



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPEN (PG)

Director: Craig Roberts

Starring: Mark Rylance, Sally Hawkins, Rhys Ifans

UK, 2021, 1 hour 42 minutes

The Phantom of the Open is a 2021 British biographical comedy-drama film directed by Craig Roberts, from a screenplay by Simon Farnaby, based upon the biography *The Phantom of the Open: Maurice Flitcroft, The World's Worst Golfer* by Farnaby and Scott Murray.

It is an amiably daft and sentimental Britfilm, a comedy of the underdog starring Mark Rylance, based on the strange true story of Maurice Flitcroft, a Barrow-in-Furness shipyard worker and amateur golfer who took up the sport in middle-age. Flitcroft practised on the beach, and became known for cheekily entering the British Open golf championship in 1976 as a self-declared professional, thus circumventing the handicap requirement for amateurs.

"Having scored with the delightful "Paddington 2" script, Farnaby essentially writes Flitcroft as a larger, de-furred version of the lovably bumbling bear, stumbling catastrophically through assorted farcical scenarios and somehow emerging a winner even when he loses." (Guy Lodge, Variety, October 20 2021)

Reviewing the book on which the film is based, Brian Oliver wrote: *"Maurice Flitcroft, who died three years ago, was the forerunner of Eddie the Eagle, Eric the Eel and the Jamaican bobsleigh team [. . .] He was committed, opinionated, argumentative, stubborn, proud, and absolutely hopeless at golf, a game he did not take up until he was in his 40s.[. . .] He could not afford a club membership, bought his clubs from a catalogue, wore plastic golf shoes, and managed to gain entry into a qualifying competition for the 1976 Open by pretending to be a professional. When he teed off at Formby, near Liverpool, he had never played 18 holes on a proper course. Maurice went round in 121, beating the previous record worst score by eight. [. . .] He was constantly referred to as "the Barrow crane driver" [. . .] Maurice was far more than a crane driver, though. Before that job he was a factory hand, a stunt diver in a holiday revue show, a sailor, a ship's fireman, a boilerman on a ferry, a shunter for British Rail, a foreman's clerk, a building site gopher, a warehouseman, a machine operator at a wool mill, a lorry driver for a glue firm, a car washer and polisher, a shoe polish salesman, and an ice cream man. He lost most of those jobs through arguing with those in authority."* (The Guardian, 18 July 2010)

Preview courtesy of eOne

Notes compiled by Richard Heatly