

THE AUSTRIAN ARMS ISSUE OF 3.7.1945.

To replace the discredited Hitler Head Design, Hans Ranzoni the Younger was commissioned to design a new set of stamps using the single headed eagle of republican Austria as the central theme. This set was printed by the Austrian State Printing Works in Vienna using three different types of printing process. Normal typography was used for the low and for some of the middle values; offset printing was employed for the remainder of the middle values; and recess printing for the four high values. Some of the middle values were printed first by typography and later by offset. The offset printings of this Arms set may be distinguished from the typographic ones by the fact that on the offsets there is no indentation of the paper either on the face or on the reverse, whilst with the typos the shiny surface is slightly oily to the touch.

The official information about these stamps is given in Postal Ministry Bulletin No. 7 and is tabulated below. No actual currency unit was included on the stamp as it was not then known whether the German pfennig-Reichsmark currency would be replaced by groschen-schilling money by the time the stamps were issued. In fact, the use of the German currency continued until the "Schilling Law" of 1 December 1945 when the pfennig and mark were replaced by the Austrian groschen and schilling at the rate of one for one.

The value of the schilling was defined by the Allied Military Government as 10 schilling equal to one U.S.A. dollar. This was confirmed by the Austrian National Bank on 27 October 1946 which specified the price of one kilogramme of "fine" gold as being 10,680 schilling. This corresponded to 1,000 schilling being equal to £25 sterling or 1 schilling equaling 6d.

However, this arms set was actually sold as a pfennig-mark issue but only in the Russian zone. This implied that the first six values issued on 3 and 14 July 1945 (5, 6, 8, 12, 30 and 42 stamps) were on sale in Graz on 25 July 1945 only and were withdrawn when Styria became part of the British zone.

The values from 3 to 16 inclusive were printed in sheets of 100 (10 x 10) and harrow perforated 14:13¾. The remaining values were printed in sheets of 50 (5 x 10) and harrow perforated 13¾:14 whilst the RM values** were also printed in sheets of 50 but harrow perforated 14½:13½. For speed of production the commoner values were printed either completely (5 and 6) or partially (8 and 12) from rubber plates, whilst normally metal plates were employed. The latter may be distinguished by the impression of the design being visible on the reverse, while they are not detectable on the reverse of stamps printed from rubber plates. The gum itself may be sub-divided with the pf values into smooth-flat gum, horizontally ribbed gum and vertically ribbed gum.

The varieties with the pf values are very numerous and reference should be made to a specialised catalogue for them. The 10 is known imperforate whilst the 3 RM is known imperforate underneath and the 5 RM is known imperforate at the top. The set was valid until 20 December 1945 but were obtainable from the Vienna Head Post Office until 1947.

** Heinzl, in his *Österreich nach 1945*, points out that there was no service that could be paid for by the 2RM, 3RM, or 5RM stamps!

Issued	Face	Colour	Printing	Number
3.7	5	Green	T	12,159,032
3.7	6	Violet	T	19,123,632
3.7	8	Brown-red	T	16,869,854
3.7	12	Carmine	T	21,194,854
3.7	30	Grey-green	T	2,818,550
3.7	30	Grey-green	O	1,752,504
14.7	42	Grey-green	T	1,866,000
14.7	42	Grey-green	O	4,212,544
20.7	38	ultramarine	T	1,465,000
20.7	38	ultramarine	O	3,103,544
25.7	20	cobalt	O	4,456,772
28.7	16	blue-green	T	4,087,422
28.7	24	light brown-red	O	3,496,722
3.8	15	red	T	5,252,432
3.8	80	violet-red	T	2,081,000
3.8	80	violet-red	O	625,544
9.8	3	brown	T	12,576,722
9.8	4	blue grey	T	6,966,722
9.8	40	purple	T	5,271,072
9.8	60	violet-brown	T	3,266,072
10.8	10	dark-brown	T	5,336,722
10.8	25	blue	T	4,591,072
10.8	50	emerald green	T	2,921,072
21.11	1 -	olive green	R	1,605,850
21.11	2 -	violet	R	1,605,850
21.11	3 -	lilac	R	1,595,850
21.11	5 -	red-brown	R	1,605,950

Notes:

‘Issued’ is the date as dd.mm; all are 1945

‘Face’ is discussed above; in reality it was pfennig and mark

‘Printing’: T=typography, O=offset, R=recess

