



## HISTORY OF SIGNALLING IN 100 OBJECTS SWEETHEART BROOCH



The Sweetheart Brooch is one held in the Royal Signals Museum from WW2, but the origin and history of ladies wearing military jewellery goes back to the nineteenth century. There are examples during Victorian times and during the Boer War at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was often said that men in military uniform attracted the opposite sex and the badges and insignia formed part of this military uniform. These badges when made into brooches by jewellers were often worn by wives, mothers, sisters and sweethearts. They were worn with pride and respect for someone who was serving their country.

There was another reason for these being worn; they were used as a “Red Light” to keep opportunists away from ladies, who were affianced to members of the forces serving overseas! These tokens really became much more widespread during WW1 and there is a photo of “Tommy Atkins and His Lady” with the title “I will be your Sweetheart ....”. The soldier is wearing the uniform of the Royal Army Medical Corps and the lady is wearing a similar badge as a brooch. Mass production of jewellery had begun in the late 1880s and this sort of brooch was mostly made in Birmingham. Many of these jewellers were switched to working in munitions factories during WW1 and the same occurred during WW2. Often between 1914-18 these were made out of hollowed out silver, tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl and enamels. During WW2 similar materials were used, but the fashion of design at the time changed with some having the military badge hanging as a pendant or being bar brooches.



As ever with fashion, there is a high end of the market for these brooches, made with gold, diamonds and silver. An example of this is the one on the left worn by Princess Mary, who was the first Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Corps of Signals, made by the Goldsmith & Silversmiths Company Ltd of London. It too is on display in the Royal Signals Museum, which also has copies in the archive of the books by Pamela. M. Caunt. She published 3 short books on Military Sweethearts Jewellery. There are examples of all types of these brooches, including ones using the Royal Signals badge. There are some to this day for sale in the Museum shop, but the high end market requires a bespoke jeweller now and will set you back a bit – a real sign that you value your sweetheart!

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