

Perfins and bicycles

(Pieter Reijbroek, uit: *Perfinpost* 81, mei 2007)

Probably all stamp collectors are familiar with the stamps with the small holes, representing letters or iconic pictures. These are called 'perfins', an abbreviation of PERforated Initials. In the past, until the seventies, these stamps were seen as being damaged and often thrown away. Nowadays there is a large number of perfin collectors, many of them organised in clubs.



What was the use of these perfins? In the past, almost immediately after their introduction, stamps were used as a financial tender: it was possible to exchange the stamps for real currency at the post office. Stamps were very expensive in the past: the cost of one stamp equalled the amount of wages for half a day's (or a whole day's) labour. It was tempting to take away stamps from the office or workshop and exchange them for real money. The English Joseph Sloper created a perforator which could punch letters and symbols into stamps. The initial use of this perforator was in 1868. With the perforation of the initials or a logotype, the stamp bore an owner's mark and the stamp was no longer accepted as currency, thus preventing theft.

Perfins were used in lots of countries (over 200) by lots of organisations: In the Netherlands more than 800 different perfins were used, in Germany 18,000 and in Great Britain over 30,000. Amongst these, some are related to bicycles, bicycle factories, producers of bicycle parts, bicycle clubs and so on.



For the Netherlands I found 6 different perfins of bicycle factories or bicycle trading companies:

- * H. Burgsmuller & Zonen, Rotterdam
- * Kestein Rijwielfabriek NV, Rotterdam
- * Eysink Fabrieken, Amersfoort
- * Gazelle Rijwielfabriek, Dieren
- * Rijwielfabriek Gruno, Winschoten
- * R.S. Stokvis & Zonen, Rotterdam



Bicycle tires:

- * Continental, Amsterdam
- * O. Englebert Fils & Cie, Amsterdam
- * Verenigde Nederlandsche Rubberfabrieken, Heveadorp



Without question the most famous of these nowadays is undoubtedly Gazelle, founded by Willem Kolling in 1892. He and his colleague Rudolf Arentsen ordered bicycles from England and sold them in Holland. In 1902 they started producing their own bicycles in a factory in Dieren, in the east of the Netherlands. In 1954 the first million bicycles were manufactured and in 1999 a total of 10 million bicycles had been reached.

Gazelle used perfins in the period 1920-1928. The perforation was used in 30 different Dutch stamps. In the majority of cases cancellation of perfins was done in the village or town where the company was established. For Gazelle this was Dieren.

I wish to thank Han Dijkstra for the corrections in the English text.

Dit artikel is eerder geplaatst in Bicycle Stamps, het blad van de Bicycle Stamp Club.

Perfins and bicycles (2)

(Pieter Reijbroek; uit: Perfinpost 81, mei 2007)

In the previous issue of BS I mentioned 6 different perfins of bicycle factories or bicycle trading companies for The Netherlands, **Gazelle** being the best known

One of the others was used by **H. Burgsmüller & Zonen** of Rotterdam. Burgsmüller & Zonen, originally from Germany, was a manufacturer of arms and bicycles. The Dutch perfin (B3) was used in more than 40 different stamps in the period 1922-1938. Burgsmüller also used perfins in German stamps.

Two are known, both different from the Dutch type; the first (1.B,7) was used for a rather short period, 1921-1924, the other (1.B,8) 1923-1939. The bicycle factory in Germany was in Kreiensen, a small town south of Hannover. I have not found any information on this company later than WWII.



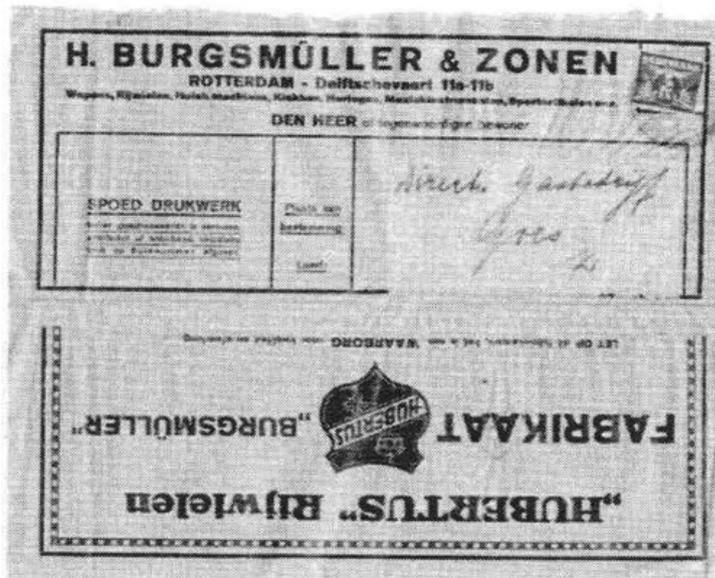
German perfin (1.B,7)



German perfin (1.B,8)

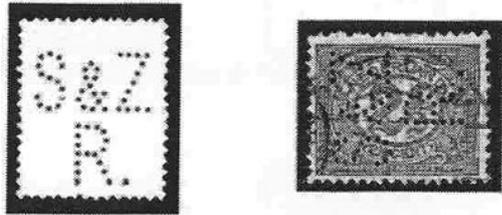


Dutch perfin (B3)



Wrapper from Burgsmüller, Rotterdam

The commonest bicycle-related perfin in The Netherlands was used by **R.S. Stokvis en Zonen** of Rotterdam (S&ZR 1) (R.S. = Raphael Samuel. R.S. Stokvis lived from 1807-1889.).

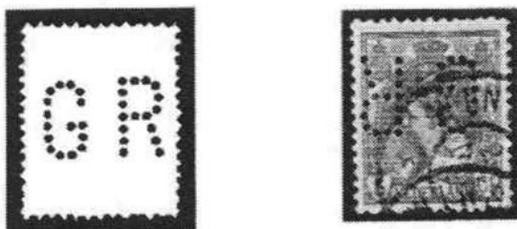


So far, this perfin has been found in over 200 different Dutch stamps. At first this company did not manufacture or assemble bicycles; it was more a trading company of bicycles (besides many other products). At least from 1930 onwards it also manufactured bicycles in the factory of Gruno, Winschoten.

R.S. Stokvis en Zonen had several establishments in other cities in The Netherlands, e.g. Groningen and Amsterdam, which show capital G and A respectively (instead of R). These other establishments did not trade bicycles. The company was later taken over by Union, another well-known Dutch bicycle factory.



The Gruno bicycle factory had its own perfin (GR), which was only used 1908, in just 7 different stamps, so it is comparatively rare. Gruno was established at Winschoten in 1893, and manufactured bicycles in Uden from 1952 onwards.



In 1955 the company was bought by Stokvis, who closed down the factory in 1968.

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