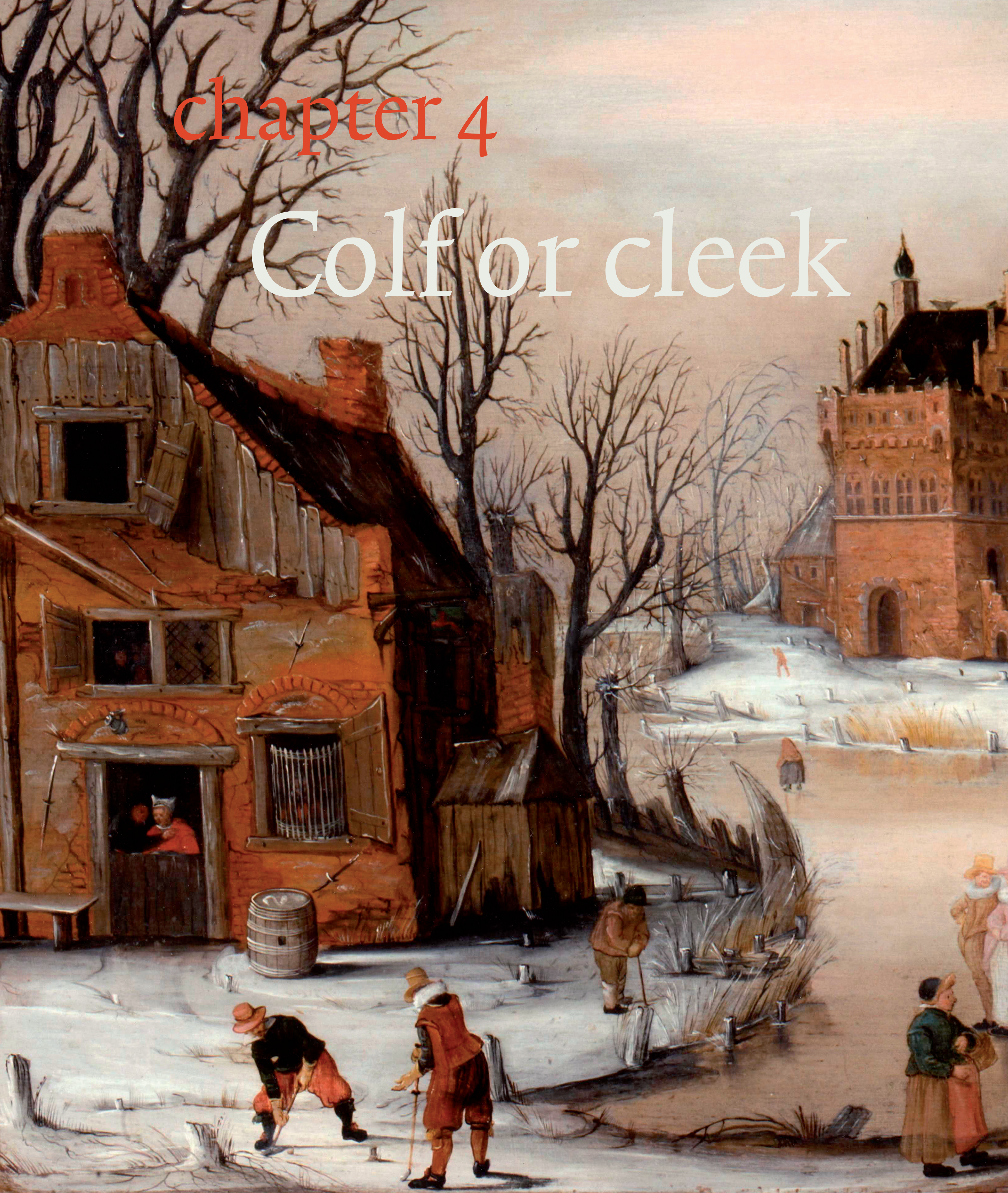


chapter 4

Colf or cleek

Colf or cleek

The colf is a club used in the game of colf or 'het spel metten colve', in the Low Countries. There are many iconographic images of a colf shown in numerous detailed paintings and prints. There are also a large number of illustrations of colfplayers on the delft blue decorated ornamental tiles popularly used in Dutch houses.

Colf player on a Delft Blue tile

Pictures of the colf as an attribute appear in a great number of landscape paintings and portraits of children. The game of colf is often referred to in documents found in archives, mostly city ordinances banning the playing of colf and banning the game from the streets.

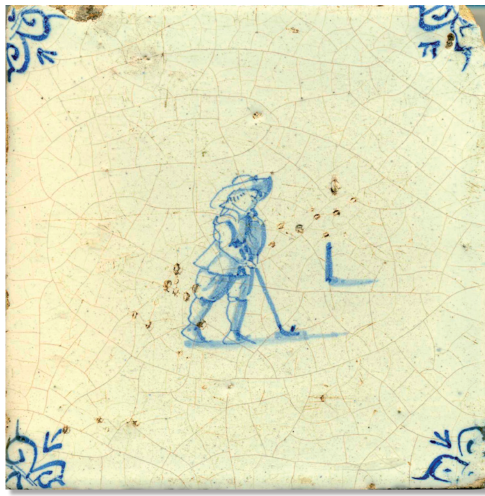
Very few colfs have survived to this day. The majority have come from archaeological shipwrecks. Mostly, it is the colf shoe or '*colfslof*' made of lead that has survived the wear of time. A colf is a one-piece club with a lead metal shoe wrapped around the club head. The metal shoe had a dual-purpose. First, it made the club head heavier, improving the swing weight of the club. Second, it protected the club head from damage caused by the blow when hitting the ball. Balls used in the game of colf were initially wooden balls but gradually, stuffed leather balls used in other games such as the game of '*caets*' replaced them.

There have been a small number of archaeological finds of a colf made in shipwrecks. A ship archaeologist studies shipwrecks and there have been many shipwrecks found in Dutch waters. Even prehistoric finds in the river delta of the Low Countries area. Noteworthy finds are shipwrecks from the Roman period up to the early Middle Ages and later periods. The Flevopolder in the IJsselmeer is a treasure house for ship archaeologists with more than 435 shipwrecks found.

Before impoldering, the South Sea was the important gateway to the open seas for the Republic and Amsterdam after the secession from the southern Low Countries following the fall of Antwerp to the Spaniards. Antwerp's connection to the North Sea was through the important but vulnerable De Scheldt waterway. Shipwrecks are interesting because they store a huge amount of historic information. Especially if they are found on the soft muddy ocean floor, they remain well preserved for posterity. After the shipwreck is found, the ship, cargo and inventory can tell us the story about its history, about when and where the ship was built as well about the type of ship and shipbuilding techniques. The cargo tells us about the routes the ship followed and its role in trade. The ships utensils and other objects can tell us about the daily life on-board. The Flevopolder added to the history of the early game of colf after a spectacular find of a shipwreck, a clinker-built coastal vessel of 20 m long and 5 m wide, near Biddinghuizen. Besides all the ordinary archaeological finds, the ship revealed a rare find of 16

Two boys with a colf, by unknown artist (Kennemer G&CC)

Boy and girl with a colf (c1635), by W. de Geest or environment (Kennemer G&CC)



Four Delft Blue tiles with colf players

complete colven with leaden colfsloffen and leather wound grips. Discovered in 1984, excavation of the shipwreck finally took place in 1992.

It was remarkably well preserved. From the dating of coins found, it could be determined the ship had sunk in about 1540. Based on certain repairs, the age of the ship was about 20 years. From tools and grains of corn found in and around the shipwreck, archaeologists inferred the ship regularly transported grain cargoes, most probably from the South Sea to the Baltic Sea. Because of the spectacular finds of colfs on-board the shipwreck, the ship received the name '*Biddinghuizer colfschip*'.

Besides the colf shoes, it was the first time sticks were found with the club head still attached to the shaft. The clubs seem to have been unused new specimens as there is no damage on the colf shoes. They were probably for trade and not for personal use by the ship's crew. Of the 16 colf clubs, 12 were for adults and four for children. Of the 12 adult clubs, nine were for right-handed players and three for left-handed. Of the children clubs, two were for right-handed players, and two clubs were symmetrical and therefore ambidextrous.

The smaller sized children club heads are about half the weight of the adult ones although only slightly smaller in length. Some clubs have a traditional decoration on the backside. The shafts are oval round with a thicker top end. The remains of the two grips found show horizontally weaving and attachment to the colf shaft with nails. One had a diagonally wound leather grip. Another had a thinly roped grip.

The length of the adult colf is on average 110 cm, the child's colf about 30 cm shorter. The diameter of the stick starts at the top end with 2.75 cm, tapering towards the bottom 1/3 of the club to 2.0 cm and widened again towards the club head. The grips are either made of plaited leather or wound rope and have a length of about 30 cm. Some colf clubs have no grip.

Colf shoes were normally made of a lead metal alloy. A cross-section of a colf club head shows a triangular almost symmetrical form: a flat sole, a flat angled hitting surface and a slightly rounded back. The length of a normal leaden colf shoe is c 10 cm, the width 3.5 cm and the height 4.0 cm. The club maker would bend or mould the colf shoe around the club head, cutting and soldering to fit tightly. The thickness of the leaden shoe is 2-4 mm. The smaller colf shoes are thinner and lighter. The slightly rounded backside of the colf shoe occasionally has small stamped decorations.

The colf clubs found show great similarity to the specimens pictured in the many winter landscape paintings of the seventeenth century. Although the clubs found on the Biddinghuizer colfship are

Colf clubheads from the 'Kennemerland' shipwreck (Shetland Museum)

A single colf and a set of eight colf clubheads from the 'Biddinghuizer colfschip,' Rijksdienst voor Archeologie, Cultuurlandschap en Monumenten (RACM) Scheepsarcheologie, Lelystad

Ice sailing (c1601), by Christoffel van Sichem

roughly half a century older. Interestingly the wood of the club head of the colf was not bent but rather was sawn in an angle from a straight board parallel to the annual rings of the tree. The width of the rings are also proof the outer part of the tree was used for cutting the stick being tougher and more flexible than the inner part. This inner part could easily crack under the force of a shot.

From the start point of a game of colf to the selected target, a stretch of play could cover up to a few hundred metres in length and would need several full shots to reach. Understandably, the colf needed to be of acceptable strength and durability. In the past, little research has been done about the early game of colf in the Low Countries and the equipment used for the game. Obviously, access to archives and manuscripts is difficult to those without a mastery of Dutch. Fortunately, there is a substantial amount of iconographic material in museums, catalogues and art books and this has sparked an interest in unravelling the mysteries of the past. The aim is to prove the possible relationship between the popular early game of colf played in the Low Countries and the game of golf played in Scotland.
S.J.H. (Steven) van Hengel followed in the footsteps of J.A. Brongers, who we can label as the pioneer historian of the Dutch game of colf. Art historians and museum conservators in the Netherlands have renewed the interest in the genre painting of the Dutch masters of the Low Countries. However, there is still inadequate knowledge about the early history and origins of the game of colf and its relationship with the Scottish game of golf.
Lately, the growth of information technology and the possibility of accessing relevant documentation through the internet have advanced the interest in history. In a matter of seconds, it is possible to connect to museums all over the globe and to review collections. The awareness that art belongs to the public domain is growing fast and information is becoming more freely available.
In addition, archives and libraries are embarking on painstaking and costly digitalizing projects making historic documents, books, magazines, and newspapers available to a larger public. The modern digital screen tablet has replaced the Roman clay tablets of old, symbolising the continuous information technology revolution through the ages. This will certainly lead to the unravelling of more dark secrets of the past and to a simpler approach to the history of golf.
Such irrelevant statements as 'who invented golf' or 'where did golf start' will become myths of the past and be replaced by mature discussions and exchanges of opinions based on facts. This in turn will lead to conclusions about the development and interrelationship of the various games of ball and stick games played in the fractured regions named after the seduced goddess *Europa* and the mother goddess *Brittania*. Together they must have played the ancient Roman ball game of '*paganica*'.

'When the sides have been drawn he braces himself and strikes his ash weighted with lead or his Scottish cleek of box wood, three fingers wide, one thick, with lead in it at the feather ball, invisible from the driving point at its landing, but noted by ball-markers, and colfing on, striking a post, or striking for the firthest, stroke by stroke, for money or beer in the tavern, notching [each stroke] on a slender branch which each [player] sticks in the front of his coat. For he who does not mind his tally-rod shall erase the score altogether.'

Poem by Joannes Six van Chandelier (translated detail).

Man with colf on ice (c1700), by Romeyn de Hooghe

Stone tablet of house at Oude Langedijk 7, Delft

Family coat of arms of organ builder Anthonie Klick, illustrated on the panel of the organ of the church in Culemborg on 20th September, 1720

Before the Biddinghuizer colfship was excavated, the scattered wreckage of a VOC fluitship *Lastdrager* in the waters of Shetland were studied by Robert Stenuit in a 1974 dissertation. The ship was lost in a storm in 1653 near the Isle of Yell, presumably while on its way to Batavia in the Dutch East Indies. Several strange and unknown artefacts had been excavated and stored for over fifteen years in an archive box. In the same period another shipwreck, the *Kennemerland*, had been found in 1978 and similar unidentified artefacts recovered.

It was not until 1987 that these artefacts were found to be the club heads of clubs used in the early game of colf in the Low Countries. This immediately led to an extensive and detailed study of these artefacts in the context of the early game of colf and the game played today in modern life. The description of the colfslof is 'a cast hollow shell, similar in shape and made of a metal with a green patina. The end of the club head is triangular in section with a flat bottom considerably shorter than the two vertical sides. In the middle, the top edge or upper angel is somewhat blunt or almost flattened. The profile of the top edge is concave, not unlike a clog.'

The Dutch word *'slof'* means slipper or soft shoe but usually translates as shoe. The sizes vary from 99 mm to 91 mm and all contained a wooden core, the remaining part of the wooden stick of the colf. Interestingly, the spectrometric analysis proves the colf shoes were made of brass and not a commonly used lead metal alloy. Iconographic evidence suggests that in the Low Countries people played the game using a colf with a metal covered head. However, occasionally we see pictured a so-called Scottish cleek, as described in Chandelier's poem.

The wooden cores of the four colf shoes of the *Lastdrager* also differ from the commonly used ash wood. They were identified as *Robinia pseudoacacia Linnaei* (being False Acacia or Black Locust). This is a tree of medium size and indigenous to the eastern part of North America. In fact, in the mid-seventeenth century, these trees were both imported into the Republic and locally cultivated.

The wood, used for various purposes, was 'as tough as ash and as strong as oak' and 'resistant to decay'. Apparently, it was also fit for steam bending. It has been determined from inside these colf shoes of the *Lastdrager* that the wood is indeed bent and consisted of two pieces of wood pegged together and glued with a natural pine resin-based material. The use of the acacia wood in the *Lastdrager* colf clubs is the only recording of this type of wood being used in making a colf. The preferred wood used for colf manufacturing was ash. Although there are early references, made by the Scottish club maker Kincaid in 1687, that ash and hazel are usable, the preferred wood for club making in Scotland in the first half of the nineteenth century was hickory. It was imported from America and said to be 'unbreakable'. The colf clubs found in the *Lastdrager* are different to the common clubs and colf shoes excavated from the M-11 in Biddinghuizen. Many colf shoes found during underground constructions in Amsterdam show likenesses to the Biddinghuizer colf clubs. There is of course the possibility the *Lastdrager*, carrying the colven with bronze colf shoes and made of the acacia wood, was transporting these from the Dutch colony Nieuw Amsterdam in North America. They could have been made there. There are records of people playing the game of colf in Beverwijck (now the New York state capital Albany) near Fort Orange along the Hudson River. The colf equipment on-board most probably was not commercial cargo but rather the personal property of the officers or passengers on-board. As the game of colf was extremely popular it would not be surprising if the Dutch expatriates played the game in their colonies and elsewhere and even produce the equipment locally with native material. Most iconographic sources depict the colven with bluntly shaped heads made of lead. However, there is also iconographic evidence of bronze or brass headed colven with sharp angles and a high toe end as the colfsloffen of the *Lastdrager* clearly show.

Another shipwreck, identified as the *Kennemerland* near the Shetlands, revealed amany colf shoe number of colven on-board. Christopher Dobbs described them in 1991. They are now in the Shetland Museum. These 'colfsloffen' found are identical to those of the Biddinhuizer colfship.

The early game of colf, that became popular in the Low Countries, is a long game played outdoors on roads, in fields or, in wintertime, on ice. The game was mainly played in the densely populated towns and cities of Holland, Zeeland and in Flanders, along-

View of New Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

Henry Tudor VIII, King of England, by Hans Holbein

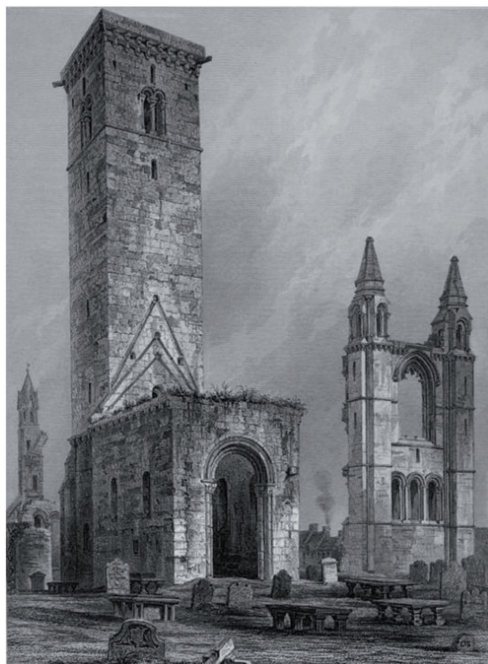
side coastal waterways and rivers. It was either a long driving competition between players or a match towards a set target.

As early as the fourteenth century there existed close ties between the Low Countries and Scotland, mainly in relation to the wool trade. The city of Bruges had an important early relationship in this respect. The history of Scotland itself is worth a closer look.
The 'Declaration of Arbroath' of 1360 is considered an important step in the history of the Scottish nation following savage battles in the Wars of Independence with England (Edward I and II) for supremacy of the country. The burial inscription of Robert Bruce reads, "A noble hart may haffe nane es. Gyff fredome failyhe". An extract of the declaration states: "It is in truth for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom – for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself". It is the most famous document in Scottish history founding the Scottish nation and seen as a radical movement in constitutional thought at a time when all Christian nobility was united in crusade against the Muslim enemy.
From the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, the Renaissance, an intellectual movement in Europe, transformed Scotland. The Renaissance was a rediscovery of ancient knowledge with classical texts becoming known. They inspired humanist movement in all sorts of disciplines, such as science, literature and philosophy, but also arts and architecture, putting man and not God at the centre of the world and preferring practicality to the divine.
In Scotland, the Stewart monarchy built a strong national sense of identity. The nation formed rapidly with organised and regular taxation systems, a standing army and a strong emphasis on law, cutting the influence of the clans of Scotland. King James I laid down the foundation of a robust Renaissance movement in Scotland and the reign of James III formed a crucial turning point of the nation's history and development.
The Stewarts probably formed the oldest royal pedigree of Europe, tracing a lineage back through an ancient line of mythological kings, placing them in the top division of kingship in Europe, backed with an imperial crown. The Stuarts set out to make political alliances through marriage to the richest and most powerful nobles in Europe, such as the Duke of Burgundy and the King of France. The marriage of James IV to Margaret Tudor of the Royal House of England created a strong union and placed the Stewarts in line for the English crown in the due course of history.
The religious destiny of Scotland earlier seemed to be in the hands of the infant Mary, heir to the Scottish throne after her father James V died in 1542. The wooing by the Protestant English under Henry VIII and the Catholic French started. Through the clever diplomacy of Marie de Guise, Mary's mother, the French triumphed and Mary married Francis, heir to the French crown, giving the French effective control of Scotland.
In England Henry VIII's daughter, Mary Tudor as Queen had returned the nation to Catholicism. The Scottish Protestant cause seemed lost, defeated by 'the Monstrous Regiment of Women' in the words of John Knox. However, events changed quickly after the accession by the Protestant Elizabeth I to the English throne supported by her faithful Lords.

New Latin schools and universities spread classical learning, giving access to new ideas and thinking. The printed word revolutionized the way to knowledge through books. Mass-produced copies became reasonably affordable to the ordinary man. This enabled Protestant theories to spread, which in turn created violent theological disputes. Scottish nationalism supported by the Stewarts also embraced the printed word with the spread of patriotic literature and poems of Scots such as William Dunbar.

Mary Tudor 1, Queen of England (1544), by Master John

Artists, musicians and craftsmen, permeated with the Renaissance influence, were now catching the attention of the Royal Court. Scottish painters started a new tradition following contacts with the Low Countries. There was of course also a revolution in warfare with new mathematical knowledge and industrial techniques for building ships and cannons. The central authority of the King no longer could be defied. A new rich elite formed that displayed power and wealth. A modern world was beginning.



St Andrews Cathedral and the church of St Regulus (1845), engraving from The Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Scotland, by R.W. Billings

Elisabeth Tudor I, as princess, the later Queen of England, by Levina Teerlinc

The reappearance of Mary, Queen of Scots, at Leith's port in 1561 after the death of her husband Francis II, King of France, created a sharp contrast between the growing Protestant cause and the traditional Catholic principles. The Scottish Protestant Kirk had established itself in the absence of the Royal Court and in defiance of Mary's authority as Queen leading to a conflict with Scottish Parliament. Protestantism was in development in Scotland and this process could not be reversed although ruling questions needed answering.

In Scotland, an uncontrollable Protestant mob started an unprecedented iconoclasm and destroyed God's glory and glitter, stripping altars and smashing icons of the Catholic Church. The ruins of St Andrews cathedral stand symbol of this religious and cultural atrocity. With abbeys and cathedrals left in decay and Scottish artistic legacy of the early Renaissance lost forever. After Marie de Guise's death in 1560 Scottish nobility supported the rebellion and parliament denounced the authority of the Pope. Mary, Queen of Scots, having returned to Scotland could delay, but not reverse this course of independence of a nation in reform. Mary's opponent in religious matters was John Knox, a militant Protestant who wanted no dealings with Catholicism at all, 'In religion there is nae middes'. However, Scottish society preferred the route of tolerance and Mary, Queen of Scots, was allowed to remain Catholic but without interference with the Reformation at hand. She continued her claim to the throne of England and this would eventually become her downfall.

Matters had become complicated for Mary when her second husband, Lord Darnley – the father of the later King James VI – was murdered and Mary remarried the suspected assassin James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell. Under pressure from the Protestants, she abdicated in favour of her son and finally fled into exile in England to seek the protection of Elizabeth I, Queen of England. Elisabeth, who was suspicious of any Catholic uprising in her own realm, imprisoned Mary. Later Mary's fate was sealed when she was implicated in Catholic plots against Elizabeth, she was sentenced to death for treason and executed by beheading.

The regime in Scotland was Protestant although the population needed to be convinced that Mary's overthrow was justified. The brilliant Calvinist scholar, George Buchanan, asserted that Mary, as Queen of Scots, had broken her contract with the people by becoming a Catholic tyrant and therefore the people were entitled to depose their monarch. He also created the false myth of her promiscuous love life accusing Mary of being a 'whore'. Buchanan, appointed as the tutor of the young King James VI, trained the young king to serve the Protestant church. In time, James would assert his control over the Protestant Kirk and develop his own ideas of kingship seeing himself as a 'godly prince', head

James Stuart VI, the later King of Scotland and England and Ireland (1580), by Arnold van Brounckhorst

of the church but not being subject to earthly law. Only God had the right to depose him as king. All across Europe, the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism were sharply defined. Religious massacres and martyrs were plentiful. In Scotland, the Kirk started the propaganda machine of genuine Protestant belief through catechism and popular songs. James founded Edinburgh University to train ministers professionally and introduced the idea that all people should have a Bible. The new godly society created aimed at proper and disciplined behaviour with adultery punishable and promiscuity revealed. A new Scottish society had emerged.

James VI succeeded Elizabeth as King James I of England and Ireland in 1603 and his Protestantism had seemingly paid off. The Scottish King and his Royal Court moved south to London. Scotland had now joined the European Reformation, a religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics. The essence of Protestantism, started by Luther in the early sixteenth century, recognised the primacy of the Bible scriptures and rejected the authority of the Pope. Lutheran texts quickly spread over Europe inciting religious conflict and rebellion. The Kirk stood at the heart of Scottish society.

The royal connections created new and profitable trading connections bringing back from Europe important knowledge and new ideas from France, especially from Flanders and other states of the Low Countries, of the Burgundy and Habsburg Netherlands, and later the Republic. The close political and personal ties through marriage between the Stuarts and the Oranges linked the two nations firmly together.

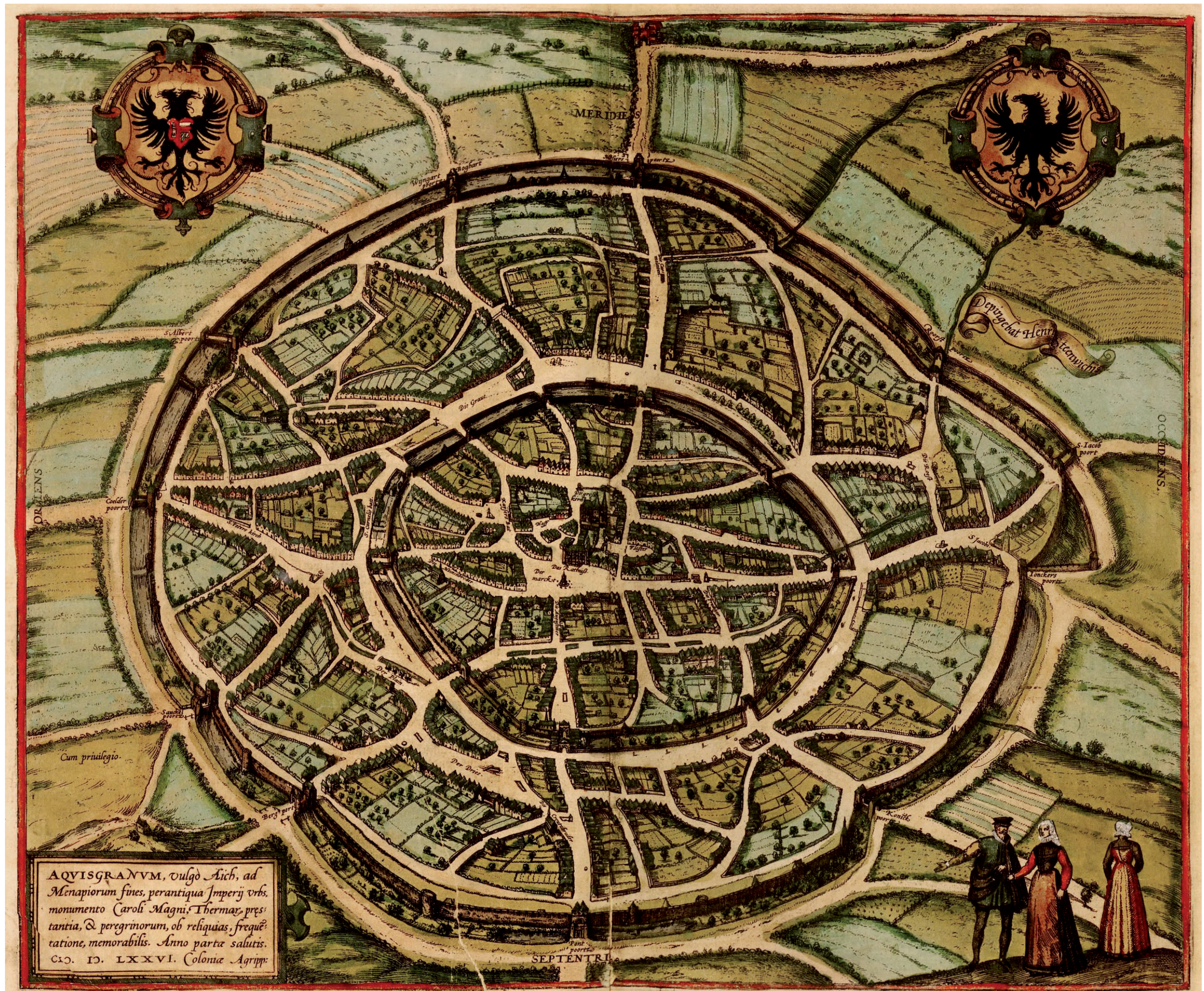
The foundations of modern Scotland were laid six hundred years ago through the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century with the enormous expansion of European trade. Scotland lay at the outer edges of a developing European economic growth. To take part in this growth it needed to expand its trade. It was necessary to establish commercial footholds on mainland Europe.

The first important entry port to Europe was the city of Bruges in Flanders of the Low Countries. This was the starting point for many Scots with new trades, jobs, education and warfare opportunities. The main export trade of Scotland was wool, and plenty of wool. Bruges was the centre of the medieval wool trade and manufacture of fine cloth and tapestries. Flemish cloth made from Melrose wool was a household quality standard for the many European merchants. Bruges became the official staple for Scottish products. This status gave Bruges a monopoly in trading Scottish products in return for extending certain privileges to the Scottish merchants. The range of Scottish products expanded to hides, skins, tallow, salt, salmon and coal.

As the entrance to Bruges gradually silted up, the port town of Veere near the old city of Middelburg in Zeeland province took over the prime status and monopoly. Veere later shared this position with Rotterdam as the trade further grew. The political importance of the northern Netherlands, the new independent Republic, resulted in economic dominance in Europe. Veere kept its special status as a prime port for Scotland for four hundred years and remained an important entry point for Scottish immigrants.

Scotland created merchant communities in other parts of Europe too, like Bordeaux and Dieppe in France, Bergen in Norway, Malmo in Sweden, and Copenhagen in Denmark. These included ports in the Baltic Sea, in Poland and even Russia had Scottish trading communities. Scots would stick together, organize their own social communities and networks and set up their own Kirks. Countless Scots migrated to and settled in Poland as peddlers and craftsmen for a living.

Map of Bruges (1526), by Braun and Hogenberg



Map of Veere (1652), by Joan Blaeu

In Scotland, Edinburgh had become the nation's Renaissance capital. It benefited from the extensive trading across the North Sea through its port town of Leith on the Forth of Firth. It was the gateway to Europe and collecting point of new experiences from Europe. Growing with the expansion of trade from a busy town to a bustling city, it became the second city in Britain next to London. The city was crowded with merchants, lawyers, bankers, shippers, and dominated the trade with the European continent.

In return, many representatives of their European counterparts settled in Edinburgh and took part in day-to-day life introducing their cultures and habits. The raw materials and goods exported from Scotland would be shipped from the smaller burghs on the east coast. There was also a substantially growing trade from European countries, especially from the Low Countries resulting from the staple status of its ports.

Being part of the European culture had become an everyday reality introducing architectural form and design like the wealthy merchants' houses of James Dick at Prestonfield in Edinburgh or George Bruce at Culross with their typical Low Countries Dutch influence.

There was of course the Auld Alliance, which went as far back as the late thirteenth century, between Scotland and France. A political necessity to curtail the English plans for expanding their power base. This mainly military and diplomatic alliance also led to commercial gains. The many Scots serving as mercenaries in the French army, fighting fierce battles in France against the English army in the fifteenth century, gave the French breathing space to survive. At the time, this saved the country from

Joan of Arc (c1475), miniature by unknown artist

English domination and served the Scots own purpose as well. Many Scottish mercenaries settled in France and formed the fierce Garde Ecossais, acting as loyal bodyguards for the French royalty. Earlier they had fought side by side with the legendary Joan of Arc in her historic battle for relief of Orleans.

The Auld Alliance with France was based on a deep and long-lasting friendship and cemented by the Scots love of French wine. The alliance gave Scots merchants the privilege of first choice of the finest wines from the Bordeaux region. Wine Quay in Leith port was the landing point for French wines stored in the cellars for the Scottish elite of society. Commoners would be restricted to beer and whisky. In later days, rum from the West Indies, the base of the famous punch mixture contributed to the Scottish palate of favoured drinks and used to settle the many wagers on the Links of Leith. The Reformation in

The church at Veere, by Jan van der Heyden (c1652)

The Norman Conquest, Bayeux tapestry

Protestant Scotland, however, ended the traditional alliance with France and commerce halted. Although the wine trade always seemed to survive the political and religious sways.

The golf historian David Stirk has pointed at the origins of the Scottish nobility having its roots in 1066, following the Battle of Hastings, and William the Conqueror's invasion and conquest of Britain. In the Court of Charlemagne, heraldry was an important means of identifying relations between families and allowed noble family members to recognise family antecedents from by their coats of arms.

In the Dark Ages of Europe, after the Romans had left Britain and other occupied European territories, one kingdom would surface as the defender of civilization and Christian faith. This was the kingdom of Charlemagne, ruler of the Franks, who was born in Flanders of the southern Low Countries. His capital was in Aix-la-Chapelle, which is now known as Aachen, the most powerful cultural and political epicentre of its time.

A common Dutch language north of the French borders united the territory of Flanders, reaching from Aachen to Boulogne. After Julius Caesar wrote his book *De Bello Gallico* the Romans would name this people *'Belgae'*, the angry or fierce people, and qualify them as *'fortissimi'*, the strongest:

'Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres, quarum unam incolunt Belgae, aliam Aquitani, tertiam qui ipsorum lingua Celtae, nostra Galli appellantur. Hi omnes lingua, institutis, legibus inter se differunt. Gallos ab Aquitanis Garumna flumen, a Belgis Matrona et Sequana dividit. Horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae, propterea quod a cultu atque humanitate provinciae longissime absunt, minimeque ad eos mercatores saepe commeant atque ea quae ad effeminandos animos pertinent important, proximique sunt Germanis, qui trans Rhenum incolunt, quibuscum continenter bellum gerunt.'

Noble bloodlines were preserved and the bloodline of Charlemagne itself reached the highest rank. Through his mother, William the Conqueror of Normandy had an important Carollingian bloodline too. This gave him the invaluable support of the experienced soldiers and nobles of Flanders when he decided to invade Britain.

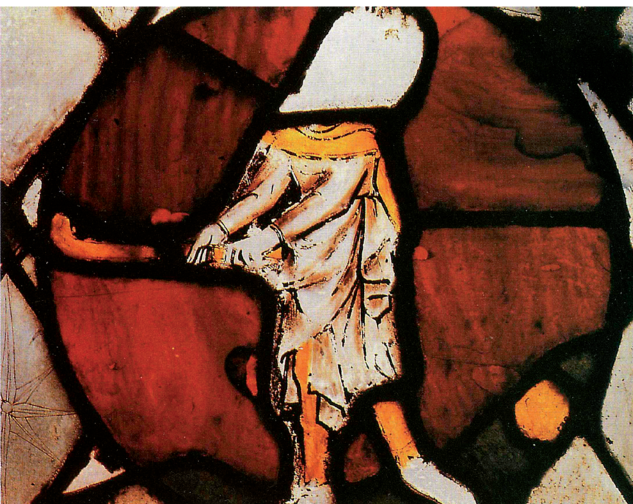
The Duc de Boulogne provided the crucial naval force necessary to transport William's army across to Britain for his successful attack. The highly skilled knights of Flanders played an important part in the final victory and in handsome reward for their major efforts, received lands from the dispossessed Anglo-Saxon manor owners. These lands were concentrated in the East Midlands allowing the settled Flemish landowners good waterway communications with their old homeland in Flanders. Having settled

Book of hours of Adélaïde de Savoie, Duchess of Burgundy - November (c1460) – detail, unknown author (Institut de France, Musée Conde, Chantilly), men playing stick and ball game of cambuca

well into their new home country the new Flemish landowners undoubtedly introduced their habitual cultural activities and recreations to England then. This included club and ball games.
In 1363, Rymer in *Feodora* mentions *'cambuca'*, a club and ball game being played in England. In it, he states that a game 'known to all' is played with a crooked stick or curved club or playing mallet with which a small wooden ball is propelled forward. Surely, this must relate to the popular early game of *'chouler à la crosse'* or *'sollen met den colf'* as played in Flanders in the southern Low Countries.
The *'Crécy man'* window of Gloucester Cathedral of 1350 most probably shows a man playing what Rymer named *'cambuca'*. Note however, that early club and ball games have a large degree of variability and variety with no real standard forms of play. A ball could either be contested for by two teams of players, or hit towards a target by an individual player.

View of golf players at St. Andrews – detail (17th century), unknown artist English School, (British Golf Museum, St Andrews)

The Flemish in the East Midlands now used their political influence and marital interrelations to secure David of Cumbria as King of Scotland in 1126. Most of the Flemish family relatives of King David and his wife Queen Maud moved with him to Scotland. This was also because they may have felt less comfortable under the rule of the Norman King William and his successors in England. The Flemish as a dominant minority were starting to form a threat in England. The Flemish brought with them to their new Scottish court great wealth and a cultured, sophisticated way of life. The Flemish probably took with them their favourite games and pastime, such as *'sollen met den colf'* or *'souler a la crosse'*, as they identified the game of playing ball with a club in the Dutch, Flemish or Frankish language. As a community, they integrated into the life of Scotland and became the foundation of later Scottish nobility. We can deduce this from the heraldry of Scottish families today that have direct links with the noble families in Flanders at or before 1066. In addition, many of the Scottish family names appearing in early records and annals of the game of golf in Scotland are believed to originate from Flanders. Abernethey, Auchinleck, Anstruther, Baird, Balliol, Brodie, Bruce, Cameron, Campbell, Comyn, Crawford, Douglas, Erskine, Fraser, Graham, Hamilton, Hay, Innes, Leith, Lindsay, Leslie, Lochore, Montgomerie, Murray, Oliphant, Seton, Stewart – including the Royal House of Stuart, Sinclair, Stirling.
The original ancestor of the House of Stuart Alan Fitz Flaald was 'Steward' in the household of the Count of Pol in Brittany and originated from Flanders. Through his mother Fitz Flaald was a descendant of the ancient and venerated Flemish family of the Counts of Hesdin. He arrived in Scotland at the time of King David I, who appointed him to High Steward (or Stewart) at his Royal Court. His knowledge of court protocol and behaviour of Flemish nobility was important for King David and his Flemish wife Queen Maud.
There is a remarkable connection between Scots families of Flemish origin, the Freemasonry in Scotland and the forming of early golf societies in Scotland. The earliest golfing societies are The Edinburgh Burgess Golfing Society, The Edinburgh Company of Golfers, The Society of St Andrews Golfers, The Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society and The Musselburgh Golf Club. In England, The Society of Goffers at Blackheath had a similar Scottish Masonic connection. The relations between Scotland and the Low Countries through time remained close because of the early Flanders connection. Once the merchant trade picked up between Scotland and the Low Countries on either side of the North Sea, the two games of colf and golf with a shared ancestry in Flanders would meet again. In England, the game of golf named *'cambuca'* with probable origins in Flanders did not survive the passage of time.
However, the related game of *'jeu de mail'* or *'pell-mell'* originating from France southern regions, did survive in England. It achieved a royal status being played by the Tudor, and later Stuart kings, in London, where a *'mail'* court was placed on land next to



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

Coat of Arms of The Royal Burgess Golfing Society of Edinburgh, founded in 1735

A View of Bruntsfield Links looking towards Edinburgh Castle – detail, by Paul Sandby (The British Museum, London)

St James' Palace, now still known as Pall Mall. The fenced court, now The Mall, was built with a length of about 400 metres, similar to courts in The Hague and Utrecht in the Republic of United Provinces of the Netherlands. This game of pell-mell or paille maille became extinct in the early part of the nineteenth century after interest in this fashionable royal French game waned, fuelled by Napoleon's final defeat in Europe.

In the Republic in the seventeenth century, at the time that Veere had lost its strong position to Rotterdam, trade was valued more than religion. The nation nurtured toleration and absorbed many refugees with great talents. With Rotterdam now becoming the focal point of Scottish trade with Europe. Both merchants and religious refugees found their spiritual anchor in the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam. Dutch Calvinism and Scottish Protestantism coexisted peacefully because there were large similarities between the two.

Many Scots settled in Rotterdam and worked in various skilled trades and crafts. The Scottish community flourished and happily co-existed in Dutch society and to this day many Scottish family names are still existent the Netherlands. Those seeking a professional or academic education in Scotland chose the University of Leiden, not far from Rotterdam in the centre of Holland. The University of Leiden became the nation's bulwark of freedom – *'Libertatis Praesidium'* – in the seventeenth century. It attracted freethinking academics from all over Europe to become the centre of intellectual excellence in areas of law and medicine in this Golden Age of the new Republic.

The impact of Dutch thought was huge and irreversible. Hundreds of Scottish students enrolled in the University of Leiden and studied law. After returning to Scotland, they laid down the theoretical basis of modern Scots law that dominated the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh. In medicine too, Leiden was leading and many Scottish physicians of name and fame received their education. The founder of the famous Medical Faculty in Edinburgh, Alexander Munro, with his leading professors had all received their education at the University of Leiden. Many institutes in Edinburgh were based on principles and models taught in Leiden.

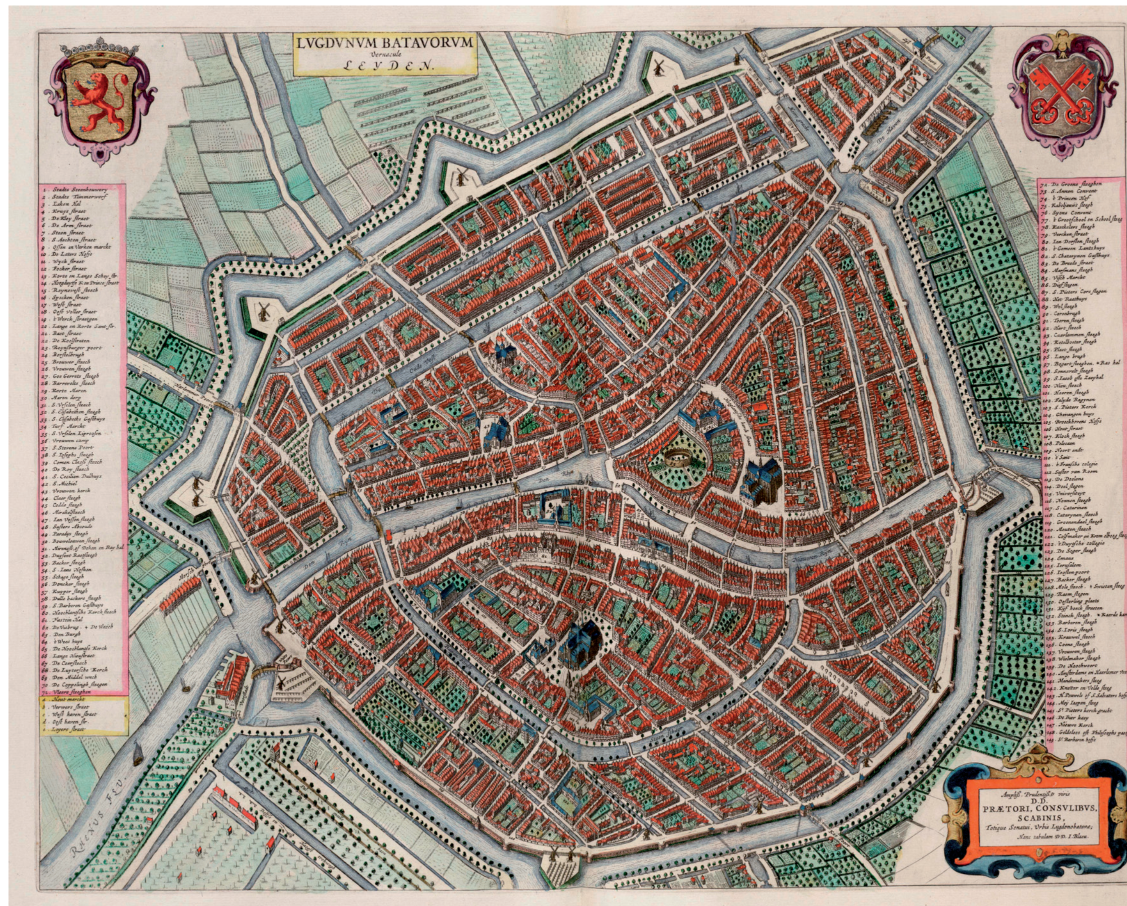
There were also social ties between Scotland and the northern Low Countries established on less peaceful activities. Scores of Scottish mercenaries fought on the side of United Provinces. This was a more opportunistic way of life for many Scots abroad during the wars between the various nations in Europe at the time. The prospects for these Scottish mercenary in the end were not bright but the phenomenon did contribute to assimilating of other customs and habits by the Scots. The European way of life and thinking had firmly fixed itself in the Scottish systems.

Player of the game of pell-mell

It is notable that the Stadtholder William III, Prince of Orange, and his wife Princess Mary Stuart launched the invasion of Britain from the Republic in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The aim was to drive his father-in-law and uncle King James II from the throne because of his unwanted 'papist tendencies'. This would also allow many Scottish exiles to return home and to reshape Scotland using ideas and methods they had met during their stay in the Low Countries.

They brought with them new economic ideas on how to run a financial system and created the Bank

Map of Leiden (1649), by Joan Blaeu

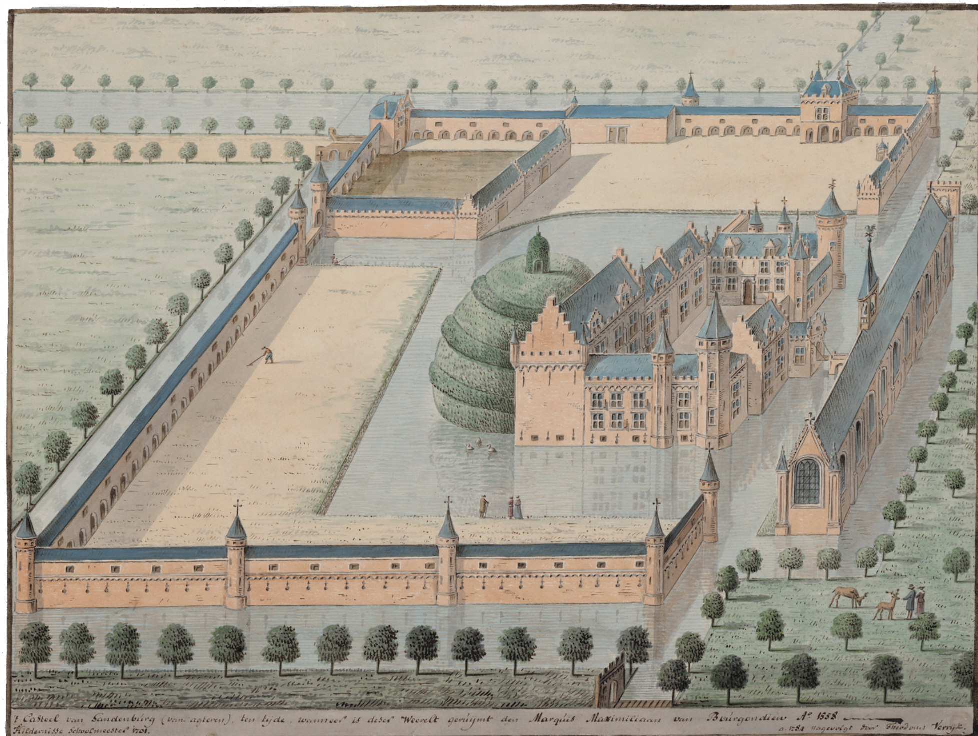


of Scotland based on these principles. In creating the Company of Scotland, they copied the model of the hugely successful United East India Company of the Republic. Clearly, William III acted as sponsor for all these new enterprises in Scotland and England. They provided an immense potential for the economic growth of the two nations now united and led the way to an unprecedented British dominance world wide a century later.

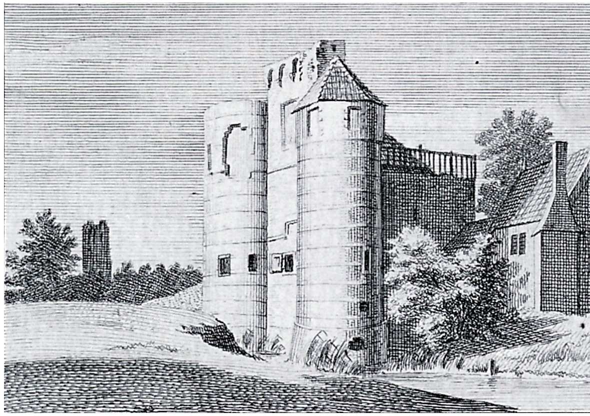
View on Veere (1562), drawing by unknown artist

William III and the Glorious Revolution of 1688

The location of Veere on the west coast of the island of Walcheren at the mouth of The Scheldt and close to the important city of Middelburg of the province Zeeland was of great influence to its development. Middelburg, with Maastricht, Nijmegen, Utrecht, Deventer and Groningen, form a group of the oldest cities of the Netherlands with roots going back to the pre-Roman period.
In the twelfth century, inhabitants of Veere occupied themselves with fishery on the North Sea. Gradually they would expand their naval activities at sea to trading with neighbouring ports in other countries. A new and wealthy merchant class was born becoming lenders to the local nobility and receiving privileges in return. The Lords of Borsele and later Burgundy would use their influence to improve the position of Veere and benefit from a continuous flow of foreign merchants.
In the early fifteenth century, Scottish merchants selected Veere as their favoured port or gateway to Europe after Bruges lost its importance as Scottish staple. This was because the Zwin channel, which had for long given the city its access to sea, started silting. We may consider Veere the closest historic connection between Scotland and the northern Low Countries leading to many social and cultural exchanges between the Scots and the Republic.
When in 1444 Wolfert VI of Borsele, Lord of Veere and Sandenburch, married Princess Mary Stuart, daughter of the Scottish King James I (1394-1437) and Joan Beaufort, Veere was awarded the position of staple for the Royal Burroughs of Scotland. The Stuart dynasty would rule over Scotland from 1371 to 1707. From 1603, the Stuarts also ruled over England. Historically the counts of Holland and Zeeland and thereafter the princes of Orange-Nassau have always upheld close political and personal ties with the Stuarts. To this day, the monarch of the Netherlands is entitled to the Marquisate of Veere, showing the importance of Veere of old.
Mary's marriage to Wolfert van Borsele in Veere was the start of a long string of personal commitments of the Stuarts to the political and commercial expansion of Scotland into the Low Countries and Europe. The records show that hundreds of Scots attended the marriage of Wolfert and Mary and stayed on Walcheren to celebrate the marriage at Sandenburgh Castle near Veere, the splendiferous residence of the influential Van Borsele family. This was the beginning of a prolonged stay by the Scots in Veere, which would last until the end of the eighteenth century. That was when the Netherlands came under French sphere of influence.



Sandenburgh castle (1784), recostructive drawing by Theodorus Verrijk



Ruins of Sandenburgh castle in 1743

From his father-in-law, King James I of Scotland, Wolfert van Borsele received the rights to the county of Buchan north of Aberdeen. King Richard of England too granted important feudal rights to the bridal couple. We do not know a lot about the life and times of Mary Stuart in Veere at Sandenburgh Castle, where she held court. She died suddenly in 1465, a year after the death of her young son and heir, Karel van Borsele. Supposedly, she is buried in the choir of the Grote Kerk in Veere.
During the reign of Wolfert and Mary, a major reconstruction of Sandenburgh was undertaken and it became a cultural and political centre of great prosperity. As a castle, it would also have a military and economic role with various amenities and many local inhabitants in its service. This was a period of tremendous prosperity for Veere with the construction of many new representative buildings in the city by order of Wolfert.
Mary had three sisters, one of whom had married the Dauphin of France. All three were well-educated and intelligent women, who actively engaged in literature and poetry. Mary was much involved in her countrymen's wool trade and granted facilities on the Sandenburgh estate for treating the imported wool stocks from Scotland. Business developed well for the Scots in Veere.
Their newly gained wealth allowed them to build luxurious and finely decorated houses on the main quay of Veere. Houses with names as *Het Lammetje, De Struys, Domfris, Aberdaan, Het Wapen van Schotland, Het Kasteel van Edinburgh, De Wolzak* are still standing on the quay, De *Schotse Kaai*, in Veere. From these properties in Veere, the Scottish merchants acted as intermediaries for the export of goods and services from the Low Countries into Scotland. Curiously one of the older houses Veere bears the name *De Kolf.*
Inevitably, their stay in Veere and other parts of Zeeland and Holland lead to personal unions and marriages with the Dutch population of all classes and standing. The Conservator of the Privileges, a formal office awarded to a Scotsman of good standing in the Scottish community of Veere safeguarded the interests of the Scots in Veere. Scottish inhabitants were exempt from paying taxes on beer or wine and were subject to their own court of justice. They also had their own Scottish Kirk and were firm Protestant believers. There were eighteen successive Scottish ministers appointed to the Scottish Kirk in Veere between 1613 and 1799 by the Assembly of Edinburgh. The Scottish community was a tightly knit one that made it easier for them to survive in a country, where in general it was certainly not easy for foreigners to adjust. As Charles Stuart, a Scottish citizen of Veere, said:
'Lands manieren bin wel te leeren, maar gewoontes ende smaken bin dikwijls niet te verleere'.
[You can adjust to a country's manners but you will always keep your own way of life and taste.]

There were many Scottish military spread over several garrisons based in Veere to protect the commercial interests and valuable staple goods of the merchant community stored in Veere. In the first half of the seventeenth century, Veere had a large population of around three and a half thousand inhabitants of which four hundred were Scots or about ten per cent of the population. This

Winterlandscape with scating scene and colf players on a frozen river near castle – detail, by Anthonie Verstraelen

percentage more or less remained the same overtime. However, Veere gradually lost its dominant position to Rotterdam in Holland. Rotterdam clearly had greater political influence because of its substantial commercial interests in the VOC, the United East Indies Company, which was the driving force behind the growing economic and military power of the Republic.
Fifty years after the reconstruction by Wolfert and Mary, a large fire destroyed a section of the Sandenburgh castle and invaluable art pieces were lost. Unfortunately, the Van Borsele family archives were mostly lost. Although bits and pieces were rebuilt, Sandenburgh never regained its past glory. By the end of the sixteenth century, the building had largely been stripped.
Gradually dismantled to ruins the castle only served as a romantic decor of popular winter landscape paintings during the Golden Age. In the winter landscape painting with skating scenes and colf players, Antonie Verstralen presumably used Sandenburch as background for his illustration of popular winter amusements. A fitting background for the game of colf.

Because of the importance of Veere within the Habsburg Netherlands, Emperor Charles V had awarded Veere a marquisate. This underlines the historic imminence of a city that at the same time was the most important gateway of Scotland to Europe. The history of Scotland and the northern Netherlands after the secession from Habsburg Spain show remarkable parallels.
Wolfert I of Borsele, Lord of Veere, first built Sandenburgh Castle in 1280. The feudal tenure of the newly built Sandenburgh Castle passed over to Beatrix, the wife of Count Floris V of Holland, and lending it directly back to Wolfert I of Borsele. This was a familiar feudal structure for the noble landownership in those early days. Today, only the buried foundations remain of Sandenburgh. In its heyday, it was the centre of European politics, art and culture. Wolfert I created a strong power base for his heirs among the counts of Holland and Zeeland.
The noble lineage of the Van Borsele family passed over to the House of Burgundy after the daughter of Wolfert VI of Borsele, Anna, married Philip of Burgundy in 1486. Their grandson Maximilian became Marquis of Veere in 1555. After his death in 1558, King Philip II of Spain inherited the Marquisate of Veere. Prince William I of Orange reclaimed the title after the proclaimed independence of the Republic and to this day, the ruling monarch of the Kingdom of the Netherlands still holds it.
This ended the powerful Van Borsele dynasty with lineages to the highest royal circles of today. The Van Borsele family had ownership of substantial

Houses on the Kaaij in Veere

properties in Zeeland, Holland, Brabant, France and Scotland. Its members were next of kin to various European monarchs and had influential positions in the Habsburg Netherlands, such as admiral-general and commander of the naval fleet. Veere was the Van Borsele home base giving a further stimulus to the growth of the local economy. Veere would quickly follow Den Briel and Vlissingen to support the rebellion of Prince William I of Orange against King Philip II of Spain. Veere thus stayed in the mainstream of the Reformation in Europe and the founding of the Republic.

Winterlanscape with scaters on a frozen canal playing ice colf on ice (c1625), by Anthonie Verstralen (Salomon Lilian, Amsterdam)