



Members of the Group in 1963 during a visit to Dr Wood in Wales

50 Years of the Malaya Study Group

Gordon Peters, Editor, *The Malayan Philatelist*, looks back over half a century of activity

The Malaya Study Group is concerned with the stamps and postal history of the former British Colony of the Straits Settlements, together with the nine protected Malay States in the Malay Peninsula and post-Independence Malaysia and Singapore.

With such close ties to Great Britain, it is perhaps surprising that the Group was founded by a citizen of the United States of America. In 1959, after enquiries among friends and in the philatelic press in the USA and the UK, Mr Howard J Selzer of Chicago, Illinois, took a bold step and published a journal which he called *The Malayan Philatelist*. In this publication he announced the formation of the 'Malayan Study Group' and explained his interest and plans for a society devoted to the philatelic affairs of Malaya. He listed the names of 15 people who had expressed willingness to share in this venture. With further publicity, membership grew very quickly, proving the need for a society. Howard continued to run the Group single-handed, and to edit and produce (on stencils and duplicator) the journal six times a year. The title of the Group was modified to the 'Malaya Study Group' and the annual subscription, modest even in 1959, was US\$1.50 or 10 shillings in the UK.

As membership grew, so too did the number and quality of the articles in the Journal. The leading collector of Malayan material at that time was Dr F E Wood, FRPSL, and he agreed to become Honorary Chairman of the Group. In 1948 Dr Wood had published his own comprehensive account of the stamps of

Malaya, a book which in two volumes, based on articles published in the *London Philatelist*, remains the definitive work on its subject and period to this day. Additions have been made but almost no corrections, testimony to the quality of the work produced.

The UK Branch

Howard continued to publish *The Malayan Philatelist* (or *TMP* as it is more conveniently known) for the next ten years, during which time the United Kingdom members had organised a circulating packet of material, though due to insurance reasons, limited to UK members only. This put members in closer touch with one another and it was not long before a meeting of members was arranged at the (now long gone) City of London Philatelic Auctions Rooms in Bishopsgate, London. Thus, a

second unusual occurrence of events, a circulating packet list bringing together members of a society for a first meeting. As a result, and with Howard's approval, the 'UK Branch' of the Malaya Study Group was set up with its own committee to run it. By calling it a 'Branch' it was hoped that other 'Branches' would be established in the United States, Malaya and elsewhere. In the event, this did not happen, but in Australia, several members met from time to time to discuss matters Malayan.

The UK Branch thrived, financing itself from meeting levies, packet sales commission and, later, auction commission. Meetings were held initially in Caxton Hall, London, and later in Rugby, Nottingham, Bristol and Bournemouth. Scottish meetings followed and still continue.

In 1969, Howard was unable to continue his work in running the Group and producing *The Malayan Philatelist*. Arrangements were therefore made to transfer operations to the UK Branch,

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details of which were finalised at a meeting at the London International Exhibition at Olympia in 1970. Gordon Peters undertook to edit and produce *The Malayan Philatelist* and send it to all members, together with a newsletter which had been introduced to keep all UK members informed of events and to report past meetings. Gordon remains editor of *The Malayan Philatelist* to this day.

Howard remained, and remains, a member, and was made the Group's first Honorary Member in recognition of his achievements. The UK Branch as such was dissolved and its affairs absorbed into the main Study Group.

The Group has, over the years, published almost a dozen books of various lengths on various topics, including a comprehensive index of *The Malayan Philatelist*, 1959–2004 (which is free to all members upon joining) and a definitive work on *The Stamps and Postal History of Kedah and Perlis*. The latest publication is a book entitled *Malayan Postal Stationery, 1937 to 1947* (see panel at right). Other work is in preparation and awaits publication.

The Group now has well over 400 members, half in the UK and a strong representation, as one would expect, in Malaysia and Singapore, in addition to Australia, and where it all started 50 years ago, the United States.

The Malaya Study Group

The Malayan Philatelist, is distributed four times a year to all members, by airmail where appropriate at no extra cost, containing a wealth of information and in-depth articles on all aspects of Malayan/Malaysian philately, all members being encouraged to contribute.

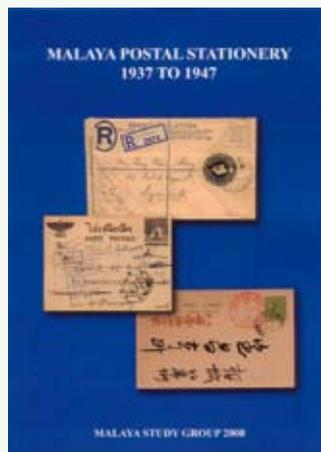
In addition to *The Malayan Philatelist*, a newsletter is also distributed with the same frequency. The newsletter includes descriptions of displays given by members, both to the Malaya Study Group and other Societies, members' activities, and information of a general nature of interest to the group.

Room/postal and postal only auctions are held two or three times a year, which normally include high class specialist items, participation in buying or selling being restricted to group members only.

Not all members are specialists, and few collect everything. Interest spans such diverse topics as Censor Mails, Postage Dues, British Military Occupation, Malaysian Definitives, Postal History, Postal Stationery, Japanese Occupation, a specific State or Reign, etc.

Full membership is £10.00 per annum, which is excellent value for money! For further information please contact: David Tett, Membership Secretary, PO Box 34 Wheathampstead, Herts AL4 8JY UK, or email: davidtett@aol.com
The Society's website is www.malayastudygroup.com

Malayan Postal Stationery 1937–1947



The Malaya Study Group have recently published *Malayan Postal Stationery 1937–1947*. The book covers the postal stationery of Malaya during this period of change, and is the result of a decade of work by members of the Malaya Study Group, a real team effort.

It covers the King George VI era of Straits Settlements and the Malay states and includes usage within that decade of stationery issued earlier, some of which dated back to 1922. This book also includes the 1941 upratings, the Imperial forces in Malaya, the Japanese occupation and the British Military Administration. It has scarcity ratings for all the stationery items, and many illustrations, all in colour. This book is a mine of information for anyone interested in Malaya or postal stationery or the King George VI era, it is heartily recommended.

Malayan Postal Stationery 1937–1947 is available from Mr D J Pain, 1 Woodfield Grove, Streatham, London SW16 1LR, for £18 + £2 p&p. The book is 93 pages of text, A4 perfect bound in full colour.

MSG members should visit the website www.malayastudygroup.com for details of the Members' special offer, or contact Mr Pain directly.

Also still available from the MSG are some of its previous publications:
Kelantan, its Stamps & Postal History by Bill Reeves and Barry Dexter (£10.50)
Singapore Post Offices & Registration Labels by William H Lyons (£12)
Malaya The Survey Department Essays of 1933 by Andrew Norris (£10.50)
Malaya Postal History to 1939 as Recorded in Official Documents by Bill Reeves (£6.75)
Malaya Postal Documents from 1876 by Andrew Norris (£10.50)
Kedah and Perlis, Their Stamps and Postal History, 1887–1941 by Rob Holley (£50)
The Malaya Study Group's next publication will be:
Malaysia and the Federation of Malaya—Their Stamps & Postal Stationery, Volume 1—General Background Information, The Malayan Postal Union Postage Due Stamps and Federation of Malaya (1948–1963) by Len Stanway, this book should be out later this year, and will be followed by further volumes.

Below left: Australian Imperial Forces 25c. imprint cover, hand coloured
Below right: Johore 8c. red envelope postmarked Singapore
Bottom: BMA 15c. registration envelope, maritime mail postmark sent airmail to the UK

