

## The bicycle - The messenger of death

We often connect the bicycle with exercise and well-being, but in conflicts they had a different purpose. For example, the German riders in WW II were Europe's horror and made the blood freeze, as they were the cornerstones of the German military strategy. The bicycle was in use early and was used effectively. The German bicycle soldiers created fear by being able to move quickly and quietly, and it was not easy to stop these marksmen, who were mainly elite soldiers in hunting troops. Never has the world seen a more destructive and brutal bicycle force as in World War II. Many countries had bicycles in their army, however, there were few countries that used postmark in the war that referred to bicycle companies on the post that were communicated. Objects with red frame are difficult and rare.



*Drawing by V. Mundorff: Bicycle squadron Nr. 101 in action in Chemnitz in Saxony during World War II*

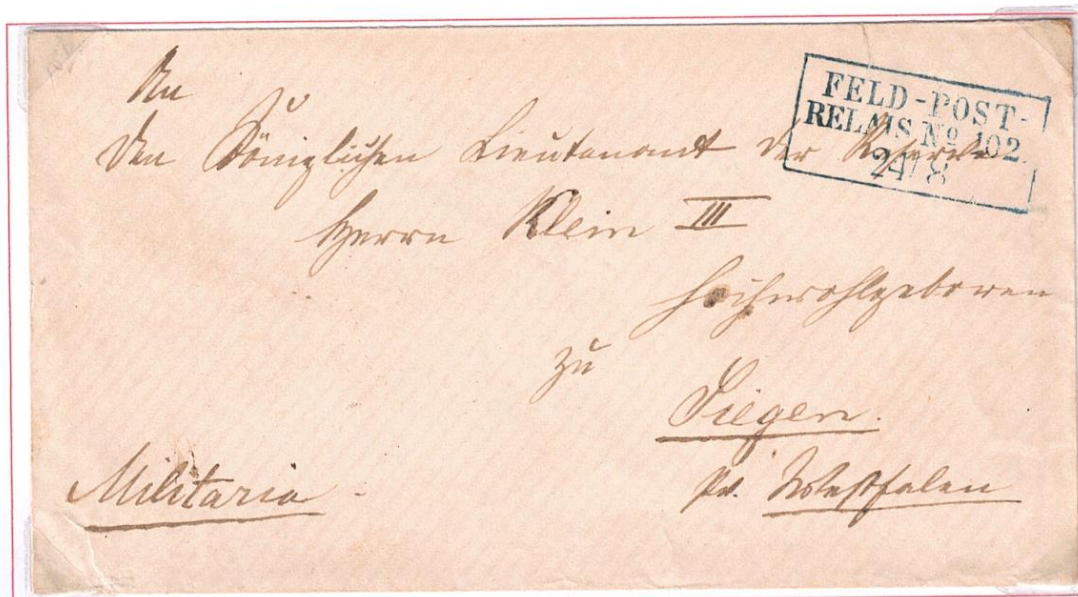
The collection shows use of bicycles in military ordonan's service, transport and conflicts ranging from the Franco-Prussian War to the post-war period. It deals with Mobilization, World War I, Inter-war period, the Finnish winter war, as well as World War II. Switzerland as neutral country had many companies with bicycles at the borders to the war zones, and is included in the scope of the exhibit. Maps are included showing where the individual companies were present. Post-war time is included because several countries continued to train soldiers for the use of bicycles in case of conflict, and some correspondence to companies producing bicycles for military purposes included as well.

### Sources:

Axis History  
Das Bundesarchiv  
Lexikon der Wehrmacht  
Mit dem Fahrrad an die Front - Hans-Werner Salzmann  
Die Deutsche Feldpostübersicht 1939-1945 - H. Kannapin  
British Army Postal Service 1903-1927 - Edward B. Proud

Finland at war - Vesa Nenye  
Associazione Nazionale Bersagliari  
Ordinamento bersagliari ciclisti  
Troupes cyclistes pendant la guerre France  
Archives Nationales, France  
The Bicycle in Warfare - Ally Roche





The Franco-German War was a war fought in the period July 1870 – May 1871 between France on the one hand and the North German Confederation supported by Baden, Bavaria and Württemberg on the other. August 4, 1870, German troops crossed the French border with 384 000 men in the first line. Bicycles of the Kangaroo type were used in the ordinance service.

Asia



線歩徒 (七其) 習演別

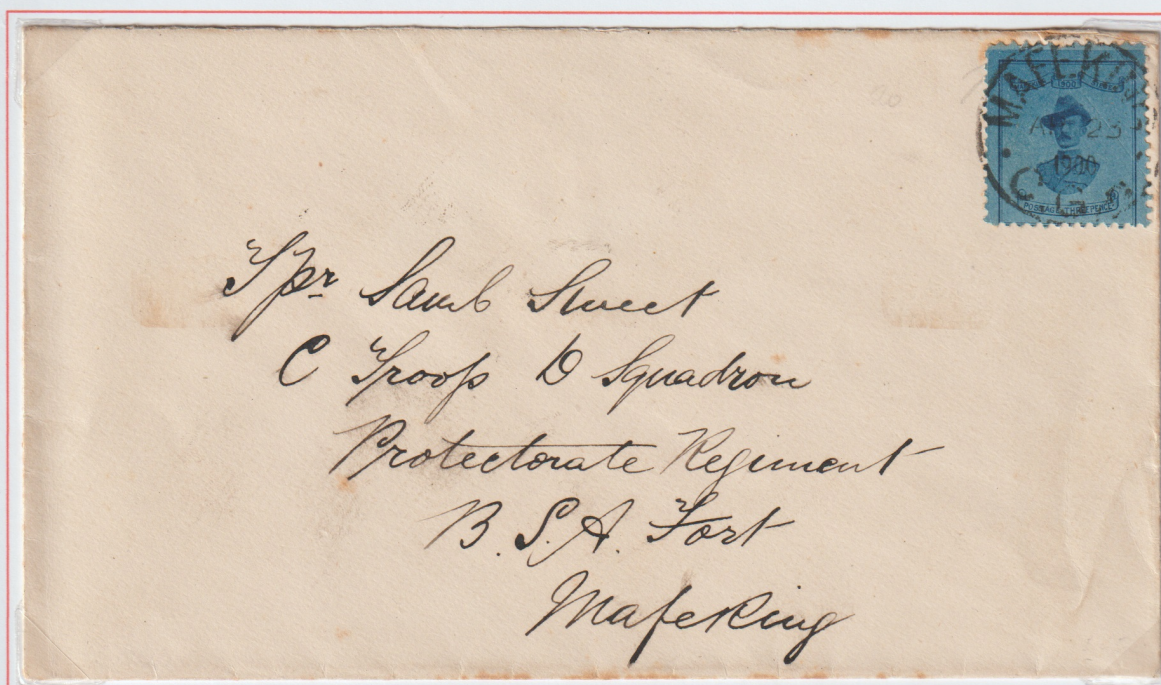
The Russo-Japanese war started in February 1904 and ended in November 1905. The reason was the imperialist ambition of two countries in Asia. Bicycle were used in ordinance service.







During the Boer War, the bicycle was, among other things, used actively for ordinance service from headquarters to the field. Envelope used by the Military after the Siege had been lifted. Oval postmark "87th Battery / Royal Field Artillery". Addressed to the "Officer Commanding, 87th Field Howitzer Battery R.F.A.". The stamp shows Cadet Sergeant Warner Goodyear on assignment. (Plate III, position 34).  
*Provenance: Collection "Goodyear", Robson Lowe.*



General Baden-Powell was the supreme commander of the bicycle companies. He was also involved in the planning of tandem bicycles for attack with two, four and eight men's tandem bicycles. (e)





Mobilization order sent from the Scottish headquarters. The Highland cyclist battalion was a bicycle infantry battalion of Territorial Force, and part of the British Army during World War I. They were an independent unit from 1909 and served Britain throughout the first World War. The unit was dissolved in 1920.

Italy



Mobilization April 19. 1916 to the war zone for 6th troop, 5th bicycle company. The company belonged to 40th battalion.





Field Post sends from 17th Northern division Train (T17) to the 2nd line battalion Highland cycle battalion in Montrose, Scotland where UK's first operational military airfield was. The postmark was in use July 26. 1915- April 6. 1918. Highland cycle battalion was formed in November of 1914, in Kirkcaldy. Ended its days in Ireland 1919. This corps became the 1st Provisional cyclist company in July 1915. This censorship was in use on the Western front from April 1915 – January 1916.

Germany



1. Bavarian Hunter Battalion was incorporated into the Alpecorps on May 27, 1915. Their task was to support the Austrian alpine front in Tyrol. The battalion consisted of elite soldiers in the German army. Overall there were six bicycle companies in the Alpecorps.





Postage-free recommended shipments were only allowed for military units and service locations.

The 6th Army was the Bavarian branch of the German army. It was formed on April 1, 1900, and had head office in Regensburg. Outside Bavaria, it was referred to as "Royal Bavarian". The term was used by Bavarian units to distinguish them from similarly numbered Prussian units. Under 6th Army there were 6 infantry divisions. In total, the 36 bicycle companies had distributed on divisions, 1 cavalry and bicycle department, 10 spare departments and 17 reserve troops. During World War I, they fought on the West front, first in the Battle of the Frontiers in the area between the Meuse river and the Mosel until July 1916, and then in battle at the Meuse hill, at St. Mihiel and Bois-Brulé. In July and August 1916, they fought in the battle of Verdun, and then in battle in the Argonne forest. At the end of September 1916 they fought in the Somme battle.

The divisions suffered huge losses in these battles.

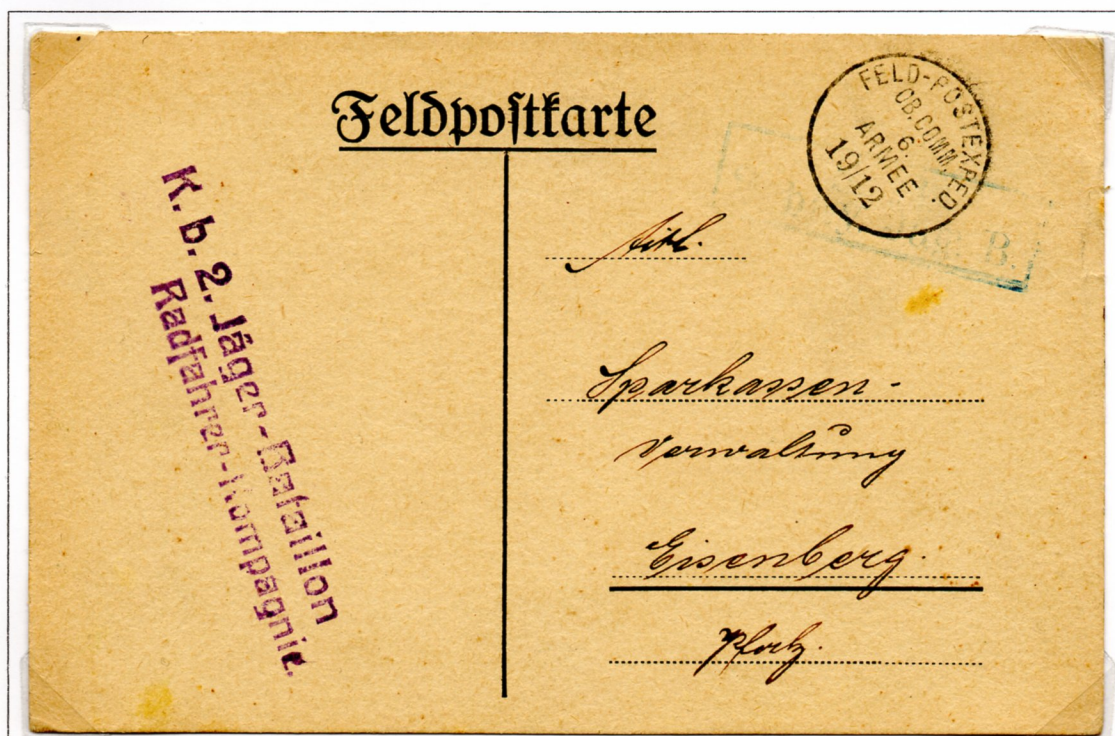


Hunting battalion no. 7 belonged to the 7th Army Corps, and was stationed in Bückeburg in today's Lower Saxony in northwestern Germany.





The 51st reserve division was a unit of the Imperial German Army in the First World War. The division was formed in September 1914. The reserve division had its own bicycle department. In 1915, they had headquarters in Coburg, which is located by the Itz river in Upper Franconia region of Bavaria, Germany. They were in the second battle in Ypres. April 22 - May 15, 1915. The 51st reserve division was dissolved in 1919 during the demobilization of the German army after World War I.



The Royal Bavarian Hunter Battalion Bicycle Company was under the 35th Cavalry Brigade in the 35th Division in 1914. They were based in Kulm. Later moved to Infantry regiment 344.





The bicycle company departs from Westönnen in the Arnsberg, district of North Rhine-Westphalia.

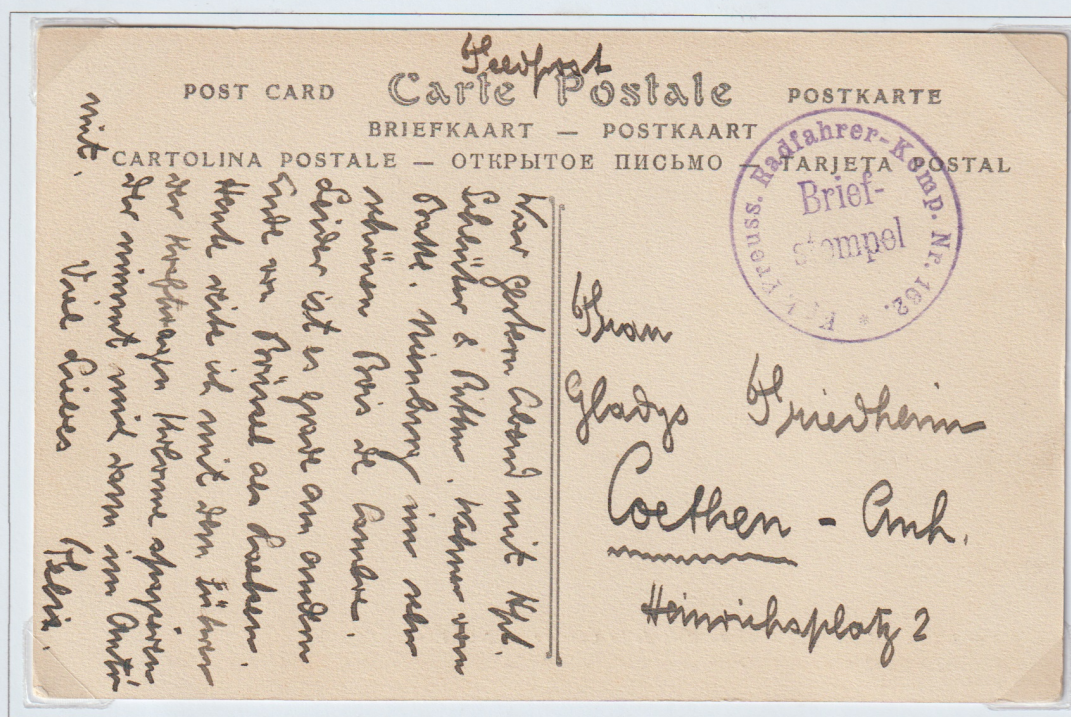


From August 1916, there were eight bicycle battalions (1-8) in Bavaria, each with a machine gun and six bicycle companies. The Bavarian bicycle battalion fought on both the Western front and the Eastern front.



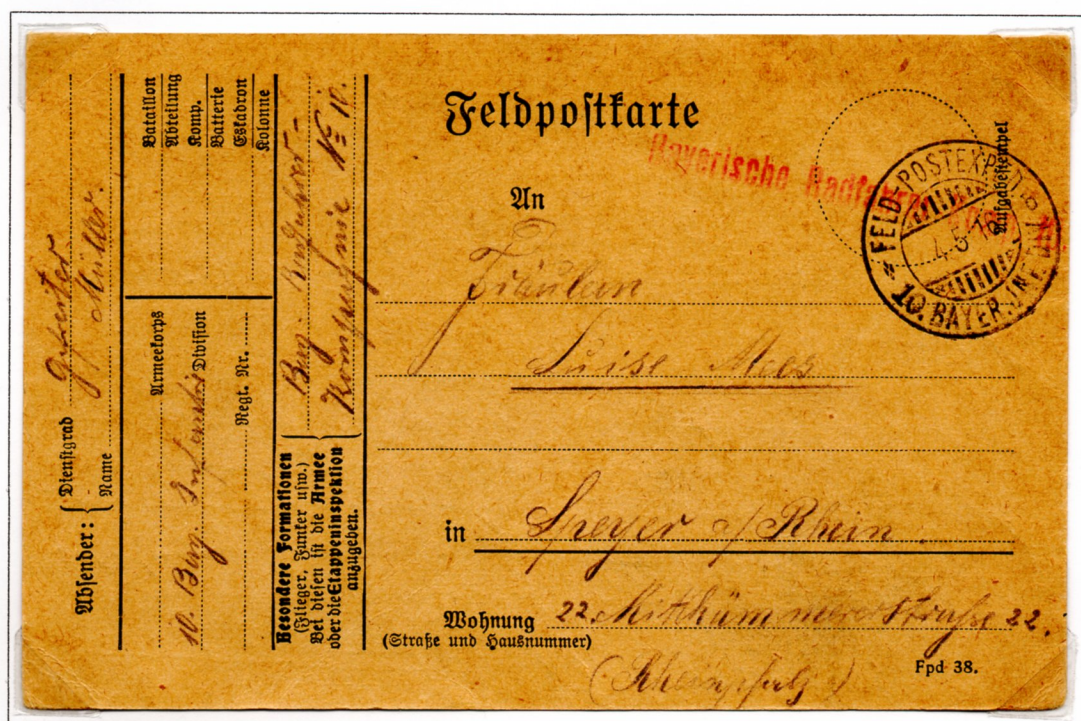


Bavarian cycling company No. 10 belonged to the Bavarian infantry division which fought on the Western front in Lorraine in France.



KGL. Preussian bicycle kompani No. 162 was subordinate hunter Battalion 4. Stationed in Brussels in Belgium in 1918 until November of the same year.





Bavarian bicycle company No. 10 was a unit, but had several functions.  
This company belonged to the 10th Bavarian infantry division which was in Lotringen.

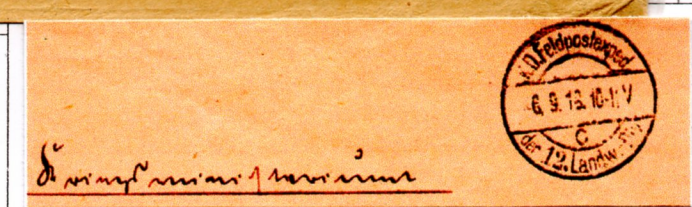


Bicycle battalion no. 4 had several bicycle companies. This is 1st bicycle company hunter 13.  
They were stationed in Bruges in West Flanders in Belgium.



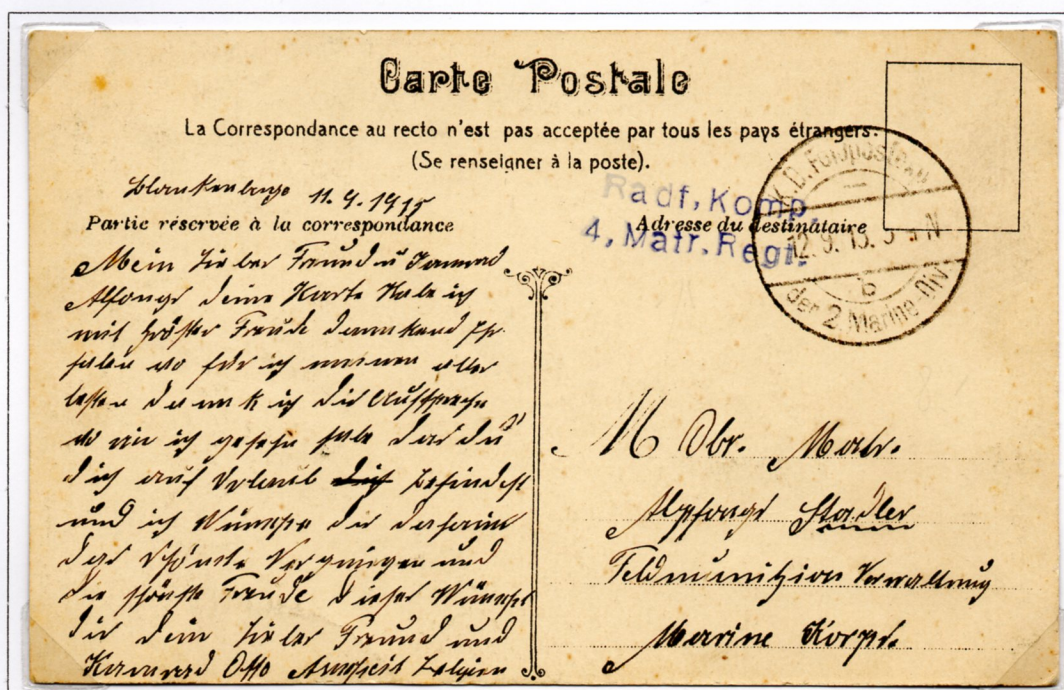


8th Hunter battalion/bicycle company was under the 12th militia division. They were on the Western front in Rhineland.

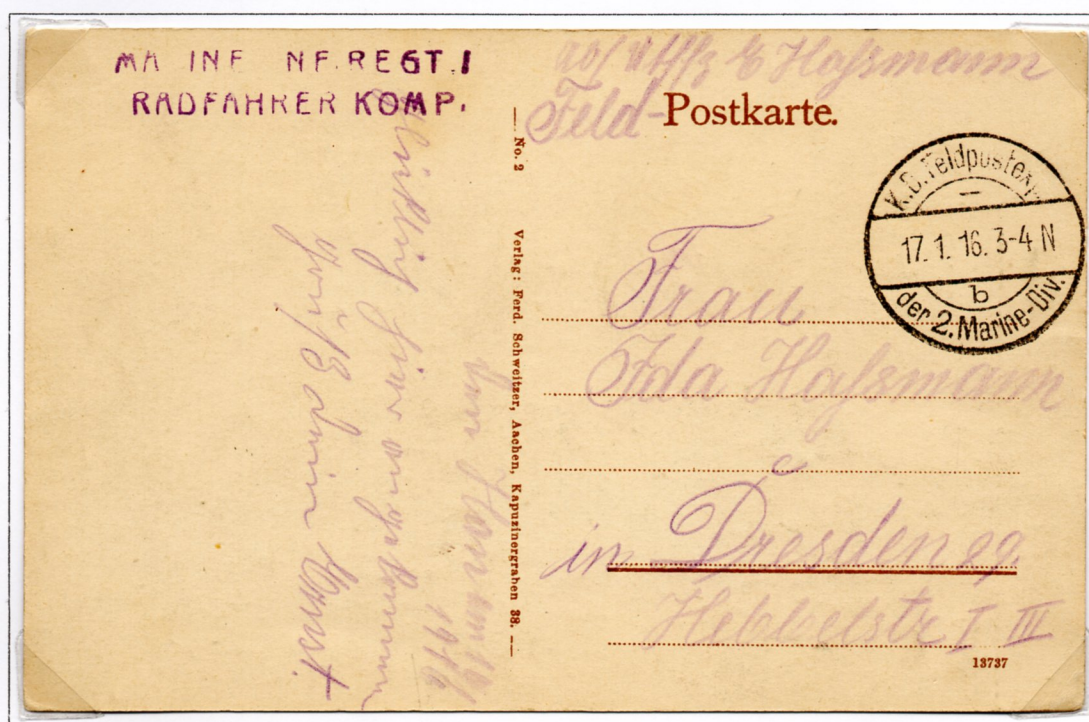


Bicycle company 58 was below 58th infantry division. They were stationed in Lille, France.





Bicycle company for 4th. Sailor regiment belonged to 2nd. Marine division.  
They were stationed in Blankenberge in Belgium.



**Bicycle company of the 2nd. Marine division was in 1916 covered in Herbesthal on the border between the kingdoms of Prussia and Belgium.**





50th Infantry Division was a formation of the Prussian army. The division was formed on March 10, 1915. The cycling company participated in several battles, including Verdun, Fort Vaux, Aisene and the German spring offensive. Allied intelligence in 1917 and 1918 considered them a first-class attack division.



Württemberg bicycle company 1 was in 7th district division and was a unit of the Prussian/Germany army in Württemberg. From March 1, 1916 they participated in a trench war in Upper Alsace at Colmar, which was then located in Germany. The battles lasted until 21.2.17, when they were moved to Lothringen, where it was fought in the great battle of Verdun between French and German troops.



|   |      |  |                  |  |
|---|------|--|------------------|--|
| Absender:   | Ort  |  | Bataillon        |  |
|   | Name |  | Zweigng<br>komp. |  |
|   |      |  | Batterie         |  |
|   |      |  | Geschw.          |  |
|   |      |  | Kolonie          |  |
| Besondere Formationen<br>(Füßler, Jäger usw.)<br>Bei diesen ist die Armee-<br>oder Divisionsbezeichnung<br>anzugeben. |      |  |                  |  |
|   |      |  |                  |  |

**Feldpostkarte**

**Radfahrer-Abteilung**

**Seldpostkarte 39**

An *Herrn Fritz Kahlke*

*XI Komp. 38 km in*

*2. Inf. Regt 55,*

*1. Batt.*

Wohnung \_\_\_\_\_

(Straße und Hausnummer)

F. 36 (12. 14.)

The 13th reserve division was formed following the mobilization in August 1914. Bicycle Division 39 participated in the offensive in the Aisne region in December 1915 before being transferred to Verdun. Then they were transferred to Flanders where they ended the war.

Allied intelligence considered the division mediocre in 1917, and first class in 1918.

**Demobilized and disbanded in 1919.**

Feldpostkorrespondenzkarte.  
 Landst.-Radfahrer  
 II. Kompagnie

An  
 Frau Mikri Gode  
 Wien III  
 Kriebitzgasse 20  
 9.17

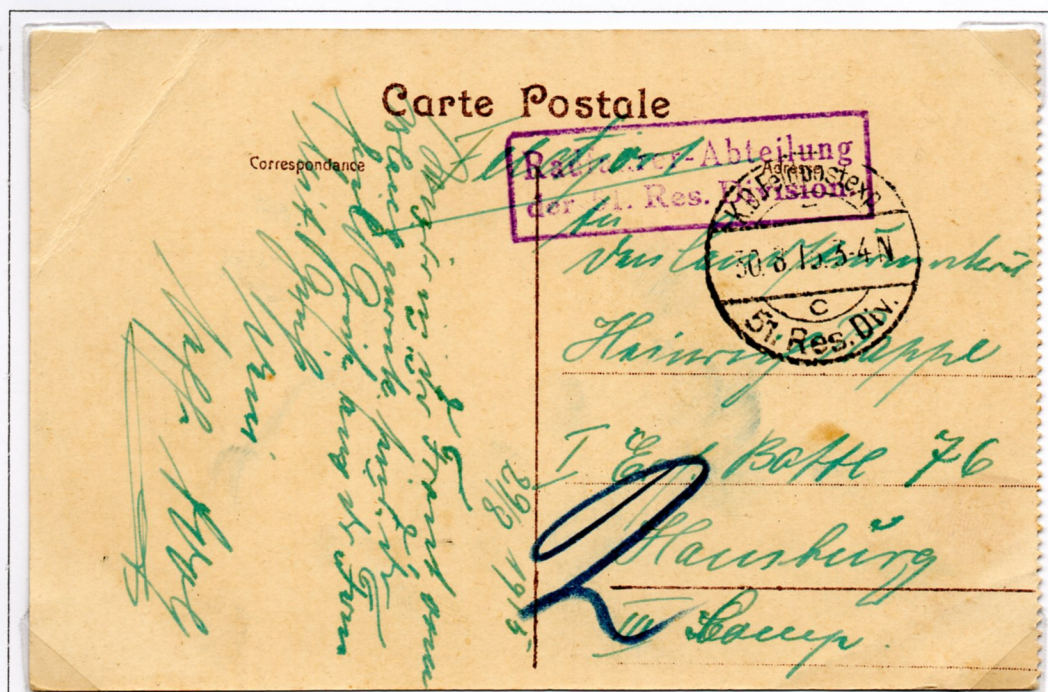
Leopoldsdorf  
 283

Landst. bicycle Baon 2nd company belonging to the Austrian army, was coated in Baon, a French municipality of the department of Yonne in the region of Bourgogne.





The 6th Army was formed on mobilization in August 1914.  
The bicycle company of Hunter Battalion 11 belonged to the 6th Army.  
They joined the Battle of Lorraine in 1914.



The bicycle department of the 51st. reserve infantry division was in 1915 covered by the Western front. In the autumn of 1915 they were in Loos in northwestern France.



