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28/2/75

Dear Jan Van Bengel

When I visited the Netherlands in March 1974 I had the pleasure of being invited by you to your home in Hardenhout. I spent a very enjoyable evening as your guest. At this late hour I write to thank you, and ask you to accept my apologies for not doing so earlier.

Since my visit to you I have had time to think about all the information you imparted to me; I also have given further study to Everard's Book on this subject, he no doubt believes the Game as we know it originated in Holland.

I have a few points which I hope you might clear up

for me

(I) When did JAN TER GOUW write the book in which he mentioned that Solf was a true game of the fatherland.....

II Are there any exact dates for the development of the ball — the Beechwood, the Fethery, the Looet, the Gutty, and our present day ball, (In other words was the Fether Ball the first ball played in Scotland?, did the Looet ball exist before the Fether?)

III Where may I obtain a picture of "Feast of St Nicholas" by Jan Steen. To me this is a most striking picture, as the club is so like our earlier Solf Clubs, in fact, it is almost identical to two clubs, which hang on the wall in Portmarnock Solf Club, Dublin.

The European Amateurs Team Championship takes place in Ireland in Kilkenny at the end of June next, I have been asked to write a few notes for the Programme of this Tournament, I would like if possible to reproduce

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the Jan Steen "St Nicholas Day" in support of the belief that the game come originally from Holland. I take it there would be no objection to taking this step.

I was fortunate recently to be introduced to a person who is reputed to be the greatest living authority on British Military History. His name is D. W. KING, OBE, <sup>the</sup> Chief Librarian British Defence Ministry. He spoke of the very considerable Military, and Religious, Relationship between Scotland, and the Dutch Republic. He has promised to send me some tabulated information on the subject. In our own National Library here in Dublin I have done a little research, and have found that in 1568 - FIRST SCOTS COMPANY OF FOOT IN THE SERVICE OF THE DUTCH REPUBLIC, 1572 REGULAR RECRUITING OF THE SCOTS/DUTCH COMPANIES WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE SCOTTISH KINGDOM. It would seem to me that there may be earlier Relationships, and that the armies in addition to the seamen played a

SAILORS

(over)

Considerable part in bringing  
the game to Scotland & England.  
If it is not too much  
trouble I would be pleased  
to hear from <sup>you,</sup> also if you are  
interested as I am sure you are,  
I will send you a copy of what-  
ever information I receive from  
D.W. King

Once again my very  
great thanks for all your  
trouble during my visit to  
Holland

With my warmest good  
wishes I remain

Very sincerely

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21-3-74

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8<sup>th</sup> March 75

Dear Gerald,

This is to thank you for your letter of the 28<sup>th</sup> February. Everards' translations are not always correct. Anyway, the book of Jan ter Gouw he refers to was written in 1871.

Golf balls: in the early days there are of course very few exact references.

Beechwood golf balls: first evidence of use in Holland; 26<sup>th</sup> December 1297; in use in Holland until about 1620; in Scotland, no early mention - probably also until about 1620;

"Sajet" - compressed wool - balls: first evidence of use in Holland: 1587;

"Featheries" - compressed goose feather - balls: there is no evidence of featheries in the 1700's or earlier at all. It seems a pretty good guess that they might have been invented by James Melville or one of his men after 1618. Why else does the Earl of Caithness clearly refer to wooden balls as late as 1614 (see "Early Golf" p. 19) and is there a need to curb the import of (presumably Dutch "sajet" balls) in 1618? If the featheries had existed already then there

would have been a different reference in 1614 and the Kings resolution of 1618 would have been superfluous - always assuming that featheries were superior in performance to "sajet" balls.

"Gutties" - gutta percha - balls were invented in 1845 by Robert Adam Paterson a Divinity student at St. Andrews Scotland.

the present-day type, with a wound rubber core was invented by Coburn Haskell of Cleveland U.S.A. in 1898 and was known as a "Haskell-ball" in the early days of its existence.

1. The Jan Steen picture: is in the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen M. Athenesstraat 18-20, Rotterdam

to whom you could write for a reproduction and the right to reproduce it. Frankly I am not such an admirer of that picture - from a golf historian's point of view. It is rather late (around 1660) and not a very good specimen club. I am enclosing two photographs of earlier paintings: the Inkhuzen orphan of 1612, with club and ball and the "Kemmerer" young golfer of 1635 with a club only, which I think are more typical.

I am also enclosing a copy of "Early Golf"

which - I think - was not available when you were here.

Do send me your article. I'll be very interested to read and have it.

I do not believe that it was the soldiers or sailors who brought the golf from Holland to Scotland. It must have been the small merchant navy vessels carrying wool from Scotland to Holland quite regularly. Most likely, seeing the evidence available, this happened much earlier: between 1401 - and 1457 on the shipping line Dordrecht - Brielle - Edinburgh - St. Andrews.

War history: I'm interested in this from another point of view. One of my ancestors on the mother's side was

Gregory Gibbs

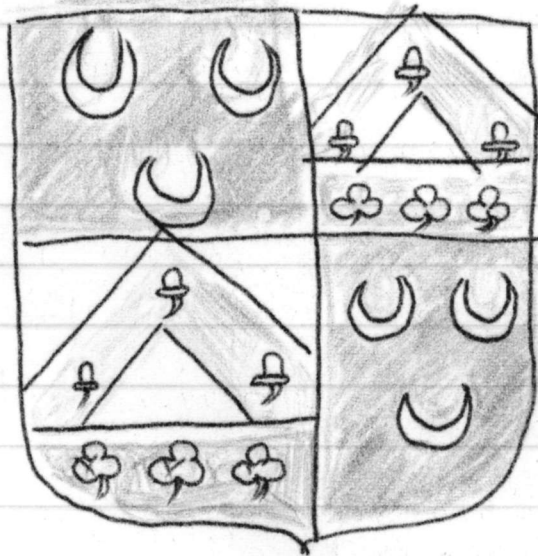
Master gunner (what one would call a general of artillery)

landed with a small army under Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, in support of the Dutch fighting the Spanish at the time, in October 1585.

The army had been recruited by Sir John Norris who had a lot of ties with Ireland

Gregory Gibbs liked it so much in Holland that he remained in Brill when the troops went back, married the mayor's daughter and founded a family of which my mother (maiden name Helen Gips) is a straight descendant. Can your friend tell me more about

G.G. who was presumably an Irishman?  
His coat of arms, still the family's was



Can your friend Mr. King tell me anything more about him?

With kindest regards  
yours very faithfully  
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