

Gustav Brehmer, *Markneukirchen*

The company of Gustav Brehmer was founded in 1871 in the town of *Markneukirchen* in Saxony and became one of the premier manufacturers of war badges during the Third Reich. Interestingly, Karl Wurster, owner of another major war badge manufacturer during the Third Reich began his career working for Brehmer until he eventually opened his own factory some 100 meters from Brehmer after leaving in 1912. The craftsmen at Brehmer produced some of the highest quality badges for the *Luftwaffe* and *Heer* including the numbered *Panzer* Assault Badge (PAB) and numbered General Assault Badge (GAB), but was perhaps most well-known for their stunning *Luftwaffe* Flak Badges. Until recently it was not known that Brehmer also produced a *Heeres-Flak* Badge for the German Army. Brehmer manufactured *Heeres-Flak* Badges in both *Tombak* and *Feinzinc*.

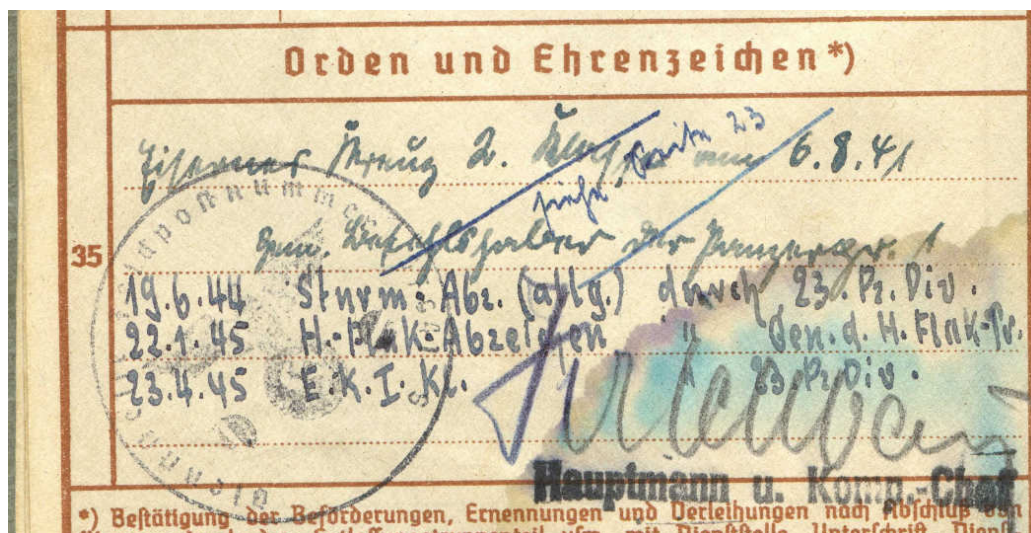


The models of Gustav Brehmer

Tombak	Weight and measurements unavailable		
Zinc with round wire catch	Height: 60.51mm	Width: 45.92mm	Weight: 25g
Zinc with square wire catch	Height: 60.65mm	Width: 45.85mm	Weight: 22 g



After the war the city of *Markneukirchen* became part of the German Democratic Republic and the Brehmer company began production of East German militaria under a new name; *Präwema* (*PRÄgeWERkzeugMACHinen*) *Praegewerk Markneukirchen GMBH*. The “new” company produced awards in the original Brehmer factory which had not been damaged during the war. There are stories of a massive haul of Third Reich militaria, including rare numbered Army General Assault and numbered *Panzer* Assault badges discovered behind a false wall in 1988; all reportedly seized by the *STASI*.



Unteroffizier Friedrich Hiß fought with the 23rd *Panzer* Division when he was awarded his Army Flak Badge. He also received the General Assault Badge, Wound Badge in Black, and both the Iron Cross 1st Class and Iron Cross 2nd class.

Gustav Brehmer, Tombak

Brehmer and Juncker were the **ONLY** producers of the *Heeres-Flak* badges in *Tombak*, and finding such jewels is difficult. They are the pinnacle of Army Flak Badges. Note the gunmetal color of the badge. The regulations called for a silver-anodized finish much like the eagle on the Luftwaffe pilot badge. Interpretation of this regulation leads to *Heeres-Flak* Badge color ranging from bright silver to deep gunmetal, at times almost bronze in hue.



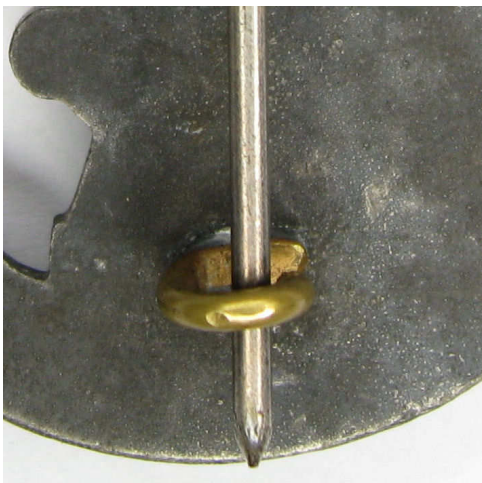
The reverse hardware provides us with clear evidence these badges were made of *Tombak*. The hinge and catch needed no mounting plates, and were soldered directly to the reverse. Note the way the reverse was crafted with the edges filed down. Many *Heeres-Flaks* have quite sharp edges, but the craftsmen of Brehmer put in extra effort.





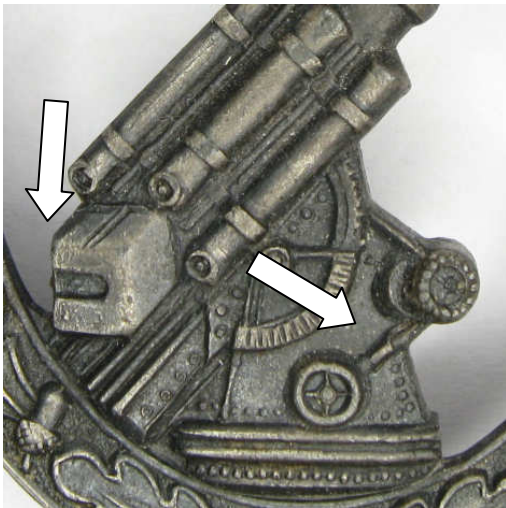
The head of the Brehmer eagle shows clear links to Juncker. The “tooth” in the beak is the clearest sign, but when you look closely you see the eyes are also nearly identical. There are plenty of ways to tell them apart, most easily note the much thicker, almost hairy legs on the Brehmer. The central claw on the right always has a notch in it. Most important note the wing does not touch the gun barrel.

This is the classic Brehmer block hinge. Compare it to the ones on the *Luftwaffe* Flak badges and you will see the pedigree. The central pivot pin holds the retaining pin quite well and all still have the original dark color to them.



The bright brass catch looks odd on the dark badge. It may be a replacement, though it is difficult to tell; if it is the work was masterfully done. Note even from above you do not see any excess solder.

Here we see the C-shaped catch, brass gleaming. It is odd to find a Brehmer with such a gleaming round-wire catch; normally Brehmer used more substantial square-wire catches on war badges.



The gun itself has many critical points to look for. First, Brehmer *Heeres-Flaks* lack a roundel next to the breech. Second, look at the flaw in the metal line connecting the elevation and traverse handles; it is a characteristic of all of these badges. Also, the elevation wheel has no round dots on it, unlike the traverse wheel, a curious difference but a clear one to look for.

Note the shape of the head; while the badges share traits with Juncker, the reverse outline lacks Juncker's oval shape and telltale flashing on the head. Another part of the badge that screams Brehmer is the notch in the retaining pin. It makes something of a "V" shape and is found on other Brehmer badges. Compare the pin's marking to *Luftwaffe* Flaks and you will see they are the same.



BESITZZEUGNIS



DEM

SS-Kanonier

Hans Schönthaler

3. Batterie SS-Flak-Abt. "Das Reich"

WURDE DAS
HEERES-FLAK-ABZEICHEN

<http://www.ironcross1939.com>

HAUPTQUARTIER O.K.H., DEN 16. November 1943.

GENERAL DER ARTILLERIE
BEIM OBERBEFEHLSHABER DES HEERES



GENERALLEUTNANT

This superb *Heeres-Flak Urkunde* was signed by *General Fritz Lindemann*, holder of the Knights Cross of the Iron Cross. He was part of the July 20, 1944 plot against Hitler and was killed by the *Gestapo*.



A *Waffen-SS Unterscharführer* wears a *Heeres-Flak* Badge attached to his tunic by thread. He also wears an Army General Assault Badge and both the 1st and 2nd classes of the Iron Cross.

Gustav Brehmer, Zinc with Round Wire Catch

At first glance this badge looks to be under the wrong heading. Clearly this silver beauty is the *Tombak* one and the dull, dark one before must be zinc? While first looks may be deceiving a quick check of the hardware tells the story. The plating on this zinc badge is superb, with some truly minor bubbling showing the base metal to be zinc.



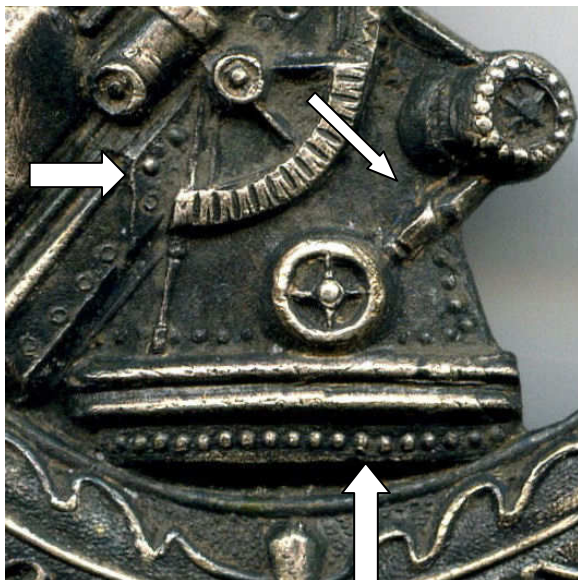
The reverse of the badge shows it is made of zinc. Note the notch on the retaining pin just as found on the *Tombak* version; a telltale marker for Brehmer. Also note the edges; it wasn't only the *Tombak* version that was hand-finished.





The feet of the Brehmer are quite reminiscent of numbered *Panzer* Assault Badges by Brehmer; they are large and highly detailed with speckles covering them. The arrow-head central talon on the right side has the same notch in it as the *Tombak* version.

This badge has a typical sheet-metal hinge, found on so many other Brehmer badges. Though not extravagant they did their jobs. Note the hand finishing gives the edges a slight bevel.



A critical feature is the split 7th rivet. Count from the right along the row of rivets at the base and the 7th one always has a bit of flashing on the bottom, almost splitting the bead. Check the *Tombak* version and you will find it is a die characteristic. Also note the three curious rivets between the breech and gears. On any other badge they would all be rivets or circles, but Brehmer gives us a mix. We again see the break in the bar connecting the two wheels. All of these details were part of the die and should ALWAYS be present.

The back of the retaining pin has the characteristic Brehmer "V" on its side. These minute details should not be glossed over because they provide additional details that help us identify makers. Alone they are curiosities; holistically we see these features tell a story and each maker's stories are unique.



Again note the critical area where the gun barrel does not touch the wing. In all other authentic *Heeres-Flak* badges ONLY the pillow-crimp has this feature. Proceed with caution if you have a badge where the wing does not touch the gun barrel unless it is a Brehmer or pillow-crimp.

We can clearly see the round catch-plate necessitated by the zinc base metal. Brehmer needed this plate to improve adhesion between the catch and the badge. The additional surface area made for a solid hold.



Gustav Brehmer, Zinc with Square Wire Catch

The front of this badge is identical to the other badges, down to the flawed rivet and the arrowhead talon. The gold color is a copper coating on the zinc base metal also found on some L56 *Heeres-Flak* badges.



The reverse of the badge shows the silver plating is flaking off, but certainly gives an appreciation of what the original color must have looked like. Note the catch that is found on so many Brehmer badges.



The hardware helps point to Brehmer, but is only one element in the identification. Still, the hardware on this badge is identical to the hardware on *Luftwaffe* Flaks by Brehmer.



Linking this badge to Brehmer

The badges shown above provide clear links to Brehmer. Thanks must go out to Philippe DeBock whose analysis on the German Combat Awards forum made the link possible. As he stated:

I think these badges can only have been manufactured by Gustav Brehmer.

The grip mark I posted (see below - GB 50 PAB) as far as I'm aware of is unique to GB and can also be found on zinc GB luft flak badges.

The pebbling on the talons as mentioned by Tom Durante also is a typical GB higher grade PAB design characteristic.

We already knew that GB made high quality BM Luft flaks that design wise come very close to Juncker made luft flaks.

So the fact that this heer flak shares design features with Junckers doesn't come as a surprise. There for sure was a very close collaboration between Juncker and GB. If you look at the grade II & III PAB's GB also used the Juncker design for both wreath and Panzer. Further evidence of this collaboration can also be found when comparing Juncker's and GB's GAB designs.

<http://www.germancombatawards.com/>



Other links to Brehmer can be seen by this numbered *Panzer Assault* Badge by the Brehmer firm. The legs are very similar in design to the Flak badge, and more concretely the same "V" shaped notch exists on the retaining pin. While there is no single "silver bullet" such as a maker mark, taken holistically, the vast amount of evidence clearly links this badge to Gustav Brehmer.

The Flak Badges: available at

<http://www.ironcross1939.com/>

This comprehensive reference is the result of years of study by one of the leading experts of the Flak Badges of the Wehrmacht. Marc Garlasco has meticulously examined dozens of variations by all known makers of these war badges of the Second World War and clearly presents them to us. His work is essential reading for anyone interested in collecting the anti-aircraft badges of the Luftwaffe and Heer. The novice and the expert collector alike will benefit from this ground-breaking treatment. For the first time anywhere the Flak Badges of the German Army are dissected. Garlasco demystifies these awards and presents all with the tools to preserve history. In addition to badges, he incorporates the history, award documents, and cases, turning simple pieces of metal into a tangible connection to historical events. This book is a "must have" for every serious collector of war badges and will stand the test of time for years to come. Over 460 pages and over 850 pictures in full color.

