

**AN INCREDIBLY RARE SECTION OF GERMAN WW1 NIGHT LOZENGE FABRIC DISPLAYING TWO TYPES OF 1918 BALKENKREUZ WHICH WAS REMOVED FROM THE PORT SIDE OF THE RUDDER OF AN AEG GIV BOMBER. SOLD WITH THE NAMEPLATE OF A FRIEDRICHSHAFEN GIIIa WHICH WAS BROUGHT BACK FROM THE WAR BY THE SAME SOLDIER**



### **THE FABRIC CROSS**

The fabric and cross itself measures 79cm height and 75cm width at its widest part. The width of the cross is slightly shorter at each end, the missing 2cm (approximately) at each side being where the fabric was attached to the rudder frame itself. It is very unlikely the height of the cross, bar a matter of mm, was any bigger; the dimensions of the rudder frame dictating the maximum width and this in turn dictating the maximum height for the cross to look as even as possible.

There is a slight slope between the top right and bottom right of the fabric which would roughly follow the gradient on the AEG rudder frame. To the very top left of the fabric is a rectangular section missing which is exactly the area where the rudder hinge would have been.(see pics of rudder frame)

The original cross painted onto the fabric was 65 x 65cm, including a 1.5cm white border around the entire cross. The cross has then been repainted and enlarged to conform to the later specifications, increasing the height and width of the cross. The white border has increased from 1.5cm to 5.5cm, this with a 1cm black border

This section of lozenge fabric itself was made from two pieces of lozenge fabric that were stitched together. This is because the height of the rudder being far bigger than a single bolt (roll) of lozenge fabric. Therefore two bolts were stitched together so the entire rudder could be covered at once. On this particular example, the join seam is clearer on the reverse of the fabric.



## **PAINT**

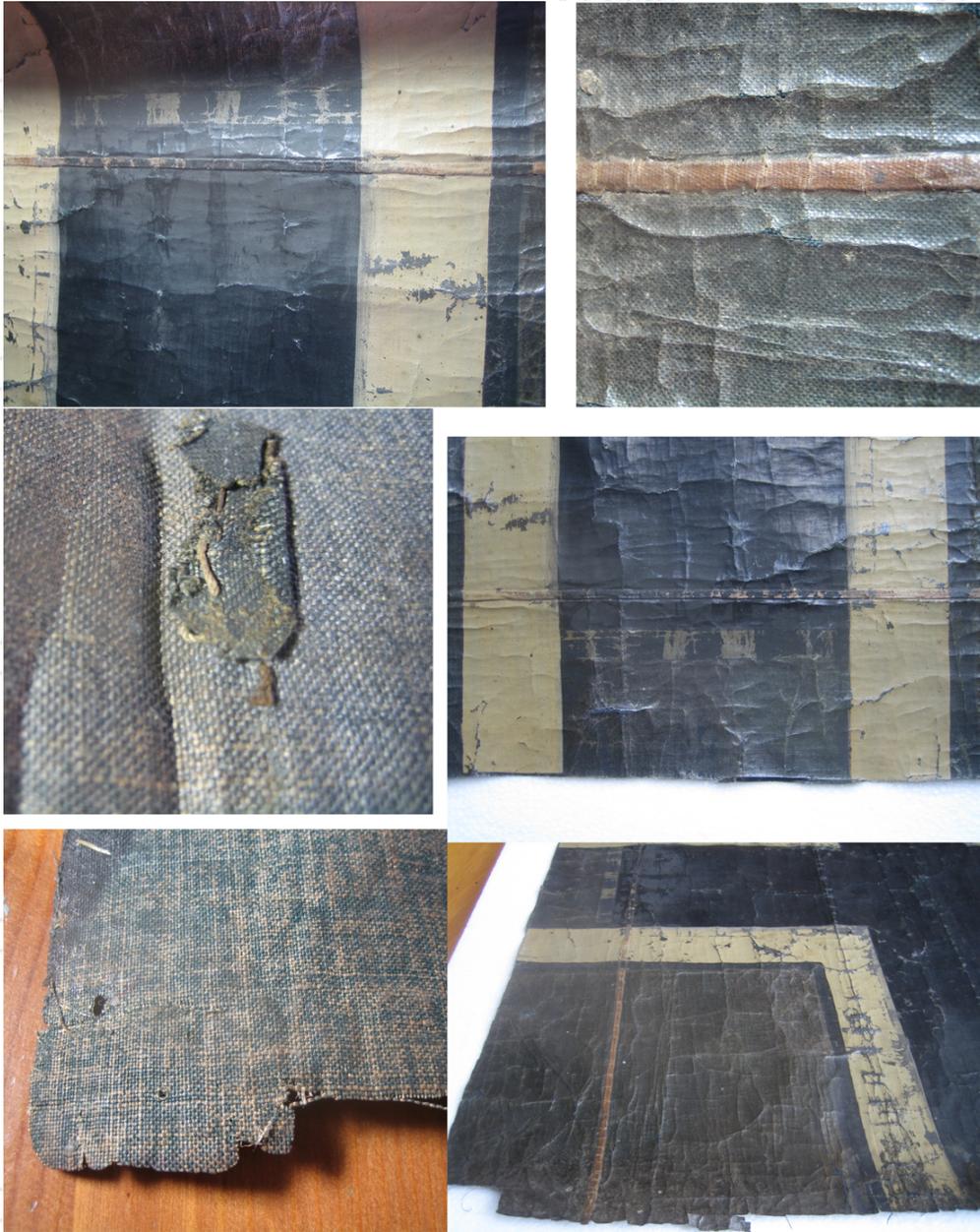
Some of the paints used for insignia on later war German aircraft did not adhere well to fabric or other paints and this can be seen perfectly on this piece of fabric. The original cross, including the 1.5cm white border, was painted over (or at least partially) with a later black paint to increase the length/width of the cross. The later black paint has not adhered well to the previously unpainted but doped fabric, or the original 1.5cm white border, which is why we can faintly see the original white border. However the later white paint used to increase the dimensions has adhered very well, as has the black paint when applied on top of the new white border. This issue with the later paint is the only reason we can see that there are two types of cross painted onto the rudder.

The use of the Balkenkreuz on German aircraft started towards the end of March 1918 but the exact configurations changed several times between then and the end of June 1918. The early cross painted on the fabric here, would date from around April or May 1918, the later cross from around June 1918 plus

## **IDENTIFICATION**

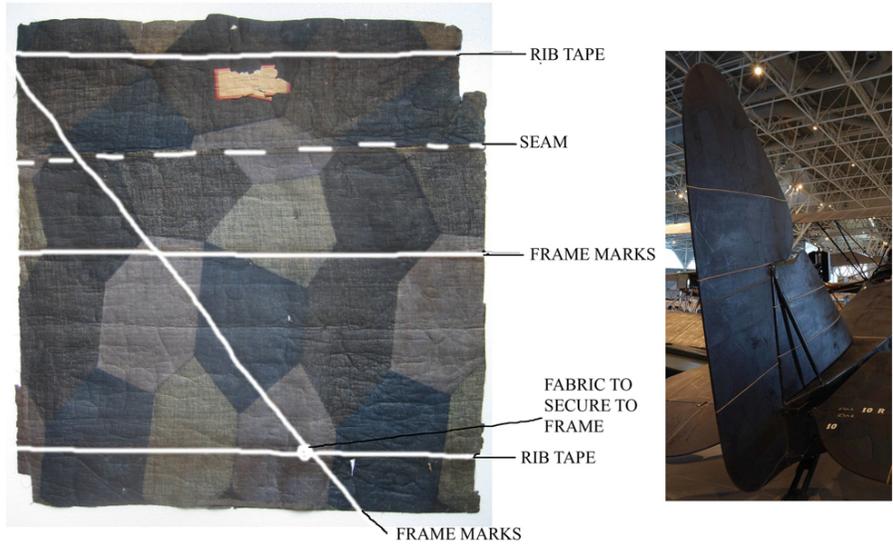
On the reverse of the fabric, we can see stitch marks and the remnants of the stitching used to attach the upper and lower rib/tapes. These measure 62.5cm between each attached rib.

Exactly half way between each is the faint marks where the fabric was stretched over another tubular rib but not attached. Checking the AEG rudder on the Canada Aviation and Space Museums (CASM) example, this is exactly the same.



We can also see where the seam where the two sections of lozenge fabric were stitched together, both being roughly in the same place. On the CASM example, the overlap and seam is on the obverse of the fabric, not the reverse that is for sale here but the CASM example has been recovered with modern printed fabric. Key to identification are faint marks of a diagonal frame tube on the fabric reverse, which starts at the left of the upper rib/tube and crosses the lower rib/tube about two thirds of its length. At this intersection is the remnant of a small piece of fabric, which was sewn onto the fabric and was used to attach the diagonal rib/tube to the fabric. Looking at the picture of the frame of an AEG's rudder, we can see exactly the same diagonal rib/tube. These two faint marks from where the fabric was stretched over the

metal frame, along with the position of the rib tapes, make it clear that the fabric cam from the rudder of an AEG GIV.



Checking the rudders of the other two most likely aircraft types the cross could have come from; Friedrichshafen or Gotha (and their variants), none are possible matches.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AEG\\_G.IV](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AEG_G.IV)



There are two small canvas patches to the lower left of the fabric, these covering shrapnel damage or bullet holes. Although these are canvas colour, both have traces of dark paint which has not adhered to the canvas, in the same way as it hasn't to the end of each of the crosses arm. To the right of the lower patch, there is an unpatched hole and presumably this shrapnel or bullet hole happened the last time the aircraft was in flight and was never patched.

The AEG GIV bomber became operational in late 1916 and remained in service until late 1918. During the war, the AEG GIV served mainly as a tactical bomber, operating close to the front lines. In 1918 this type was increasingly used as a night bomber, the fabric used on this particular type being night lozenge, which is less frequently seen on this type. A single AEG GIV survives in the Canada Aviation and Space Museum (CASM) and was also covered with night lozenge fabric:

<https://ingeniumcanada.org/aviation/artifact/aeg-giv>

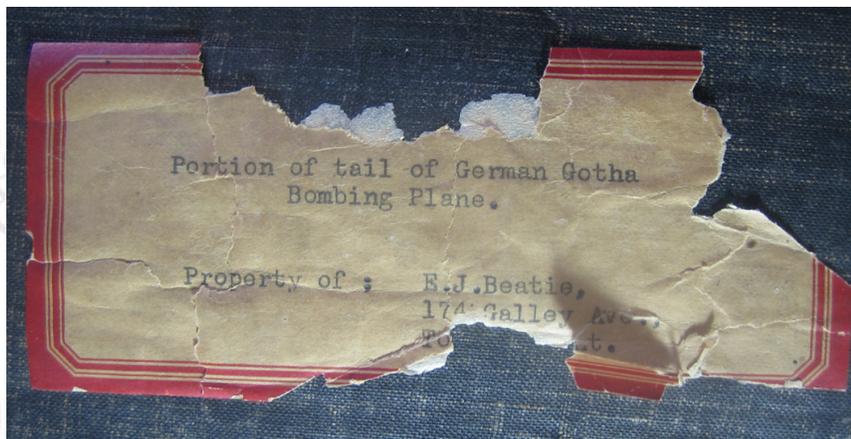




This A.E.G. G.IV (G.1125/16) was shot down by British anti-aircraft fire over Alchet-le-Grand, France on 23 December 1917. The British captured the aircraft intact and re-registered the bomber as G.105. A.E.G. G.IVs primarily flew close air support and battlefield interdiction missions on the Western Front.

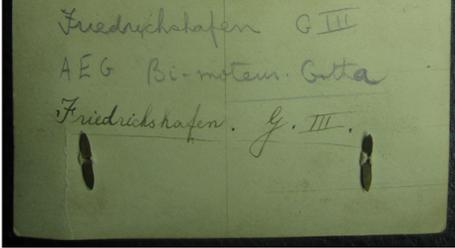
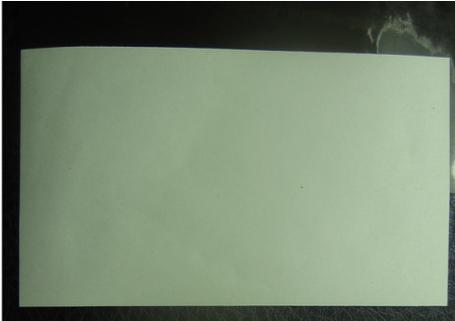
### PROVENANCE AND CONCLUSION

This piece of fabric came from the nephew of a Canadian soldier who brought it back from the war as a souvenir. It came with two original postcard sized photos and a negative of a Friedrichshafen GIII bomber, with the original nameplate of a Daimler built Friedrichshafen GIIIa attached to one of the photos. It was originally presumed the fabric also came from this particular type of aircraft but careful comparisons show it could not have come from the rudder (or fuselage) of any model of Friedrichshafen, especially a GIIIa which had a box configuration tailplane. The photos, which show allied, presumably Canadian soldiers, around the Friedrichshafen, suggest the photo was dated just post war, when allied troops took over German airfields. It is more than likely other German aircraft were at the same location, including the AEG. The reverse of the post card with the plate attached has Friedrichshafen GIII written to its reverse but also says 'AEG' which may indicate the types they were.



A label to the reverse of the fabric suggests it may have been on loan to a museum or displayed at some point. It describes the fabric as being from a 'German Gotha bombing plane', 'Gotha' being a way to describe most German bombers of the time so shouldn't be read into.

Although the photos and nameplate are clearly not from the aircraft the fabric came from, this nameplate, which is rare in its own right, it is being sold with the fabric as it was brought home by the same soldier and if the location or unit of the Friedrichshafen can be established, it may lead to the same for the AEG.



There were approximately 320 AEG GIV bombers produced between 1916 and the end of the War, only one of which survives. Whether any other AEG GIV rudder crosses exist is unknown but none could be located when researching this piece of fabric. Condition of the fabric is surprisingly good. The fabric is still pretty supple and the paint that remains is stable, with little no flaking when carefully rolled.

The vast majority of fabric crosses that come on the market are from fighters such as the Fokker DVII but even pieces of lozenge fabric without insignia painted onto them are usually the upper four or five colour day type. Examples of night lozenge fabric are rare but examples with a fuselage or rudder cross are incredibly rare. Here you have not only the rare night lozenge fabric but a full rudder cross, which shows the use of two types of cross. All in all this is an outstanding and very rare piece.