillon Burckhardt (demonstration battalion), Bataillon Von der Heydt, an artillery battalion formed from the 2nd Bataillon of the 7th Flieger Division artillery regiment) and anti tank, signals, and pioneer companies. Additionally, following the Allied invasion, from November 1942 to December 1942, 1000 replacements per day arrived in North Africa. These included the 1st and 3rd Bataillon , 5th Para Regiment, the 11th Fallschirmjäger Pioneer Battalion, Brandenburgers, and the Barenthin Parachute Regiment.



Oberjäger Klaus Schuberth of Fallschirmjäger Regiment 12 "Sturm Regiment" which was formed from elements of I/Luftlande Sturm regiment which was part of the 4th Fallschirmjäger Division. Date of award of the Afrika band is unknown.

An entry was usually made to document the awarding in both the soldier's Soldbuch and Wehrpa books. The authorized/typical entries, and the books themselves, are discussed in more detail under the "Fakes and Reproductions" section of this article. Pictured below are typical entries.



Soldbuch photo of Oberleutnant Georg Gerhard, who served in Panzergrenadier regiment 104, 21st Panzer Division from 1943 and 1944. He was wounded and evacuated to the continent where, in 1944 he was again assigned as a member of the now reformed 21st Panzer Division while in Rennes, France.



An entry for the Armelband AFRIKA from the award page of Oberleutnant Gerhard Kurtz. Kurtz was a signals officer and served with I/Sturzkampf Geschwader 3 in 1942. He was latter KIA on the Russian Front in 1943 when he and his pilot were shot down.



Unteroffizier Peter Otto was an artilleryman, serving with the 10th Panzer Division's Panzer Artillerie Regiment 90 in Tunisia in 1943. Due to the lack of authorizing stamp it is likely this award of the AFRIKA band was made during prisoner of war captivity. Pictured is the entry from his Soldbuch showing the award was rendered on 1.5.1943. not got this to hand going from memory...hope it is the same one!



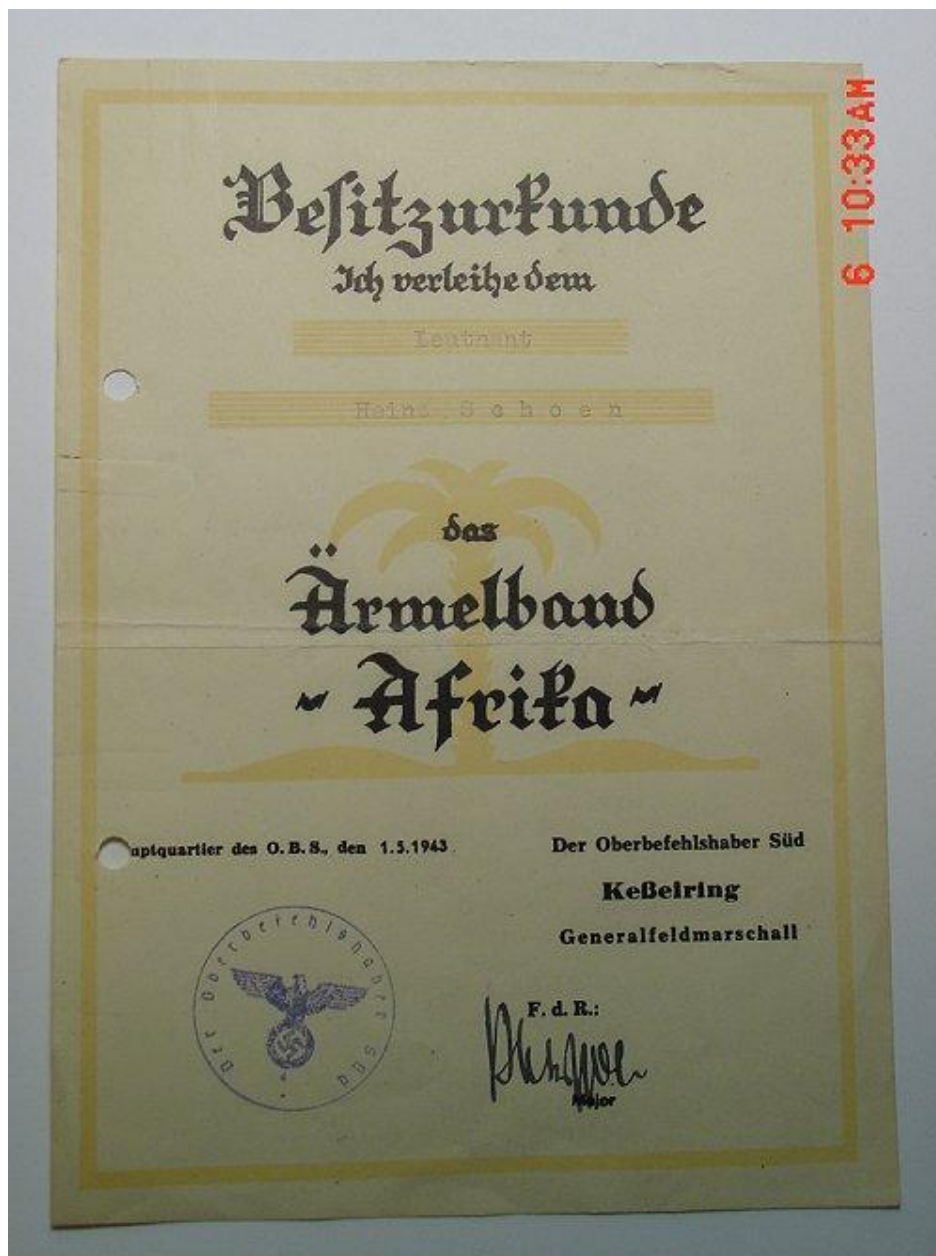
Entry for the Afrika band made in the Soldbuch of a Heer soldier who served in the 8th Panzer Regiment, 15th Panzer Division.

Below I have described and/or pictured the most commonly seen documents for each service. These were kindly provided

by Forum members and are not examples from previous publications.

Luftwaffe formal documents were DIN A5 (150mm x 210mm) size. Described from outside to inside and top to bottom - as pictured below - this version had a border in a pink-tan color. At the top, in an old German font was the word "Besitzurkunde". This is one of the few, if only military award documents I am aware of that used this word - most others being either "Besitzzeugnis" or "Verleihungs-Urkunde". Underneath, in the same font, were the words "Ich verleihe dem", meaning "I present (or award) to...". The next two lines were provided for typing or hand writing in the recipient's rank and name. These provisions were denoted by six thin horizontal lines in the same pink-tan color that together formed a highlighted bar in which the typing or printing was to be entered. The upper set, which recorded the recipient's rank, were shorter than the lower set that contained the name. It should be noted that the majority of combat award documents will have the letters of the last name double-spaced if typed. However, the absence of such is not necessarily an indication of a fake. In the center of the document were three words, again in the old German font, with one word per line: "das", "Brennband", "Afrika", the quotation marks around the word Afrika being stylized and appearing, as best as can be described, as small flags, or banners set between two vertical poles. It should be noted that these did not follow German grammatical protocol that called for the lead set of quotes to be at the bottom of the word and the trail set at the top. These three worded lines were superimposed over a palm tree centered between a two mounds (or low mountains) motif in the same pink-tan color as the other features. Underneath this portion were the preprinted provisions for where and when the award was issued (the date usually being typed in), positioned to the left, and the authorizing official's title, name and rank. As this was a Luftwaffe award, printed on these documents one finds "Der Oberbefehlshaber Süd - Kesselring - Generalfeldmarschall" preprinted on the award form. At the time, Kesselring was the commander in chief of the southern front. Lastly, underneath these and at the bottom were to the left, the typical official stamp - in this case that for "Der oberbefehlshaber Süd" surrounding the hoheitsadler or national symbol. To the right at the bottom was the printed letters "F.d.R." meaning "Für die Richtigkeit", or in other words, someone was signing for the awarding officer, usually a junior subordinate. This was followed by the signature of the staff officer acting on behalf of the Oberbefehlshaber. Underneath was the signer's rank. Two versions exist in this regard, one

with a preprinted rank and another with typed in rank. The typical signature made on these documents is that of a Major Pfeffer.



Curtis Hall Collection

There also appears to have been a Fallschirmjäger version. It was executed in a relatively plain format. At the top, in old German text (and using upper and lower case letters) was the word "Besitzurkunde" (possession/presentation document). The use of this word is fairly unusual, as most documents carry the title 'Besitzzeugnis' (possession/presentation evidence) instead. Directly underneath is the phrase "Ich verleihe dem" (I

award) followed by two blank lines - the top line for entering the recipient's rank and name, the bottom - and shorter line, for entering the recipient's unit. The words 'Armelband "Afrika"' came next under, with the quote marks around the word AFRIKA being executed on the top ends of the word rather than in accordance with German grammar that typical has the lead quote at the bottom. Toward the lower left corner are the words: "Hauptquartier des O.K.S" in a plain font, followed by a blank underline for typing in the date. The Germans used several styles to record dates. For example, the 25th of May 1943 could be written as 25. Mai 1943 or 25.5.43. Other variations are possible based on how diligent or attentive the clerk typist was. Continuing to the right toward the opposite side of the document and on line with the previous left entry were several lines of printing. The top line was "Der "Oberbefehlshaber S d", followed underneath by "Kesselring" and under this his rank: "Generalfeldmarschall", with room for signature in between. Lastly, on the right, under Kesselring's printed signature block is the entry: "F.d.R:". The official signing for Kesselring signed with his last name under this entry. Again, the person signing many of these was this Major Pfeffer. Under his signature is printed his grade "Major" in a very small sized font. On occasion, one will find these documents signed by others with the appropriate printed (not typed) rank of the individual, for example "Leutnant I.a."

Heer formal documents were also in DIN A5 size, but were different in presentation. Besides the different format and wording, the Heer used a fill-in-the-blank reminder under each line requiring an entry to be manually put in. Starting at the top was the more commonly seen word "BESITZZEUGNIS" printed in Roman lettering, using double spaces between the letters and all caps. Next, under this were the words "DER OBERBEFEHLSHABER", again in all caps using the same font but of a smaller size. This was followed on the next line by the word "DER" and space for typing in the unit from which the recipient was assigned at the time he became authorized the award. This is usually typed in with "Heeresgruppe "AFRIKA"". Underneath was the line, in all caps "VERLEIHT DEM" and a blank drawn line for typing in the recipient's rank. In a small size font, and enclosed parenthesis, under the blank drawn line was a reminder to the clerk preparing the document that this was the place to record the rank: the word "(Dienstgrad)". Following this, and underneath was a blank line for typing the name, that is: "(Vor und Zuname)". The next line was a similar space for recording the unit of the recipient "(Truppenteil)". Then came the title of the award: "DAS ARMELBAND >>AFRIKA<<". Some Heer examples will have typed in above this the words "mit

Wirkung vom" (in effect from) and a blank space for recording the date and location of presentation manually, with the typical reminder of this style document: "(Ort Und Datum)". The locations are usually a city somewhere on the European continent/Germany proper. However, on occasion - and as was very common with many other kinds of award documents - the abbreviation O.U., for Ortsunterkunft (meaning somewhat literally 'place of the quarters' - but figuratively 'at the field headquarters, wherever that was at the time'). Toward the bottom of the document was another blank line provided for the authorizing official's signature: "(Unterschrift)", rank and duty title: "(Dienstgrad und Dienststellung)" - for service grade/rank and service position. Last, in the lower left was a dotted in circle that guided the preparer in placing the unit stamp. Centered in the circle was the clerk's reminder: "(Stempel)". Pictured below is an example of an award made to an Oberfeldwebel Hektor of the Feldgendarmarie.



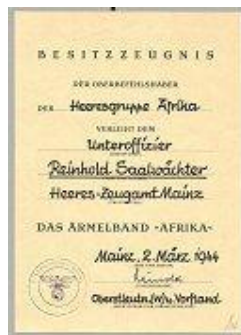
AFRIKA award document to Oberfeldwebel Edmund Hector. The preprinted words DER OBERBEFEHLSHABER have been crossed out in favor of typing in "Kommandeur des Abwicklungstabes 6 Armee und Heeresgruppe Afrika". The Abwicklungstabes were special staffs that were designed to tidy up the paperwork/bureaucracy after significant battle loss. At least two existed, one for Afrika and another for Stalingrad. There may have been a third when Army Group Center was destroyed. These organizations reconciled casualty lists, sent out award documents to the next of kin or survivors still in hospital. They were necessary organizations since the parent organizations no longer existed.



Photo of Eduard Hektor in North Africa wearing his tropical motorcyclist coat and shown with his motorcycle.



Portrait photo of Hektor in tropical uniform. Perhaps taken on leave or before deployment.



A hand printed variation award document. This example is to an Unteroffizier Saalwächter who was in the Feldgendarmarie and served in both North Africa and Italy. However, at the time of the award he was attached to the Heeres Zeugamt (garrison headquarters) in Mainz.

Kriegsmarine formal documents were also in DIN A5 size in an unadorned format. This service had its own style as well. At the top was the usual announcement line of "BESITZZEUGNIS." capitalized, with a period at the end of the word and the entire word underlined. The next line reads "Auf Grund der Ermächtigung (upper and lower case), meaning: "based on authority" or "because of the authority". Next under this is the line: "Des Oberbefehlshabers der Kriegsmarine" in upper and lower case, followed by "VERLEIHE ich dem" in all lower case except the word 'Verleihe' is capitalized. Next a dotted line was provided for typing in the rank of the recipient, and underneath was another dotted line for filling in the recipient's name - which

was usually double spaced when typed. In a larger text under this is the phrase 'Das Armelband "Afrika"' which was completely underlined with two lines. The quotes around the word Afrika used the correct German grammatical construct by being alternative to one another, bottom and top/front and back of the word. The next entry was positioned to the lower left and consisted of another dotted line whose entry was noted by the preprinted words "Ort und Datum". The usual area for stamping was defined below this by marking the center of the stamp with the word "(Dienstsiegel)" in parenthesis, translated directly to mean service seal (or signet). Lastly, to the lower right was a space for entering the awarding official's signature and title. The only preprinted entry in this block of the award document was found very close to the bottom right under a dotted line and reflected "Dienstgrad und Dienststellung" (service rank and service position) and "Des Verleihungsberechtigtem" meaning the individual with award granting authority, or the person having the authority to justify the award. The signature could be stamped or hand written and was the top entry in this block area of the Kriegsmarine award document. All entries were typed on up to three lines below the signature - typically: rank, title and command - and above the dotted line, with the last typed entry (usually the command from where the award was issued) being on the dotted line.



Soldbuch and photo of Kriegsmarine Fahnrich (Ingenieur) Albert Eggenhoffer. Page 25 shows the entry that Eggenhoffer "arrived Africa 8.1.1942" and "left Africa 17.5.1943". He was awarded the AFRIKA cuffband on 1.4.1944 at a time when he was assigned to a Schnellbootsflotilla in the Adriatic. The photo is interesting in that he wears not only the AFRIKA band, but also 3 E-Boat badges! Additionally, the photo is dated in winter, yet he is wearing his Kriegsmarine tropical tunic. Eggenhoffer either had a sense of humor or no sense at all!

WEAR AND REGULATIONS



A group of soldiers being spoken to by their officer. Note the soldier in the foreground wears the AFRIKA cuffband on his continental style uniform..

As an award, the recipient received a single piece, usually cut from a roll of manufactured cuffbands. An award document accompanied the award and with this, the recipient was authorized by regulations to go to any authorized outlet source and obtain additional items. Any member was authorized to obtain privately purchased awards, although by the time in the war that the AFRIKA cuffband was being issued, significant controls were in place to economize on war materials. Officers, who were responsible for their own uniforms, and therefore received a maintenance allowance, were the most frequent users of privately purchased items throughout the war.

The AFRIKA cuffband was correctly worn on the lower left sleeve of the bearer, although photographic evidence attests to the fact that on some occasions this regulation was ignored. Perhaps the most notable example of this practice was General von Manteuffel, who elected to wear his award on his right sleeve along with his Grossdeutschland cufftitle.



A rare wartime photo of a Kriegsmarine member wearing the authorized AFRIKA cuffband award



The Gefreiter on the right in this photo wears the AFRIKA cuffband on his continental combat tunic. He is not wearing any combat badges, but close inspection shows evidence of at least one set of badge loops.

Correctly positioned as a single award, it was positioned 7-8 cm above the lower edge of the sleeve on the parade waffenrock and 15 cm above the cuff edge of the service, and / combat uniforms. If the uniform had turn back cuffs/French cuffs, such as in the case of the greatcoat or Luftwaffe and Heer officers' uniforms, the cuffband was correctly positioned 1 cm above the top edge of the turn back. Much is made in collectors' circles of the significance between machine stitched and hand sewn attachment of insignia. It remains difficult to make a case that machine sewing versus hand sewing, or visa-versa, is an indication of an originally war time applied cufftitle. Both methods were used and both are, therefore, correct. Likewise, it is difficult to state categorically that any particular style of uniform always had cufftitles attached in this or that way. Photographic evidence and examples of uniforms and cufftitles in private collections adequately attest to these points. However, hand sewing of sleevebands was the more common method and made more sense given the practices of the times. Ultimately, with the availability of period original threads to the collector, it is often near impossible to tell if the sleeveband is true to the uniform without obvious wear and tear indications. One should

never attempt to remove an original sleeveband from a uniform to look for differences in the wear of the nap, as there is a 50% chance that you are likely to have made a mistake and altered a piece of history.

If the AFRIKA cuffband was worn in conjunction with other sleevebands, the oldest award had precedence and therefore was worn highest on the sleeve. Notice from the von Manteuffel photos below, the general at least wore his AFRIKA cuffband correctly placed above his Gro deutschland cufftitle. The additional photo is an example of multiple awards being worn correctly - in this case by a Luftwaffe member.



Portrait photo of a well decorated Luftwaffe Fallschirmjäger NCO who was awarded both the KRETA and AFRIKA cuffbands. He has these positioned correctly with the oldest title at the top. Note both the Luftwaffe Paratrooper and the Luftwaffe Ground Combat Badges in wear.



Original wartime presentation photo with inscription of Generalleutnant von Manteuffel while he was commanding Panzergrenadier Division Gro deutschland. Of interest is the fact that he elected to wear his AFRIKA band on his right sleeve - the location the Heer reserved for unit cufftitles. Generalmajor von Manteuffel served in Africa from the beginning of 1943, assuming command of 'Division von Broich' in February, which was redesignated 'Division von Manteuffel' at that time. The division fought in until surrender on 9 May 1943, but von Manteuffel was only in command through March 1943. .



General der Panzerruppe Hasso von Manteuffel in an orders group with members of the 116th Panzer Division, while he was commanding the 5th Panzerarmee. This moment in time would have been captured during preparation for Wacht am Rhein - what became to be for the Allies the Battle of the Bulge in Allied terminology. Von Manteuffel wears a leather overcoat with the AFRIKA cuffband being worn on the incorrect arm. The Gro deutschland cufftitle is also worn - on the correct arm - and in this case, above the AFRIKA band, attesting to the stature von Manteuffel accorded his service in command of this elite unit. Although no longer commanding Panzergrenadier Division Gro deutschland at the time of this photo, it is known that the GD unit cufftitle was permanently awarded within the division on rare and exceptional occasions for superior service. In fact it was von Manteuffel who began this practice as

division
commander. The
Division even created
divisional award
documents to support
the permanent
awarding of the
cufftitle, which
otherwise had to be
removed if the soldier
was reassigned. It is
likely that von
Manteuffel received
such an honor upon his
departure as the GD's
commanding
general. However, as
worn by von Manteuffel,
this combination is
otherwise entirely
incorrect. He is also
known to have
continued to wear the
unique GD cipher on his
shoulder straps after
taking command of 5th
Panzerarmee.



A rare picture in two respects. First, it shows the AFRIKA band worn on the Heer parade Waffenrock. By this time in the war, Waffenrocks were no longer authorized to for manufacture, although they could still be worn. Secondly, the soldier is a member of the Heer's elite panzergrenadier division, the Gro Deutschland. As this division did not fight in North Africa, he is obviously a late volunteer for this Russian Front workhorse division.

FAKES AND REPRODUCTIONS

As with most Third Reich awards, the AFRIKA cuffband was already in reproduction shortly after the end of the war. Consequently, the earliest reproductions almost certainly used some, or all, original wartime materials. These will only be detected by very close inspection and are often altogether impossible to tell. However, the vast majority of forgeries are not well executed and are relatively easy to detect. Documenting all variations of reproductions and fakes is a challenge, as they are numerous. Described herein are the common reproductions collectors will run up against. There exists forgeries that are quite close the original as can be seen below. Pictured below is one of the best fakes available today. The example shown was obtained from the Far East. The side-by-side comparison of the original (top) against the fake (bottom) should be informative.

Reproduction

Side by side comparison of a fake



(top) and original (bottom)
obverse/front

Original



e inspection and are often altogether impossible to tell. However, the vast majority of forgeries are not well executed an

Reproduction



Side by side comparison of a fake
(top) and original (bottom) reverse.
Click on images to enlarge

Original



Reproduction



Side by side comparison of a fake
(top) and original (bottom) ends.
Click on images to enlarge

Original



Modern fakes tend to use polyester materials throughout, including the embroidery thread, soutache braid, stitching and even the base cloth. Reproductions exist where the base material is felt or a linen type cloth, semi-rough burlap cloth, or even a webbed polyester material – almost looking like rip-stop nylon. The often referenced 'burn test' is a good means to make a determination on the composition of the materials used. While not always a 100% guaranteed method to determine originality on cloth items in general, in the case of the AFRIKA cuffband, it can be stated with a high degree of certainty that the standard issue band was not made of materials that melt when heat is applied. Threads from the composition of an original, issued style AFRIKA band should burn to ash.



A poor quality fake. Many such reproductions can be marketed as private purchase or POW made. While either are possible in this particular case, I believe this to be a reproduction. As noted, original AFRIKA cuffbands are only scarce rather than rare and a collector has a good chance of obtaining a regulation, issue piece so, does not have to guess on pieces such as this one. Below is the reverse of the poor quality copy.



In terms of actual construction, fakes usually exhibit some easily detected mistakes. First, the embroidered lettering is usually the wrong size - with letters that are most often too short - and will be embroidered too thin in width. Letters are almost never formed correctly either, with the 'R' and 'K' being especially bad. The poor formation might be in the construction of the letter, for example the stem of the 'K' may angle wrong because it is too short, or the curvature of the 'R' may bulge too much. In other variations, the letter endings do not exhibit the correct flair or serif. In some cases the letters are completely blocked with no serif at all to the ends.

The palm trees are also seldom up to standard. On the low-end fakes, the most common mistake is often the actual embroidery of the palm leaf veins in a different color thread (such as black). On originals the palm centers are not embroidered at all, but rather created by leaving the center of the leaves slightly hollow. The high quality fakes will capture this detail quite convincingly, but on close inspection, may be seen to leave too little space open. However, collectors do not need to be overly concerned with these versions, as the execution of the remainder of these cuffbands will let down the entire piece.

The Russia braid on reproductions is often set in from the edge slightly, rather than being tangent to it as an original should show. Fake Russia braid is usually slightly thinner than original braid. The easiest detail to pick up on is that fake Russia braid/soutache is often the wrong color, being a darker, charcoal gray rather than a silver-gray. A dead give away is that the braid will be a different color – usually a lot darker - than that of the title embroidery. On originals, the color of the soutache is visually identical to that of the embroidery. Some fakes are hand embroidered, using bullion, instead of machine embroidered in cotton. Those out of Pakistan especially rely on this technique. Hand embroidery will usually incorporate a linen-looking backing that extends and covers across the entire embroidery. In some fakes, this backing covers the entire reverse of the cuffband. This backing exists in white and black and the effect is to make the cuffband extremely stiff, almost

cardboard like. While it cannot say categorically that original, hand embroidered, bullion versions did not exist (they probably did in very small numbers), the issued style described and pictured in this article is by far the most numerous and is in fact, the standard issue piece collectors should seek. As these cuffbands are only scarce (as opposed to being rare), they are obtainable by collectors with a little patience, care and time. Consequently, a collector need not risk adding a fake bullion version to their collection, or leaving it up to varied opinions, by guessing at a variation example. Of course, any variant coming with thorough provenance would be a different story. Recently there appears to have been discovered, and now sold on the market by several dealers, several batches of unissued pieces. Those observed display obvious and heavy storage wear and tear, looking dirty and stained, but nonetheless, are original pieces. Thorough study, patience and an objective approach to collecting should get the average collector past the fakes and able to locate and own an original.

Award documents are also reproduced and faked. Virtually every award document is these days. However, one should be especially on guard when considering high-end awards and those to elite units such as Fallschirmjäger, Feldherrnhalle, Gro Deutschland, Waffen SS, and panzer soldiers. Forgers for some reason seem prone to select more highly decorated soldiers when forging all manner of high and low award documents, so be wary of Knights Cross holders being awarded EK Is or various campaign decorations. Fortunately for the collector, these are easier to research than and award to the average soldier. In the case of the AFRIKA cuffband award document, it is recommended that the buyer look very closely at Fallschirmjäger documents, because of their desirability, and anything making direct reference to the Duetsches Afrika Korps, as Heer documents were issued to soldiers as members of the Panzerarmee and not the DAK. Forgeries are usually done on original blank award forms, to make the challenge more daunting. Consequently, the collector should arm him/herself with a variety of resources that enable them to check the validity of the entries as a primary means to determine originality. Does the date of the award make sense? Was the authorizing official in command of that headquarters at the time of issue, etc. etc.? Some data will be difficult to verify. Thus another area to check is the type set being used (there are differences between wartime and more modern typewriters in the size and formation of letters that one can learn to discern by looking at enough original and fake documents), the type of pen or pencil (the Germans did not have ball point pens, for

example, and quite often signed in colored pencil), and the spelling of typed words and abbreviations (for example, many times what looks like a capital "J" as used as "Jnf.", is the typical abbreviation of 'infantry'). Of course, German military typewriters had a runic key for making SS. But any AFRIKA band to an SS soldier should be considered exquisitely rare and thus, viewed with a very critical eye. For all intents and purposes, the Waffen and Allgemeine SS did not participate in North Africa, as already mentioned. Some sources make note of an SS police organization having served in Tunis. This is probably true. However, the vast majority of these rare awards were made to soldiers that escaped the surrender and subsequently transferred to the SS after their return.

Wehrpa and Soldbuch entries are also faked. These forgeries are seldom complete fabrications from blank documents, however. Most often, the existing information is doctored to include an award that was never received (thus increasing the attractiveness and price of the document) and/or a unit that was never served in. This latter case is the most difficult for the forger to be convincing at, as service entries were pretty much made in chronological order. Any later entries would require significant erasing or would be noticeably out of sequence. The Soldbuch was the soldier's paybook and, as such, remained with him and carried on his person. These typically exhibit more wear and tear than the Wehrpa, which was a unit record that stayed with the unit's (usually the company) administration and transferred with the soldier. In North Africa, the Soldbuch would not fit in the tropical shirt or the trouser pocket without having to be somehow damaged, so it was carried in the tunic pocket. There was a special rate of pay for soldiers serving in North Africa, so one should expect to see such an entry made on the page showing payment scales in a genuine tropical Soldbuch. The standard entry was "Inhaber hat am (date) afrikanischen Boden betreten" (holder arrived in Africa on such and such date). The details of assignment were found on page 4, however soldiers were given orders to remove this page when capture was imminent. This would be something a forger might overlook if the book purported to be that of a former POW. Nor did the Soldbuch used in Africa carry a photograph of the owner (a practice begun in 1943) as continental books did later in the war when a more positive means of identification became necessary. The Luftwaffe paybook was almost identical, except it was covered in a Luftwaffe blue cover and not the tan color used by the Heer. It also carried a Luftwaffe eagle on the cover and also had a page pasted on the inside cover that gave guidance in the form of "Ten Commandments for the Conduct of War by German Soldiers". The Kriegsmarine Soldbuch was

similar to the Heer version. Collectively, these distinguishing characteristics may help the collector determine whether or not a particular Soldbuch is or is not fabricated.

The Wehrpa is also faked and, being much less scarce than the Soldbuch, probably more commonly seen being tampered with. The information contained inside was largely different and completed the soldier's total official service record. For the collector interested in the award of the AFRIKA cuffband, the books contain information on awards on page 23, units served with beginning on page 12, campaigns and battles beginning on page 32 (often a type-written page(s) pasted in place of or in addition to hand-written entries) and any special training beginning on page 20. All branches of service used identical books, the only difference usually being a stamp on the front cover designating the branch of service. Any of these locations of information are targets for the forger. A gain, one should look closely at the chronology, how the entries were made (typed, stamped, hand, pen or pencil, etc.), what units were served in and how the awards square with the service in battles and campaigns.



In the summer of 1959, Ritterkreuzträger and former SS-Unterscharführer Alfred Riekstins of the SS Waffen F silier Bataillon 19, was killed by Soviet forces in a forest vicinity of Frauenburg, Latvia. Frauenburg had been one of the Red Army's main points of attack during the battles in late 1944 and early 1945 to seize the German Kurland Bridgehead. Riekstens' continued resistance, fourteen years after the unconditional surrender of Germany's armed forces to the allies is symbolic both of the intensity of the German's defensive Courland campaign and the determination of her soldiers who fought it. Heeresgruppe Kurland's successful stand for eight months in the face of huge and repeated onslaughts by the Red Army left it unbeaten right up to the surrender on 8 May 1945. The KURLAND cuffband - the last award of its kind to be instituted, produced and awarded - distinguished the soldiers who fought this epic and difficult campaign that has been overshadowed in history by other battles of the time such as Market Garden and the Battle of the Bulge.

THE CAMPAIGN

In September 1944, Finland secured a separate peace with Russia, which resulted in an operational dilemma for the Germans that cast the fate of the soldiers of Heeresgruppe Kurland. Despite the agreement with Russia, Finland and Germany coordinated a period of time - until 15 September - to withdraw German forces from Finland. In fact, neither could have afforded not to do so. On the one hand, Germany would never have agreed to surrender her forces in Finland to the Soviets and, were Finland not to agree to the unobstructed withdrawal, the Germans certainly would have fought the Finns to extricate herself. In any case, scarcely enough time was available under the provisions of the agreement and the extent of the withdrawal became a heated debate in the German high command. Germany still required Baltic ports, not only to evacuate her forces from Finland, but also to secure continued shipments of war-critical ore from Sweden. Baltic ports would also keep the Soviet fleet in check and bottled up in Russian waters. The German's strategic position so far north also kept the Soviets from forward basing the Red Air Force to strike deep

in to Germany. Finally, they allowed the Wehrmacht units fighting on the northern most portions of the eastern front to continue being supplied and having the means to evacuate its wounded and the mounting numbers of ethnic German refugees.

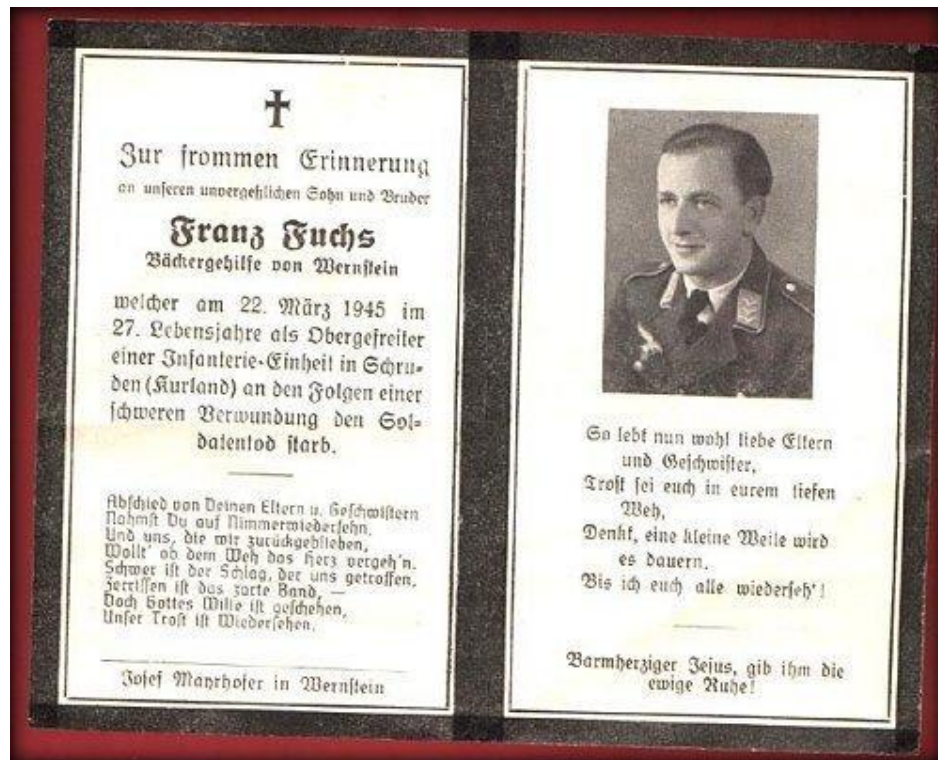
The establishment of the Kurland Bridgehead and the reasons the Germans decided to fight to hold on to it had their roots as far back as the beginning of the year 1944.

Additionally, to understand the relative positions of opposing forces in the Courland bridgehead by mid-September 1944, the campaigns fought earlier that year need to be generally understood. Two events that had the most impact were first, the successful Soviet offensive in January and February 1944 - which broke the 900 day siege of Leningrad allowing the Red Army to concentrate its Fronts in the north - and second, the successful offensive against Heeresgruppe Mitte later that summer (Operation Bagration) - that defeated the German center. In this latter campaign the northern wing of the Soviet offensive used the forces that had concentrated following the Red Army's relief of Leningrad. It was in the final stages of this summer offensive, specifically during July 1944, that the Red Army decisively defeated the 3. Panzer Armee, pushing it west and creating a huge gap between it and the 18. Armee to its north. As Heeresgruppe Mitte collapsed, the Soviets, recognizing their success and the opportunity at hand, pressed their attack west. Heeresgruppe Nord (later Heeresgruppe Kurland) on the left flank of Heeresgruppe Mitte, was forced to either abandon the northern portions of the Eastern Front and move southwest in to Prussia or withdraw north in to the Courland area. Because of reasons already noted concerning the importance of this northern area, Generaloberst Schröder withdrew and concentrated his army group into the Courland area and, by August, found his army group more and more isolated by the advancing Russians.

The campaign is generally broken in to in six battles. These battles were defined by major Soviet offensives, however the overall fighting from 15 September 1944 to 8 May 1945 seldom if ever paused. The dates of these battles are generally designated as follows:

- First Battle 26 Oct-7 Nov 1944
- Second Battle 20 Nov-30 Nov 1944
- Third Battle 22 Dec- 31 Dec 1944
- Fourth Battle 24 Jan-5 Feb 1945
- Fifth Battle 20 Feb-15 Mar 1945
- Sixth Battle 18 Mar-31 Mar 1945

The fighting in Courland from the German perspective was defensive. However, several large attacks were made to regain contact with forces in East Prussia and to push the main line of resistance east from Libau - the key and critical port for the bridgehead. All branches of the Wehrmacht: the Heer, the Waffen SS, the Kriegsmarine and the Luftwaffe took part in the campaign, making the award of the KURLAND band unique for such a decoration. There was little variance in either the method of attack, the locations of focal points for each attack, or the conduct and outcome of the six battles. The objective of the Soviets was to split the two subordinate armies of Heeresgruppe Kurland and drive to the coast in order to capture the port of Libau, thus cutting off the German support base and setting up the conditions for defeating the army group in detail. The Red Army's attacks were somewhat unimaginative, opening in almost all cases with the customary heavy artillery barrage. However, early in the campaign, during the opening of the second attack the Soviets initially postponed the artillery barrage and mounted a massive aerial attack of sustained duration. In this, as in all previous and subsequent attacks, the Germans were able to hold on through the opening phases and follow up with counterattacks that ground the Soviets to a halt. The typical focal points occurred frequently in the center (east and southeast) of the bridgehead. The main efforts most often occurred either between Autz and Doblen, in the vicinity of the city of Frauenburg or at the seam between the two armies of the army group. All German units experienced harsh conditions and tough fighting, but several divisions repeatedly bore the brunt of attacks. The 4., 12. and 14. Panzer Divisionen and the 205. and 215. Infanterie Divisionen in particular saw some of the heaviest fighting. As on all parts of the Eastern Front, the Panzer Divisionen were the fire brigades that sealed off the Red Army penetrations while the Infanterie Divisionen held the shoulders and attempted to stem the tide. In this campaign the pilots and crews of the Luftwaffe's Jagdgeschwader 54 remained constantly engaged, suffering casualties along side their ground comrades of the Heer and Waffen SS.



Death notice of Luftwaffe man Franz Fuchs who died in defense of the Courland bridgehead on 22 March 1945, the sixth and last battle of Courland

Likewise, the ships of the Kriegsmarine played invaluable roles with fire support, supply and evacuation. The German's skill at defeating the Soviet attacks was usually complimented by the high rate of casualties they inflicted on the Russians. The fifth offensive by the Russians was to have delivered the final blow, but as in the previous four attempts, it failed to split the army group. The Soviets were never fully able to regenerate the fury of earlier attacks after this. The Germans, if never able to match the numbers of men and material the Soviets could bring to bear, clearly broke their spirit by the middle of March 1945. Hereafter, while attacks continued, the final offensive was not executed with the intensity of earlier attacks. On 18 March, Grand Admiral Dönitz presented his plans at the Wolfschanze for the withdrawal of the army group with the assistance of the Kriegsmarine. He estimated it would take 9 days to withdraw. However, the plan - Operation Laura - was denied, sealing the fate of Heeresgruppe Kurland.

Courland appears to have been an obsession with the Soviets. Although the Red Army could and did replace spent

units with complete fresh formations, the Red Army had battered itself well beyond the point of diminishing returns considering the overall course the war was taking. Everywhere they were routing the Germans, yet Courland stood. The fighting became very limited in scale after the sixth battle. Perhaps the imminent fall of Berlin had a direct impact on their resolve to press the fight further. On 3 May, the Soviets lit up the Courland pocket with every available gun and the Germans steeled themselves for yet one more assault, but to no effect. The Soviet display merely marked their exhilaration over the fall of Berlin. Heeresgruppe Kurland thus began to prepare for its seventh battle of Courland by thinning its forces in less threatening sectors and reinforcing those areas likely to have to take on the brunt of the next assault. It was a battle that would never be fought. Unable to defeat the Germans, and with the complete collapse of Germany imminent, the Soviets had withdrawn the bulk of their offensive army. Heeresgruppe Kurland issued its final orders on the night of 7/8 May 1945, informing units that a ceasefire would ensue beginning at 1400 on 8 May. The fighting in Kurland officially ended 8 May 1945 and roughly 270,000 members of the German Wehrmacht marched east in to Soviet captivity.

The northern armies of Heeresgruppe Kurland, 16. and 18. Armeen, remained undefeated right up until 8 May 1945, with sporadic fighting continuing for the next couple weeks. Their eight-month resistance allowed for the evacuation of 2.5 million eastern Germans and the evacuation of numerous German units used to defend the heart of Germany. The efforts of these tough Wehrmacht soldiers also saved an estimated 3.5 million German soldiers from certain and needless captivity at the hands of the Soviets. As it was, Heeresgruppe Kurland's own reward for the determined stand it made was in fact the same fate from which it saved millions of others. With the exception of a portion of the battered divisions that had been withdrawn over the course of the campaign or were able to get out of the bridgehead in the final days, the Wehrmacht soldiers of Heeresgruppe Kurland marched east in to Soviet captivity early in May 1945. Save for the likes of SS-Unterscharfuhrer Riekstins who fought on for another fourteen years, and those few lucky enough to survive years of harsh captivity at the hands of the Communists, many were never heard of again.



KURLAND CUFFBAND

The KURLAND cuffband was the last such award approved, designed and issued by the Wehrmacht. It was designed and instituted at the request of Generaloberst von Vietinghoff who commanded Heeresgruppe Kurland at that time. Examples of the band itself are scarce. Authentic award documentation is very rare. Photographs of the cuffband in wear are yet more difficult to find. Unpublished photos were even more difficult to locate.

Awarding and Criteria

The criteria to qualify for the award were simple. A service member had to have participated in three engagements or sustain a wound. There was also a time period of three months of service required for those soldiers not directly engaged in combat.

As noted earlier, the KURLAND band is also virtually the only cuffband that broad numbers of Wehrmacht soldiers from across the service branches were qualified to receive. Modern collectors of Heer, Luftwaffe, Waffen SS and Kriegsmarine all would have interest in this award. There are several recognized versions of the cuffband, which can pose a challenge for collectors. Only one version is easily recognized as authentic. In writing this article, I sought out many collectors for confirmed examples of authentic variations and had significant difficulty.

Cuffband Types

Authentic KURLAND cuffband styles can be grouped in to two categories: those manufactured within the bridgehead and those manufactured outside the bridgehead (in Germany mainly). Technically, there was only one official version. This would be the full-length style produced and issued in Germany. Many of the scarce contemporary photos showing

the cuffband in wear, tend to show what looks to be the full-length version made in Germany. Many of these photos are of Wehrmacht members that were probably either evacuated from the pocket individually for various reasons (wounds, reassignments, leaves, etc) reassigned as individuals or reassigned with their units to other battlefields or areas. Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe personnel would have had the best opportunities for getting to Germany as individuals.

To collectors however, the locally made style tends to be recognized as the "official" cuffband and is most often found in original form on the collector market today. This style came about when, after the 12 March 1945 order directing its establishment, Heeresgruppe Kurland took it upon itself to locally manufacture the award. It is certain that the reason for this decision was the prevailing conditions of isolation of the army group coupled with the pride and morale impacts of being able to reward the soldiers who knew they would be required to fight on in spite of their predicament. The main manufacturing source was apparently located in a weaving mill in the city of Kuldiga, Latvia. While a concern existed for the shortages of material to weave the cuffbands, the fact that the locally manufactured version is short may have also been a decision based on a September 1944 OKW directive stating that to conserve materials, all cuffbands and cufftitles would henceforth be made 22 cm long (versus an heretofore standard length of about 35-40cm). Sources contain conflicting information as to when it actually began to be issued. One such source states after the third battle - which would have taken place in November- December 1944. Other sources state March 1945. Taken at face value, neither would necessarily be wrong, as March 1945 was in fact after the third battle. But, with the official institution being 12 March 1945, it would seem unusual that it could have been issued as early as January or February 1945. No information has surfaced which documents the date of local manufacture. Research indicates that there are two possibilities for when the cuffband began to be awarded and issued: (1) word and description of its institution preceded its official institution in March 1945 - which is entirely possible based the administrative process and the fact that the published order is really only the administrative benchmark - and thus local production and issuance could have begun earlier than March 1945 or (2) those who were able to fly or ship out of the bridgehead after November-December 1944, received their official cuffbands around/after March 1945. Two pictures in Williamson's and McGuirls's book on cuffbands of Majors Toni M Iler and Sepp Brandner, both Knights Cross winners, give more clues. Both are shown in portrait shots with their

oakleaves and sporting the KURLAND band. Mller's may be a printed, full-length version and Brandner's may be the machine woven style (length unknown). Mller was awarded his oakleaves on 14.2.45 and Brandner on 26.4.45. Additionally, Brandner received the CCC in Silver on 11.4.45, but is pictured still wearing the Bronze CCC. It is likely both men exited the pocket at different times to receive these awards, but the photos had to be taken after the issuance of the cuffband, as both are photographed wearing one...indicating that Mller's photo occurred a couple months after his oakleaves were awarded and on another separate trip out of the pocket. And, since Brandner did not even receive the Knights Cross until 17.3.45 (interestingly a week after the KURLAND band was instituted), it seems probable that these portrait photos were made late March '45 to early April '45, indicating that cuffbands were available at this time - certainly outside the bridgehead, but most likely inside as well. Brander is not known to have left the pocket again, and in fact refused to, surrendering with his men to the Soviets on 9 May 1945. Additionally, many of the entries in soldiers' Soldbuch and Wehrpa books, as well as on award documents, commonly show the date of 20 April 1945 as a date of awarding. No dates earlier April 1945 were found, so the preponderance of evidence supports awarding on or after the 12 March 1945 institution date. This would leave about a sixty day period in its life span - and helps explain its all around rarity. Please see the documents section below for additional information regarding awarding.

Regardless of the location of manufacture or the particular style, all KURLAND bands have the same basic design motif. The word KURLAND appears on a sliver-white background cloth in bold, black, linotype lettering, centered between - on the left - the coat of arms of the Hochmeister (Grand Master) of the Teutonic Knights, and - on the right - the city coat of arms of the city of Mitau, a major historical city in the Courland area of Latvia. The cuffband is lined top and bottom with black border.



Detailed Description of the Locally Manufactured Version:

There are probably a number of authentic, locally manufactured KURLAND cuffbands, as the varieties on the collector market are numerous. So numerous in fact that it is sometimes difficult to state authenticity based on any "standard". But, one that turns up relatively frequent on the collector's market, and thus can be said to probably be the most 'official' of the locally manufactured styles is the one pictured above. As this version is the most widely accepted and perhaps the most available to the collector, it is describe in detail and referred to as the "short style". Other types will be covered in less detail later.



Two short style bands locally manufactured. Note the different lengths.

This short style KURLAND cuffband is machine woven, meaning that the design motif is woven in to the cloth as the band is made, rather than embroidered after the cloth is woven. The base cloth is frequently described as a silver-white. It in fact does yield visually a somewhat silver tint, but this is as much due to the shade of off-white thread used in the weave as it is to the fact that this white thread is woven as a facing color with black thread as a pattern color in order to produce the title design. The weave of the cloth on close inspection produces a very even pattern in a standard overlapping/basket style weave. The length of the Kuldiga/locally manufactured type is around 23 cm. Some bands are found with about .5 - 1 cm of this length on each end folded back under. Some have it fully exposed, but the intent was to fold it under. The band's width ranges from about 3.7 to 4 cm.



Detail of the cuffband letters showing the black threads running consistently horizontal.

All of the central motif of the design is woven in to the facing white thread of the cloth with a heavy black thread. This black thread runs only horizontal on an original and can be clearly seen with a close look, whether looking at the obverse or reverse. The letters are 16 mm in height and vary between 11mm and 13 mm in width. The U (10mm narrowest, 11 mm at the widest portion of the letter) and the L (7 mm at the narrowest portion and 11mm at its widest dimension) do not conform to the other letters in width. Typically, the strokes of the letters R, L, A, and D do not join/connect at all points

The shields are (left - The shield of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights) 25mm x 25mm and (right- the coat of arms of the city of Mitau) 24mm x 26 mm on the typical locally manufactured version. As in most Heer cuffbands, symbolism played a role in the design of the KURLAND band as well. Germany's history with the Courland region dated back over 700 years. The design of the KURLAND band was perhaps unique in the extent that its designers attempted to integrate this regional association. Other cuffbands, such as the AFRIKA and >KRETA< bands employed a similar design template, but the symbols that flank the title were not determined on history.

The left shield (pictured below), the coat of arms of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights is an interesting choice. Founded as the Teutonic Order in twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Knights were one of the three Christian military orders - the others being the Hospitallars and the Templars. The black cross, added to the traditional white shield of medical orders, distinguished the Knights' order as a military-based organization. Initially associated with medical care during the crusades, and specifically battlefield medical care of German knights, the Teutonic Knights' became a fighting force whose power and influence ebbed and flowed over the next centuries. Constantly in search of a home since the crusades, the order resided from Jerusalem to Venice and eventually became most firmly established in the Baltic area of Europe during the Reformation. The nations of Poland and Lithuania, traditional enemies of the order, defeated it at Tannenberg in the fifteenth century, resulting in most of what was then known as Prussia, being ceded to Poland and the order all but ceasing to exist. Under National Socialist Germany, the memory of the Teutonic Knights was used on propaganda to evoke an emotional connection for Germans of a Germanic warriors constantly embattled against the Slavic states of Eastern Europe, befitting of the more modern struggle for the Courland bridgehead against the Soviets.



The right hand shield, the coat of arms of the city of Mitau - modern day Jelgava - was located about 30 km from Riga and was situated on the Drixa River. The city of Mitau was founded by the Teutonic Knights in the later thirteenth century. As already noted, Riga itself featured prominently with Heeresgruppe Kurland. Under the rule of the Teutonic Knights, Jews were never permitted to live within the city of Mitau. Later, in the sixteenth century when Mitau was under control of the Poles, Jewish merchants were allowed to conduct business within the city, but were once again expelled by the seventeenth century when the area was taken over by the Cossacks. Thus, Mitau/Riga evokes a symbol of German dominion and ownership of the region as well as a degree of National Socialist pride.



The level of standardization of the two shields from cuffband to cuffband that collectors will encounter in this machine woven version - which are relatively complex designs on a cuffband - is such that the two pictures below accurately illustrate the main characteristics and detail.

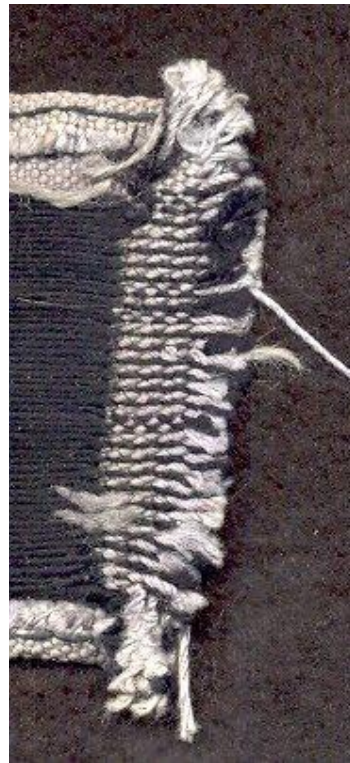
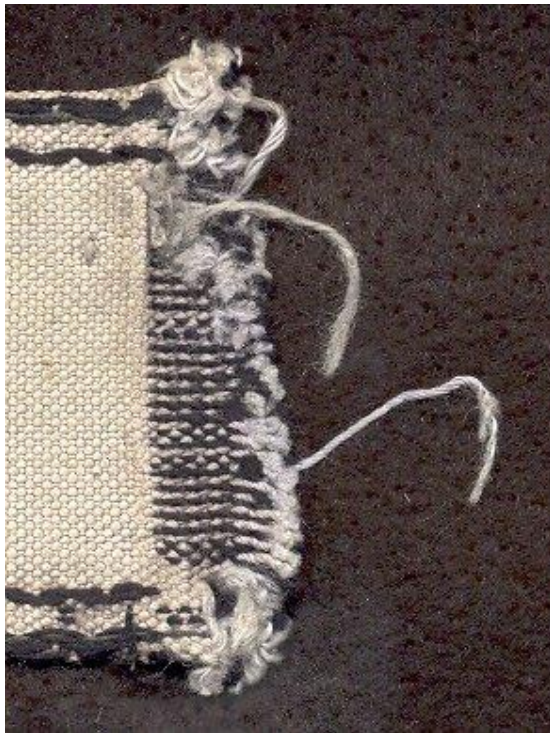


The cuffband border on the locally manufactured version is not woven in to the cuffband, as is the rest of the design, but embroidered (machined) on the background cloth. Between the embroidered lines are black thread knots or dots. They are generally formed by two strokes of the thread - sometimes tightly together, sometimes distinct apart. Typically, about eighteen each of these dots are visible both on the top and the bottom border. They will not usually line up vertically/symmetrically between those in the top border and those in the bottom





Four reverse photos of the KURLAND band showing the negative image, the top and bottom folds, the horizontal run of the black threads, frayed ends with salt and pepper weave to them, and the crispness of the detail of the shields



Detail of the front and back of the band ends, illustrating the salt and pepper weave of the ends. On the reverse the locking row of weaving can be discerned

The reverse of the KURLAND band is the visual negative of the obverse. While the horizontal black threads used in the weaving will frequently look disheveled, the reverse image of the letters and the two shields are actually crisper than the obverse images. Above and below the letters are long lengths of black thread that generally anchor at the inside edges of the shield. The ends of the cuffband are always frayed and exhibit a distinct salt and pepper or a checkerboard weave pattern on just the portion which folds under - about a centimeter's worth - a key detail on an authentic band of this type. The ends, and thus the folds, are locked in place by the weaving process in a manner that looks as if the weave was doubled back on itself for a row or two. These sections were meant to be folded under and sewn to the uniform sleeve. The horizontal folds along the top and bottom edges - typically .5 cm worth - are likewise frayed but will not exhibit the salt and pepper weave present on the ends. They will, however show the reverse of the embroidered border lines, but NOT the dots. The outer most line of the double lined border will be observed on the outside of the reverse fold. One must lift up the fold to see the inner row or embroidery. Neither will look particularly clean, continuous and straight. The folds are held in place by the embroidery of the respective outer most horizontal top and bottom bands rows. Lifting up the horizontal folds will reveal the reverse of the embroidered dots as well. Loose threads on the reverse, but especially to the ends, corners and folds - both black and white - are not uncommon and should not be taken as signs of a reproduction.

Brief Description of the German Made, Full Length Style



Obverse and reverse of a full-length, machine embroidered cuffband that may be an example of the official award. This example was a vet acquisition from a POW camp in France. Many soldiers in units who qualified for the award were, as stated earlier, transferred out of the pocket to fight on other fronts before the surrender



Obverse and reverse of another full-length style that is another possibility for being the officially awarded German manufactured piece. The photo shows the reverse folds turned back under. Also note the embroidery backing. The piece was acquired in 1989 in Germany

No current literature used in research for this article illustrates a full-length cuffband and also clearly and unequivocally states that it the version manufactured in Germany prior to the war's end and intended to be the standard issue award. Both of the examples pictured are full-length versions that, if not the intended issue award, might have been something very close to it. Again, the wartime life span of the KURLAND cuffband could not have realistically been much more than 60 days. Certainly the leadership in Germany could not have known the war would end on 8 May, and would have generally proceeded with the manufacture of the band in a normal fashion. As in all German awards, care would have been taken to produce a quality piece, even at this late stage. The top examples are well made and exhibit many manufacturing characteristics of wartime cuffbands/cufftitles in general. A machine-embroidered style band would also most likely have been the product that was approved, and both of these are. One might expect to find black Russia braid as a border, since many cuffbands and cufftitles in the Wehrmacht (Waffen SS excepted) used this

material. However, given the result of the style band made in Kuldiga, one must question if a complete deviation from past practices was not the intent and thus, the bottom style, with the checkered border was in fact the intended award piece. The border on this example may be symbolic of an unbroken chain, much like the troops of Heersegruppe Kurland or it could just be a stylized representation of soutache. Not knowing which came first, or if the design of the cuffband truly originated from within the bridgehead (it is reported to have been designed by soldiers within the Courland pocket) or from award designers in Germany (who would have been more likely to stick with "specifications") and approximated by Heeresgruppe Kurland, the lower example more closely agrees with the Kuldiga produced short style and points to the notion that it could be the issue style. The top example is probably the award piece and the different border on the short style, locally manufactured version is a stylized representation of Russia braid/soutache or what appealed to the Kuldiga weavers at the time.

WEAR OF THE KURLAND BAND



This young Gefreiter properly wears the KURLAND band, which looks to be a full-length version. The absence of the breast eagle, cap eagle, collar litzen, and shoulder straps on his M43 uniform suggests the soldier had the photo taken sometime after the war. His band looks non-standard and the title design somewhat simplified. It may be hand embroidered.

As noted earlier, photographs of the band in wear are extremely rare. With only a short life span this can be understood. The cuffband was properly worn on the left sleeve as a campaign

decoration and could also be worn with either a unit cufftitle, as in the case of the Waffen SS, or another campaign award, in which case the older award took precedence and would properly be placed above the KURLAND band. The picture below shows Luftwaffe Knight's Cross winner Kempken, who has properly sewn on his two campaign awards, with the KURLAND band above the AFRIKA band.



Courtesy/reproduced from Ritterkreuztraeger der Luftwaffe, by Oestermeir

Correctly positioned, the band would be placed about 15-17 cm or 5.5-6 inches above the bottom edge of the sleeve. This would find the cuffband always above the top edge of a turn back,

French cuff by about 1-2 cm or .5 inches on uniforms of this style. Bands sewn on the French cuff of officer uniforms are not proper and in my opinion usually indicate ignorance on the part of the person who sewed it on post war. The two photos below show the band in wear. The picture on the left shows Knights Cross winner Oberfeldwebel Max Jensen of I/G.R. 502/ 290. Infanterie Division wearing what looks like the locally manufactured, short version described above in detail. It may even be pinned on judging from how loosely it is applied to his sleeve. The photograph on the right is of Oberleutnant Bernt von Bock and would seem to be an example of a full-length band in wear.



Courtesy/reproduced from Ritterkreuztraeger
der Luftwaffe, by Oestermeir

Jensen won the decoration on 29.4.45 as a platoon leader and Feldwebel. The 290. I.D. was a very capable unit that fought in

France and spearheaded the invasion of Russia. Trapped at Demyansk, it fought with both Army Group Center and Army Group North. The 290. I.D. arrived in the Courland Pocket in October 1944 and remained there fighting until the end of the war.



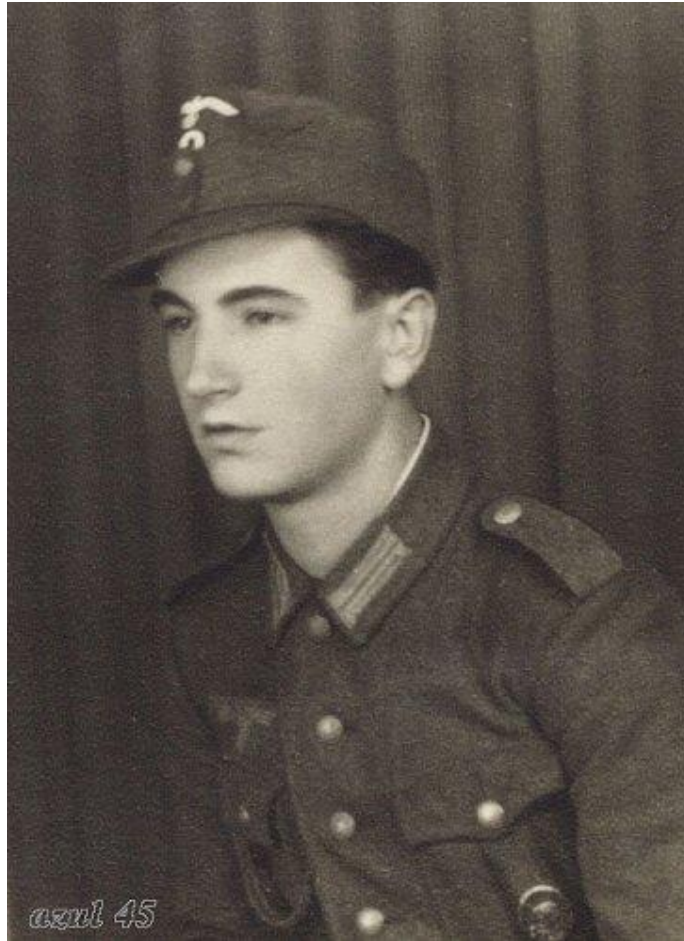
Previously published photo credited to
AMilitaria Magazine.

Again, Gordon Williamson's and McGuirls' excellent book on cuffbands shows a photograph of Kriegsmarine sailor on page 65 wearing what looks most like a full-length embroidered style of the KURLAND band and a Luftwaffe officer, Knights Cross winner Leutnant Heinz-Georg Kempen, on page 52 shown wearing the KURLAND band along with an AFRIKA band. In this case, close scrutiny shows evidence that it may be the shortened machine woven style Kempen is wearing. No photos of a Waffen SS member wearing the band has surfaced.

The band would have been authorized for wear on field, service, parade dress and overcoat uniforms, as all campaign cuffbands were, except for the 1936 SPANIEN 1939 cuffband.

A very rare photo of the KURLAND band worn on the parade Waffenrock. The Officer and Ritterkreuztraeger is Hauptmann Günther Braake who commanded a battalion in the 422. Infanterie Regiment of the 126. Infanterie Division. The fact that Braake wears his parade uniform so close to the end of the war - within less than two months - is indicative of how military life continued in many ways, despite the imminent collapse of the Third Reich. On this occasion Braake was most probably on convalescent or authorized leave out of the bridgehead. Having already received the Wound Badge in Gold in May 1944, he was again wounded in December 1944 and yet again in February 1945. It is from this last wound that he may have been sent home recovering in March 1945.

A close up of a larger photo recently discovered and published in International Militaria Magazine showing the cuffband in wear by a single Oberfeldwebel aboard what looks like an evacuation water craft probably somewhere vicinity of the Ostsee. It cannot be determined if this evacuation is part of the Courland bridgehead or some other location in the Baltics at the end of the war (courtesy IMM through "Polux" and Jacques Calero).



Heinz Sydekum awarded the KURLAND band on 20.4.45 – a common date of awarding of the cuffband. Sydekum's unit suffered terribly throughout the war, seeing some of the heaviest fighting with the center and southern German armies in Russia. By 1943, his parent division, the 327. Infanterie Division, ceased to exist and the remnants of the unit were absorbed by other divisions. Some of these, in turn, were also destroyed. The 327. Heeres Pi. Bataillon eventually made it to Army Group Kurland, where Sydekum seems to have seen the war end, going in to Soviet captivity – Courtesy Manuel R. collection.



KURLAND CUFFBAND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Documentation pertaining to the award of the KURLAND cuffband is scarce due to the late institution of the award and the isolated condition of the command, as well as the subsequent surrender to the Soviets. However, Soldbuch and, more rarely, Wehrpa books with Kurland related entries, award notification telegrams, and actual award documents for the cuffband do infrequently come on the collector's market. As rarities, and therefore items that command higher prices, documents related to the Kurland campaign are more prone to be forged and faked. Thus, any serious documents collector should have available references that record battle locations, dates, commanders and their related units, and order of battle information in order to guard against the acquisition of faked documents. The extremely few award document reference books that illustrate and describe authentic examples of original KURLAND award documents are all absolutely required, as no single reference stands completely on its own for complete information. In this article is a compiled general order of battle for all branches of the Wehrmacht that had forces committed during the period that qualified a soldier for the cuffband - 15 September 1944 to the end of the war. Except for separate units below division level, those that do not conform to a divisional structure, and unique or special units that participated in the campaign, this list does not break down below the division level - and in some cases, such as the Kriegsmarine, does not include higher organizational structures - so there is much room for added detail. This is merely provide this as a starting point for collectors to research a document they are considering adding to their collection. There are several good references that can add to this level of detail - however, many of the more detailed books are expensive. The investment can be worth it for serious document collectors, but many members of the Association who already have the books usually seem willing to assist a collector who does not.

It should be noted that throughout the eight-month campaign, several divisions such as the 14. Panzer Division, and various other units were in fact withdrawn from the bridgehead or destroyed, so the units shown did not necessarily fight the entire campaign, but nonetheless their members qualified for the cuffband.

ORDER OF BATTLE

Heeresgruppe Nord - Changed to Heeregruppe Kurland on 25 January 1945:

Army Formations :

- 16. Armee
- 18. Armee

Corps Formations :

- Armee Korps: I, II, X, XVI, XXXVIII
- Panzer Korps: XXXIII and L
- Armee Abteilung Narwa
- III (Germanisches) SS-Panzer- Korps
- II SS-Korps
- VI SS Freiwilligen-Armee-Korps

Units routinely came under different command relationships between these two armies as well as between the corps.

HEER Formations :

- 11 Infanterie, 21 (only in battle group strength having been destroyed in the Russian summer offensive against Heeresgrupped Center), 24, 30, 31 Volks-Grenadier, 32, 52 Sicherungs Staff, 58, 61, 81, 83, 87, 93, 121, 122, 126, 132, 201, 205, 207 Sicherungs, 218, 225, 227, 263, 281 Sicherungs , 285 290, 300 Sicherungs, 329, 389, 563 Volks-Grenadier, 4 Panzer, 12 Panzer, 14 Panzer, 7. Panzer Division (possibly), elements of Schwere-Panzer Abteilung 502
- Panzer-Fusilier-Regiment Gro deutschland (operated in the vicinity of Heeresgruppe Nord only very early in the campaign, and then only briefly. Most likely its members did not qualify for the award)
- Heeres-Artillerie-Abteilung 814
- Heeres-Flak-Abteilung 276 (attached to 14. Panzer Div. at least in Sep.)
- Heeres-Flak-Abteilung 290
- Flak-Regiment 60
- Panzer Brigade 101
- Schwere-Panzer Abteilung 510 w/ 3./ Schwere-Panzer-Abteilung 502
- Schwere-Artillerie-Abteilung 436
- Sturmgeschutz-Brigade 184
- Sturmgeschutz-Abteilung 600

- Sturmgeschütz-Brigade 912
- Sturmgeschütz-Brigade 227
- Panzer-Brigade Kurland

Waffen SS Formations :

- 11. SS Freiwilligen-Panzergranadier-Division, Nordland
- 4. SS-Freiwilligen- Panzergranadier - Brigade Nederland
- 19. Waffen-Granadier-Division der SS (lettische Nr. 2)
- 15. Waffen-Granadier-Division der SS (lettische Nr. 1)

Numerical designations were dropped on 11 Oct 1944 and brigades were redesignated as divisions.

Luftwaffe Formations :

- 21 Luftwaffen Feld,
- 12 Luftwaffen Feld Divisionen
- Jagdgeschwader 54
- 6. Flak Division
- Luftflotte 1 (redesignated Luftwaffenkommando Kurland on 17 April 45)
- HQ., II./ and III./ Schlacht-Geschwader 3.
- III./ Schlacht-Geschwader 4.
- Nacht-Schachtgeschwader 3
- HQ., 1., 2., Nahaufklarungsgruppe 5.
- HQ., I., and II., Jagdgeschwader 54.
- Various (up to 100) batteries of Flak (2. and 6. Flak-Divisionen)

Kriegsmarine Formations :

- Marine Artillerie Regiment 10, Abteilung 530, 532, 536
- Marine Flak Abteilung 712
- Marine Festungs Pioneer Bataillon 312
- 9 Marine Kraftfahr Abteilung
- Marine Artillerie Arsenal
- Marine Ausrüstungsstelle
- 9 Sicherungs Division comprised of numerous Kriegsmarine special units (Torpedo Boots, Minenlesuchboote (Brummer, Linz, M328 -not inclusive), Raumbooten (R22), Kriegsfiskutter, Motorfishkutter, Vorpostenbooten, Landungsflotille, Artillerieträger (7), Hospital Ship Oberhausen, Stützpunkt Bohnsak, Sperrbrecher, Emden, Leipzig, Prinz Eugen, Admiral Hipper, Admiral Scheer, Lützow, various destroyers, Schnellbootshulflotille, Werkstattboot (Nidden, Cranz - not inclusive)
- 6. Zerstörer-Flotille (Z 25, 28, 43, Karl Galster)

- 5 Torpedoboot-Flotille (T23, 24, 28, 33, 35, 36)
- 2 Torpedoboot-Flotille (T1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 19, 21)
- 4 Zerstörer-Flotille (Z34, 38, 31, 35, 39)
- 3 Torpedoboot-Flotille (17, 19)
- F506 (Frachter)

BESITZZEUGNIS

Im Namen des Führers
hat
DER OBERBEFEHLSHABER
DER HEERESGRUPPE KURLAND
dem

Pionier
Dienstgrad

Heinz Sydekum
Vor- und Zuname

3./Heeres-Pionier-Bataillon 327
Truppenteil

DAS ÄRMELBAND „KURLAND“
verliehen.

Btl.Gef.Std., den 20.4.1945
Ort und Datum



Dienststempel


Unterschrift

Hauptmann u.Btl.-Kdr.
Dienstgrad u. Dienststellung

azul 45

KURLAND award document presented to Sydekum. It is representative of the standard pre-printed style almost always seen

Award documents probably exist in both pre-printed and field made form, however, the pre-printed form is the more usual one to be encountered by collectors. Telegrams announcing the cuffband award may also be encountered. Pre-printed versions of the award document are highly standardized. The DIN A5 size (150mm by 210mm) was used. The example above was the only unpublished, collector-donated document found by the time this article was hung on the web. It is an example to army soldier, but would have been standard for all branches of the Wehrmacht. However, pages 64 and 65 of Gordon Williamson's and Thomans McGuirl's German Military Cuffbands 1784-Present show examples of examples for Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine recipients, respectively. Both formats conform to that described below. Additionally, Forman's Guide to Third Reich German Award Documents...and Their Values, Vol 1, pages 287-289 show four more examples, three Heer and one Kriegsmarine, which also exhibit the same format. Detlev Niemann's Bewertungs-Katalog ORDEN UND EHRENZEICHEN DEUTSCHLAND 1871-1945 No 1 shows a Kriegsmarine example in standard format. Lastly, Emile Caldwell Stewarts original publication "German Military Award Documents 1939-1945" shows a Luftwaffe version on page 150 and a field version to a Luftwaffe member on page 151.

The wording and format on the KURLAND award document conforms to the information found on most award documents. The pre-printed version described is printed in what we would probably today call a century gothic font.

B E S I T Z Z E U G N I S

Im Namen des Fuhrers hat DER OBERBEFEHKSCHABER DER
HEERESGRUPPE KURLAND

dem

..... Dienstgrad

..... Vor- und Zuname

..... Truppenteil

DAS ARMELBAND „KURLAND“

Verliehen

..... Ort und Datum Unterschrift

..... Dienststempel Dienstgrad u. Dienststellung

The award was made in the name of the Fuhrer, but was bestowed by the commander of Army Group Courland (Heeresgruppe Kurland). From known originals, it appears that the signing authorities ranged over a wide array of ranks, from flag/general officers to field grade officers in a variety of positions, which varied as well according to the particular branch of the Wehrmacht. This was not always the case with awards - some having definitive issuing levels - which tends to help in establishing authenticity of a document. However, due to the conditions in early 1945, it makes sense that the KURLAND band would be awarded under a variety of authorities. Issue locations varied as well. Readers can refer to the Association web article on the AFRIKA cuffband for more complete information as to meanings of abbreviations of issuing headquarters.

Dates on award documents will vary too. The date of 20.4.45 seems to be a common date for the KURLAND band. Other dates observed, especially on Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe award documents include 4.5.45, 7.5.45, 8.5.45, and even 13.5.45, this latter date illustrating the renowned German penchant for effective and efficient administration lived up to its reputation, and the machinery continued to function for some time after capitulation.

The awarding of a KURLAND band was also noted in a member's Soldbuch and Wehrpa . Entries in the latter appear more rarely. Wehrpa books stayed with the units, whereas the Soldbuch remained on the soldier. Many units, on order from Heeresgruppe Kurland destroyed their records in the final days of the war. Regardless, the typical entry would show on page 21 or 22 of the Soldbuch and state: the date of issue - „Armelband „Kurland“ - and the authority/officer that made the entry. Again, the latter will vary. Pictured below are several Soldbuch entries.

Leningrad and Demyansk. It ended the war in the Courland bridgehead. Hennitz's entry shows an award made on 2 May 1945, just a week before the end of the war. The entry was made by an Oberleutnant who was his company commander. The Soldbuch and cuffband are reported to be vet acquired, the cuffband being found in the Soldbuch

Auszeichnungen

am	für (Zeit)	Verdienten	Ordnung	Not.
5.8.42	<i>Ordnung</i>	<i>1941/42</i>	<i>Unterschrift</i>	
5.3.45	<i>in der</i>	<i>SR 405</i>	<i>Hannewinkel</i>	
8.2.45	<i>in der</i>	<i>SR 405</i>	<i>Hannewinkel</i>	
20.4.45	<i>in der</i>	<i>SR 405</i>	<i>Hannewinkel</i>	

22

Another Heer Soldbuch entry

am	für (Zeit)	Erläuterungen	RSS.	Stpl.
		Kriegsverdienstkreuz 2. Klasse mit Schwertern O. U., 1.2.1942 Träger Stellf. Fejinh.		
		Leutnant und Adjutant 11.5.45 Bedingungen für Thunelbare Kurland sind erfüllt Major		

22

Unteroffizier Walter Augustin served on the staff of the 24. Infanterie Division when it fought in Courland. The 24. was another division with a distinguished combat record and proven reputation, fighting in Poland, the Crimea and, for the last two years of the war, as part of the Germans' northern armies. It went in to Soviet captivity after the war's end. Augustin received an entry in his Soldbuch on 20 April 1945 - again, a very common date related to the awarding of this decoration. He was a well-decorated veteran of the

entire war receiving the EK II on 12.12.39, the Ostmedaille on 15.3.42, the Rumanian Anti-Communist Medal on 17.11.42, the Krim Shield on 30.12.42, and the KVK II on 20.4.45 along with his KURLAND band. It is interesting to note that an entry made on 14.5.45 records that his Wehrpa was destroyed in enemy fighting (Feindwirkung) on that date...evidence that shows not all forces capitulated on 8 May 1945, especially in Courland Soldbuch entry - Courtesy of ERICH CRACIUN /Old Europe. This authorization is only valid for publication on WEHRMACHT AWARDS.

am	für (Zeit)	Erläuterungen	SSR.	Stpl.
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Kriegsverdienstkreuz 2. Klasse



mit Schwertern

O. U., 1.2.1942

Leutnant
Stellf. Adjutant

• Offizier für Winterschlacht
im Osten 1941/42 verbleiben
durch die Hochschnee 1942
am 1.2.42.



O. U., 22.3.42.

Leutnant

Leutnant und Adjutant

11.5.45 Bedingungen für Heerführer
Kriegsland sind erfüllt

Major

Soldbuch entry for Obershirrmrister Heinrich Birkenhake of the 122. Infanterie Division, who is pictured at right. His entry at the bottom of the page is interesting in that it does not state the award as usually seen, but rather states "Conditions for the Kurland award are fulfilled". Note also that this entry was recorded on 11.5.45 - several days after surrender. Birkenhake would die in captivity less than a year later, in January 1946.



Another pair of photos (portrait is from his Wehrpa) showing the Soldbuch entry for Oberwachmeister Otto Hebenstreit and the alte Hasse. This award was made on 8.5.45 - the last day of the war. Hebenstreit was a well decorated veteran of the Werfer Regiment 70, having previously earned the EK II and EK I, the Allgemeines Sturmabzeichen (GAB) and the Kuban Shield.

am	für (Zeit)	Erläuterungen	SSR.	Stpl.
----	------------	---------------	------	-------

Kriegsverdienstkreuz 2. Klasse



mit Schwertern

O. U., 1.2.1942

Leutnant
Stellf. Adjutant

• Teilnahme für Winterschlacht
im Osten 1941/42 verlitet
durch die Hochschütz 122
am 1.2.42.



O. U., 22.2.42.

Leutnant

Leutnant und Adjutant

11.5.45 Bedingungen für Trunkbare
Kurland sind erfüllt

Major



Gefreiter Karl Knop also served with the Werfer Regiment 70 and saw his award made 1.5.45. The notation is also an uncommon format.



Likewise, the Wehrpass will reflect award entries on page 38. Shown is the entry made in the Wehrpa of August Weber as a member of Infanterie Regiment 503, 290. Infanterie Division. Weber also served briefly with Infanterie Regiment Gro deutschland, coming from Infanterie Regiment 92 when its third battalion was used to expand the Gro deutschland to regimental strength. Again, the 290. Infanterie Division was a hard fought division. It was accustomed to fighting surrounded, having fought in and broken out of the siege at Demyansk, but Weber was not a member of the unit at the time. His KURLAND band entry shows the familiar 20.4.45 award date and the notation Armelband „Kurland". Weber was also decorated with the IAB on 2.9.44, the Wound Badge in Silver on 18.8.44 and the KVK I on 12.1.45.

Bescheinigung über verliehene Auszeichnungen		
Dem Inhaber sind verliehen worden:		
am	Bezeichnung der Auszeichnung	Bezeichnung der Dienststelle (Soldpost-Nr.) durch Stempel und Unterschrift
24. IV. 44	Wingst-Abzeichen	1.
20. IV. 45	Kurland-Band	Leuthaus (Cpt.) 1. Inf. Jng.
20. IV. 45	E K II	2.

This last picture again shows the April award date in a Wehrpa . The wording of the entry is different from most, noting Kurland-Band versus the Armeelband „Kurland" form of notation. Also interesting is the sometimes seen means of recording the month in Roman numerals as 20. IV.45

GALLERY OF VARIATIONS

A variety of different KURLAND bands appear to exist - both the short and the full-length styles. So many so, that it becomes a difficult task to accurately identify each one and describe it with any reasonable level of detail that would imply that more than one of a variation will be encountered. This gallery section illustrates this point well. The varieties that survive range from very professional products to exceptionally crude examples. Those pictured in this section are presented as probably authentic wartime variations. However, in addition to the wide wartime variety noted, post war German veteran's organizations produced versions as well - with the same wide range of techniques - and one must be very cautious.



Four examples of the short style, locally produced band. The top-most KURLAND is the 'official' style described in detail above and is a good contrast for comparison with the others. The other three pictured are each embroidered and not machine woven and are considerably cruder in construction. Note the variety of the top and bottom borders.



The reverse of the cuffbands show even more clearly the sloppy construction. Note that the lengths vary as well.



Four more variations of the short style band, these being both hand and machine embroidered. The second from the top is particularly interesting in that white thread has been used to develop the shields that flank the title. In some of these, the elk's head is almost comical.



The backs of the four previously illustrated cuffbands.



These four additional variations of the short style band are somewhat neater in technique, but still crude. The second example from the top, however is printed. Again, note the

different designs in the bands' top and bottom borders - in some hardly any effort at all was made.



The reverse of the printed cuffband looks to have a lining. The others are all made on a piece of rough-cut cloth.



Front and back of what seems to be a hand-embroidered version of the short style. The main difference here being the border that forms a complete box around the title. Otherwise, the same general comments apply.



A quite nicely done woven short style. The attention to this particular band and the skill of the embroiderer is reminiscent of the 'official' short style. The woven nature of the band's similarity is most evident on the back.



Finally, a fairly nice printed version in the short style

A possible explanation for both the variety of these short style bands and their sloppy construction may be based on the effort taken within the bridgehead in 1945 to meet the requirements to issue a band to each member of Heeresgruppe Kurland . It seems possible, that with a strength of about 270,000 members

and the rush to produce the cuffband, that the Kuldiga source of local manufacture was insufficient to meet demands. Thus, additional bands were made by smaller, 'cottage industries' for whom which materials would have been scarce. The pattern design would have been easily disseminated (and judging from the various interpretations of the lettering and the shields, probably done even by word of mouth) and the local population - even unskilled laborers - would have been eager to perform any work that could result in compensation. Like any KURLAND band, few of these small business versions would have actually made it to the front lines to ever be bestowed. With the liberation of the Baltic states and the collapse of the former Soviet Union in the 1980s, the former Iron Curtain satellite countries soon discovered the western appetite for WWII German militaria, and the collecting market suddenly had a relative wealth of this rare cuffband available - examples that may have been kept and stored for years in any number of small businesses, as well as supplies of the 'official' Kuldiga version included.

Full Length Style

Two examples of variation full-length cuffbands are illustrated. The first is embroidered on a thin white cloth.



This second example is a very interesting printed version, on yet a different backing cloth. Note in the lower picture that the reverse has a dark material as a backing and shows evidence of possibly having been snapped on at some point.



FAKES AND REPRODUCTIONS

Non-authentic KURLAND cuffbands certainly exist. However, as stated already, to describe and/or catalog various types is very difficult. From the previous gallery of variations provided by collectors, one can quickly assess the challenge this effort would entail. As with most all cuffbands and cufftitles, the KURLAND band was being produced right up to the end as well as soon after the war ended on 8 May 1945 and thus, the line between wartime original and post war production or reproduction blurs. Many of these early pieces thus would not necessarily be correctly termed as fakes or reproductions, but in fact would be more correctly described as post war production originals. As seen above, there is sufficient evidence to show that this cuffband continued to be awarded, and most certainly produced immediately after 8 May 1945. However, post war originals quickly gave way to post war reproductions - say for example

those made for German unit veterans associations - which today have given way to outright fakes. Today's collector is wise to be cautious even of German veteran acquired examples. Post war associations continued to hand these out at gatherings as mementos and in some cases probably as awards for veterans who never received the award they qualified for prior to 8 May 1945. In many cases, those handed out post war were reproductions, but could just as easily have initially been wartime-produced examples. The average German veteran - especially after forty to sixty years - whether he remembers or not - will often quote post war association pieces as the award they received...especially concerning the KURLAND band...as for all intents and purposes, these were the first actual award they did receive of the cuffband and would certainly not be able to - nor think to - distinguish between post war and wartime manufacture.

Having said that, the collector is still armed with tools to acquire a wartime original production piece. Collectors would be wise to look at the examples shown in the sections above entitled "Detailed Description of the Locally Manufactured Version" and "Brief Description of the German Made, Full Length Style" as the standard to seek. Anything else, without absolute provenance would still at best raise some doubt. The locally manufactured short style seems especially difficult to convincingly fake. However, those collectors seeking full-length styles are probably venturing on to the thinnest ice. Machine weaving is probably more costly to do than machine or hand embroidery. Thus, post war fakes are more likely to be embroidered and of considerably better quality embroidery, yet missing many of the nuances of a wartime original. Stiff cloth, incorrect cloth, and non wartime synthetic threads and construction materials are a few examples of what to look for when determining authenticity. Fakers can also include characteristics of other wartime cuffbands or cufftitles that may seem out of place that should be warning signs, such as soutache braid where none was intended, material backing to the embroidery and reverse overlapping and sewing of the reverse excess material.



Commonly Known as "Ostmedaille" (East Medal) or "Russian Front Medal" this award was introduced on the 26th of May 1942 to recognize those who participated in the first winter of Operation Barbarossa (the invasion of the Soviet Union). The mammoth endeavor to attain "living space in the east" for Germany employed over 3 million men separated into 3 Army groups; North (Leeb), Center (Bock), and South (Rundstedt). On June 22nd the German forces crossed the border achieving almost complete surprise and with a powerful punch broke into the heart of the Soviet Union. Despite its initial success, however, this Blitzkrieg would not deliver a quick victory and as summer months passed the fighting only intensified. The end of autumn brought a bitterly cold Russian winter which caught the invasion force unprepared and turned the elements into an enemy as dangerous as the Soviets.

Created by SS Unterschriftführer Ernst Kraut, the Eastern Medal was to commemorate those who endured these freezing and challenging months. The award is far from rare in the collector's world owing to the fact that 3 million were issued and countless more manufactured. This large scale production yielded a number of variations which are interesting to study.

Manufacturing and Technical Information

The medal features a concave obverse with a helmet and stick grenade immediately below the ribbon loop. Its main obverse feature was a German Eagle holding a swastika, with a branch of leaves behind the swastika. Its convex reverse had the inscription "WINTERSCHLACHT IM OSTEN 1941/42" (Winter Battle in the East) in capital letters with a sword and wreath of leaves crossed under it. The medal measures 44mm (including the ribbon loop) by 36mm.

A plethora of different firms manufactured the award from different metals, making it challenging to categorize the variation. For discussion purposes here they will be broken downs into two categories by the metal used in manufacturing;

- Type 1; Buntmetal
- Type 2; Zinc

What we call here type 1 badges were made from Buntmetal (hard metal) and have stood the test of time better than their zinc counterparts. Surviving examples have generally preserved all the detail and usually preserved most of the finish as well. In fact, they are often found with their finish practically intact making for a visually powerful award. As with any antique, the condition of it also depends on outside factors (storage), and although in some cases the finish has faded off, it is always possible to see a trace of it.



What we categorized as type 2 medals were manufactured from zinc and very often show visible aging signs. Although this type of medal may be occasionally found with a good amount of the finish and detail intact, they are more commonly found with either the "bubbling" that occurs in zinc badges over time or with the finish completely evaporated. In the first case, the zinc has literally bubbled underneath the finish and looks almost like the medal was sprayed with water. In the second case, the finish on the badge has evaporated so long ago and so thoroughly that it gives the impression that it was never there.



If a maker's mark was present it is stamped on the ribbon loop. Below is a list of confirmed manufacturers of the awards and is by no means exhaustive,

FIRM	FIRM	LOCATION
------	------	----------

#		
3	Wilheim Deumer	Ludenscheld
6	Fritz Zimmermann	Stuttgart
7	Paul Meyhauer	Berlin
11	Grossmann & Co.	Wien
13	Gustav Brehmer	Markneukirchen/Sa
15	Friedrich Orth	Wien
20	C.F. Zimmermann	Pforzheim
	Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Graveur-Gold-und	Silberschemiede- Innungen
30	Hauptmunzamt	Wien
39	Rudolf Berge	Gablonz a.d.N.
55	J.E. Hammer & Sohne	Geringswalde
60	Katz & Deyhle	Pforzheim
65	Klein & Quenzer A.G.	Idar/Oberstein
76	Ernst L. Muller	Pforzheim
80	G.H. Osang	Dresden
88	Werner Redo	Saarlautern
93	Richard Simm & Sohne	Gablonz a.d.N.
100	Rudolf Wachtler & Lange	Mittweida

107	Carl Wild	Hamburg
127	Moritz Hausch A.G.	Pforzheim
L/55	Wachtler & Lange Rudolf	Mittwaida/Sa.
L/57	Boerger & Co.,	Berlin SO 16 Adalbertstr. 42

The medal was suspended by a dark red ribbon with a thin white-black-white stripe. Its foundation decree stated that the red signified the blood shed in the struggle, the white represented the snow, and the black honored the memory of those fallen during the campaign.

Award Criteria

The award was presented to those who met the following criteria during November 15, 1941 and April 26, 1942.

- Fourteen days of combat participation, 30 combat sorties for Luftwaffe pilots.
- Sixty days of service in the combat zone (even if not engaged in actual combat).
- Having received wounds, or frostbite severe enough to warrant a Wound Badge.

In case of death the medal was awarded posthumously and was presented to the next of kin. It was also awarded to German Allies, notably the Italian and Rumanian forces, as well as those volunteers from the invaded Eastern territories who joined the German cause.

For a typical soldier who fought in the Eastern front visit the Eugen Rothenhofer page in the Recipients section of this site.

Presentation and Wear

The medal was presented in a paper envelope which featured the name of the award on the front, with the reverse usually bearing the name of the manufacturer. To my knowledge, this award was never presented in a box or any other device.



To the left are two original envelopes. They are actually identical except for the manufacturer mark giving credit to the theory that many pieces were subcontracted.

Its institution order called for the medal to be worn as part of a group only for official purposes. Active duty personnel would wear only the ribbon from the second button hole in the tunic. This place was normally reserved for the Iron Cross and/or War Merit Cross 2nd class and if any of these awards were also bestowed the recipient could wear both ribbons or place the Eastern Medal on a ribbon bar. Though widely distributed, the Eastern Front Medal was held in high regard and it can sometimes be seen outranking the War Merit Cross 2nd class.



This Soldbuch picture of Jacob Reis shows him wearing the Eastern Medal in the correct fashion.



This ribbon bar belonging to Karl Rinklef shows the award (second from the left) in its proper place; after the Iron Cross ribbon but before the long service and Austria Annexation medal.

Documents

The document style most often encountered is the typical A56+ official style. Since this award was not usually bestowed on the field, typewritten or unofficial documents are very rarely encountered. An entry was made in the appropriate section of the recipient Soldbuch and Wehrpass.



Typical Award document
for the Eastern Medal



Soldbuch annotation (August
1942 entry)

By order of the OKW, all considerations for presentation stopped on September 4th, 1944.

Reproductions

Unfortunately for collectors neither the abundance of originals, nor their low price, managed to curb the reproduction of the Eastern award. In this case the relative low cost ensures that the reproductions are truly geared toward reenactors and not for collectors who, for only a few dollars more, could attain a period piece. This does not disqualify the occasional reproductions from seeping through to the collectors ranks, however, but fortunately a large majority of modern strikes lack the detail present in wartime strikes (although manufactured in the millions there is an evident sharpness to original medals).

What one encounters more often than not is a period medal with a reproduction ribbon. These have a more firm feel to them and unless intentionally softened to deceive a real collector would not be confused between a newly sewn ribbon and an original one. Also, an original ribbon should not fail the "Black Light Test".



A helpful tool to help determine the authenticity of a paper or cloth item from the Third Reich era is the "black light test". Generally speaking, original ribbon or paper items made during the Third Reich may be distinguished from those made since by the fact they will not fluoresce under a black light. While Paper items made prior to 1945 will not "glow", those made since the early 50's generally do fluoresce due to the amounts of chemical bleaches and dyes utilized. Similarly, cloth items that contain synthetic fibers or fluorescent dyes will also incandesce under black light and these types of materials were not generally used during World War II.

There are some collectors who argue against the black light test based on the fact that fluorescent dyes were in existence prior to the era. Although that detail is irrefutable, the fact that they were present does not mean that they were widely employed. In my experience original period items do not fluoresce under black light. Still, a word of caution should be put forth - because an item fluoresces it does not automatically mean that it is a reproduction. Be aware that the test can generate "false positives" as items that were washed with modern detergents may be "contaminated" and fluoresce under the black light. Likewise, one should not assume based solely on the fact that an item does not glow that it is a period item. The "black light test" is a tool that should be used in conjunction with others to determine authenticity. Having said that, please allow me to reiterate that in general, an item from the Third Reich era should not fluoresce under uv light and one that does should be very carefully examined.

Below is an example of what one should expect from the black light. The two ribbons on the right are originals and reflect some light, but the one on the left is a modern reproduction and fluoresces under black light.



RELIC FROM THE BALKAN FRONT

Every now and then, a very desirable and rare war relic comes my way. After over 40 years of collecting, I still get that special thrill and exhilaration that I first experienced so long ago when I acquire my first war relic. It has been so long ago I do not remember what that relic was, but the feeling has never changed after all those years. As my collecting years seem to be coming to an end, and after owning so many great relics, I thought that pleasurable feeling has been erased from my mind. However, my new find has again fired that desires to search for hidden facts that can help this relic "come alive" and tell its story.

A day or two ago, I spotted an unusual black M-43 field cap listed on an Internet auction. It caught my eye because it appeared to be of S. S. Panzer pattern, but had the insignia of the German Police

rather the S. S. Skull. It was an officer's cap, noted by the silver bullion trim and was so interesting that I was determined to try and acquire this item. I have never been that interested in cloth items, but something about this cap stood out and "beckoned to me" to give it a place on my trophy shelf.

To make a long story short, I acquired the cap and the history behind it makes for what I knew would be a great story. Before I go any farther, the cap was acquired from a fine fellow collector by the name of Christopher Sweiwe, Troy Michigan, a new member of the Ohio Valley Military Society. He provided the basic information concerning the cap, and with the cap and his facts at my disposal I began my research into the history of the S. S./Police Panzer unit from which this cap came.

Chris informed me that this cap came from a museum in Canada where it had been on display since shortly after the end of the World War two. It had been labeled as being worn by an officer of the "15th S. S. Panzer regiment commanded by a S. S. General Roshner fighting Tito's Partisans." With the cap and this vague clue, I began researching to find any information about a "Police/S. S. Panzer regiment".

I spent the better part of a day looking through my reference library trying to find any S. S./Police Panzer regiment. Then I remembered that I had a source of information in my files that might provide the clue to unlocking the now mysterious unit. It was the March 1945 ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE GERMAN ARMY published by the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department. This book was given to me years ago by a former Lt. S. Zinderman. His book was well worn, filled with his personal notations and from first appearance was not worthy of being displayed in any collection or library. However, as it has for many years, it provided all the information to give the cap a personality and a story to tell.

The first thing I looked for was the name Roshner, with a rank of an S. S. General. There was no such name listed. However, there was a Erwin Rosener and he was an S. S./Police Obergruppenfuehrer, age 43, and was listed as HSSPF, Wk. (Wehrkreis) XVIII as of August 1, 1944. He was the "Chief of the Anti-Guerrilla activities." For some unusual reason, the U. S. didn't have any other relevant information as to his past commands, dates, origin, or awards. This is most strange as he was such a high ranking S. S./Police officer.

Noting this information, I consulted Gerhard von Seeman's book, *Die Ritterkreuz Trager* and Jost W. Schneider's book *Their Honor was Loyalty* and again drew a blank.

I took another approach by looking for any S. S./Police Panzer regiment. None was found, so I started again, but at the top of the German High Command and now looked for an S. S./Police Panzer Division. Bingo..I found the unit. It was listed as the 4th S. S. Panzer Grenadier Division. Under the American designation was the German designated sub-title listing the Division as "4. S. S. - Polizei - Panzer - Grenadier -Division".

The Division was formed in October of 1939 in Germany from members of the German police. After training, the Division campaigned in the West. From July 20, 1940, until July of 1941, the Division was in France. The Division was transferred to the eastern front, northern sector and was continuously engaged.

The Division was transferred to the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and assigned the Government security. This was after the assassination of S. S. Obergruppenfuehrer Reinhard Heydrich in 1942. Partisan activity began to increase during this period. The unit was specifically provided security duties.

In the summer of 1943, the division was transferred to Greece, again combating partisan forces. In September, the Division was transferred to Serbia, then to Hungary in November of 1944. No further information was listed by the U. S. Army Intelligence. What is known is that the German forces suffered great losses, sometime entire divisions being wiped out, battling Tito's Partisan and the Soviet forces.

Every time I admire my M-43 S. S./Police Panzer cap resting in my display case, I stop and day dream. I have found out a lot about the history of the Division whose officer once wore this simple black field cap. Alas, if the cap could just tell me its story, I would really have one most interesting story to tell. However, taking into consideration all that I know, I can close my eyes and almost see a Panzer officer, wearing my cap. He is wearing an Anti-Partisan War Badge, Tank Assault Badge, and a Close Combat Clasp on his uniform. Of course he is wearing a Knights Cross around his neck and charging into battle in the Sava River Valley, Near Zagreb, in December of 1944. Could you?

PARTISAN WAR BADGE

(BANDENKAMPFABZEICHEN)

Is It Real?

One of the most interesting and desirable of all combat badges issued by the Third Reich is the Anti-Partisan War Badge. It is also one of the most widely reproduced badge found on today's collectors market. I just acquired an original bronze example from a local W.W.II veteran and found it to be of a different strike than I have ever seen. It is unmarked, but has characteristics of two or more known makers that produced this badge during the brief 15-month period in which it was issued. Therefore, I would like to share the information I have accumulated over my years of collecting combat badges of the Third Reich, as well as that of other noted collectors, and in particular those who have covered the Anti-Partisan War Badge in references that they authored. Hopefully the answer to the question "Is it Real?" will be answered at the conclusion of this article.

Partisan fighters from all the occupied nations controlled by the armies of Nazi Germany immediately struck back at the invading German forces. The military branches of the Wehrmacht immediately engaged them, in turn. In October of 1942 Waffen S. S. Obergruppenfuehrer von dem Bach-Zelewski took over as Chief of Anti-Partisan Warfare. However, it was not until late January of 1944 that Himmler, Chief of the S. S., instituted a special war badge to recognize the service of the troops engaged in this type of combat. Most all recipients were recognized for their extremely dangerous service combating the partisans and guerrilla fighters, especially in the Balkans and behind the lines on the Eastern Front. The award came in three grades, bronze (for 20 days of active service), silver (for 50 days), and gold, (for 150 days). The awarding of this badge was not restricted only to the Waffen S. S., but the authority for recommendation was delegated down to the OKH, OKL, OKM as well as police leadership. (The Luftwaffe personnel were also eligible to receive this award but the bronze class required 30 operational sorties, 75 sorties to receive the silver class and 150 sorties to receive the gold class. If an enemy aircraft was shot down during a mission, that sortie counted as three.)

To the best of my knowledge the exact number of manufactures and specific types of the Anti-Partisan War Badge are still unknown after over fifty years as well as the number of badges awarded. This is due to the period of manufacture and limited number of the

badges being awarded. Compare the number of personnel qualified to be awarded this badge with the number of Luftwaffe Pilots badges produced and awarded; or the Infantry Assault Badges, Tank Assault, or any other combat badges produced and awarded during W. W. II. Hard facts show that this badge was given to only a select few in a theater of the world where many recipients never returned and that the time the badges were issued was extremely short compared to all the other combat badges. Add the S. S. element, the sinister look with the serpents and dagger, and the popularity of collecting these items and logic dictates that one must understand why they are reproduced to the degree that they are today. It's a simple fact that the demand far outweighs the supply and the greed for the dollar tend to cause the unscrupulous to crank out the reproductions by the hundreds. Each year they produce higher quality reproductions to snare the unwary collector.

I will try to point out the different original types of the Anti-Partisan War Badges that I personally know to exist. I am sure, especially after my latest acquisition; probably more examples or variations lie in some veteran's souvenir chests just waiting to be discovered by today's enthusiastic collectors.

I first want to acknowledge five noted collectors and authors and their books on the subject of Third Reich war badges: Lt. (ret.) John R. Angolia (*For Furher and Fatherland*, volume 1, pages 106-108), David Littlejohn and Col. C. M. Dodkins (*Orders, Decorations, Medals and Badges of the Third Reich*), Page 156, Adrian Foreman (*Foreman's Guide to Third Reich German Awards...And Their Values, Second Edition*), pages 88 and 89, and Michael F. Tucker (*Collecting Military Badges of the Third Reich*).

I especially want to acknowledge the information provided to me for so many years by my late friend, Dr. Phil. Kurt-Gerhard Klietmann. His legacy as one of the most knowledgeable authorities on the subject of orders and decorations of the world, and his Institute for the Scientific Research of Orders will live on forever.

The first type of the Anti-Partisan War Badge is attributed to the firm of C. E. Junkers, Berlin. I once owned the badge pictured on page 106 of *For Furher and Fatherland*, Volume 1. It was a semi-hollow back with a "needle" type pin with cut out serpents. The years have erased my memory as to whether it was marked or not, but I distinctly recall that I showed this badge to Dr. Klietmann and he stated to me that it was of C. E. Junkers manufacture. One important feature that is found on the C. E. Junkers badge that is never observed on any other type is the fang of the serpent on the top left. Its fang is part of the cutout and the head of the serpent doesn't touch its body that is wrapping around the blade of the

sword. The cutout of the fang is more obvious in the flat back variation than in the semi-hollow back.

Another obvious feature is the sword handle appears to be twisted. One extremely rare version was manufactured in aluminum. I have owned one of these very rare badges. C. E. Junkers pioneered the use of aluminum. (The

Another semi-hollow back variation that I have owned was almost identical to the C. E. Junkers badge, but had the number "4" stamped on the pin. This was the identification number used by the firm of Steinhaur & Luck, Ludenscheid. I have no photograph of that badge. However, a near perfect reproduction this type badge bearing the hallmark "4" in the center of a brass, not steel, pin is coming out of Germany. It can be easily identified by looking at the reverse, the thin stamped hollow back, (Note: No Anti-Partisan War Badges were produced with a stamped full hollow back.), the type of pin and catch, and by the type of material it is produced from. Also, the serpents have four cutouts, a mark of all reproductions I have encountered.

The second type is exactly like type one, but with a wide flat pin with L/12 (the war time code for C. E. Junkers, Berlin) stamped on the pin. I inspected a badge of this badge in a collection in England in the early 1970's. I have also observed the same type badge, but without any markings. Again, note the fang and open mouth of the serpent.

The third type is of solid construction and had a "needle" type pin and exactly like the observe of the first and second types. Most Anti-Partisan War Badges encountered have the "needle pin"

The fourth type is exactly like the third, but had a flat pin and neither the third or fourth types were marked as to the maker. The fifth types are badges manufactured by other manufactures. It seems that competition still flourished as the war was coming to an end and various manufactures produced the Anti-Partisan War Badge. I had an example of the Anti-Partisan badge manufactured by the firm of Robert Hauschild, Pforzheim, who used the LDO number L/56 and is the only manufacture to use four cut-outs on the serpents. See page 106 of *For Furher and Fatherland*, Volume 1, for a picture of the badge I once owned. Also make note that a new reproduction of this type of badge, produced in all three classes, has recently entered the country from Austria and Germany as well as a cast copy also being offered from Germany.

The sixth type is badges identical to type number five, but have no markings. I think that more than one manufacture produced this

type of badge. I base this on the fact that minor details in the die strikes indicate that different dies were used. Considering the relatively short time that these badges were produced it is highly unlikely that a particular firm would have two dies for the same badge. Both the Junkers and Hauschild badges and my newly acquired variation have a long slender hilt on the sword. I have noticed that in other examples the hilt is larger and fuller in the center. (See page 156 of *Orders, Decorations, Medals and Badges of the Third Reich*.)

The seventh type is the rarest of all Anti-Partisan War Badges and was produced by the firm of C. E. Junkers, Berlin. They are covered in detail by Adrian Foreman on page 88 of his book, *Foreman's Guide to Third Reich German Awards... And Their Values, 2nd Edition*. These badges were the Deluxe Special Grade 111 in gold and awarded only four times by H. Himmler on the 15th of February 1945. (See page 108 of *For Fuhrer and Fatherland* for a picture of one of the presentation documents for this badge.) The badges were custom made convex, heavy gold plated tombak with blue steel finish on the sword blade and finely cutout serpents. To my knowledge, only one example exists today and it is in a private collection in England. (No photo available)

The eighth type was the Special grade of the Anti-Partisan War Badge in Gold and Diamonds 1944-45. Forman states on page 89 of his book *Foreman's Guide to Third Reich German Awards....And Their Values, 2nd edition*, that twenty examples in silver-gilt with diamonds were produced, but never awarded. I have never seen an example of this type.

The above is a lot for anyone to try and remember when encountering an Anti-Partisan badge for the first time and don't know what to look for to determine if it is real or fake. Therefore, here are some valuable things to look for that will help to avoid making a mistake and to answer the question "Is it real?"

1. Observe the type of material of which the badge was produced. If it is made of any other material other than tombak, kriegsmetal, and in the extremely rare case if aluminum, chances are that it is a reproduction. However, this alone doesn't make the badge original wartime produced. Some reproductions are being made of similar looking material.

2. Check the back of the badge, especially the pin and catch. Look how it is affixed to the badge. Observe the type of pin and catch. Since all Anti-Partisan badges were produced in either tombak or kriegsmetal, affixing a pin and catch on this type of late war material was different than employed on other materials used earlier in the war. Michael J. Tucker covers this procedure quite well on page 44 of his book. The "C" type catch was affixed to a separate metal plate prior to the two parts being affixed to the badge. If one encounters an Anti-Partisan War Badge with the "C" catch soldered directly to the back of the badge it can safely be considered to be a reproduction. 99% of all original badges have steel pins and are affixed directly to the badge without employing a steel plate. However, some manufacturers produced the pins of bronze or other metals other than of steel.

I would like to discuss the three different materials used during the late war years and of what they were composed. Also I want to point out what one should look for in determining the difference between them.

Tombak is an Alloy of copper, zinc, and tin. The color appears to be that of bronze. This type of material was used in many badges after 1943. The firm of C. E. Junkers used tombak for a brief period for their Anti-Partisan War Badges, but kriegsmetal was used most.

Britannia is an Alloy of antimony and copper. Often called "white metal". One of the characteristics of this metal is that one can buff or polish it, thus giving it an appearance of nickel silver. This metal was used ever increasingly from middle 1942, with a peak use in 1943, until the end of the war. I have never encountered an Anti-Partisan War Badge produced in britannia, but it is possible that some were.

Kriegsmetal is an alloy of zinc, lead and copper. This metal was used very late in the war and the color was dark gray, almost looking like lead. Copper was a scarce commodity and its use was limited in badges after 1943. The percentage of lead and zinc compared to the copper content were greater in kriegsmetal giving it the look of lead. Dipping or "washing" as the last process of production applied the various finishes. After only very little use the badges quickly lost their finish and appeared to be made of lead. I have had badges made of kriegsmetal stored in display cases where the "washed" finish oxidized and faded and fell off at the touch. I always avoided these badges when I could get an early war produced example. I am not alone in avoiding or adding a kriegsmetal badge to my collection. Many other collectors avoid these badges, often considering them to be fake. However, many of the rarest badges of this period, particularly the Anti-Partisan War

Badges, were constructed of the above described metal. It is important to take note and remember this as I continue.

Michael F. Tucker's new book deals with how to detect if a badge is original or reproduction. His book, *Collecting Military Badges of the Third Reich*, should be a part of every collector's reference library today. I have read his book and in my opinion it one of the best on the market dealing with detecting original badges from reproductions. While I am a firm believer that no single source is 100% correct in it's content, I would have to give Mr. Tucker 95% for his efforts. I suggest that one refer to the chapters dealing with types of materials, pins and catches in his book.

The pin and catch on an original Anti-partisan War Badge MUST conform to the manner the manufactures used at the time to affix the pins and catches to both tombak and kriegsmetal badges.

We are now back to the haunting question: Is it real? If you acquire an item from a veteran, knowledgeable collector, or reputable dealer who will give a "life time" guarantee, you start out with a 99% chance the items is original. However, know your source as the most important advice I can offer. I've encountered hundreds of "veterans" who "personally took" post war combat badges off a dead enemy soldier or POW. Other stories are "my father, uncle or brother" brought this rare, but fake, badge back from the "Great World War Two." It used to be in the 1950's and 1960's that a collector had three criteria that he followed when adding items to his collection. First, he looked at the condition, next the price, and originality was last. I have noticed today that the first thing a collectors asks himself "Is it real?" Then he looks the condition and the price is at the end of the list.

I am afraid that by the end of the next decade, a beginning collector will have to turn to Scotland Yard, the F. B. I., and the best forensic laboratories that can be found to determine what is real and what is fake. Hopefully, I will be wrong, but the quest for the all mighty dollar and man's inherent greed seems to overshadow the quest to keep the past alive by searching for that original elusive war relic from the past. It also keeps us all reaching for the provable "brass ring" on the merry-go-around of war relic collecting. In conclusion, I know my source for my latest find and I can lie down with a worry free mind that it absolutely original in every way. But, when my Anti-Partisan War Badge next passes into another collectors hands, will he have to ask "Is it real"? Probably so because that is the most important question that a collector must ask himself as he prepares to inter into the collecting arena of the new millennium.