

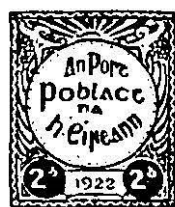
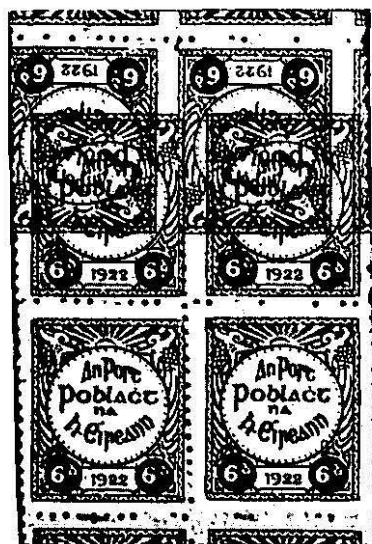
Irish Republican Army Stamps of 1922

PREPARED FOR USE BUT NOT ISSUED

Supplement No. 3

ÉIRE PHILATELIC ASSOCIATION

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The treaty between Great Britain and Ireland which was signed December 6th 1921 in effect provided for a period of transition during the year 1922. Control of the postal facilities and the assumption of lawful authority by the Irish Government was to be gradual during the year as British troops withdrew from the various areas. The Irish Free State was to come into existence on December 6th 1922. We know from philatelic history that a Provisional Government was to work out this transition and that the postal facilities were taken over beginning with the issuance of the provisional overprinted postage stamps on February 17th, 1922.

But the fact that a great number of the members of the Irish Republican Army were not in sympathy with the treaty complicated the transfer of lawful authority from the British troops to the new government. In each case, control was surrendered to the brigade of the Irish Republican Army which was the only organized military authority in most areas. Where the brigade was pro-treaty in sentiment, the transition was simple and uneventful; where the brigade was anti-treaty in its feelings, there was no recognition of the Provisional authority and consequently many problems of administration arose.

In the light of this situation, the Irish Republican Army stamps of 1922 become a vital part of the postal history of Ireland. We shall not attempt to resolve the debate which exists over whether these stamps were ever legitimately issued and used but shall confine our study of these stamps on the generally accepted statement that these stamps were "Prepared for use by a competent authority but not issued."

In April 1922, the Irish Republican Army in Dublin occupied the Four Courts and until sometime in late July of 1922 defied all attempts of the Provisional Government by peaceful means to have them submit to the authority of the Free State troops. Internal strife was imminent in that city. Finally in July, the Free State troops moved in force and re-captured the Four Courts.

During the spring and summer of 1922, a great part of the South of Ireland was in the hands of Irish Republican Army brigades which were not in sympathy with the Provisional Government. Thus the area roughly south of a line drawn from Limerick on the west coast to Waterford on the southeast was under the sole governing authority of the I.R.A. The lines of communication between those north of the line and those to the south were cut, especially the main railroad line to Dublin.

About 20 miles to the north of Cork is Mallow Junction and when the bridge to the south of Mallow was blown up in July 1922, all rail traffic was disrupted and practically destroyed. The Irish Free State troops were busily engaged in handling the Dublin situation, and so control of the South remained in the hands of the I.R.A.

Shortly thereafter, postage stamp supplies ran low and began to be rationed at the post offices. Higher values were bisected and postmasters began to initial letters and balance their accounts by affixing large values to one or more of the envelopes in a batch.

This situation became so acute that the I.R.A. in Cork contacted the Eagle Printing Works in that city to supply stamps. Being out of sympathy with the Treaty, they wished to issue stamps bearing a portrait of Padraig Pearse, who gave his life in 1916 for the Republic. The printer was unable to produce a satisfactory design and an emissary was sent to England to try to get a plate made there. It is said that he was arrested when he arrived and it was perhaps this fact as well as the continued shortage of stamps which compelled the I.R.A. to accept a design which read - "AN POST POBLACT NA h'EIREANN" within a framed circle.

During July, the Eagle Printing Works delivered to the I.R.A. barracks at Union Quay, Cork an undisclosed quantity of one penny, two penny and six penny stamps in the above design. These stamps were to be issued in early August on a Saturday.

The Irish Free State Army smarting from the defiance of the I.R.A. in Dublin and determined to establish its authority in the South, made a surprise landing at Passage, near Cork and reached that city on Thursday, one day before the stamps were to be delivered to the post offices. Before retreating from the city, the I.R.A. fired their barracks and the bulk of the stamps was destroyed in the Union Quay headquarters.

There is no credible evidence that any of these stamps saw postal service. No used example is known to exist or to have existed. The claim that some of these stamps were used on letters from Dunmanway to Dublin is only hearsay and not valid evidence. Specimens were given to various members and friends of the I.R.A. and have turned up in the area around Cork over the years. It is possible that the varieties hereinafter mentioned were remainders found in the hands of the printers.

But whatever the source of the stamps still available, it is estimated that there are about 250 of the 1d and 2d values and about 1000 of the 6d - including all varieties.

PRINTING AND VARIETIES OF THE STAMPS

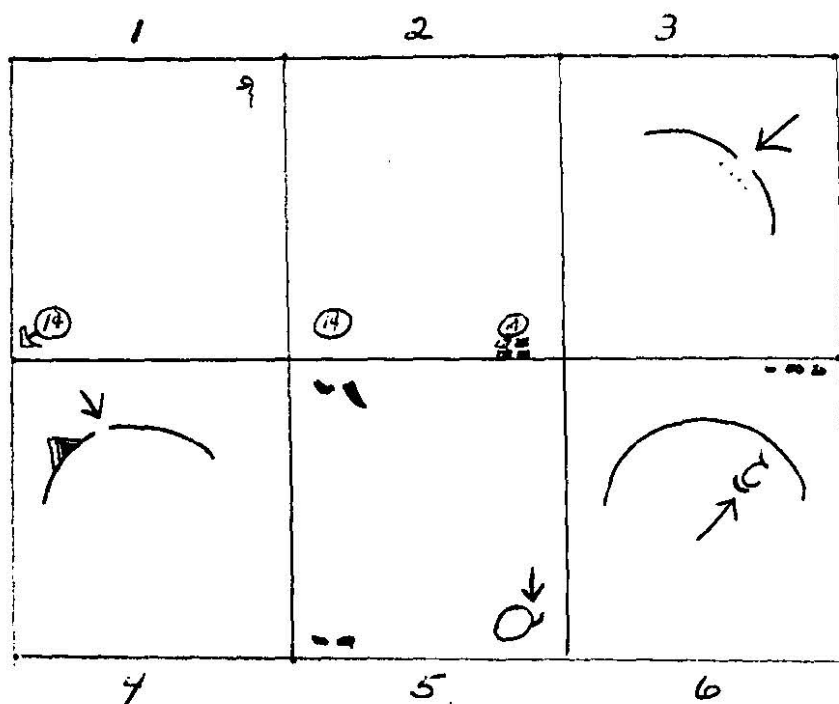
The most authoritative information available seems to indicate that the sheets of the 1d and 2d values contained 120 stamps in ten horizontal rows of 12. The stone was made up by transfers of six subjects arranged in two horizontal rows of three (3x2). Each subject stamp differs from the others, in some detail and while the difference is slight as we shall see hereinafter, each is distinguishable. Thus each subject stamp of the transfers repeats itself 20 times in each sheet.

We can now authoritatively report the composition of the 6d sheets. They were printed in sheets of 80 - two panes of 40, 10x4; both panes identical. Mr. H.G. Leslie Fletcher, Bexleyheath, Kent, England has a complete sheet with margins to substantiate this fact. Previous theories were based upon tete-beche pairs and double and even triple impressions. Mr. Fletcher explains these varieties as follows: Tete beche was caused by printing on too small a paper, thus reversing the paper to utilise as much as possible. The triple print was caused by the lower panes being left in the press accidentally. The stone was made up by transfers of four subjects (2x2) and each stamp differs slightly.

Varieties

The color of the 1d value is chestnut or dull chestnut brown, and the stamp appears on white wove paper, unwatermarked and either perforated 11 in a rough single line or imperforate. Gummed (white).

The six-subject blocks of the 1d value show several distinguishing features, including:



1. The ornament and frame lines are joined at the top right corner: also the value circle and the ornament below it in the left bottom corner.

2. The frame lines below the right value circle are broken: the dot in the left hand value circle is very small.

3. The circle is broken and two dots are missing opposite "POST" on the right.

4. The two rays to the left of the center ray are "chipped"; circle broken opposite the solid triangle on the left.

5. There are breaks in the inner frame line opposite the long ray at left top and below the left value circle: there is a small projection from right of the right hand value circle.

6. There is a small crescent type mark immediately beneath the "t" in "PORT": the outer frame lines are broken in two places at the top right: the circle is also broken. There are also variations in inking.

The color of the 2d value is dull green or pale yellow green, and the stamp appears on white wove paper, unwatermarked and perforated 11 in a rough single line or imperforate. Gummed (white)

The six-subject blocks of the 2d value have the following distinguishing features, among others:

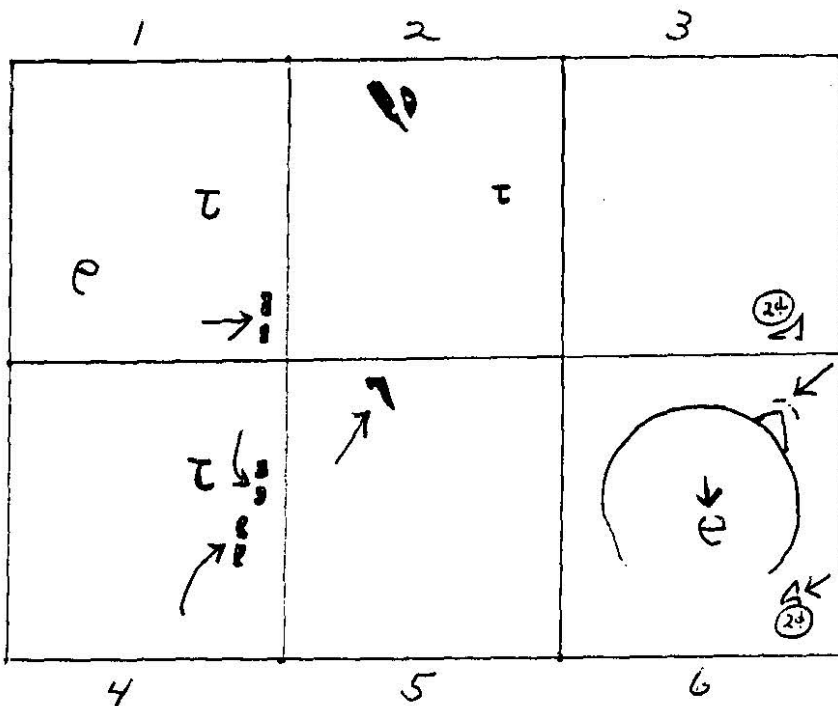
The six-subject blocks of the 2d value have the following distinguishing features, among others:

1. The final "t" of "Poblact" is very large and raised above the other letters; the E of "Eireann" is without tongue: the outer frame line is broken opposite the top of the right value circle.

2. The final "t" of "Poblact" is small, thick and raised: the middle ray and the ray to the left chipped.

3. The ornament below the value circle on the right is broken.

4. The final "t" of "Poblact" is very large: the outer frame line is broken opposite "Poblact"; inner frame line broken opposite "NA".



5. The ray to the left of the middle ray at the top is shaped like a "7"

6. The small "e" of "Eireann" is broken: the small curved line above the angle N.E. of the circle and the ornament above the right value circle are also broken. There are also variations in inking. An additional variety has been reported: one line of perforation (vertical) being double. The extra line crosses the right portion of each stamp in the 11th column.

The color of the 6d value is dark blue and appears on white wove paper, unwatermarked and perforated 11 in a rough single line or imperforate. Gummed (white).

The 6d value is also found perforated 11 on laid paper as well as white wove paper. The copies which appear on laid paper are always ungummed whereas those on plain paper are gummed. Laid paper is defined as paper in which the pulp has been run over gauze with parallel lines close together that may be seen in finished paper when held to the light.

The 6d four-subject blocks show several distinguishing features including the following:

1. A curved dash appears across the circle below the sun.

2. The cross-bar in "NA" is broken: there is a dash across the outer ornamentation and frame lines on right opposite "NA": break in the inner frame-line below value circle on left.

3. There are two small breaks in the circle opposite the second "n" in "h-Eireann".

4. The top of the ray and the inner-frame line above the "O" in "PORT" is broken; the R (S) in "POST" is broken: the dot in the right value circle is very small.

Double impressions are known to exist on both laid and wove paper, perforated 11. Triple impressions are also known.

It is said that the designs were cleaned off the stone almost immediately and with the exception of a few of the 6d value there were no remainders nor any reprints known.

Some at least of the imperforate examples are more sharply printed than normal and may be proof impressions from the first transfers, prior to the laying down on the printing stones.

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Correspondence with and specimens from the Rev. John Leahy, E. P. A. Wibaux, Montana.

Correspondence with and suggested revisions by F. E. Dixon, E.P. A. County Wexford, Ireland.

Suggestions and corrections as to the plating of the six penny value from Mr. H.G.L. Fletcher, 4 Crook Log, Bexleyheath, Kent, England

