

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 a pregnant 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. The Waterfalls at Schaffhausen nearby allow the fortress to control and 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. That 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 an 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.

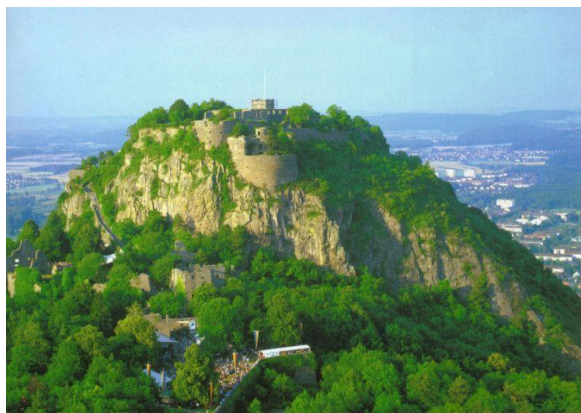
More of Konrad's character is described by [George Molenkamp](#) in his Section 2.2. Other stories can be found on the Internet (Schwarz Family History) and as [Konrad Wiederholt in the German Wikipedia](#).

After the war his wife, Anna Armgard Burkhart, who had been left in Bremen and wound up in Strassbourg as part of escaped duke [Eberhard III. 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 lost 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.

Historical significance

The significant outcome 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. 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.



Randy, John, Konrad, and Gio Wiederhold (2013)

There is now a Wiederholdstrasse between Ziegenhain, Konrad's birthplace and Niedergrenzbach, where many Wiederholds lived as well. In 1970 Ziegenhain was incorporated into Schwalmstadt, Hessen which still has a moat around its town center.

Extensive entries for Konrad Wiederhold (in German also [Konrad Widerholt](#), with more references) in the Alfred Wiederhold books are in [Ziegenhain branch](#), the [Ziegenhain-Staina](#) branch, with relatives that went to the US, in the Homberg Anhang, and also in the Deutsche Geschlechterbücher Band 41. He is mentioned with his [birthplace in the US Wikipedia](#). A 1857 book on the Hohentwiel, that includes details on how Konrad managed to survive the many sieges from 1638 to 1644, by [Karl von Martens is available at Google](#). Konrad, not getting support from his patron, Duke [Johann Friederich of Württemberg](#) (1583-1628) who was hiding in Strassburg, had to survive by exacting protection payments from the surrounding villages, but also robbing – mainly catholic settlements, monasteries and travelers, and trading prisoners he made for ransom.

Penname

The name Konrad Wiederhold was used by [Walter Kreiser](#) (1898-1959), a German aircraft and helicopter engineer and journalist, to hide his identity. Walter was arrested in 1931 for revealing that a Lufthansa base was secretly being used for the development of military aircraft technology, and convicted of treason. He escaped from jail, first to France, then to Switzerland, and in 1941 to Brazil where he participated in an anti-Nazi-group of exiled Germans.

Confusion about Konrad's descendants

Many genealogical entries assign children in their ancestry to Konrad Wiederhold (1598), the famous defender of the Hohentwiel. But they are all nephews or more remote relatives. The reuse of given names, the spelling variations and uncertainty about dates makes that easy. But there is sufficient documentation to sort the family out with a fair confidence.

Konrad Wiederhold (or Konrad Widerholt 1598-1667) and Anna Armgard Burkhardt (1583-1666) had only one child shortly after their marriage in 1617; he died young during 1618, his father may then have been already on his way to Venice. They were then separated for a long time due to the 30-years' war. Dying without direct inheritors resulted in a long inheritance fight, documented at length in [Alfred's Homberg book](#), pages 24-54. That fight further muddled up the data, but also left detailed records. I will always use the (birthyear) with a name here, since it is so easy to get confused.

- I. Heinrich Wiederhold or Heintz Widerhold (1540-1618) and Katharina Fenner or Catharina Venner (1547-1635) are the parents of Konrad Wiederhold (1598). They had 8 children., 5 sons and 3 daughter. The 30-year's war started during their lifetime, making their children hard to track. Their second son, Heinrich Wiederhold (1578-1626) stayed on the farm, but he, his wife, and daughter were killed by Tilly's catholic army in 1626 when their mill was burned down. There is no record of his then 6-year old son George Wiederhold (1620). It is likely that all of Heinrich Wiederhold's (1540) younger sons became soldiers. Konrad Wiederhold (1598) is their youngest son.
- II. Johannes Wiederhold or Hannß Widderholt (1512) is the father of Heinrich Wiederhold's (1540). He was married to another Fenner woman; they had 7 children.
- III. Heinrich Wiederhold or Henrich Wedderolt (1480-1532) and Catherina von Beeden or Katharina von Bredau (1480-1530) are the parents of Johannes Wiederhold (1512). They had 7 children and are the ancestors of all alternative children assigned to Konrad Wiederhold (1598) that I have seen.

[Johann Georg Wiederhold \(1600 1677\)](#) is often assigned as a child of Konrad (1598). He is the 2nd son of Daniel Wiederhold (1560-1638) and Maria (1573-1635). Daniel Wiederhold (1560) is the 7th son of Heinrich Wiederhold (~1510-~1574) and Elisabeth Salfeld (~1510-1562). That Heinrich Wiederhold (~1510) is the third son of Henrich Wiederhold (1480); entry III. in the list of Konrad Wiederhold's (1598) ancestors. While quite remote, the confusion is easy, because he interacted with Konrad Wiederhold (1598).

Johann Georg Wiederhold (1600) had also fought in the 30-year's war. He was badly wounded in 1634 during the battle of Nördlingen and took refuge on the Hohentwiel castle, defended by his 2nd-level cousin, Konrad Wiederhold (1598). Johann Georg Wiederhold (1600) took over the management of the castle after the war, when Konrad retired.

[Johannes Hermann Wiederhold \(1634\)](#), married to Anna Elisabetha Schmalhausen (~1645), is shown in some Ancestry trees as a child of Konrad (1598). He is actually Konrad's nephew. He is the 4th child of Hermann Wiederhold or Georgio Hermanno Wiederhold (1581) and Catharina Amaliae. Hermann Wiederhold (1581) is the fourth of 8 children of Heinrich Wiederhold (1540) and Katharina Fenner (1547), entry I, in the ancestor list.

[Johannes Wiederhold \(1573- ~1641\)](#), married to Margareta, is the eldest son of Heinrich Wiederhold (1540) and Katharina Fenner (1547), entry I. He claimed some the inheritance of Konrad Wiederhold (1598) and allocated it to his 9 sons. He named one of the sons Burkhart Wiederhold (1635-1710), perhaps to strengthen the relationship.

References:

Many books and stories have been written about Konrad Wiederhold. I will list a few that I have looked at. General references used are at the [background story](#).

[BahnmaierK:1835] D. J. F. Bahnmeier and M. Albert Knapp: *Gedächtnissfeier Conrad Widerhold's des Verteigers von Hohentwiel und Obervogts in Kirchheim, bei Ausstellung seiner und seiner Gattin Busten in ihrer Gruft Kapelle den 16 Decbr, 1834*; J. F. Schwarz, Kirchheim U. T. 1835; summary and speeches at a memorial celebration, from Alfred Wiederhold's Library, donated by Jürgen Wiederhold (*1940), July 2022.

[Billig:1967] *Gedenkfeier Konrad Wiederhold*; 2 July 1967; with photographs of participants, including Alfred Wiederhold and Ellen Wiederhold (1913); from Alfred Wiederhold's Library, donated by Jürgen Wiederhold (*1940), July 2022.

[Baur:1941] Ernst Baur: *Konrad Widerhold, Eine Erzählung*; Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1412; starts with details of his appointment in Württemberg, from Alfred Wiederhold's Library, donated by Jürgen Wiederhold (*1940), July 2022.

[Finck:1960] Ludwig Finckh: *Konrad Wiederhold, Ein Mann aus Hegau*; Silberburg Verlag – Werner Jachh, Stuttgart, 1903

[Gast:1839] Fr. Gast: *Adelsbuch des Königreichs Württemberg*; J.A. Gärtner, Stuttgart, 1839, pp 384-388.

[Martens:1857] Karl Martens: *Geschichte von Hohentwiel*; J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart, 1857 – available at Google Books.

[Mayer:1953] E. Mayer: *Konrad Wiederhold, Festspiele, 1953*; Volksschauspiele E.V., Kirchheim-Teck; from Alfred Wiederhold's Library, donated by Jürgen Wiederhold (*1940), July 2022. Pictures.

[Weinberg:1938] Josef Weinberg: *Der Kommandant vom Hohen-Twiel*; Kurt Arnholt Verlag, Stuttgart, 1938.

[KoernerW:1923] Bernard Koerner & Hugo Wiest: Reutlinger Geschlechterbuch, Vol. 2 (Deutsche Geschlechterbücher Vol.41); Starcke Verlag, Görlitz (now Limburg), pages 12-13, 451.

[Stickelberger:1820] Emanuel Stickelberger: Konrad Widerhold, Eine Hohentwieler Geschichte. #rd Edition; Friedrichh Reinhardt Verlag, Basel; from Alfred Wiederhold's Library, donated by Jürgen Wiederhold (*1940), July 2022.

[Thoma:1903] Albrecht Thoma: *Konrad Wiederhold*; Lehmann Verlag, München, 1903.

[Weitzel:1867] C. L. Weitzel: Conrad Widerhold, ein Gedrangthes Lebens- und Charakterbild, mit einem Anhang über das Widerholdisch Stipendium; Carl Niemollers buchhandlung; Kirchheim U. Teck, 1867; from Alfred Wiederhold's Library, donated by Jürgen Wiederhold (*1940), July 2022.

[Wiederhold:1961] Alfred Wiederhold: *Stammfolgen Wiederhold aus Homberg*, Band 1, Section Ac – Ziegenhainer linie; self-published, 1961, pages 24-33.



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