

The

Joe Robertson

Collection of

Underpaid Mail & Postage Dues

**of the Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States,
Malaya, Malaysia, Singapore & Bornean Territories**

**A set of scans for your delectation
and for students of these subjects**

Organised and distributed by the Malaya Study Group

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Notes on Using this Device

If you are reading this then you have successfully loaded the Memory Stick, opened it and found this section as suggested on the sleeve.

The Collection is arranged chronologically within each section.

The early items were deemed to be of more import and have been scanned in to Document Files in smaller numbers. These are numbered sequentially in the index to each section.

The larger sections of later material were done in greater numbers and are filed in Folders in date order.

Folders take priority in the indices and are thus above the Document Files so the Folders appear at the top. If you want to start with the earliest date items click on the Document Files first.

Preface

Joe Robertson was a popular and well liked active member of the Malaya Study group. He served as Secretary for a period and ran an auction for our society but more importantly he supported the Group by attending as many meetings as he could. He was a regular at London, Leicester and Worthing.

Joe always contributed to the meetings he attended and joined in discussions to learn or share knowledge, as well as using his wit and sense of humour to join in the repartee or banter freely traded. He gave as good as he got and this adds to our sense of loss with his absence.

Such exchanges included debates on why he hated sprouts and was a rare Dubliner who didn't like Guinness. Leading to suggestions on whether he could ever be a trusted friend by those who liked both. This was all nonsense, and we knew it, but the answer to the question of Joe's trustworthiness was most certainly yes.

There was a famous occasion in Worthing, when another late lamented friend in Brian Geden, turned up smartly dressed sporting a M.S.G. tie. Joe, never one to trouble his tailor, was less elegantly attired. The leg pulling gave great amusement to all present, including the two participants. Fortunately a photograph was taken and appears later in this document on disc.

Perhaps an apt memory as news has just been received that it is anticipated that Brian's display collections of Singapore will be offered in the same auction as Joe's Postage Due material which is currently scheduled for February 28th 2018. Friends reunited through the sale of their cherished material and passionate interests.

Joe was living proof of the value of the U.K.'s National Health Service Bowel Cancer Screening for the over 60s. He took the test offered and fortunately this meant that his cancer was detected early and was successfully treated. Joe would encourage anyone of an age able to have this test to do so. Please note his wise words.

It may be this illness, the support and friendship given to Joe during this time that made Joe think of his demise. Also of his friends. Whilst the bulk of his estate went to family, his philatelic estate, collections, etc., were willed to the Malaya Study Group. A complete surprise at the time – but not so much on reflection.

His collections were large, rambling and of many diverse subjects so were unsuitable for the Group to handle through their own auctions. They were not all Malaya to start with and had a large amount of Ireland, plus some Great Britain and thematic collections such as Maps on Stamps. It is planned for the proceeds to be spent wisely for the benefit of all of our members.

The first expenditure is to get scans of Joe's mounted collection of Underpaid Mail and Postage Due material of Malaya and the Bornean Territories. These are presented herewith on a disc and will be distributed to all M.S.G. members gratis thanks to Joe. We hope also to distribute this to other interested parties in due course. Hopefully this will be a welcome tribute to a good friend of the Malaya Study Group.

The final thing to comment about is a long running, long standing amusement that is well known to many of the members able to attend our display meetings. It has also been reported in our Newsletter in years gone by. This was the 'Stages' of the material that Joe displayed. If I may remind or inform you –

Stage 1 – Cover or card as acquired – usually just in a pochette

Stage 2 As Stage One with rough notes hanging out of pochette.

Stage 3 – Researched and properly written up for display on an album leaf

This system has been freely and fondly adopted by many of the U.K. members lucky enough to attend display meetings around the country. For example, a good number of other members might remark – “Recent additions presented in Robertson Stage 1 fashion” and is not a rare expression!

So as long as we keep this expression and sentiment going this will be another warm memorial to our departed friend. So whilst we are all alive – Joe is still with us.

R.I.P. Joe.

AFN August 2017

In Memory of Joe Robertson

I am here this morning not just to talk about Joe, but Joe's great hobby of stamp collecting, although I will try to remember that, though I have spotted a few stamp collectors here, most of you are normal people.

That is what I would call a Joe Robertson remark, as he was blessed not only with an Irish sense of humour, but a very down-to-earth attitude towards his hobby. He always referred to collectors like himself as 'anoraks', and he did not resent for one moment the general public putting people like him several places below train-spotters and pot-holders on the staircase of sanity. Furthermore, like all the Irishmen I have known – in fact I think I have heard more Irish jokes in Ireland than in Britain - he took a most relaxed attitude towards the jests directed towards his countrymen, as long, of course, you were prepared to take your share of his Irish ripostes in return.

I first met Joe around the late 1980s when he joined the Malaya Study Group. For the uninitiated, the MSG is a society for studying the stamps and postal history of Malaya. I forget now what drew him to our territory as it is a former British colony - not an institution dear to his heart - but he very quickly settled in as Joe was an arch-joiner and the most sociable of men. And he was not just content to be a member, he liked to contribute and in addition to the MSG, those national societies of which I know he was also a member included the Postage Due Society and the Sarawak Specialist Society. He was also a regular attender at the meetings of about four of his local stamp societies, serving on their committees at various times as well as filling several posts as an officer, was Hon. Treasurer of the Hampshire Philatelic Federation and secretary of the MSG during the time I was Chairman. I may have omitted other philatelic commitments of his as he certainly pulled his considerable weight when it came to supporting the hobby. But that was Joe.

Joe did not keep his enthusiasms to himself, making sure in his Christmas newsletters that we all knew what he had been doing over the past year including how far he had got in mounting up his stamp collection. In particular, his special interest, an area of philately known as postage dues, that is letters which were sent through the post either unpaid or underpaid and the stamps and postal markings fixed thereto signifying the fact. I will not attempt to describe the fascination these had for Joe, suffice to say they dominated both his collecting interests and most of his leisure time.

Postage dues are a somewhat complicated subject and not many in the MSG have been prepared to tackle it in an organised way but Joe studied it meticulously and made himself the leading authority on it in our society. So much so, that we were often left perplexed during his displays but these were never less than thoroughly researched and fluently presented. He also rarely missed a Group meeting no matter where it was held - in London, Bristol, Leicester or Worthing. The only one he missed, I believe, was the Scottish meeting. After he had completed mounting his collection it was his intention to write a book on postage dues with particular application to Malaya which would have been the standard work on the subject and a fitting memorial to him and his collection but alas, was not to be.

Joe and I became better acquainted at the Singapore Stamp Exhibition in 1995 when we travelled out from the UK together and he was one of a group of four of us staying at a local hotel. We walked from the hotel to the centre of Singapore on the first morning and I think Joe never got over it as it was his first experience of the heat and humidity of the Equator, particularly as he was disinclined to walk anywhere if he could possibly avoid it. He often referred to it in later years.

I also remember that morning for another incident which had occurred at breakfast. There was some banter with the young Chinese waitress who responded with the comment:

“Oh, you Brits are all the same!” To which Joe took the gravest exception and proceeded to lecture the young lady at some length, the gist of his serious discourse being that he was most definitely NOT a Brit as HE came from another country altogether, which he would have her know was called Ireland. The girl looked understandably bemused while the rest of us nearly died of laughter. Joe was, without question, every inch an Irishman and a deep-dyed republican to boot, able to describe in detail each and every injustice committed on Irish soil going back almost to the Middle Ages. He was also an expert on the intricacies of the politics of Northern Ireland. But he never forced his ideas on anyone, you had to ask first.

An only son, he was brought up in Dublin and joined an assurance company when he left school. The company transferred him to Belfast where he worked for several years before he was sent to London. Later his company moved to Basingstoke where he made his home. I often left my car there before we went on to London together by train. On our return it was not unusual for us to chew the fat until well after midnight debating subjects such as, inevitably, Malayan philately and the 'Irish Troubles', but also politics in Britain and life generally. He was very left wing and never ceased to deprecate the fact I read the Daily Tory-graph, as he liked to call it.

Late in his career he was recruited into the special government department, based in Brighton, charged with regulating pensions in the private sector after of the Maxwell fiasco, and Joe bought a home there, although he retained his flat in Basingstoke. Later he moved into a house and I went to view it soon afterwards. I admired the lawn and garden and said that as he came from the Emerald Isle, he would now be able to show us how green his fingers actually were. The next time I visited everything was under hardcore and concrete!

After his retirement he often attended meetings in Leeds, serving on a Board as a pension trustee, but he did not neglect his homeland, making regular visits across the Irish Sea as he was very attached to his family there, sometimes, incidentally, taking the opportunity of submitting a postage due entry into the Dublin stamp exhibition.

In recent years he regularly visited me in Southampton as I was unable to get up to London for meetings and we spent the days talking stamps, prominent amongst which, of course, were his beloved unpaid or underpaid covers. He was an excellent companion, interested in everything, never dogmatic, well-informed on current affairs, prepared to listen, and with that Irish sense of humour always prominent.

My wife and I will miss him very much as a friend, and he will be a great loss to the Group as he was always such an *active* participator. I will always remember his positive and cheerful presence at meetings, his contributions to the gatherings in the pub afterwards (though he seldom touched alcohol, not even, remarkably, Guinness), and the little things like his chirpy comments he made to successful bidders when, acting as 'auction-runner' at our meetings – the nearest I ever saw to Joe taking exercise - he ferried their purchases to them in the room. With their lots had to come his Irish leg-pull. It is just one of the many happy memories the Group will have of him.

I would like to add, if I may, a small footnote.

On 6th March this year, sometime after his death, I received a card from Joe. It was posted in Antigua on 18 December 2016 and as usual, did not have a stamp. He hoped it would arrive with some postage due marks on it making me go to the post office to pay my pound or whatever it is for its retrieval, and he would then have another card for his collection. The card read: “Must get down after I come back and talk about the cruise and other things. Here for the day.” I have found it very hard to face the fact that Joe will not be down any more and we shall never talk of “other things” again.

Rob Holley



Joe in T Shirt with Brian Geden with M.S.G. tie at Field Place Worthing, having exchanged views on the said tie and dress-code.



With friends at Field Place, Worthing



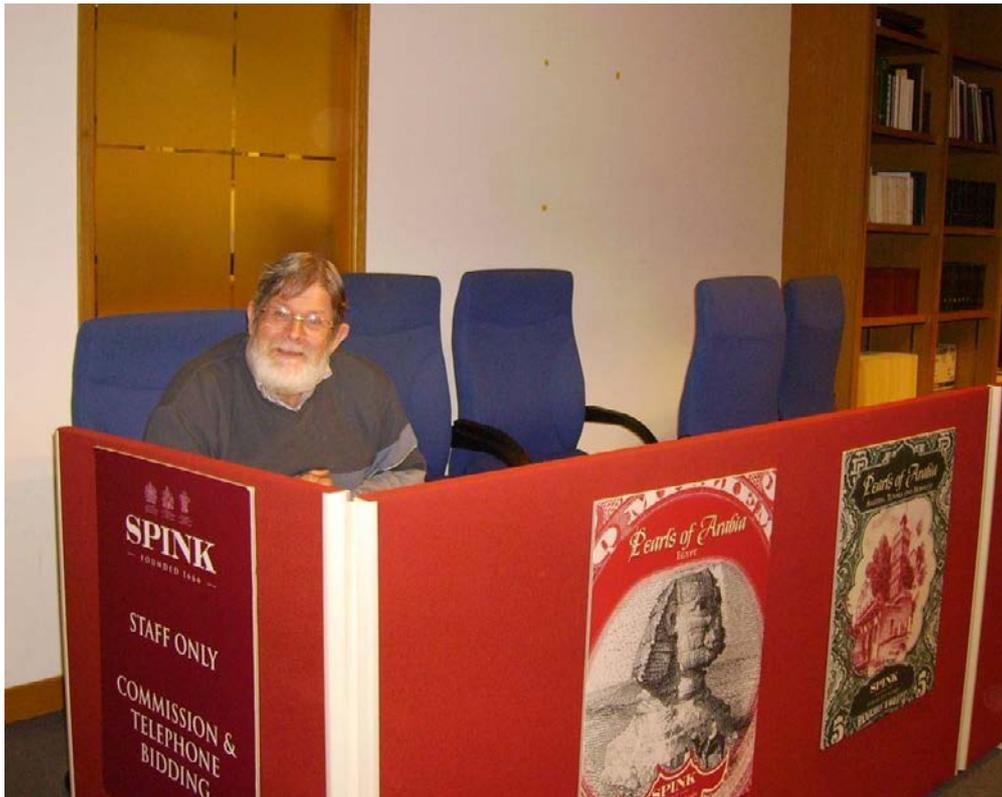
Worthing – East Worthing Community Centre



Leicester - the Regency Hotel



London, May 2000 with Mike Ludlow



Spink, London. Not taking telephone bids !



Spink Maritime display April 2016



Spink July 2015