



# *Malaya Study Group*

SINCE 1959

## **A Brief History of the Malaya Study Group**

**1959 - 2019  
60 Years...  
...and Counting**

**PART TWO**

## The Malayan Philatelist

The philatelic journal 'The Malayan Philatelist' (known to members as TMP) may be regarded as the foundation stone of the Malaya Study Group. As noted in the chapter on the Formative Events of the Group, Howard Selzer, having received positive responses from a small number of correspondents produced and published issue number 1 of the journal. This first issue of the Journal announced Dr FE Wood as the Honorary Chairman with the main focus of the issue being a Bibliography of Malayan Philately. From this start, the journal has continued to be published regularly.

There was a short break from the August 1969 issue to the October 1970 issue as the leadership of the MSG was reorganised due to Howard's 'incapacity as Secretary of MSG / Editor of TMP'. Editorship and production of The Malayan Philatelist moved to the UK as agreed at the Special General Meeting held in September 1970. It was also agreed that subsequent numbers of issues of The Malayan Philatelist should be at the discretion of the editor - subject to the overall direction of the Executive Committee. In January 1971, the Committee confirmed the appointment of G Peters as Editor, continuing from him taking on the journal in October 1970.

At the March 1974 Committee Meeting, the possibility of reducing the production of TMP from 6 to 4 issues per year was discussed, however it was agreed 'to make no change at present'. This was changed in 1975, when 4 issues were produced due to the Editor's time involved, which was noted to the AGM in March 1975, but also a contributory factor was the increase in postage costs. The plan would be to keep the total number of pages of TMP unchanged.

In 1976 there were 5 issues produced, rising back to 6 in 1977 until 1984 when it was noted in the Newsletter that not enough material was available for publication in TMP, and so subsequently the number of issues per year would be reduced on permanent basis. Although after this there were occasions for 5 issues and the issue of supplements. While the number of pages has varied, since 1991 the number has been around 100 pages per year.

This rose to around 112 per year in 2016 when it was decided to stop a separate Newsletter and incorporate the Newsletter and its information into a specific section of TMP.

The number of Volumes from 1959 to 2019 is 60 volumes consisting of 285 issues. The TMP Volume statistics are reported in the Appendices. An index has been published annually for each TMP volume.

TMP has essentially continued as it was started and after sixty years of publication, it might be thought that there is less and less to fill the pages of the journal. Be that as it may, its fundamental purpose remains the recording and discussion of all aspects of the stamps and postal history of what is now constituted as West Malaysia and the Republic of Singapore, including their various historic governmental groupings, from the earliest time forward. Although, even after 60 years, the pages do cover newly 'discovered' items and original research.

To quote from the November 1970 Newsletter, the Newsletter Editor writing on the continuation of TMP (all-be-it from the UK) defined its function as 'conveyance of philatelic knowledge, postal history, and results of studies. All is not yet known, nor clearly defined, and research may prove some long held theories or even basic accepted facts to be wrong. Please therefore send your articles in to the Editor of TMP also questions, these really are valuable, and anything else which may help or encourage research will we are sure be most welcome. A happy Editor is one who has a file of articles, questions, book references, and studies waiting for space. It's our magazine, we the membership want the knowledge of what exists and why, how it came about etc. You voice your question the answer will assist the great majority. Please do not be afraid to put pen to paper, and do not duck when someone comes back with a blitz, if they are correct research will be gained, if wrong prove it and let them bow to your diligent fact finding.'

In the January - March 1993 issue of 'The Philatelist and Philatelic Journal of Great Britain' edited by Robson Lowe, in a feature 'Review of Reviews' examining the issues 169 to 176 of TMP, the Editor commented: 'The excellent 'Malayan Philatelist' seems to go from strength to strength... It is a magazine packed with useful information for Malaya collectors of all stages. We cannot even begin to mention all the notes, queries and replies, nor the updates on previous researches and illustrations of hitherto unrecorded postal markings; and for those interested in the new issues, there are lengthy explanations and descriptions which will help to inject life and meaning into even a straight forward display of this very attractive material.'

### **TMP Editors**

There have been, in the initial 60 years of production, only three editors of The Malayan Philatelist:

Howard Selzer	April 1959 to August 1969 (Issue 1 to 63)
Gordon Peters	October 1970 to June 2009 (Issue 64 to 245)
Len Stanway	from March 2010 (Issue 246)

### **The Evolution of Production of TMP**

The journals of the Group were originally printed on a mimeograph machine with the stencils for the machine being cut on a mechanical typewriter and then duplicated. The paper size used was American Quarto (8½ x 11 inches).

Production methods changed when the TMP was published in the UK from the October 1970 issue. In 1971, the then Editor, with help of a £100 loan from the Group, purchased a typewriter (at a cost to himself of £216) to type TMP, rather than have it professionally typed, thus saving the Group production costs. The quality of print was also improved. Then in 1972 the company which printed TMP was changed, and this led to a more consistent product, particularly in respect of the quality of paper used. Off-set litho printing was used, with colour being introduced in 1987 for some of the images.

The next major adjustment was in 1998 when the paper size was changed, as both the American size paper was not so readily available in the UK and there was an issue with colour

photocopying on to that size. The decision was taken to use A4 sized paper with this trimmed to a height of 11 inches to fit with the binders being used.

With the change in Editor in 2010, the publication was changed to be digitally printed rather than photocopied, with full colour typically used throughout the issues. In addition, the publication was printed in Malaysia (and distributed from there). The format was changed to be printed in A3 and folded to A4 and stapled, with the index being provided loose annually.

### **Features of TMP**

In addition to regular informative articles, there have been a few features to TMP over the years.

**The Question Box:** This has been a regular feature over the years from the very first issue with questions being posed. Dr FE Wood, in the second issue, said 'The Question box also looks as if it would provide us with a lot of information and a good deal of fun, I hope.'. The second issue saw the answers to the first questions, with new questions coming in.

**Post Offices:** First introduced by Shirly Cannicott in TMP Volume 1 Number 2. In the early TMPs the discussion was under 'Dead Men' or defunct Post offices. After the appointment of Mr Jindadasa as MSG Consul for Malaya, he would write in his 'Report from Malaya' on new Post Offices and Agencies. The reporting on Post Offices continued from then on by various members.

**Stamp Issues:** From the beginning of TMP reports came in covering new stamp issues across Malaya. However, it was only in 1990 that a formal 'New Issues Column' was established and has remained a regular feature.

**Specialist Subjects:** In 1966 it was announced that in 1967 three issues of TMP will be set aside special subjects and the other three to cover Malayan Philately in general. There was just one dedicated issue until the TMP editorship passed to the UK. After this there were several further 'dedicated' issues, with the next being Vol 17 No2 which focused on the Postal History of the Japanese Occupation Period.

**Competition:** In the August 1962 issue ideas came in from membership for improvements and one was to have a 'article contest' with an award for the best over a volume of TMP, and it was proposed by the Editor this would start with Volume 5. At the end of Vol 5 the Editor listed 14 articles for members to vote on - calling on all members to be engaged in this. The result was announced in the August 1964 issue, with P Pratt the winner with the article 'French Maritime Cachets on Straits Settlements Stamps'. He received a three-year paid membership subscription. In 1964 13 articles were available to vote on and was won by J Dewey, and in 1965 there were 5 articles to vote on. After request to vote nothing further happened and the competition never again took place.

**Malayan Miscellany:** This was introduced into TMP in 1971. The feature brought together snippets of information, news items, notes, reports, etc., which though of interest and importance, were too short to form even a brief article by themselves. Corrections and

additions to previous articles were also to be included here. This was hoped to encourage members to send in those items which may have otherwise thought to be too short.

### **Awards for TMP**

TMP has been entered into 4 exhibitions over the years, winning Silver medals in each. These are:

London 1980 International Stamp Exhibition. TMP awarded Silver Medal in the Literature Class.



AMERIPEX USA International Stamp Exhibition May 1986 Chicago, Illinois. TMP awarded Silver Medal in the Literature Class.



Stamp World 90, May 1990 at Alexandria Palace, London. TMP awarded Silver Medal in Literature Class.

NAPEX, Washington DC, USA, June 2011. TMP Volume 51 awarded a Silver Medal in Literature - Periodicals Class.

# Newsletter

## UK Branch Newsletter

A UK Branch Newsletter was introduced in July 1965 under the editorship of D Clayton. Up until this point, the Secretary of the UK Branch had been sending letters to members prior to each meeting. There were about 6 UK Branch newsletters sent out each year.

The Newsletter's main focus was listing upcoming events and reporting on meetings with detail. In addition, it gave news on: the packet; membership information; subscriptions; obituaries; visits to other societies/displays by members being given; awards; and other general news. In addition, AGM information/reports were included annually. In the early newsletters there was also some philatelic questions and answers / discussion / sharing of information - that were not sent for publication in TMP! Although in the May 1968 Newsletter it was noted that the Newsletter 'will not, however compete with The Malayan Philatelist but run parallel to it' serving those in the UK. A 'question box' was started in the August 1969 Newsletter and a new feature was added in April 1970 issue of the Newsletter – a full listing of Auction results (the first being the auction held in March 1970).

In April 1966 I Raybould took over editorship when D Clayton moved to Singapore and H Miller took over from August 1967 but had to stop due to work commitments. D Clayton stepped back in to the role from April 1969 having returned from Singapore.

There were 33 UK Branch Newsletters.

## Malaya Study Group Newsletter

The Malaya Study Group (UK Branch) Newsletter then became the MSG Newsletter, following the running of the Study Group moving to the UK. It was noted that the committee felt that 'the newsletters fulfil a very useful purpose, and so will continue' and would be sent out with TMP. Within TMP it was to be reserved for technical philatelic articles, news, questions and answers etc and the Newsletter for more domestic uses - notices, accounts of previous meetings, member's wants etc and to help complete a study before publication in TMP. The editorial in TMP will be used to draw member's attention to administrative matters. The Group Newsletter started at No 1 with the April 1971 issue.

D Clayton agreed to be Editor of the Newsletter and, following his election at the first AGM of the Group, continued his role from the UK Branch newsletter. He remained in post until March 1979 (with Newsletter No 45 in the pipeline) when he retired, and N Hackney was appointed.

New production methods came about in 1982 due to distribution issues with a move to offset litho in issue 64 (No 1 1982). The production then moved to typeset in 1987 with issue 92.

The 'Centenary Edition' of the Group's Newsletter was issue No. 5 1988 (December), which was N Hackney final issue as Editor.

R Holley was elected in March 1989 and his first issue, Number 101 was published and printed using, at the time, the 'Group's latest acquisition', an AMSTRAD PCW9512. The newsletter was printed using computer software called 'Locoscript' and typed with a daisy wheel printer.

In 1998 a change in computer to the Newsletter Editor's own, which was more up-to-date, resulted in a modest format change in font and layout. There was also a change of printers to the printers that printed TMP, still on A4 sheets. From the start of the year 2000, the newsletter was produced in 'book form' - A3 sheets folded to A4. The printers again changed due to an alteration in arrangements for dispatching the Group's publications.

There was a major change in 2003 with a reduction from 6 to only 4 issues of the Newsletter per year. It then being issued with TMP to rationalise the administrative burden and mailings and thus reduce expenditure on postage. In 2004 meeting reports were to be provided by the exhibitor or a volunteer as rapporteur whereas up to then typically it was the Newsletter Editor providing the reports.

The Newsletter was a separate publication until Issue 1 2016 – Series 235, when it then became an integral part of The Malayan Philatelist with the TMP Editor managing the content.

#### **MSG Newsletter Editors**

Derek Clayton	1970-1979
Nicholas Hackney	1979-1989
Rob Holley	1989 - 2004
Gaden Robinson	2004 – 2009
Nick Hackney	2010 (stepped in to do 2 issues due to passing of Gaden Robinson)
Mac McClaren	2010 - 2015

The Newsletter contains a fascinating range of information – both from display reports, but also from the recorded 'letters to the editor' and responses and, in addition, the pondering thoughts from the editor.

Being a Newsletter meant that occasionally there were items aired that were 'highly controversial views' which then created some friction... It was agreed by the Executive Committee that the Editor retained the right to 'expressions of personal opinion' but 'it was essential that meetings were properly reported...'

## MSG Study Projects

Howard Selzer had the notion that the Malaya Study Group would have a focus on study rather than just being called a 'society'. With this in mind, to help new members and member's research, he first started with a bibliography of Malayan Philately launched in issue 1 of The Malayan Philatelist (TMP). There followed input to the bibliography in the next editions of TMP, with an updated list appearing in the December 1967 issue of TMP.

The next focus to assist members was an illustrated index of Post Office cancellations of Malaya, and this was launched in Vol 1 Number 5. The first results of the cancellations were published in August 1960 (Vol 2 no 4), with the first decade to be written up and illustrated being the 1890s. The next decade of cancellations was the 1900s issued in the April 1961 TMP, and the 1930s cancellations in the February 1962 TMP. Howard himself, due to challenges with postmarks being run over different decades, decided that he would put down information for the 'early years', and produced lists for the 1820s through to the 1880s in the June/August 1962 issues of TMP (Vol 4 No 3 and No 4).

In October 1960 (TMP Vol 2 No 5), a suggestion was made for a project to list all the Post Offices of Malaya, with information about each. For this it was reported 'There was found a lot of popularity amongst our members'. The first list of Post Offices to be reported were those in Kelantan and Trengganu (TMP Vol 3 No 1) with the note 'several members are working on other States'. Due to space in TMP the listings were decided to be limited to opening and closing of the Post Offices, with a space left for members to write their own remarks. By August 1961 (TMP Vol 3 No 4) the first 'full' list of the Post Offices of Kelantan and Trengganu were added as a supplement, and the initial list of Singapore Post Offices reported looking for the details of opening and closing of these.

At a UK Branch meeting on 14 May 1965 a display of Malaya Borneo Exhibition Overprints was given. There was much interest and agreement there was more to learn of the overprints, that it was agreed 'there and then that this issue should form the subject of the group's first philatelic study'. In January 1968 there was a call in the UK Branch Newsletter for more study projects, with one suggested being the BMA Overprints. The UK Branch Committee at their April 1968 meeting discussed approaching various members with proposed study areas. By August 1968 one proposal for study had been received and an offer to start one, with a list of other suggestions. The call was continued in the July 1969 Newsletter stating 'The object of a study group is to study....we are a study group, and consequently we should endeavour to live up to our name....'. Reports note that the study projects of the UK Branch took off after this date.

Following discussion at the Group AGM in March 1971, where it was debated that 'as the Malaya Study Group... there should be more emphasis on conducting studies...', a Co-ordinator of Study Projects was appointed in June 1971. In the following TMP it was announced that the appointment had been made. The announcement stated 'The function of the co-ordinator will be to try to avoid separate studies being conducted on the same subject; to put members in touch with the appropriate person running a study, and to give advice generally, when asked, on the conduct of a study. He will not necessarily instigate, or even participate in, the studies themselves. Although the resources of the Group will be, as far as



practicable, available to members concerned in a study, the initiative must come from individuals. If, therefore, you feel that a particular aspect of Malayan philately needs detailed study, and there is, of course, plenty of scope in that respect, here is your chance to do something about it.' The first suggested study, following this announcement, was Postal Rates in Malaya.

After further discussion at the 1972 AGM, and a proposal that 'the Executive Committee of the Group should make the study of philately its special function, and should appoint a Sub-Committee... to promote study projects and the publication of knowledge and information resulting from these.', there was a 'Study Projects Committee' formed in 1972. At the 1973 AGM it was noted 'the Sub-Committee had got off the ground, if only just. The first principal project would be a series of studies on the growth of Post Offices and Postal Agencies in the various states.'. At the December 1973 Committee Meeting it was agreed that a budget be allocated to allow the Sub-Committee to produce projects. A further agreement was reached to loan a member of the Sub-Committee up to £200 [£181 spent] for the purchase of an electric typewriter to aid preparation of the studies to a good pre-publication level. Papers were written and submitted to the Committee, who would then ask members if they could add to the study and would then send a copy of the paper for comment/addition.

By 1974, after the slow start, a number (7) of draft papers were in circulation [including Kelantan & Kedah postal history & post-war cancellation papers; Surcharge marks; Civilian censor marks; Orchids] and some in preparation, with several more offers (7) made for projects. There was a lot of discussion at the 1974 AGM about membership being involved sufficiently and ensuring members, who were interested, reviewed the drafts of any study projects. A sum of £200 was also voted for to meet the cost of the first book and it was agreed that a questionnaire would be sent to everyone to understand collecting interests to assist with gaining support / input to projects [NB: About 50% of membership responded].

Not long after becoming Chairman in 1975, Malcom Wade wrote in the Newsletter 'I would remind members that the primary aim of the Group is study, and the publication of the results of such study. It is incredible that after sixteen years existence, the Group has yet to publish any authoritative document on any facet of Malayan philately or postal history. The Malayan Philatelist contains some fascinating and erudite articles, but these in total only serve to wet the appetite. A vast field remains to be unearthed, studied, recorded, collated and published....'. He continued 'We have an ever increasing membership, but how many consider themselves 'students'? I believe that specialisation in philately falls into three phases - Interest, Accumulation, Study. I think that too many members concentrate on accumulation, have minimal real interest and no intention to study.... If such members cannot appreciate the importance of their accumulations and the information they contain then attempts should be made to persuade them to make their material available to those of us with a real interest so that records can be made, facts noted, conclusions drawn and the results published.' With finally 'We are a world-wide organisation and I would like to see much closed liaison between members with similar interests, and far more participation by members in the UK or from overseas who cannot attend meetings.....'. However, this sentiment was not universally accepted....

By the end of 1975 there were 5 papers in circulation. It was agreed by the MSG Executive Committee that publication decisions should not be taken until a publication manuscript had been passed before the Committee. At the February 1976 Committee Meeting, it was noted that the papers for Kedah, Kelantan & Singapore were still in circulation, that the post-war cancellation index study was now 80% complete; and a new paper had been received and one was promised. However, while some projects proceeded, some fell by the side.....

With the issue and review of papers taking too long, the Study Projects Coordinator gave his resignation which was accepted at the March 1976 Committee Meeting. Nevertheless, despite issues, the rest of the team continued, with the name of the team being changed by the Executive Committee to 'Special Publications Committee'.

The same position continued at the AGM in 1977. It was noted that the Singapore, Kelantan and Straits Settlements Postmark papers had been reviewed and returned to the authors, and the Kedah and an FMS paper were being amended to take account of the De La Rue Archive material, that had recently come to the market. Further, a supplement on Japanese Occupation was still in circulation and a paper on the Stamps of Johore had recently been received. There was no information received on the Post-war Cancellations paper nor another paper on postmarks that had previously been submitted.

At the July 1977 Executive Committee Meeting a typed copy of the W Reeves FMS handbook, with the illustrations, was placed before the Committee. The format was discussed and agreed with costs to be established. Reported in January 1978 Committee Meeting, the costs would be £700 for 300 copies. It was agreed to proceed on the basis of the recommendation of the Publications Committee.

It was reported at the 1978 AGM that the Singapore paper and the Kedah paper were undergoing revision and that the FMS book had been delayed due to the review of the De La Rue archive material, 'However, the book had now been produced and was available at the meeting'. Thus, the first MSG Study Project materialised and M Wade, retiring as Chairman at that meeting, noted 'he was particularly pleased that the first of the Special Publications Committee's publications had taken place during his term of office.'

The Special Publications Committee's report to the 1979 AGM stated, 'A substantial study of Malayan Postal Markings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been received and is under consideration' and 'a list of Malayan Post Offices to 1957 has been compiled' with the decision pending on how this may be made available. In addition, it was noted that 'members are at work on studies on the stamps of Singapore and stamps and postmarks of Kedah'. The report went on to outline the concept of the project scheme and note that a paper on Kelantan 'is in existence' but there were other states to study and asking for members to come forward. During 1979 a study of Straits Settlements Postal Markings to 1867 was published in a single special issue of TMP being 18 pages.

At the 1980 AGM, the Special Publications Committee reported that a number of papers were still being worked on and reported one member was doing a book on the postmarks of Malaya during the Japanese Occupation. They also noted that one study had been withdrawn as the information had mostly been covered in TMP. During the year a 20-year index to TMP was

produced by R Price in Australia, under the auspices of the Special Publications Committee. The 1981 AGM report only updated on the progress of the Malayan Post Offices and noting the Kedah paper had been delayed. At the 1982 AGM it was reported that the List of Post Offices was being printed and would be available soon and for the Kedah paper the part on stamps had been completed but had needed expansion. The Kelantan and Singapore papers were in abeyance. The Malayan Post Offices study paper was published in 1982.

Although work on studies continued, an editorial by the Group's Newsletter Editor, in his final issue as editor at the end of 1988, commented that there was a danger of auctions dominating the Group's activities. He wrote 'I would like to express one personal observation, and a hope, that the research activities of the Group can be enhanced again. I wonder if we look too much on the prices realised, and too little on the study aspects of the Group.'

The Kelantan publication was eventually published in 1992 and the Kedah, by then with Perlis, publication entitled 'Kedah & Perlis: Their Stamps & Postal History 1887 – 1941' was published in 1995, this costing about £10,000 to publish. By the end of 1995 it had sold enough copies (circa 300) to cover this cost.

Following the 1992 publication, the next study publication by MSG was 'Malaya Postal Stationery 1937 to 1947'. A study was started by Ian Raybould but never came to fruition before he passed away. In 2003 it was decided to form a study group to work on completion of the study, as Ian's research papers were handed over to the MSG by his family in hope of the project continuing. To move this forward a Study Meeting was held in October 2003. Only about a dozen attended the meeting but, with contributions from members outside of the UK, items were shown, and data recorded. It was a profitable meeting and as a result was described more as a true study made by the Group, which continued over the following years and included a 4-page questionnaire distributed with the Oct/Dec 2004 Newsletter which resulted in a further 20 members or so contributing information. There were in the end 43 contributing members. A project team of 7 members then worked to ensure it went to print, which was eventually accomplished in 2008. The final publication should be recognised as the first ever to progress all the way to independent publication by the Group.

To highlight that work on a project does take time and effort, in 1989 the Royal Commonwealth Institute donated the Malayan Government Gazettes to the Group. It was decided to extract relevant information, which was a major task to process the Government Gazettes. However, this work resulted in the CD 'Postal and Historical Information extracted from the Government Gazettes of Straits Settlements and Native States' edited by Nigel Tyre being issued in 2012. By the time the project was completed, and the CD produced, the Royal Commonwealth Society had passed their library to Cambridge University. The Group, although knowing the gazettes were valuable, recognised that some of the material was not in the National Archives in the UK and, with this in mind, the Group decided to donate the gazettes to Cambridge University, so the gazettes would be available for future research.

A list of MSG Publications is in the Appendices.

## MSG Finances

The MSG since its formation has successfully managed, through the hard work of the various Committee Members over the years, to increase its reserves, typically year on year. With increasing reserves, this has allowed for very few small increases in subscription rates (see section on membership for these rates).

From the start of the Group, the reserves increased due to the increase in membership, with the subscriptions collected. It was also supplemented with 50% of the packet commission from the UK Branch. For the UK Branch, the increase in reserves grew through the commission on the auctions held and the remaining packet commission. [See sections on Auctions and Packet.]

When the Group administration was transferred to the UK in 1970, it still was the auction and packet which drove the increase in the reserves. In the later years, while the packet makes a contribution to income, it has really been the auction commission that has given the Group a stable base of income.

In 2018 the Group's financial position was secured for years to come, following the generous bequest to the Group by J Robertson from the proceeds from the sale of his collection by an auction house.

In 2019, as part of MSG's 60 years celebration and the continuing support for philately, a 5-year interest free loan of £40,000 was made to the Royal Philatelic Society, London, as financial assistance towards their fundraising 'Tomorrow's Royal' for their new headquarters at Abchurch Lane.

## Auctions

In the first issue of TMP the Editor mentioned that auctions were to be a feature of the Group, with 'a planned commission of 10% to the Study Group'. Further to this, in TMP Vol 2 No 5 October 1960, the Editor stated 'In the past the start of a Group Auction, via the pages of our bulletin, has been mentioned several times. However the response has not been very encouraging. Your editor recently had the opportunity of discussing this matter of auctions within a specialist group with the officers and members of several other such groups. Without exception they were all full of praise for the additional interest such auctions had provided among their members and for the success of the auctions themselves. This leads me to wonder whether we have not missed the boat in not putting forth a greater effort to get an auction started within our group.' There followed an appeal for members to send material to the Editor (Howard Selzer) to 'help get this additional group activity off to a successful start'. Members were reminded of the 10% commission that would go the Study Group to 'cover costs, and it is hoped, to provide some help in covering the cost of putting out our bulletins.'

The listing for the first Group auction appeared in TMP Vol 3 No 2 April 1961, with the Editor running the auction. It was a post bid auction with a closing date of 10 July, to allow time 'so that Study Group members overseas can take part in the auction service'. There were 26 lots - 22 stamp lots and 4 postal history covers (The Catalogue Value reported excluding the Postal History items was around \$170). Unfortunately, there appears to be no recorded comments on how the auction went or what the items realised. However, in the 1961 statement of accounts is reported a commission for the auction at \$3.12, suggesting that the auction raised over \$31.

In TMP Vol 4 No 5 October 1962, it was noted 'Quite a few members have again expressed their interest in holding auctions. Our last auction was held in April 1961, with only moderate interest. There is no reason why they cannot be held again.' There then followed a call for material.

In the UK, at the general meeting held 15 March 1963 to discuss the formation of a UK Branch, an auction was held with lots provided by 3 members (and one lot by proxy). Sales amounted to £11 17s which provided a commission sum of £1 3s 9d.

At the 17 May 1963 UK Branch meeting (and reported in TMP August 1963) it was announced that there would be two further meetings, in September and December, proposed to be held in London. It was stated that there would be 'Bring & Buy Auctions' held at each meeting. These auctions were of course "room only" auctions, so exposure to many members was still limited. For later sales, lists were prepared and distributed to members, with the opportunity for "postal bidding". It is noted that these Bring & Buy Auctions gradually dropped off as full auctions became established.

The catalyst for holding a planned auction by the UK Branch came about due the success of the packet being run. One member, C Taylor, had submitted several booklets of Straits Settlements stamps 'surplus to his requirements - desirable material, and by no means overpriced'. It was felt that if these had gone into the circuit, each member who was first on the list 'would have a field-day, leaving little for those lower on the list'. The Committee

decided that sale by auction was the only fair way to give more members a chance to obtain this decent material.

The next mention of an auction is in the December 1963 TMP. This was from the UK Branch of the Study Group with the notice that a large auction would be held at the AGM on 14 March 1964 at Caxton Hall, London, and that material should be submitted. It was noted 'In the past the UK Branch auctions have been very successful and the Branch officers are working hard to make this the best of them all'. Before the auction the Secretary noted that the 'Bring & Buy Auctions have been held at most meetings and have proved popular. This success has prompted today's bigger auction.' 150 lots were offered with 102 sold to the room and 6 to postal bidders. Realisations totalled £161 11s 6d, which benefited UK Branch funds to £16 3s 2d.

Following this, there was a passing comment made in the February 1965 TMP that the UK Branch is planning their AGM and 'Grand Auction' and that 'Last year both the meeting and auction were an outstanding success'. In the April 1965 TMP there was a report of the 1965 AGM and Auction held on 20 March. This reported there were 168 lots of which 150 sold for around £181, many prices being well above valuation. 67 bids were received from 11 postal bidders 'a marked increase over last year'. By the November 1966 auction, although there were only 137 lots, 120 were sold with postal bidding attracting 117 bids from 13 members.

In December 1967 the UK Branch held its first wholly Postal Auction. Over 500 bids were received from 48 members of which 44 were successful. The auction realised £460 15/-. (There is some discrepancy between information reported in TMP and that in the book containing the written minutes.)

The pattern of auctions continued being held after the UK Branch AGM and a second later in the year. The first detail of full Auction results was given in the April 1970 issue of the UK Branch Newsletter for auction held in March 1970.

### **Auctions Moving Worldwide**

In TMP December 1970, it was noted: 'A feature of the UK Branch meetings for the past few years has been the auction of philatelic material sent in by members. Usually, these sales consist of about 250 lots at valuations of a few shillings to many pounds, and contain something to interest almost everyone. The sale catalogue is sent to all UK members, but due to the time and expense involved, it is not practicable to send to other members. However, if any member outside the UK would like a copy of the March [1971] sale catalogue, please let me [G Peters, Editor] know, and one will be sent by airmail.'

### **Growth of Auctions**

From an average of c230 lots submitted per auction in the early 1970s, the total number of lots rose to 300 - 350 per auction in the 1980s. This growth prompted the Committee to note that 'The large amount of material coming forward for auction was getting to be a problem'. Notwithstanding this, the number of lots being submitted continued to increase to around 600 by the turn of the twenty-first century.

This increase was met by the growth in the number of auctions from once to twice or even three times a year in the 1990s and 2000s.

### **The challenge of the MSG Auctions**

As with every aspect of running an organisation questions are raised, and the auction has been no different. Several times comments were passed about material presented for the auction, lot descriptions, and therefore unsold lots, with these leading to minimum reserve prices. There were several noteworthy comments on the issue of lot description. For a flavour, two are noted.

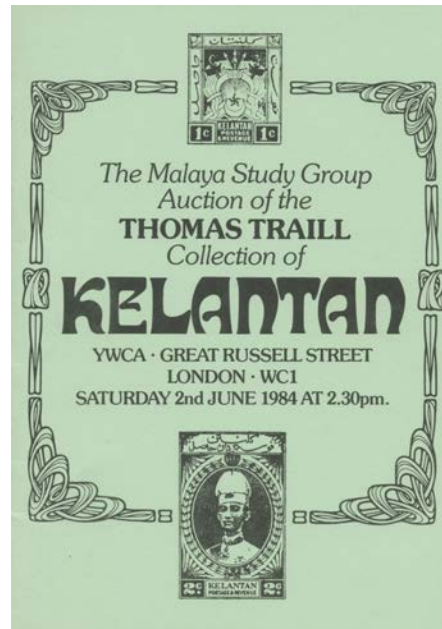
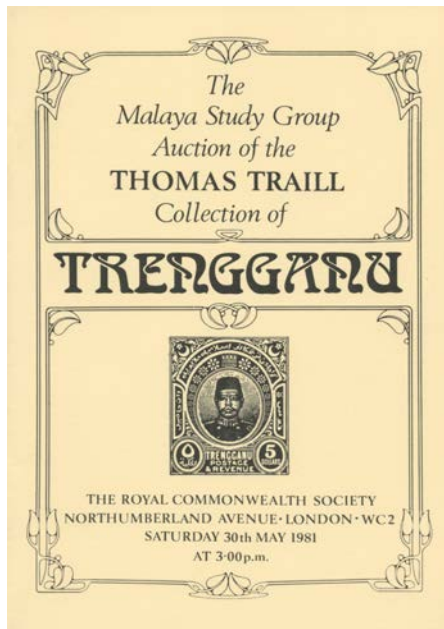
Writing in NL 156, Sept/Oct 1998, the comment was made on preparing lots 'More than half of the lots in our Group auctions go to postal bidders, mainly abroad. Without that foreign demand, vendors would not do nearly so well. It is in fact, one of the reasons why there is always material for our sales while the turnover for the packet has declined, i.e. the auctions have high percentage of sales, good prices, quick returns. A significant factor in the confidence of our postal buyers is the accuracy of our descriptions. If a lot has a fault or a blemish we mention it. It is in no-one's interests if a lot is returned, it means extra cost to the Group and more work for the hard-pressed auctioneer. I think, at times however, an impression is given that our auctioneers are too hard, we run down the lots too readily, and may even be thought to be looking for faults. It is certainly true that running down one's product is a bad way to sell it. On the other hand, our method works, ...our sales record is good and we have virtually no discontented buyers.'

Following this, ten years later, R Holley in the Aug/Nov 2008 Newsletter (NL204) in preparing the write-up of the July auction results, which featured 380+ lots including 120 lots selling the remnants of Bill Reeves collection, commented on why 67 lots went unsold - although it appears that no realisation was published on this occasion only the report on the auction. 'To some extent we are the victims of our own success. We break material down into small lots, give full descriptions and charge a humble 10% with no add-ons, so we are a popular auction house, but I cannot help wondering how long this can go on. It is getting increasingly difficult to get members to volunteer for the work involved and for this reason we have been reduced to two auctions a year...' He went on to note the unsold lots were more likely to be defective material or doubtful postmarks rather than unrealistic reserve prices - the scarce and attractive find buyers. The need to describe material well was discussed and the challenges this poses - including leading to the unsold lots - and an opinion was given how to overcome this. In reply to this, A Norris noted that the balance in a description is of equal import as accuracy. '...there are very few stamps, proofs, covers or other philatelic items that can be described simply as "fine"... many fine and collectable items do not have something 100% about them.'

Rob Holley's concerns, expressed in 2008 about volunteers to run the auctions, have proved prescient. Since 2013, no one has been willing to assume the formal role of Auction Manager. Instead, auctions have continued with an ad hoc, revolving cast of acting auction managers, often splitting the running of the auction between them. Since 2019 the number of auctions has reduced to one a year.

The other concern recently has been a decline in the number of items submitted by vendors. This may reflect the fact that several of the long-standing collectors of Malayan material have already disposed of their collections, either in blocks in multi-vendor auctions or in single vendor auctions. (See below).

### Single Vendor Auctions



Although the Group had held many auctions with members committing material, the early collections of members went to auction houses for sale, starting with Dr FE Wood's collection. The first single vendor auction held by the Group was the T Traill collection of Trengganu. This was on 30 May 1981. It consisted of 238 lots, with only 19 being unsold. This was followed by his collection of Kelantan held in the Group's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in June 1984 with 257 lots sold.

There followed, in regular intervals other single vendor auctions. The single vendor auctions and the number of lots are:

Auction Date	Member	Collection	No. Lots Offered	No. Lots Sold
May 1981	Thomas Traill	Trengganu	238	219
June 1984	Thomas Traill	Kelantan	282	257
June 1987	Hugh Allen	Malaya	402	397
Oct 1990	John Rosevear	Malaya	516	477
Oct 1991	Ashley Skinner	Malaya Part 1	518	496
Nov 1993	Ashley Skinner	Malaya Part 2	1,000	1,000
Autumn 1994	T Marshall D Clayton	Malayan Stamps Postal History	637	628
November 1995	Patrick Kearney	Malaya Part 1	652	628
October 1996	Patrick Kearney	Malaya – Part 2	618	595
June 2002	Ian Raybould	Malaya	500	476



October 2004	Malcolm Wade	Selangor	320	306
May 2007	Peter Setchell	Malaysia MBE Kedah	350	317
July 2009	David Medhurst	Postal Stationery & Stamps	441	
July 2010	Malcolm Wade	Perak	286	267
2013	Malcolm Wade	BMA Postal History	366	366
October 2016	Edward Proud Malcolm Wade	Stamps & Postal Stationery	373	364
October 2018	Rob Holley	Kelantan, Perlis & Trengganu	449	426

### **Success of Auctions**

From small beginnings, the core features of the auctions have been constant: i) to provide a philatelic benefit, available to all members; ii) restriction of availability to auctions to members-only; iii) no buyer's premium and, by commercial standards, a pretty modest vendor's commission; iv) the application of proceeds surplus to the cost of holding the auction to other philatelic benefits for the Group's members, such as support for publications, keeping membership subscription rates down, and the maintenance of a sustainable reserve.

To finish, the Newsletter Editor in 1997 wrote 'We are a study group... our auctions were started simply as an opportunity for members to dispose of their duplicates to the mutual advantage of all' and went on to say '...the Group has gained a great deal from the named sales we have had in the past. We have become financially viable and, as individuals, we have been given access to some wonderful material in a very easy-to-buy form.'

## Packet

In the first issue of The Malayan Philatelist, it was reported that a Packet Circuit was in the planning stages in the USA, with James Dewy as the organiser. In the second issue of TMP it was noted that 6 people had expressed their interest in the Packet, and by TMP Volume 2 issue 1, February 1960, it was announced: 'Our Group circuit or packet is now ready to go into operation. Due to the problems encountered in sending a circuit overseas we are going to have one in the United States, one in Great Britain, and perhaps another in Malaya if suitable arrangements can be made, with a District Manager in each area. This will also simplify providing insurance and currency exchanges. The packets will be circulated both within a district and between districts. A district manager to handle these duties in Great Britain is needed and we hereby ask for a volunteer.' By April 1960, packet books were available in the USA for filling, and it had been agreed that a charge of 10% was to be levied on all sales to 'cover running expenses and help towards Group funds.'

### Packet in the USA

In the April 1961 TMP the Editor wrote 'Our circuit manager in the US... reports that the response has been slow and disappointing.' and that a letter would be sent out to all members in the US in hoping 'this will encourage members to help to put the circuit into more active operation'. This letter included a questionnaire in regard to the packet.

By December 1961, it was noted in TMP that the first US circuit packet has been sent out and asking 'that those receiving it keep it moving so that there is not unnecessary delay in it reaching other members. Again, there was a call for material. Ultimately, the packet in the US never took off.

### Packet in the UK

Following suggestions made in TMP, Mr Rosevear undertook to organise an Exchange Packet circulating among members in the UK. In August 1960 arrangements had been made for a packet in England [England was changed in the next TMP to Great Britain] with the Packet Secretary agreed as G Rosevear. In the December 1960 issue of TMP there was the announcement: 'U.K. Circulating Packet: - Mr Rosevear writes that one packet has been launched and the sales has exceeded his expectations.' It went on to add 'however more books and members are needed. Remember, the packet has been put into operation for your benefit'.

In October 1961 the TMP Editor reported from Mr. Rosevear that 'sales in the U.K. packet have been extremely good; some have sold all that they put into the packet and at least half of the total value of the packet has been sold.' The Editor continued that the 'only problem is getting enough contributions from members to keep the packets going. U.K. members please take note.'

At the 1965 UK Branch AGM, it was noted in the packet report that there was a 'high percentage of sales obtained'. By 1967 about 60 members in the UK were taking the packet, with a packet taking about 7 to 8 months to circulate. It was reported that 'although it is not the object of the Group to amass considerable sums of money, the 10 % commission on sales is considerably helping the funds and will undoubtedly be of use in the event of the Group

launching any special project or publications. Half the commission is retained by the UK Branch, the remainder, less expenses....is credited to the Groups main account run by the Secretary.'

### **Group Packet**

When the Group administration moved to the UK, the Packet in the UK continued with all the commission going into the main Group account.

In 1973 it was noted that MSG members in Australia had set up a packet in conjunction with the Sarawak Specialists Society and material was requested. A proposal to send the packet circulating in the UK to Australia was not taken up and, in addition, a proposal to allow informal exchange of MSG and SSS packet in the UK was rejected by the MSG Committee.

Packets occasionally went missing creating follow-up with insurers to have claims paid. In the early 1980's three packets went missing in a very short space of time and the insurance claim was refused. This threatened the existence of the Malaya Study Group, as the value of these packets was greater than the Group's funds. The ex-U.K. member to whom all three packets had been addressed when they went missing had emigrated. The person had moved to the Middle East on a long term work contract, and because of this the Insurance Company could not get the information from him they required. Fortunately, the person visited a philatelic society in Malaysia and the Group managed to track down an address. Thankfully the person replied to clarify that he never received the three packets, and the insurance company was obliged to pay the claim in full. The Group then had several successful auctions which helped take the pressure of the exposure from the Packet. By the early 1990s the Group was in a much more secure financial position, due again to successful auctions, moving away from a similar threat of exposure.

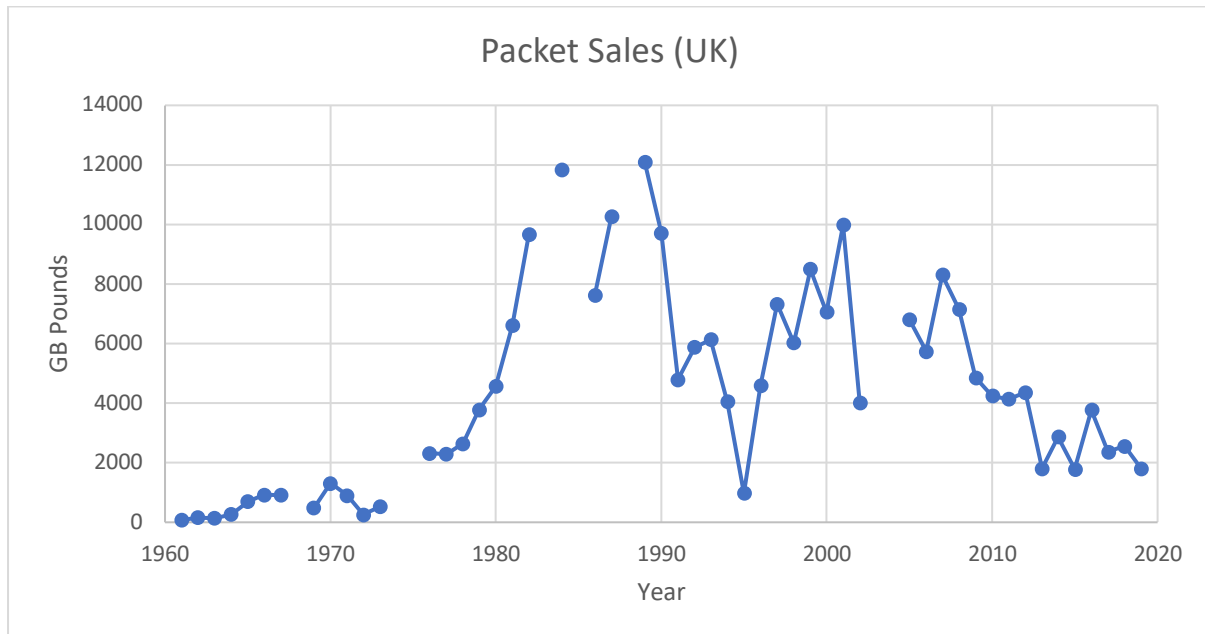
In 1991 there was a 'drastic reduction' in packets circulated compared to the previous few years and an argument that the insurance charge of 5% [necessary as packets often had gone missing in the mail] as well as the 10% commission, was putting off members submitting booklets. The discussion continued, so in early 1992 the insurance charge was subsidised by Group by 40%, so the effective insurance rate to contributors dropped from 5% to 3%. By 1992 there was a small upturn in the packet sales therefore Group income, but not enough to be worthwhile to cover the insurance subsidy. To try and stimulate material circulation and therefore sales, there was the note in the Jan/Feb 1993 Newsletter that material not selling in the Auction should be placed in the Packet. In 1994 the 40% subsidiary for insurance withdrawn.

In October 2011, Packet 1,000 had completed its circuit in the UK. In 2011 there were 3 circuits and 94 Packet members. In 2015, 71 members were taking the Packet and by 2019 65 members taking the packet.

In 2013 a trial was undertaken for overseas members to be able to enjoy the packet. The plan was to scan packet material and send the scan to a member so they could select material, then pay, then receive said chosen material. This was done with one member and resulted in sales of £43. Further trials were conducted in 2017 with the possibility of using PayPal to

manage funds from overseas. However, in 2019, the packet was still only available for UK based members.

The UK Packet Report Summary is given in the Appendices.



Data reported where available

## Regional Meetings

### MSG UK Meetings

Meetings with displays started with UK Branch general meetings held in London. The first of these meetings was held at the City of London PA Rooms, Bishopsgate. The meetings were then held at Claxton Hall, the 'Barley Mow', then BPA premises on the Strand for Friday meetings and the Royal Commonwealth Society for Saturdays. It should be noted that most of the London meetings were initially held on a Friday, with an occasional Saturday meeting. There was a gradual shift to Saturday meetings, and in 1966-67 there being 3 Friday and 3 Saturday meetings. In 1971, with a rise in numbers attending, the Friday ordinary meetings moved to the Stanley Gibbons Auction Room, with occasional meetings at the Royal Commonwealth Society or Claxton Hall. Then in 1979 the meeting location moved to the YMCA (Gt Russell St) for most Friday and Saturday meetings – as Stanley Gibbons Auction Room was no longer available for use.

At the AGM in March 1980, Saturday display meetings in London were discussed with consideration of them becoming 'all day meetings' to attract more members travelling to London. The first London all-day meeting took place on 9 May 1981. On 30 April 2000, the first Sunday meeting was held, with only 11 attending. The 2001 programme dispensed with mid-week meetings for first time and the second Sunday meeting was held in September that year. By 2012 there were up to 8 meetings per year in London. In the intervening years this has now reduced.

### London Meeting Venues

1963	City of London Auction Rooms, Bishopsgate (Inaugural Meeting)
1963-1968	Caxton Hall
1968-1971	British Philatelic Association Boardroom, The Strand WC2 (Fridays) or Royal Commonwealth Society, Northumberland Avenue WC2 (Saturdays)
1971-1972	Stanley Gibbons Auction Rooms, Russell Street WC2 (Fridays) or Royal Commonwealth Society (Saturdays)
1972-1974	Stanley Gibbons Auction Rooms (Fridays) or Caxton Hall, SW1 (Saturdays)
1974-1977	Stanley Gibbons Auction Rooms (Fridays) or Royal Commonwealth Society or Caxton Hall (Saturdays)
1977-1979	Stanley Gibbons Auction Rooms (Fridays) or National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place SW1 or Caxton Hall (Saturdays)
1979-1980	YWCA Central Club, Great Russell Street WC2 (AGM at Royal Commonwealth Society, one Friday at Victory Services Club, Seymour Street W2)
1980-1990	YWCA Central Club (AGM at Royal Commonwealth Society)
1990-1998	YWCA Central Club (Central Club Hotel from 1996)
1998-1999	British Philatelic Centre, Charterhouse Street EC1
1999-2000	British Philatelic Centre (one meeting at Tavistock Hotel, Tavistock Square WC1)
2000-2001	British Philatelic Centre or 22A Brownlow Mews, WC1 (alternating)
2001-2002	22A Brownlow Mews (three at British Philatelic Centre)

2002-2003	Spink Auction Rooms, Southampton Row WC1 (two at British Philatelic Centre)
2003-2019	Spink Auction Rooms

In addition to several London meetings throughout the year (including the “festive nibbles” at the Christmas meeting from 2005), there have been many regional meetings - which have changed as the years have gone by. Meetings held post 1971 were MSG meetings.

At the 17 May 1963 UK Branch AGM, it was noted that ‘occasional provincial meetings’ (for the UK Branch) were being explored and at the 1964 AGM in May, it was announced there would be a meeting in Bristol on 30 May (1964), and this took place.

The first weekend event took place over 24/25 February 1968 in Rugby, and the following year in Bournemouth there was a meeting 28/30 March. This meeting included reminiscences from those who had lived in Malaya along with displays. The Bournemouth meeting continued for a number of years but when it did not happen in 1975 there was a call for considering additional ‘provincial meetings’, this having been raised on more than one occasion.

The Newsletter of June 1976 publicised that a provincial meeting in Edinburgh was planned for 4 June 1977. This was later amended to being Friday 3 June, and only in the evening. The meeting took place during the Edinburgh Philatelic Society Golden Jubilee weekend. It was the Group’s only provincial meeting that year. Regular regional meetings in Scotland started in 1983, with informal meetings organised by Bill Spalding. These were first advertised in the Newsletter in 1986, and by 1989 were no longer entitled ‘informal’. The meeting ran until 2017, with the meetings from 1992 switching between Iain Dyce (Glasgow) and David Mekie (Edinburgh) and in 1993 the meetings were switched to May to avoid other regional meetings. The meetings with known as the ‘Scottish Meeting’ but was renamed ‘Scotland & North of England Meeting’ in 2004. In 2010 it reverted to ‘Scottish’.

In the February 1977 Newsletter there was noted the possibility of a provincial meeting in Nottingham for 1978. This meeting was held Saturday 9 September 1978.

At the March 1980 AGM meetings outside London were reviewed. A Worthing meeting was looked at, which had been proposed as a location at the 1979 AGM. This regional meeting came about on 18 October 1980. 1981 was missed but a meeting was again held in 1982 after a proposal (and volunteer) was made at the 1982 AGM. From then there continued the annual Worthing meeting, typically in September period.

Another long-term regional meeting was that at Leicester, running from 1991. The first six years of the meeting cakes were produced for the meeting showing a variety of ‘iced’ stamps [see miscellaneous photographs in Appendices for examples.].

From the 1988/89 season, the number of annual meetings was regularly in double digits. In the 1995/96 season there reached 12 MSG meetings: 7 London meetings (including the Patrick Kearney Auction and AGM/Auction), 4 UK regional meetings (Bristol, Worthing, Leicester, Glasgow), and the Singapore 95 meeting. The availability of 10 or more annual meetings continued through the years and into the 2018/19 programme.

### Locations and Dates of Regional Meetings in UK

Location	Year	Month	Comments
Bournemouth	1969 to 1974, 1976, 1979	March	Weekend Event
Bristol	1964 to 1972	May	Planned to be moved from Bristol in 1969 as the organiser no longer had access to the facilities used but continued at new location
Bristol (Portishead)	1987 to 1995	August	Held during Bristol and District Federation Annual Convention
Edinburgh	1977	June	Only regional meeting in 1977
Leicester	1991 to 2019	March/April	
Milton Keynes	2013 to 2016	June	Stopped due to lack of suitable venue
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1996	November	Ran to coincide with ABPS Newcastle '96
	2010	September	Coincide with NEPHILEX 2010
Nottingham	1978 1985, 1988	September April	
Rugby	1968	February	Weekend Event
Scotland Edinburgh	1990 1993, 97, 2001,04, 05, 08/09, 12, 13, 16	September May	'Scottish' meeting (Renamed 'Scotland & North of England Meeting' in 2004 and in 2010 reverted to 'Scottish')
Glasgow	1983 to 1989, 91, 92 1994, 95, 96, 1998, 99, 2000, 2002/03, 06/07, 10,11, 14, 15, 17	October May	
Stockport	1970	October	
Swindon	1996	June	During SWINPEX
Worthing	1980, 1982 to 2019	Typically in September	Open meeting with a bourse

Stands have also been on occasions taken at regional stamp shows to promote the society. i.e. Midpex, AEPS Essex, Basildon National Philatelic Exhibition.

It should be noted too that in the early years, the UK Branch was invited to display at various society meetings.

Over the years there have been several other in-formal meetings [i.e. not advertised in the Newsletter] arranged by members - such as Southampton 1984 and 1987 (recorded from photographs), Bournemouth when the annual weekend ceased, and the informal meeting held in Bournemouth during Stampworld 1990. An informal meeting was tried in Cheltenham 1983 but cancelled.

### **MSG Meetings with Other Societies in the UK**

There have also been joint meetings over the years with other specialist societies. The main number of joint meetings being between the Sarawak Specialist Society and the Malaya Study Group. Many are members of both societies, given the 'overlap' in the territories history. For example, in December 1997 the Sarawak Specialist Society visited the MSG as part of their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, where cheese and wine was provided. The Sarawak Specialist Society presented 'The Borneo Connection' and provided a written programme for the occasion. A reply to this was in November 2001, with a joint meeting where the MSG visited the Sarawak Specialist Society. As examples for more recent meetings with other societies, in 2014 there was a joint meeting with the GeoSix Society and in 2016 the British Airmails Society.

### **MSG Meetings Outside the UK**

Following a meeting with the Secretary of the Philatelic Society of Malaysia, in the June 1972 TMP the Editor put forward a comment 'I wonder if it will be possible to hold an international meeting of the Malaya Study Group in Malaya in the not too distant future?'. This produced a positive response from some members in the UK and the task was set to investigate the practicability, although formal meetings appear not to have materialised.

The Members in Australia have been relatively active over the years and have arranged MSG meetings around the country in Melbourne, Sydney, and Canberra, with meetings often held during stamp exhibitions and quite often in conjunction with the Sarawak Specialists Society (such as Ausipex 1984, Melbourne National 1989). Other meetings recorded include in March 1999 a joint meeting of MSG and Sarawak Specialist Society in Australia and 2 meetings in September 2004 Sydney and Melbourne. Then in April 2005 an MSG morning meeting (including Sarawak Specialists Society) at Pacific Explorer World Stamp Exhibition, Sydney.

During the Singapore World Stamp Championship in September 1995, held at the Singapore International Convention Centre, an MSG meeting was arranged where 69 people attended throughout the day to a 'myriad of displays'. Following this exhibition, a meeting in Singapore ran alongside Singapore WSC 2004 at the same location. For Singapore 2015 World Stamp Exhibition, held in August at Marina Bay Sands Exhibition Centre and celebrating 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of "Singapore Day", a meeting brought together 41 members from Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and UK. This was followed by a dinner.

In September 2007, to mark 50 Years of Nationhood through Philately in Malaysia, the Philatelic Society of Malaysia and the Malaya Study Group co-sponsored a 5-day meeting in Malaysia. A number of formal displays were given over the 5 days. The Philatelic Society of Malaysia produced a souvenir book following the meeting, which included contributions from MSG members.

Other occasional meetings have been held in Malaysia and Singapore, i.e. An all-day meeting December 2014 in KL, in celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Straits Settlements Postage Stamps and an informal gathering of Malaysian and Singapore members of MSG took place in October 2017, which included 'poolside refreshment and Italian dinner'. At the end of 2019, MSG members in Malaysia started a Philatelic Lifestyle series - showing there is always more to do and say in different ways.