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THE STEYR K98k

Written by Bob Jensen and edited by Peter Kuck 06/11/2002

The forced Union between Austria and Germany in 1938 provided Hitler's Third Reich with the huge small arms and vehicle plants at Steyr and the heavy weapons factories at Skoda. These two industrial complexes nearly doubled Germany's available weapons production facilities. Steyr, produced nearly 1,000,000 K98k rifles between 1938 and May of 1945 as well as hundreds of thousands of Radom pistols, MP-40's, MG-42's, tank chassis, trucks, and tiger tank turrets.

During the war Steyr only used two manufacturing codes ("660" & "bnz"). Waffenamts "623" was used for parts made at Steyr and Waffenamts "77" was used for parts made at Radom under Steyr supervision. Steyr was one of only two manufacturers of K98k rifles who put a period after their code on the receivers they made ("bnz."). This was discontinued mid-1944. There are three noticeably different sized "bnz" receiver markings; a small, a large, and a largest. While Steyr made K98k's for all three branches of the German military they were also were the sole K98k contractor for the SS.

German military authorities took control of the Austrian factories in March of 1938 and before the end of the year Steyr rifles were being produced for the Luftwaffe. These distinctive rifles are known as the Austrian "Mod.29" or as the "Mod.29 (O)". They can only be found with 1938 and 1939 dates. In late 1939 production of "Mod.29" parts ceased and rifle construction was converted to the standard K98k rifle. Assembly of the "Mod.29" continued only until all parts on hand had been used.

It appears that only a few 1939 dated K98k rifles coded "660" were completed before the end of 1939. These were the standard configuration that all 1939 dated K98k rifles displayed. They are fully proofed with "WaA623" Waffenamts on all parts. All parts are serial numbered, including the trigger-guard screws and the cleaning rod. The stock and handguard are laminate, and both are serial numbered internally. The stock is also numbered externally. The buttplate is flat, proofed, and numbered. All metal parts are milled and all known examples have the "H" (Heer) for the Army branch of service stamp on the left hand side of the butt stock.



In 1940 a large number of the K98k rifles were assembled at Steyr using receivers from the Polish factory at Radom. These rifles were assembled from receivers and parts captured by the Germans when Poland was overrun in September of 1939. The "G.29/40" the receivers, bolt assemblies, triggers, triggerguards, and firing pins were shipped to Steyr and assembled using K98k stocks, bands, barrels, etc. The receivers bear the Polish Eagle chamber marking, the date 1939, and the factory name RADOM, with the Steyr "660" code.





The 1940 Steyr production “660” coded K98k is unusual in that the “Mod.98” designation was not on the rifle’s siderail. This designation is lacking in all 1940 dated Steyr rifles but does appear on 1941 production rifles. The 1940 rifles continue to use laminate stocks and handguards with flat buttplate, all milled parts, branch of service stamps--all apparently H for the Army--all parts were proofed Eagle “623”, and the serial number appear both internally and on the bottom rear spine of the stock. The known serial number range is from 2002a to 352n with an estimated production run of 150,000 rifles.

1940 dated “bnz” K98k rifles were surrounded with controversy. It has been reported that David Armstrong, who was a dedicated K98k researcher throughout the 1970’s, recorded several “bnz” 1940 dated K98k’s. Unfortunately his findings have not been made available to other collectors. Bob Jensen, however, reported on a 1940 “bnz” rifle which conforms to the 1940 code “660” K98k rifles including the absence of the siderail Mod.98 stamping. Unfortunately its serial number is 9724k which puts it into the “660” code serial number range. The “660” serial number range which includes the “l” and “n” suffixes accounts for approximately 20,000 rifles, or two weeks production. Certainly a 1940 “bnz” coded rifle could be correct and both “660” and “bnz” coded rifles could have been made concurrently within these letter blocks. The controversy cannot be resolved until more serial numbers and examples in those blocks are identified. (Note * an early “bnz” 41 dated rifle can be made into a 40 dated example by carefully stamping a zero over the 1 and 1940 dated rifles used the four digit date while the 1941 rifles used only a two digit date.) It would seem that a “bnz” 40 should be a “bnz” 1940 to be correct.



1941 saw the introduction of the two-digit date in place of the four-digit date on the receiver, the addition of “Mod.98” on the siderail, and the addition of a front sight hood. Both laminate and solid stocks were used and cupped buttplates appear. All metal parts were milled and the Waffenamt numbers were “623” for Steyr parts, and “77” for Radom parts. Stocks were still numbered both internally and externally. The first subcontract parts appear--buttplates which were numbered to match. Serial number range for the 41 “bnz” K98k is from 2005 to 7811I, with an estimated production of 120,000 rifles.



1941 also saw the first production of “bnz” rifles for the Kriegsmarine. Only those with a stylized letter N for the North Sea operational area-(engraved on the left side of the bolt-takedown washer) are known to exist.



In 1942 the final assembly and acceptance proof was moved to the top of the receiver above the “bnz” code and the 2 digit date code “42”. All previous production had four “WaA623” stamps in a row on the right side of the receiver ring. Stocks were laminate and still numbered both internally and externally. Branch of service stamps was used and all known examples went to the German Army. All metal parts were milled and proofed. Waffenamt “77” proofs started to appear in increasing numbers, usually on the rear sights, triggerguards, floorplates, bands, and bolts, this indicating an increasing usage of Radom produced parts. The known serial number range is from 728 to 6043 1 for an estimated production of 130,000 rifles.

In 1943 Steyr rifle stocks can be found made of either laminate or solid wood and were numbered both inside and outside. All metal parts were milled, numbered, and proofed with combinations of Waffenamts “623” and “77” proofs. The primary difference from 1942 production is that the range graduation scale on the underside of the rear-sight leaf was deleted. Stamped bands, triggerguards, and floorplates begin to appear in late 1943. The known serial number range is from 797 to 596u, with an estimated production of 230,000 rifles. Steyr also made K98k rifles again for the German Navy. There is usually a deeply stamped letter “M” on the right side rear of the stock on these rifles.



Standard 1944 Steyr production used a single digit to denote the year of manufacture. One will occasionally, perhaps rarely, encounter a “bnz” with the double digit 44 date stamp. These were the last lot of the SS rifle contract (note the absence of the military “WaA623” waffenamts). The “bnz 4” variation used stamped parts. The use of Waffenamts “135” parts becomes quite common. Waffenamts “77” and “WaA77” parts are found in large numbers and barrels made at F.N. (proofed “WaA140”) are often found. 1944 also saw the first use of the “bnz” barrel shield. Many of the receivers used by Steyr in 1944 were made at Radom as evidenced by the Waffenamts “77”



proofing and the string of odd and assorted 'squiggle' proofs found on the receiver bottom sides under the level of the stocks. Steyr stocks have a distinctive bolt grasping clearance compared to other makers such as “byf” and “CE”. The 1944 and later Steyr stocks also have crude inletting for the sling. Bolts on the 1944 “bnz” K9Bk's commonly exhibited the round gas holes and the milling is quite rough. Steyr did not go to the phosphate finish in 1944. All seem to have gone to the Army and the stocks were still H stamped but no longer externally numbered. The known serial number range is from 744 to 4917q, with an estimated production run of 280,000 rifles.

The “bnz” rifles are interesting as there are several sub-variations that appear in sufficient number that a collector can expect to find good examples of all but one of them. Strong evidence indicates that in 1945 unlike the normal practice of the earlier years Steyr continued the sequential serial numbers of the 1944 rifles into 1945 and did not stop the numbers and start over again with number 0001, no letter block. The highest “bnz” 4 rifle noted is serial number 4917q and the lowest “bnz” 45 is number 4186q. No 1945 “bnz” rifles earlier than the q serial number range have been reported.

The 45 dated rifles are different in several respects. The Mod.98 was moved to the top of the receiver from the siderail and placed above the “bnz” 45 logo that was now in a single line. Barrels and bolt assemblies are serial numbered but the receivers are not. The bolt-takedown washer was deleted and replaced with the simple hole drilled through the toe of the buttplate. Wood screws retained bands and the normal band springs were not needed. The bayonet lug and cleaning rod were also deleted and a simple sheet metal end cap held by a small wood screw was utilized to protect the forend of the stock. Triggerguards and floorplates marked “byf”, “svw”, and “qnw” are found as well as some Waffenamt “135” or Waffenamt “Waffenamt “214”. “bcd” rear sight assembly pieces are also common. The “623” Waffenamt remained the final acceptance stamp on receivers and barrels. Rifles up to mid S serial number range are blued. The switch to the phosphate finish rifles appears and the transition seems to have happened all at once as I, at least, have not heard of a dual-tone “bnz” 45. They are either all blue or all phosphate. Stocks are either laminate or a single piece of soft beech, which varied in color from a light tan to a dark brown. Stocks and handguards were not numbered. Many, but not all, have a nicely stamped Eagle H in the stock. At about the 1200t range several of those unusual alternately thick--thin layers of wood laminate stocks appear at random these “bnz” 1945 K98k’s like the “byf”, “svw”, and “svwMB” rifles are the quintessential Kreismodell K98k’s. The known serial number range is from 4166q to 5935t, with an estimated Production run of 30,000 rifles.



Notes from others

Pete ; this is what I understand of bnz 43 and bnz 4-44's that have no final 623 proofs on receiver. Those bnz's that lack any 623's on the receiver and have no alpha suffix can be SS rifles as these are camp assembled weapons using second pick parts, and were made outside of HzA approval. I am lead to believe that from putting info together from various sources and collectors that the wehrmacht protested vigorously to these out of spec 98k's turning up in the field and protested their lack of inspection. That is why I believe a lot of single rune 43 dates turn up and all with no letter block and all I have seen have unnumbered cocking pieces and bolt sleeves, of which all are generally a bit crude even by steyr " standards ".The lack of all k's made so not having this definitive mark reminiscent of a stern gewehr is probably again due to bad QC.I am sure these are all rifles intended for the SS or similar non German formations due to the Army pissing about these non standard weapons turning up and not wanting them mixed with their weapons .I do think though that the single rune is indicative of a second class arm so assembled and not confident it means it is SS property exclusively .Some of these have even turned up with the subcontractor C proofed stocks as well. And I have never seen a bnz43 or 4 or 44 with anything other than a microscopic e/623 in grip, the exception being bnz45's-they have turned up with nicely proofed 623's like early 41 and 42 production-probably reject stocks usable for the kmods I guess, Bill.

Table from mr_farb on bnz 45 production

Stgwols = stamped trigger guard without long serial number

Sfp = stamped floor plate

Code	s/n	Match	Receiver finish	Report by	comments
Bnz 45	6998q	no	blue		stgwols (byf-phs), spf (byf-phs) (restored rifle)
Bnz 45	1916r		blue	Davis	No mod98 marking on receiver
Bnz 45	6932s	yes	phosphate		Blued bolt, stgwols (svw-phs), spf(byf-phs) matching, exp stock EH
Bnz 44	7202s			Davis	Oversized BNZ 44 receiver
Bnz 45	7470s	no	phosphate		Stgwols (svw-phs), spf(byf-phs), exp stock EH, mm bolt,
Bnz 45	8056s	no	Blue over phs?		offset bnz code, mm stock, matching metal
Bnz 45	8366s			Davis	
Bnz 45	1835t	no	phosphate		Stgwols (svw-phs), spf(byf-phs),blued bolt (replacement stock)
Bnz 45	3159t	?	phosphate		Stgwols (svw-phs), spf(byf-phs), phs-blue parts mix, walnut stock
Bnz 45	3507t	yes	phosphate		Stgwols (svw-phs), spf(byf-phs), bolt (phs), sold \$1,899 Brocks 9/2004
Bnz 45	4637t	no	Phosphate		Matching metal – no stock, sold Auction arms 9/2004
Bnz 45	4898t	?	phosphate		Stgwols (svw-phs), spf(byf-phs), bolt (phs), laminate stock EH
Bnz 45	4987t	no			Matching metal – cut up stock
Bnz 45	S17?t	?			No details
Bnz 45	5284t	?	phosphate		Stgwols (svw-phs), spf(byf-phs), bolt (phs), solid stock
Bnz 45	5440t	?		Davis	No details
swjxe	5616t			Gunboards	No details
swjxe	5628t	no	phosphate		Stgwols (byf-phs), spf(byf-phs), bolt (mm), solid stock (cut down)
Bnz 45	594?t	?	Phosphate		bolt (blue), odd rear band, no front band
Bnz 45	6264t	yes	phosphate	Davis	non import

mr_farb 3/02/2005 list

Serial Number Addenda Edited by - Edited by - Hambone on 11/24/2003 8:54:40 PM

1943 dated

Code	s/n	source		Report by	comments
bnz 43	355	RC		kroh	SSZZA4 on barrel
bnz 43	755	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	767	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	1259	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	1497	RC		Collector57	Coles
bnz 43	1638	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	1497	RC		Kroh	
bnz 43	2169	RC		waffenmacht	From cai
bnz 43	2954	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	2986	RC		Kroh	
bnz 43	3048	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	3373	RC		Cai	Straight gouge rune
bnz 43	3677	NI	matching		
bnz 43	3702	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	3921	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	3926	Old I		falpo	X no WaA, DDR proofs, import to Fr., 1950-1961)
bnz 43	3986	RC		rifleboar	
bnz 43	4025	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	4166	RC		Kroh	
bnz 43	4302	NI	matching		
bnz 43	4431	RC		Kroh	FN barrel
bnz 43	4494	NI	matching	gustav	
bnz 43	4495			mawzerluvr	
bnz 43	5699p	RC		s.p.k.	Suspect – non Rune
bnz 43	5954	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	6351	RC		jkp	
bnz 43	6411	RC		Kroh	
bnz 43	6583	RC		drills66	
bnz 43	6606	RC		kyabrams	Tennessee guns
bnz 43	6737	NI		dixieboy	
bnz 43	6987			D DiSalvi	
bnz 43	7292	RC		Br73	from coles
bnz 43	7456	RC		Kroh	
bnz 43	7667	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	7676	NI		DaSwede	
bnz 43	7958	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	8072	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	8088	RC		Nirvana	From Coles
bnz 43	8345	RC			
bnz 43	8886	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	9585	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	9592	RC		Kroh	
bnz 43	9814	RC		Coles	
bnz 43	9824	RC		Kroh	SSZZA4 on barrel
bnz 43	9962	RC		Coles	

1944 dated

Code	s/n	source		Report by	comments
bnz 4	2463	NI	matching		E/H stock
bnz 4	2711	RC		Coles	
bnz 4	2719	NI	matching		E/H stock
bnz 4	3035	RC		Paul Caruso	From coles
bnz 4	3431	RC		Coles	
bnz 4	3677	RC		Qve kid	From Kroh late stock screwed on bands,no bayonet lug light red tan stock
bnz 4	3742	RC		Kroh	
bnz 4	5255	RC		Coles	
bnz 4	5776	RC		Coles	
bnz 4	6305	RC		Kroh	
bnz 4	6720	RC		Coles	
bnz 4	7085	RC			Bcd/bnz 4 dual code mm bolt
bnz 4	7434	RC		Kroh	
bnz 4	7553	RC		Kroh	
bnz 4	9947	RC		Howiebearse	From coles
bnz 4	3569a			SAC22PPC	Waf 63's

UNUSUAL "RUNE" RIFLES

Code	s/n	source		Report by	comments
243	2266	empir e		jkp	1938 sszza4
bnz 42	2708	RC		Coles	
bnz 42	5497	RC		Coles	
bnz 42	9896d	RC		Coles	
bnz 4	3193d	RC		Coles	
bnz 4	7112d	RC		Coles	
bnz 44	3199	RC		Coles	
bnz 44	7824	RC		Coles	
bnz 44	8548	RC		Coles	
bnz 4	8816h	RC		Coles	
bnz 45	8547r	RC		Coles	

1940 660 by Steyr

Proofing & serial numbers (sample rifle 1940 660)

Receiver code	660 (1940)	receiver proofs waf (4) WaA623	
Side rail	Blank		
Serial number	4 digits 3805 C		
Upper band	s/n	waf 623	
Lower band	s/n	waf 623	
Trigger guard	s/n	waf 623 (2)	milled with lock screws
Floor plate		s/n	waf 623
Bolt	ribbed & blued		
Root		rear firing proof	top s/n underside Waf 623(2)
Gas shield	s/n	waf 623	
Safety	s/n	waf 623	
Cocking piece	s/n	waf 623	
Extractor	s/n	waf 623	
Extractor collar	no s/n	no waf	
Front sight	no hood	waf 623	
Rear sight	meter scale both side	s/n	waf 623
Rear sight base	s/n	waf 623	
Rear sight ramp	s/n	waf 623	
Stock	Laminate		
Stock Markings (external reported only)			
	Side	none	
	Pistol grip	no s/n or waf	
	Spine	no s/n or waf	
Bayonet lug		1	
Magazine follower	s/n	waf 623	
Barrel Ring	115 39 SI	waf 623 (2)	

1943 bnz Single Rune by Steyr

ss contract K98k rifles made by Steyr? (You be the judge)

Proofing & serial numbers (sample rifle 1943 bnz)

Receiver code	bnz (43) single rune	receiver proofs waf 77 (1) s/n 6757 <u>with firing proof</u>
Side rail	Mod.98	
Serial number	4 digits s/n 6757	
Upper band	no s/n no waf,	band is speed milled
Lower band	no s/n no waf	
Trigger guard	s/n wa77 (2)	speed milled with lock screws
Floor plate	no s/n waA77	milled & blued

Bolt	ribbed & blued (round gas release holes)		
Root	rear firing proof	top s/n	underside waf77 (2)
Gas shield	no s/n	waf77	
Safety	s/n	waf77	
Cocking piece	no s/n	waf77	
Extractor	no s/n		
Extractor collar	no s/n	no waf	
Firing pin	no s/n	WaA77	

Front sight	hood	waf77	
Rear sight	meter scale one side	s/n	no waf
Rear sight ramp	s/n		no waf
Rear sight base	4		no waf

Stock Laminate (cob webs in bolt take down hole)

Stock Markings (external and internal)

Side	no s/n or waf
Pistol grip	waf77
Spine	no s/n or waf
serial numbered	internally handguard and stock
Bayonet lug	blued waf77

Magazine follower milled no s/n no waf

Barrell markings bw bnz shield1 WaA623 Firing Proof

NOTE: rifle cost me \$675, Overall finish excellent with some surface rust spots Mirror bore, stock unsanded, some old paint splatter (white ceiling), broken cleaning rod tip.

1944 Large letter bnz by Steyr

Last of the ss rifle contract K98k rifles made by Steyr? (You be the judge)

Note lack of WaA623 on receiver and Branch Mark on stock.

Military issue had a smaller 4 (one only) on receiver for a date.

Proofing & serial numbers (sample rifle 1944 bnz)

Receiver code bnz (large) (44) receiver proofs waf (1) no number (on side)

Side rail Mod. 98

Serial number 4 digits possible alpha suffix

Upper band s/n no waf

Lower band s/n no waf

Trigger guard s/n waf 135 byf stamped with lock screws

Bolt ribbed & blued

 Root rear firing proof top s/n underside 7

 Gas shield no s/n no waf

 Safety s/n no waf

 Cocking piece no s/n no waf

 Extractor no s/n

 Extractor collar no s/n no waf

Front sight hood no waf

Rear sight meter scale one side s/n unreadable waf

Rear sight base s/n unreadable waf

Stock Laminate

Stock Markings (external reported only)

 Side Eagle no branch mark

 Pistol grip no s/n or waf

 Spine no s/n or waf

Bayonet lug no s/n no waf

Magazine follower no s/n Lxr