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***The Postage Stamps of Austria in the German Philatelic Literature of the year 1918*
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THE POSTAGE STAMPS OF AUSTRIA
IN THE GERMAN PHILATELIC LITERATURE OF THE YEAR 1918

The earth-shaking events of the year 1918 have affected Austria as well in recent hours. Whatever feelings affect the hearts of individuals, one thing is certain, that a line must be drawn under the country in our albums, and that Austria now belongs among the philatelically closed countries. The Austrian Post has offered a wide field of activity to the specialist collector: types of paper, enormous numbers of perforations, printing accidents but also it gave us truly artistic postage stamps.

Unfortunately however there is little literature on Austrian stamps, and it would be very desirable for someone to compile a handbook- something like the Krotz handbook for Old Germany, since Kropf's work does not nearly cover the material.

The year 1918 brought us only two catalogues. The Michel catalogue treats Austria relatively fully but obviously cannot go into nearly so much detail on perforations, differences between plates etc. as Kohl's handbook. Then there is also a special catalogue from the firm of Baumgarten, Vienna, which however has many of the prices missing so that it cannot be used as a basis for exchanges, and the catalogue of the XIII, stamp auction in Vienna. This contains many interest items for the Austrian specialist, with pictures as well, and the prices obtained show how highly the types are valued today. Rare cancellations also made very good prices, e.g. an Austrian field post cancellation on a letter from the Papal States, which reached 473K! An unused red Mercury without gum with a small thin patch reached 12,650K. The postage due stamps perforated in Prague in the year 1900 also roused great interest.

The Austrian Post Office rarely offered us new issues.

Air-mail stamps appeared on 31 March 1918. The air mail route Vienna-Cracow-Lemberg-Kiev was opened on 20 March 1818, initially for military and diplomatic correspondence, then for private mail from 1 April. The postal rates were increased sharply. They consisted of the ordinary postage, a handling charge of 1K, and an air mail charge of 1.50K per 20g. Only

specially issued air mail stamps could be used for the handling and air mail charges. These were lilac 2K-stamps (the same pattern as the existing 2K blue), over printed with 1.50 K 1.50; yellow 3K stamps (the same pattern as the pink 3K stamps), overprinted 2.50 K 2.50, and grey 4K stamps (the same pattern as the existing 4k green). They all had the additional overprint "Flugpost".

Originally it was assumed that these would only be provisionals and a definitive issue would appear shortly afterwards, but the air mail was discontinued a while ago and the new issue never appeared. Every letter handled carried a hand-written number in the bottom left corner, which showed its place in the sequence, and also had an airmail cancellation on the dispatch and receipt. For further details see **Donaupost**, p.134ff.

The air mail service Vienna-Budapest was opened on 4 July 1918, but was closed down again on 24 July because of a number of serious accidents.

From 15 October the Vienna-Lemberg air mail service was closed for private use, and Lemberg-Kiev only went on for a short time for military and diplomatic use. As far as the size of the issue goes, **Donaupost** (see p.133ff) reports that some 25,000 items had been sold to the end of April, and their sale over the counter was discontinued on 27 April.

Errors are not known so far, except for one variety in which the overprint on the 1.50K stamps is displaced to the left, and the colour error in the shape of a darker 4K stamp sold in Lemberg.

The issue of 4 and 45h stamps announced in several places has not appeared yet, but there has been a 1K stamps in the design of the 40h stamp, in red on yellow paper.

Donaupost (see p.443) also reports a printing error on the 2h on 15h charity stamp with the surcharge at the top.

The 5h and 20h stamps of the 1916 issue appeared in a lighter or darker colour in the course of the years. According to **Illustrierte Briefmarken-Journal** this is an insignificant variety, but **Donaupost** looks on it as a definite change of colour.

Austria has been more productive of postal stationery. The shortage of postcards in the year 1917 is relevant. There were weeks when retail outlets in provincial towns had no postcards, and the Post Office counters only a few.

The 8h Karl card, was originally published on thin, smooth, soft card, but later appeared on poor, thin, grey cardboard. Double cards also appeared on this. After the increases in postage of 1 September, postcards appeared with 10h and double cards with 10+10h, on the pattern of the 10h stamps, without prior notice. Since however these cards did not appear until relatively late and there were still large stocks of 8h postcards on sale, but there were no 2h stamps on the market then. The 2h special delivery stamps, both the rectangular and triangular types had to be used for the additional postage. These special delivery stamps (obviously for private use) were also used as surcharges on postcards. There were also letter cards carrying the green 20h Karl stamps. The report found in various journals (**Germania-Berichte**, **Neutrale Korrespondenz**, **Illustriertes** (sic) **Briefmarken-Journal**) that the issue of letter cards was completely discontinued is thus not correct.

A provisional postage stamp (already queried in **Illustrierten** (sic) **Briefmarken-Journal**), a 1h red with a red pen stroke, issued in Wörgl, appears to be a private makeshift.

As mentioned above, the postage rates were increased considerably from 1 September, the most important changes being cards raised to 10h, inland letters to 20h.

The specialist collector will find some very interesting articles in the literature for the year 1918.

Donaupost published an article from the reputable pen of Dr. Weinert on the 1st issue of Austrian stamps, dealing with types of paper, print and colour, and giving specially interesting pictures of bisected stamps.

Also, Bach in the **Deutsche Briefmarken-Zeitung**, p.80 gives a table of bisected Austrian stamps. According to him, the 1st issue was only bisected diagonally and only used in Hungary.

Donaupost also published an article by Lešetický called "Control Marks on the Stamps of Austria". I think the editorial board of this journal would do specialist collectors of Austrian stamps a great service by issuing this judgmental work as a separate off-print.

It will just be mentioned briefly here that according to the author, control marks have been used on Austrian stamps since 1865. Up to 1899 stripes, crosses, Roman Numerals or similar signs were used on the coloured edges. From 1899 the Roman Numerals 1-XII were used with only stripes for the last, 1908 issue. Small crosses were used in one corner of the protective borders of the war pictorial stamps, from 1913 to 1915 crosses or small stripes, crosses for the 1916 issue and stripes since 1917.

Later (end of 1918), the edge of the sheets showed wide stripes in the colour of the stamp.

Philat. Zeitung published an article on commemorative stamps from Kolbig, Budapest, but these are welfare stamps not postage stamps.

The same journal carries an article by Glasewald on three forged cancellations on new printings of the first issue.

Illustrierte Briefmarken-Journal on p.94 gives an article by Heynold surveying all stamps issued (before the beginning of the world war), namely:

Austria	388	
Austrian Post Offices in Crete		22
Austrian Post Offices in Turkey	101	

This is considerably more than, for example France with its 205 stamps - in spite of having three changes of regime - or Great Britain with its 276, though it certainly has a much greater turnover of stamps.

A reader complained in **Illustrierte Briefmarken-Journal** that the current Austrian stamps are very hard to soak off and the editors advise him to soak them in warm water.

An advert in the same journal, p.180 shows that the remarks about pneumatic postcard no. 24 in the postal stationery section of Senf in 1917 is not quite correct, since such a card was purchased in 1904 at the Prague Post Office no. 5, and sent off via the pneumatic post.

The editors of **Illustrierte Briefmarken-Journal**, on p.244 also state that the 2h periodical stamp of 1908 only exists in blue, not in green as well. They think a breakdown in colour may have occurred. This is contradicted by **Donaupost**.

The **Deutsche Stempel-Zeitung** reports false cancellations under nos. 62 and 116.

So much for the stamps of Austria. Field Post stamps will be described in a later article.

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