

THE OPEN CLASS, AN EXHIBITOR'S VIEW

Firstly, a little background about myself: I have been exhibiting nationally, and occasionally internationally since 1982, with varying degrees of success. Although my main collections are Ceylon postal history and postal stationery, I do have pictorial class collections of Golf, Education and World War 1 silk post cards.

My Golf collection started life as a thematic exhibit. It won its class at Stampex in London in 1988 with large vermeil award. Since then, it has expanded beyond the thematic rules, and I have been looking for a class in which to exhibit. I tried the social philately class, with disastrous results, a bronze medal- quite a drop! That was in 2000. Last year I was encouraged by Birthe King and Christine Earle to try the open class. What you are about to see is the result.

Anyone trying this class for the first time needs to look carefully at the rules, because unlike thematic philately, the open class must have a considerable non-philatelic element which is not just post cards. Also, the open class demands an original approach/treatment. I decided that my treatment would focus mainly on quotations, mainly humorous, and that the story should be an entertainment- fun!

The introduction page, vitally important, has introduction, plan, references, personal research and an eye catching item or two. This is the only page that the jury guarantee to read entirely so it needs to be clear. It should tell the judges, and the public exactly what the exhibit is doing section-by-section. It is also a good idea to have some indication of rarity.

My Golf exhibit "A Good Walk Spoilt" is written up by hand on double, A3 pages. I would recommend this size of page as less space is wasted. Quotations, the key treatment, are on a grey backing, most items, as seems appropriate for golf, are on a green backing. Rare items are on red.

The first section, "The Origins and later", deals with golf in history, and starts with an early letter mentioning playing "at the golf" in 1708, probably at the Leith links, as the letter is from Edinburgh. The most unusual item on the first page is the replica piece of stained glass from Gloucester Cathedral showing the earliest known picture of a golfer. It appears in the Crecy window which dates from 1348. The open class requires unusual non-postal items to be included in the story. The second page illustrates the spread of golf around the world using postcards printed for golf clubs or going to clubs in remote places, none of which would be allowed in a thematic exhibit. Page three introduces some aero-philatelic postal history, when early flights used golf course fairways as runways before the building of permanent airports. Page four considers chance being a factor in early golfing postal history, with Zucker rocket flight 1934, which was launched from a golf course; and the early German label errors. Finally golf and warfare is considered in the last page of section one, with propaganda labels, converting golf courses to grow more food, and using golf hotels as

recreation and recuperation for troops. In all of these pages there are many items which could not be used in thematic or social philately exhibits.

Section two, "A Caveman Putting" is about playing the game. The title is taken from two Lee Travino quotations. Stance, grip, swing and teaching people to play are all illustrated, as are the parts of the swing. Types of golf shots are shown on the third page of this section, driving; fairway woods; irons; chipping and putting. Cigarette cards and a matchbox label are amongst the non-philatelic items. Golf scoring (numbered 19/20) is amongst my favourite pages. Use of imagination can score with judges, and I like to think that this page works well with its bogey to par station and 1d Black Swan. The golfers' new handicap is also quite 'light hearted'.

"God knows where", a paraphrase of Dr Billy Graham's quotation is the title for the third section about golf courses, the first page of which is devoted to St Andrews, "The home of golf" and features a scarce cover with the Golf Place c.d.s. and St Andrews no.1 registration label. The page numbered 23/24 has some unusual golfing links with St George- a chance to show off a P.U.C £1 and half sovereign in an unusual context. However the real rarity on the page is the circular Baines and Co. advert card. Other items in the golf courses section include golfing leaflets and postal stationery from some unlikely places. The club houses section includes the rare Gill and Reigate advert from 1911, while the golf course features, has the Oklahoma City "Chicken in the rough" advertising cards.

Golf may have "too many dammed silly rules", but it would be impossible to play without some of them. Pages 33-38 illustrate rules, administration and finance using many non-philatelic items. Including a 1934 rule book, 1930 stymie measure (6"), and my favourite, a booklet of coupons from the Royal Colombo club for discounted bar services.

"A Load of Balls", the section on golf equipment, starts with an 1817 letter referring to "Golf clubs and balls". On the same page, the Belgian ferry cards, including the scarce provisional, were the first postal stationery to show golf equipment not in the context of a golf course. Pages 41-44 feature golf balls, with several unusual items, notably the 1841 St Andrews 1d black; German bank note, and the Indian telegrams. To do well in the open class, as the pictorial classes generally, one must try to think "outside the box". Other equipment is illustrated on pages 45-48, and includes my personal favourite golf picture post card, the Singhalese golf caddy from 1903.

"The game of Kings and others" section is about golfers, and pages 49-50 show a spectacular letter from Edward Prince of Wales, the future King Edward 8th mentioning golf, and an official photograph of King Leopold 3rd of Belgium, perhaps the best royal golfer to date. The following pages illustrate famous professional and amateur golfers with a number of signed items, perhaps most unusually, Henry Cotton's recipe for ratatouille. Pages 55-56 show an item which must be removed, and almost cost me the best in class at Perth: the Kazakhstan sheetlet showing the six famous golfers. Although the pictures are good, the item is from the "undesirable list", and must not be shown internationally. The open class is therefore

not totally open, so would-be exhibitors should be careful about similar items in their collections.

“Getting better and better”, another paraphrase, again from Lee Travino, that most quotable golfer, is the title of the golf competitions section. The first page, numbered 57-58 deals with major competitions, and includes a gold plated bill-fold from the U.S.P.G.A in 1970, an unusual, non-philatelic item, just less than the 5mm thickness requirement, and easy to mount as it clips to the page. The next page deals with match-play events from the international professional, to lowly individual club amateur contests. The British Boys event cover is possibly the rarest of all mobile P.O. marks from any golf tournament. The Kargo page is another of those eye-catching pages, because of the fan shape of the playing cards. It’s all about a card golf game which became very popular for a while in the 1930’s. Other unusual competitions are illustrated on page 63-64. It includes one of my very few Italian items, a small card for “Garden golf” in 1961. The AIF cup will be a double page when I expand the exhibit to 8 frames at some point in the future, as I have several other items to go with this post card. It is always a good idea to have a plan for expansion to 8 frames (or 10, 12 page frames) and collect material to be able to do it. I suppose I am fortunate in this regard, as I have been collecting golf for many years, and have several hundred pages of material which will allow expansion without lowering the standard.

“Playing Around”, Pages 65-70 is the section on Ladies golf. The item which attracted most comments from the jury in Perth was the silver letter opener, but the item I most like on the page is the illustrated envelope beside it. Together they are almost perfect ‘Open class items’. The glamorous ladies on pages 67-68, contrast well with the top golfers on page 69-70. Again I have plans to expand both parts of this section.

The final parts of the exhibit are a series of short sections: “So popular”, about worldwide golf; “Walking Naked”, about golf humour; and “Just a little thing”, which incorporates almost an interactive quiz, with general conclusions. I suppose the criticism, as it stands, would be that there is an in-balance here with the rest of the study; almost as if it finishes in a rush. The judges thought that there was some room for expansion, which will happen when I move up from 5 to 8 frames.

It seems that my golf collection has found its proper home, and I will look forward to writing it up again for the full number of frames. However, the difficulty is finding an international exhibition with a fully fledged open class. I expect the next one will be London 2015, followed by New York 2016 but we shall see.

I hope you have enjoyed this Exhibitor’s- eye view of the Open Class. I understand fully that it is not for everyone. As a postal historian, I have to say that the pictorial classes: thematic, social, open and post cards are very challenging, and certainly very time consuming in terms of planning and presentation. If you have any questions, do ask.

Graham Winters FRPSL. Milan, April 2013.