

Prussian Line Cavalry Colours in the Campaign of 1866

Introduction

The colours carried by the Prussian Line Cavalry during 1866 were not dissimilar to those carried by their forebears during the latter part of the Napoleonic Wars. Indeed, as with the Line Infantry regiments, the system established for the post-1806 Prussian army remained more or less in place until the late 19th century.

Each Line Cavalry Regiment bore a standard, the standard generally remaining furled and protected inside an oilskin cover carried by the standard bearer (*Standartenträger*) until battle. The regimental standard party (*Standartengruppe*) consisted of the standard bearer (a sergeant), and several NCOs. In battle, this group took its place in the second rank of the third squadron. During the campaign such standard parties suffered a number of casualties, as they became the target of enemy fire.

Description of the colours, streamers etc.

The standards carried by the Line Cavalry regiments were made from double-thickness silk or damask, with the designs embroidered. They usually were ornamented with gold or silver fringes, each approximately $1\frac{2}{3}$ inches long. The standards were a little over 20 inches square, attached to flagpoles approximately 3 m in length. The flags were attached to the pole by nails, gilt or silver in colour. The colour of the poles was black for the Line Cavalry regiments. The top of the pole was completed by a pear-shaped flat head of gilded brass, approximately $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches high. This generally bore a cipher and crown or simplified Maltese cross.

The majority of the regiments bore colours issued in the latter part of the Napoleonic Wars, or in 1861. The older regiments, particularly some of the Cuirassier regiments, carried remnants of flags dating from around 1807.

Unlike some other armies, campaign and battle honours were not painted onto the flag, but denoted by streamers. These were tied to the top of the pole, the oldest streamer at the top and so on down. The following streamers were carried by regiments during the 1866 Campaign:
Prussian National Streamer (*Banderole*) issued to the unit upon presentation of its flag, replaced by the relevant campaign streamer upon participation in its first campaign. Silver with three lengthwise stripes of black silk, black and silver tassels.
1813-15 Campaign Streamer Orange with white (outermost) then black edging, silver tassels.

Streamer denoting Military Badge of Honour (*Militär-Ehrenzeichen*) Black with black (outermost) then white edging, silver tassels. This was awarded for the campaigns of 1848-49.

1864 Campaign Streamer Black with one edge orange and black (latter outermost) and the other white and black (latter outermost), silver tassels. Some of these streamers bore crossed bronze swords, which denoted that they had been borne under enemy fire.

When the regiment's standard or its standard party had come under fire, or indeed the standard had been hit in battle, it was awarded a commemorative ring. Some poles could be decorated with several such rings. These were almost always silver, appeared just below the brass tip and were 1½ - 7" wide.

Once a regiment had been in existence for more than a century it was awarded a centenary band (*Säkular-Fahnenband*). This was basically another type of streamer, of black silk with silver braid edging and fringes, and silver lettering.

A small number of regiments carried additional streamers. Kürassier Regiment Nr 6 was awarded a Russian streamer, by Grand Duchess Alexandra Feodorovna (the former Princess Charlotte of Prussia) in 1823. This was of dark blue velvet with gold embroidery and gold fringes, with the Prussian eagle and crown on the bow, and decorations at the bottom of the streamer. Uhlan Regiment Nr 3 was awarded a Streamer by the Tsarina Maria of Russia in 1858. This was of red velvet with yellow medallions, gold embroidery and fringes, with Prussian eagle and crown at the top, and decorations at the bottom of the streamer.

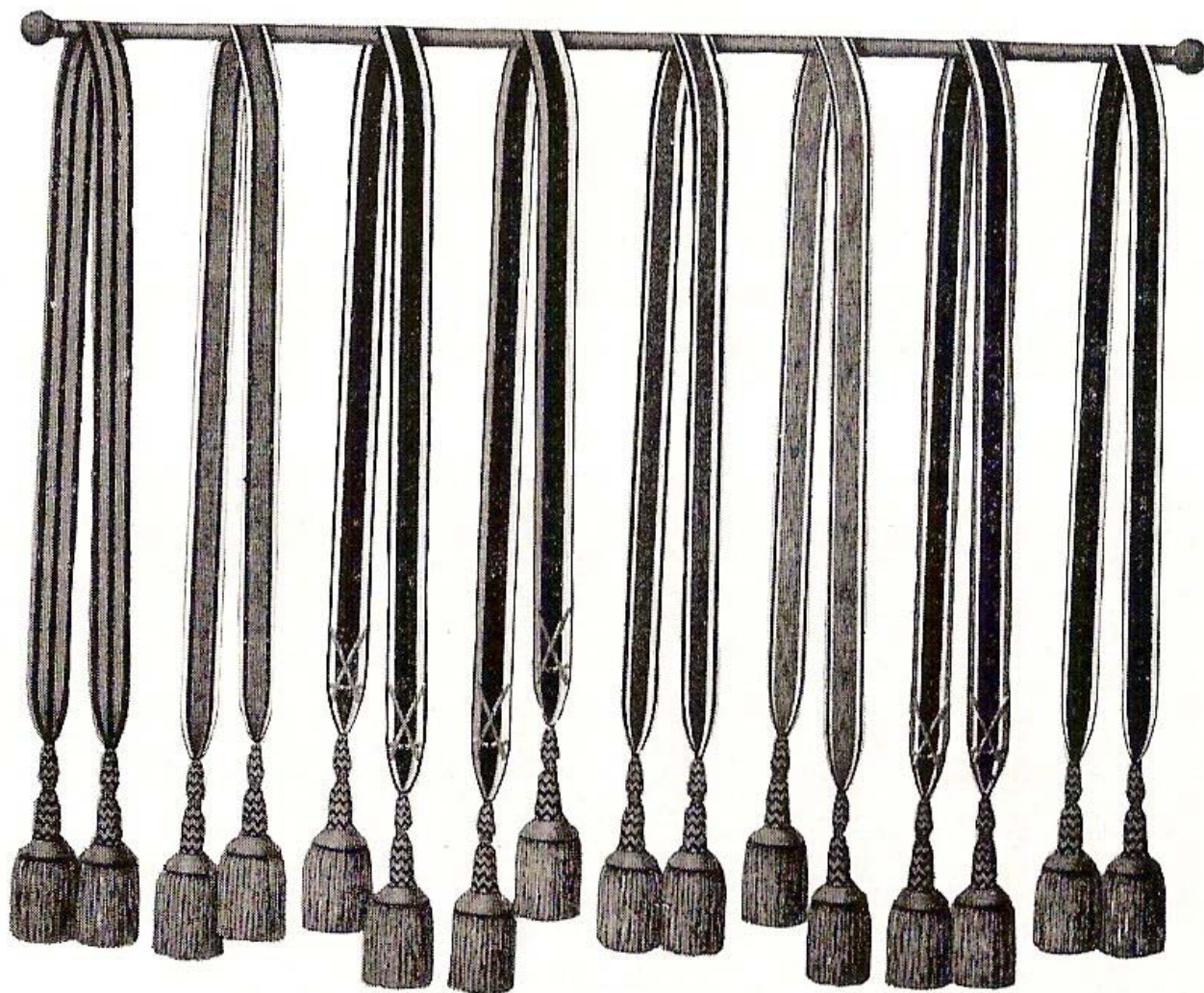


Fig. 1. Campaign Streamers carried in 1866 (from left to right: Banderole; 1813/15 Streamer; Militär-Ehrenzeichen Streamer (with Swords) for 1848/49; 1864 Streamer with Swords; Düppel Streamer; Alsen Streamer).

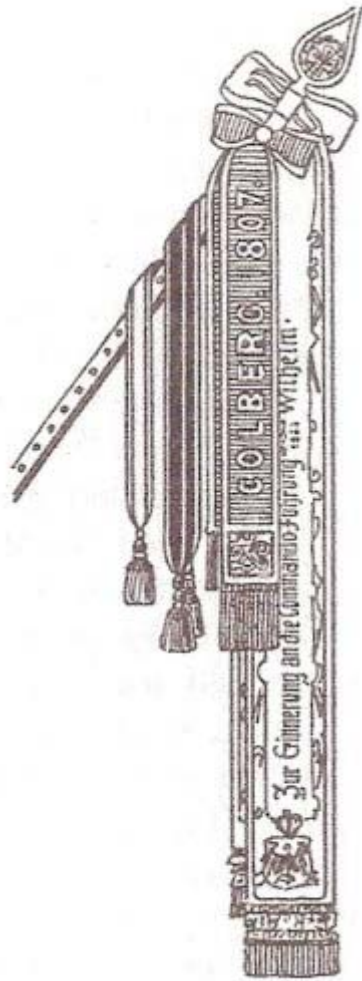


Fig. 2. Method of attaching streamers to the flagpole (the example shown here is a Line Infantry colour, but the method for cavalry standards was identical).

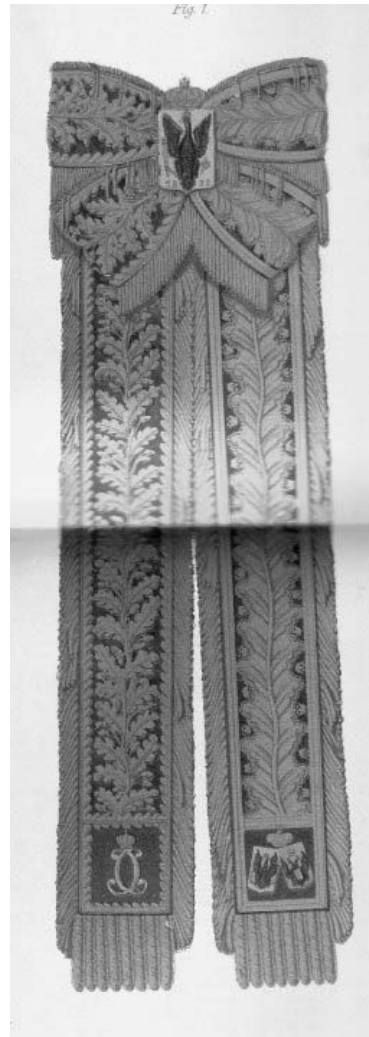


Fig. 3. Grand Duchess Alexandra Feodorovna Band, Kürassier Rgt Nr 6

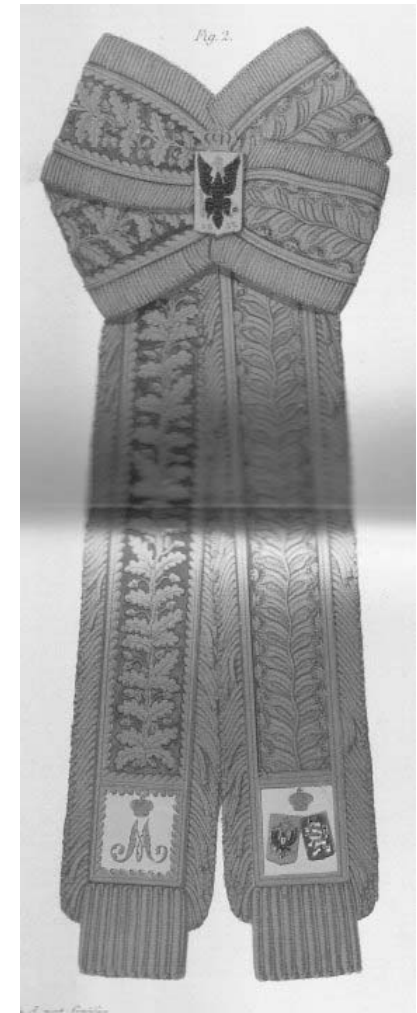


Fig. 4. Tsarina Maria Band, Uhlan Rgt Nr 3

The physical condition of the colours in 1866

Compared to the infantry colours made of silk, the cavalry standards were generally in very good condition, due to their double thickness, and embroidery. Those issued in 1861, for example, would have been virtually pristine. It should be noted that King Friedrich Wilhelm III ordered that flags issued after 1808 constituted a reminder of the victory over the French during the War of Liberation 1813-15, and thus should not be replaced by newer versions.

As with our Prussian infantry colours, we have produced pristine flags, with the caveat that the table below should be consulted to determine the actual condition of the standard in question in 1866. Gamers can then decide whether they wish their units to carry pristine flags, or suitably tatter (or even remove) their flags to present a historically accurate appearance.

Overview table for Prussian Line Cavalry standards 1866

<i>Regiment</i>	<i>Flag Type</i>	<i>Issue date</i>	<i>1866 condition</i>	<i>Streamers & Bands</i>	<i>Notes</i>
KR1	Pre-1807 A	1722	Mostly destroyed	1813; SF	
KR2	Pre-1807 B	1727	Destroyed	1813; MEZs; SF	
KR3	Pre-1807 C	1727/29	Destroyed	1813; SF	
KR4	Pre-1807 D	1717/27	Destroyed	1813; MEZs; 1864; SF	
KR5	Pre-1807 D	1741/61	Mostly destroyed	1813; SF	
KR6	Pre-1807 E	1761/62	Destroyed	1813; 1864s; GDAF	
KR7	Pre-1807 A	1815	Good	1813	
KR8	Pre-1807 D	1815	Good	1813; MEZs	+ K
DR1	Pre-1807 F	17??	Destroyed	1813; SF	
DR2	Pre-1807 B	1807	Mostly destroyed	1813; SF	
DR3	Pre-1807 B	1807	Partially destroyed	1813; SF	
DR4	Pre-1807 D	1815	Mostly destroyed	1813	+ N
DR5	1828a	1861	Good		
DR6	1828a	1861	Good		
DR7	1828a	1861	Good	1864s	+ K
DR8	1828a	1861	Good		

HR1	1814/15	1815	Good	1813; SF	+ Tb
HR2	1814/15	1815	Good	1813; SF	
HR3	1814/15	1815	Good	1813; MEZs; 1864s; AK; SF	
HR4	1814/15	1815	Good	1813	
HR5	1814/15	1815	Good	1813; SF	
HR6	1814/15	1815	Good	1813	
HR7	1814/15	1815	Good	1813	
HR8	1814/15	1815	Good	1813; MEZs; 1864s	
HR9	1814/15	1815	Good	1813; MEZs	
HR10	1814/15	1816	Good	1813	
HR11	1814/15	1816	Good	1813; MEZs	
HR12	1814/15	1816	Good	1813; MEZs	+ K
UR1	1814/15	1815	Good	1813; SF	
UR2	1814/15	1815	Good	1813; SF	
UR3	1814/15	1815	Good	1813; TMR	+ G
UR4	1814/15	1816	Good	1813	
UR5	1814/15	1815	Good	1813	
UR6	1815	1816	Good	1813; MEZs	+ K
UR7	1814/15	1816	Good	1813; MEZs	
UR8	1814/15	1816	Good	1813; MEZs	
UR9	1828a	1861	Good		
UR10	1828a	1861	Good		
UR11	1828a	1861	Good	1864s	
UR12	1828a	1861	Good		

Key to the table:

Regiment: DR1 = Dragoon Regiment Nr 1 etc.; HR1 = Hussar Regiment Nr 1 etc.; KR1 = Kürassier Regiment Nr 1, etc.; UR1 = Uhlan Regiment Nr 1 etc.

Streamers & Bands: 1813 = 1813-15 Campaign Streamer; 1864(s) = 1864 Campaign Streamer (s = with Swords); AK = Streamer awarded for the storming of Alsen 1864; GDAF = Grand Duchess Alexandra Feodorovna Band; MEZs = *Militär-Ehrenzeichen* Band with Swords; SF = Centenary Band; TMR = Tsarina Maria of Russia Band.

Flag types: Pre-1807 types A, B, C, D & E = patterns essentially identical to colours carried during the Seven Years War; 1814/15 = 1814/15 pattern Line Cavalry flag; 1815 = 1815 pattern Line Cavalry flag; 1828a = 1828 pattern Line Cavalry flag with updated central shield. See our range of flag sheets for images.

Notes: + denotes standard damaged during the campaign by enemy fire, followed by letters denoting action or battle in which damage occurred.

Key to these are as follows (the number in brackets denotes number of colours that suffered damage during a particular action):

G	Gitschin	Bohemia (1)
K	Königgrätz	Bohemia (4)
N	Nachod	Bohemia (1)
Tb	Tobitschau-Rokeinitz	Bohemia (1)

Further reading

Researching the subject was extremely time-consuming, and no easy matter. The following sources were consulted:

Fiebig, E. *Unsterbliche Treue: das Heldenlied der Fahnen und Standarten des deutschen Heeres* (Berlin: Andermann Verlag, 1936)

Königlichen Kriegsministerium (bearb.) *Geschichte der Königlich Preussischen Fahnen und Standarten seit dem Jahre 1807* (Berlin: Mittler, 1889, 3 Bde)

Sutherland, Stuart *Prussian Standards in 1870* (article from *The Foreign Correspondent*, newsletter of the Continental War Society)

Voigt, Günther *Deutschlands Heere bis 1918. Ursprung und Entwicklung der einzelnen Formationen* (Osnabück: Biblio Verlag, 1980-87, 11 Bde)