

*Details of any
copies of Kerr
in Holland would
be welcome*

From:
Mr David Hamilton

2b Kirklee Road,
Glasgow G12
Scotland

Dear Steven,

John Kerr and the The Golf-Book of East Lothian
A request for information

The Reverend John Kerr's great work **The Golf-Book of East Lothian**, Edinburgh, 1896, is a major item in any library of golf. It is not the rarest or the oldest golf book available but it is rare enough and old enough to command a unique place in the collector's library. It is one of the finest volumes on golf ever printed with 516 pages and numerous illustrations on fine paper.

It might be imagined that the Reverend John Kerr's life as a parish church minister in the east coast of Scotland was one of inconspicuous service, graced by his notable writings. Instead, it was a life of conflict, leading to humiliation and public disgrace. His massive debts could not be concealed and to meet his creditors, even his library of golf books was sold, as was his notable collection of golfiana.

Sufficient sources are available to construct a short biography of Kerr. Moreover, the records of his publisher T and A Constable have survived in some detail, and using these day-to-day records it has been able to tell something of the stormy passage of the great **Golf-Book** to its final publication and distribution. This story of Kerr and the **Golf-Book** will be published as a fine limited edition in 1985.

To add to our knowledge of the early owners of the **Golf-Book**, I seek information on the original recipients of the book. Both the large paper version (Edition I) and the small paper version (Edition II) were numbered and the T and A Constable files have a partial record of the original recipients or purchasers of the **Golf-Book** together with a note on a few of the recipients of presentation copies. As yet the list of original subscribers has not come to light but the list may be found or can be reconstructed with the help of the present owners of these books. Kerr signed and inscribed many of the original volumes.

I enclose a preliminary list of the destination of some of the large paper copies: it is hoped that this list can eventually be completed. I invite your help with providing details of the earlier ownership of any copies of the **Golf-Book** which you might have or can inspect. Any messages, letters or inscriptions and details of later owners are of great value. Those who help in this way with details of owners of the golf book will be presented with a copy of the publication on Kerr and his book. It is hoped that this will also be a valuable and attractive reference work.

David Hamilton

David

beaver. 22/6

To:

David Hamilton
2B Kirklee Road
GLASGOW G 12
Scotland

Here are details of the early ownership of a copy of John
Kerr's **Golf-Book of East Lothian**:

Large or small paper edition:
(size is given inside)

Book number (given on an early left hand page):
(Note: some presentation or review
copies were unnumbered)

Messages, letters or inscriptions from Kerr:

Any other messages or early owners names:

Present Owners name (optional)

Location of any other copies :

Any other information of interest

From : Name:

Address:

THE GOLF-BOOK OF EAST LoTHIAN

This is preliminary list of the purchasers of the large paper version (Edition I) of **The Golf-Book of East Lothian**, together with the brief information available so far on the recipients of the presentation copies.

As more information is gathered, a similar list of the original owners of the small paper edition II will be made up.

Presentation Copies:

The presentation copies were not numbered and known recipients were:

Lord Balfour
Mr Gladstone
Honorable Company of
Edinburgh Golfers
Earl of Roseberry
The British Museum
Sir James Gibson Craig Bart.
Dr Duddingston Wilson
Mr Davidson Smith
Jas Fleming, Skelmorlie

Copy No. 1: Rev John Kerr--personal
copy

Numbers 2-160 were sent to those who subscribed to the book prior to publication: little information is available yet on the ownership of these copies though owners of a few copies are known.

No. 55: P Croall, Scotsman
Office

Nos 77-82: ordered by Willie
Dunn, but order cancelled.

No. 94: Mr John Kerr--?brother

No.133: Mr Nicholson, Saltcoats

The copies numbered 161 or greater were sold by Kerr, and the following owners are known.

No.161: Mr Orr,
Tantallon Lodge, North Berwick

No.162: ?

No.163: Mr Strain,Ayr
 No.165: ?
 No.166: Mr A.W. Belfrage , Erskine Place
 (return copy from Mr Dalziel)
 No.166: Douglas and Foulis, Booksellers
 No.167: MacNiven and Wallace, Booksellers
 No.168: Douglas and Foulis
 No.169: F.and W. Dodsworth,Booksellers
 No.170: Mr Ayling
 No.171: Douglas and Foulis
 No.172: J.B Handyside
 No.173: Major G. Marrow, Dunbar
 No.174: Hippolyte J. Blaire, Edinburgh
 No.175: Conservative Club, Edinburgh
 No.176: Douglas and Foulis
 No.177: J.Wharton Loch Esq.,
 No.179: Andrew Elliot,Princes St.
 No.180: S.J.Fisher,Streatham,Surrey
 No.181:?
 No.182: Mr Foster, Wimbledon
 Nos 183,184: The Earl of Wemyss
 No. 185: F.S. Ireland, London.
 (originally to a Mr Walter D. Bovill)
 No. 186: John Kerr, Learmonth Terrace
 No.187: The Marquis of Tweeddale,New Club
 No.188: Wm Ford Esq, Fentonbarns
 No.189: Douglas and Foulis
 No.190: ?
 No.191: Douglas and Foulis

No.192: T and A Constable, Publishers
No.193: The Earl of Haddington, Tynninghame
No.194: Douglas and Foulis
No.194: John Ayling, Thistle St,
(double number to check)
No.195: Duncan Ferguson, Burntisland
No.196: ?
No.197: T and A Constable,
No.198: Dr Simpson C.Fowler, Juniper Green
No.199: L.R. Lack ,Croydon Surrey
No.200: J.S. Higginbottom, Port Ellen, Islay
No.201: Charles Mainwaring, London
m No.202: ?
Nos 203 and 204: John Kerr
No.205: J Campbell Irons
Nos 206,207: ?
Nos 208 and 209: John Kerr

The recipients of numbers 210-250 are not yet known , but include those receiving books sent out at Christmas 1900, probably as presents by Kerr. The recipients of these gifts were:

W.W.Robertson
Sir James Gibson Craig
Rev J. Caesar
James Law
John Cromarty
R.W Hawk,

and three copies to Kerr personally.

SOME COMMENTS ON EARLY GOLF

by

DAVID HAMILTON G.C.S.

A reply to Jim Barclay's Criticisms of
Steven van Hengel's book "Early Golf"

Steven van Hengel's book "Early Golf" was published in 1982. It was a remarkable venture and the author's familiarity with the early records of his own country produced the first serious account of early golf in the Low Countries. The material was so new, and there was so much of it, that the book dispelled many myths and created a reappraisal of early golf in the Low Countries. Steven, however, was careful not to make comparisons between the Low Countries and Scotland in his search for the origin of the game. Indeed he invited the reader to make up their own minds. Steven's brief asides on early Scottish golf were not, I am sure, meant to be taken seriously.

Unfortunately, others were not so cautious. The blurb on the dustjacket of his book and the introduction by Peter Dobereiner both claim that Steven had proved that golf did not originate in Scotland. Hence it was only to be expected that in the ^{January 1984} issue of the Golf Collectors' Society Bulletin, Jim Barclay should air the matter and ^{he} criticised these

references to golf in Scotland. It would be a pity if these offhand remarks by Steven about Scottish golf should lead to doubts about his otherwise remarkable work. It is worth therefore looking again at his brief references to golf in Scotland, to which I add my own view of Steven's contribution to the argument about the origins of golf.

It is a pity that Steven says that there was no golf in the West of Scotland before 1850. I am sure Steven ^{if reminded,} would have remembered that many golf clubs were founded in the West of Scotland before that time, as Jim Barclay points out. In particular the Glasgow Club was founded in 1787. ^{it is always a mistake to think of} But golf in Scotland

as just the story of the rich men's organised ^{from the 1740's onwards.} clubs. Informal clubs and cliques existed much earlier and golf was played by a mass of other people who were not members of the clubs. This level of golf in the West of Scotland is described in the famous poem on golf " Glotta " in 1720. I think ^{what} Steven really meant to say that early golf was primarily an East Coast game in Scotland, and no one would dispute that.

His second slightly unfortunate remark ^{in Early Golf} again made in an aside, was that there were scarcely more than 500 players at one time in Scotland up until 1850, and that golf was merely a lighthearted game played by Freemasons before their more serious ^{masonic} evening meetings. The link between the Freemasons and golf in Scotland is a most interesting development in

the study of the history of the game and Stirk and Henderson should be thanked for pointing it out. I think however these links have been exaggerated since Freemasonry was so common among the ^{class of} rich and leisured ^{also} men who were drawn to golf that it is inevitable that there was a high percentage of Freemasons in the original golf clubs. ^{of the early clubs} A study of the minutes shows that the afternoon game was indeed important to the golfers and much of the revelries at night were not Masonic but were very much to do with the game of golf. But the statement that there were no more than 500 players in early ^{19th century} Scotland is a serious error. I think the figure has been obtained by adding up the members of the known golf clubs, and this method omits the mass of other players who did not belong to these clubs but who played a game over the public land. We know little of this other level of Scottish golf. Many of these players outside the ^{organised} clubs were wealthy, ^{and could afford the expensive equipment,} others were clubmakers and ballmakers, and almost certainly there was mass of poor golfers who had to content themselves with a game using less sophisticated clubs and balls.

Turning now to the origins of golf and the choice between Scotland and the Low Countries as the country of origin of the game, the immediate problem is that while the Low Countries have ancient records and numerous paintings which have survived, in Scotland there has been poor survival of the medieval ^{or} records and there was no tradition of landscape or portrait

painting whatsoever. Steven therefore had a wealth of records relevant to the club and ball games in the Low Countries, ^{but Scotland has little.} His main finding has been ^{that there was in his country} a game called "colf" which was popular but faded out about 1700, being overtaken by a rather different game of "kolf" played in a formal court with heavy clubs and balls and bearing no resemblance to the modern game of golf.

In studying the evidence ^{that} Steven gives ^{us} about the early "colf" game, it shows important similarities but many differences from golf as we know it, and this raises the question as to whether it was the forerunner of modern golf. The first important finding is that "colf" seems to have been ^{largely} a street ^{of non-coastal towns} game, and the numerous proclamations and prohibitions on the game were all designed to prevent damage to property, windows and persons in the street. Certainly the game was once forced out of ^{the town of} Haarlem in 1389 to a special "colf" course outside the town, but presumably ^{there} the game retained its street character and the golfers returned ^{or attempted to return} repeatedly to the towns. The game was played with a single heavy metal-headed club, with a moderate degree of loft, not with a set of clubs. only in use. ^{All the familiar paintings, as Steven points out, show one club} The grip and whipping on the shafts were not robust.

^{nm or} All these features suggest that this was a short game played in the ^{uneven, muddy} town streets where accuracy and loft rather than length were required. The other evidence suggests ^{that "colf"} was probably played

towards a broad target such as a door or post, and not *invariably* to a hole. The number of children portraged with "colf" clubs suggests it was also popular with children, giving them a diversion near, but usually outside the house.

Whether or not this game of "colf" counts as being a form of golf entirely depends on ^{a definition of golf and} how close a similarity to the modern game is looked for. If by golf we mean any game played with club and ball and ⁱⁿ which the player, standing alongside the line of play, competes with other players for the lowest number of strokes from one point to another, there being perhaps only one ^{short} hole, ^{a single} or target to reach, then "colf" could be ^{called} the earliest form of the modern game.

~~But the Scots historian would have to say at this point that the theologian John Duns Scotus born about 1226 and probably reared in the Borders, played a ball and club game in his youth similar to "colf".~~

If, on the other hand, we seek ^{the first evidence of} a long game played on open ground marked out in a series of holes and played with a set of clubs of varying lengths and loft designed to give ^{and then} distance ^{of "colf"} accuracy when playing towards a hole in the ground, then the Dutch game ^a does not fit. Using this definition, ^{such as this} game ^{evolved} only in the coastal towns of Scotland.

The records of the 1600's give the first mention of a series of holes ^{in the Scottish game} and the use of sets of clubs. The earlier references to golf in Scotland are ambiguous and the well-

known Acts of Parliament are of little help, and indeed suggest that golf was a churchyard game, perhaps played to the door of the church as a target.

In summary, Steven's book has given a thorough analysis of the games similar to golf in the early ^{of the Low Countries.} records. My own view would be that club and ball games played outdoors towards a target for the least number of strokes developed simultaneously in the Low Countries and Scotland in med ^{ae}ival times. The remarkably close links between the two countries are admirably demonstrated in Steven's book and his finding that a great trade fair was held at St. Andrew's each year and was attended by the merchants from the Low Countries, shows how integrated the communities were. However, I think the two ^{early} games in Scotland and the Low Countries were different. In the Low Countries it was a short game played with one club in the streets of ^{inland} towns towards a target and perhaps ^{with} only one 'hole' in use. It was a game favoured by children and could be played on ice in winter. In Scotland the game was played on the hard ^{open} links of the East Coast towns outside the towns. By the 1600's ^{in Scotland} it was a long game played with a set of clubs and over a number of holes, the target being a hole in the ground. ^{np} In searching for the country of origin of golf the breadth or narrowness of the definition of the ^{looked for} game is all-important. I would take a fairly narrow definition of the early game we seek and in doing this "colf" ^{becomes} only a first cousin of the modern game, ^{though perhaps an older relative.} Using this definition of golf, the modern game started in Scotland.

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Dr. David Hamilton

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

WELLCOME UNIT FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

47 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6PE

Tel: (0865) 511730

10th March 1984

Dear Steven,

I'm here for a year's sabbatical,
which is also giving me time to get
some work done on the history of
Scottish golf.

I would be delighted to have
a photocopy of the references you used
in your book to the export of golf
balls to Scotland from Bergen of Zoom in the
15th century. I think they came from

Dr Unger's book De Tol van Tersekeroord 1939

As you can imagine, it is not held
here, even in the Bodleian Library.

Best wishes

David Hamilton

* The Bulletin has just come in, and
I will send a short article commenting
on Jim Barclay's points.



19th March 1984

30, Saxenrodeweg
2116 VA Bentveld
Holland

Tel. 023 - 24 01 69

Dr. David Hamilton Ph.D., FRCS
Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine
47, Banbury Road
Oxford, OX2 6PE

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of the 10th March. How nice to have an old-fashioned Sabbatical Year in these hurried times!

As requested I am enclosing photocopies of the relevant pages of Dr. W.S. Unger's, *De Tol van Iersekerroord*. The book appeared in 1939, just about in time since some of the records were destroyed in war actions in 1940. Even so, what he could put together at that moment was far from complete. There must have been more records and maybe earlier ones.

It is interesting to note that the toll tariffs were brought down in 1519. While the toll was one of the best sources of income of the county of Holland it was adjusted once in a while since it was not meant to hamper the trade of the Scheldt towns such as Veere, Middelburg, Flushing, Bergen op Zoom and Antwerp. With kind regards I am,

*Yours very faithfully,
Steven*

Steven J.H. van Hengel

Enclosures

Steven J. H. van Hengel, 30, Saxenrodeweg, 2116 VA Bentveld, Holland
Tel. 023 - 24 01 69

9th Sep. 1983

Dear David,

This to thank you for your kindness in sending
me a copy of the map of Golf Courses in Scotland
which you helped to draw. Although I know quite
a few of them it makes me feel very humble
for all the ones I do not know!
Kindest regards,

yours

Steven



Tel. 023 - 24 01 69

8th October 1982

30, Saxenrodeweg
2116 VA Bentveld
Holland

D.Hamilton Ph.D., F.R.C.S.
Dept. of Surgery
Western Infirmary
GLASGOW G11 6NT
Scotland

Dear David,

I have terrible arrears in accumulated but unanswered mail and so it is only now that I come to thank you for sending me a copy of the Good Golf Guide to Scotland and a cheque for 30 guilders. My apologies!

I was a bit puzzled about my 'fine work on Dutch Golf' which you wanted to have. There is, at this moment, the catalogue of the exhibition called Colf-Kolf-Golf which is nearing its close, and there will be in a few weeks time - the book which is now in print and is called Early Golf.

I take it that you would be more interested in the latter seeing that it is in English and contains the photographs, or rather all the relevant ones, of the catalogue, which is mainly in Dutch. So if I am right and if you bide your time for a few weeks you may be one of the first to have the real book!

Kindest regards,

Sincerely yours
Steven

Steven J.H. van Hengel

From Mr David Hamilton, PhD, FRCS

Dept of Surgery, Western Infirmary, Glasgow G11 6NT
041-339 8822

21 Partickhill Court, Partickhill Avenue, Glasgow G11 5AA
041-334 1118

Please accept this
gift of my little book
on Scottish golf.

I also enclose a draft
to pay for a copy of
your fine work on Dutch golf

David