THE AUSTRIAN ARMY OF THE NAPOLEONIC WAR

The Austrians were the most consistent of all Napoleon's foes and were at war with the Republic, the Consulate and the Empire. Despite suffering catastrophic setbacks and defeats the Imperial forces proved remarkably resilient and proved capable of fielding large armies.

The Holy Roman Empire covered a large range of countries, so Germans, Czechs, Walloons, Poles, Croats, Serbs and Hungarians could all be found serving in what was effectively a multi-national army. The result was the Kaiserlich und Konglige Arme (Imperial and Royal Army). The very disparate nature of this force created problems of inconsistency and headaches for command. As a result for much of the early period of the wars command was dictated from Vienna, resulting in a paralysis of operational command that a young Bonaparte was able to exploit to the full in North Italy.

The litany of defeats at the hands of the French tends to lead wargamers to dismiss the Austrians as a viable wargames army. This view is perhaps a little short-sighted, as the Austrians faced the French army at the height of its power, and coming second best to Napoleon at his peak is not a fair reflection on the qualities of KuK Arme.

On a purely practical note, the Austrians are very easy to paint, and look very smart indeed on the battlefield. In terms of best results for least effort, the Austrians hold all the cards!

AUSTRIAN INFANTRY 1798-1815

A Line infantry regiment consisted of 3 battalions, each of 6 companies of 140 men. Each battalion theoretically numbered 1340, but campaign losses mean that this was rarely achieved and sustained.

The regimental grenadiers were normally separated and brigaded into composite grenadier battalions.

Each regiment had a Colonel in Chief, (Inhaber). While he was in charge, the regiment bore his name. This changed when he was replaced, resulting in a certain degree if difficulty in identifying regiments from OBs.

The uniform coat was of white cloth, single breasted with small, plain cuffs and turnbacks. German regiments wore white trousers and black gaiters. Hungarian regiments had pointed cuffs and wore light blue trousers with the outer seam piped in yellow and black braid. These were worn without gaiters and tucked into ankle boots. Waistcoats and equipment belts were white, cartridge box black and the rucksack of brown cowhide.

Regiments were distinguished by distinctive facing colours displayed on the turnbacks, cuffs, collars and edging to shoulder straps.

The crested helmet was introduced in 1798. It was officially replaced by a black shako in 1806, but continued to be worn in numbers until 1809. Hungarian regiments were issued with the shako in advance of the German units.
Officers normally wore a grey coat, (‘überrock’) on campaign. A gold/black waist sash and a gold band on the shako were also distinctions of rank. Grenadiers wore the same uniform as their line counterparts, but replaced the helmet or shako with a distinctive black fur cap. The large front plate was of brass, while the cloth rear was normally of facing colour laced white. Drummers wore the same uniform with the distinctions of ‘swallows nests’ in regimental facing on the shoulders. Drums were brass with striped black and yellow drum hoops.

Equipment belts were white. The cartridge box was of black leather. The rucksack was brown cowhide with a grey greatcoat strapped to the top.

The above illustration shows the single breasted coat common to all Line Infantry. The Helmet was universal issue for all Line infantry from 1792 onwards but was progressively replaced from 1806 onwards. The Grenadier bonnet was also common to both German and Hungarian regiments.
AUSTRIAN 'HUNGARIAN' INFANTRY 1798-1815

Erzherzhog Ferdinand Benjowsky
Alvinczy Graf Sam.Gyulai
Furst Anton Esterhazy Barond de Vins Thomas Nadasdy
Vokassovich Ignaz Gyulayi

Graf Sztary Baron Splenyi
Erzherzhog Anton Victor Johann Jellacic
St Julien Franz Jellacic
AUSTRIAN GRENNZER 1798-1815

Grenzers (from the German grenze meaning border) were regiments raised along Austria's long border with the Ottoman Empire from Austria's Serb, Croat and Slovenian subjects and had many aspects of a local militia. In peacetime they helped defend the border against Turkish incursions and had an admirable reputation for marksmanship and good morale. Grenzers served under their own officers and were not paid troops, although they did have looting rights and the army provided their uniforms and weapons. Grenzer regiments had between two and four battalions that usually, though not always deployed together. Grenzers wore a colourful Hungarian style uniform, usually in brown with blue pants.
Jaegers (meaning 'hunter' in German, called chasseurs in some sources) were light infantry skirmishers raised in the Hereditary Lands, often from gamekeepers and foresters. They were considered part of the regular army establishment. Jaegers were organized in units of battalion strength. They wore grey uniforms with grey or white pants (the former being more prevalent) and green facings. They wore a wide brimmed hat called the korsehut (Corsican hat) though early period jaegers wore the typical Austrian infantry helmet.
AUSTRIAN ARTILLERY 1798-1815

The uniform was similar in cut to that of the Line Infantry. The coats were brown with red facings, showing at collar, cuffs, turnbacks and piping on the shoulder straps.

Headwear was the Korschut, (a broad brimmed hat turned up on one side), and from 1805 onwards the bicorne as depicted.

Gun carriages and limbers were painted ochre yellow with black metalwork.
AUSTRIAN KURASSIERS 1801-1815

In 1801, there were 8 regiments of Kurassiers. Actual strengths varied during the wars but in general, each regiments consisted of eight Squadrons, of companies of 130-150 men. Each regiment therefore theoretically numbered 1040 to 1200.

The coat was white with cuffs in regimental facing colour. Turnbacks were white edged with facing colour. Collars were white with a patch of the facing colour. Waistcoats and breeches were white, Boots were black. The helmet was black leather with a brass front plate topped by a crest of black over yellow.

The cuirass was worn on the front half of the body only. It was painted black and retained by a white leather waist strap.

Trumpeters did not wear the cuirass, and could replace the black and yellow helmet crest with a red version.

Officers wore similar uniforms to their men adding a gold/black waist sash as a mark of rank. Their cuirasses were edged with red velvet, has a brass edging and a downwards pointing brass arrowhead.

Shabraques were red edged with yellow, and were topped by a sheepskin edged in red. These were white for rank and file and black for officers.
AUSTRIAN CHEVEAUXLEGERS 1801-1815

Cheveauxlegers operated as ‘Medium’ cavalry, and were clothed and equipped in similar style to the Dragoons. In 1801 there were 6 regiments,

Coats were originally white, but were officially changed to green in 1801. In 1805 this was changed when the 3rd, 5th and 6th reverted to white.

Waistcoats and breeches were white and boots were black, although on campaign grey overalls were used. The helmet was black leather with a brass front plate topped by a crest of black over yellow. Trumpeters wore a red crest and were traditionally mounted on greys.

Officers wore similar uniforms to their men adding a gold/black waist sash as a mark of rank.

Shabraques were red edged with yellow, and were topped by a sheepskin edged in red. These were white for rank and file and black for officers.
AUSTRIAN DRAGOONS 1801-1815

Dragoons operated as ‘Medium’ cavalry. In 1801 there were 6 regiments of Dragoons.

Waistcoats and breeches were white and boots were black, although on campaign grey overalls were used. The helmet was black leather with a brass front plate topped by a crest of black over yellow. Trumpeters wore a red crest and were traditionally mounted on greys.

Officers wore similar uniforms to their men adding a gold/black waist sash as a mark of rank.

Shabraques were red edged with yellow, and were topped by a sheepskin edged in red. These were white for rank and file and black for officers.
In 1801 there were 12 regiments of hussars.

Hussars wore a short jacket called a ‘dolman’ and an over jacket trimmed with fur, called a ‘pelisse’. The pelisse was often worn slung over the left shoulder. A ‘barrel-sash’ was worn around the waist and the ensemble was finished off with tight breeches and boots. Both the dolman and pelisse were elaborately decorated with many rows of yellow and black cord loops. Hanging from the left was the ‘sabretache’ - a decorated pouch. Headgear was a shako in regimental colour.

Each regiment had different colour combinations of dolman, pelisse, breeches and facing colour making them extremely colourful regiments.