

Database structure and sources

Prosopographical database

This database covers all substantive (i.e. not acting or temporary) commanders of field formations from army group to division inclusive throughout the war. It also covers all chiefs of staff from army group to corps and over 500 divisional chief general staff officers (*Ia*). I've prepared career summaries for each officer from the sources set out below. I have constantly improved the accuracy of these summaries as new or better sources have become available. I've then used this information to populate the database.

Database fields

The database has the following main fields:

- Formation (division etc) and post to which the entry applies
- Parent contingent (Prussian etc) and type of formation (active, reserve etc)
- Name of officer
- Date and place of birth and age at specified dates
- Parent contingent of officer
- Date of original commission and years of service at specified dates
- Arm of service
- Pre-mobilisation status (active or inactive)
- Attendance at *Kriegsakademie* and holding of general staff jobs in peacetime or wartime
- Dates of arrival and departure in the post
- Rank on arrival in the post and date of the warrant
- Location of the formation on arrival and whether engaged against the Entente spring offensive
- Next posting and location
- Decorations or punishment relating to the posting (sacking or sidelining)
- Whether killed or wounded
- Whether of royal or Guards provenance
- Comment (what information needs further checking)

The database can be searched on any combination of these fields.

Sources

Official

Rank lists. This means principally the yearly *Ranglisten der königlich Preußischen Armee und des XIII. (königlich Württembergischen) Armeekorps*, the *Dienstalters-Liste der Offiziere der Königlich Preußischen Armee und des XIII. (königlich Württembergischen) Armeekorps* and the Bavarian and Saxon equivalents. As official publications scrutinised by the officers themselves, these are the most accurate sources. Between them they provide the arm of service, date of commission, date of promotion to current rank and post currently held or, in the case of wartime lists, last peacetime post, and attendance at *Kriegsakademie*.

Reichsarchiv, *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918: Die militärischen Operationen zu Lande*, 14 vols, (Berlin: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1925-56). The German official history. This often quotes the names of formation commanders from division up, and gives scattered references to other relevant officers including when quoting them as sources.

Documentary

BArch, RH61/1091, 'Die Schlachten und Gefechte des Großen Krieges 1914-1918. Nachträge'. This file, prepared as an aid to the writing of the official history, gives names and dates in post of commanders and senior general staff officers at OHL, army group and Army level; in the latter case it provides the same details of the line-of-communications [*Etappen-Inspektion*] officers. It also gives these details for every corps chief of staff and divisional commander.

BArch, KAM and HSAS personal papers left by officers [*Nachlässe*]. The catalogues [*Findbücher*] for these usually include summaries of the officer's career.

Documents. A large variety of documents refer to relevant officers and the posts they held at the date of issue. In addition *Kriegsranglisten* [war rank lists] and staff lists [*Stellenbesetzungslisten*] are particularly valuable for their complete lists of officers in headquarters with identifying details. There are good collections of *Kriegsranglisten* in the GLAK, 456 D and HSAS, M433/2 series; and for the Bavarians, online at www.ancestry.co.uk, under 'Bavaria, Germany, WWI Personnel Rosters, 1914-1918'. Some personnel files are also available, especially in the GLAK, 456 E, HSAS, M430/2 and KAM, OP series. Lists of attendees at divisional command courses have also been useful for identifying general staff officers: the best sources are HSAS, GU117 Bü 362 and M635/2 Bde. 544-548.

Semi-official

Hermann Cron, *Geschichte des deutschen Heeres im Weltkriege 1914-1918* (Berlin: Militärverlag Karl Siegmund, 1937). Cron worked in the *Reichsarchiv*, and this is the

standard work on German army organisation. It details commanders and chiefs of staff for all army groups and Armies.

Deutscher Offizier-Bund, ed., *Ehren-Rangliste des ehemaligen Deutschen Heeres auf Grund der Ranglisten von 1914 mit den inzwischen eingetretenen Veränderungen* (facsimile reprint of 1926 original, Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1987). This is not an official source but was based on the last pre-war rank lists for the Prussian, Bavarian, Saxon and Württemberg armies. It gives the parent contingent of the officer, rank and post as of 1 August 1914, last active service wartime post and rank on retirement or position in the *Reichsheer* at the date of going to press. Three Addenda show the care taken to get the detail right.

Divisional and regimental histories. These occasionally provide details of relevant officers.

Secondary

Dermot Bradley and others, eds, *Deutschlands Generale und Admirale, Teil IV: Die Generale des Heeres 1921-1945*, 7 vols, (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1993-2004). This provides detailed career summaries of officers who served as generals between 1921 and 1945. Although not stated, these must be based on files in BArch. In a positive review in *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*, MGFA researcher Bruno Thoß described it as a reliable collection of data. The series stops at 'Lutz'. There are parallel volumes on air force, police and SS generals which cover some relevant officers.

Othmar Hackl, *Die bayerische Kriegsakademie (1867-1914)* (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1989). Hackl was head of the MGFA in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This book includes reliable lists of all students at the Bavarian *Kriegsakademie*.

Hanns Möller, ed., *Geschichte der Ritter des Ordens "pour le mérite" im Weltkrieg*, 2 vols, (Berlin: Verlag Bernard & Graefe, 1935). This provides useful details of the pre-war and wartime careers of all officers who won the *Pour le Mérite*. I've also used publications on awards of the Bavarian *Militär-Max-Joseph-Orden* and the Saxon *Militär-St.-Heinrichs-Orden*.

Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, online at http://www.ndb.badw-muenchen.de/ndb_baende.htm. Published by the *Historische Kommission* of the *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, this work provides biographical articles on leading German personalities, including military. It therefore covers the most senior officers from the First World War as well as others who were for some reason prominent. It also covers officers who served in the war but only rose to prominence after it.

Günter Wegner, *Stellenbesetzung der deutschen Heere 1815-1939*, Vol. 1, *Die höheren Kommandostellen 1815-1939* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1990). This is the most comprehensive reference work available on senior commanders and staff officers in the First World War German army. It records details of commanders from army group to brigade, including dates of birth, arrival in and departure from the relevant post and death. It also includes the same details of chiefs of staff down to corps level. Where tested against official sources, it has been generally reliable: but a work of this scope cannot avoid mistakes. For the

purposes of my thesis and book therefore, wherever possible I've replaced it with official sources as listed above, especially BArch, RH61/1091. But it remains an indispensable tool.

Herrmann A.L. Degener, ed., *Wer ist's? Unsere Zeitgenossen*, 7th and 8th editions, (Leipzig: Verlag von H.A. Ludwig Degener, 1914 and 1922). The German *Who's Who* covers senior officers, especially pre-war.

Miscellaneous. A variety of other works which can be assessed as reliable also provide worthwhile detail. Officers' memoirs are a particularly useful occasional source.

Formations database

This database covers all permanent (i.e. excluding provisional) field formations throughout the war from army group to divisions, focusing on the latter. The database has the following main fields:

- Formation
- Type of formation (active, reserve etc)
- Contingent (Prussian etc)
- Dates formed and disbanded
- Location at various dates, including transfer between fronts
- Participation and casualties in various battles, including the Entente spring offensive
- Combat value at various dates where known
- Composition of command team (divisional commander-*Ia*) by arm of service at the outbreak of war and in April 1917; also longevity of the partnership where known

The database can be searched on any combination of these fields.

Sources

Official sources

Großer Generalstab, *Die Schlachten und Gefechte des Großen Krieges 1914-1918* (Berlin: Verlag von Hermann Sack, 1919). The official publication on battle nomenclature, listing every action of the war, with details of the formations which participated and dates. It also has a list of corps commanders with dates, thus covering a gap in BArch, RH61/1091.

Reichsarchiv, *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918: Die militärischen Operationen zu Lande*, 14 vols, (Berlin: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1925-56). Its appendices are a rich source of information about the movement of formations, their participation in battle and sometimes their casualties. Vol. XIV, Beilage 34 contains a complete list of German corps and divisions active during the war, including dates of formation and where relevant disbandment.

US War Office, *Histories of Two Hundred and Fifty-One Divisions of the German Army which Participated in the War (1914-1918)* (London: London Stamp Exchange Ltd, 1989; originally published 1920). This was prepared by the American Expeditionary Force's General Headquarters intelligence staff, based on French and British records for the years 1914-1917 and American for 1918; these records in turn drew on intelligence material shared between the Allied and Associated Powers. The book describes composition, movements, actions fought and assessed combat value of the 251 divisions covered. Its factual content – though not necessarily its assessments of combat value – is regarded by modern historians as authoritative. There are, however, errors in it, and so wherever possible I've checked it against official German sources. I have not used its assessments of combat value.

Documentary

I've generally used documents less in this database than in the prosopographical one. Exceptions are details of current combat value and casualties during the Entente spring offensive: the principal documents used here have been KAM, HKR alte Nr. 150 for casualties and the current combat value of divisions at Arras; and the Seventh Army casualty figures in GLAK, F1/639 and the current combat value reports in F1/334-336. Divisional *Findbücher* have also provided some details of movements and subordination.

Semi-official sources

Hermann Cron, *Geschichte des deutschen Heeres im Weltkriege 1914-1918*. As above. It gives details of the raising and composition of formations from army group to division, as well as changes in their organisation.

Hermann Cron and others, eds, *Ruhmeshalle unserer alten Armee*, 2 vols, 5th edition, (Berlin: Verlag für Militärgeschichte und deutsches Schrifttum, c. 1934). This book was based on official documents and supported by both the *Reichsarchiv* and the Bavarian *Kriegsarchiv*; many of the editors, including Cron, worked at the *Reichsarchiv*. It includes details of divisional composition, movements and participation in battles.

Approach

I generally take official sources, whether printed or archival, as more accurate than semi-official or secondary; and German official sources as more accurate than non-German. The main exception to this has been to prefer *Ruhmeshalle unserer alten Armee* to *Histories of the 251 Divisions of the German Army* as a source on divisions. Wherever possible, I've cross-checked unofficial and secondary sources against official, and I've made – and still make – a continuous effort to upgrade the accuracy of information.

However, even the most reliable official sources contain mistakes or differ among each other. Given the state of the sources as a whole, complete accuracy is not possible. For this reason, when I give statistics in the book derived from the databases, I round numbers up or down as appropriate, and I quote percentages to the nearest whole number.