

Lapland Schild

There has been much speculation concerning so-called "late war military shields" rampant in the collecting community. There are the 'Lorient Sheid,' the 'Duenkirchen shield,' the "Balkan shield," the "Warschau shield," the "Arnhem shield" and the "Lapland shield." Of these, only the *Lapland* shield is official and original to the pre-May of 1945 era.

The first two were indeed made, and issued, by local commands but never officially approved, to military personnel inside the besieged French ports (they held out until May 5, 1945) and the "Balkan," "Warschau," and the "Arnhem" pieces were *possibly* considered but never implemented during the course of the war. They are, in point of fact, fantasy items. On the other hand, the *Lapland Schild* was approved and authorized prior to May of 1945 and is considered a legitimate wartime German decoration.

In February of 1945, the *Oberbefehlshaber* (CiC) of the *20.Gebirgs Armee, General der Gebirgs Truppen* Franz Böhme, made a request to the *Oberkommando des Heeres* (OKH-Army High Command) to institute a *Lapland* shield for personnel of the *Wehrmacht* who had served a minimum of six months under his command, and two weeks before May 1, 1945, Hitler approved this issue and a telegram was sent to General Böhme from the head of the *Heeres-Personalamt* (HPA-Army Personnel Office) officially instituting this decoration.

While sketches had been submitted to the officials in Berlin and one had been approved by Hitler, the shield was not made until just after the German surrender in Norway on May 8, 1945. German troops there were interned under the British and General Thorne, the senior British officer, granted permission for the shield to be made, and insofar as possible, to allow it to be presented. Entry in the *Soldbuch* (or paybook) of the soldier was permitted. In both cases, the use of the swastika was forbidden so the shield had no such emblem and the service stamp in the paybook had the swastika gouged out of the metal stamp.

This issue shield was made of thin aluminum with a backing of a tar-like substance and was attached to a field-gray cloth backing via *four* holes perforated in the shield.

Following the end of the war, a small firm in Hamburg began to make these pieces, based on the original design but cast in a thicker aluminum. These could be safely purchased by former soldiers entitled to have it for DM 4.-(The Germans are very strict about unauthorized use of military decorations). As this new issue did not have a swastika, it did not fall under then-West German law forbidding the use of the symbol. The thicker, flatter post-war pieces have *three* attachment holes instead of the four holes of the original.

2 attachments (total 215.0 KB)



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The shield is made from paper thin aluminum with a sort of asphaltum material, on the reverse, for filling and rigidity.