



Hermann Hampe

The German submarine
war badge of the First World War

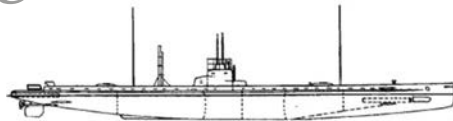




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Inhalt: Einführung eines U-Boots-Kriegsabzeichens. S. 33.

Nr. 32.

Einführung eines U-Boots-Kriegsabzeichens.

1. Ich will für die U-Bootsbesatzungen Meiner Marine in Anerkennung ihrer während des Krieges erworbenen Verdienste ein besonderes Kriegsabzeichen stiften.
2. Das Abzeichen kann von Offizieren, Deckoffizieren, Unteroffizieren und Mannschaften der vor dem Feinde tätigen U-Boote erworben werden, nachdem sie sich auf drei Fahrten gegen den Feind besonders hervorgetan haben. Von dieser Bedingung darf nur im Falle einer Verwundung abgewichen werden.
3. Das Abzeichen wird auf der linken unteren Brust getragen, von Unteroffizieren und Mannschaften auch auf dem Überzieher. Es verbleibt den Beliehenen auch nach dem Ausscheiden aus der U-Bootswaffe.

Für die Verleihung sind zuständig die in Immediatstellen befindlichen Vorgesetzten. Von ihnen wird ein Besitzzeugnis ausgestellt, über das die einzelnen Dienststellen nach Anweisung ihrer Immediatvorgesetzten Nachweisungen zu führen haben.

Der Staatssekretär des Reichs-Marine-Amts hat Mir Entwürfe für das Abzeichen vorzulegen.

Großes Hauptquartier, den 1. Februar 1918.

Wilhelm.

In Vertretung des Reichskanzlers
v. Capelle.

in den Reichskanzler (Reichs-Marine-Amt).

Berlin, den 1. Februar 1918.

Vorstehender Allerhöchster Erlass wird hiermit zur Kenntnis der Marine gebracht.

Der Staatssekretär des Reichs-Marine-Amts.

Id. 1277.

v. Capelle.

The German submarine war badge of the First World War

In the Naval Ordinance Sheet No. 4 of February 1, 1918, the German Emperor Wilhelm II introduced a remarkable military insignia with the following text

- 1.) I wish to endow a special war badge for the submarine crews of My Navy in recognition of their services rendered during the war.
- 2.) The badge can be acquired by officers, deck officers, non-commissioned officers and crews of submarines operating in front of the enemy, after they have distinguished themselves on three voyages against the enemy. This condition may only be deviated from in the case of injury.
- 3.) The badge shall be worn on the lower left side of the chest, and by non-commissioned officers and crews also on the overcoat. The badge remains with the person in charge even after leaving the submarine weapon.

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The superiors in immediate positions are responsible for the award. A certificate of ownership is issued by them, about which the individual departments have to keep records according to the instructions of their immediate superiors.

The State Secretary of the Imperial Naval Office shall submit to me drafts for the badge.

Grand Headquarter, February 1, 1918

Willhelm II

The capitalization of his own address should not surprise us; it was customary at that time with His Imperial Majesty.

Schott in his artist workshop



What makes this piece of non-ferrous metal so interesting?

First of all, there was previously no such badge in the Imperial Navy. Only the military pilot and observer badges existed, both donated in annual intervals on the birthday of the Emperor in 1913 and 1914.

The German Emperor is today perceived merely as a tragic person, in some ways a misinterpretation of his extremely complex personality. He had a certain artistic inclination, which is quite unknown. Many of his ship drawings have been preserved to this day. The Sieges-Allee or Victory Alley with 32 monuments of the Hohenzollern in Berlin, which he commissioned in 1895, was not only financed but also artistically supervised by him.

Walter Schott

The sculptor Walter Schott, born in 1861 and thus only two years younger than Wilhelm II, also worked here. He had been commissioned by the Emperor to create the sculptures Albrecht the Bear, Bishop Wigger of Brandenburg and Bishop Otto of Bamberg for the Sieges-Allee.

The later Kaiser, Wilhelm II, visited the Schott family - Walter's father ran the art foundry of the Fürstlich Stollberg ironworks - as a pupil with his teacher Hinzpeter.

Schott and the later Emperor met again in Potsdam as early as 1887, when Schott created a bust for the Prince of Stollberg-Wernigerode. In 1897, Walter Schott created and produced the Centennial Medal in memory of Wilhelm I, the Emperor's grandfather, at the Emperor's personal request.

In 1899, on the suggestion of the Emperor and following the Emperor's preliminary design, Walter Schott erected a commemorative sculpture of the Guard Regiment on Foot near St. Privat, showing the winged archangel Michael.



Commemorative sculpture of the Guard Regiment on Foot near St. Privat



Untermyer-Fountain; New York



Die Kugelspielerin – Photograph

Another famous work of art by Schott is located in Central Park in Manhattan.

The group of figures of the Untermyer-Fountain is a work of Walter Schott from the time before 1910. The fountain was built in 1947 as a donation of the Untermyer family to the city of New York.

„This is the finest figurine created in the last century“
Reinhold Begas

With this statement, the sculptor legend Reinhold Begas (1831 - 1911) paid tribute to the sculpture „Die Kugelspielerin“ created by Walter Schott in 1897.

For the 36-year-old sculptor and medalist „The Ballplayer“ was a huge success. Indeed, today it is considered as his most famous work.

Shaped hundreds of times in a wide variety of materials, it was finally published by the „Meissener Porzellan-Manufaktur“ and became a best-



seller in the international art trade. In 1910, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the „Meissener Porzellan-Manufaktur“, this bestseller was reenacted with young women and the photographs were subsequently marketed as postcards.

A bronze version of the Ballplayer stood in the Luisenhain in Berlin-Köpenick in front of the town hall, exactly the place where the shoemaker Friedrich Wilhelm Voigt gave his escapade as Captain of Koepenick to receive a passport.

However, according to the district administration, it was melted down in 1942/1943. Another original is still in Düsseldorf today, standing in the flower garden at the southern end of Königsallee.

With all of these works, Professor Schott developed into a kind of court-sculptor of the German Emperor, so to speak, in the literal sense of the word. However, he also became totally dependent on Wilhelm II and therefore received little attention during the Weimar Republic.

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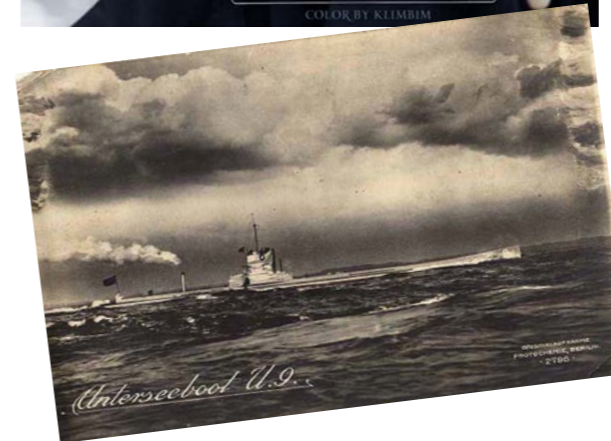
It is worth mentioning again that Schott was not „only“ a sculptor, but also a medallist. This old craftsmen title refers to a coin engraver in state service. Walter Schott designed and executed various medals.

On March 22, 1897, for example, on behalf of the German Emperor Wilhelm II, a centennial medal that was donated to commemorate the centenary of his grandfather's birth.

The design for this medal, which was mocked by the people as an order of lemon due to the yellow colour of the ribbon, done by Walter Schott.

Schott was an established artist during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm II, who saw himself in the highest favor. Therefore, it is only understandable that the German Emperor also commissioned him during the Great War to design the U-boat War Badge.

Kaiser-(Königs-)Schieß-Auszeichnungen und Schützenschnüre.



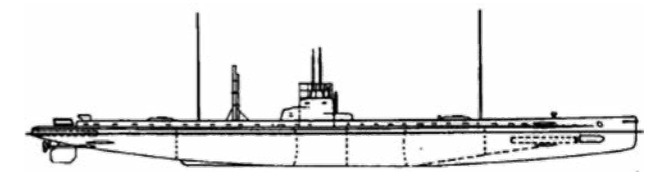
The history of the design

The design follows a whole series of military badges of the Imperial time. Already on January 27, 1895, the Kaiser badge was designed for the infantry, later followed by awards for artillery, precision shooters, machine gun divisions and the navy. Further design predecessors were the Imperial naval observer and pilot badges.

The design of these awards was likely created by the artist Fritz Schaper, an artistic teacher of the young Walter Schott. Fritz Schaper was the brother of the Berlin court-jeweller Hugo Schaper, the sole manufacturer of the Imperial navy pilot badges until the end of the Great War.

The Submarine Warfare Badge of 1918 takes up design elements from all of these insignias, while also significantly changes them.

The oval form of the badge is due to the elongated shape of the U-boat body. It shows a submarine in the center, which is essentially a mixture of different German submarine types, although the design is based on the famous U-9 boat of Kapitänleutnant Otto Weddigen.







Roman statue of Hadrian,
Antalya Turkey



Photo: Akimov Konstantin, Shutterstock

Weddigen succeeded in sinking the three British armoured cruisers Aboukir, Hogue and Cressy almost simultaneously on September 22, 1914. He thus provided early proof of the possibilities of the new submarine weapon. Due to its sinking success, the boat and its crew suddenly became known throughout Germany and internationally. Instead of a half oak leaf and laurel wreath, we see a complete laurel wreath.

The laurel wreath is a symbol and insignia for a special honour or award, especially for a victory or special success. Therefore, it is also called a winner's wreath. The laurel wreath played an important role in Roman mythology. In the cult of the god Jupiter, it was a sign of the victor, which was crowned with laurel. Therefore, the laurel wreath was awarded to supreme commanders when they returned to Rome in victory.

The laurel wreath appears in history in different forms. There are representations of a single laurel branch that is wound around the head as a wreath as well as those in which two single laurel branches are interwoven at the lower part and wound into a wreath. In this second variant, the two branches are joined together in such a way that the tips of the leaves point in the opposite direction to the braid. Accordingly, a laurel wreath is positioned on the head in such a way that the leaf tips point simultaneously forward and diagonally upwards. This stands for the positive element, a forward striving or life-affirming élan.

The U-boat-war-badge itself is adorned by the German Imperial crown of 1871, a development whose form was based on the imperial crown of the Holy Roman Empire, but also consciously differed from it.

However, there was no real existing crown until the end of the monarchy in 1918. Until their disappearance in the Second World War, only the provisional wooden models of the crowns could be viewed at Monbijou Palace in Berlin.



Technical production details

One of the most interesting features of the period U-boat war insignia is the seaweed colouring, which today is often only partially present, or in the case of badges that have been heavily cleaned, no longer present at all. A gilding of the badges, as assumed by many collectors, could not be proven.

Schott worked a lot with bronze material, which develops a greenish patina.

A greenish patina can be achieved artificially if nitric acid is enriched with copper. For this purpose, a piece of copper is dissolved in nitric acid. Before the saturation level is reached, the copper is removed so that the acid retains some etching effect.

If individual objects of art are patinated, a stippling process is used to colour them green. The patina solution is repeatedly applied in a thin layer and then left to act for a longer period of time. The slower the patina formation, the better that patina layer adheres. The patina solution can be applied with a brush.

Finally, antioxidant is applied or the surface is polished with wax. When waxing, the surface is brushed with a brush brushed over hard-wax that has previously been moistened with turpentine oil or petrol. To obtain a three-dimensional effect, parts of the patination can be polished away to accentuate the surface, as was done on the Schott badges.

Green as the colour of the awakening nature also represents hope, one of the biblical virtues symbolized by an anchor. It is quite possible that Schott wanted to make this reference. However, according to one story, this colour was not so well received by the wearers of the badges, as it reminded them of the depths of the sea, in fact of death. Perhaps this is the reason why the green seaweed colour on some badges looks like



Sharpened needle

it has been cleaned away. The few lucky collectors owning an original Schott badge with that colour should not be tempted to remove the “tarnish” by any means.

Contrary to the view of many collectors, the original badges were not gilded. One finds either the early green patination or presumably later pieces with the features of original badges that were not patinated. The Schott badge is essentially a brilliant reduction to the essential. In the centre the laurel wreathed weapon, crowned by an Imperial crown. One unfortunate problem is that the Imperial introductory regulations give us no direct indication of the artistic design.

However, we can safely say that Walter Schott is the artistic genius behind the design as well as the maker of that famous badge, not only because he had a huge workshop producing many of his artistic work's for the public market over decades, because there is also a direct hint to this conclusion on the badge itself:

The „f.e.c.“ mark is the abbreviation of fecit, the past tense of the Latin facere, to do. The expression, usually abbreviated to fe. or fec., is often found in older works of art and, in conjunction with a signature, indicates that the signatory has painted, engraved or carved the object. Until the beginning of the 20th century, copper engravers marked their printing plates in this form.

An important aspect regarding the creation of this badge is that Walter Schott designed the bow and stern decorations for almost all ships of the Imperial Fleet.

For the navy-loving Emperor, this was one of the most important tasks that an artist could be assigned.

Just imagine, the Emperor drawing ships together with Schott designing and discussing his artistic designs. This fact alone, which Schott mentions in detail in his monograph, makes it clear how the creative commission of his imperial patron came about.

Reference Section



*Classic Schott badge
with remnants of the
seaweed color.*



WALTER SCHOTT
FEC.



Original badge with remnants of the seaweed color though heavily cleaned.



*Badge of Kapitaenleutnant
Walter Remy, commander of
SM-U-24 and U-90*



Textbook Schott made badge



WALTER SCHOTT
F.C.

WALTER SCHOTT
F.C.

Walter Schott badge with
the more rounded needle.



*Badge with field-sharpened
needle, after worn by
enlisted men.*



Classic and typical
Walter Schott badge.



Another classic badge.



Walter Schott badge from likely earlier production with corrected 'T'.



Remnants of the seaweed
green color still present



Just a few remnants of the color still present, though still a desirable piece of history.





An early badge with the original seaweed green color.



A textbook badge with a few remnants of the green color worn by Hermann Schnudt of SM U-79.



Original badge which appears as never been patinated with the green seaweed color. Note a more rounded needle.



50151



Why Walter Schott?

Unfortunately, today we cannot exactly determine when he was commissioned by his Imperial patron to create this work of art.

The idea of a submarine war badge emerged as early as 1916. The German submariners in the Mediterranean noticed very early on that their Austrian comrades wore a special badge.

Following this, the commander of the submarines, Commodore Michelsen, had a design constructed: a green oak leaf wreath with imperial crown, in it a red enamelled „U“.



It was Rear Admiral v. Trotha who endorsed the design presented by Michelsen for the command of the High Seas Fleet. He informed v. Müller, the Chief of the Imperial Naval Cabinet, in writing about the Schott design that:

„Such a badge may be artistically excellent as a single piece, but it seems to me that it does not achieve what the submarine badge is supposed to give, namely an eye-catching mark. A „U“ that is easily and clearly understandable to everyone will most certainly meet this requirement“.

The emperor himself flatly rejected this suggestion and on April 19, 1917, he agreed to Schott's proposal, which he „improved“ personally.

The material is so-called cannon bronze, an alloy of 90% copper and 10% tin. It was made by the casting process, which results from the - rare - presence of so-called casting cavities and the machining of the back. A plane grinding of the back was necessary to remove a presumably central casting channel and several ventilation openings. This also explains the presence of the concentric rings on some specimens. Here, the central casting channel was roughly removed with a rotating tool and the surface was straightened.



The magic "t"

An interesting detail of the manufacturer's stamp on the reverse is the missing second „t“ in the name of the artist. This seems to be a defect in the striking stamp, which developed over time, as rudiments of the second letter may still be present on the stamped maker marks.

Since Walter Schott always wrote his own name with a double „T“ even in older publications, an intentional spelling can be ruled out.

On some badges, one can see that the process of losing it continued. On perhaps earlier pieces, the first of the two “TT”s is still recognisable. The example here shows this variant quite well: it is badge of Kapitänleutnant Walter Remy. Here, again, the defect seems to have been noticed and a smaller „T“ was added, a correction that often leads to confusion among collectors.

The author has not yet come across an original on which „TT“ is correctly present. It can therefore be assumed that the defect already occurred at the beginning of the manufacture but was not noticed immediately.



Technical peculiarities

On the obverse of the badge, small defects may occur in some of the original pieces, in the starboard bow area of the submarine body. Here, a defect of the form can also be assumed, which was promptly discovered and repaired. However, it is likely, that when finishing the apertures around the submarine body in some specimens the file was simply used too much and worked right into the submarine body, which actually should not be altered.

Regrettably, Schott badges are widely and sometimes professionally counterfeited.

Unfortunately, for obvious reasons the author of this writing is unable to go into deep detail about these forgeries. The currently-offered reproductions are already so deceptive that it would most likely be a mistake to publish the very few remaining unknown features of original pieces.

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In order to offer the collector a comparison with awarded originals, such items are shown and the main characteristics are explained.

Collector online forums can contribute to the authentication of offered specimens to a considerable extent. There is often expertise available that outshines some authors. Collectors should in any case start such a request before they invest their hard-earned money in any reproductions offered by dealers, private persons or on online platforms.



Photos in wear

Photos in wear during the period are unfortunately, but logically scarce. There are many photos in wear from the time after 1918, but mainly with later-bought replacements made by various makers.

Such badges are an interesting field for some collectors, but basically not something that was issued during the period and had been there. An existing awarding document with the corresponding badge proofs an award period until January 1920.

Arithmetically, about 4,500 badges would have been awarded based on the crew lists. However, due to the rarity of original pieces, a significantly lower number can be assumed.



The company Steinhauer and Lück advertised a reproduction in 1939 for reactivated Great War officers.





Oberdeckoffizier decorated in the Great War with the Iron Cross of both classes. He is wearing the 1921 pattern dagger and the Imperial uboat badge manufactured by Walter Schott

Awarding documents



*Memorial of the
submariners, Møltenort*



Later use of the design

Besides the recurrence of the design in the U-boat war badge during the Nazi era, there were clear also references in the period after 1945.

The memorial of the submariners (photo left) was erected in 1930 in Møltenort near Kiel. Crowned with an eagle, which unfortunately was technically defective, the memorial had to be rebuilt in 1938. For this occasion, a large swastika was placed below the eagle. This was replaced after 1945 by a submarine war badge, which is clearly based on the original design by Walter Schott.



The activity badge of the submarine personnel of the German Bundesmarine also does not completely leave the original design: here, again there is the silhouette of a submarine and a wreath, made of oak leaves, albeit it partly departs from the previous lines of tradition.



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Authenticity features

Round needle type

Original badges are observed to have two styles of attachment hardware, namely the flat needle and a more rounded one. Such an example is in the possession

of the author, which - with one explainable exception - meets the originality criteria, but has a more round needle wire also with a flattened tip.

This is either a replacement needle or - more likely - a manufacturing variant. The catch hook is correct and



only the needle hinge has a different relation to the known original pieces. These badges are considered as being legitimate.

Different features on original examples

Bow-flaw feature

The author is personally aware of original pieces showing small irregularities in the bow area of the submarine body. These are also on different other badges that are original. It seems to be a mechanical problem, but the cause is not clearly determined.



These impairments do not speak against the originality of the badge, if all other authenticity features are present.

Another Schott badge with the same small imperfections: The two small "bites" can be clearly seen. The reason for it still remains unknown to the author.

It can be assumed that it is either a problem in the injection mould, or perhaps a kind of tool is responsible for this irregularity.

However, it does not seem to be a design feature, since no German submarine is known to have any superstructures or attachments in this area.

These rare, somewhat faulty badges have been dyed green and show traces of wear, which suggests that they were issued to crew members.

It should be mentioned that the badge shown here also shows the beginning of a small circle on the



back, which is another feature.

Circle on the back

In some badges that are to be addressed as original, there is a presumable tool trace on the back, essentially concentric circles, which are more or less pronounced.

A plane grinding of the back was necessary to remove a presumably central casting channel and several ventilation openings. This also explains the presence of the concentric rings on some specimens. Here, the central casting channel was roughly removed with a rotating tool and the surface was straightened. Statements about originality cannot be made with the presence or absence of this feature.

The badge shown here is configured with the variant round-needle and shows original features. From the photo, the badge looks unclear, but this could be due to the photo.

The maker mark shows the features that we would expect on original items.



70171





Sharpened pins

Example with jeweller sharpened pin and small break in the stern pillar:

The reason for this pinpointing was that some soldiers could not afford to have special fastening eyes attached to their uniforms, to which badges and medals were attached.

The likely corrected missing "T"

This badge with the clearly recognizable and - presumably - re-stamped missing „T“ seems to be one of the earlier ones. It is the variant with the slightly rounded needle pin.

It seems too early to draw conclusions here about the sequence of manufacture production, but here the missing „T“ seems to have been re-stamped very carefully. There are badges where this is not the case. Was this painstaking work abandoned later?





One can see quite well on this original badge that it looks like the missing „T“ has been added. In connection with the version having a rounded needle pin, it could be assumed that these are early specimens where an attempt was made to correct the missing „T“, which is not visible to the naked eye. Later this seemed to be omitted.

The presumably added „T“ is much smaller than the original one of the stamp. This does not seem to be a deterioration of the manufactory stamp, but rather a deliberately added small „T“.

That is the maker mark of the Walter Remy badge. It also seems that a smaller “T” was applied by hand.

Fluting on some original badges

Many original badges feature a corrugation below the submarine body, in the stern and bow areas.

Presumably, we see a ridge here that was created by the mold and overlooked during manual finishing.

Whether this is an intended design feature or a reference to different molds is purely speculative.

Weight variations

The weight of the badges is unfortunately NOT a criterion regarding originality. The weights can quite strongly vary, as weights between 22 and 27 grams (0.78 - 0.95 oz) have been determined on original pieces.

Questionable badges

The badge sold here in 2021 by the auction house elive-auction.de captivates upon first sight with its colouring. It looks old, and it may very well be.

It lacks the maker’s mark of Walter Schott, but otherwise it certainly has some of the characteristics of an original Schott piece. The view seems slightly “blurred”, although that may be due to the photos. According to the vendor, its weight is 36 grams. Even if the weight is not a characteristic of a Schott badge, this might be considered too high for an original. It remains to be seen whether more badges of this kind will appear. At present, it is difficult to determine the originality with certainty based on the two photographic views.

Another much thicker badge appeared on the German MFF Forum in September 2021. It is also unmarked and shows the correct “grooved” design of the needle catch. It seems there is also some patina on it.

Despite having some interesting features, it cannot be accepted as a legitimate Schott piece.

The thickness comparison shows clearly the difference between an original and the “fat” variation. (picture above)

A thick and unmarked example was sold at the German auction house Ratisbon’s in 2021. It has also some interesting features, but it seems to be more indistinct in details. The thick rim is disturbing. Although no weight is known, this badge seems to be very heavy.

Due to the thickness, this badge must be difficult to wear. However, the badge fits some original features but not all, especially the lack of sharp detail on the obverse.

Recommended literature:

Gordon Williamson, Walter Schott and the Imperial U-boat Badge,
The Military Advisor, Season 1234

Uwe Lautenschläger, Das UBoots-Kriegsabzeichen 1918,
Internationales Militaria Magazin, Januar 2017

Reinhard Schlotter, Ein Beitrag zur U-Bootwaffe und ihrem Kriegsab-
zeichen 1918

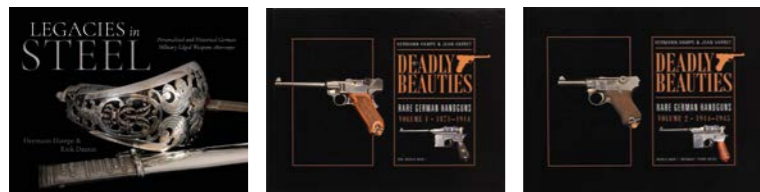
Klaus D. Patzwall, Das Kaiserliche U-Boots-Kriegsabzeichen,
Militaria, 2/1995

Jean Rosier, Ergänzungen zum ersten U-Boot-Kriegsabzeichen 1918,
Militaria, 5/2001

Militaria-Magazin IMM 184
Serie: Kaiserlich Deutsche Orden und Ehrenzeichen - Teil 2: Das
U-Boots-Kriegsabzeichen 1918 - Varianten im Vergleich

Walter Schott: Ein Künstler-Leben und gesellschaftliche Erinnerungen
aus kaiserlicher Zeit. Dresden 1930

Authored by Hermann Hampe



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