

## Konrad Wiederhold, defender of the Hohentwiel (1598-1667)

The best-known Wiederhold in Germany is Konrad Wiederhold, the protestant defender of an important fortress in the Thirty-years war (1618-1648). Several books and novels describe his exploits. Konrad Wiederhold was born in 1598 in Ziegenhain, about 50km north of Fulda. In 1615 he became a mounted soldier and Muskietier for the German sea-faring states of Bremen and Hamburg.



As a Hessian mercenary officer Konrad wound up in Bremen (1616). A story has it that, accompanying the departure of delegation of the ruler of Helgoland Konrad fired his gun as a farewell salute. The horse of an accompanying lady,

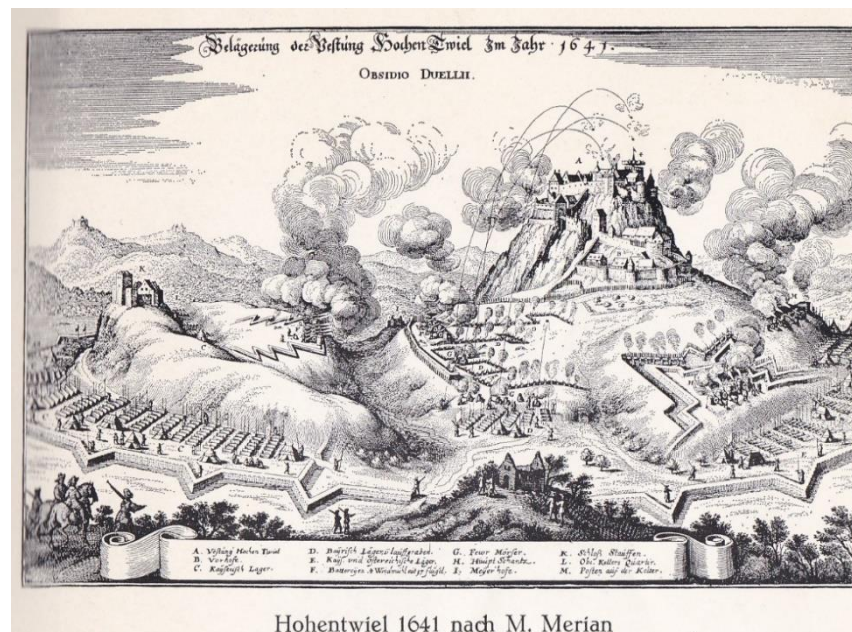


Endlich hatte Konrad das rollende Tier erreicht. (S. 13.)

Anna Armgard Burkhart, spooked. Konrad rescued her, and they were married soon after. The fancy picture here is from a historical novel: A.Thoma: Konrad Widerholt, der Kommandant von Hohentwiel; J.F.Lohmans Verlag, 1903.

Konrad had to leave Anna behind soon after. In Venetian service, he sailed from Delfzijl to Venice, and eventually was posted in Padua. Konrad was hired there in 1619 by an envoy of the duke of Württemberg to help defend his duchy and soon took charge of a large fortress near Singen, the Hohentwiel. It sits on top of the cone of a long-extinct volcano, controlling the land passage along the Rhine river between France and Bavaria past Switzerland. Waterfalls at Schaffhausen nearby disable shipping

During the Thirty-years war Austrian imperial and French royal troops, supporting the Roman-Catholic rulers entered Germany. The small protestant German states were not unified in defending their lands. The duke of Württemberg fled to Strassbourg. The counter-reformation effort took over most of southern Europe, so that the area is now primarily catholic. The fortress was besieged several times between 1641 and 1648, primarily forces of the Austrian empire, but never conquered



Hohentwiel 1641 nach M. Merian

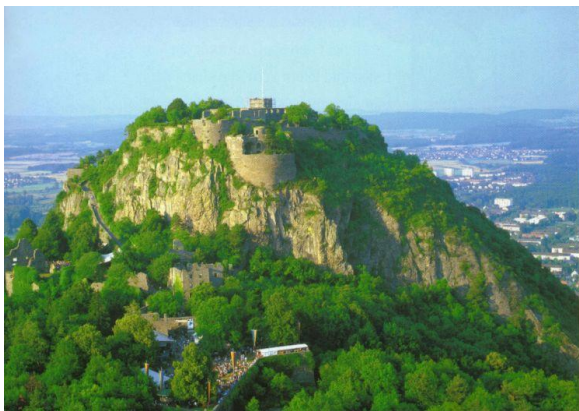
Konrad is described as a tough, religious, and straight-laced commander. His soldiers were not allowed to be rowdy or curse. But during the sieges they obtained supplies by robbing catholic priests and their fancy possessions. He even liberated a organ from a catholic church, installing it in the church he had built on the grounds of the fortress.

About 1643, Gabriel Konrad Wiederhold von Weidenhofen (1617-1656), then in the service of the Empress of Austria, was assigned to visit Konrad and to convince him to yield the fortress: "zur Übergabe der Festung an der Sr Majestät so viel zu bewegen". That exploitation of family relationships fell on deaf ears.

More of Konrad's character is described by [George Molenkamp here](#) in Section 2.2. Other stories can be found on the Internet (Schwarz Family History)

After the war his wife, who had been left in Bremen and wound up in Strasbourg the duke of Württemberg's retinue was finally able to rejoin him. They did not have children, but adopted a nephew, Johann Georg Wiederhold (1600-1677) who was badly wounded at the battle of Nördlingen (1634). The Swedish (protestant) forces list badly, Johann Georg managed to find his way to the Hohentwiel and recover there. After the war (1650-1672) he took over, as Johann Georg von Wiederhold von Weydenhofen as commander of the Hohentwiel Fortress, but may have resided there only to 1666. His youngest son Johann Dietrich von Wiederhold (1651-1715) became the commander from 1694-1713, after having been in military service in the Netherlands and the Black Forest.

Konrad was well rewarded with money and land, but not having any children, extensive arguments ensued about the inheritance [page in AW Homberg vol.3]. The moral of that outcome is that if you have anything of value left at the end of your life there should be a well-crafted testament and a reliable, unbiased executor.



It's quite a climb, but we did not have to carry stones for adding to the walls, as was required in 1600. Konrad's bust is there, but the Wiederhold coat-of-arms over a portal is now hard to recognize.

The significant aspect of the Defense of the Hohentwiel is that the province of Württemberg (now merged with Baden as the German State of Baden-Württemberg) remained protestant. That defense also bolstered other protestant states to the North. Gio and Voy visited the fortress with his father and our son in 1971, and then again with our entire family in 2013.



Randy, John. Konrad, and Gio Wiederhold



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