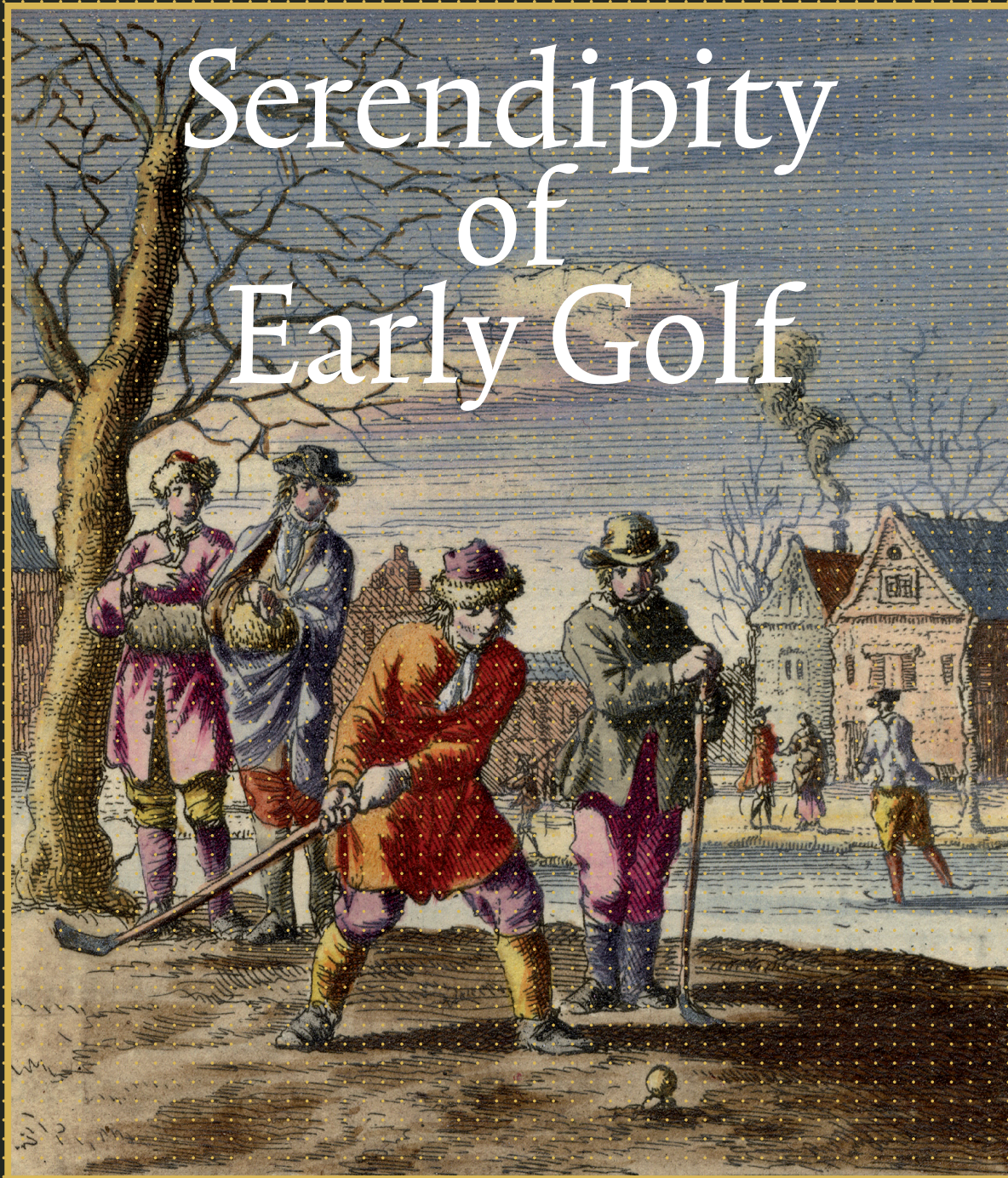


Serendipity of Early Golf



Robin K. Bargmann



MIDDEN EN EINDE. 87

De K O L F.

Trest gy het stuk des levens wel,
Zo wind gy 't allergrootste Spel.



Zo werd de Kloot, (na 't Kinds behaagen,)
Van hier na 't oogmerk toe geslaagen :
Maar wysheid kolft zyn eigen Hert ;
Op dat het uit gerustigheden,
Van 't Aardse wel-zyn , hier beneden,
Na 't Hemels Doel gedreeven werd.

F 4

PSALM

Serendipity of Early Golf



Robin K. Bargmann





M

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all those who have aided me and have given me invaluable advice while producing this book. I am appreciative of the kind support given by the many good friends, acquaintances and institutions. In particular, I would like to mention Angela Howe, director of the British Golf Museum in St Andrews for her kind assistance in obtaining important information. I am grateful to Anne Smith, granddaughter of the golf professional Henry Burrows, for giving me insight in her family archives and information about her grandfather's golfing career in the Netherlands. I have appreciated the discussions I have had with Olive Geddes of the National Library of Scotland and the information she willingly shared with me. It has been an inspiration to have had the opportunity to exchange opinions and views with Annemarie Willemsen of Leiden University, in particular about her extensive knowledge of medieval child games in the Low Countries.

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Countries. I have appreciated the cooperation received from Benno van Tilburg and his colleagues of RCE Lelystad in reviewing ship archaeological material. Jan Morren too has been very helpful in providing historical information about the Kennemerland area.

It is an honour to be a member of both the British Golf Collectors Society and European Association of Golf Historians and Collectors and to share the wealth of knowledge of their members. In particular I thank Christoph Meister, David Hamilton, Jean-Bernard Kaczmierzak, John Hanna and Donald Cameron for their friendship and helping hand. A special thanks to Pius Muskens, who has demonstrated his continuous energetic support as a true golf archivist and I wish him well. I also salute Ayolt Brongers for preserving the valuable golfing heritage of his father. Sadly our fellow historian and friend Erik Kuurstra of the Hilversumsche Golf Club passed away recently. He will be remembered for his sharing spirit and for his collegial support.

I am grateful to all institutions and individuals, who have provided images or granted permission for use of illustrations in this book. Moreover I have been able to use the many images that are now in the public domain. In producing the book, I want especially to thank Godfried Vonk for his professional support and advice as designer as well as his enthusiasm throughout the project. I must also mention Blair Charles, who edited my English text and helped me maintain chronological narrative. I could not have done without him or his keen understanding of the material. I thank Peter Mariee for his knowledgeable advice in book printing, and Arnout Spiegelenburg, who has been so kind to provide his special services in book binding.

I dedicate this book to my father of 94 years, who introduced me at a very young age to the game of golf. It is with him that I have shared many treasured moments in the wonderful world of golf over the years.

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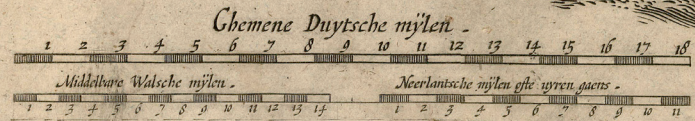
Civitatum Poporum, numerus in singulis Provinciis -

Brabantia	26	700
Gelabria	22	300
Zutphania	5	123
Limburgi	23	1163
Flandria	30	1154
Artesia	10	754
Hannonia	24	550
Hollandia	29	440
Zeelandia	9	147
Namurci	4	182
Marchionatus S. Iny.	1	9
Mechinica	5	70
Ultrapetiti	11	44
Francia	11	41
Frangalonia	1	145

Civitates. Popi

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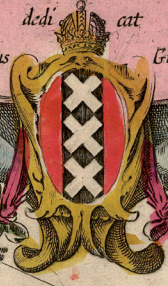
PROSOPOPEIA LEONIS BELGICI.
 Dardania virtutis, Opum, Martisq, secundu
 Gloria vix toto clauditur Orbe mea
 Regibus ast multis felicior esse videbor,
 Aeterna si me Pace beent Superj.





BELGICVS

AMPLISS. AC PRUDENTISS. D.
D. PRÆTORI, CONSVLIBVS TOTIQVE
SENATVI REIP. AMSTERODAMENSIS
HUNC LEONEM BELGICVM
dedi it
Cornelius Græbanus



De Noordzee

ZUYDER ZEE

FRANS ISULANA





Introduction

Leser, siet ghy somtyts fout,
Vonnist daarom niet te stout;
Denckt de maecker is een mens!
Niemant 'Soeck en Vind' zijn wens.

Reader, if you sometimes see a fault,
Do not therefore condemn too boldly;
Think the maker is a human!
No one 'Seeks and Finds' his wish.

In this poem Adriaen van de Venne, a painter and poet in the Golden Age of the Republic, begs the reader's indulgence for unintended errors made by him. He also gives a general statement that one does not always find what one is searching for. This may well have been the first step towards defining the meaning of *Serendipity*.

One hundred years later, to be exact on 28 January 1754, Horace Walpole took the next step in his letter to his cousin Horace Mann.

He wrote: "This discovery, indeed, is almost of that kind which I call *Serendipity*, a very expressive word, which, as I have nothing better to tell you, I shall endeavour to explain to you. You will understand it better by the derivation than by the definition. I once read a silly fairy tale, called *The Three Princes of Serendip*. As their highnesses travelled, they were always making discoveries, by accident and sagacity, of things which they were not in the quest of. For instance, one of them discovered that a mule blind of the right eye had travelled the same road lately, because the grass was eaten only on the left side, where it was worse than on the right. Now do you understand *Serendipity*? One of the most remarkable instances of this accidental sagacity - for you must observe that no discovery of a thing you are looking for comes under this description - was of my Lord Shaftsbury. Happening to dine at Lord Chancellor Clarendon's, he found out the marriage of the Duke of York and Mrs. Hyde, by the respect with which her mother treated her at the table".

Although the ineptness of Walpole's example fails to describe fully the process of *Serendipity* or its grand concept - making discoveries by accident and sagacity - his invention of this new word has left a lasting impact in literature and science.

Golf player on a Delft Blue tile

When starting to write a book about the history of golf, as so many have done before, I experienced that you have to set out in good faith for elsewhere and lose your bearings serendipitously. In other words, use any accidental and sagacious finds during your discovery tour through golf's history. Knowing the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus was serendipity gives sufficient comfort.

The fairy tale Walpole refers to in his letter, *The Three Princes of Serendip* written by the Italian writer Michele Tramezzino in 1557, was most probably based on a tale of ancient Persian or Indian origin. It was a slim volume, but very popular with the riddle guessing and fable reading intellectuals of sixteenth century Venice. Giovanni Boccaccio's well known *The Decameron* fits in this category of popular books too. It was while trying to find the definitive etymology of the word 'serendipity'. Both by reading Theodore Remer's book, 'Serendipity and the Three Princes: From the Peregrinaggio' (1964) and by studying the history of *Serendip*, a former name for Sri Lanka or Ceylon, when I came across an interesting find. One made by the Dutch golf historian Albert Bloemendaal in a 1932 article of the newspaper *Times of Ceylon*. That in the archives of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (the Dutch United East Indies Company) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, mention is made of the purchase of balls and clubs for playing golf.

The VOC had a trading post in Colombo from 1651 to 1796 and from the archives it can be determined that VOC officers played the game of golf on Ceylon. This find is what Walpole meant with the meaning of serendipity more than 250 years ago in his 1754 letter. It is an encouragement for all, historians and others alike, to continue to discover things the finder was not in search of and to be serendipitous in the matter of adventure through golfing history. There are still many mysteries to be resolved.

The date 1754 rings a bell with many golf adepts around the world, as it is the officially recognized founding date of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews. Although The Royal Burgess Golfing Society of Edinburgh still holds the title of the oldest golf club or society in Scotland. St Andrews is today recognized as the home of the modern game of golf as it originated from the ancient golfing societies in Scotland.

In that same respect, golf historians consider Edinburgh to be the ancient birthplace of golf in

Scotland. This was long before golf started on its unprecedented growth in popularity from the middle of the nineteenth century with the advent of the new gutta percha ball during the modern industrial age of Victorian Britain. There is no doubt the modern game of golf, as we know it today, originated in Scotland. The game then spread over the world with the global expansion of the British Empire. Eventually to reach the shores of the Netherlands in 1893.

However, the early game of golf's origins in Scotland and its relationship with the game of golf played in the Low Countries in the late middle ages and later, is the subject of continuous research by golf historians. The pioneer golf historian of the game of golf in the Low Countries was J.A. (Aijolt) Brongers. He extensively published articles in the magazine *Golf of the Nederlandse Golf Federatie* between 1937 until his unfortunate early death in a plane crash in 1954. S.J.H. (Steven) van Hengel took an interest in the pioneering work of Brongers. He continued the research, especially in city archives, looking for edicts and ordinances about the early game of golf or 'het sollen metten colve'. His work is compiled in the book *Early Golf*, published in 1985. Sadly, Steven van Hengel unexpectedly died in that same year, the day before his finest moment. He was to officially present his book during the traditional luncheon of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, of which he was a proud member. The occasion was on the final Sunday of the Open Championship, held that year at Royal St Georges, which I attended too. A sad ending to a glorious moment.

His work is a true monument to the historical research of the early game of golf and the possible relationship of the games existing in both Scotland and the Low Countries. His work has enticed many people to have a closer look at the origins of the game of golf and to contribute to resolving its many unfolding mysteries.

I had the privilege of knowing Steven van Hengel personally, since joining the Kennemer Golf & Country Club at a young age in 1964, and later serving with him in the Committee of the club between 1979 and 1982. Van Hengel was an experienced banker in Amsterdam and I was lucky to have the opportunity to do internship with his bank during my law studies at Leiden University. During our many contacts, I was intrigued by his extensive knowledge of history and especially his keen interest in the early game of golf in the Low Countries.

Golf gradually disappeared as a game during the latter part of the eighteenth century as the newer game of kolf evolved from it. We are fortunate that an overload of iconographic material, paintings, drawings, engravings, scriptures, etc, have been left from the period when the game was at its peak of popularity, so there is sufficient material for historians to dig into.

Following Steven's passing, I too have taken an interest in golf history and in particular the game of colf during the period of the Golden Age in the Low Countries. This book is homage to his great work as a golf historian that has inspired many to continue the search for further clues.

Van Hengel introduced the standard rule to use the word 'colf' with a 'c' when it relates to the early game of colf in the Low Countries; and 'kolf' with a 'k' when it relates to the newer mostly indoor game of kolf that gradually replaced the older game of colf. 'Golf' with a 'g' relates to the modern game as we play it today and originating from Scotland.

The Low Countries, ruled by the Burgundy House and later the Habsburg House, originally consisted of seventeen provinces, roughly the same area as the present Benelux territories. It is often referred to as either the Burgundy Netherlands or the Habsburg Netherlands. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the provinces of the Netherlands started to revolt against the Spanish Habsburg oppression. England and the Netherlands, with a common enemy in Spain were both successful in beating their shared opponent and forming alliances when necessary, notwithstanding the many conflicts between the two nations for supremacy at sea.

Eventually the northern seven provinces of the Habsburg Netherlands seceded and formed the Republic of the United Seven Provinces of the Netherlands ruled by the States General in partnership with the Stadtholdership of the House of Orange-Nassau. The provinces of the southern Netherlands remained under the Catholic Spanish Habsburg rule and this led to a huge exodus from Flanders of Protestant intellectuals, merchants and artisans to the northern neighbouring Republic. The combination of religious and intellectual freedom in the new state format resulted in a period of tremendous prosperity in this newly unified nation known as the Golden Age of the Republic.

The relationship between Scotland and the Low Countries during the time of the Burgundy Netherlands and before had always been very close. Both nations were, commercially and personally, very much interrelated, even at the highest level of the royal House of Stuart. This continued after the unification of the crowns of Scotland and England, when in 1603 the Stuart King, James VI of Scotland, succeeded the most famous Tudor Queen of England, Elizabeth I, to the English crown to become King James I of England. This event not only brought the royal and ancient game of golf to England at the grounds of Blackheath near Greenwich Palace. It also led to a Prince of Orange gaining the united thrones of Scotland and England as King William III in 1688. The game of golf remained very much a pastime of Scottish gentlemen. However, it only managed to survive as an activity of a few golfing societies in and

around Edinburgh united by Masonic tradition until its final breakthrough as a popular game in Victorian nineteenth century.

What the early origins of golf in Scotland are is still uncertain but most clues point towards the period of Normanisation of Britain following the victory of William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Then the state of Flanders was by far the most powerful and influential nation in Western Europe with a strong Carolingian lineage. William himself was a bastard son of a noble woman of Flanders giving him the proper lineage and he married Princess Matilda, Duchess of Flanders, to further strengthen the royal lineage.

The top layer of the society in Normandy was greatly influenced by people of Flanders. The Norman Conquest was most probably a conquest by Normandy, led by people from Flanders too, who settled in England in large numbers and eventually took over the royalty in Scotland. This would give credibility to the theory that golf in this manner was introduced as a game to Scotland and that these Flemish immigrants formed the basis of the continued close relationships between Scotland and the Low Countries.

The earliest mention of the game of colf known is in a scripture of the poet from Flanders Jacob Maerlant in his *Boeck Merlijn* of 1261. This book written in the old-Dutch language was based on the earlier book *Le Livre de Merlin* written by Robert de Boron in old-French. Where De Boron writes '*d'enfanz qui jouent à la çoule*' and '*si hauce la croce*', Maerlant says '*kinder...slogen dar cynen bal*' and '*gaff...enen slach...met ener colven*'. These children were playing a ball game and hitting with a club.

This leads me to believe the early game of colf in the Low Countries, '*sollen met den colve*' and '*souler à la crosse*' are one and the same game, albeit in the two languages spoken in the Low Countries, French and Dutch. Interestingly the game of crosse, *le jeu de crosse*, is still played in southern part of modern-day Belgium in the area of Mons or Bergen. Historians Geert and Sara Nijs extensively described the game of crosse in their book *Choule, The Non-Royal but most Ancient Game of Crosse* published in 2008.

Etymology is in itself a powerful tool to support or strengthen historical theses and to decipher historical problems. It is not an exact science and is open to interpretation. Most modern-day words have their roots in the past and etymology can show the way to more clarity. The word golf had been subject to many etymological surveys. Interestingly the English word *club* is etymologically derived from the Latin word *clava*, meaning club or stick, as is the Dutch word *colf*. Therefore, the words *club* and *colf* have the same meaning and the same derivation of the word *clava* the Romans used.

This is an acceptable conclusion as the Romans colonized and ruled over Britannia (south of Hadrian's

Wall) and Terra Belgica (the Low Countries or Flanders west of the Rhine and north of the Seine) during the same period (ca 0-500 AD). In both territories, the word *clava* had its own evolution as many other words too. In the Low Countries, from medieval times, the game of colf was popular and went by the name, '*het sollen met den colve*', the ball game with the club. This evolved to the single word '*colven*' meaning to play colf or just to colf.

The question now is whether and when, the word colf, meaning the game of colf, was imported into England or Scotland. In addition, did this word etymologically evolve to become the modern-day word golf? To cut a corner in this introduction one could state the expression *golf club*, in the sense of the stick to play the ball game with, is in a way a tautology as both words *golf* and *club* etymologically relate to the meaning stick. This leads to the logical conclusion that the word *golf* in Britain is a later day imported word from the Low Countries and relates to the game played rather than the stick used for the game.

Etymology does open new roads to resolving questions relating to the history of golf, the *historia golfiana*. In that sense I have always wondered whether the word *putt*, used in golf for the important final stroke to the hole or flagstick as the target, has any relation to the word *butt*. A word the Scottish language uses for the target in archery, knowing the ancient archery and golfing societies were closely related, often containing the same people as members.

All golf historians know the Act of Parliament of 1457 banning playing the game of golf in Edinburgh and other cities in Scotland in favour of practicing archery: *...and at ye futebawe and ye golf be utterly cryt done and not usyt. And at ye bowe markes be made at all parochkirks a pair of butts*. Why not use the same word for the target, i.e. the butt. A good putt is a good shot at the target.

I am also intrigued by the history of Bruntsfield Links in Edinburgh, considered the birthplace of golf in Scotland. This is where organised golf started in the early eighteenth century as a continuation of the early game of golf on this playground location for some time before. It was the first king of Scotland, King David I (1124 and 1153), who granted the community of the royal burgh Edinburgh the extensive area of land lying south of the city called the 'Borough-mour'.

Magistrates used their charter rights of 1508 to allow their citizens to use the terrain where '*...inhabitants sometimes amused themselves at the golf*' although '*it was an unfit place for any person to walk in*' because of the many quarry holes. After the wood of the forest of Burgmuir had been cut and the terrain had been quarried the area was quite dangerous. It gradually was turned into a playground and given the name



Bruntsfield Links adjacent to Bruntsfield House. After this playground became overcrowded, the golf players moved to Leith, the town port of Edinburgh. There, on the sandy coastal area outside the city walls, they established a new links as a playground. This is where the Company of Edinburgh Golfers established itself in 1744. Other golfing societies moved from Bruntsfield Links to Musselburgh where the Honourable Company eventually joined them too. Bruntsfield Links, as the first real playground for organised golf, was therefore quite a distance from the coastal areas of Edinburgh. The question arises as to whether the word *links* is not to be considered meaning a designated playground where golf and other games were played.

I have discussed and reproduced the poem *The GOFF* by Thomas Mathison in its entirety as it gives a playful but comprehensive description in a classical manner of golf being played in Edinburgh in the middle of the eighteenth century.

The comparison with Haarlem is interesting too, as Albrecht, Count of Holland, granted De Baen to this city in 1389 as a playground for everlasting days. Here the citizens played their most favourite games, such as colf and caets, and practiced archery too. They would also form their societies called *Schutterijen*. To this day De Baen is still a public park in the Haarlemmer Hout, much like Bruntsfield Links in Edinburgh is.

I have given an overview of the early game of caets in the Low Countries, a precursor of the modern game of tennis, because of the many similarities with colf. Colf and caets were the two most popular pastimes and used the same type of leathery balls, albeit with different sizes. In his book *Heeft yemant lust met bal,*

of met reket te spelen the historian Cees de Bondt has given a wonderful survey of the old game of caets as it was played in the Low Countries.

The game of colf took to the ice in winter when ordinary economic life had come to a standstill because of frozen waterways and the freezing cold temperatures. The Little Ice Age, as we still call it today, during the early part of the Golden Age of the Republic was a period of frequent long and cold winters.

Many well-known painters of that period have illustrated scenes of winter amusements. It is almost surprising to see how many scenes contain people playing colf, the most popular pastime on ice together with ice skating and sleighing. These images give us a huge amount of information on how the game was played and what material was used. The similarities between the game of colf in the Low Countries and the game of golf in Scotland are quite remarkable. This leads to the question what relationship there is between colf and golf and what the origins of both games are. We indeed may have to go back to the days of the Norman Conquest to find an answer and to determine whether the people of Flanders colonizing Britain introduced the ancient game of golf to Alba (Scotland).

It is quite clear that the clubs used in the Low Countries and Scotland are different, the leaden colf versus the wooden club. Although occasionally, Dutch painters pictured the '*Schotse kliek*', an imported club from Scotland or England (Blackheath). In his poem, Six van Chandelier also makes the distinction between the colf and the cleek from Scotland.

When the game of colf in the Republic gradually faded away into obscurity during the eighteenth century, golf in Scotland became an organised game.

There the few golfing societies managed to keep the game going as a pastime and save it from extinction before golf's sudden explosion in popularity in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Where relevant I have intertwined the history of golf with other historical events taking place so as not to isolate golf history itself but to create an understanding of the development of colf and golf in the context of the broader history of society.

I have given a short survey of the beginnings of modern golf in the Netherlands in the 1890s. It was much a game organised by the Dutch aristocrats and well-to-do citizens rather than a game played by British expats in the Netherlands. The close personal and commercial relations between the British and Dutch nations in the East Indies are an important reason for the growth in popularity of British outdoor sports in the Netherlands during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Four golf clubs established themselves in the Netherlands between 1893 and 1895: The Hague Golf Club, Doornsche Golf Club, Rosendaelsche Golf Club and Hilversumsche Golf Club. It would take another fifteen years before the foundation of Kennemer Golf Club in 1910 at Santpoort.

This book has been written in English to enable a broader public with an interest in the history of colf played in the Low Countries and its relationship with Scotland to access the information. For this reason too, a short survey is given of the early beginnings of golf in the Netherlands to 1910 when Kennemer Golf Club was founded.

I wish you much enjoyment reading this book.