

# Burma - The First Two Issues-a synopsis

**Purpose:** The exhibit presents a study of the first two issues of Burma with a strong emphasis on uses.

**Importance:** This is the finest exhibit devoted exclusively to these two issues ever shown. Many key items once resided in the great collection of Gerald Davis, who never exhibited. Many items are shown that he was not aware of. The rare and unique items shown are essential to telling the story. It cannot be duplicated.

**Treatment and Organization:** The exhibit is divided into three main chapters as shown on the title page. Each chapter begins with a mini title page and chapter plan. The introductions at the top of these pages are shown at the right. The first page of each sub chapter has a 16-point left heading. Subsequent pages have 10 point left headings to help remind viewers where they are in the story. The 14 point right heading is page specific.

Since these issues were primarily "Make-Up Issues" they are shown by the types of use rather than by stamp denomination. Many denominations covered no specific rate, but solo uses are shown where appropriate. Covers in 1937 King George V Issue use section are franked with only those issues. Covers in the deliberately brief 1938 King George VI Issue use section are franked mostly with those issues and show uses not affected by World War II.

The Wartime Uses chapter has been found to be the best way to logically show those uses that did not exist when the stamps were issued. Covers are often franked with both issues. Many of the high values have not survived on covers dated prior to 1940. For example, the earliest surviving use of the 1937 KGV 25 rupees stamp is July 10, 1940. The same cover also includes the earliest known use of the 1938 KGVI 10 rupees stamp. It would be awkward to show it in either the King George V or the King George VI chapter.

**Philatelic & Related Knowledge and Personal Study & Research:** This exhibit represents over 35 years of collecting, study, correspondence, and research. In 1992 I began a regular written correspondence with the late Derek Filby of Wales. Some items from his great collection, auctioned by Cavendish in December 2017, appear in the exhibit.

Personal research and discoveries are shown throughout the exhibit. They are indicated by the symbol of a magnifying glass  and include such things as:

- Five inverted watermarks not listed at the time of my discovery and reporting to SG are now listed.
- Census information on high values used on cover
- Unlisted shade information supported by National Postal Museum lab analysis
- Newly reported overprint varieties
- The plate positions of previously reported overprint varieties
- Newly reported constant printing varieties
- New rate information.
- Census information on any rare censor
- My earliest reported use of the typographed KGVI 1 anna is now listed in SG
- **Census information for the first time on some rare KGVI SERVICE stamps on cover uses. →**

## THE KING GEORGE V PROVISIONAL ISSUE

### India Stamps Overprinted Burma

On December 8, 1936 the Burma government cabled the India Office, London, "Decision for stamps postponed until April 1937. Meanwhile Indian stamps overprinted will be used." Burma was separated from India on April 1, 1937. Current definitive stamps of India received a lithograph **BURMA** overprint at Nasik, India. Nearly all George V denominations of India were overprinted. Few matched prevailing rates.

#### Chapter Plan:

|                                  |                                        |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| King George V Issue Stamps       | King George V Issue Air Mail Uses      |
| King George V Issue Surface Mail | King George V Official Stamps and Uses |

## THE KING GEORGE VI ISSUE

### The First Stamps Designed for Burma

After King Edward VIII announced his abdication on December 8, 1936 work began on designing King George VI stamps for Burma. The stamps were to be printed in India. It was not feasible to have the new stamps ready in time for Burma's April 1, 1937 separation from India; hence the provisional **BURMA** overprints on India stamps in the previous section. Although India itself was able to issue King George VI stamps on August 23, 1937 it took Burma until November 15, 1938.

#### Chapter Plan:

|                                    |                                       |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Designing the King George VI Issue | King George VI Issue Uses             |
| King George VI Issue Stamps        | King George VI Official Stamps & Uses |
| King George VI Issue Varieties     | Additions to the King George VI Issue |

## WARTIME USES OF BOTH ISSUES

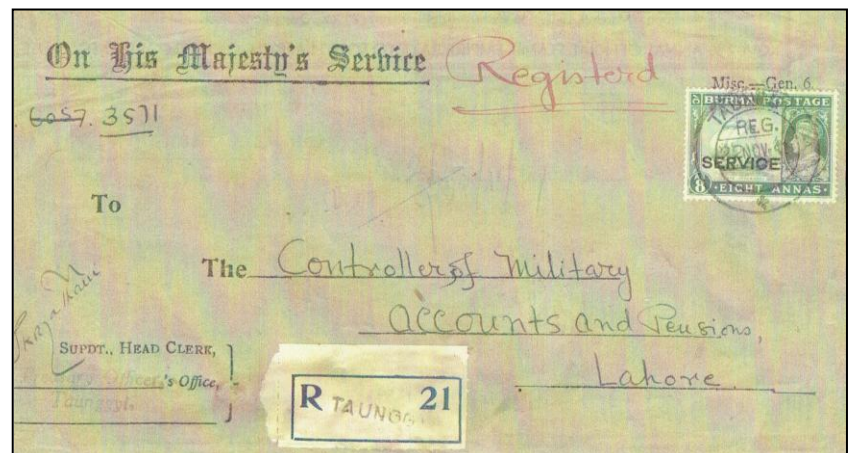
### New Routes and Rates

This chapter shows uses from the time World War II started until Burma was totally occupied by the Japanese. Routes were changed by necessity. New rates appeared that were route dependent. Many of the high denomination stamps issued in 1937 and 1938 are not known used on cover until this period. Rare rates, routes, and markings are described as appropriate.

#### Chapter Plan:

|                     |                                  |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Surface Mail        | Horseshoe Route Air Mail         |
| Empire Air Mail     | China and Trans-Pacific Air Mail |
| Non-Empire Air Mail | War Comes to Burma               |

## ONLY RECORDED SOLO USE



**Condition:** Condition of pre-production material and stamps is exemplary. Burma is a southeast Asian country with hot humid conditions and the annual monsoon season. The covers are remarkable considering the climate, overweight items, wartime handling, censored material opened multiple times, items severely delayed, etc

**Rarity:** Rare items are double framed in dark red and rarity statements are in dark red. The exhibitor is the first person to undertake a census of high values used on cover in order give actual numbers known rather than estimates. The on cover high values in the exhibit are especially notable as many of the earliest and latest known uses are shown and are based on my census work. When I say “recorded” that means in my published census work. When I say “known” that means known to me and the other serious Burma collectors I communicate with. I am the secretary of the Burma (Myanmar) Philatelic Study Circle headquartered in the UK with a worldwide membership, including members in Myanmar.

**Completeness:** SG lists inverted watermarks of the KGV 8 annas (11w), 5 rupees (15w) and 10 rupees (16w). RPSL and BPA have never issued certificates for any of these. I have no KGV or KGVI 2 rupees SERVICE stamp on cover. A collector friend in Singapore has both. He is starting to sell some items, but not these. I will be the first to know when he does. A collector in California sent me a scan. I offered to buy it but now he can't find the actual cover!

**Exhibitor credentials:** Exhibitor is the Secretary of the Burma (Myanmar) Philatelic Study Circle (UK) and the first officer not to reside in the UK. The exhibitor is a frequent contributor to The Burma Fantail, our society journal.

**New developments:** This 25 Rupees cover was added in 2025. There are now three 25 Rupees covers in the exhibit; the first time anybody has accomplished this. It is not padding as each one differs in rate paid, route, or both.



#### Bibliography - Catalogues and books:

Stanley Gibbons has much more information than Scott.

The Murray Payne Commonwealth King George VI Catalogue is also useful. *(I was contacted prior to publication of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> editions for my input and corrections.)*

The Postal History of Burma by Edward B. Proud, 2002, has some useful information.

Burma Postal History by Gerald Davis & Denys Martin is of little use, mostly dealing with the time prior to 1937.

The best reference is Burma-The Stamps and Postal History of the Three British Kings 1901-1947 by James Song. Self-published 2020 in Singapore. *(On page xxii the author listed me at the top of the list of people thanked for help)*

**Articles:** This link will give you plenty of articles, many written by me.

[Burma First Two 2025 References.pdf](#)

**Video Presentation:** A Zoom video presentation I presented to the British Empire Study Group in October of 2022 can be found at:

[Search Results for “Burma” – British Empire Study Group](#)

# THE FIRST TWO ISSUES OF BURMA - 1937 to 1942

**Purpose and Scope:** This purpose of this exhibit is to present a study of the first two issues of Burma, showing the stamps, varieties, and their uses with the exhibitor’s extensive research and discoveries indicated as appropriate. The time frame is from the separation from India in 1937 until the Japanese Occupation in 1942.

**Highlights:** Included are rare and unique archival items needed to tell the story, previously unreported varieties including inverted watermarks now listed by Stanley Gibbons because of the exhibitor’s efforts, and a remarkable number of rare covers with earliest or latest known uses or largest franking with the highest rupees value stamps.

Exhibit Plan:

- |                                      |            |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 1937 King George V Provisional Issue | Frames 1-3 |
| 1938 King George VI Regular Issue    | Frames 3-6 |
| Wartime Uses of Both Issues          | Frames 7-8 |

Each chapter begins with an introductory page that includes a list of subchapters.

Many rare items are shown. The rarest are double framed in dark red.

Statements concerning rarity are in dark red.

Indicates personal research or discovery.

|                                  |                                               |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Burma currency: 12 pies = 1 anna | Some rates use the tola as the unit of weight |
| 16 annas = 1 rupee               | rather than the ounce. 1 tola = .41 oz.       |

**Background:** The British completed their conquest of Burma in 1886 with the third Anglo-Burmese War. Burma was made a province of India although the Burmese and Indian people shared no cultural or ethnic heritage. Burma was immediately placed under the India postal system and stamps of India were used.

In the 1920’s demands for self-rule in India had been growing increasingly strong. Three India Round Table Conferences were held in London from 1930 to 1932 to discuss the situation. However, there were significant disagreements between the Indian and the British political parties that the Conferences would not resolve. Burma was represented at the first two conferences. **Burma** was not happy to be a province of India and desired complete independence. **A Burma Round Table conference** was held in London from November 27, 1931 to January 12, 1932 to discuss the future of Burma.

FROM THE CONFERENCE THAT STARTED IT ALL

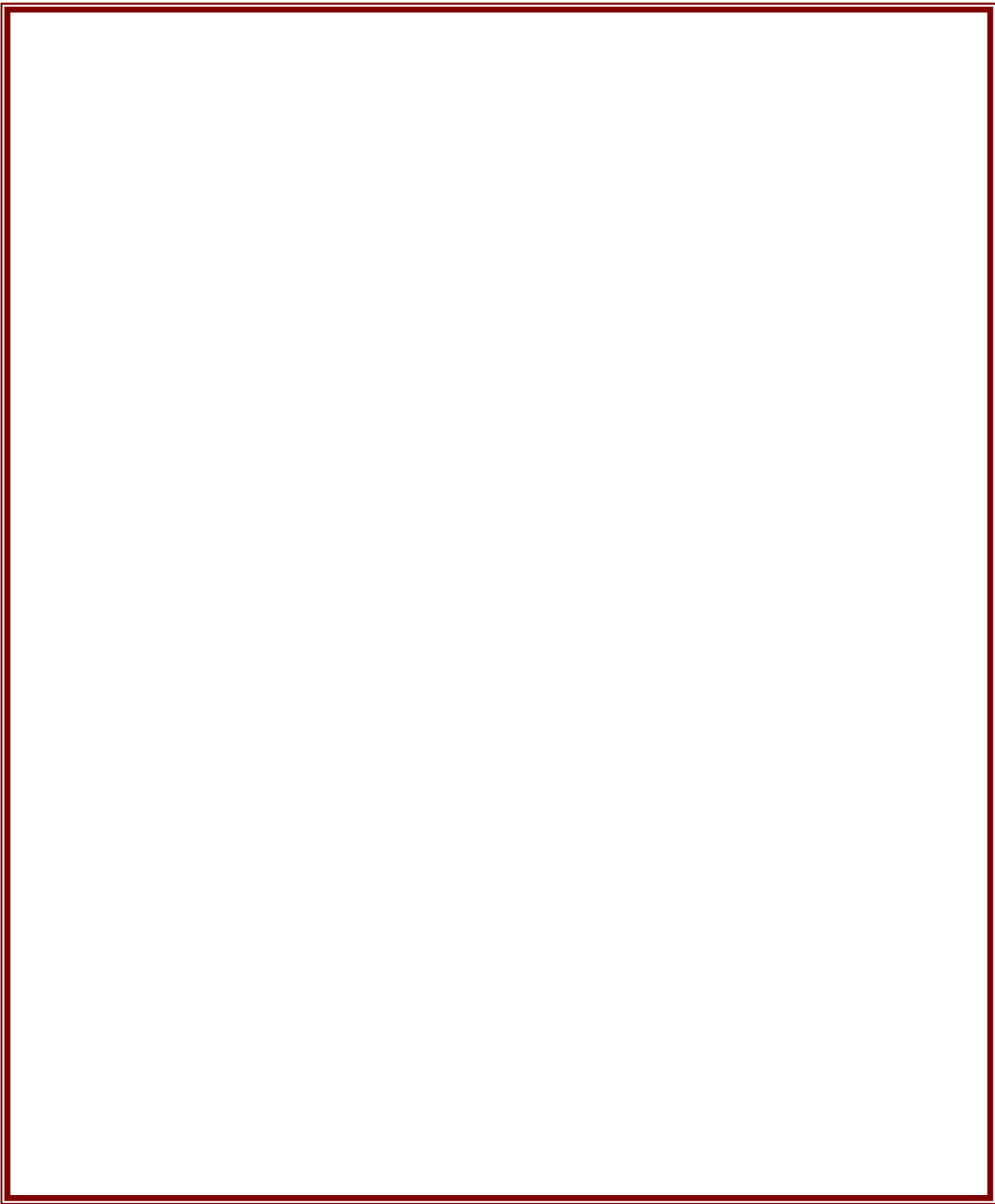


Certificate of Posting of a Registered Postal Packet  
Burma Round Table Conference - December 2, 1931

In August 1935 Parliament passed **The Government of Burma Act, 1935**. This specified that on **April 1, 1937** Burma would no longer be part of India and become a separate British Colony.

**Stamp Preparations:** King George V died on **January 20, 1936** and Edward VIII became King on the same day. Work began on designing King Edward VIII stamps for Burma to be used after separation.

EDWARD VIII ESSAYS FOR STAMPS EXPECTED TO BECOME BURMA’S FIRST ISSUE **((unique))** *ex-Davis*



Prepared by Security Printing India at Nasik upon the news of the death of George V.  
Signed by Thomas Archer, the Chief Artist Engraver.

Edward VIII announced his abdication on **December 8, 1936** and George VI became King. **No Edward VIII stamps were issued.** In less than four months Burma would be separated from India and would need stamps.