

chapter 1

The early games





The early games

People often state the origins of golf are a matter of mystery or even controversy. Many books about the game of golf have similar introductions stating that it is unclear where and when this game originated. History is not an exact mathematical science although historians do have a liking for clear dates and facts.



William Innes, *The Society of Goffers at Blackheath*, (1793), engraved by Valentine Green after Lemuel Francis Abbott

There are many dates relating to documents containing the word golf or words etymologically related to the modern word golf such as goff and gouff or colf and kolf. The Romans used the Latin word 'clava', meaning club. Clava is indeed the Darwinian ancestor of the English word club and the Dutch word colf. Both 'golf' and 'colf' have their etymological roots in the Latin word 'clava' from the time when Romans colonized both Britain and the Low Countries at the start of the era.

One cannot state that golf started at any particular location or at any particular time. One can study the forerunners of the modern game of golf as played today and there is an overload of evidence showing the game spread around the world hand-in-hand with the expansion of the British Empire. There is also no doubt the modern game of golf played on the British Isles has its origins in Scotland.

The game most probably spread to the rest of Britain following the union of the Kingdoms of Scotland and England when King James VI of Scotland inherited the English crown to become King James I of England and Ireland. After James Stuart moved his royal household to Greenwich Palace in London and taking with him many Scottish nobles, the Scottish influence in royal courts and society in England dramatically increased. This included introducing the game of golf as played then in most of the Scottish royal burghs, most importantly Edinburgh and St Andrews.

King James I of England founded the game of golf in Blackheath outside Greenwich Palace in London in 1608 more than 400 hundred years ago. A historic fact now recognised worldwide. This Stuart King took



King James VI of Scotland and James I of England and Ireland (1621), by Daniel Mytens (The National Portrait Gallery)

himself to London with a retinue of many hundreds of courtiers and servants. From their ranks would appear the first golfers known in London. They also played at Tothill Fields in Westminster. However, the game of golf did very much remain a Scottish pastime, even in England.

Scottish Players at Blackheath later in the eighteenth century characteristically wore traditional apparel in military like bright red jackets as a warning to pas-

sers-by of the acute danger of the hard feathery balls flying by over their heads. It is known the Scots in London preferred upholding their cultural heritage and identity. Family descendants both in England and in Scotland were involved in the formalization of companies and clubs of golf players in later days, many still known to this day.

Looking back in history there is little evidence in Scotland of the game of golf in the form of equipment, such as clubs or balls, or even visual images, such as drawings or paintings, from earlier than the mid-eighteenth century. The 'Troon clubs' probably belonging to a Stuart King in the early seventeenth century may be the oldest clubs known.

The only surviving written sources relate to the darker ages of golf in Scotland before the formal establishment of the game of golf through the first golfing societies. Societies such as the Royal Burgess Golfing Society of Edinburgh or the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, followed by the forming of golf clubs as we know them today.

Before the establishment of these golfing societies,



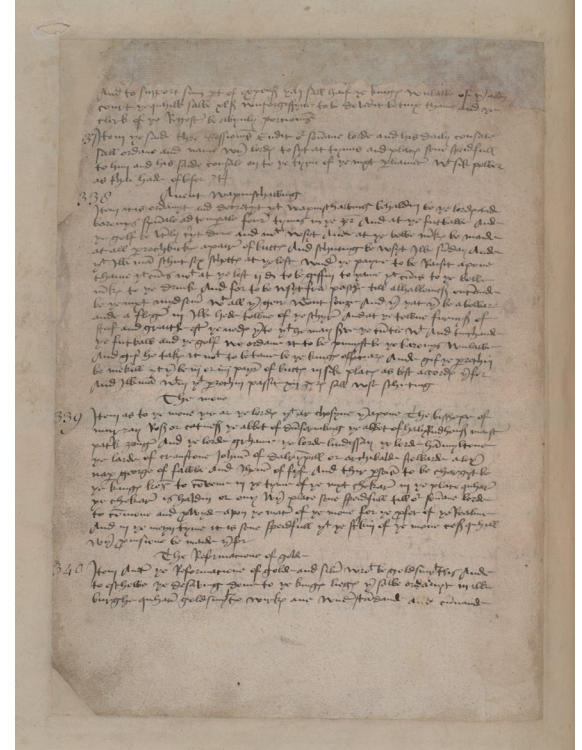
A 'Troon club' (British Golf Museum, St. Andrews)



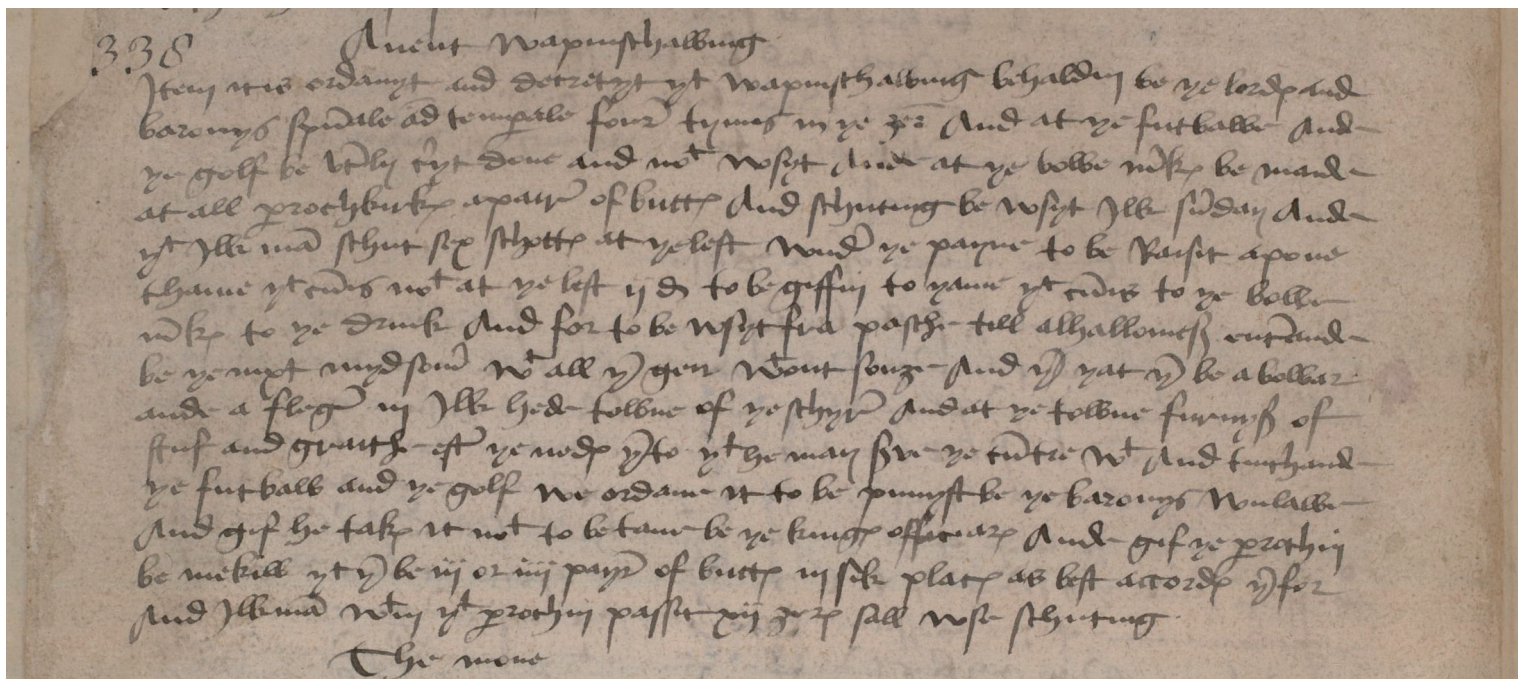
King James I of Scotland (c1425) (National Galleries of Scotland)



King James IV of Scotland (c1490) (National Galleries of Scotland)



Act of Parliament of Scotland of 6 March 1457, King James II decree (The National Archives of Scotland)



Act of Parliament of Scotland of 6 March 1457, King James II decree (The National Archives of Scotland) - page detail

the game of golf was a popular pastime on the playgrounds outside the burghs and cities of Scotland and before that in safe compounds of the streets and courtyards. Historians of the game of golf in Scotland turn to the written sources for reliable information or even proof. From this information, we can draw from our imagination how the game thrived and grew into a most popular game of Scottish nobility. The earliest written record of golf played in Scotland is the Act of Parliament of 1457 banning playing the game of golf in Edinburgh and other cities in Scotland. One should realise that in the fifteenth century Scotland, great turmoil plagued the country, with quarrelling between Scottish nobility and hostile

invasions by the English. The Stuart King James I of Scotland was the person who established a 'firm and sure peace' quelling internal divisions and repelling invaders by forming a strong and united army. Military training was essential, with archery practice made compulsory for men, starting at a young age. In this period, the first written evidence appears in a reference to the game of golf. The evidence shows that golf met with the disapproval of the civic establishment and military authorities. The earliest known written reference to golf in Scotland dates from 1457, when parliament decreed that: 338. Item 'ye fut bawe and ye golf be utterly cryt done and not usyt' and instead archery was to be practiced. Target prac-

tice in the kirk (church) yard was compulsory, with each man shooting at least six shots. Defaulters paid a penalty of two pennies, spent on drinks for those who had obeyed to the practice rules of archery.

The full text reads as follows:

338. Item it is ordanyt and decretyt that wapenschawing be haldin be ye lordis baronys spiritual and temporal four times in ye year. 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. And schuting be usyt ilk Sunday []. And touchand ye futebawe and ye golf We ordane tit to be punyست be ye baronys unlaw. And if he tak it not to be tain be ye kings officars.

[Item 338. It is ordained and decreed that the lords and barons, both spiritual and temporal, organize armorial displays four times in the year. And that football and golf should be utterly condemned and banned. And that for archery, a pair of targets be set up at all parish churches and shooting be practiced each Sunday []. And concerning football and golf we ordain that it be punished by the local barons. And if not done so, then by the King's officers.]

There are no records explaining how the Scots played the game of golf at this time. The fact of the same sentence line addressing both football and golf could lead to the conclusion that golf here is like shinty, a game played between two opposing teams chasing one ball. In those days, the Scots played golf and football in the streets and courtyards of the Scottish cities and most probably caused peril to people and goods. The main reason for banning football and golf does seem to be a merely need to have men practice archery in case of war.

James III repeated these royal decrees in 1471: (*'ye futbal and golf be abusyt in tyme coming'*). And again by James IV in 1491: (*'that in na place of the realme be usit fut bawis, gouff or uthir unprofitable sportis'*). Both decrees stress the importance again of archery practice.

Interestingly in an earlier parliamentary decree in 1424, only the playing of the game of football was banned (*'the king forbids that na man play at the fut ball'*) under pain of a firm penalty. This decree is almost a repetition of an earlier similar English decree of 1363. This could mean the game of golf had not yet gained popularity in the early part of the fifteenth century in Scotland.

In the sixteenth century, historic developments made King James IV change his mind about the still popular game of golf. He concluded a 'treaty of perpetual peace' with Henry VII, King of England. This factor reduced the need for training archers. In addition, gunpowder's invention caused muskets and cannons to replace the bow and arrow as military weapons. The peace did not last.

However, the Scots could continue to play the game of golf without the threat of royal wrath. Evidence of this King's own passion for the game is given by a regular supply of 'clubbes and ballis' to his majesty and his court. Even his granddaughter, Mary Queen of Scots would swing the club at Seton Palace in times of stress.

The sandy soil and drier climate of Scotland's seaside east coast was well suited for the game of golf. The seaside grass was naturally short and made access to the ball easier than in long wet inland grass. This natural habitat of the Scottish east coast gave an enormous boost to the development of the increasingly popular game of golf.

The Scottish Stuarts proved to be commercially



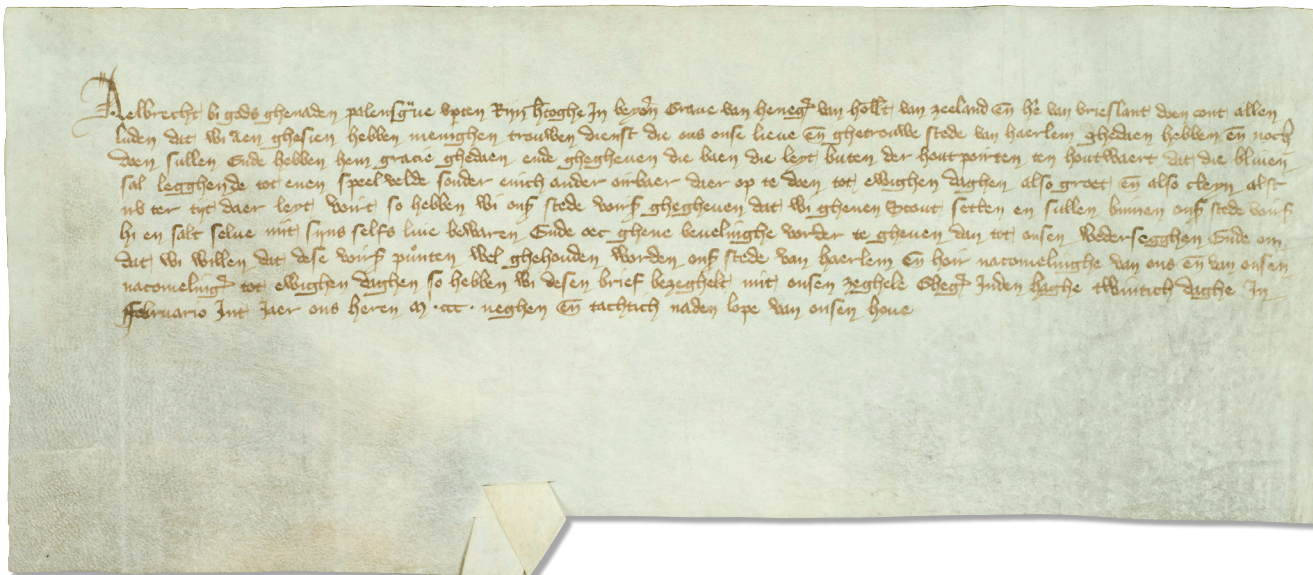
Leo Belgicus - *Novissima et Accuratissima Leonis Belgici* (1609) - detail, by Claes Jansz. Visscher (Historisch Museum Rotterdam)

thinking royals when the outflow of 'silver and gold out his Hienes kingdom of Scotland for bying of golf ballis' from the Low Countries needed to be stemmed. They granted a monopoly to the ball-maker James Melvill. Any ball found without a 'Melvill stamp' the state would confiscate. On the other hand, Melvill could not charge more than four shillings for a ball. Balls did not come cheaply in those days. Numerous documents found in archives on both sides of the North Sea in Scotland and the Netherlands, tell us the Scots imported huge amounts of balls from the Low Countries.

In the Low Countries, the filled leather ball had replaced the wooden ball used in the early game of colf by the thirteenth century. There were scores of ball makers in the Low Countries (locally called 'ballenfrutters') because of the popularity of the game of 'caets'. A regular ball was a

leather ball filled with wool or other animal hair. To increase the compression of a ball, the leather was sewn wet inside out and the reversed leather cover then filled with hair boiled in water. After the leather ball was firmly stuffed and closed it would be left to dry. The leather shrank and the hair expanded at the same time creating a naturally high compression and increasing the bounce of the ball.

Balls used for the game of colf were hardened and made heavier using white-lead paint. This also made the balls impervious to water and substantially improved the durability. Clearly finding or recovering a white ball made life a lot easier and cheaper for the wayward hitter. Later in time, feathers often replaced the hair to create a ball called the feathery ball. This ball was lighter in weight and created more compression because of a higher degree of expansion of the dried feathers.



Transcript of a Charter of the City of Haarlem sealed by Aelbrecht, Duke of Bavaria and Count of Holland etc., on 17th February 1389 (Noord-Hollands Archief, Haarlem)

One could also draw a comparison to the first edict found in the Low Countries. In those days, it was known as the Burgundy Netherlands and later, the Habsburg or Spanish Netherlands, consisting of what is now Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Issued in 1360 by the Magistrates of the City of Brussels:

Item 'wie met colven tsolt es om twintich schell oft op hare overste cleet'.

[That whoever plays ball ('sollen' is to play ball) with clubs ('colf' is a club) shall pay a fine of twenty shilling or have his coat confiscated].

This is the first of scores edicts found banning the game of colf from the streets in many cities in the Low Countries, usually because of the damage it caused to the citizens and their property. Clearly, the game was a nuisance within the city walls. The game of colf was clearly too popular and therefore needed removing from the streets to designated grounds outside the city walls, where there was minimal chance of injuring people or damaging property.

From documents, we can assume that many incidents had occurred, such as mud and dirt flying against buildings, people struck in their faces and bodies and legs hit by balls and clubs. Breaking window-panes and stained-glass church windows was a frequent encounter. Even outside the city walls, incidents occurred of crops damaged and cows scared away. There are many hints the game of colf in the early days was a rough game causing much hindrance.

'Straten werden onvry, goede luyden beseert en glaesen warden uitgesmeten, quetsingen komen te ontstaen, slick ende vuylnis met hare colven tegens de huysen te smyten,

Map of Haarlem and De Baan (1552) - detail (Noord-Hollands Archief, Haarlem)

de persons die des heerene straten syn gebruykende worden in haer aengesichten, tegen haar lyff ende beene aangeslagen, gras ende gewas vertrappt, ende koiën verjaagd.'

[Streets became unsafe, citizens hurt and windows broken, injuries occurred, mud and dirt thrown against walls with their clubs, people using the public streets are hit in the face, body and legs, grass and plants trampled, and cows scared away.]

In 1387, Albrecht of Bavaria, standing in for his brother as Regent of Holland, signed a charter for the City of Brielle. In those early days of the late Middle Ages, gambling was particularly popular. The decree forbade gambling on games, all games, whatever people called them.

Of course, certain exceptions were made for betting on games popular at the courts of Holland: 'caetsen' (tennis), 'worptafelen' (throwing the dice), 'mitter colven te slaen buten der veste onser Stede voirscreven' (playing colf outside the city walls), and 'scieten metten boge' (archery). This clearly shows the popularity of the game of colf, literally hitting [the ball] with a club ('mitter colve te slaen').

In 1389 Albrecht, then Count of Holland, wished to show his gratitude to the citizens of Haarlem by

granting the city a uniquely chosen area, 'de Baen', meaning 'the course', as a playground for everlasting days. On a map dated 1542 the course or playground named 'de Baen' is visible, located in the Haarlemmer Hout outside the south wall of the City of Haarlem.

Transcript of a charter of the City of Haarlem sealed by Duke Aelbrecht of Bavaria, Count of Holland etc. (1330-1404) on 17th February 1389. Noord-Hollands Archief, Haarlem Inv. Nr. Mr. A.J.E., 1-41):

'Aelbrecht bi gods ghenaden palensg(ra)ve upten Rijn h(e)rtoghe in Beye(re)n Grave van Heneg(ouwe) van Holl(an)t van Zeeland en(de) he(er)van Vrieslant doen cont allen luden dat wi aen ghesien hebben menighen trouwen dienst die onse lieve en(de) getrouwe stede van Haerlem ghedaen hebben en noch doen sullen Ende hebben hem graa(v)e ghedaen ende ghegheven die baen die leyt buten der Houtpoirten ten Houtwaert dit die bliven sal leggende tot enen speelveldt sonder enich ander oirbaer daer op te doen tot ewighen daghen also groet ende alsoe cleyn alst nu ter tijt daer leyt voir(noemt) so hebben wi ons stede voir(sijt) ghegheven dat wi gheven vercont setlen en sullen binnen ons(e) stede voir(sijt) hi en salt selve mit sijns selfs luie bewaren ende oec gheve bevelinghe w(e)rden te gheven dan tot onsen wedersegghen ende ons dat wi willen dat deze voir(sijde) punten wel ghehouden worden ons(e) stede van Haerlem en(de) hen nacomelingen van ene en(de) van onse





Map of Haarlem (1646), by Pieter Wils

nacomeling(en) tot ewighen daghen hebben wi desen brief bezeghelt mit onsen zeghele Rhegt inden Haghe twintig daghe in februario Int Jaer ons here M ccc (1300) neghen en(de) tachtich naden lope van onse hove.'

Detail:

'Ende hebben hem graa(v)e ghedaen ende ghegheven die baen die leyt buten der Houtpoirten ten Houtwaert dit die bliven sal leggende tot enen speelvelde sonder enich ander oirbaer daer op te doen tot ewighen daghen also groet ende alsoe cleyen alst nu ter tijt daer leyt voir(noemt)'

[Albert, Count of Holland] has granted [to the citizens of Haarlem] the course that lies outside the Houtpoort (= town gate) at Houtwaert as a playground and has decided that no other activity is permitted at it and that it will remain the same size as it is at the time.]

The course or playground had a length of about 320 metres and width of about 200 metres for use by the citizens as a playground, mainly for the game of 'colf', as well as other popular games such as 'caets'. The game of caets is a forerunner of the game of tennis played today and was hugely popular in many countries in Europe, especially among royalty.

In the game of caets, the player hits the ball with the palm of the hand. The French call the game 'jeu de

Village of Donpière in Description de Hainaut (1598)
-detail, by Adrien de Montigny of Valenciennes

paume'. The use of small hand racquets in a later variance to the game led to caets evolving into the modern game of tennis. The word 'baen' or course was in common use in connection with the games of colf, caets and malie.

People played the game of colf with wooden clubs, weighted with a leaden shoe at the bottom end cast around the club head. Balls were wooden, although later, probably under influence of the popular game of caets, leather balls filled with wool or other hair became 'en mode'.

In a later charter of 1497 mowing rights for the 'Baen' in Haarlem were granted by Philips of Burgundy,

Count of Holland, thus further ensuring the rights as a playground for 'colf' and 'caets'. In earlier times, the course had been in popular use by archery companies of the city. Nevertheless, granting a special playground for the game of colf was a favourable decision in those early days of this popular game. This can be seen from the many decrees in other cities banning 'sollen met colven' or 'slaen mitter colve', that is banning 'playing ball with clubs' or 'hitting with clubs' from the streets within the city walls altogether. In later days, there were special courts dedicated to the similar and perhaps more civilized game of 'jeu de mail' also known as 'malie' or 'pell-mell'. The game became hugely popular in higher aristocratic circles in the Low Countries due the increasing influence of French culture and fashion. Many cities built designated 'malie baenen' for this new fashionable game, such as The Hague and Utrecht. These are both still in existence but no longer in use for the malie game. A similar development happened in England, where at the same time the French game of 'pell-mell' became fashionable London's royal circles.



Leaden colf and wooden ball (15-16th century)





Winter landscape with windmills on a city wall, by Jan van Goyen

Pleasant view of the Maliebaen in Utrecht (1715), by Gerard Kribber, engraved by I. van Vianen (Atlas van Stolk, Rotterdam)

Looking at the Scottish decrees banning the games of football and later golf, in the early fifteenth century one wonders whether this was because it was such an 'unprofitable' sport or whether it also related to the games roughness.

It is commonly thought the early game of golf in Scotland or colf in the Low Countries refers to a static game, with players hitting their own still ball towards a distant target, and not a dynamic game. Here, two opposing teams of players contested a single moving ball towards each opponent's goal.

There are clear images in books of hours showing a stick and ball game with more players contesting one single ball. Goals were usually castle gates. Games were peacetime simulations of warfare with each party attacking or defending their castle gates inside the city walls. War and civil turmoil were an unpleasant fact in the period of the Middle Ages in Europe.

One can imagine that this game of golf or colf between two opposing teams of rushing players was a rough activity, as was early football, and caused some havoc within the city walls to humans and their property. This could also be a reason for ban-



Game of Pell-Mell (1625) - detail of album nr. 31, by Adriaen van de Venne

ning these two popular games in Scotland. The popular early game of caets in the Low Countries, played in the city streets and courtyards, usually received a







Book of hours of Adélaïde de Savoie, Duchess of Burgundy - June (c1460), unknown author (Institut de France, Musée Condé, Chantilly)

similar banning as colf did and games were detained on playgrounds outside the city walls.

Looking again at the decree of 1360 of the city of Brussels stating 'wie met colven tsolt', that whoever plays ball with clubs shall be fined. This word 'sollen' still exists in the modern Dutch language and means 'to drag or push around'. The Dutch expression 'iemand laat niet met zich sollen' meaning someone not to be trifled with, in a physical sense but also metaphorically. This does not refer to a static game, on the contrary. The derivation of the word 'sollen' comes from the French 'souler' or also written as 'chouler', known from the game 'chouler à la crosse'. The word 'crosse' meaning wooden club, constructed from two joint pieces of wood. The word 'choula' is an old word for ball. 'Chouler' is therefore playing ball, a ball game, and 'chouler à la crosse' playing ball with a wooden club. Most likely, this game – sollen met den colf or souler à la crosse – was originally played between two opposing teams of players contesting a single ball. Interestingly the game of chouler à la crosse has survived the ages past and today is still being played in small pockets north and south of the Belgian-French border in the Flanders region. Two teams of three people play the game with only one ball, an egg-shaped wooden ball called a 'choulette', and play cross-country from one post to the next post. The two teams play against one another with the same ball, laid still and played from where it lies.

This may be a reminder of the earlier game with a moving ball between two opposing teams. There are no known names or expressions in the Low Countries for old club games played with a single moving ball between two opposing teams of players, but it is most likely that this game would have existed.

Therefore, it is probable that the game referred to as 'het spel metten colve' or 'het sollen met colven', was the club and ball game. It is also probable that more varieties of the game with a still or moving ball existed

Book of hours of Adélaïde de Savoie, Duchess of Burgundy - November (c1460), unknown author (Institut de France, Musée Condé, Chantilly)

simultaneously in the Low Countries. However, as the game matured along with its players, the game most probably referred to as colf became a popular game with a ball played from where it lies to a certain target with each player playing his own ball. This needed more skill but a lot less physical effort.

In the fifteenth century, the popularity of the game of colf in the Low Countries grew steadily. Most of the ordinances counted were in the provinces Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht and Flanders. Especially Holland played a major role in the evolution of the game. A decree in Dordrecht (Keurboek 1, art. 204) issued in 1401, stating that: in the city furthermore nobody shall play any ball games whatsoever, on the wide streets, nor in churchyards, nor in churches, nor in cloisters, not to throw balls, nor to play ball games with a club ('noch cloten mitter colve').

In Utrecht in the same year, the city council forbids



Book of Hours (c1520) - detail, illustrated by Simon Bening of Bruges (The British Library)

playing golf or tennis at Oudwijker field ('nochte met colven en spelen nochte en teneyzen tot Oudwijker velt'). In 1455, the city of Leiden banned the game of colf from the inner city altogether, on land or on ice ('upty soe wel als upt lant'). In wintertime, the game of colf and many other games were hugely popular as the daily pace of life came to a moderate standstill and people enjoyed pastime on ice.

From these many ordinances, it is possible to draw a clear picture of the ever-growing popularity of the game of colf and the nuisance it was causing to the inner city life. Merchant's guilds too would extend their powers to ball and club makers, such was the growth of the game and the balls and clubs used.

With the changes in society in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, many games gained in popularity and attracted a large following. Especially ball games as caets and colf had developed rapidly using the safer leather balls filled with hair. Older twelfth



Game of crosse (1923), print by Anto Carte, Circle Montois de Bruxelles, St Antoine

and thirteenth century illustrations show the history of the early game of colf as it changed.

In many golf history books it is said the first organized game of golf or colf in the Low Countries can be proved to have occurred in 1297 in Loenen aan de Vecht, a township between Amsterdam and Utrecht. However, there is unfortunately no documentary proof of this first golf contest available and its history therefore relies mostly on folklore and legend kept alive in nineteenth century school teaching. Legend has it that on the day after Christmas in 1297 a game of colf took place to commemorate the unfortunate death of Floris V, Count of Holland and Zeeland, in 1296 in Muiderberg at the hands of his killer Gerard van Velzen, Lord of Kronenburg. It especially commemorated the triumph of justice over the evil murder of this hugely popular sovereign of Holland with the trial and execution of Van Velzen and his fellow conspirators in front of the Kronenburg Castle in Loenen.

Every year for almost 550 years until the demolition of Kronenburg Castle in 1831, there was apparently a commemorative game of colf played in Loenen. Although no documentary evidence is available of this first historic contest in 1297, one can still retrace the course played traditionally every year until the mid-nineteenth century.

It is said the contest started in front of the Courthouse ('Rechthuis') of Loenen and advanced to the Kronenburg Castle, where the castle door was the first target. The next track went along the river Vecht to the Mill. The second target was the Huis te Velde, another castle on the other side of the town of Loenen. Finally, the last track ran along the main road back to Loenen and returned to the door of the Courthouse. Winners would receive barrels of beer while the many spectators had apples as a treat. Although not enough evidence is available, the great symbolic value of this famous event makes it historically believable. The absence of full documentary proof does not make this history hogwash.



Floris V, Count of Holland (1254-1296)

Mail à la chicane (1624), by Paul Brill (Minneapolis Institute of Arts, The William Hood Dunwoody Fund)





Gerard van Velzen, Lord of Velzen, Noordwijk en Kronenburg (before 1850), by J. Buys

During a special exhibition organized by the Musée de Pau, this event was for the first time recognised as an important historic mark in the history of the early game of golf. The occasion was the centenary in 1956 of the venerable Pau Golf Club, founded in 1856 by mostly Scottish gentlemen, creating the oldest golf club on the European continent. On the club's centenary, the city dedicated a special exhibition in the town museum about the history of the game of golf. It is interesting to retrace the described course of the four tracks (nowadays referred to as 'holes') in Loenen and learn about the nature of the early game of colf. The backdrop of this commemorative event in Loenen highlights the importance of Count Floris V of Holland to political developments of the Low Countries. The choice of 'het spel mitter colve' as favoured game for this event displays the popularity of the early game of colf in the Netherlands. Steven van Hengel has elaborately described this episode of Loenen referred to in the Pau catalogue in the book *Early Golf* (1985). Jan ter Gouw had first published the annual event in his book *Volksvermaken* in 1871 based on an earlier manuscript *Het kolfslaan bij het slot Kronenburg te Loenen* written by a schoolteacher, H. Breuninghoff in Abcoude in 1836. He recounts the legend of the murder of Floris V and the following execution of his murderer Gerard van Velzen and he describes the commemorative colf contest being held in Loenen until 1831. However, there is unfortunately no documentary evidence found that this traditional colf event took place in Loenen starting in 1297 and from then on yearly.

Most probably, one of the earliest pictures or illustrations of a colfplayer, or at least a ball and stick player are to be found in the stained-glass 'Crécy' window of Gloucester cathedral in southern England. Popular legend has the window placed in the cathedral in the latter half of the fourteenth century serving to commemorate the battle of Crécy in 1346 and the siege of Calais in 1347 in northern France.

The roundel with the image of the 'Crécy' man is one of several in the cathedral window with scenes in France during the campaign. It is not possible to discover why the subject chosen was a colf player. It does show an image of a popular game of Flanders in the Low Countries, which obviously caught the imagination of the English.

Take note that Burgundian Netherlands (the Low Countries) territory in those days reached into what is nowadays northern France, including the area around Boulogne and Calais across the present-day language border dividing the Dutch/Flemish and French language domains.

The general thought is the depicted man is playing a game called 'choule'. However, the conclusion is justified that 'chouler à la crosse' and 'te sollen metten colve' represent the same club and ball game although in two different languages, French and Dutch/Flemish. In those early days, the club and ball game played in this region was the same, whether called 'chouler à la crosse' or 'sollen metten colve'.

The 'Crécy' man is in full swing hitting a ball. A closer study reveals the ball not placed on the ground between his feet but rather flying in the air at knee

height. This suggests the club and ball game played here is a variant of colf or crosse similar to the earlier 'shinty' like format.

The man is wearing a dress like coat with leggings. Unfortunately, the stained-glass piece with his head is either missing or not filled in. However, looking at the form in the glass it we can assume that he would have his head slightly tilted to his left, looking over his shoulder towards the ball. The Great East Window of Gloucester Cathedral is the largest stained-glass window in Great Britain. Created in around 1350 it depicts a popular representation of the Holy Virgin's Coronation.

Another interesting picture from about this same period is the illustration in the Flemish Book of Hours, depicting three players each with their colf and three balls on the ground. A few scholars have stated the white spot represents a smaller leather ball and the three larger and darker balls are wooden.

This is not correct. A closer look with modern digital techniques shows the white spot is a damaged spot with white paper showing through the displaced paint and not a white ball at all. The fourth man is probably the person acting as neutral arbiter and pointing at the inn where the waiting innkeeper standing in the doorway will serve drinks after the game.

Arbiters were customary and necessary because of the heavy gambling and betting habits of the players. Notable is the likeness between the period clothing of the men, with that of the 'Crécy' man. One could even restore the head of the 'Crécy' man using the head in reverse of the player on the left

Great East Window - detail, Crécy man playing cambuca, (Gloucester Cathedral Church of Saint Peter)





Seton Armorial (1591), The marriage of James Stuart IV, King of Scotland, and Margaret Tudor, daughter of Henry Tudor VII, King of England (National Library of Scotland - Sir Francis Ogilvy)

of the Flemish Book of Hours illustration to get an accurate feel of the image of the colf player on the stained-glass window. Why the 'Crécy' man's head is missing in the window remains a mystery. Some historians, such as David Stirk, Robert Browning and Fred Hawtree, have tried to link the game of golf as it developed in the early days in Scotland to the many military battles of that era. The battles of Crécy 1346, Poitiers 1346, and Baugé 1421 took place during the 'Hundred Years War' between the French and English.

The Scottish military had joined forces with the French to battle the English, most probably to protect their own political and commercial interests. The Scottish soldiers would have met with the habits and games of the people of Flanders in the southern Low Countries and France around Calais (or Calis). There may be much truth in this theory, considering that after the Norman Conquest of England, the people of Normandy and Flanders now populated England and that France was indeed their common enemy. The people from Flanders, having settled in Britain gradually moved from East Anglia and Northumbria into Alba now known as Scotland.

Over the years the Scottish with influx from Flanders came into conflict with the English with influx from Normandy.

As it happens, there have historically been continuous close ties between the Low Countries and Scotland, resulting in regular exchanges and friendly relationships between the two countries. It is notable that Scotland and the Low Countries have never declared war against each other and have always kept close personal ties at the highest levels. Both countries played their popular ball and stick game, whether called golf or colf. There is enough justification for the historic title of 'Royal and Ancient' for the game of golf. Over a period of nearly two hundred years from the Treaty of Glasgow in 1502 to the Glorious Revolution in 1688, each

Scottish monarch of the Stuart dynasty was involved in the game of golf as a player.

The game had become the outward symbol of the union of Scotland and England. The 1502 peace treaty allowed the Scots to indulge in their favourite sporting diversion of that time. A century later a Stuart King brought the game with him to the English court in London and from Blackheath unknowingly started the first movement of 'globalizing' the Scottish game of golf.

Before 1502 a multitude of laws made clear the ban of golf was imposed in the interest of military training of the Scots against the 'auld enimies of England'. It was only after the marriage of James IV with Princess Margaret, daughter of the English King Henry VII, and the ensuing treaty of perpetual peace with a re-



Book of Hours (c1520) - September (c1520), illustrated by Simon Bening of Bruges (The British Library)



Open Championship Challenge Belt (1860), won by Tom Morris jr. (British Golf Museum, St Andrews)

splendent ceremony at Holyrood Castle the change occurred. The new peace made it possible for the King and anybody else in Scotland to play golf with a clear conscience.

There is no evidence the Glasgow peace treaty may have brought the favourite sport of the Scottish Stuart kings into temporary fashion at the English royal court of the Tudors. The English Tudor kings remained fond of their royal game of tennis derived from the game of 'caets' (caitchpul) also named 'jeu de paume'.

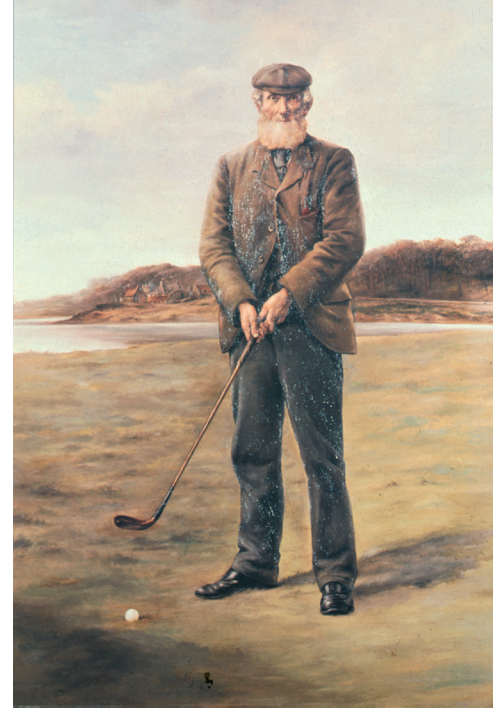
The preference of their Scottish relatives for a different ball game could have caught the eye of the Tudor family. In fact, the monarch whose example did most for the game of golf in England was James' IV grandson, James VI, who succeeded to the English throne as James I. This Scottish King was responsible for taking the royal and ancient game of Scotland to the royal courts of London. Only then did the preceding marriage of James IV to Margaret Tudor bring real peace and the game of golf to both countries.

The Scottish game of golf later entered a steady decline in the middle of the eighteenth century due to

costs rising beyond the average means of the ordinary Scot. In addition, the game had lost popularity at the royal court too. It is all credit to a minor circle of mainly Scottish Freemasons the game was kept going at the royal burghs in Scotland and at Blackheath in England. They kept golf from dying out altogether like the early game of colf had in the Low Countries under the French influence of the time.

A coincidence of several relevant historic events in the middle of the nineteenth century brought about an explosion of golfing activity in Britain that gave the modern game of golf new impulses. A new artisan class was born in the Industrial Revolution who had the time and need for leisure and sports.

The development of the railway increased the mobility of the people. New courses made possible and were built because of the invention of new mechanical techniques such as the grass mower. Most important was the introduction of a new material for the production of cheaper and more durable golf balls, the gutta percha ball. Gutta percha is a resin gathered from a tree in Malaysia.



Willie Park Snr, by John A.T. Bonner (British Golf Museum, St Andrews)

'Hail Gutta percha! Precious gum
Over Scotland's links long may ye bum'.

The new gutty ball was so hard that it could better withstand the power of iron clubs and even damaged the old wooden club heads. It could withstand wet conditions and with new industrial manufacturing techniques, mass-produced balls were substantially cheaper than was its feathery ball predecessor.

The popularity of the game grew dramatically and the number of golf societies increased more than tenfold within the time span of twenty years between 1870 and 1890 to almost 400 golf clubs. The game by its nature was both competitive and attractive to watch as well as to bet on.

Matches were organized and the first form of professional golf developed from this popularity. The first open golf tournament, as we know it today was organized at Prestwick in 1860. Eight professionals played three 12 hole rounds for a Challenge Belt prize for the championship, now generally regarded as the first British Open Championship and won by Willie Park Snr.

In this period, the game had also started spreading worldwide with the establishment of the British Empire. The first golf club started outside Britain was the Calcutta Golf Club in India in 1929. The first on the European continent was Pau Golf Club in Pau near the Pyrenees in Southern France in 1856. In the Netherlands Hague Golf Club would be the first formally instituted golf club in 1893.

Members of Pau Golf Club (c1890),
by Francis Powell Hopkins

