

THE REFUGEE STAMPS OF CYPRUS 1974-2014

INTRODUCTION - Turkish military forces began an invasion of Cyprus on 20 July 1974, and eventually took over the northern one-third of the island. The events in August 1974 created an immediate need for funds to house, clothe, and feed the displaced Greek Cypriots, and a Refugee Relief Fund (RRF) was set up. The Department of Postal Services made urgent arrangements to supply a special postage stamp, value 10m, which was to be used on every postal item posted in Cyprus with a few minor exceptions, the income to be used to alleviate the suffering of refugees's.

The first refugee stamp was released for sale on 1 October 1974. The stamps have had a very long life, first released in 1974 and still in use in 2014, 40 years later. They have been printed in three distinctly different designs, with numerous relatively minor variations, a range of different colours, and been priced in three different currencies, although the sale value has remained more or less the same over the whole period of use. The Cyprus RRF itself could well have claims to be the longest ever running fund of its kind.



PLAN

1 – The Provisional Refugee Stamps.

2 – First Design of Refugee Stamps.

3 – Second Theme

3.1 - First Design (1st & 2nd Printings)

3.2 - First Design Cents Currency (1st, 2nd & 3rd Printings)

3.3 - Second Design (1st to 7th Printings)

3.4 - Second Design (Alex Matsoukis Printings)

3.5 - Second Design (Oriental Press Printings)

3.6 - Second Design Colour Printings

4.0 - Pre-printed stamps and Inclusion Values

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The information has been gathered from Study Paper No.16 of the Cyprus Study Circle of which the material shown formed a part of the content.

1 – THE PROVISIONAL REFUGEE STAMPS

Stocks of the 1971 definitive 5 mil value (SG359) were overprinted by Aspioti-Elka the stamps original printer. It has been stated that 3,675,000 stamps were actually overprinted and were placed on sale during the period 1st October 1974 to 2nd December 1974. Usage continued until mid 1975 when stocks were exhausted.



The correct format of the overprint is shown left in both mint and used form.

The lowest sheet number seen so far is 124680

It was obviously very difficult to maintain registration during the overprinting process and various shifts can be found.



High vertical shift



Shift high and right

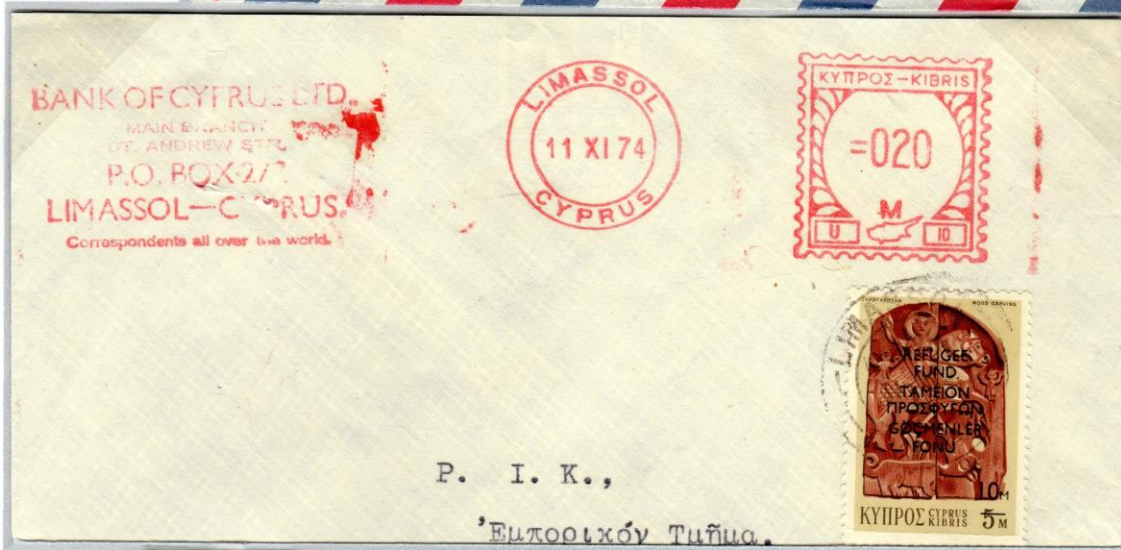


Shift high and left

Other overprint shifts of a similar nature to those shown are known to exist.

1 - Cont
The stamps
in use.
 Examples of
 shifts are
 shown.

Note
 The unofficial
 slogans that
 have been
 used.



2 – The First Design of Refugee Stamps



The basis for the design of this stamp was the photograph illustrated left showing an old woman Stavroula Leonidou fleeing from her village Tremithi carrying her Grandson Leonides Pieri.

Final design & printing was by Aspioti-Elka in Greece. Release date – 2nd December 1974.



Mint



Used



A second printing was carried out and released on 10th November 1975 the only difference being this release was on chalk faced paper, print quality is the only way of telling the difference, the second printing shown right is much sharper than the first printing shown left.



Below and right are shown examples of the stamps in service.



2 – SECOND THEME, FIRST DESIGN 1st & 2nd Printings



This new theme is a reproduction of an original wood engraving entitled "Cyprus 74" by the distinguished engraver and stamp artist A. Tassos. The subject, in grey-black ink on a white background within a rectangular frame, is a young girl in front of coils of barbed wire. In the design the date 1977 in small figures appears in the upper left corner.

The picture left shows the normal printing of the sheet number at the top R.H. corner of the sheet.

1st Printing issued – 10th January 1977 on watermarked paper (usually with watermark inverted) – printed by Aspioti-Elka.



Note the lack of a sheet number



2nd Printing issued - September 1977 on watermarked paper (usually with watermark inverted) also known on un-watermarked paper – printed by Aspioti-Elka.



Watermarked paper



Un-watermarked paper



2 – SECOND THEME, FIRST DESIGN
1st & 2nd Printings in Cents Currency

Similar to the 1977 design but with the following differences, the letters in all the words at the top of the stamp are slightly larger. The year, 1977, at the upper left is replaced by 1984. The value, 10m is replaced by 1c. Finally, there is clearly a larger gap between the letters “D” and “G” on the second line at the top of the stamp.

Printer - Waddingtons Ltd in Leeds, England.

1st Printing – release date 18th June 1984
 Watermark normal and can be difficult to see on this issue



2nd Printing release date July 1985 upright watermark, the main distinguishing difference between the two printings. The imprint is in two lines not one as the previous release



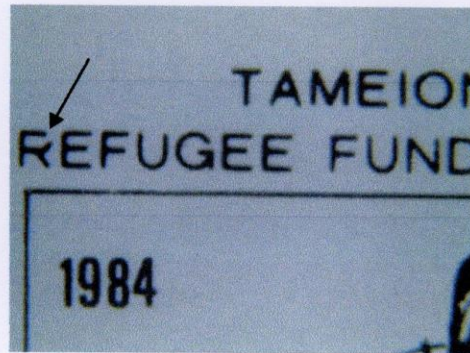
2 – SECOND THEME, FIRST DESIGN
3rd Printing in Cents Currency

Printer – Aspioti-Elka in Greece, watermark inverted.
 Release date – January 1987

Normal stamps as printed shown right.



The upper LH stamp of the block below left has the extra line flaw known as V4.



The broken R variety known as V3 illustrated above appears on the two stamps in the 4th row across in the block shown below





**2 – SECOND THEME, FIRST DESIGN
3rd Printing in Cents Currency – Cont.**

Printer – Aspioti-Elka in Greece, watermark inverted.



The flaw shown left known as V1 appears on all stamps in the far left vertical row of the block shown below left.



The broken frame line flaw illustrated above known as V2 only appears on the top RH stamp of the block shown left.

It has been considered that the various marks that appear on this printing are the result of lack of cleanliness during the printing process that has allowed specks of dirt/ink to build on the cylinder.

2 - THE SECOND THEME, SECOND DESIGN

1st Printing – issue date 12th September 1988



There was an introduction of colour for the first time, a muted shade of pale grey forming the background of the central panel. The words at the top of the stamp were the same, but re-arranged into three lines. The date, 1984, in the top left of the panel is omitted and replaced by the date, 1974, in large white figures in the top right of the panel. The year of issue, 1988, is in small black numbers in the bottom right of the panel. The three words for Cyprus, in equal size, are re-arranged in a straight line, and separated by dots, at the bottom of the stamp, below the panel. Finally the value, 1c, is shown in the top right corner, instead of the bottom right corner.

Printer - M. A. Moatsos S. A, in Greece. Normal watermark (*the last issue to appear on watermarked paper*)

2nd & 3rd Printings – issue date 4th September 1989



The most obvious change is the date in the panel, 1989 instead of 1988. There are also more subtle minor differences. The stamp itself is very slightly smaller, and the design panel is smaller in both height and width. The panel has a glossy finish contrasting with the matt finish to the rest of the stamp.

Printer: Helio Courvoisier S.A. in Switzerland, un-watermarked paper.

4th, 5th 6th & 7th Printings – introduced from 7th October 1991

The theme and colours were retained and the only noticeable changes, apart from the year of release in the bottom right corner of the panel, is a reversion to the slightly larger design panel, and that a short dash replaces the dot between the words CYPRUS at the base of the stamp on each of the 4 years' printings.

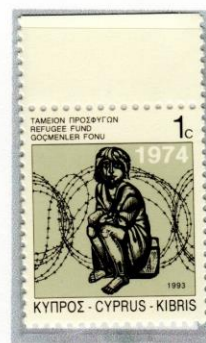
Printer - Alexandros Matsoukis Corp. in Athens, Greece. On un-watermarked paper



1991



1992



1993



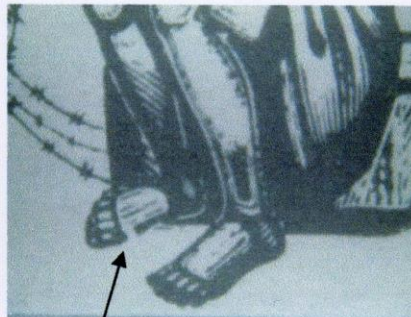
1994

The details of the flaws known on the Matsoukis printings follow

THE SECOND THEME, SECOND DESIGN
3.4 – The Alex Matsoukis Printings 1991 - 1994



Found on R1/1



Break in outline of girl's right foot. Found on R1/3



Spot on the arm Found R2/1-10

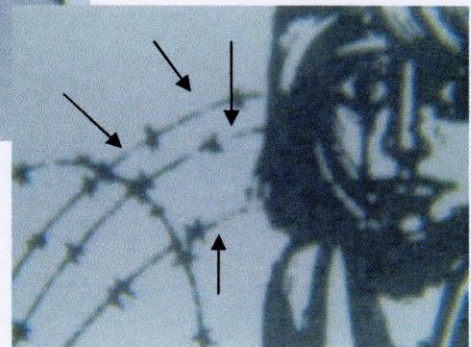


Break in frame above "PO" of ΚΥΠΡΟΣ – see left. Found R2/1-10



Break in the frame. Found R4/1-10 see left.

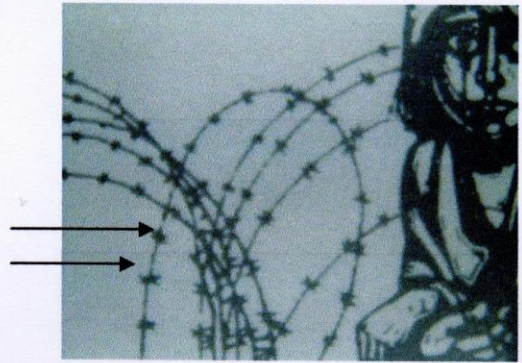
Several breaks in three strands of barbed wire joining the girls face. Found on R4/1-10 see right



3.4 Cont. – lower L.H. pane

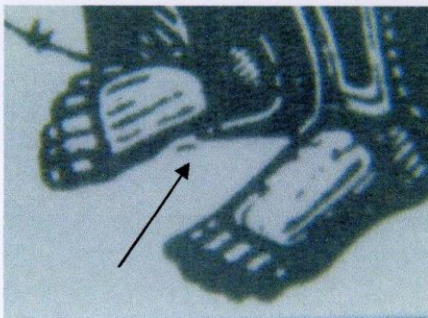


Break in 4th strand of barbed wire. Found on both R1/1-10 & R6/1-10



Breaks in first vertical strand of wire nearest left of stamp. This flaw appears on R5/1-10 & R10/1-10

There is a short line under the right foot, this flaw occurs on stamps R5/1-10. It is also present on stamps R10/1-10.



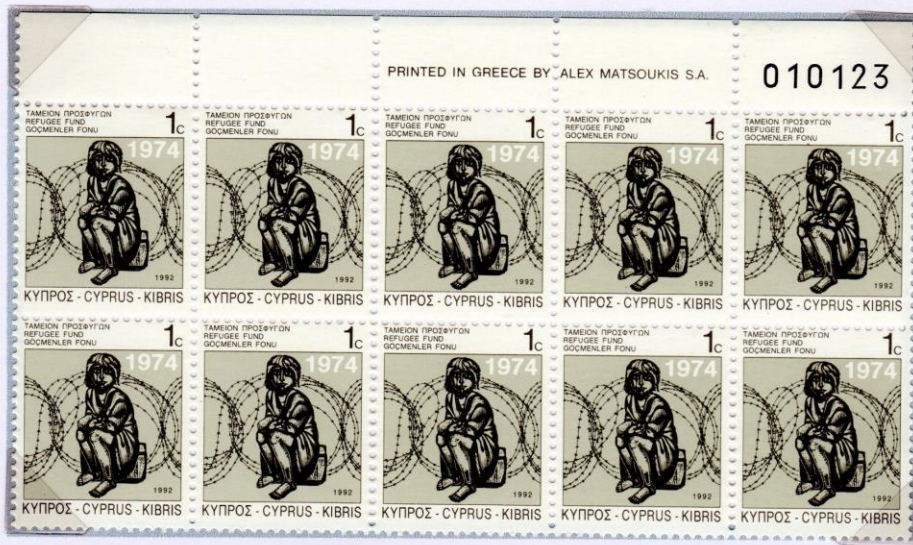
All the flaws shown for the left hand side of the sheet are repeated on the right hand side of the sheet. The lower R.H. pane is shown right for reference



PRINTED IN GREECE BY ALEX MATSOUKIS S.A.

3.4 Cont. – 1992 issue

This issue displays the same flaws already described for this printer in the 1991 issue the blocks shown give an indication of the span of Sheet Nos. used.



The 1993 & 1994 printings by this printer carried exactly the same flaws

THE SECOND THEME, SECOND DESIGN

3.5 – The ORIENTAL PRESS Printings 1995 - 2001

1995 First Printing

Compared with the Matsoukis printing, the design panel is slightly smaller, by almost 2mm in height, and the lettering and numerals on the stamp are smaller and slightly thinner. The year 1974 within the design panel is noticeably smaller. Other differences are that the intersecting coils of barbed wire to the right of the girl's waist are now fused into a large black blob, and only one small black dot remains of the two tears under the girl's left eye. There is a clear break in the vertical strand of wire above the fused area to the right of the girl's waist, and there is a large break in the wire joining the girl's face at left and on a level with her mouth.



The block above shows rows 1-2 and stamps 8-10, it shows one of four imprints around the margin and the position of the sheet number

The design panel is slightly coloured against previous printings.

The block below shows rows 8-10 and stamps 1 – 4 in each row.



A small horseshoe shaped black flaw occurs attached to the girl's left foot on stamp R8/4. This flaw is constant on all sheets examined. It appears on all seven of the printings from 1995 to 2001.

3.5 – Cont.



1998 and subsequent Printings
 For the first time the words **REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS** appear in English in the top margin above stamps R1/2 & 3 and in Greek in the left hand margin opposite stamps R1/1 & R2/1. The emblem of the Republic also appears for the first time in the top corner of the left hand margin. **PRINTED IN BAHRAIN BY ORIENTAL PRESS** now only appears in the bottom margin below stamps R10/2 & 3 and R10/8 & 9



The sheet number is still positioned above R1/10 see left

The foot flaw previously shown still appears on R8/4 see below.



THE SECOND THEME, SECOND DESIGN

3.6 – The Colour Printings 1995 - 2014

From this point forward there was a move away from the stark black/white image and colour started to be introduced mainly for the design panel.



A change of currency to the Euro brought about even more colour to the design panel. A different colour is now chosen for each year.



4 – Pre Printed Stamps & Inclusion Values

Other methods of paying the obligatory tax have been introduced such as the use of pre printed stamps on postal stationary and the automated inclusion of the tax into registration fees and business bulk mailing.



All the refugees are now living in settlements and they are slowly being given the deeds to the properties they live in and being made responsible for their own affairs. Which begs the question "How much longer will the Obligatory Tax be required".