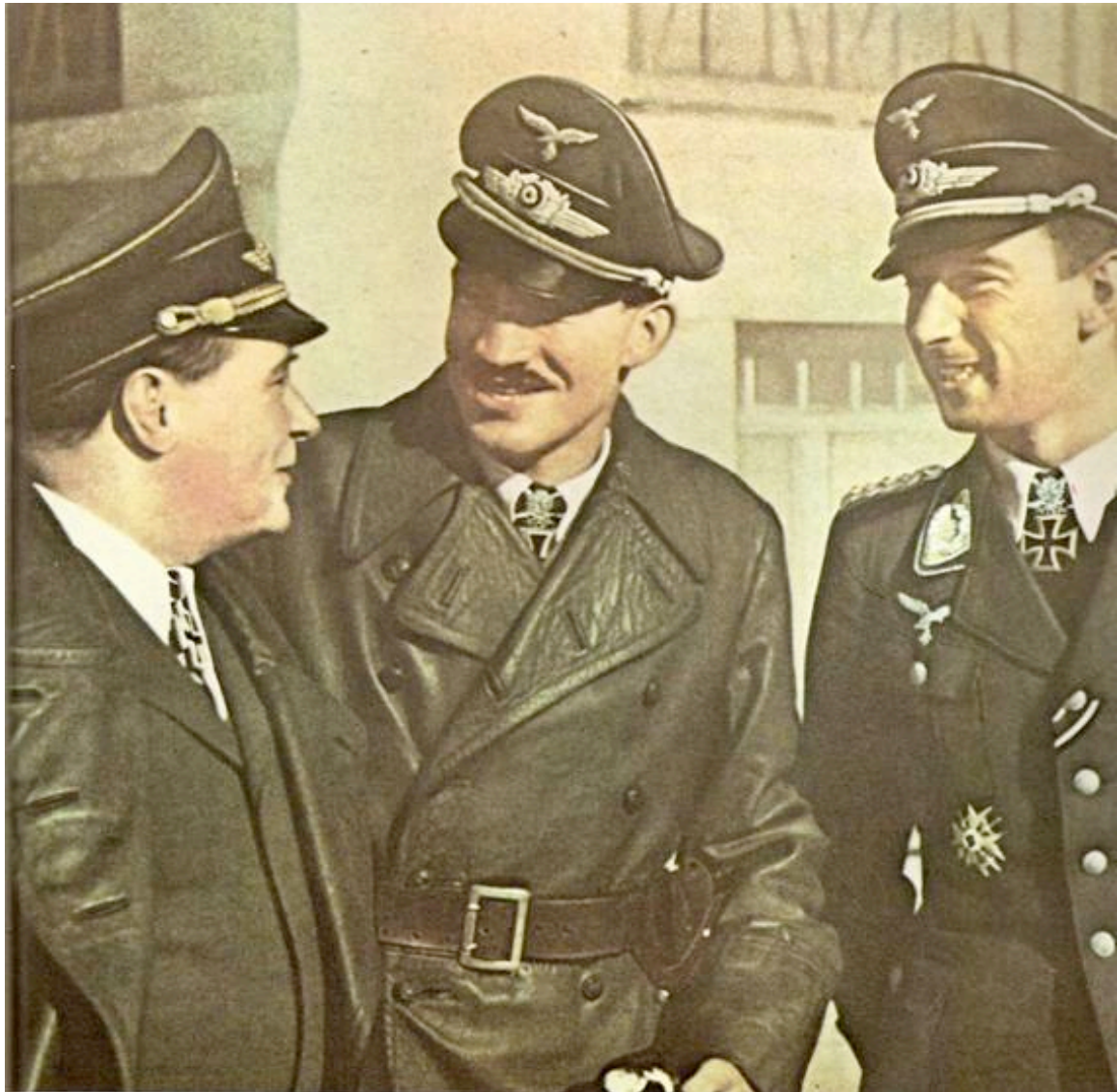


## THE STRANGE CASE OF ADOLF GALLAND'S DIAMONDS

Copyright © Wilbur C Stump 2011

When Adolph Hitler instituted the Swords to the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross 1939 on July 15 1941, he also introduced a further grade in the form of the *Eichenlaub mit Schwertern und Brillanten zum Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes* to reward the air ace Werner Mölders in recognition of his hundredth kill. Although the ELSB was not formally instituted until September 28 1941, Mölders was awarded the *Brillanten* on July 16 1941, becoming the first of just twenty-seven *Brillantenträger*.



Adolph Galland, seen between Ernst Udet, to his right, and Werner Mölders, to his left, was awarded the *Brillanten* on January 28 1942, by which time Mölders was dead, killed in a flying accident on his way to Udet's funeral the previous November. In this photograph, from a *Signal* magazine article on Germany's first's *Brillantenträger*, Mölders is wearing his ELSB, which is the same size as Galland's ELS (*Eichenlaub mit Schwertern*). The *Eichenlaub* and *Eichenlaub mit Schwertern* clasps were supplied to the *Ordenskanzlei* by the Berlin firm of Godet.

The first sets of ELSB were duly supplied by Godet. The Godet ELSB was based on the firm's ELS and was approximately the same size, measuring 24mm x 27mm. The ELS was drilled and inset with diamonds, with a brace soldered around the reverse of the leaves for strength. Some sources state that Godet sub-contracted the Paris branch of Tiffany's to inset the diamonds but there is no proof of this. In the *Signal* photos, Mölders is wearing Godet *Brillanten*. The next two recipients, Adolph Galland (28.1.1942) and Gordon Gollob (30.8.1942) are said to

have received the Godet *Brillanten* before the contract to produce the ELSB was given to Otto Klein of Hanau, one of the firms later commissioned to manufacture the German Cross.

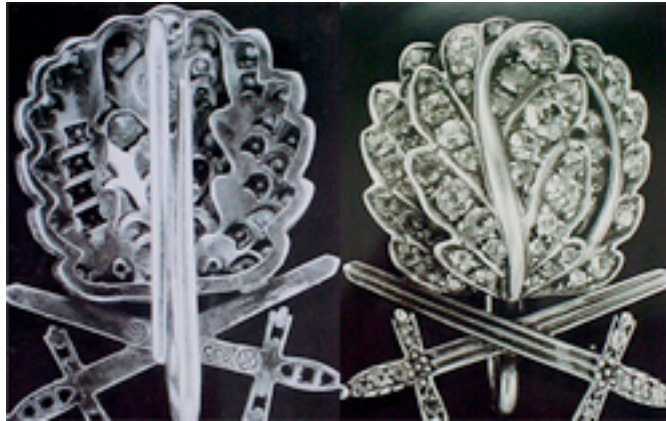


The above photograph, supposedly dating from the time of Mölders' funeral, shows a set of *Brillanten* said to have belonged to the air ace. They certainly conform to the Godet design. The *Ritterkreuz* itself, however, is of a type not seen in any of the contemporary photographs and films of Mölders. It is a so-called 'three-quarter ring' variant said to have been made by the Ludenscheid firm of Wilhelm Deumer very early in the War. Deumer was not one of the firms subsequently authorized to produce the RK. However, a number of wartime portraits show this type of cross being worn. There again, a number of wartime photographs showed the so-called 'Rounder' RK being worn, a variant subsequently proven to be a postwar fake.



The Klein ELSB was superior to the Godet piece. Measuring approximately 22mm x 28mm, Klein's ELSB was built up from several main parts, as the above photograph shows. Rather than a single casting as with the ELS, the swords consisted of two castings, one soldered to the other after the hilts and crossguards were inset with diamonds. The central rib of the top leaf was soldered in place and both leaf components were pierced and handchased to create the settings for the stones before being joined at the base by two small 'doughnut' rivets with a third at the apex. The contoured brace was then soldered to the reverse and the sword assembly was soldered to the leaves. The suspension loop was then soldered to the reverse of the clasp.





Each *Brilliantenträger* was supposed to receive two sets: the award piece in 950 platinum inset with a total of fifty-five genuine diamonds weighing some 2.7 carats, and a dress copy in 935 silver inset with semi-precious gemstones. The reverse of the lower sword of the A Stück ELSB normally carried the 950PT hallmark on the crossguard with the firm's Circle-K hallmark and the triple-chevron Hanau hallmark on its blade. The B Stück ELSB usually bore the 935 silver hallmark and the firm and city hallmarks on the reverse of the blade of the lower sword. The ribbon loops of both types were in sterling silver and marked 925.

However, not all *Brilliantenträger* received two sets. Adolph Galland received four sets during the War. In his memoir, *The First and The Last*, Galland recounts how Hermann Göring, having examined the *Brillanten* presented to Galland by Hitler, had a superior set produced, which he gave to Galland. Hitler, upon learning of this, then commissioned an even better set for Galland. In his memoir, Galland wrote: "*How I got the diamonds is another story. Hitler had given me one set with the usual ceremony. Some time later, when I was sitting opposite Göring in his special train at his H.Q. in the Ukraine, Göring looked at me quizzically and said, 'tell me, are those diamonds the Fuhrer gave you? Let me have a look at them.'*"

*"I put down my knife and fork and started to take off the Knights Cross [...] Göring took my diamonds in his hand and scrutinized them. 'No,' he said with a grimace of disapproval. 'These aren't diamonds at all. They're just stones, ordinary stones. The Fuhrer has been swindled over this. He knows a lot about guns, battleships and tanks but hasn't a clue about diamonds. Look here, Galland, I'll get some for you. Then you will see what diamonds really are. I still have a few left'. He took the diamonds and I fastened on my Knights Cross with a paper clip.*



**Galland with his Godet ELSB**

*"Later I went to Karinhall to see Göring. The diamonds had been built by his court jeweler and Göring was as pleased as a child. 'Look here,' said Göring, holding a decoration in each hand so that the diamonds sparkled. 'These are the Führer's diamonds and these are the Reichmarschall's. Do you see the difference? Now, which one of us knows about diamonds?' I had to admit that he was right. The Reichmarschall's had a beauty of their own, they were larger and had a wonderful brilliance. Compared with them, the Führer's stones looked very inferior. He gave me both decorations back and I now had two sets.*

*"Well, later it seems that Hitler found out about this and stated that the original pair he had awarded were only 'temporary'. He then ordered another pair made, which was presented to Galland as a third set after he criticized the second (Göring's pair) as 'just ordinary stones'. Towards the end of the war my command post near Berlin was completely destroyed by bombs, and among other things I lost set No. 3. When Hitler heard of this he had a new set made. This was my fourth".*



Visitors to important militaria shows like the MAX Show and the Show of Shows or SOS often make a beeline for the stand of the West Coast dealer Wolfe-Hardin. Amongst the high end exotica on display are the cased *Brillanten* awarded to three of the first five *Brillantenträger*: Adolph Galland (28.1.1942), Hermann Graf (16.9.1942) and Gordon Gollob (30.8.1942). Steve Wolfe has stated that the Galland *Brillanten* were acquired from the late General Galland's family. The Galland family has declined to comment, other than to indicate that Adolph Galland's *Brillanten* remain in the family and that there are two sets. Galland's memoirs make it clear that of the four sets he received during the War, one set was taken by Göring and another destroyed by enemy action, leaving the sets he received from Göring and, later, from Hitler.

The Galland *Brillanten* in the above photograph of the Wolfe-Hardin showcase are clearly Godet-pattern ELSB while the other two seem to be Klein pieces, although they appear to differ quite radically from one another. The noted Knight's Cross expert Dietrich Maerz, author of *The Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross 1939*, a self-published book hailed by some as the definitive reference work on the subject and by others as little more than a tool to introduce fakes into the marketplace, stated on an internet forum on 6.1.2008: *"I have the alleged Galland Diamanten [sic] in my book. I certainly don't know whether they are really Gallands piece, but I am very confident (and not only me) that they are a first model Godet - and not only because of the L/50 stamp..."*.

Presupposing for the sake of argument that the set of Galland *Brillanten* examined by Maerz is a genuine Godet piece made between July 1941 and May 1945 rather than twenty or thirty years later, like so many of the Godet EL and ELS residing in dealers' and collectors' showcases today, this would still not explain how it could be attributed to Adolph Galland. Galland was a very precise, meticulous man and he went into some detail about the four *Brillanten* he received during the War. The first was a Godet piece. The second was a piece made by Hermann Göring's "court jeweler", which was apparently larger than the award piece Göring took from him. The third and fourth sets given to him by Hitler were obviously Klein pieces. Perhaps the second set was commissioned from Klein by Göring.

In March 1941, the *Präsidialkanzlei* tightened the rules governing the manufacture and supply of all grades of the *Ritterkreuz*. Only firms authorized by the PK-Amt could produce the RK and its clasps. They were still allowed to produce copies for sale through retail outlets but these had to be marked with a code issued by the *Leistungsgemeinschaft Deutscher Ordenshersteller* or LDO, as it was known. Godet's LDO code was L/50. So the ELSB said by Mr Wolfe to have been acquired from the Galland family is a retail dress copy, yet nowhere does Adolph



Galland refer to presenting his Wehrpass or Soldbuch at an approved retail outlet and buying himself a set of the very same kind of *Brillanten* that incurred his Commander-in-Chief's disapproval. Galland clearly had no need to buy replacement or duplicate *Brillanten*. Later in 1941, the PKA confiscated most of the *Ritterkreuze* and clasps in firms' and dealers' stocks, including LDO-marked pieces, and some LDO-marked crosses and clasps were presented as award pieces.

Would Hitler have given Galland another Godet ELSB in the first half of 1942? It is possible, especially as Gordon Gollob received a Godet ELSB from Hitler in September 1942. Could it have been an LDO dress copy? This is also possible. However, it is unlikely and, in any case, Galland's third set was destroyed. Could Hitler have given Galland an LDO-marked Godet ELSB later in the War as a replacement for the destroyed set? It is highly unlikely that Hitler, intending to outdo Göring, would have given Galland anything other than a set of platinum ELSB inlaid with 2.7 carats of real diamonds by Klein of Hanau. Were these the award set, by some strange chance, they might be stamped with the LDO code, given the PKA's confiscation of such pieces, but Göring does not seem to have returned the award set to Galland.



As the above extract from an article in the May 23 1953 of the Munich edition of *Revue* magazine shows, Galland's brother made enquiries about commissioning a new set of *Brillanten* for Adolph Galland. The article states: "A prospective customer has already appeared: the former General der Jagdflieger Galland, who has been living in Argentina for some time. The inquiry came from a Polizei-Wachtmeister, on behalf of Dr. Jur. Galland of Essen, a brother of the ex-General. The Polizei-Wachtmeister is himself a highly decorated fighter pilot and one of Knuth's best customers. From his meagre police salary, he laboriously saves money for his medal collection. For him, these are not just medals but symbols of history."

Adolph Galland was helping the Argentine dictator General Perón to modernize his air force and often wore his decorations at official and social functions, a small vanity that would later cost him any chance of employment by the new Bundeswehr. Although the enquiry seems rather tenuous, The *Revue* article poses some awkward questions. If Adolph Galland or his family had two sets of *Brillanten* at the time, or three sets if you believe that the alleged Galland *Brillanten* in Wolfe-Hardin's possession were acquired from the Galland family, why would Galland's brother enquire about having a set made for Galland to wear at functions in Argentina? Why not simply have the Argentines bring Galland one of the genuine sets in the diplomatic bag? Or why not have a set made in Buenos Aires, a wealthy city that boasted branches of some of the world's top jewelers, including Tiffany's and Mappin & Webb, both of which had workshops in the city.

One could conclude from the magazine article that neither Adolph Galland nor his family were in possession of any of Galland's wartime *Brillanten* in 1953, including the set Galland was wearing when taken into captivity in 1945. Or one might surmise that they wished to retain the wartime sets for sentimental reasons. Yet as anyone who has studied German-related phaleristics knows, the certificate is the award, the medal merely being a badge signifying possession of the certificate. Galland was not terribly fond of his Führer or of Göring so it is unlikely that he would have attached much sentimental importance to the *Brillanten* they gave him. He would have been perfectly happy to wear a set commissioned on his behalf in 1953 by his brother.

As far as the other sets of *Brillanten* in the showcase are concerned, Gordon Gollob is known to have been awarded a Godet piece in August 1942. Perhaps Göring subsequently ensured that Gollob received a superior ELSB by Klein. In the case of the fourth recipient, Hans-Joachim Marseille, he was killed in action before he could actually receive his ELSB. The fifth recipient, Hermann Graf (16.9.1942), received a set of Klein *Brillanten*. All that one can say is that the *Brillanten* attributed to Gollob are obviously not by Godet and that they differ somewhat in appearance to the set attributed to Graf.

Historical Military Art and Collectibles  
Presents

## Oak Leaf with Swords and BRILLIANTS

(Eichenlaub mit Schwertern und Brillanten)

Offered for the first time to Iron Cross collectors are these exquisite, jewel-quality specimens of Germany's very highest military awards of World War Two: BOTH the Silver and the Golden Oak Leaves with Swords and Brillants.

During the six years of the World's Greatest War, only ONE Golden Oak Leaf and 27 Silver Oak Leaves with Brillants were ever awarded.

|                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Silver with simulated diamonds | U.S. \$795.00   |
| Silver with genuine diamonds   | U.S. \$3,650.00 |
| Gold with simulated diamonds   | U.S. \$1,445.00 |
| Gold with genuine diamonds     | U.S. \$4,250.00 |

HISTORICAL MILITARY ART  
and Collectibles  
Postal Drawer 1806  
Lafayette, California 94549 U.S.A.

The shape of the Gollob ELSB in the Wolfe-Hardin showcase recalls the copies advertised some years ago by the Historical Military Art and Collectibles dealership, which offered copies of this decoration for prices ranging from \$795.00 to \$4,250.00. HMAc operated through a PO Box in Lafayette, California. Coincidentally, Lafayette is the hometown of a well-known collector by the name of Harper Noehren. Mr Noehren happens to be a jeweller who allegedly supplies top dealers with all sorts of high end fakes of Third Reich awards and objects, including the diamond-studded badges and, of course, the Knight's Cross *Brillanten*. His clients allegedly include Steve Wolfe, Jason Burmeister, Charles Snyder, Bob Hritz, Bill Shea and Craig Gottlieb. The photographs of component parts of the 'Klein' *Brillanten* shown in this article are from a series of photographs reportedly taken in a jewellery workshop near Mr Noehren's hometown of Lafayette.

Klein themselves produced copies for collectors long after the Second World War but these were very different in overall appearance and construction to their wartime *Brillanten*. However, the British phalerist and author Gordon Williamson states on Page 424 of *The Iron Cross of 1939*: "This, and the previous two photographs, are believed to show a post-war piece manufactured by the original maker in an identical manner to their wartime counterparts". This statement is part of a caption to three views of a set of B Stück *Brillanten* by Otto Klein. Williamson's statement caused some consternation in high level collecting circles, not just in Europe and the USA but also in the newer markets in Russia and China but he was only confirming common knowledge amongst those in the know for years; Klein have supplied collectors and dealers with perfect replicas of their wartime ELSB, just as Godet supplied perfect replicas of their EL and ELS and, according to some sources, their ELSB.





The clasp measures typically 28mm in height, 22mm in width with the Swords at 27mm. Due to being jeweller hand-crafted, each piece was virtually unique and thus variations of a millimeter or so in dimensions may be encountered.



Oakleaves, Swords and Diamonds set by Otto Klein of Hanau.

Upper left: Reverse of the Klein Diamonds set. On the reverse of the Sword blade are found the Klein mark of a letter "K" within a circle, the platinum mark, and the emblem of the town of Hanau (three chevrons within a circle). This, and the previous two photographs, are believed to show a post-war piece manufactured by the original maker in an identical manner to their wartime counterparts.

A side view of the Diamonds clasp shows the multi-part nature of its construction.



Mr Williamson's fellow *Ritterkreuz* authority Dietrich Maerz publicly stated on January 6 2008 that "*the B-Types are blatant fakes*", in reference to the B Stück *Brillanten* produced by Klein. Perhaps Maerz meant to say that some of the B Stück Klein pieces are blatant fakes. However, if they are identical to the firm's wartime pieces, then they are far from "blatant". And if the firm has been making perfect replicas of the silver *Brillanten* for dealers wishing to retail them as genuine pre-May 8 1945 ELSB, then who can say that they have not made perfect replicas in platinum with real diamonds? Some of the diamond-inlaid fakes of Third Reich awards are let down by incorrectly cut postwar stones but with the return of the rose cut style, the more recent fakes are becoming harder for newer collectors in places like Russia and China to detect.

As far as the Deutsches Ordensmuseum are concerned, the B Types are genuine. In 1990, the DO published the results of an enquiry into the fate of genuine examples of the *Brillanten*. 'A' refers to the platinum sets and 'B' to the silver versions.

Vorhanden in Familienbesitz,  
beim Träger oder beim Käufer 15A, 10B

Nicht aufgehündigt 3A, 6B

In den Kriegswirren verloren  
gegangen 3A, 0B

Von den Siegern erbeutet, gestohlen 1A, 1B

Beim Absturz zerstört 1A, 2B

Umgearbeitet in eine Brosche 1A, 0B

Umgearbeitet in eine Brosche  
und gestohlen 1A, 0B

Mit den Trägern beigesetzt 0A, 3B

In Gefangenschaft abgenommen 0A, 5B

Unklar 2A, 0B

Total, 27A 27B

According to the DO, just two sets were unaccounted for in 1990, both of these being A Stück platinum *Brillanten*. Not every *Brillantenträger* received two sets. Ramcke, for instance, received just one set. The set attributed to Marseille, which is on display at the Luftwaffe Museum in Utersen, is a copy and it is doubtful that Marseille actually received his *Brillanten* before his death. Other *Brillantenträger*, like Adolph Galland, received more than two sets.

So what of the two sets of *Brillanten* in the possession of the Galland family? Are these genuine wartime sets or the perfect replicas made to order after the war by the Klein family, Adolph Galland having perhaps sold the originals for scrap in the hard years immediately after the War, when he was very short of money? What about the set of “Galland *Brillanten*” in the Wolfe-Hardin showcase? Even if it is a genuine pre-May 8 1945 piece, which is impossible to determine without running a SEM test like the ones carried out on several questionable *Ritterkreuze* by the noted collector Dr Tom Hansen, there seems to be no way of proving that it is the Godet ELSB awarded to Galland by Hitler in January 1942, which was subsequently taken from Galland by Göring.

But perhaps the most telling clue lies in the fact that none of Wolfe-Hardin’s wealthy clients, including some stellar show business personalities, has snapped up this unique piece of memorabilia, not even serious idiots like the Chinese millionaire who was talked into buying Hermann Göring’s *Grosskreuz* document. Nor have they stumped up for the Klein *Brillanten* attributed to Gordon Gollob and Hermann Graf, neither of which resembles the other, indicating that one of them may not have come from Otto Klein’s Hanau workshop. And even if one of them did come from Klein’s workshop, who can say whether it was made in 1942, 1972 or even 1982? And even if the Russian and Chinese collectors were to wise up and develop enough intelligence to approach the Galland family about the two sets of *Brillanten* they claim to have, who can say if these *Brillanten* were owned by Dolf Galland before May 8 1945? After all, one *Ritterkreuzträger* sold his cross four times over to collectors and at least three RKT families have sold their deceased relatives’ formal RK documents twice.

Wilbur C Stump  
Crotchrot, KY June 2011