

## **POSTAL HISTORY Class 2C - A work in progress**

Notes from the Class 2C judging team at the Australian National Exhibition, Melbourne Stampshow '09

The exhibition took place from 23<sup>rd</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> July 2009 and was the first time that FIP Postal History Class 2C, formally introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009, was judged in competition in the Southern hemisphere, the other two occasions this year were at IBRA 2009 in Germany and at Bulgaria 2009, both using FIP rules. The following notes were drawn up before, during and after the judging process, and take into account a presentation by Malcolm Groom at a seminar on the last day of the show, and the discussion which followed. During the course of the seminar there was also discussion of the idea of judging exhibits in Postal History in time frames i.e. before 1875 GPU, 1875-1945, and post 1945, rather than geographical regions. This was generally viewed as a positive step forward.

**We are grateful to the judging team at Melbourne 2009 for approaching the assignment of judging a group of the new Postal History Sub-Class 2C (afterwards named 2C) exhibits with diligence and thought and to Chris King for producing the teams findings in a timely manner. The team had to deal with fellow jury members in other teams who were not totally familiar with the new Class and with exhibitors who were similarly learning the way forward. Unfortunately the Seminar given at the Exhibition could not be scheduled before the exhibition. We hope that some of the problems encountered or interpretations made can be addressed better in future Exhibitions**

Relevant quotations from the SREV and Guidelines (hereafter referred to as the Guidelines) set out in the FIP Commission for Postal History Newsletter of October 2008, are included below, and are intended to place the reality of judging Class 2C Historical, Social and Special Studies exhibits in the context of the Guidelines.

The Guidelines state at 2.1, that:

*Historical, social and special studies exhibits show the interaction of the postal system with society, events, commerce or the historical geography of an area and the effect the postal system has on humanity and humanity on the postal system.*

**The objectives of 2C are to provide a sub-class in Postal History where postal historians (and exhibitors) can present exhibit topics that represent postal history in the broad sense. Hence the terms “*show the interaction of the postal system with society, events, commerce or the historical geography of an area and the effect the postal system has on humanity and humanity on the postal system*”**

**Sub-classes 2A (rates, routes and postal services) and 2B (Marcophily) are there to accommodate the established postal history exhibitors and it is hoped 2C will be used by exhibitors to explore postal history in the broader sense.**

**Some successful topics chosen by exhibitors at Melbourne 2009 illustrate the class. There are many topics yet to be tackled.**

***Commercial Philately in Australia to 1940* (LV) shows the interaction of philatelic commerce with the postal system.**

***Swedish Militaries and Volunteers in Campaigns – 16th Century to 1919* (V) shows the interaction of humanity on the postal system through a series of military events.**

***Great Australian Legend (ANZAC)* (LV) covered the effect of a major military campaign on the postal system and told the story of ANZAC through postal history and non-philatelic material.**

**Australian Electoral Business (V)** showed the adaption of the postal system by humanity (politics) to deal with postal voting etc. and use of the postal system by politicians.

These are just a selection of topics chosen by Melbourne exhibitors and we think the overarching objective should be to continue to explore topics which fit the broader definition of 2C as opposed to the intentions of 2A and 2B. We need to continue to explore the possibilities of 2C before we apply measurements and additional guidelines to it. Some topics will work and some will not.

The Guidelines go on as follows:

*3.2 Historical, social and special studies (sub-class 2C) exhibits would include material developed by commerce and society for use in the postal system and may include non-philatelic material where relevant to the subject of the exhibit. The non-philatelic material should be incorporated into the exhibit in a balanced and appropriate manner in such a way that it does not overwhelm the philatelic material.*

*Examples of Historical, social and special studies include:*

- 1. Telegram services*
- 2. Greeting cards (including Valentines)*
- 3. Illustrated, Pictorial commercial envelopes used in a postal system.*
- 4. Studies of the effect of the postal system on commerce, society and industry.*
- 5. Historical, local and/or regional studies.*
- 6. Studies related to an event or historical landmark*

These are, however, not a limitation on the permissible subjects.

The Guidelines also note that exhibits ...

*... may be planned chronologically, geographically (e.g. by local/national districts), by mode of transport/service, or by any other way that the exhibitor may feel appropriate to employ.*

They add that exhibits should avoid ...

*... large-scale duplication of similar items, large chronological gaps where possible, and the inclusion of expensive items not directly relevant to the subject shown.*

Furthermore, and as ...

*... a general rule a Postal History exhibit should show interesting material (philatelically and, where permitted, non-philatelically) to the best advantage, and not appear to be a manuscript for a monograph.*

*All exhibits under sub-class 2C must be capable of being exhibited in standard exhibition frames.*

*3.3 The plan or concept of all sub-classes of postal history exhibits shall be clearly explained in an introductory statement (ref. GREV, Article 3.3).*

The points to be awarded are also set out in the SREV, as follows:

<i>Treatment (20) and Importance (Philatelic 5 &amp; Historical &amp; Social aspects 5)</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Philatelic, Historical &amp; Social Knowledge, Personal Study and Research</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Condition (10) and Rarity (20)</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Presentation</i>	<i>5</i>

However, the Commission's guidance in judging the class is incomplete since their intention appears to be enabling and not prescriptive, so it was necessary for the team under Gary Brown to establish a framework so that judgements could be made systematically and equitably.

**The guidelines are deliberately drafted this way as 2C has such a wide field of topics to be explored. The concern of seeing a wide variance in results between topics, exhibitions etc is balanced by not wanting to exclude potential exhibitors or topics before we judge them.**

**After all**

**2C has been introduced as a new experimental sub-class.**

The Guidelines are very specific in respect of Introductory Pages, and were considerably sharpened at the Bucharest meeting in 2008.

*4.1 All Postal History exhibits must contain an introductory statement, showing the scope of the exhibit. The title of the exhibit must correspond to the introductory statement.*

*4.2 The title page should be used as follows:*

*To give relevant general (Postal History) information on the subject being developed in the exhibit.*

*To include a plan of how the structure of the exhibit is shown - chapters or sections etc., which have postal history relevance, rather than a "frame by frame" or "page by page" description.*

*To include areas of personal investigation.*

*To include details of important documentary sources and references.*

*4.3 The judges will evaluate the material shown, and the associated text in the exhibit against the information included on the Title Page (Title, Introductory Statement; information relevant to the whole exhibit; the way the exhibit is structured; research and references).*

*A well thought out title page will assist both the exhibitor and judges.*

In Melbourne, in Class 2C, the introductory pages were very variable, and in many cases accorded neither with the SREV, nor did they assist the individual judge in preparing for judging the exhibit.

**This is rather surprising because these Guidelines were published nearly a year ago. However, there is not just one way to prepare a title page. Please note that it says "should" which is a recommendation and not "must" which would be compulsory! We try to give the exhibitors as much liberty as possible. Therefore, we expect the jurors of 2C to consider this and to be more tolerant in future.**

This class is distinct from the Social Class originally pioneered in Australia and New Zealand, but it was evident that with no Social Class available at the exhibition, that a number of exhibitors had simply assumed that Postal History Class 2C was the Social Class by another name.

An introductory page for an exhibit in Class 2C will almost certainly introduce the Social Context as well as the Postal History, but even accepting this, no exhibitor properly met the Guidelines. The author considers that use of the shorthand term "Social", to describe the Historical, Social and Special Studies Class is misleading, and should be avoided.

**In 1998 the Federation of New Zealand asked the FIP Commission for Postal History to include "Social Philately" in the Postal History Class. After many years of discussions we finally achieved this in 2008 only because we submitted it to the FIP Congress as a**

**compromise. “Social Philately” as a new separate class would have no chance to be accepted by the FIP Congress and probably be included in the “Open Class”. We agree with the author that it would be wrong to reduce this new sub-class to just “Social”. However, in the meantime “2C” has been established and is used worldwide. If one reads the rules carefully everybody ought to know what historical, social and special studies means. The definition is too complex to translate into a simplified one-line title!**

The jury looked at all of the frames in question before commencing judgement in order to inform a discussion and, having done so, decided that the first point of principle was to ensure that Guidelines should be different from those for the Open Class which was also included in the Exhibition.

**The Guidelines 2C are different from the Open Class. We felt that it does not make much sense to be very restrictive with most of the qualified postal history exhibitors and on the other hand to allow nearly everything to a few newcomers in the Open Class. The logic conclusion was: If we are more tolerant with our Postal History exhibitors, we do not need an Open Class!**

The marking scheme included the division of Treatment and Importance into Treatment 20 points, Philatelic Importance 5 points and Historical and Social Importance 5 points. The Guidelines determine that:

*With regard to historical, social and special studies exhibits, the related historical and general non-philatelic knowledge will be considered in assessing all aspects of these criteria.*

It was therefore felt necessary further to subdivide the Philatelic, Historical & Social Knowledge, Personal Study and Research points into three sections, as follows:

Philatelic Knowledge	15
Historical and Social Knowledge	10
Personal Study and Research	10

The team found that this helped to focus attention on the distinctive nature of the class.

**We understand the need to have an agreement in the team how to evaluate Knowledge but if we split the Philatelic knowledge and Historic and Social knowledge we cannot then expect the emphasis to be on Postal History!. The exhibit subject will have an impact on the amount of Philatelic and/or Historic & Social knowledge presented and we suspect that it is impossible to determine what is ‘philatelic’ or ‘postal history’ and what is ‘historic and social’ knowledge. Knowing the rates and routes are details which might be important or not depending on the subject of the exhibit. Historic importance of the sender or addressee of a letter or even its content could be more interesting to develop an exhibit than the rate. The effect of historic events on the postal system and the rates is certainly more interesting. We think that the combined knowledge is what matters.**

Other criteria adopted were that:

- The Postal History must tell the story; other material should be ancillary and supportive.

**We feel that the selected material should in combination tell the story. We do not wish to see exhibits with pages full of written Postal History. If we want to read a book it is easier to do this at comfortably at home. A key opportunity for 2C is to enable postal historians to incorporate postal history ephemera and non-philatelic material into their topics. To treat it any other way would make it subordinate to the ‘postal history’! We believe the intention of 2C is to encourage the inclusion of related material in order to make such exhibits more attractive and easier to understand.**

- The writing up and interpretation of Postal History items must be from a postal historical point of view.

**The title of the exhibit (topic) and the chosen material will dictate the write-up. The focus of the exhibit *Commercial Philately in Australia to 1940* was as much on the story of the early Australian philatelic dealers as the postal history of that period. This made it a much more interesting exhibit to the viewer than if it had simply been an exhibit focussing on the postal history shown.**

- Rates and routes should be described.

**This depends entirely of the principal topic of the exhibit. It would not make much sense to describe rates and routes in a historical exhibit of a major battle during the first World war or of Polish internees in Switzerland during the second World war because most of the mail would be postage free. On the other hand an exhibit of Shipmail from Europe to the Americas would need the study of rates and routes which would reveal if the letter went by packet steamer or commercial boat etc.**

- Mint stamps should be used very sparingly, if at all.

**Agreed, however, there are exceptions which should be tolerated e.g. unissued postage stamps which do not exist commercially used but are the only way to illustrate a historical event or a mint stamp showing the portrait of the sender of a letter, etc.**

- Cancelled stamps and stamps postmarked on piece should be used only when entires are not available.

**We agree if entires are obtainable but only if these are better to develop the scope of the exhibit. Nevertheless, we can imagine instances when a single postage stamp tells as much as a letter.**

- Photographic or other illustrative material should be, where possible, contemporary with the material exhibited.

**We fully agree. It should be as much related as possible. A pre-adhesive letter of 1830 with a postcard of 1920 illustrating the same place is certainly not a desirable match.**

- Ancillary material should not be greater than 20% of the items shown. i.e. a maximum of 5-6 items per frame, on average.

**Absoluty not!**

**The SREV and guidelines deliberately avoid stating a %. There seems to be a need to have a measurement but we are comfortable with 'appropriate'. What is appropriate for one topic may overwhelm another topic. We do not want to have to define how we measure the %, by number of items, by space taken up by them nor to check the 'prescribed' percentage? Otherwise jurors risk to become quantity surveyors or clerks.-**

**We also do not want to force exhibitors to leave out interesting and important 'non-philatelic' material because they fear exceeding a 'prescribed' percentage.**

- Ancillary material should not dominate the exhibit.
- **Agreed**

Like other philatelic exhibits Historical, Social and Special Studies evidently need a connected thread running through them, and lessons from other Postal History divisions, Thematic Philately and the Open Class in the use of different fonts, for example could help to distinguish them, but the primary characteristic of the class should be Postal History.

**This sounds rather confusing and certainly does not help exhibitors nor jurors to do better in 2C. The often misused word "thread" is not mentioned in any Postal History regulations nor guidelines. We intend to give Postal History collectors and exhibitors as much liberty as**

**possible. We hope that this might help to attract more women to Postal History. We expect 2C exhibits to have a structure which is easy to follow and to understand.**

In discussion with exhibitors it became obvious that some exhibits might not easily fit these Guidelines, but that Guidelines for juries are essential. Certainly the jury as a whole accepted the points above as useful in the consideration of 2C exhibits, and most members were actively involved in discussing and developing the basic criteria adopted by the team.

**Guidelines are necessary to avoid arbitrary judging. However, to invent additional guidelines without having the approval of the responsible Commission nor informing the exhibitors beforehand, is detrimental to a positive development of 2C. Therefore, we agree with the exhibitors if they do not comply with the “Guidelines introduced by the Melbourne 2009 Jury”. We know that the Guidelines which were approved by the Congress are not perfect, but sufficient to exhibit and judge 2C exhibits during this experimental period.**

The Guidelines say:

*Coloured photographs or reproductions should be at least 25% different in size from the original. Full size reproductions of single cancellations or part of a cover are permitted. All material whether non-postal or non-philatelic material, should preferably be original.*

Had we felt that exhibitors were aware of this guidance we would have adopted the following further expansion of this statement:

- Photocopied or scanned Postal History items are not permitted unless they are showing detail or reverse of a Postal History piece included in the exhibition.

**Of course we prefer to see the original item, however, if the only known item is in a museum and the reduced scan of such an item relates to original shown on the same page, this could help to develop the exhibit positively. Therefore, we are against such restrictive regulations.**

- Ancillary or supportive items should generally not be photocopied or scanned. They should usually be in the possession of the exhibitor.

**We do not agree. Why should an exhibitor not show the reduced image of a painting which is in the National Gallery London or Prado Madrid if this perfectly relates to the original postal history item shown on the same page?**

- Where items are too large to display they can be reduced but must be accompanied with a statement that the item in question is in the possession of the exhibitor. Where possible the item should be on the reverse of the exhibition page.

**We do not agree. Such rigid regulations spoil the original idea of 2C. If an exhibitor owns an engraving from 1780 which is larger than the exhibition page and shows a reduced scan of it together with an entire of 1775 of the same place, he may indicate that he owns the original stating some more details of the engraver etc, but certainly this should not be a “must”.**

While this was the first outing for 2C, and the additional guidance adopted here was useful to the jury team, it cannot be regarded as in any way definitive. For example the Guidelines say that:

*The relevance, balance and importance of non-philatelic material shown in historical, social and special studies will be evaluated by the judges.*

Our response to this group of exhibits indicated that perhaps 20% was a useful guide to the acceptable level of ancillary material.

**We do not agree fixing a percentage. We have seen excellent 2C exhibits in Vienna and Milano last year.**

Other juries will face different groups of exhibits, including those in the One Frame class, and may take a different view.

Some exhibitors were disappointed in their results, but their endeavours would have been better rewarded given greater familiarity with the Guidelines. Fifteen exhibits were presented in this class, and there was considerable interest from the rest of the jury in this team's judgements, but as noted above, and after debate its decisions were supported by our colleagues which certainly gave us confidence in our approach.

**We certainly have to gain more experience before we will be in a position to improve our guidelines. Until then we suggest that jurors should be tolerant and open minded in order to encourage a positive development of 2C.**

With exhibitions in the coming months in Australia and New Zealand at national level, and with other juries elsewhere in the world having to judge the new class, it is hoped that the above offers a first step at providing a framework to help distinguish this from other Postal History classes and from the Open Class.

**As a general comment we would like to see a challenge issued to ALL qualified postal history judges to prepare an exhibit under class 2C to both educate the viewing public, other exhibitors and themselves about the possibilities of this sub-class and develop understanding about where the SREV's and Guidelines have inadequacies.**

We hope also that this is a helpful contribution to a debate that must necessarily continue while the Class settles down, and we look forward to hearing of other jury's experience and contributions via the FIP Commission Website at <http://www.fippostalhistory.com>.

**Our website cannot be used as a discussion forum because what is written on our website will be considered (at least by some) as valid even if it might be a wrong opinion from a third party. Such contributions might confuse rather than help exhibitors and jurors of 2C. Our site "Questions and Answers" would be the better way to avoid further misunderstandings.**

Gary Brown's jury team included Geoff Lewis, Ben Palmer and Chris King, all of whom contributed to the process. However, these notes are compiled by the last of these and any errors or omissions are his responsibility entirely.

Chris King  
Melbourne  
26<sup>th</sup> July 2009.