

# LAURENCE VINEY LIMITED

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21st August, 1984.

Mr. Steven J.H. van Hengel,  
30 Saxenrodeweg,  
2116 VA Bentveld,  
Holland.

Dear Mr. van Hengel,

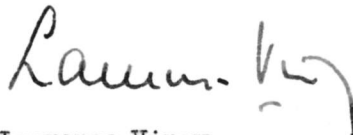
We have met once or twice at the Golf Collectors Society at Sandwich and Birkdale; while I was at St. Andrews this year I was too busy giving Tom Watson his Golfer's Handbook Golfer of the Year award to attend the Golf Collector's dinner that evening. Nor did I see you later in the R & A or elsewhere.

Thank you for sending me a copy of your book. Actually I already have one which I bought on publication. As a collector, books are my only interest to keep and read, but not to deal.

Whether I can include a piece on the Dutch birth of the game in the Origins of Golf section in the 1985 edition, is doubtful; I am under great pressure to have 90% of the copy for the book complete by November 30th.

However, I am not good at precis writing, but if you would like to let me have 500 words on the subject I could hope to be able to include them. Please let me know if you will do this.

Yours sincerely,



Laurence Viney.

27th August 1984

30, Saxenrodeweg  
2116 VA Bentveld  
Holland

Laurence Viney Esq  
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BERKHAMSTED, Hertfortshire HP4 2PL

Dear Mr. Viney,

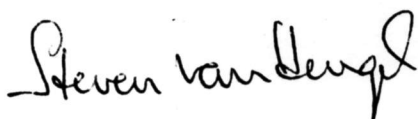
This to thank you for your letter of the 21st. I was sorry not to come to St. Andrews for the Open. Business kept me here.

I have given your invitation some thought. Being concise without being superficial is not always easy. The Golfers' Handbook is a reference book of such importance that it should have the up-to-date on every subject in the best form.

Looking at page 80 'The Origin of Golf' I have tried to produce a new wording for the first section (and I am sure my English needs correction). If this were to go in the place of the first section and the first sentence of the second section (which would then commence with 'The first official reference to golf.....') it seems to me that this chapter would be quite up to date.

With kind regards I am,

sincerely yours



Steven J.H. van Hengel

Enclosure

## The Origin of Golf

In general lore and conjecture far exceed the historic records about the origin of golf. Understandably since medieval records are scarce. The precise origin has not been found and it is unlikely that it ever will. It is not too wild a supposition that golf originated from a combination of two then existing games-chole(or crosse) and pall mall-in the Low Countries around 1250.

V they In Scotland the first record of golf is the decree of King James III of 1457 against that game and football since ~~it~~ interfered with the practice of archery which was more desirable from a military point of view.

In the Low Countries the first known game of golf goes back to Boxing Day 1297 and there are quite a few records of the game in the 14th century.

fact Although the absence of records does not exclude the possibility of earlier golf, some significance must be attached to the ~~circumstance~~ that the earliest places where golf was played in Scotland were all located in and around towns which had a regular trade with the Low Countries. At the end of the 14th century there were also substantial exports of golf balls from the Netherlands to Scotland.

There is widespread misconception about golf in the Low Countries being a game played on ice only. The numerous winter landscapes, so popular in the 16th and 17th century, lead to a wrong conclusion. The records have it that it was a game played on land and sometimes on ice-when it was there.

The interaction between golf in Scotland and the Low Countries in the early days was far greater than is often realized. There was a lively traffic between the two areas, who never in history have been at war with each other. If golfballs were exported from the Netherlands to Scotland in the 14th century, clubs were exported from Scotland to Holland in the 17th century.

Little is known about the nature of the game in its early days. As far as royalty and nobility are concerned golf may well have been rather similar to pall-mall since this likeness is sometimes referred to in the records. It is improbable that golf was a popular game in Scotland in early times. The price of a golf ball alone would have been prohibitive. King James VI set the price limit for a golf ball at 4 shillings scots in 1618, then a considerable sum of money.

Golf(known as 'colf') disappeared in the Low Countries around 1700 to be replaced by a midget version of the old game combined with pall-mall, henceforth known as 'kolf'. The old game, whatever its nature was, continued to be played in Scotland in the beginning of the 18th century by small numbers of players.

Great tribute is due to the 'golfing societies' which were formed in Scotland from 1735 onwards. Virtually all of them had a masonic background. By 1800 there were 7 of them in Scotland and one in London. Even if they considered the game only a good exercise before their sumptuous meals (joining the dinner was more important than joining in the game) they should be given credit for preserving the game and giving it its modern basis and its first complete set of rules. Had it not been for these few societies-between 1735 and 1800 the total membership of all of them never exceeded 500-golf might well have become extinct in the 18th century.

The great expansion of golf commences with the introduction of the gutta percha ball around 1850. This ball was cheap, waterproof and long lasting. None of this could be said of its 'feathery' predecessor. The new ball caused an explosion of golf in Great Britain. Enthusiastic Scotsmen and Englishmen carried the game to the most distant parts of the world. Some clubs, such as Royal Blackheath were real mission posts in this field.

Profound research into the history of the game in the last 30 years has produced a picture which is different from earlier concepts but far better founded.