

# **A Gaze at the Galleries: Spectators at Championship Golf Events in Kent**

**1892-1938**

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## **Abstract**

Studies on spectatorship, are acknowledged to be difficult and consequently more scholarship on the subject generally, and on golf galleries specifically, is required. This article examines aspects of spectatorship in golf tourism and the visitor experience at The Open Championships and other major golfing events held in Kent during the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. Explicitly, it aims to discover who attended these events, charting the scale, composition, experiences, behaviours and instances of patriotic pride and passion displayed by the crowds. Finally, it will reveal how some elements in the Scottish press initially interpreted this in relation to Scotland's historic ownership of golf in general and The Open in particular. The paper recognises how events attracted significant if contested, numbers of passive golf tourists. It confirms that the galleries fully engaged with the players, enthusiastically cheering on their local favourites and international superstars alike. Furthermore, the conduct of the Kent crowd was deemed, by the press, to be superior to those attending the other Open venues. A further theme was the defensive national and regional pride or snobbery that was associated with hosting The Open Championship, particularly before World War One.

**Keywords:** Golf, The Open, Kent, Crowds, Spectatorism, Fandom

## **Introduction**

When the Open Championship was first played in 1860, it never entered into the minds of even the most far-seeing golfer that within forty years it would take place on the

shores of the English Channel.<sup>1</sup> Nor would they have imagined the crowds of spectators that would travel to Kent to watch the events unfold. The first thirty-three editions of The Open Championships had all been held on just three courses in Scotland when the delegates of the three Associated Clubs who hosted the championship decided to expand the rota.<sup>2</sup> In recognition of the growth of the game in England, they awarded Sandwich in Kent the honour of becoming the first English course to host The Open, in 1894.<sup>3</sup> Hoylake was quickly added in 1897 before it was agreed that The Open Championship should rotate between Scotland and England; the delegates decided that a further English course was required to even up the rotation. So another Kent course, Royal Cinque Ports, Deal was added in 1909.<sup>4</sup> Following World War One changes to the governance of the Open Championship occurred when the Championship Committee of the R&A were asked to accept the management of The Open. Subsequently, in 1932, a third Kent course hosted The Open when the Championship was successfully played at Prince's GC.<sup>5</sup> It was not only the Open Championships that were held on the Kent courses. Between 1892 and 1937 nine men's British Amateur Championships, two women's Amateur Championships and the 1930 Walker Cup were played at either Royal St. Georges or Royal Cinque Ports.<sup>6</sup> All of these events drew in spectators seeking the pursuit of pleasure and satisfaction from witnessing the competition on offer. The format of The Open evolved; from 1860 until 1891, The Open was played in a single day over 36 holes. The competition switched to 72 holes, two rounds of 18 played over two days, in 1892. It changed again in 1926 with the first two rounds played on consecutive days and then after a cut to reduce the field, the two final rounds were played on a Friday. This pre-weekend finish was to allow the professionals to return to their clubs and cater for the members at the weekend.<sup>7</sup>

The importance and nature of spectatorship, what tourism researcher Heather Gibson called passive sports tourism, is reviewed in this article. However, there appears to be a lack of studies on spectatorship, which sports historian Mike Huggins, acknowledged to be a

difficult but under-researched topic.<sup>8</sup> There can be little doubt that some examples do exist, including Hill's excellent scholastic analysis of travelling FA Cup fans visiting London.<sup>9</sup> A widening of the discussion on the composition, attitudes and behaviours of spectators is therefore required and more uniquely, in research terms, focusing on golf. This essay highlights the experiences of a small, more privileged, segment of the population, rather than those of the masses. The findings will provide an important counterbalance for sports historians when making comparisons between the experiences of these golfing galleries and the crowds that attended other sports. Sports that were watched by broader segments of British society and so fans were likely to act differently and display contrasting traits. This thesis will therefore concentrate on these un-mined areas of fan studies by providing an insight into aspects of spectatorship in golf and aims to discover who attended the early golf championships held in Kent. Kent was the only county situated in the South of England to host The Open. Its location and distance from Scotland were important points of difference from those links in the North West of England that also hosted The Open. It also reflects on how the crowds were catered for and how all this contributed to the overall visitor experience over the forty-six years. The article will uncover how elements of the Scottish press initially viewed the Kent courses hosting The Open and how this was interpreted in relation to Scotland's historic ownership of golf in general, and The Open, in particular. Further examples of banal nationalism are discussed in terms of the gallery's support for golfers from the 'home nations' and the complexities of this terminology are specified in terms of content, time and place. Lastly, attempts have been made to establish the status of people in attendance through the examination of images from golfing galleries. This reflects Mike Huggins and Mike O'Mahony's position that pictures can be employed to analyse different historical moments. The social cognition researchers Rene Kopietz et al. suggest that audience studies are not unbiased, objective documentation of events but offer sets of

meanings, metaphors, and stories. The representations construct a particular interpretation, yet one that the biasing of eyewitnesses' memory and judgment might skew.<sup>10</sup>

The recent digitalisation of national and local newspapers, accessible within the British Newspaper Archive has allowed researchers to explore the history of golf in much more depth than before. Hence, the media is essential and critically interconnected to how sport is portrayed and understood.<sup>11</sup> This is equally true for newspaper articles that were written for particular audiences where the writer's, or the owner's position and perspective including any unconscious biases they possessed may have shaped the narrative. All media content is selected, interpreted and edited to achieve several varying goals: shaping values, providing a public service or expressing the views creatively together with significant amounts of sensationalism. The media effectively becomes part of the event but is also an image-maker. This provides a powerful platform to produce narratives consistent with the ideologies of the author and to meet their audience's interests. However, sociologist Toni Bruce suggests that too often people fail to think critically about the content. In contrast, they ought to apply a method of more in-depth understanding by encoding and decoding the material.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, consideration needs to be taken of the political and social contexts in which these sources were written. We must, therefore, treat much of this material with caution, but they do offer some insights into the crowds of passive golf tourists. Even with the development of these online resources, there were still gaps and additional material was discovered in the archives of the three championship golf clubs in Kent that further helped to identify the documented representations of the galleries.

Scholars, including Rob Steen and Charles Bladen et al., have acknowledged the emergence of spectator sport as an essential branch of popular culture. While John Zauhar adds that this fixation with spectatorism has created an annual calendar of sporting fixtures and events to which the dedicated and passionate fans feel they are compelled to attend. This

also includes sports tourists who visit the major sporting events that are held each year.<sup>13</sup> Events have therefore played an important part in sport and by association with sports tourism having been identified as the pleasurable consumption of unnecessary activities and an escape from one's normal place of work and residence.<sup>14</sup> The socio-psychological concepts associated with social interaction and the witnessing of prestigious, once-in-a-lifetime events are factors that influenced and motivated the passive consumption of sport. In contrast is the fear of missing out (FOMO), a social anxiety that one might be absent from an exciting and rewarding experience.<sup>15</sup> Psychological factors linked to self-esteem have also been attributed, highlighting the chance to be part of the celebrations and creating a positive feeling of oneself. The Tourism researcher Po-Ju Chen identified that another personal value of attending events might include identification or social identity, known as conspicuous consumption and the inducement to enhance one's social status simply by being seen there. Finally, she highlighted that, for some, it is a modern form of pilgrimage to attend events at specific famous sporting venues, such as St. Andrews, Lord's or Wembley.<sup>16</sup> Youcheng Wang and Abraham Pizam have noted in their tourism management research how the importance and the heritage of The Open Championship attracted considerable attention and enhanced the desire of golfing enthusiasts to make this pilgrimage to The Open venues to watch the leading players tackle the famous links.<sup>17</sup>

Kent became firmly established as a destination for The Open Championship over the first half of the twentieth century. This was on account of the true links nature of the courses, the popularity of golf in the southeast of England in terms of playing and watching and the accessibility of the venues. This was first demonstrated in 1894 when *The Scotsman* argued, 'nowhere in England has the game made greater strides than in the Metropolis but the lack of suitable ground in the neighbourhood of the great city no doubt led to the discovery of Sandwich'.<sup>18</sup> In the same year, *The Sketch's* golf correspondence described Sandwich as

‘these beautiful links on the Channel and in my opinion Sandwich is as good as St Andrews or Prestwick’.<sup>19</sup> However, until the early nineteenth century, access to and even throughout Kent for any activity was particularly challenging. It was the building of the railway line from London to Dover in 1844 by the South Eastern Railway Company (SERC) that opened the county up and made transport easier, particularly as the network spread through the county including branch lines to Sandwich and Deal in 1846/7.<sup>20</sup> The new faster and safer railways accelerated the development of the seaside holiday, including golf tourism to the resorts of the East Kent coast. When The Open was held at Royal Cinque Ports GC in 1909, special through express trains from London Charing Cross to Deal, with the option of return tickets for the same or the following day, provided services for the golfing tourist travelling from the capital.<sup>21</sup> Other than for cricket, Kent did not possess a significant sporting pedigree to encourage the local population to become ardent sports spectators, which further suggests the galleries comprised significant numbers of golfing tourists.<sup>22</sup> This reflects sports psychologist Daniel Wann et al.’s fandom theory of personal investment that suggests people need a range of items to encourage sport consumer behaviour, and this includes quality, history and vicarious achievement.<sup>23</sup>

### **Determining the scope of the crowds**

When looking for authenticated evidence of crowd sizes, there is a lack of official figures in any of the three Kent club archives or the R&A records. Two approaches to identifying crowd sizes were used, first by examining newspaper articles and then by looking at the amount of gate money taken. However, the newspapers were not very precise with vague and generic references to the crowd sizes. *The Edinburgh Evening News* reporting on the first Open held at Sandwich in 1894 noted, ‘There was a large gathering of spectators when a start was made at a quarter to ten’.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, *The Morning Post* at the same event observed, ‘There was a large number of spectators, who accompanied the players in crowds more or

less numerous, according to their popularity'.<sup>25</sup> Whereas, in contrast, five years later when The Open returned to Sandwich the *South Wales Echo* informed its readers, 'The Open Championship commenced this morning, but the early couples did not have large galleries, but fine golf was seen'.<sup>26</sup> These accounts demonstrate that journalists were trying to illustrate to their readers an indication of the crowd's size in the absence of official figures. The same ambiguity in reporting actual numbers is shown for the accounts of the Amateur Championships. Sports historian Richard Holt reminds us that amateurism was a distinctive ideology in British sport and that in golf, as in cricket, but unlike rugby union and rowing, the amateur was permitted to compete in person with the professional. However, golf was a game that was steeped in 'relentless amateurism', which provided an ideological underpinning for its social hierarchies.<sup>27</sup> Yet unlike today, the press historically covered the accounts of amateur sport on an almost equal billing to professional sport reflecting this ideology.

The following show there was no difference in reporting style between the approach for the amateur and professional matches: 'A large company [crowd] visited the course [at Sandwich] to watch the [semi and] final of the 1892 Championships'.<sup>28</sup> The famous golf correspondent Bernard Darwin writing in his typical descriptive style for *The Times* waxed, 'a large crowd [was] sweeping across the course in front of the players'.<sup>29</sup> This account gave the reader a sense of movement and the crowd's involvement, to complement the more mundane details of merely the extent of the gallery. However, when reporting on the 1914 Amateur Championship once again hosted at Sandwich, *The Northern Whig* informed its readers 'a crowd of quite 4,000 followed the last stages'.<sup>30</sup> This is the first attempt found that estimated or quantified the size of the crowd in figurative terms. It tries to assist the reader in picturing the relative size of the crowd, with an absolute figure rather than a vague descriptive adjective. This same figure was identified again in *The Aberdeen Daily Journal* for the first Open held after World War One in 1920 at Royal Cinque Ports. It wrote, 'there

was a large concourse, probably numbering 4,000 on the links, an exceptional number for this far away links'.<sup>31</sup> What is also interesting about this account is the reference to the remoteness of the course. Three more factors appear to have influenced writers to estimate a figure to convey the sense of occasion. The first is the presence of royalty, 'Among the crowd of 5,000 people was HRH Prince of Wales'.<sup>32</sup> The second was the victory of a British golfer, '[a crowd of] 4,000-5,000 spectators rushed wildly forward eager to congratulate and carry shoulder high the man who after eleven years had won the Open Championship for Britain'.<sup>33</sup> The prospect for the day's play was the third factor that influenced the press to comment on the crowd, as shown by the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* which noted, 'although, the prospect was for a day of highly interesting golf, there were comparatively few on the links when play commenced, and the play was therefore followed in comfort'.<sup>34</sup> Alternatively at Royal St. Georges for the 1930 Walker Cup, 'A crowd of 5,000 watched British chances peter out this afternoon until what at the interval we thought might be a fight, simply become a fiasco'.<sup>35</sup> Certainly, the physical location of the links was deemed worthy of remark: 'the distance of the links from the town and the uninviting weather deterred spectators; but still, a considerable number of enthusiasts followed, the cracks, over the links'.<sup>36</sup> This report combines the relative remoteness of the course and the weather as disincentives but how the presence of the top players, the cracks, encouraged the crowd to attend in significantly large numbers. Furthermore, an article in *The Scotsman* on the 1929 Amateur Championship final informed its readers that, 'the silence of remote Sandwich was broken by the applause of the 1,000 spectators'.<sup>37</sup>

There was, however, clear evidence that The Opens held in Kent did not attract the same levels of spectators as other venues such as in Scotland or even the North West of England. When John Henry (J.H.) Taylor became the first English professional to win in 1894, *The Lincolnshire Echo* observed, 'there was a large attendance, but scarcely so great as



might have been looked for on so important an occasion'.<sup>38</sup> This view was repeated in 1899, 'The crowd at Sandwich is never a large one'.<sup>39</sup> Praise was given on another occasion, but it was tempered, 'the company was a large one, for Sandwich'.<sup>40</sup> Even the players recalled that at times, particularly when out of contention for the title, the crowds were absent. J.H. Taylor playing Sandwich in 1904 remembered 'Bursts of occasional cheering reached my partner and me as we plodded along, solitary and alone, except for our caddies'.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the greater popularity of the non-Kent venues was explicitly noted by *The Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 'the gathering in the afternoon had considerably increased, but it was below the attendance at St. Andrews, Prestwich or Hoylake on final days'.<sup>42</sup>

Much of this appears to have been a case of the Scottish press's Scotland-centric view of the sport against the remote South-East English courses. *The Scotsman* in 1894 lamented, 'there was not a great crowd of spectators [at Sandwich] to witness the play that there was at Hoylake, but there were sufficient onlookers to give, a gallery, to many players'.<sup>43</sup> This tone was repeated in 1899 the next time The Open visited Kent with *The Dundee Courier* offering, 'Sandwich cannot command a company of spectators of any magnitude, and throughout yesterday the force of gallery was never felt by any of the players'.<sup>44</sup> *The Glasgow Herald* added, 'it was rather surprising that considering the favourable weather conditions and the importance of the competition so few spectators had assembled. They scarcely numbered 500'.<sup>45</sup> This contrasts with the London-based *Sporting Life* that wrote on the same day, 'the prominent players drew large galleries from the spectators who thronged the course'.<sup>46</sup> A final example of this theme is in evidence within *The Aberdeen Journal*'s report on the 1900 Amateur Championship held at Sandwich when it compares the lack of crowd unfavourably with previous Scottish hosts of the event.

The St. Andrews or the Prestwick crowd was absent at the start in the morning. Not more than a hundred gathered near the starter's box, and never during the two rounds did 300 assemble. A crowd perhaps is never very desirable at a golf contest, especially if it grows beyond control.<sup>47</sup>

The reason for this tone in the Scottish press might be explained when one recognises that they were writing for their home market which would have considered golf to be a wholly Scottish game. Indeed as the *Dundee Courier* wrote, ‘for this branch of sport [golf] which the Scotsmen have long regarded as their own’.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps they begrudged the hosting of major tournaments outside of Scotland and their readership would have seen any competition, represented here by the size of the Kentish crowds, as a threat and a challenge to Scotland’s historic ownership of golf. This would have encouraged the Scottish press to write tactfully for their readership and without fear of contradiction as there were no other sources available to conflict with their accounts. Certainly the number of Scottish-based professionals competing reduced once The Open began to be held in England. Of the thirty-seven players at the 1889 Open at Musselburgh, all bar three represented Scottish clubs. Whereas in 1894 at Sandwich of the sixty entrants, only fourteen were representing Scottish clubs, although twenty-one were native Scots, now based at English clubs. Similarly, in 1897 at Hoylake, seventeen entered from Scotland, with a further sixteen Scots representing English clubs and now thirty-six non-Scottish players in the field.<sup>49</sup> This lack of representation from Scottish-based professionals could have been another reason for the tone of the newspaper coverage. Sport has frequently been used by submerged nations, to promote themselves and more precisely here, been presented as a way of highlighting Scottish, as opposed to English, identity. Furthermore, sport acts as a proxy for true national sentiments.<sup>50</sup>

However, these attitudes were not present in subsequent years and so perhaps represent an acceptance of Kent’s right and ability to host The Open. Interestingly, a significantly more positive voice was present in 1898 when the *Dundee Courier* reported on the victory by the Scottish professional Fred Herd at that year’s American Open Championship.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps Herd being a Scot and that the runner-up, Alex Smith was a fellow professional from Carnoustie mitigated any ill feelings to a rival major event being held outside of Scotland?

The second and more scientific indication of the relative extent of the crowds attending The Open can be ascertained from studying the amount of gate money taken. However, for the first sixty years of The Open, no gate money had been charged; it was discussed in 1923 but deferred until it was introduced in 1926 at Royal Lytham & St Annes GC and then collected continuously from 1928 when it was again held at Sandwich. Initially, the charging of gate money was not an example of creeping commercialism, but was designed to limit the number of spectators and specifically to deter undesirable spectators.<sup>52</sup> In this latter point, it does provide one clear example of social exclusion, by barring those of lesser means who were considered to be unattractive to the members of the Championship Committee; they were aiming to provide a spectacle for their equals and not the masses. However, as golf historian Peter Lewis notes, the money raised was utilised to help the Championship Committee in any way it thought best for the game, but mainly to help fund the expenses associated with running the Walker Cup rather than to increase the prize money for the professionals. The original policy of not collecting entrance fees was supported in *The Yorkshire Post* when it wrote, 'It is one of the great advantages of golf that it is not a gate-money game, and therefore the professionals will never be able to dictate terms to its rulers'.<sup>53</sup> This position contrasts with cricket, where the crowds attending an Edwardian era Ashes test series were estimated to have generated £25,000, as sport for the commercially minded, had become a source of profit.<sup>54</sup> What is clear is that the total gate money taken for the Opens held in Kent was significantly less than in Scotland or the North West of England. When it was first collected in 1926 at Royal Lytham, the amount was £1,092, but there was over a 50% fall at Royal St. George's two years later. Similarly, in 1931 when the Open was held at Carnoustie, the income was £1,543, whereas the next year at Prince's it was just £625. A new record was set in 1933 at St. Andrews with £1,988 taken, against only £748 at Royal St. George's in 1934. Finally, after breaking the £2,000 barrier in 1937 in Carnoustie, in 1938

at Royal St. George's it was just £822.<sup>55</sup> Admission charges to the course for the 1938 Open for non-members were 2s. 6d. per day and 10s. for the week. The former could only be obtained at the pay-boxes on the course. In contrast, applications for the latter had to be made through the Secretary.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, a very rough calculation suggests there were approximately 6,500 paying spectators in addition to the club members in attendance. However, this figure is at odds with newspaper accounts, although they might have also guessed or inflated the figures. It appears that the crowds, if gate money is the barometer, were consistently lower at the Kent courses through the latter period of this study. No specific reasons why this should have been the case have been discovered, but various accounts acknowledge that crowds in Kent were traditionally lower than at other venues, albeit they too did increase over time as The Open became more popular.

### **The composition of the Kent crowds**

The role and position of women in all sports were and still are highly contested. Sports historians have considered the topic of gender in sport and, through recording the growth of women's golf, they have highlighted that golf was not only a respectable sport but also one with a degree of radicalism. Golf allowed more women's participation than did most other sports, although on the understanding that a degree of segregation was required. There are accounts of women playing golf around St. Andrews from the 1860s and this culminated in the founding of The St Andrews Ladies GC on 5 September 1867. In England, The Westward Ho! and North Devon Ladies GC was formed in 18-68.<sup>57</sup> By the early 1890s around 2,000 women were playing golf in Britain and in 1893 the Ladies Golf Union (LGU) had been formed.<sup>58</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, golf had become regarded as a fashionable sport for English upper and upper-middle-class gentlemen who formed or joined private and exclusive clubs. The historian, David Cannadine has offered three different views on the English class system: a seamless and interconnected web, three distinct levels—upper, middle

and working-class or simply a case of 'them' and 'us'. The English were obsessed with class and their elite clubs of all kinds strongly smacked of it and so the working man was regarded as a sub-species on the golf course. Indeed, golf was regarded as a middle-class preserve and the 'other' fell foul of a rarely concealed snobbery. Victorian and Edwardian golf clubs were replete with 'Upstairs Downstairs' tensions, reflecting contemporary strict social hierarchies.<sup>59</sup>

Previously published studies have failed to address the social status or class of the galleries specifically. Yet, in terms of the composition of the galleries, the newspapers do provide some interesting accounts. However, a more robust evaluation has been undertaken by analysing the surviving images of the golf events, including a range of still and moving images. In this investigation, the ratio of men to women has been identified. Furthermore, the identification of the clothing they wore has given some insight into their social status. An implication of this is that, in playing terms, women were present on the links before the first Open Championship was held in Kent. Thus they could reasonably be expected to be seen in the galleries, even if Wann et al. say that women were usually underrepresented as sports spectators.<sup>60</sup> This position, of course, mirrors broader patterns in society regardless of the consumption of sport and cultural activities during this era of masculine hegemony. The report on the 1892 Amateur Championship in *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, confirmed and celebrated the presence of women in the gallery at Sandwich: 'it was wonderful to see the large crowd of onlookers composed not only of men but also ladies, following the final between Mr Ball [John Ball was an eight-time winner of the Amateur Championship] and Mr Laidlay'.<sup>61</sup> The illustration of the 1894 Open Championship at Sandwich in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* (Figure 1) noticeably shows a fair proportion of women watching the golf at the first Open held in England.<sup>62</sup>

[Figure 1: near here]

A later image, taken from a *British Movietone* clip of the 1932 Open at Prince's (Figure 2) shows a mix of genders in the crowd around the final green, giving the winner, the American professional Gene Sarazen some polite applause as he finishes his winning round.<sup>63</sup>

[Figure 2: near here].

Further evidence appeared in *The Times*: 'At the 17<sup>th</sup> Mr Wethered [Roger Wethered was a champion amateur English golfer] hit his pitch off the extreme shank of his niblick, to send ladies screaming and men tumbling'.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, four-time Open Champion Walter Hagen in his biography remembers during one round at Deal in strong winds that, 'the women were holding umbrellas over them as they passed the bunkers to prevent sand, grit and even pebbles from being blown into them'.<sup>65</sup> These written accounts acknowledge the inclusion of women in the galleries. Another indication of the ratio of men to women, over the first three decades of the twentieth century, taken from three crowd images at the 1904, 1922 and 1932 Opens (Figures 3, 4 and 5) are similar with almost 80% of the crowd made up of males.

[Figure 3: near here].

[Figure 4: near here].

[Figure 5: near here].

A final image (Figure 6) from Sandwich of the 1922 Ladies Amateur Open is harder to calculate with absolute accuracy but suggests a higher proportion of women were present. It can, therefore, be assumed that as this was the Ladies Amateur Open, this deviation from the norm is to be expected, as peer groups have been identified as essential factors for sports fan socialisation.<sup>66</sup>

[Figure 6: near here].

Part of the difficulty in determining the proportion of men to women in the images is that a large number of men were wearing long coats which make it difficult to distinguish them from the women in their long skirts. Men's fashion in the 1920s was not known for its individualism. Men wore a suit with a flannel shirt, and most men did not deviate from these social uniforms. When the weather was cold, men wore overcoats that reached just below the knee. By the 1930s, blazers and casual trousers were often worn in the summer as informal wear and sportswear; also knee-length plus fours with long knitted stockings, wool caps and two-tone leather brogues were popular for playing and watching golf.<sup>67</sup> For 1930s women's fashion, there was a trend towards what was termed a mannish look, which was applied to all forms of clothing, including outdoor wear.<sup>68</sup> By this decade the Norfolk jacket had become less common attire for men, though it had become a prevalent clothing item for women. The winter coat that was a vital part of every woman's wardrobe, which stopped just below the knee, added to the uncertainty.<sup>69</sup> Hats were also commonplace for men and women and through these some differentiation could be made. There were several styles of hats men had to choose from in the 1920s. A gentleman would not head outside without a hat and Homburgs, Trilbies and Panama Straw Boaters were most popular. Alternatively, wool caps might be worn for sporting and leisure events, however, lower classes could be seen wearing similar style, newsboy caps.<sup>70</sup> This does make the analysis in terms of class much more difficult. For women, the most common hats were the close-fitting cloche hat, and women from all walks of life wore them. As the 1920s progressed wide-brimmed garden sun hats with round crowns were the thing to wear outside.<sup>71</sup> Further scrutiny of images, this time from the 1904 and 1932 Open Championships depict quite a stylish gallery with well-dressed men and women (Figures 3 and 5). The former image includes around twenty people, with the men having very prominent stiff white collars and a number sporting plus-fours. The latter image reflects the 1930s with many in more casual sportswear including blazers and

boaters. Whereas, the majority watching Walter Hagen at Royal St. George's GC in 1922 are possibly more from the lower-middle-class (Figure 4) with more flat caps and less well-fitting suits in evidence.<sup>72</sup> However, this can be deceptive given the similarities in dress between the classes and the number of men wearing long coats in these black and white photographs. This impression suggests that golf drew on a broad socio-economic group, although, with a limited sample size of images, it is hardly a robust analysis; however, it provides a fascinating snapshot. Although the interpretation of the images needs to be treated with some caution, there is much to suggest a further correlation between the images of women in the galleries and the likely class or social standing of the spectators. This is represented by their mere presence, as the working-class or lower-middle-class; women were unlikely to have had the time to attend events like The Open. The anthologist Florence Boos highlights that for women life was a daily routine of drudgery comprising hard, boring and repetitive chores, leaving very little time for social activities.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, the lack of children in the images again suggests the women were of a status where they were not the main provider of childcare. Furthermore, if their children were of school age they would have been in boarding school as the majority of the events were held in May, thus during term time. If younger, children would have been in the care of nannies.

A reference in *The Aberdeen Daily Journal* to spectators attending the 1920 Open at Deil in cars does indicate the affluence of the galleries suggesting further evidence of the socially exclusive nature of these spectators.<sup>74</sup> This use of cars to distinguish class can also be applied to another movie clip of the 1932 Open at Prince's. It shows a row of motor cars parked close to one of the greens as the players put out. (Figure 7).

[Figure 7: near here].

National Motor Museum staff, who were able to identify the cars' make and value stated that the cars were undoubtedly an expensive form of transport to own and use. The motor cars



included a Daimler which is shown in the 1932 Daimler brochure as models ranging in price from £550 to £1250. Another one is a large Morris, either a Major or Isis. Again as a guide, in 1932 these were listed between £210 and £350 depending on the model. Finally, the next two cars are Minervas, and these were Belgian cars of some quality for the discerning customer. The 1931 motor show guide in *Autocar* magazine states that they sold for £490 for the chassis alone or £550 with a saloon body.<sup>75</sup> What stands out when considering these costs is that the average earnings of male workers were around £3 per week (£150 per year) in the UK in the 1930s.<sup>76</sup> As the twentieth century progressed the option of travelling by car increased particularly for the typical golfing spectator. The image from the 1932 Open is revealing as it helps to confirm the apparent wealth within the golfing gallery. Motor cars enabled increased levels of golfing tourism to be undertaken by this particular section of spectators who could afford to own and use this expensive form of private transport.

Finally, it is important to note that The Opens held in Kent were frequently patronised by members of the royal family. Mike Huggins has acknowledged the links between the British monarchy and modern sports regarding their frequent attendance from the nineteenth century at Cowes and Ascot.<sup>77</sup> As the traditional role of the monarchy weakened, their attendance at royal games grew progressively more important. Equally, an event's image was enhanced by an association with royalty; it provided an increased sense of respectability contributing to perceptions about the event's sociability, status and social class.<sup>78</sup> The first account of a royal presence at The Open was in 1899 at Sandwich, when the Prince of Wales (Edward VII) and the Duke of York (George V) were present after the first round.<sup>79</sup> It was King Edward VII who became the Patron of St. George's Club in 1902 and who soon confirmed the club's royal title on 17 May 1902. However, it was a later Prince of Wales, briefly Edward VIII, who was the most frequent and committed golfer and spectator amongst the British royal family. He became captain of Royal St. George's in 1927.<sup>80</sup> The Prince's

engagement with the 1928 Open was naturally widely reported with *The Glasgow Herald* describing how the Prince of Wales was an interested spectator during the final stages. *The Times* added that he had spent a considerable part of the day watching the tournament before presenting Walter Hagen with the Open Championship trophy.<sup>81</sup> The Prince's interest in proceedings was included in books written by the two American golfers who keenly contested the final round in 1928 at Royal St. George's GC. Walter Hagen, the winner, recalled how, 'one of the crowd was HRH Prince of Wales, who followed me for most of the last nine holes'.<sup>82</sup> The runner-up, Gene Sarazen, later wrote that while playing the 12th hole he noticed that a limousine was driving along with the Prince of Wales and Hagen sitting in the back. Hagen and the Prince had come out to see the progress of Hagen's chief rival.<sup>83</sup> Despite this association with these two American golfers, the Prince was present in 1930 to support the British team at The Walker Cup when the USA was the opposition, albeit the amateur American players rather than his professional friends. *The Times* stated, 'the fine weather brought out a stream of spectators and there really were a large number of people headed by the Prince of Wales'.<sup>84</sup> While *The Scotsman* demonstrated his evident keenness to attend the match by noting, 'the Prince of Wales flew to Sandwich yesterday, to follow the play in the Walker Cup'.<sup>85</sup> The enthusiastic involvement of the Prince of Wales and accounts of his support in the press further demonstrate the high position and social acceptance that golf was held in during the period.

### **The interaction of the Kent crowds**

Having discussed who was watching the golf on the links of Kent, it is essential to gain an insight into the crowd's reaction and interaction to the events they witnessed. Sports historian Allan Guttman explains that sports fans are dynamic participants, partisan, and eager to inspire with their cheers but were occasionally disorderly.<sup>86</sup> Events can stand for exciting, sophisticated and modernistic outcomes or experiences, in addition to the more practical

economic and political ones. Furthermore, spectators enjoy a vicarious experience at sports events by effectively interacting with the players as the drama unfolds, and the game heads towards its climax.<sup>87</sup> As enterprise consultants, Joseph Pine and James Gilmour discuss how an event-goer's experience can be categorised as either passive participation, which includes entertainment or aesthetic experiences, or active experience, which is more of an education and escapism.<sup>88</sup> Tourism researcher Wendy Sealy gives three reasons why spectators attend golf events: to see players succeed, to see them fail or to simply watch them play and enjoy the spectacle.<sup>89</sup> Within the written media there are examples and evidence of respectful, generous and enthusiastic support for the competitors, appreciating the good play on display, but also the sharing and, at times, creating the tension, drama and individual agonies of the action.

When J.H. Taylor won the first Open played in Kent at Sandwich in 1894, the *Edinburgh Evening News* described how he was loudly cheered on the home green when he finished his round.<sup>90</sup> The account of his victory within *The History of The Royal St. George's Golf Club* was even more colourful, recounting how J. H. Taylor's last round became a triumphant march, and he finished 'to the music of cheers'.<sup>91</sup> Ten years later, when Jack White, the Scottish professional won his only Open title at Sandwich, *The Scotsman* wrote about how he was 'heartily congratulated by the large gathering all-round the [last] green'. This level of keen support was taken up in *The Daily News* when describing how at the prize-giving, 'White was greeted by a spontaneous outburst of applause as he collected his £50 and the gold medal'.<sup>92</sup> This suggests how thoroughly popular had been his victory and how the crowd were eager to show their appreciation. In 1909 J.H. Taylor returned to his winning ways and retained great support amongst the crowd when he won the first Open that was played on the links of Royal Cinque Ports, the second of the three courses to host the Championship in Kent. According to *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, 'coming home, Taylor

played beautifully ... he never made a mistake, and amidst great cheers, he finished in 74 [shots]’.<sup>93</sup> J.H. Taylor was obviously a crowd favourite, as at Royal St. George’s GC in 1922, *The Times* tells how the now fifty-one-year-old, five-time champion, ‘was setting the spectators shouting, laughing and almost crying with joy’.<sup>94</sup> J. H. Taylor went on to finish sixth just four shots behind the winner Hagen. Another English golfer, Henry Cotton, on his way to 1934 victory at Sandwich was rewarded for his great play on the green: ‘Cotton took his putter ... and when he holed the putt for a four there was another cheer’.<sup>95</sup> It was not just the professional players who received this enthusiastic level of support. When in the final of the 1914 Amateur Golf Championship held at Royal St. George’s GC, the Irishman and eventual runner-up, Mr Charles Hezlet, successfully chipped in from the bunker, *The Times* reported that ‘there was a shriek of “He’s holed it!” followed by an outbreak of cheers, whistles and cat-calls’.<sup>96</sup> Another Irish amateur, Mr Lionel Munn, took on the American favourite Robert Sweeny in the 1937 Amateur Final at Sandwich and courageously fought back at the end of the morning round, to make it a close match. *The Times* recounted how the home supporters reacted to this comeback: ‘the crowd broke into delirious cheering as Sweeny had not gathered as many “Rosebuds” as he might’.<sup>97</sup> The galleries on the Kent links were also noted to be empathetic to players who were not so successful in their play. At Sandwich in the 1904 Open, James Braid, another five-time Open winner, was in contention with three holes to play and the crowds gathered to witness the outcome. Unfortunately, for Braid, he was not victorious as *The Standard* testified, ‘he, however, could only manage three fours striking the lip of the hole on the last green which induced a large sigh from the crowd’.<sup>98</sup> Another dramatic Open occurred in 1920; local historian, David Dobby in his history of Royal Cinque Ports writes how Abe Mitchell, the Sussex-born golfer, was leading after the first two rounds. However, when someone in the crowd shouted ‘Duncan has a 4 for a 69’ this unnerved Mitchell and his game deserted him and he squandered his 13-shot lead.<sup>99</sup>

*The Scotsman* commentating on the same Open described the big crowd as being stupefied by Mitchell's collapse before adding how another competitor, Syd Wingate, let the occasion and the crowd unsettle him too, letting the Scot, George Duncan win the first Open held after World War One.<sup>100</sup> George Duncan was involved in the closing stages of the 1922 Open, and he recalled in his autobiography how he was chasing Walter Hagen for the title, and the crowd, at Sandwich, got very excited over the last two holes. 'Thousands of people were tumbling out of tents, dashing from motor-cars [to watch the outcome.]' Nevertheless, when Duncan's par and tying putt on the 18<sup>th</sup> came up short, he remembered how 'The crowd groaned'.<sup>101</sup>

This theme of tense excitement and crowd interaction is apparent in *The Times's* coverage of the 1911 Open when the famous amateur golfer, Henry Hilton, challenged for his third title, some fourteen years after his and any amateur player's last success. The possibility animated the Royal St. George's GC crowd, 'It is almost impossible to convey the agonised state of mind of the spectators ... the glorious possibility of an amateur winning once again [Henry Hilton] was enough to send the crowd scampering across the course in the wildest excitement'.<sup>102</sup> Hilton was to finish in third place, behind, six-time Open Champion, Harry Vardon and the Frenchman Arnuaud Massy who were tied after the four rounds. However, this result was not confirmed before further theatre had taken place, 'At this point reports came of great play on the part of Massy, and the exhausted spectators rushed out once more to find the Frenchman'.<sup>103</sup> This epic finish was taken up by *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*: 'There was excitement over the first three days, but a max was reached on the Thursday, which was marked by surprise after surprise. No wonder people [the crowd] were moved, as they had probably never been moved before at a championship'.<sup>104</sup> These reports demonstrate the high level of support that the crowd must have had for these two former champions, Henry Hilton as an amateur and Arnuaud Massy as a foreign player in their

respective quests to prevail over the field of British professionals once more. Two episodes exemplify the pressure of the crowd and their expectations on even the greatest of players. The five-time champion J.H. Taylor admitted in his biography, how he was affected by the presence of the crowd and how he let it impact his play when competing in the 1893 Open at Prestwick. However, between then and the 1894 Open at Sandwich, he had played in more events and was comfortable playing in front of the galleries, allowing him to play his best and collect his first title.<sup>105</sup> The second example of the pressure of the crowd was in 1934 when Henry Cotton was aiming for his first championship victory and had the added pressure of becoming the first British winner of the Open after a decade of American dominance. Cotton had played outstandingly over the first three rounds at Sandwich and had a 10-shot lead, and the expectant home crowd were sure that he was poised to win. However, upon reaching the first tee before the final round, Cotton was told there would be a 15-minute delay and so, as a result, Cotton decided to sit alone in a nearby tent. When the time came for him to start, he had become tense and anxious and unable to swing with his previous freedom. The situation was not helped by the crowd, who were equally anxious and were vocal in trying to encourage him after he had dropped shots over the first five holes. At the sixth hole, Cotton turned to the spectators and according to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, pleaded ‘let me alone’.<sup>106</sup> Henry Cotton recovered his nerve and settled the crowd, birdieing the thirteenth hole before finishing confidently and winning by five shots.<sup>107</sup> A link between the two episodes was chronicled in J.H. Taylor’s autobiography when he wrote, ‘I am not likely to forgive or forget Cotton for the agonies he caused me and members of a very large and excited gallery that followed him during his final round’.<sup>108</sup> These two incidents clearly show the impact even the most supportive crowd can have on a player.

There were, of course, many celebrated players who had become crowd favourites and who were of particular interest to the crowd; as Wann et al. remind us, it is common for

spectators to elevate some players to hero status, above the mere mortals in the field.<sup>109</sup> This case was demonstrated in *The Scotsman* that noted when playing Sandwich in 1894, ‘Mr Ball naturally attracted a good deal of attention’. John Ball was the holder of the Amateur Championship, which he had won for the fourth time, he was to go on to win it a record eight times, and he also won the 1890 Open Championship at Prestwick.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, *The Times* when reporting on the 1899 Open at Sandwich informed its readers, ‘naturally the play of Harry Vardon attracted a considerable amount of attention and the spectators were treated to a splendid exhibition of the game’.<sup>111</sup> Whereas at Deal in 1920, James Braid clearly appealed to many female fans: ‘Braid seemed rather frightened on the greens...and those faithful ladies, who follow him around with dog-like devotion and pathetic eye, suffered severely yesterday’.<sup>112</sup> The amateur golfer was awarded pseudo-royal status, by the golfing galleries: ‘Wethered tapped his ball to the lip of the hole to win the title and stepped into his kingdom amid the acclamations of his subjects [the 1923 crowd at Deal]’.<sup>113</sup> The *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* recognised the acclaim received by the 1938 Champion winning at Royal St. George’s GC: ‘a more popular win than Reginald Whitcombe’s there could not have been and the prolonged plaudits at the presentation of the cup were a tribute’.<sup>114</sup> This was Whitcombe, the third of three golfing brothers fourteenth attempt to win The Open, and the account reflects how, as the British social anthropologist Kate Fox identifies, the underdog is automatically and instinctively adopted by the British crowd as an extension of the desire to see justice in all elements of life, including sport.<sup>115</sup>

### **Displays of banal and hot nationalism at the golf in Kent.**

The galleries certainly favoured their heroes and on occasions demonstrated great patriotic, or as the academic Michael Billig describes it, ‘banal nationalism’ support for the home players. Yet equally, there are many accounts of the spectators displaying support for the leading overseas golfers, who played in the Opens.<sup>116</sup> This statement demonstrates that Billig’s notion

of a shared sense of national belonging to the homeland was most undoubtedly present. Rob Steen describes the former as the Us Syndrome, and adds that while nationalism is problematic, ‘it gives us a good excuse for some damn fine sport’.<sup>117</sup> This is further developed by the researchers Hywel Bishop and Adam Jaworski arguing that the role of national identity, the nation and nationalism is always relevant when international sporting events are witnessed.<sup>118</sup> One of the most prominent times for spectators to be so supportive is when patriotic pride and passion are involved. This actual or metaphorical form of flag-waving, as Billig describes it, supports political activist and author C.L.R. James’ notion that sport is never only about sport, but has wider cultural and political undertones.<sup>119</sup> However, the support demonstrated for the American and international visitors are examples of a ‘meritocratic-based celebrity’ for which sport is particularly good at creating, regardless of their country of origin.<sup>120</sup> As another political studies writer, Diana-Luiza Dumitriu highlights, ultimately, people relate to national identities and celebrities, as they both trigger feelings of emotional engagement.<sup>121</sup> When J.H. Taylor won in 1894 at Sandwich, he was immensely popular, as the first Englishman to win the Open Championship.<sup>122</sup> It was also the first time The Open had been held outside of Scotland and as golf historian, Furber noted, not surprisingly, ‘J. H. Taylor was a favourite of the crowd who saw him as the first English professional capable of beating the Scottish supremacy’. J. H. Taylor himself recalled that ‘while playing the closing holes a good number of spectators had arrived to see me finish’. Equally, when Henry Cotton was aiming for victory at Royal St. George’s GC in 1934, his nationality was a factor in the crowd support. Even though Cotton had become the professional at the Royal Waterloo club in Belgium, Furber penned, ‘[Cotton] was nonetheless every inch an Englishman and had brought back a smile to the thousands who followed him over the three days’.<sup>123</sup> *The Yorkshire Post* also demonstrated this patriotic swell of support, ‘the prospect of this British victory brought to the course today a large



crowd of English [British] enthusiasts who were eager to see for themselves whether Cotton could prevail'.<sup>124</sup> Again, it was not just when watching the professionals play that patriotic passions were present within the galleries; the newspapers clearly stoked this sentiment with their potentially provocative description of the non-British participant. Bernard Darwin as *The Times* golf correspondent provided this piece on the 1914 Amateur Championships at Sandwich, as if he were reporting on a battle not a game of golf:

The 17th caused every patriot in the crowd to shudder audibly as Tubbs played a host of poor shots to lose the hole to his American opponent. Then, amid the whispered prayers of the crowd, Tubbs managed to win on the 18th green. The spectators were divided in their feelings, they sympathised with the vanquished but recognised that a real menace to having a British winner had been removed.<sup>125</sup>

He went on in an even more war-like tone, 'the match saw the American invader defeated but only after a gallant fightback to lose at the last'.<sup>126</sup> The ultimate and understandable cause of patriotic or banal nationalism support comes in sporting events between teams representing their countries. The importance and intensity are magnified, particularly for the British media and by extension the spectator, on account of the cultural significance that sport represents for a country that considers itself to be the home of organised sport.<sup>127</sup> For men's amateur golf this is the Walker Cup; the 1930 event was held at Royal St. George's. The teams were captained by two of the most famous amateur golfers of all time, George Wethered of England and Bobby Jones from the USA. As was the tradition, the two captains competed against each other. *The Times* wrote, 'they were all square at the turn and the [home] crowd rejoiced loudly, unaware of the impending doom as Jones won three of the next four holes scoring 4, 3, 3 and 3'.<sup>128</sup> This dominance by Bobby Jones was symptomatic of the match, as the result of the match saw the USA win ten matches to just two games by the British and Irish team.

This anti-American, Union Flag-waving sentiment was not omnipresent and the Kent crowds recognised and wholly supported three of the greatest American golfers in the inter-

war era. When Walter Hagen won his third Open Championship, there was a clear sign of him winning over the local crowd. Hagen acknowledged when writing about his career, that he had received acclaim for winning in 1924 at Hoylake, but his 1928 win at Sandwich ‘was greeted by increased warmth and sincerity, with applause, cheering and words of congratulations and eager smiles from huge galleries that followed him around’. As his final round in that year progressed, he wrote, ‘I began to pick up a bigger gallery...they came streaming after me, calling out my name and giving me reports of my competitors’.<sup>129</sup> Even in the intensity of the Walker Cup, *The Belfast Newsletter* acknowledged that, ‘the idol of American golf, Bobby Jones, drew the largest gallery and delighted the crowd by the magnificence of his shots’.<sup>130</sup> Finally, the third American star to excite and win over the British crowd was Gene Sarazen. When he won The Open in 1932, on the only occasion it was played at Prince’s GC, the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* wrote, ‘The new champion [Sarazen] has always been popular with the crowds because of his cheery and modest bearing’.<sup>131</sup> *The Courier and Advertiser* added, ‘even the most biased partisan must admit the merit of the performance’.<sup>132</sup> *The Yorkshire Post* helps to explain further why he was so popular: ‘Sarazen’s geniality and his sporting attitude have always endeared him to a British crowd.’ It was also evidenced by the paper printing a transcript of his victory speech when Sarazen proclaimed, ‘I think your British golf crowds are wonderful ... both on and off the course hundreds of people told me that if one of your men could not succeed they wanted me to win. I was never hustled or jostled and not once had I to ask them to stand back. Their sporting spirit was wonderful’.<sup>133</sup> It was not just North American golfers that the Kent crowd were seen to cheer for; in 1928, the Argentinian Jose Jurado led after two rounds at Sandwich and was still in contention after the third, before falling away somewhat. *The Times* noted this support and wrote, ‘the hero of Tuesday took away with him a large and adoring crowd’.<sup>134</sup> In general, therefore, it seems that nationalism, in banal or more, hot forms, was more often

stoked up by team competition. In contrast, when individuals were representing their countries in international tournaments, it was significantly diluted. Overall, these examples strengthen the idea that there are, as Wendy Sealy reminds us, three motivations for spectators to attend golfing events: to see players win, to see them lose or to watch and enjoy all players regardless of the result.<sup>135</sup> To Sealy's list, this thesis can add a fourth reason, to support their country.

### **The behaviour of the Kent crowds**

The relationship between sports spectators and society is referred to as fandom and it has been heavily researched and many definitions exist. Wann et al. conclude that it can be defined as a culture or subculture and it comprises individuals who attend and watch sporting contests. By becoming absorbed by the contest, they can impact and influence the event through their interactions, including their mere presence but more critically by cheering or barracking of the players. More recently, Donald Getz, the events critic, has christened these kinds of spectators as sport junkies with cricket's Barmy Army as a contemporary example.<sup>136</sup> Early sports spectators were sometimes viewed as deviant, frenzied or hysterical and the author Rogan Taylor adds that football spectators were often stigmatized, but this could apply to the supporters at any sporting event who were not conforming to the accepted social norms, beliefs and attitudes.<sup>137</sup> All sports have rules of play and also unwritten rules that outline the etiquette that not only players and likewise spectators must abide by. Those fans that do not, according to Wann et al. are known as cultural dopes.<sup>138</sup>

The liberal support for all players and in particular those who displayed captivating characteristics was further recognised in a series of reports. It also recognised that the Kent crowds were extremely knowledgeable and often better behaved than those who frequented some of the other Open venues. The contrast between the 1894 Open Championship held in Sandwich and the 1894 Amateur Championship that was played on the links at Hoylake is

revealing. Before a ball was struck *The Manchester Courier* pleaded, ‘We trust that the crowd will be able to put more restraint upon themselves than was shown at the recent meeting at Hoylake and endeavour to control their excitement when a critical part of the game is reached’.<sup>139</sup> This theme was echoed by *The Scotsman* once the play had commenced, ‘there was not a great crowd of spectators to witness the play that there was at Hoylake. The advantage was that many of them were golfers, or, at least, had some idea of the game, which could not be said of the gathering which witnessed the Amateur Championships at Hoylake’.<sup>140</sup> It appears that the crowd at Hoylake had been very unmanageable. Two independent reports depict the events, firstly, ‘the final was witnessed by a crowd estimated at no less than 4,000 persons, who, truth to tell, slightly interfered with the play ... a long rope to keep the crowd back was carried forward in a semi-circle by sailors,’ and secondly, ‘the excitement was piling up with a vengeance and the huge crowd was at this point somewhat difficult to manage’.<sup>141</sup> Even after The Open had been held on the Kent courses on several further occasions, the behaviour and knowledge of the Kent crowd remained positive and praiseworthy. This was recognised in 1911 by *Golf Illustrated*, ‘Where they came from I do not know, but here [Sandwich] there is no need for a force of policemen.’ The merits of the crowd were further emphasised, ‘a huge crowd was expected [for the play-off] but instead, a good and extremely orderly and intelligent crowd were present’. The editor then speculated, ‘if the match had been played at St. Andrews or Hoylake, the size and quality of the crowd might be different’.<sup>142</sup> To summarise this theme, the esteemed golf writer Henry Longhurst wrote in *The Tatler*: ‘I do not think a better-conditioned course than Royal St. George’s exists in Britain at the time. The crowds were well-mannered and very admirably controlled by a selection of stewards who mingled firmness and politeness to a degree that has often been lacking at other events’.<sup>143</sup> These newspaper accounts show that for over forty years there were consistently good reports written about the Kent crowd’s high standards of

etiquette. This strongly suggests that the Kent or the Southern golf fan was more refined than their counterpart in the North West or Scotland. Previous research into the North v South divide in English spectator sport has focused on football, tennis and athletics, yet there has been limited research into golf. This new research supports the previous disclosures that northern crowds displayed intense levels of enthusiasm and emotion representative of their working-class culture and background. However, it highlights how in golf, the more conforming, conventional and middle-class Southerner was equally enthusiastic but perhaps more refined in their support.<sup>144</sup>

### **Catering for the Kent crowds**

Three further examples add to the narrative about the spectator experience at The Open and help to illustrate the costs associated with attending the golf and the broader services on offer. Firstly, this includes the recognition that the spectators were catered for in terms of the availability of refreshments. *The Dundee Advertiser* recounted that at The Open at Sandwich in 1894, ‘luncheon tents have been erected’, but it does not expand in any detail as regards the catering arrangements.<sup>145</sup> Whereas, the records in the Royal St. George’s archives are more enlightening regarding the access to the catering and the cost of food at The 1938 Open. The records show that luncheon was provided in a Member’s Tent, but this was only for members and their guests who were holding temporary members’ passes. So this suggests these refreshments were not available to the general public. The tickets for the luncheon were available at 3s. 6d. per person and that tea was 1s. 6d. per person. The combination of exclusivity and the cost reflect the privileged position and socio-economic status enjoyed by the members. Secondly, for those who travelled by car, the archives reveal that once again the members received preferential treatment. Their motor cars were parked for free, on the production of a Member’s Badge, in the field known as the Running Green. Whereas, the parking arrangements for non-members’ saw cars diverted to the farm entrance on the left of

Sandown Road, some 600 yards before reaching the club. Unfortunately, no record of the costs associated with non-member car parking is recorded, but there was no suggestion that it was free.<sup>146</sup> Thirdly, the opportunity to sell golf-related equipment to the captive-niche market was realised with the first Exhibition Tent, the forerunner of what is now called the Tented Village, being erected at the 1909 Open in Deal. Within the Exhibition Tent, the manufacturers and retailers could display their products and wares to the public.<sup>147</sup> *The Citizen* proclaimed it ‘an astounding attraction’ and that ‘the success has induced the promoters (The Golf Agency Edinburgh and London) to make it a permanent feature at the championship gatherings.’ There were prizes for many of the fine exhibits and gold medals were given in each section in addition to handsome money awards.<sup>148</sup> By 1911 *Golf Illustrated* recognised the impact of this commercial venture informing its readers, ‘there were now two sides of the Open, the playing and the business.’ The Open was an important time to launch one hundred and one things. Clubs, balls, clothing and other equipment needed for the upkeep of the course and the periodical highlighted that ‘thousands of pounds were spent annually’.<sup>149</sup> From the same article, it is clear that psychological marketing strategies were already in evidence with sales-people dressed in military uniform on-hand promoting the new Colonel golf ball. Golfing clothing was also available with two recognisable modern-day brands present: ‘Burberry’s golfing suits and coats being much admired and Jaeger had a nice stall, and their Shetland wool vests were much sought after’.<sup>150</sup> A branded product that has not survived was Gripolin. Gripolin was advertised as a new preparation for the hands, it was claimed to be better than pitch or any other kind of wax and was a product used by golfers to stop their clubs from slipping in their hands in an era before the invention of the golf glove. This demonstrates that the golf suppliers had already identified that the galleries had sufficient disposable income, after all the expenses incurred in attending the golf, to invest in new equipment and apparel and further suggests the relative wealth of the clientele.

Finally, the close relationship with the railways is evidenced by the SERC having representation within the tent answering enquires and looking after all the railway-related arrangements for the exhibitors.<sup>151</sup> The inclusion of this merchandising venture was not always a total success, for in 1938 a massive storm blew across the Kent Coast on the night before the final two rounds at Royal St. George's GC. This destroyed the Exhibition Tent (Figure 8) and scattered the merchandise across the fairways and even onto the adjoining Prince's GC as *The Times* described, 'gale force winds ripped apart the large exhibition tent and scattered debris for a mile around'.<sup>152</sup>

[Figure 8: near here].

This loss of equipment and the forfeit of income on the final day would have impacted the profit the vendors would have anticipated, who together as the Golf and Allied Trades Exhibitors had paid £200 to erect their 200' x 60' marquee.<sup>153</sup> Notwithstanding this unfortunate episode, the Tented Village has become synonymous with The Open and part of the visitor experience for all attendees.

## **Conclusion**

The main aim of this article was to widen the discussion on spectatorism by investigating the composition, attitudes and behaviours of spectators at the early golf championships held in Kent. A significant point to arise is that between 1892 and 1938 the size of the golfing galleries increased and took part in what John Zauhar called spectatorism, travelling by train and car to watch the golfing championships held on the golf links of East Kent.<sup>154</sup> The relative proximity to London and the excellent railway links with the capital and the wider southeast of England encouraged an enthusiastic golfing community to watch the various championships as they unfolded. Although the specific crowd numbers cannot be categorically verified, and even if they were regularly reported to be lower than at the Opens when held in Scotland or Lancashire, the crowds clearly supported the Championships in

increasing numbers over the forty-plus years of this study. There was some evidence that the Scottish press initially mourned the loss of their monopoly on hosting The Open and that it might have caused some level of resentment as *The Glasgow Herald* lamented, ‘the only drawback is the long journey necessary in order to reach this remote district from Scotland’.<sup>155</sup> This sentiment peaked in *The Dundee Courier* in 1899 but was not a recurring theme in newspaper accounts into the twentieth century.<sup>156</sup> Nevertheless, those present were able to create an atmosphere and a sense of occasion and the findings of this article provide exciting insights into these golfing galleries who involved themselves in what Pine and Gilmour termed passive participation.<sup>157</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the overwhelming majority in the galleries according to the variety of sources investigated were men. Yet, they were undoubtedly not male-only bastions compared with images of other sporting crowds from the period with a noticeable number of women being present, supplementing the male spectators at the golf. The theoretical implications of these findings are that spectatorism through passive golf tourism was accessible for these women in terms of being more time-liberated and therefore able to watch the tournaments. Further evidence from this study confirms that the galleries were mainly drawn from the upper and upper-middle classes. This position was specifically supported by highlighting their attire, the examples of the costs associated with attending the events, including catering and markedly by the presence of the expensive cars that cost considerably more than the annual salary of the average working man. While women had found access to golf, in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras, easier than the working classes this research has shown the presence of females and some working-class spectators in the golf galleries, but for both segments, progress was less widespread than other advances in society.

The ultimate and crowning example of golfing fandom was the regular patronage by the Prince of Wales. His presence was recognition and acceptance that watching golf was a



legitimate and no longer an example of deviant activity associated with the pleasurable consumption of unnecessary goods and services. Likewise, the reporting on his attendance in the press would have further sought to promote this change in attitude and also to encourage broader participation in golf generally. An important contribution to this experience commenced at the 1909 Open held at Royal Cinque Port GC and was a growing leisure-shopping experience, with the presence of the Exhibition Tent selling all manner of golfing goods to the captive golfing audience.

This article has demonstrated that the galleries were undoubtedly very engaged in their support for the players who took part. The Kent crowds not only witnessed some historic golfing moments but cheered for and suffered with the players regardless, be they male or female, professional or amateur, British or American who made these occasions happen. The rapturous support for the victors was recorded and this was particularly pronounced if they were English or later on, British, demonstrating a level of banal nationalism or that a keen patriotic persuasion was a consistent theme. Yet, they were equally strong to adopt and support some of the greatest American players who crossed the Atlantic in the inter-war years to play and win The Open. The actions and support of the crowd have been seen to motivate the players to succeed and play their best, but also to intimidate the players and on occasions affected the outcome of some events which supports the theories of Wann et al. on fandom.<sup>158</sup> Finally, the empirical findings in this study provide a new understanding of how it was frequently recognised that the Kent crowd were extremely knowledgeable and well-behaved, displaying the attributes of fair play and outstanding etiquette towards all players at a level above, and not witnessed at all of the other championship courses.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The Scotsman, 12 June 1894

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- <sup>2</sup> Prestwick, St. Andrews and Musselburgh, Peter Lewis, 'The Structure and Format of the Open Championship 1919-1939', *Golfiana* 6 no. 2 (1994): 34-41.
- <sup>3</sup> Francis Murray, *The British Open: A Twentieth-Century History* (London: Pavilion Books, 2000), 15; The club's Royal title was not conferred until 1902 when it became Royal St George's Golf Club by which time Sandwich had hosted The Open for a second time. However, the course was still generally referred to as, Sandwich, in most literary accounts.
- <sup>4</sup> Although Hoylake had adopted the royal title in 1871, it officially became Royal Liverpool in 1901, *The Glasgow Herald*, 18 Nov 1907; *The Times*, 18 Nov 1907; Deal was granted its royal title in 1949 becoming Royal Cinque Ports
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