# Alfred Russel Wallace on Postage Stamps

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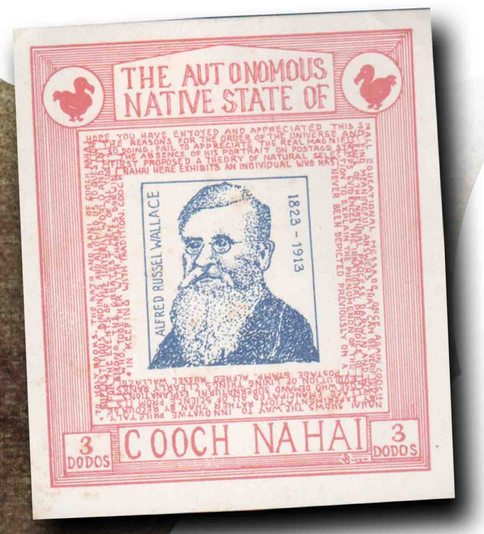
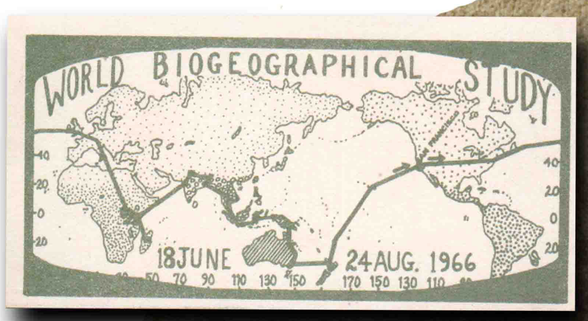
Portraits of Charles Darwin have appeared on postage stamps, coins and even bank notes issued by dozens of countries, starting from 1936, with a philatelic release from Ecuador. Those similarly honouring Alfred Russel Wallace are relatively rare.

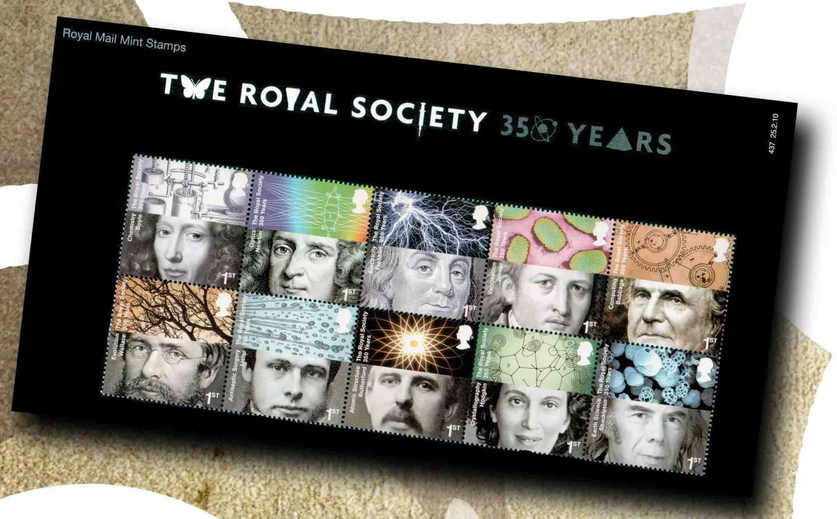



The first stamp (left) showing Wallace was privately issued around 1978 by the Rajah of the Autonomous Native State of Cooch Nahai, an imaginary country set in Redwood, California, and 'ruled' by the eccentric Dr. Lawrence Wesley Swan (1922–1999), a professor of Zoology at California State University in San Francisco.

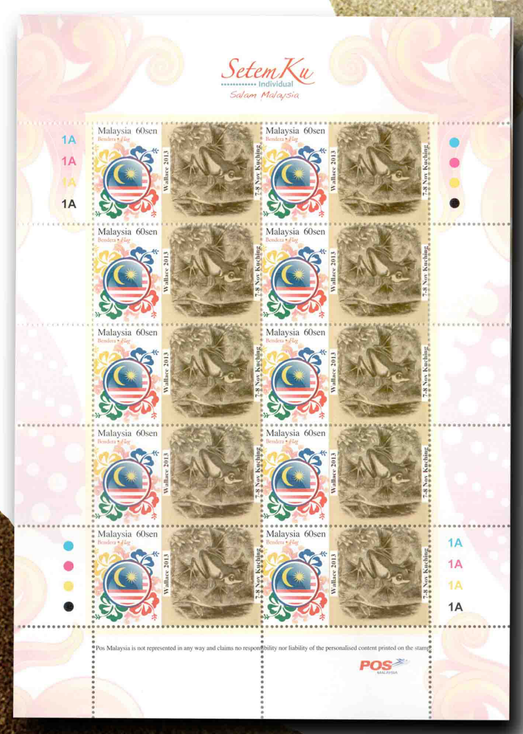


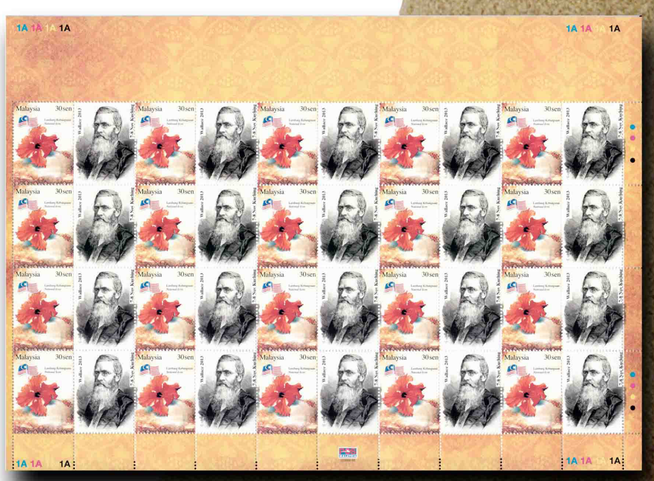

In philatelic lexicon, this as well as others in the series, including one without a face value showing the earth and its biogeographical regions (right), qualify as 'cinderellas'. Note the face value in 'Dodos', the official currency of Cooch Nahai!

On 1 July 2009, another stamp was issued, purportedly from the west African island nation of São Tomé and Principe. The postal material of this tiny island state being under the control (including stamp design, production and distribution), for a long time, of a large philatelic company in Argentina (that has similar agreements with other developing nations in Africa, West Indies and Oceania), one is unlikely to see valid postal usage of such products. This particular issue (right) shows three images of Wallace- in his late youth (from the year 1847), as he would have appeared before his arrival in Sarawak, a middle-aged Wallace, in 1869, and one from his latter years (from the portrait by Roger Remington, in the Meeting Room of the Linnean Society of London). Each of the three stamps show Wallace with dinosaurs in the background, a group of animals he did not publish on. The face values of the stamps were 13,000, 13,000 and 39,000 SãoTomé and Principe Dobras.




Matters were set right by the Royal Mail, the postal authority of Great Britain, on 3 March 2010, when it issued a set of 10 stamps, commemorating the 350th anniversary of the Royal Society (left). Arguably the world's oldest scientific society, this issue chose carefully amongst the many luminaries that are counted among its members, and included Wallace for his contributions to the development of the theory of evolution through natural selection. Wallace's portrait here shows him in his middle age (right). All 10 values are for 1st class postage within the country.




To commemorate the 100 years of his passing, we are pleased to release, via Pos Malaysia's SetemKu programme, a 30 sen stamp showing Alfred Russel Wallace (right). It is se-tenant to a stamp that shows a Bunga Raya (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*), Malaysia's national flower, and the 'Jalur Gemilang', Malaysia's national flag, set over the Songket (a pattern of traditional woven fabric). We are also releasing a 60 sen stamp of Wallace's Flying Frog (*Rhacophorus nigropalmatus*), from a woodcut that appears on page 60 of Wallace's popular travelogue, 'The Malay Archipelago, first published in 1869 (left), described as "one of the finest of travel books".