Wiki Loves Monuments: Photograph a monument, help Wikipedia and win!
Learn more

Reinhold Eckardt

Contents hide
(Top)
Career
Night fighter career
Squadron leader and death
Summary of career
Aerial victory claims
Awards
Notes
References
Citations
Bibliography

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Reinhold Eckardt (26 March 1918 – 30 July 1942) was a night fighter pilot in the Luftwaffe of Nazi Germany during World War II. He was a recipient of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross during World War II. Eckardt died on 30 July 1942 after his parachute caught on the rail of his plane after he baled out. During his career he was credited with 22 aerial victories, 3 during the day and 19 at night.

Career [edit]

Eckardt was born on 26 March 1918 in Bamberg, at the time in the Kingdom of Bavaria as part of the German Empire. Following flight training,[Note 1] he was posted to 2. Staffel (2nd squadron) of Zerstörergeschwader 76 (ZG 76)—76th Destroyer Wing flying the Messerschmitt Bf 110 heavy fighter.[1]

Over Denmark, Eckardt claimed a Lockheed Hudson shot down and two fighters destroyed over the Battle of Britain.[1] During this period, Eckardt recorded his wingman, Oberfeldwebel Heinrich Ebbinghaus' (400 miles) back to Trondheim. Western Bf 110 had been hit in the engine area. Eckardt's starboard engine was hit and he made a forced landing in Norway.[2]

Night fighter career [edit]

A map of part of the Kammhuber Line. The 'bett' and night fighter 'Viereck' are shown.

In the spring 1940 Battle of the Heligoland Bight, Royal Air Force (RAF) attacks shifted to the onset of darkness, initiating the Defence of the Reich campaign.[3] By this time, Generalmajor (Brigadier General) Josef Kammhuber had established a night air defense system called the Kammhuber Line. It consisted of a series of control sectors equipped with radars and searchlights and an associated night fighter. Each sector named a Himmelbett (canopy bed) would direct the night fighter into visual range with target bombers. In 1941, the Luftwaffe started equipping night fighters with airborne radar and the Lichtenstein radar. This airborne radar did not come into general use until early 1942.[4][5]

The night-fighter force began to expand rapidly, with existing units being divided to form the nucleus of new units. By October 1940 Nachtjagdgeschwader 1 (NJG 1—1st Night Fighter Wing) comprised three Gruppen, while Nachtjagdgeschwader 2 (NJG 2—2nd Night Fighter Wing) and Nachtjagdgeschwader 3 (NJG 3—3rd Night Fighter Wing), were still forming.[6] During this period, Eckardt was posted to 6. Staffel of NJG 1 commanded by Oberstleutnant Helmut Lent.[7] Conversion training took place at Ingolstadt in which Eckardt gained experience flying the Messerschmitt Bf 110 C heavy fighter based at Deelen Airfield, located 12.5 kilometres (8 mi) north of Arnhem in the Netherlands.[8]

On 9 January 1941, Eckardt claimed the first aerial victory by a pilot of 6. Staffel when he shot down the RAF Armstrong Whitworth Whitley Tx253 operated from No. 78 Squadron near Caernarfon Dutch border. The bomber was on a mission to the synthetic oil factory at Gelsenkirchen.[7][Note 2] On 22/23 June, Eckardt claimed four Heavy bombers and shown.[7][9] One of the bombers was the RAF Whitley Z6647 from No. 77 Squadron during a Heile Nachtjagd (illuminated night fighting) mission near Hamburg.[7][10]

Squadron leader and death [edit]

On 1 November 1941, a newly formed III. Gruppe (3rd group) of NJG 1 under the command of Hauptmann Heinz Nacke was formed from I. Gruppe of ZG 76.[11][12] On 1 December, Eckard was appointed Staffelkapitän (squadron leader) of 4. Staffel of NJG 1 which on 15 March 1942 became the 7. Staffel of NJG 3, a squadron of III. Gruppe of NJG 3.[7]

On 2 June, Eckardt shot down the Vickers Wellington bomber Z1731 from the Royal Australian Air Force No. 460 Squadron. The bomber was on thousand-bomber raid on Essen. Over Hainaut, German-occupied Belgium, Z1731 came under attack, crashing near Binche, killing all aboard including Maurice Fitzgerald, a former rugby union player.[13][14][15]

On the night of 29/30 July RAF Bomber Command attacked Saarbrücken. Defending against this attack, Eckardt claimed a Short Stirling, a Handley Page Halifax and an Avro Lancaster bomber shot down. Attacking another Lancaster bomber, his III 110 E-2 (Wkennummer 4494—factory number) was hit by return fire from the bomber, damaging one engine. Forced to bail out, he parachute was caught on the tail assembly of the aircraft, and he fell to his death.[16][9]

Summary of career [edit]

Aerial victory claims [edit]

According to Obermaier, Eckardt was credited with twenty-two aerial victories, nineteen nocturnal and three daytime claims, plus further seventeen aircraft destroyed on the ground.[7] Aircraft are also lists him with twenty-two victories, nineteen at night and three at dawn as a Zerstörer pilot.[17] According to Mathews and Foreman, authors of Luftwaffe Aces — Biographies and Victory Claims, researched the German Federal Archives and found documentation for twenty-two victory claims, plus twenty-three as a Zerstörer pilot and seventeen probable, plus two further unconfirmed claims.[18]

Chronicle of aerial victories [hide]

This and the ? (question mark) indicates information discrepancies listed by *Luftwaffe Night Fighter Claims 1939 – 1945* and *Luftwaffe Aces — Biographies and Victory Claims*.

Claim (total)	Claim (nocturnal)	Date	Time	Type	Location	Serial No./Squadron No.
– 2. Staffel of Zerstörergeschwader 76 –[19]						
1		21 July 1940	13:45	Hudson	west of Heidholmen	
2		15 August 1940	—	fighter aircraft		
3		15 August 1940	—	fighter aircraft		
– 6. Staffel of Nachtjagdgeschwader 1 –[20]						
4	1	9 January 1941	23:18	Whitley	Enkeen, south of Nijmegen[21]	Whitley T4203/No. 78 Squadron RAF[21]
5	2	9 May 1941	02:13	Blenheim	25 km (16 mi) west of Sankt Peter-Ording[22]	
6	3	11 May 1941	02:48	Whitley	6 km (3.7 mi) south of Husum[23]	Whitley P5048/No. 10 Squadron RAF[23]
– Stab II. Gruppe of Nachtjagdgeschwader 1 –[24]						
7	4	24 June 1941	02:32	Halifax	Buisenhoek[25]	
8	5	28 June 1941	01:36	Whitley	Zuidersee[26]	Whitley P5005/No. 10 Squadron RAF[26]
9	6	28 June 1941	01:42	Wellington	Hamburg[26]	Whitley Z6630/No. 77 Squadron RAF[26]
10	7	28 June 1941	01:52	Whitley	10 km (6.2 mi) southeast of Stade[26]	Whitley Z6474/No. 77 Squadron RAF[27]
11	8	28 June 1941	02:22	Wellington	Port of Hamburg[26]	Wellington W5368/No. 142 Squadron RAF[26]
12	9	28 June 1941	02:52	Hampden	south of Uelsen[28][29]	
13	10	18 September 1941	00:33	Wellington	Hamburg/Bad Bramstedt[30]	Wellington X3205/No. 75 (New Zealand) Squadron RAF[30]
14	11	16 September 1941	00:40	Wellington	Hamburg/Bad Bramstedt[31]	Wellington X9738/No. 75 (New Zealand) Squadron RAF[31]
– 7. Staffel of Nachtjagdgeschwader 3 –[32]						
15[Note 3]	12	18 April 1942	03:18	Wellington	southwest of Stade[33]	
16[Note 3]	13	28 April 1942	23:37	Stirling	northwest of Ahrensburg[33]	
17	14	7 May 1942	02:53	Wellington	8 km (5.0 mi) west of Trabel[34]	
18	15	2 June 1942	02:09	Wellington[35]	Wellington Z1731/No. 460 Squadron RAAF[15]	
19	16	2 June 1942	02:31	Wellington[35]	Wellington W5818/No. 21 Operational Training Unit RAF[36]	
20	17	30 July 1942	01:15	Stirling	7 km (4.3 mi) west northwest of Rouvroy[37]	
21	18	30 July 1942	02:51	Halifax	200 m (660 ft) south-east of Brabourt[37]	
22	19	30 July 1942	03:06	Lancaster	Brame-le-Comte[37]	Lancaster R5728/No. 50 Squadron RAF[38]

Awards [edit]

- Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross on 30 August 1941 as Oberleutnant and Adjutant of the II./Nachtjagdgeschwader 1[39][40]
- German Cross in Gold on 21 August 1942 as Oberleutnant in the 7./Nachtjagdgeschwader 3[41]

Notes [edit]

1. ^ Night training in the Luftwaffe progressed through the levels A1, A2 and B1. B2 referred to as A/B flight training. A training included theoretical and practical training in aerobatics, navigation, long-distance flights and search flights. On completion they included night-altitude flights, instrument flights, night landings and training to handle the aircraft in difficult situations. For pilots destined to fly multi-engine aircraft, the training was completed with the Luftwaffe Advanced Pilot's Certificate (Erweiterter Luftwaffen-Flugzeugführerschein), also known as the C-Certificate.[1]
2. ^ According to *Luftwaffe Aces — Biographies and Victory Claims* this claim is unconfirmed.[7]

References [edit]

Citations [edit]

1. ^ Bergström, Antonov & Sundin 2003, p. 17.
2. ^ a b c d Obermaier 1989, p. 105.
3. ^ Zaffe 2013, p. 207.
4. ^ Weal 2012, p. 29.
5. ^ Foreman, Parry & Mathews 2004, p. 9.
6. ^ Foreman, Parry & Mathews 2004, p. 27.
7. ^ a b c d e f Obermaier 1989, p. 104.
8. ^ a b c d e f g Mathews & Foreman 2014, p. 259.
9. ^ Hinchliffe 2003, p. 85-87.
10. ^ Hinchliffe 2003, p. 91.
11. ^ Bowman 2011, p. 96.
12. ^ Action 1978, p. 37.
13. ^ Bowman 2016, p. 36.
14. ^ Ring & Weal 1994, p. 224, 228.
15. ^ a b Wellington Z1731.
16. ^ Chorley 1994, p. 153.
17. ^ Bond 2014, p. 79.
18. ^ Forczyk 2013, p. 54.
19. ^ Action 1978, p. 233.
20. ^ Foreman, Parry & Mathews 2004, p. 16.
21. ^ a b Whitley T4203.
22. ^ a b Foreman, Parry & Mathews 2004, p. 20.
23. ^ a b Whitley P5048.
24. ^ a b c d e f Foreman, Parry & Mathews 2004, p. 23.
25. ^ Whitley P5005.
26. ^ a b c d e f Whitley Z6630.
27. ^ Whitley Z6647.
28. ^ Wellington W5386.
29. ^ a b c Foreman, Parry & Mathews 2004, p. 31.
30. ^ a b Wellington X3205.
31. ^ a b Wellington X9738.
32. ^ a b c Foreman, Parry & Mathews 2004, p. 38.
33. ^ a b Foreman, Parry & Mathews 2004, p. 39.
34. ^ a b c Foreman, Parry & Mathews 2004, p. 40.
35. ^ a b c Foreman, Parry & Mathews 2004, p. 43.
36. ^ a b Wellington W5818.
37. ^ a b c d e Foreman, Parry & Mathews 2004, p. 52.
38. ^ a b Lancaster R5728.
39. ^ a b c d Fellgiebel 2000, p. 168.
40. ^ a b c Scherzer 2007, p. 388.
41. ^ a b c d Patzwall & Scherzer 2001, p. 97.

Bibliography [edit]

- Ader, Gerhard (1978). *History of the German Night Fighter Force, 1917–1945*. London: Jane's. ISBN 978-0-354-01047-8.
- Bergström, Christer [in Swedish]; Antipov, Vlad; Sundin, Claes (2003). *Graf & Grislawski – A Pair of Aces*. Hamilton MT: Eagle Editions. ISBN 978-0-9712466-8-7.
- Bond, Steve (2014). *Whitley: A Detailed History of the Vickers Whitley in service, 1936–1953*. London: Grub Street Publishing. ISBN 978-1-909808-81-6.
- Bowman, Martin (2011). *Bomber Command: Reflections of War: Branded*. South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Aviation. ISBN 978-1-84884-482-6.
- Bowman, Martin (2016). *Nachtjagd, Defenders of the Reich 1940-1943*. Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Books. ISBN 978-1-47382-898-0.
- Chorley, W. R (1994). *Royal Air Force Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War: Aircraft and crew losses 1942*. Midland Counties Publications. ISBN 978-0-904597-89-6.
- Fellgiebel, Walther-Peer [in German] (2000). *Die Träger des Ritterkreuzes des Eisernen Kreuzes 1939–1945 — Die Inhaber der höchsten Auszeichnung des Zweiten Weltkrieges aller Wehrmachtteile* [*The Bearers of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross 1939–1945 — The Owners of the highest Award of the Second World War of all Armed Services*] (in German). Friedberg, Germany: Podzun-Pallas. ISBN 978-3-7909-0284-6.
- Foreman, John; Parry, Simon; Mathews, Johannes (2004). *Luftwaffe Night Fighter Claims 1939–1945*. Walton on Thames: Red Kite. ISBN 978-0-9539061-4-3.
- Forczyk, Robert (2013). *Bf 110 vs Lancaster: 1940–45*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing. ISBN 978-1-78096-317-4.
- Hinchliffe, Peter (2003). *'The Last Papers' Helmut Lent, Bristol, UK: Cerberus Publishing*. ISBN 978-1-84145-168-3.
- Mathews, Andrew Johannes; Foreman, John (2014). *Luftwaffe Aces — Biographies and Victory Claims — Volume A–F*. Walton on Thames: Red Kite. ISBN 978-1-906502-16-6.
- Obermaier, Ernst (1989). *Die Ritterkreuzträger der Luftwaffe Jagdflieger 1939 – 1945* [*The Knight's Cross Bearers of the Luftwaffe Fighter Force 1939 – 1945*] (in German). Mainz, Germany: Verlag Dieter Hoffmann. ISBN 978-3-87341-065-7.
- Patzwall, Klaus D.; Scherzer, Veit (2001). *Das Deutsche Kreuz 1941 – 1945 Geschichte und Inhaber Band I* [*The German Cross 1941 – 1945 History and Recipients Volume 2*] (in German). Norderstedt, Germany: Verlag Klaus D. Patzwall. ISBN 978-3-931533-45-5.
- Scherzer, Veit (2007). *Die Ritterkreuzträger 1939–1945 Die Inhaber des Ritterkreuzes des Eisernen Kreuzes 1939 von Heer, Luftwaffe, Kriegsmarine, Waffen-SS, Volkssturm sowie der Deutschen Verbündeter Streitkräfte nach den Unterlagen des Bundesarchives* [*The Knight's Cross Bearers 1939–1945 The Holders of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross 1939 by Army, Air Force, Navy, Waffen-SS, Volkssturm and Allied Forces with the Documents of the Documents of the Federal Archive*] (in German). Jena, Germany: Scherzers Militair-Verlag. ISBN 978-3-938845-17-2.
- Weal, John (2012) [1999]. *Messerschmitt Bf 110 Zerstörer Aces of World War 2*. Aircraft of the Aces. Vol. 25. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing. ISBN 978-1-78200-527-5.
- Zaffe, Michael (2013). *Messerschmitt Bf 110: Die Rekordleistung eines Flugzeuges* [*Messerschmitt Bf 110: The Rekordleistung of an Airplane*] (in German). Norderstedt, Germany: Books on Demand. ISBN 978-3-8482-8879-3.

- Accident description for Lancaster R5728 at the Aviation Safety Network. Retrieved on 1 August 2023.
- Accident description for Wellington W5386 at the Aviation Safety Network. Retrieved on 1 August 2023.
- Accident description for Wellington W5818 at the Aviation Safety Network. Retrieved on 1 August 2023.
- Accident description for Wellington X3205 at the Aviation Safety Network. Retrieved on 1 August 2023.
- Accident description for Wellington X9755 at the Aviation Safety Network. Retrieved on 1 August 2023.
- Accident description for Wellington Z1731 at the Aviation Safety Network. Retrieved on 1 August 2023.
- Accident description for Whitley P5048 at the Aviation Safety Network. Retrieved on 1 August 2023.
- Accident description for Whitley P5005 at the Aviation Safety Network. Retrieved on 1 August 2023.
- Accident description for Whitley T4203 at the Aviation Safety Network. Retrieved on 1 August 2023.
- Accident description for Whitley Z6630 at the Aviation Safety Network. Retrieved on 1 August 2023.
- Accident description for Whitley Z6647 at the Aviation Safety Network. Retrieved on 1 August 2023.

Portals: Aviation Biography

Categories: 1918 births | 1942 deaths | People from Bamberg | Luftwaffe pilots
German World War II flying aces | Recipients of the Gold German Cross
Recipients of the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross | Luftwaffe personnel killed in World War II
Military personnel from the Kingdom of Bavaria | Burials at Luminel German war cemetery
Military personnel from Bavaria | Aviators killed by being shot down

This page was last edited on 6 July 2025, at 23:23 (UTC).
Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.
Privacy policy About Wikipedia Disclaimers Contact Wikipedia Code of Conduct Developers Statistics Cookie statement Mobile view