

Nostalgia - How Times Change

Christmas, although a Christian festival, in many ways, it is no different from the other religious festivals we enjoy in Malaysia. They all involve home decoration, festive food, the giving of gifts, open houses, the sending of Greeting Cards and of course taking part in services to pay homage to your God, whoever he may be. For the Christians, sending Christmas cards has been a long tradition since the first card was sent, in 1843, by Sir Henry Cole, educator, patron of the arts in the UK and founder of London's Victoria and Albert Museum. It was hand-drawn with a great deal of care, printed and delivered by hand to his close friends and sent by the "Penny Post" to those farther afield.

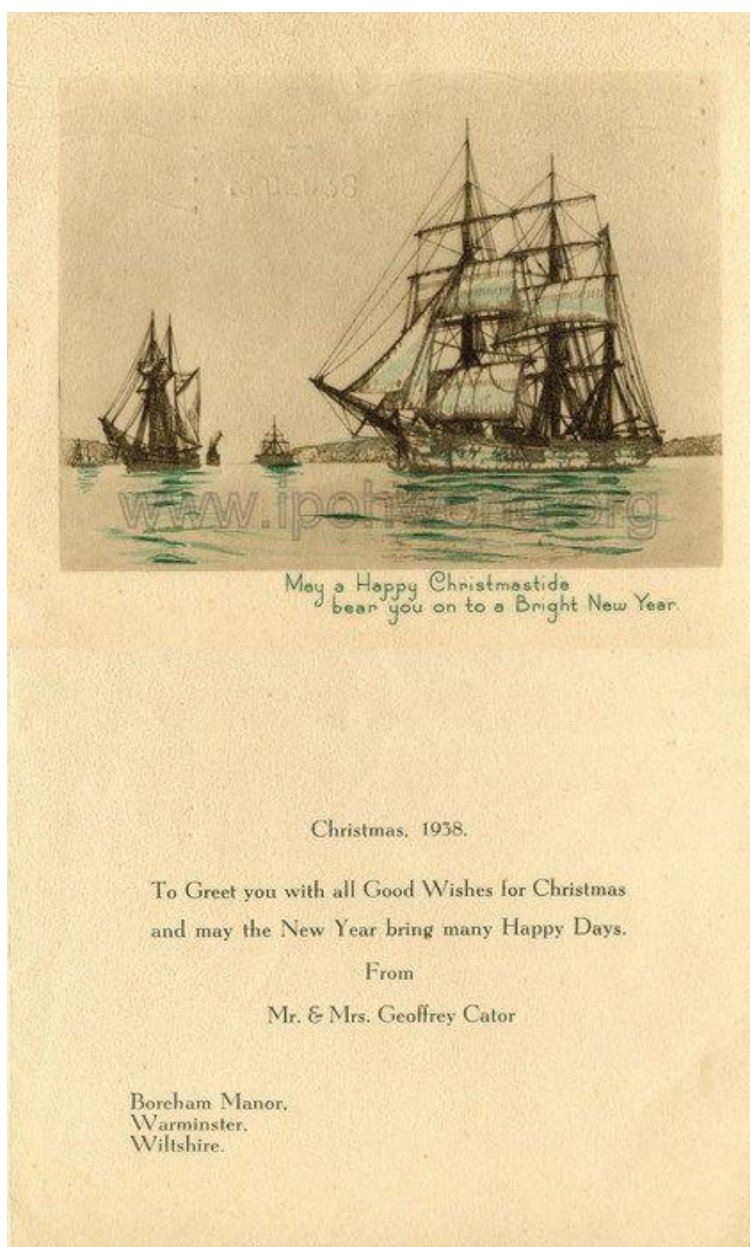
With the improved printing available by 1860 and the 50% reduction in postage charges for Christmas cards to one halfpenny (pronounced 'haypenny'), the sending of these festive greetings became the trend. By 1870 the postal service became flooded every year with millions of cards that travelled across the world. It was the British answer to keeping in touch with friends at least once a year, irrespective of their race or religion.



Colonel Walker's card 1905

It is no surprise therefore that the British officers serving in the colonies carried on the tradition and brought the habit to Malaya. The website ipohWorld.org has several examples. One such "Servant of the Crown" was Colonel Walker of the Malay States Guides. He had a unique batch of regimental cards printed in the early 1900s. The front of card displays carries the words 'Xmas Greetings in gold on a green background.

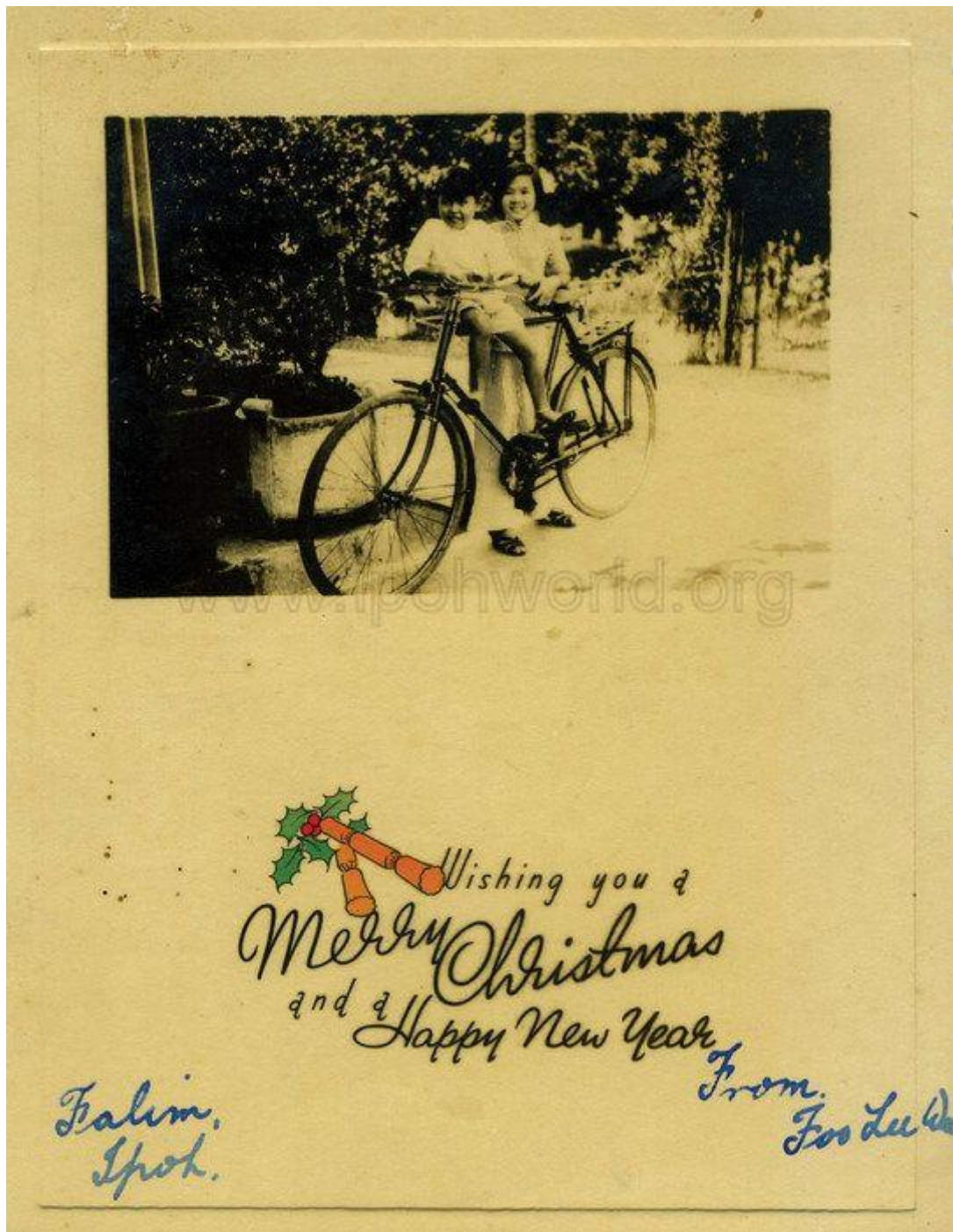
Inside, the card there are pictures of the Malay States Guides with greetings to Mr and Mrs Moss, from Col. Walker. Moss was the regimental tailor.



The Cator card 1938

Some 30 years later the British Resident of Perak (1933 to 1939), Geoffrey Cator, sent Christmas cards to a wide circle of friends and business colleagues every year. In 1938 he sent a card to Mohd Ali Pitchay, Superintendent in the Health Department of Ipoh. Posted from UK the inscription read, "May a Happy Christmastide bear you on to a Bright New Year".

But it was not only the British who sent such cards. It soon caught on locally as a perfect way of wishing your friends the greetings of the festive season. For example, Foo Lee Wai took a leaf out of Sir Henry Coles' book by producing a personalized card c1945 with a photograph of himself in Falim.



Foo Lee Wai c1945

Another example of the locally produced personalised card is from 1952. It is from the family of Dr Wu, the famous Plague fighter. With two photographs of the family from days gone by and greetings for Christmas and the New Year, it is a wonderfully nostalgic keepsake.



恭賀
新禧

1952-1953

Once more the Wu Family
wish You a Very Merry
Christmas and a Happy
and Prosperous New Year

Five Little Wus in 1941

All the Wus in 1951

Dr. & Mrs. Wu Lien-teh

Betty Yulin

Ellen Yuchen

Fred Changsheng

John Changyun

Pearl Yuchu

伍 伍 伍 伍 伍
玉 長 長 玉 玉
珠 員 生 珍 玲

伍 伍
連 連
德 德
夫 博
人 士

12, Brewster Road,

Ipoh, Malaya.



The Wu family 1952

It did not take long for commercial printers to jump on the bandwagon and since the 1860s trillions of cards have been mailed, but like everything else, technology has overtaken us. Gone are the beautifully personalised cards, replaced by standard Internet greetings, sent at the push of a key. How times change!