

ACTA NUMISMATICA
HUNGARICA

2024



JOURNAL OF THE HUNGARIAN
NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

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II

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BUDAPEST 2024

ACTA NUMISMATICA HUNGARICA

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Available online at <http://acta.numizmatika.org>

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Cover design: Gábor Vácz

ISSN

Budapest 2024

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Abbreviations of Journals and Periodicals

ActaNumHung	Acta Numismatica Hungarica. Budapest.
AECO	Archivum Europae Centro Orientalis. Budapest.
ArchÉrt	Archaeologiai Értesítő. Budapest.
ArsDec	Ars Decorativa. Az Iparművészeti Múzeum és a Hopp Ferenc Keletázsiai Művészeti Múzeum Évkönyve. Budapest.
AT	Antik Tanulmányok. Studia Antiqua. Budapest.
BIMf	Blätter für Münzfreunde. Leipzig-Dresden-Halle-Heidelberg.
BolNum	Bollettino di Numismatica. Roma.
CommArchHung	Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae. Budapest.
DissArch	Dissertationes Archaeologicae ex Instituto Archaeologico Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae. Budapest.
Érem	Az Érem. Budapest.
FolArch	Folia Archaeologica. Budapest.
FolHist	Folia Historica. Budapest.
HaRég	Határtalan Régészet. Szeged.
HtMÉ	A Hadtörténeti Múzeum Értesítője. Budapest.
MEFRA	Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'École Française de Rome. Rome.
MFME MonArch	Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve – Monumentum Archaeologica. Szeged.
MK	Múzeumi Közlemények. Budapest.
MM	Magyar Múzeumok. Budapest.
MÖNG	Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Numismatischen Gesellschaft in Wien. Wien.
Művészet	Művészet. Budapest.
Numizmatičar	Numizmatičar, Beograd.
NK	Numizmatikai Közlöny. Budapest.
NZ	Numismatische Zeitschrift. Wien.
Pontica	Pontica. Studii și materiale de istorie, arheologie și muzeografie. Constanta.
RégFüz	Régészeti Füzetek, Budapest.
RIN	Rivista Italiana di Numismatica. Milano.
Stratpl	Stratum plus. Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology. Kishinev.
TÜBA-KED	Kültür Envanteri Dergisi – Journal of Cultural Inventory, Online Journal.
ZiStA	Ziridava Studia Archaeologica. Arad.

U-Boat War Badge – U-Boot Kriegsabzeichen (1939–1945)

Gábor BAKOS*

This topic may be somewhat exotic for Hungarians. After all the sea is a long way away but many major events occurred there. Vital raw and war materials, the food and troops were transported by sea. Great Britain and the Soviet Union were particularly dependent upon this method of supply. Dominating not only the sea lanes but the sea itself was essential for survival. Germany required to develop a dominant position at sea if it wished to overcome its adversaries and the humiliating peace imposed upon it at the end of the First World War and cement itself as a superpower.

From humble beginnings in 1848 when the Reich Marine was established as barely a match for the Danish Navy and operating only in the Baltic Sea and around Hamburg great strides were made during the 1870s thanks to the initiatives of Otto von Bismarck. Such were these strides that the Brits began to consider the Reich Marine as a rival tainting their relationship in the process.¹ The rivalry culminated in the Battle of Jutland in 1916 which confined the German fleet to port thereafter. A consequence of this was the coming to prominence of the submarine the use of which had already caused serious losses to Allied shipping.² It was no surprise that the peace treaty of 1919 severely restricted the naval strength of Germany and in particular its possession of submarines and the development of this weapon during the life of the Weimar Republic.

Following the rise to power of Adolf Hitler in 1933 the development of new submarines began in defiance of treaty obligations. This was achieved by the use of a clandestine design bureau based in the Netherlands. By the time treaty obligations were relaxed in 1935 the Type A II coastal submarine, among other types, was ready.³ This development was no mean feat and the deployment of these vessels not only sparked the long awaited arms race at sea but provided the German Navy (Deutsche Kriegsmarine) with overwhelming power.

By 27 September 1935 six submarines were in service and the budget for the development of new types and the training of crews allowed for rapid development to the extent that by the outbreak of war in September 1939 57 battle ready vessels were in commission. Karl Donitz, supreme Commander of the submarine fleet (Befehlshaber der U-Boote) not only applied himself to the modernization and development of equipment but to tactics. The wolf pack (Rudeltaktik) concept which would cause severe losses to Allied shipping in the years to come were developed during this early period.⁴

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1 AILSBY1987, 114.

2 AILSBY 1987, 115.

3 WEBER-SKORA 2011, 40.

4 WEBER-SKORA 2011, 41.



Fig. 1 The crew of a German submarine

War broke out at sea, on land and in the air on 1 September 1939 and on 13 October of the same year the first medal for navy personnel was introduced. To acknowledge the service of submarine crews the U-Boot Kriegsabzeichen was created.⁵ Submarines were active right from the start and scored significant early successes. Not only was a great deal of damage done to Allied shipping but their threat tied up considerable Allied resources in ships and manpower. The tactics worked. Perhaps one of the most successful actions was the sinking of the battleship HMS Royal Oak at Scapa Flow by U-47 commanded by Günter Prien.⁶

However, the triumph was a rocky one. The branch was still in its infancy. The shortcomings in crew hygiene, operation of the enigma encryption device, and the growing danger brought on by advances in Allied weaponry and tactics made the service almost intolerable for many. The submarines were often called swimming coffins (*schwimmende Särge*)⁷ by their crews and the death toll was high.



Fig. 2 The hit on the U-243 on July 8, 1944
<https://uboat.net/boats/u243.htm> Download: 27.11.2020)

5 WEBER-SKORA 2011, 43.

6 WEBER-SKORA 2011, 42.

7 WEBER-SKORA 2011, 42.

Achieving the award was far from easy, and its conditions were determined by the ordinance signed by Admiral Raeder on 13 October 1939. The badge was available for captains, officers, non-commissioned officers and the crew who undertook at least two successful missions or who were wounded in action. The badge was regularly worn in the centre of the right hand pocket of the uniform, just like its First World War predecessor. According to the regulations if the owner possessed a higher medal, such as the First Class of the Iron Cross 1939 (Eisernes Kreuz I. Klasse 1939), then the U-Boat War Badge (U-Boot Kriegsabzeichen)⁸ was worn beneath.

Following the award ceremony the recipient was issued a document and a badge free of charge. If the original copy was damaged or lost through no fault of their own, it was replaced for free. In all other instances a recipient had to buy a new piece at their own expense after presenting the necessary documents authorizing the wearing. In the case of death, the family could retain the badge.⁹

Several designs were considered but that of Paul Casberg was eventually adopted.¹⁰ The successful design followed the form of its 1918 predecessor but complied with the requirements of the regime as we will see. The horizontally oval wreath remained as did the stylized submarine with the bow on the left. The wreath is surmounted by an eagle clutching a swastika in its talons replacing the crown found on the 1918 design.

The first production of the badge as dictated in the ordinance of October 1939 was undertaken by Gebrüder Wegerhoff in Lüdenscheid.¹¹ The distinctive GWL marking can be found on the reverse. Its base material is zinc, which often retains its surface coating very poorly. The surface of the badge appears to be rough rather than smooth. This effect is a peculiarity of the products of this maker. The friability is not the product of blisters such as on those produced after the war, the piece is well finished and detailed.¹² Thus, if we encounter a U-Boat badge with a GWL marking, it is a natural phenomenon, giving no reason for concern. The hinge-block on the reverse is distinctive and matches other GWL-produced badges. The hitch hook is C-shaped.



Fig. 3 Kptlt. Jürgen von Rosenstiel, commander of U-502

The photo displays the correct form of wearing of the award

(<https://uboot.net/men/decorations/badge.htm>)

Download: 27.11.2020)



Fig. 4 The obverse of the badge. The pale gold coat and the rough surface is well observable



Fig. 5 The reverse of the badge. The difference in the tone of the gold coat on the pin and that on the body of the badge is discernible

8 WEBER-SKORA 2011, 43.

9 WEBER-SKORA 2011, 45.

10 WEBER-SKORA 2011, 47.

11 WEBER-SKORA 2011, 162.

12 As with most of the objects connected to the Third Reich, the Submarine Army Badge is commonly mocked. Besides, especially good copies were made of the Gebrüder Wegerhoff products, thus the collector must be very careful before buying them.



Fig. 6 The fitting of the badge from a side-view



Fig. 7 a-b The placement and elaboration of the maker's mark in a close-up picture

The weight of the badge is 18 grams. Its width is 48.7 millimeters and its height is 39.1 millimeters. The pin is made of steel with a circular cross section. Its production period was the last third of the war.



Fig. 8 The obverse of the badge. The natural abrasions from wear are observable



Fig. 9 The reverse of the badge. The significant deviation in the tone of the gold coating between the pin and the body of the badge is perceivable

The next badge is marked L/18. The code identifies the manufacturer as B. H. Mayer's Hofkunstprägestalt¹³, founded by Bernhard Heinrich Mayer in 1871 and located in the city of Pforzheim.¹⁴

The design differs from the previous piece. The surface is even and smooth. The tones are uneven. The gold coating is matte. The other eye-catching difference is that the parts between the legs of the swastika are not excised. On the reverse, both the block hinge and the hitch clamp are overlaid, not integrated. Its base material is zinc which emerges through the worn gold coat in several places. The shape of the needle differs too. It is reminiscent of the shape of a coke bottle.¹⁵ The contrast between the surface of the badge and the pin, block hinge and hitch clamp can be striking. The reason for this is the different retaining qualities of the body of the badge and the fitting. The material of both the pin, the hinge and the hitch clamp is tombak, which is an alloy of copper and zinc.



Fig. 10 a-b The fitting of the badge in side-view

13 The company survived the war, and operates at the same place to this day.

14 Woods 2020, 192.

15 WEBER-SKORA 2011, 98.



Fig. 11 a-b The placement and elaboration of the maker's mark in a close-up picture

This badge weighs 16 grams. Its width is 48.6 millimeters and its height is 40 millimeters. Its production period was the second and final third of the war.

What are these markings on the military badges of the Third Reich? What is the difference between the logo, the monogram, the single or double-digit numbers or the markings beginning with the letter L? There is a difference between the markings (1-142)¹⁶ assigned by the Presidential Office (Präsidialkanzlei), the LDO markings beginning with the letter L (L/10-L/66)¹⁷, those with monograms or logos used by different manufacturers and those with complete names of companies or their places of business.¹⁸

To understand the markings, we need to look back to the period between 1933 and 1940. The regulations and protocols were less strict and the quality control was less thorough in this period. Almost all metal-working companies could produce pins and badges if they had the capacity and they wanted to take advantage of the abundance of well-paying governmental orders. The situation changed in 1939. Several new honors were founded and many awards were made after the war broke out. The different manufacturers made the badges and awards as cost effectively as possible, which, without any central supervision,



Fig. 12 a-b Miniature of the Silver Grade of the Panzer Attack Badge (Panzerkampfabzeichen in Silber) in its commercial package marked with LDO



Fig. 13 The purchased product is often unmarked, the code of the manufacturer can only be found on the package in these cases. In this instance, L/16 is the marking of Steinhauer & Lück, based in Lüdenscheid

16 Woods 2020, 34–35.

17 Woods 2020, 36.

18 The list of RZM (Reichzeugmeisterei der NSDAP) coded markings are purposefully omitted here, as the discussed awards could not be put into circulation with this marking, as it served other purposes.

produced mixed results. The quality became erratic, with many pieces being of inadequate quality or even defective. To counteract this, the Presidential Office (Präsidiakanzlei) gave the task of supervision to the Awards Office (Ordenskanzlei), which imposed strict quality regulations from that time on. According to the decree published on 25 July 1940, only companies in possession of a license issued to them were authorized to produce honors and decorations. Producing a sample piece was mandatory before the document of permission for the manufacture could be engrossed. Nevertheless, the situation did not improve much. The LDO codes were decided upon at a conference held on 15 July 1940 attended by representatives from prominent badge manufacturers as well as representatives of the German Labour Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront - DAF). It was here the decision was taken to form the Administration of German Orders Manufacturers (Leistungsgemeinschaft Deutschen Hersteller - LDO).¹⁹

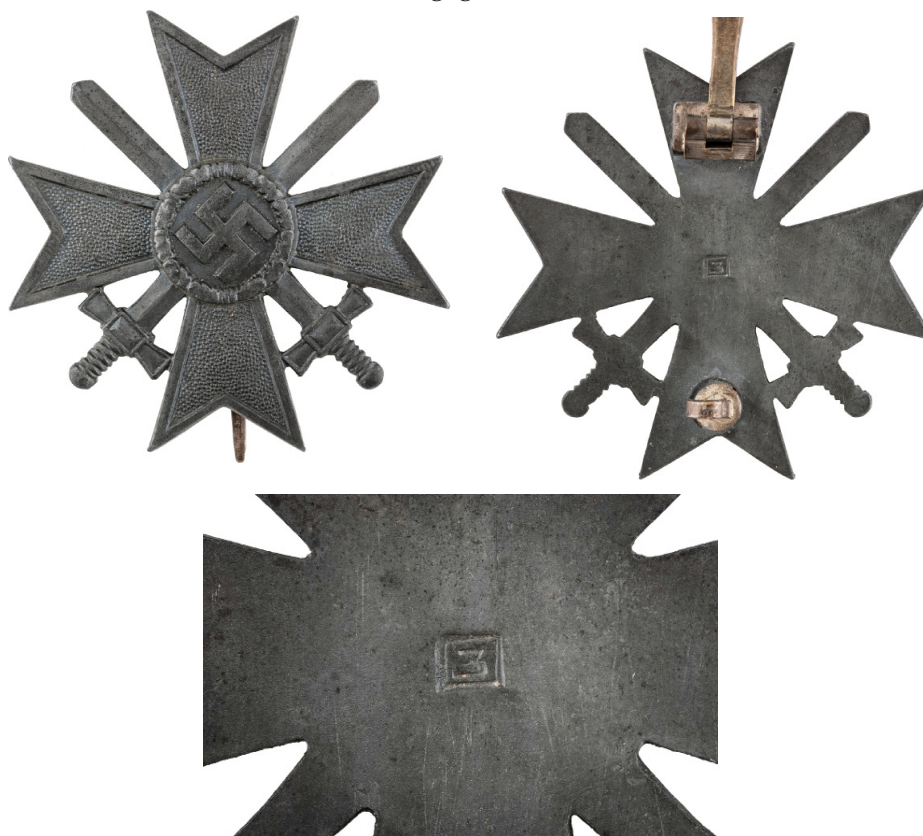


Fig. 14 a-c Number 3 PKZ (Präsidiakanzlei) code on the War Merit Cross 1st Class with Swords (Kriegsverdienstkreuz I. Klasse mit Schwertern). In this case, number 3 indicates the company of Wilhelm Deumer, based in Lüdenscheid

As a result of this reform all manufacturers had to possess a PKZ code by 1941. If they received approval, and they complied with the quality requirements, they also had to possess an LDO code for the distribution of privately sold secondary copies. Not only the quality of the products, but the information listed on the package was prescribed. In addition the LDO was also authorized to control the retail and wholesale prices of the products. Surprisingly, in the last months of the Third Reich, the control intensified. We can find an unusually high number of documents and protocols regarding the production of badges, their distribution and their prices from 1944 on.²⁰

¹⁹ WEBER-SKORA 2020, 32.

²⁰ WOODS 2020, 37.

The U-Boat War Badge is an extremely extensive subject, as many early variations are known and this article presents only two of them. Obviously the goal was not the detailed explanation of all the variations but to provide an introduction and conversation opener. As every accepted product has its own specific feature or features, their identification is possible even in the absence of markings. The world of the awards of the Third Reich is a treacherous pool for amateurs. After the war the manufacturers producing awards, badges and plaques found themselves in a tight spot. Even if they survived the bombings, awards of the orders ceased with the victory of the Allied Forces. Even so the demand was high as every soldier wanted some kind of memorabilia to take home as a trophy. Having sold off what was left of their stock manufacturers recommenced production of the sought after items. They used original dies and base materials at first but later turned to alternatives. These early copies are the most dangerous as they are not the low-quality, easily recognizable castings that are made nowadays. Notwithstanding the truth of the last statement, these could almost be called originals, as they were assembled by the same craftsmen and in the same factories as prior to 1945. The company of Rudolf Souval²¹ in Vienna made the best of the running amongst these businesses having started production very early after the war's end in order to keep the company afloat.

*The photos of artefacts used in this article are private intellectual property and as such their publication and use in any other form is bound by the permission of the author.

21 Woods 2020, 46.

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