

THE OLYMPIC BELL OF BERLIN 1936 AS A PORCELAIN MINIATURE

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I was inspired to write the following article after reading Konrad Wärtgen's essay "Ich rufe die Jugend der Welt" ("I summon the youth of the world") in the 87/1995 IMOS newsletter. Wärtgen investigates the authorship of the above slogan and attempts to explain why Friedrich von Schiller has been discussed as its author. It seems to me that he has found a logical explanation but that he is not completely clear as to the name of the person who coined the phrase. In the many examples of the use of the "Olympic Bell" as an "emblem" or "logo" as one would say nowadays, Wärtgen refers in his addendum almost exclusively to evidence from his own field of interest, stamp collecting. He does mention, however, that copies of the bell in porcelain exist as much sought-after souvenirs. These were sometimes used as collecting boxes and money boxes. As a collector of memorabilia these pieces are of particular interest to me. What is known of them?

My first logical step was to reach for the Official Report of the Olympic Games of 1936. The result: virtually nothing. Under the heading "Symbols", sub-heading "The Olympic Bell" on p.111 there were no references at all to porcelain miniatures. Not until p.369 in the same Volume I in the paragraph "Inland Propaganda" did I find a reference to measures taken by the Propaganda Committee to protect Olympic symbols. It reads:

.....3. Design protection of the Olympic Bell, the symbol of the Olympic Games of 1936 with the slogan "Ich rufe die Jugend der Welt" by entering it in the design protection register of the Municipal Court of Berlin-Charlottenburg on 22nd June 1933 under No. 41136.....

Following that, the sentence "The Olympic Bell was only permitted for special decorations..." can be found on p.372. There is, however, no reference to what form these special decorations were to take, and therefore no mention of a porcelain version of the bell.

I found the first precise, if you wish, "official" reference in the brochure "Official Guide to the Ceremony of the XI. Olympic Games in Berlin 1936", edited by the Organisation Committee of the XI. Olympiade Berlin 1936 (Reichssportverlag Berlin 68). On p.54 the following is said about the Olympic Bell:

"In the endeavour to have an emblem for the Olympic Games a bell was created from the two obvious symbols - the Imperial eagle, which holds the five rings and the Brandenburg Gate. The bell bears both symbols, one on either side. The slogan is inevitably "Ich rufe die Jugend der Welt!" which goes back to an old custom. A signet of the graphic designer, Boehland, provided the first solution. The sculptor, Lehmkcke, made the model. The Society for Cast-Steel Fabrication in Bochum donated the factory.

The Olympic Bell was produced using 16,000 kg of molten metal in the same place as where the first cast-steel bell was made almost a century ago by Jacob Meyer. It weighs 10,426 kg without its yoke and 13,841 kg with its yoke. It is 2.6m high without and 4.3m high with its yoke.

On 16th January 1936 it began its triumphal procession from Bochum via Bielefeld, Hannover, Braunschweig, Magdeburg, Brandenburg, Potsdam to Berlin where it received an unforgettable reception. On 11th May 1936 it was pulled up on to the bell tower of the Reich sports field.

Millions welcomed the bell on its triumphal procession. Many thousands passed by it as it stood in various locations in Berlin. On 1st August its peal will be heard as it rings in the world's youth as they march into the Olympic Stadium. Schillers words "Freude sie der Stadt bedeute, Friede sei ihr erst Geläute" ("It is joy to the city, peace be its first peal") are very fitting.

The Organising Committee permitted only one single form of the reproduction of the Olympic Bell. It commissioned the State Porcelain Manufacture in Berlin (founded in 1763 by Frederick the Great) which guaranteed a worthy production of the bell in a smaller form. It should constantly promote the ideals of the Olympic Games and be a reminder of the celebration of the XI. Olympiad. The bell, in dazzling white, exhibits the same features in form and writ-

ing of the original of the Porcelain Manufacture. Like its big sister, it bears the Brandenburg Gate and the Imperial eagle as well as the inscription.

It can be purchased in suitable shops, on the Reich sports field and in the State Porcelain Manufacture (Wegelystrasse, at the Bahnhof Tiergarten). The cost of the bell is 4.50 Reichsmark."

The last two paragraphs were the crucial ones for my investigation. According to the above, the Organizing Committee only permitted one single version of the reproduction of the Olympic Bell and commissioned the State Porcelain Manufacture to produce it.



The bell produced here is indeed a precise copy to scale of the original bell with all the pictures, signs and inscriptions. The bell has a fully formed crown and a conical, octagonal tongue of approximately 80mm in length which is attached to the crown area. The pictures, signs and inscriptions are embossed on the body of the bell and their contours are very clear and distinct. The bell is on a scale of 1:28. The maximum diameter of the original bell is 280cm; the maximum diameter of the porcelain bell is 10cm. There is a porcelain sign engraved on to the inside of the bell (see picture). According to the "Brockhaus" it is the sign used by the Royal Manufacture in Berlin since 1870. (This sign had two predecessors since 1763). The colour of the sign is green. Other signs on the inside of the bell are colourless stamps. I know of signs in the shape of a "C" and of "S" and of a circle which is not closed, but consists of 7 small parts (lines). In addition to these, there are bells which do not have additional signs.

The original bell was delivered with a wooden black stand.

The above describes the only licensed Olympic bell. So where does the claim arise that there are also bells used as savings boxes and bells in other forms? The secret can be revealed very quickly and simply. These bells do exist, but they do not correspond exactly to the original Olympic Bell

made by the Bochum Society. It is therefore safe to say that there is only one single version of the reproduction. The earliest photographs of this bell as a savings box can be found in the well-known blue collector's album of the Cigarette Picture Service in Hamburg-Bahrenfeld - "Olympia 1936 - Volume 1 - The Olympic Games - Preview of Berlin". In the second part of the book on p.74 there is space reserved for a photograph entitled "Olympic bells made out of porcelain as savings boxes". The photograph shows many of these savings boxes.

In what way, then, do the bells used as savings and collecting boxes differ from those of the Royal Manufacture of Berlin?

The first and most obvious feature is the different shape of the crown (see illustration on p.35). It is not as fully formed as the original and has a slit for money. Consequently it does not have a tongue. However, the change in the inscription on the bell can be viewed as crucial. The slogan "Ich rufe die Jugend der Welt" is missing. Instead, on the lower edge of the bell, one can read: "11th Olympic Games Berlin 1st - 16th August 1936". This is interspersed with little stars, oak leaves and swastikas. In contrast to the original the date is missing between the Imperial eagle and the Brandenburg Gate on the body of the bell. The pictures, signs and inscriptions are far less distinct on the steel-cast bell than on the original porcelain bell. The contours are blurred.

The bottom of the savings box bell is closed off by a lockable, nickel-plate metal cap which bears no inscriptions and is 58mm in diameter. There is a little tin key for the the lock which is held in place by two small rivets. In order to fit the metal cap, the edge of the porcelain bell had to be formed differently. The width of the lower edge of the original tongued-bell is the same as the walls of the bell. In contrast to this, the porcelain edge of the savings box bell curves inwards by 25mm, thus creating a circular opening of 50mm in diameter.



An inscription on the porcelain rim reveals the place of production and the firm's name. This has nothing to do with the only licensed State Porcelain Manufacture in Berlin. I know of three different types of rim inscription to

date. They are all grey-green coloured.

1) Inscription: "Product of the Porcelain Town of Selb / Bayer. Ostmark" (in three lines in the top area of the rim)

2) Inscription: Like bell 1, but with the addition of "Heinrich & Co." (all in one line in the lower area of the rim)

3) Inscription: "Porcelain factory / Heinrich & Co. Selb / Bayer Ostmark") (in three lines in the lower area of the rim)

Another variant is a bell with printed paper running around the bell rim. The inscription "For German Sports Aid for the benefit of our injured sports comrades" is approximately 6,5mm high. A second line reads: "This Olympic collector's bell is the property of the German Sports Aid - private collection of the items is not permitted."

I am in possession of another savings box bell which I believe to be a rare specimen. It is multi-coloured. It is basically the same size and has the same inscriptions as the bells 1 and 3 described above. The three-line inscription by the the maker on the bottom of the bell corresponds to bell 1. It differs, however, from the unicoloured savings box bells in the writing on the base. Two brown lines frame the writing. On the front side of the bell there is a brown Imperial eagle and below that the 5 Olympic rings in their original colours. Correspondingly on the back of the bell there is the Brandenburg Gate also painted in brown. It is on a coloured background, portrayed as a red, horizontal 50 mm 1.5 mm long socle and this is on a yellow and blue striped background of the same proportions.

The space between the Imperial eagle and the Brandenburg Gate bears inscriptions and signs. This contrasts to the unicoloured savings box bells which have nothing in the the space. In one of the spaces there is a three-leaved oak leaf with 2 acorns. It is 20/17 mm high and is in the above mentioned brown colour. In the other space there is a two-line text in braun "Sport / Savings box". The words "savings box" are not written in a completely straight line but curves slightly downwards. It is 29/14 mm in length.

In connection with this, I have a sugar bowl in my collection which has a bell-like shape. The bowl is approximately 120 mm high, its maximum diameter is 128 mm. It has the 5 Olympic rings in the original colours on its side and the year 1936 in gold on its side. The lid bears the word "Olympia", also in gold. The rim of the lid and the bowl have gold lines running around them. On the bottom of the bowl it reads: "Insignia -hand-painted by Scherholz".

I do not know whether or not the results of my investigation into this aesthetically pleasing field of collecting have included all the existing forms of the porcelain bells of 1936. I would therefore be extremely pleased and grateful to receive a response from any interested collectors regarding any other existing specimens or different models of the bell.
