Golf
THE TRUE HISTORY
BY MICHAEL FLANNERY

INTRODUCTION: ABOUT GOLF HISTORIES

You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.
Abraham Lincoln, 1809 - 1865

In 1982, Steven van Hengel, a Dutch banker, published a new interpretation of golf history that went off like a bomb in the golfing world. According to van Hengel, golf, rather than having Scottish origins, had begun at Loenen aan de Vecht in the province of North Holland, precisely on Boxing Day 1297. Groundwork for the acceptance of his thesis had been well-laid. Peter Dobereiner, contracted to write the Foreword to *Early Golf*, penned a glowing endorsement that surrounded the book in an aura of credibility and respectability: 'In the field of early Dutch golf, and that means early golf no matter how the nationalistic Scots may squirm, the ultimate authority is Steven van Hengel… Every fact which is hall-marked 'SvH' carries a guarantee of proof, it is unalloyed by guesswork and speculation'.

Peter was not alone in his enthusiasm. When it learned of van Hengel's conclusions, the normally staid Dutch establishment went weak in the knees, and spontaneously decided to finance an official government-sponsored touring exhibit to celebrate the miraculous news. His Royal Highness Prince Claus of the Netherlands opened the exhibition "Colf-Kolf-Golf"at the 'Markiezenhof' in Bergen op Zoom.

British golf writers and historians flocked to join Dobereiner in prostrating themselves before the altar of the new religion. Within a few years, pop golf histories were padding their thin historical content with an acknowledgement of the Netherlands as the birthplace of golf. One would have expected outrage, indignation, denial and counter attacks from the Scottish golf establishment – not to mention cabers hurled at the printing presses. Surely, the R & A, in a keening of the pipes would exile the renegade Dutchman from Caledonia, forever?

Nothing of the sort happened. The lion took it lying down. The staunchly patriotic *Scotsman* wrote: '(In) Early Golf, the Dutch writer Steven van Hengel put his case forward that the ancient roots of golf can be traced back to Holland. Even ardent Scottish golf historians tend now to agree with him.' No questions were raised about van Hengel's research, analysis or conclusions. No attempt was made to confirm his quotes or alleged facts. The Scots offered only sporadic token resistance to the kidnapping of 'their' priceless sporting heritage. Silence, or at best, whimpers – not bangs – greeted what turned out to be a preposterous hoax – a monumental distortion of sporting history perpetrated by an amateur golfer determined to impose his fantastical version of golf's origins on a worldwide public. He nearly succeeded.

I was one of many lulled into an initial acceptance of van Hengel's argument by the tacit acquiescence of the Scottish golf establishment. By 1988, when I began to research *Golf Through The Ages · 600 Years of Golfing Art*, I had read everything SvH had published, from his initial mimeographed 1972 booklet, through the exhibition catalogue and subsequent editions of *Early Golf*. On the surface, his book seemed to be a logical launching pad for the definitive iconography of golf I had begun, but something about *Early Golf* didn't smell right. Perhaps it was van Hengel's smugness, or contrived conclusions, or inconsistencies, exacerbated by an unconvincing, meagre and insular bibliography. His conceit of writing the book in English was annoying and often, confusing.

When I discussed my reservations with Richard Leech, a highly experienced publisher of scientific texts, he urged me to verify van Hengel's original sources, which boiled down to a limited body of literature, a map and a handful of relevant historical documents. During the next several months I enlisted the aid of archivists, experts and historians in the Netherlands, to test the foundation of the Dutch historian's argument – that golf (or 'colf' as he termed it) had been played at Loenen aan de Vecht, in 1297. Their research confirmed my worst suspicions. Golf had never been played there. The historical works he cited to prove that it had, contained no such references and the 'Map of Loenen with the colf course' which he published on page 17 of *Early Golf*, was a pure fabrication – a doctored Ordinance Survey map.

In 1997, I attended the sham 700th anniversary celebration of golf at Loenen aan de Vecht, where I seized the opportunity to discuss van Hengel's hoax with key figures of the Netherlands golf establishment. My questions and comments were met with embarrassment and evasion, accompanied by awkward laughter as they explained that the 'history' was meant to be just a bit of good fun. It wasn't until the December/January 2002, 3 issue of Golfjournaal, that an official retraction of the claim that golf had been first played at Loenen, was printed. The apologia was written by the distinguished historian and bibliophile, Dr. Ayolt Brongers, who over the years had been on the receiving end of my demands that the public be set straight on van Hengel's manipulation of golf history. Unfortunately, there is a still a misleading Dutch Wikipedia entry accessible in Internet that continues to tiptoe around the bogus history.

In less than a year of intensive research, I had become a cynic about everything that had been published on the origins of golf, which, unlike football, tennis, Pallone and even billiards, had traditionally been ignored by 'serious' historians. Over the following thirteen years, as well as reading most of what passes for golfing history, I immersed myself in every field remotely associated with ball games; literature, ancient texts, works of art, manuscripts, documents and sporting antiques by the thousands. It quickly became evident that the historical equivalent of Ponzi schemes didn't begin with *Early Golf*. Now, for the first time, I am pleased to share my conclusions from 20 years of research with the readers of Golf International magazine.

GOLF THROUGH THE AGES
600 YEARS OF GOLFING ART

The first in an exclusive six-part series, Golf – The True History, commissioned by Golf International, has been written by the distinguished sport historian, Michael Flannery, author of *Golf Through The Ages • 600 Years of Golfing Art*. For the first time ever, a leading international publication will publish an unbiased history of where golf began, how it evolved, and the role that Scotland played in giving the Royal & Ancient game its finishing touches before exporting it to the world.

Golf
THE TRUE HISTORY
BY MICHAEL FLANNERY

PART ONE: WAS SCOTLAND THE BIRTHPLACE OF GOLF?
EARLY DAYS, FROM ABOUT 1100 TO 1460

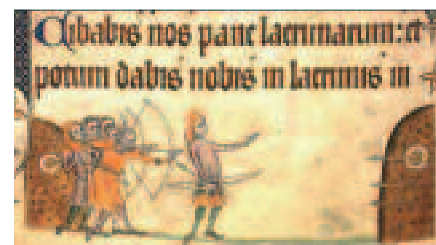
Item. *It is ordanyt and decreyt…*
(th)at ye fut bawe and ye golf be Utterly
cryt done and not usyt

Nearing the end of his reign, confronted by real and present danger on his border with England, King James II of Scotland (1430 – 1460) uttered a decree intended to ensure the safety of his realm through bringing his army up to the standards required for modern warfare. For more than 150 years, in battle after battle, English Longbowmen had determined the outcome. James decided that his subjects would drill until they became the 'Mothers of All Archers'.

Key to victory in medieval combat was the long bow, its length the height of a man or more, requiring great strength and much practise to draw and fire rapidly. It was a fearsome weapon, made even more so by customised arrows. The choice included armour-piercing tips for use against chain-mail; the barbed 'Swallow Tail' against horses; or flammable tips for psychological warfare. In 1188, an English knight fighting the Welsh (the undisputed masters of this particular art of killing), recounted how an arrow pierced his chain mail and clothing, continued through his thigh, saddle and finally, horse.

It would be misleading to suggest that James' only interest was to defend his realm against the onslaughts of the eternally aggressive Sassenachs. The king, who wore the dyspeptic look of someone who had bitten into a frozen haggis, was, in fact, a masterful ruler – vigorous, popular, and ambitious, with plans to annex Orkney, Shetland and the Isle of Man. Known as 'Fiery Face' for a vermillion birthmark, he was possessed of a hair trigger temper. According to a 1452 eyewitness account, James, threatened by a key alliance formed by the 8th earl of Douglas, flew into a rage and stabbed his rival to death.

While encouraging archery, James, who was passionate about weaponry in general, was also developing state-of-the-art artillery – with fateful consequences. While besieging Roxburgh Castle, one of the last strongholds still held by the English following the Wars of Independence, a canon exploded killing the 29 year old king. Under his successors, longbow practice continued to be mandatory.



(Above) Lutrell Psalter, 1325: Longbowmen practising at the Butt (Below) Beginning a Bully for the hockey-like game of Crosse/Chole/Kolf. This illustration appears in the Printed Book of Hours, Les Heurs de Romme, calendar page for January. By Simon Vostre for Philippe Pigouchet. Paris 1498. (Courtesy Racquet & Tennis Club, New York and Golf Through the Ages)

The James edict, designed to enhance the defence of Scotland and expand his sphere of influence, harboured the innocent words, 'fut bawe and golf, a fact that attracted neither attention nor interest for the next 400-odd years. Finally spotted by some keen-eyed Victorian historian, these two words – particularly 'golf', were used to put an enduring spin on golf history.

The fateful document in which the word 'golf' first appeared, was Act of Parliament number 338, a hand-written manuscript published in Edinburg, 6 March, 1457. It was entitled, 'Anent Wapinshawing' – of the practise of arms – and read:

Item. *It is ordanyt and decreyt… (th)at ye fut bawe and ye golf be Utterly cryt done and not usyt and (th)at ye bowe markes be maid at all paroch kirkes apair of buttes and shutting be usyt ilk sunday…*

or, in Modern English:

Item. *It is ordained and decreed… that football and golf be utterly condemned and stopped and that a pair of targets be made at all parish kirks and shooting be practised every Sunday.*

(Clockwise from left) Football as played in London, 1314, taken from *The Early Days of Sport* by Amadee Forrestier, first published in the London News, 1905; as depicted in this Misericorde of Gloucester Cathedral, ca. 1350, players of Soule, one dribbling the soule/football, the opponent going for his eyes with outstretched fingers while preparing a blow to the heart with his right hand; also at Gloucester Cathedral, within the Great East Window, is The Golf Player, a player of Soule à la Crosse, ca 1350

It's worth taking a moment to examine James' sparse words, for the first-known written use of 'golf' created a virtually unassailable legend. Generations of historians and writers seized on the decree and cited Act number 338 to support the idea that an early target sport, similar in nature and form to the Royal & Ancient game, was already in place by the fifteenth century and popular enough at that time to warrant its prohibition, not once, but again in the acts of 1471 and 1491. As we shall see, there were such club and games, but not in Scotland.

Despite the absence of any documentation showing that a golf-like game had been played in the British Isles before 1457, Robert Clark, the learned Andrew Lang, Horace Hutchinson and Robert Browning were among the golf historians who, hook, line and sinker, swallowed the 'Immaculate Conception' theory of golf. Based on a single, undefined written word – they giddily committed to the legend that Scotland was the birthplace of golf. In 1956, writing in *The History of Golf in Britain*, Guy Campbell, captured the absurdity of their capitulation to fantasy and wishful thinking:

'And before this Act . . . nothing? Nothing at all!

Indeed, but for this embargo, so far as Scotland is concerned, it is as if the game might never have been…. A game that was such a national obsession must have had an origin… but since… Scottish lore can supply no reference either to myth or origin, we must seek a line elsewhere. Fortunately, this can be found on the Continent…'

Incredibly, Campbell's analytical and intuitive conclusion was met with disdain by the Scottish golf establishment. Over the next

fifty years, not a single native golf writer ventured to tackle the vast resources of European history, literature and art, to test Sir Guy's conclusion. Shackled by a lamentable lack of academic curiosity and enveloped in a fog of dogma, vested interest and torpor, Scottish golf historians doggedly continued marching to their own drum – oblivious to the conclusions of contemporary research. For them, the golfing sun will forever revolve around Caledonia.

James had made it clear that time freed up from ye fut bawe and ye golf was to be devoted to archery practise. In the context of thirteenth and fourteenth century warfare, his proclamation was weighted with historic inevitability. The longbow had a well-deserved reputation for levelling odds in key battles. June 24th, 1340, at Sluys, a battle that determined control of the Channel during the Hundred Years' War, English archers devastated their ship-borne enemy, killing an estimated 20,000 French soldiers. Six years later at Crécy, English bowmen concentrated their firepower of 'swallow tail' arrows at five rounds per minute on the enemy's horses. Without their mounts, the knights' destructive potential collapsed like soufflé in a cold breeze. The vastly superior French force was slaughtered.

At Agincourt in 1415, 5,000 lightly-armoured English longbowmen fired until their last arrow was expended then, drawing their 3 foot swords, joined the fray. The French army, wearing armour from head to toe, lumbered helplessly like men in deep-sea-diving suits. Feathered shafts and greater mobility again carried the day.

The Scots, too, had learned bitter lessons, first at the Battle of Falkirk in 1298, and again in 1346 at Neville's Cross, where they suffered devastating defeats at the hands of Welsh and English bowmen. James was convinced that with skilled, disciplined Scottish archers, this could never happen again. 'Practise makes perfect', became the order of the realm.

Knowing the historical context, it's difficult to fault James' logic in sharpening the skills of Scottish bowmen. But why did he single out ye fut-bawe and its companion game, ye golf, to be Utterly cryt done and not usyd? As we know them today, football and golf are harmonious social recreations and, on the surface, have about as much in common as chalk and cheese – or rugby and billiards, to stay close to our subject. Surely, the sports-mad Scots were equally hooked on the national passions, cache (hand-tennis), bowls, caber tossing, throwing the stone and wrestling?

To survive in Scotland's volatile fifteenth century political climate required a far-ranging intelligence network and the canny king was well informed. James would have been aware of the long tumultuous history of 'football' and 'golf' in France and the Low Countries. Known on the Continent as soule and soule à la crosse (a.k.a. crosse, choule, chole, kolf, kolfspelen, tsollen met der kolven), for centuries these violent games had been perceived as a threat to political stability, and had

trailed death, injury and destruction in their wake (see illustration above).

Their popularity went back to the early Medieval Ages: In 1147, a French lord, in ratifying a charter of donation for his local church, laid down certain conditions, in particular that, together with a notional sum to be paid directly to him, the church would present him with seven footballs (ballons) '… of the greatest dimensions'. In 1378, soule was traditional enough to be described as so ancient its origins are beyond memory.

Sports, particularly the unruly recreations of commoners, were viewed with scepticism and disapproval by authorities everywhere. In 1261, as documented in Grands Chroniques de France, the French became the first to blow the whistle on violent ball games, with a proclamation that would provide a model for monarchs, the church, and municipal authorities for years to come. At the heart of the edict was the contention that ball games interfered with the regular practise of arms - which could have serious consequences for countries hell-bent on taking over others - or defending their own sovereignty. The model for the James edict had already been in place for two centuries.

In 1314, the English King Edward II, who few took seriously (not least, because of the pleasure he found in common labour and noble boy friends, but also his habit of riding around London with a lion in his cart) decided to head north to bring the unruly Scots permanently to heel - something not even his father, Edward I, 'Longshanks', a fierce warrior who earned the epithet Malleus scotorum - 'Hammer of the Scots', had managed to do.

To eliminate one potential distraction from this high profile, well-organised campaign, Nicolas Farndone, the Mayor of London, decided to chase football out of his bailiwick. (Concerned by) '… great uproar in the City through certain tumults arising from great footballs' (grosses pelotes de pee), Hizzoner forbade play within city walls '… upon pain of imprisonment'. The forceful ban and ensuing (temporary) calm weren't strong enough medicine to save Edward's bacon. His army was slaughtered at Bannockburn by Scots led by Robert Bruce.

Living up to his reputation, the English king ignominiously fled the battlefield and skulked home. 16 November, 1326, all credit with his lords gone, Edward was arrested. January 1327, he abdicated and shortly thereafter, was brutally murdered. In one sense, the tragic monarch had the last word. Gloucester Cathedral (where Edward II is entombed) possesses a magnificent Great East Window which contains the image of a French soule à la crosse player (as pictured on the previous page), often referred to as 'The Golf Player' - a warning against playing outlawed games.

(Above) ***The Shepherd Boy Golfer in a French Nativity*, ca, 1450. Photograph courtesy Michael Flannery**

(Below) *Jeu de Paume* (Hand tennis), ca. 1470: Two fashionably dressed teams each of three men play a match of France's most popular ballgame. Image courtesy Fundaçaõ Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon and *Golf Through The Ages*

(Below) *A game called the Calcio in Italy*. Engraving by Pietro Bertelli, ca. 1591. Private collection, Italy

Bans against ball games - even though there was little evidence that they worked, and considerable, that they didn't - quickly became a tradition and authorities in England, France, and Brussels followed suit, sometimes issuing them long after the reason for doing so was gone. James' 1457 edict was repeated more or less intact in two similar acts (1471 and 1491) before it was recognised as redundant and dropped from the books. But canny James had a very good reason for singling out these two games. In a word, if you played ye fut bawe or ye golf, you were likely to be badly injured, and an injured bowman was as useless as a soggy bagpipe.

In 1583, Phillip Stubbes' *Anatomy of Abuses* was published. One passage captures the mad dog nature of football: 'For as concerning football playing, I protest unto you it may rather be called a friendly kinde of fight than a play or recreation, a bloody murthering practise than a felowly sporte or pastime. For dooth not everyone lye in waight for his adversarie, seeking to overthrowe him, and to picke (pitch) him on his nose, though it be upon hard stones… So that by this meanes, sometimes their necks are broken, sometimes their backs, sometimes their legs, sometimes their arms; sometimes one part thrust out of joint, sometime another; sometime the nose gush out with blood, sometime their eyes start out: and sometimes hurt in one place, sometimes in an other.'

The truth is that *ye fut-bawe* and *ye golf* were two sides of the same, badly-tarnished coin. The French historian, Jean-Michael Mehl, lumped them together under the French term, soule: *"The brutality of soule, a game played with the hand, foot or crosse (a hockey-like club) explains its frequent mention in letters of remission (a legal document) which permits one to form a rather precise idea of the game. It consists of two teams, sometimes made up of several tens of players who contested the possession of a large ball of wood or of a ball of leather filled with moss and bran, to carry it to a place determined in advance, be it the side of their adversary or their own side… These games were bloody and often deadly."*

Played by medieval commoners, the 'games' were most often mob scenes with no semblance of team play– all glory accrued to whoever scored the goal. At any stage, anyone could join the fray and attempt to wrest the ball away, using fists, knees and feet to achieve his aim - often a golden opportunity to repay old scores and grudges.

Despite their shared brutality, there was a vital distinction between soule and soule à la crosse (soule played with a crosse). The introduction of a one-piece wooden club with a curved hockey stick-like head, meant that the ball had to be struck with a club to propel it - instead of being carried, thrown or advanced with the fist, foot or knee.

This marked a significant turning point in the evolution of ball games - a move from what the French termed *les jeux de force* (games of strength) to *les jeux d'adresse* (games of skill), a first step towards golf. From the earliest-known depiction of a *crosse* (about 1260) we see that the club was swung with both hands to generate maximum power - a primary characteristic of the game that would emerge centuries later as Scottish golf.

By now, the reader can forgiven for thinking that a medieval spectator couldn't even walk past a penny-pitching match without getting at least one black eye. Yet for over 700 years a number of non-violent social recreations flourished throughout Europe.

These included bowls, half-bowls, skittles, cloish (also called ringball), badminton, handtennis (jeu de paume) and whipping tops. Balls were tossed back and forth and sticks, balls and discs, thrown at targets. There were also batting and fielding games, some of which resembled baseball. The earliest known illustration of such a game, showing a crosse similar to a shepherd's crook being used as the bat, is an illustration in Bede's Life of St Cuthbert, about 1120.

Games characterised by violence when played by commoners often took on a different character in the hands of landed gentry, aristocracy and royalty. Jeanne d'Evreux (1310-1371) third wife of King Charles IV of France was documented as having played the hockey-like game of crosse using a silver club. Played in schools through the 19th century, hockey was a favourite tradition. In the mid-14th century, John of Hubant, founder of Ave Maria College of Narbonne, in Paris, encouraged his wards to play the old popular games of French folklore. A marginal note in a college record dated 1346, singles out Crocet/Crosse played with a curved club shaped like a hockey stick, among traditional children's games (Les Jeux des Enffenz).

Another sport tamed in the hands of the aristocracy was the ancient game of soule/football, which underwent a dramatic transformation when adopted at the court of the magnificent all-round athlete, Henri II. The French king's matches against the intrepid M. Laval became regular fixtures at Le Pré aux Clercs in Paris. The lineup featured His Majesty with the poet Pierre de Ronsard at his side - Henri's Hurricanes clad in white uniforms, Laval's Lions in red. Farther south in the city states of Florence and Venice, the Medici had already tarted up soule (known in Italy as calzo or calcio) in new finery, rules, and enough razzmatazz to rival the Super Bowl.

Despite interdictions, soule and crosse continued to be popular through centuries - the players sometimes dressed to kill; sometimes in rags - until the two ancient ball games eventually petered out in the late 19th century in Brittany, the most sports-mad region of France. But Soule and Crosse, despite their popularity, were not everybody's cup of tea. As society developed, games that required tactics, skill, and custom-made playing equipment emerged and by the late 13th century, change was in the air. Club and ball target sports - each team or player with his own ball - became increasingly popular.

***An 18th Century Mail and Boule*. To withstand the shock of repeatedly driving a heavy wooden ball, the ends of the clubheads were reinforced with iron bands. For added strength, the ball was struck on the end grain of the wood. JG (on the ball) is the makers mark of the legendary Jean Grasset. Photo courtesy Brian Anderson, Troon**

Centuries before the first reports of similar games in Scotland, golf was in the making in France. The earliest documents and artwork depicting golf-like games come from Paris and La Touraine, which most of us know for its Loire Valley. There was a historical inevitability as to why the '*Home to Kings*' - fertile, prosperous and cultured - had the honours as the birthplace of golf.

The story begins in Paris, the Greatest City of Christendom where, in 1292, we pick up the first thread of early golf, and begin to unravel the game's complex fabric as it passed from France, through the Netherlands, Flanders and Italy, over more than three centuries before reaching Scotland's shores.

NEXT ISSUE: ON SALE APRIL 10
FRANCE – THE BIRTHPLACE OF NOBLE BALL GAMES: PARTING THE MISTS. THE EMERGENCE AND EARLY STAGES OF GOLF, CA. 1250 TO 1480.

Golf
THE TRUE HISTORY: PART II

BY MICHAEL FLANNERY

FRANCE, THE BIRTHPLACE OF NOBLE BALL GAMES
SOCIETY, SHEPHERDS AND SPORTS - CA. 1250-1480

Left: Philippe IV, King of France, depicted a year before his death. To his right is his daughter Isabelle, Queen of England (wife of Edward II, whom, with her lover Roger Mortimer, she had murdered); to his left, his heir apparent Louis X, who, in 1316, would die after a match of paume. Manuscript folio from Liber de Kalila et Dimna, illuminated by Raymond de Béziers, Paris, 1313. Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and Golf Through The Ages.

Below: Two teams of four players putt out in a 1450 match of Pallemail in the Loire region of France. Note the closed stance, right foot drawn back at nearly a right angle to left foot. The practised technique and custom-made equipment indicate a long familiarity with the game. Heures de la Duchesse de Bourgogne, ca. 1460. Courtesy of Musée Condé, Chantilly, and *Golf Through The Ages*

Background: In Part I, *Was Scotland the Birthplace of Golf*, we saw that the famous 1457 edict by King James II, had nothing to do with golf but was, instead, directed at the violent hockey and football-like games that had raged on the continent since the thirteenth century, and become a threat to order and archery in Scotland. Peaceful club and ball target games had, however, long been documented in France. In this chapter, we'll draw upon unknown documentation and beautiful images to tell the story of the emergence of early golf-like and other important ball games in the Kingdom of the Franks.

Our story begins in Paris, which derives its name from a Celtic tribe called the Parisii, who pitched camp on the banks of the Seine about 250 BC. The Romans, who conquered the city in 52 BC, called it Lutetia Parisiorum, Lutetia of the Parisii. Around 360 during the brief reign of Julian Apostate, the name Paris was adopted. Until well into the early Middle Ages, Paris was little more than a simple provincial centre, but that was to change radically when it became the capital city of the Capets.

Hugues Capet, first king of modern France (987 to 996), was founder of the Capetian dynasty in which the crown of France passed directly from father to son for eight centuries. Unparalleled in Western history, the reign ensured enormous wealth, influence and stability, while giving birth to the noble lines of Spain, Portugal and Brazil. When the Capets hit town, Paris was kick started on its way to becoming the greatest city in Christendom – the centre of art, architecture, culture, scholarship and, of course, the recreations and ball games that made life worth while. But, ambitious projects, a handsome life style and the odd war, required big budgets and the Capets, like many other parsimonious monarchs, were often obliged to dip deeply into their citizens' pockets to pay the tabs.

Two barefoot boys, one with his crosse inverted, contest a large ball. Silver gilt enamelled ewer (burette), Paris ca. 1330, attributed to Jean Pucelle. Courtesy Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen, and *Golf Through The Ages*

In 1292, scraping the bottom of his royal coffers, the spendthrift King Philip IV of France (1268–1314) launched the most comprehensive taxation ever imposed on the Parisians, who, as le Bon Dieu would bear witness, had suffered many. La Taille de Paris (The Tax of Paris) came as no surprise to his cynical subjects, who knew it was only a question of time before the perennially broke king put the squeeze on. One fierce opponent put it, 'He is neither man nor beast. He is a statue.' Unmoved, Philip imposed similar taxations starting in 1296 – painful for his citizens, but together with La Taille of 1292, a sport-historical bonanza. The detailed documentation that resulted offers extraordinary insight into the popularity and sophistication of early French ball games.

To give the king his due, running the biggest metropolis in the Western World, with a population of 200,000 to 300, 000 – compared to thirteenth century London with around 70,000 residents – was a complex and expensive job. Paris not only had a new city wall, but paved streets, ports and Les Halles, a covered market that would remain in the same location until 1969. The infrastructure was bejeweled with the most beautiful architecture in Christendom, including Sainte-Chapelle on the Île de la Cité, the cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris, and the Saint Denis Basilica.

PARIS: "THE MOST CHIVALROUS RESIDENCE IN THE WORLD"

On the academic front, the dynamic medical faculty at the University of Paris (incorporating La Sorbonne) attracted students from throughout the Western World with a range of disciplines including surgical studies. Graduates were enfranchised to vie for the profitable market controlled by Paris' 151 barbers, who offered not only a shave and a haircut for two deniers, but pulled teeth, gave enemas, performed blood letting and wound surgery. The University's curriculum was appealingly packaged in the holistic Hippocratic-Galenic view of medicine – academic glitz, which long-term left the beard-trimmers trailing in the dust.

The prolific letter writer, Petrarch (Francesco Petrarcha 1307–1374), father of lyrical poetry and Italy's earliest Renaissance Humanist, put pen to parchment to record his initial reactions to Paris: I spent no little time there, in open-mouthed wonder; and I was so full of interest and eagerness to know the truth about what I had heard of the place that when daylight failed me I even prolonged my investigations into the night. In another letter, he observed: At the same time, (Paris) contains the most learned men, and is like a great basket in which are collected the rarest fruits of every country.

King John of Bohemia (1296–1346) called Paris 'the most chivalrous residence in the world', vowing he could not bear to live outside it – nor, as it turned out, would he. At the Battle of Crécy, August 26, 1346, fifty-year old John led his knights in a valiant but vain attack on the English line. As Froissart related, the king (who had lost his eyesight to opthamalia) burned to strike a blow against the English knights. 'The king … was so far forward that he strake a stroke with his sword, yea and more than four, and fought valiantly and so did his company; and they adventured themselves so forward, that they were there all slain, and the next day they were found in the place about the king, and all their horses tied each to other.'

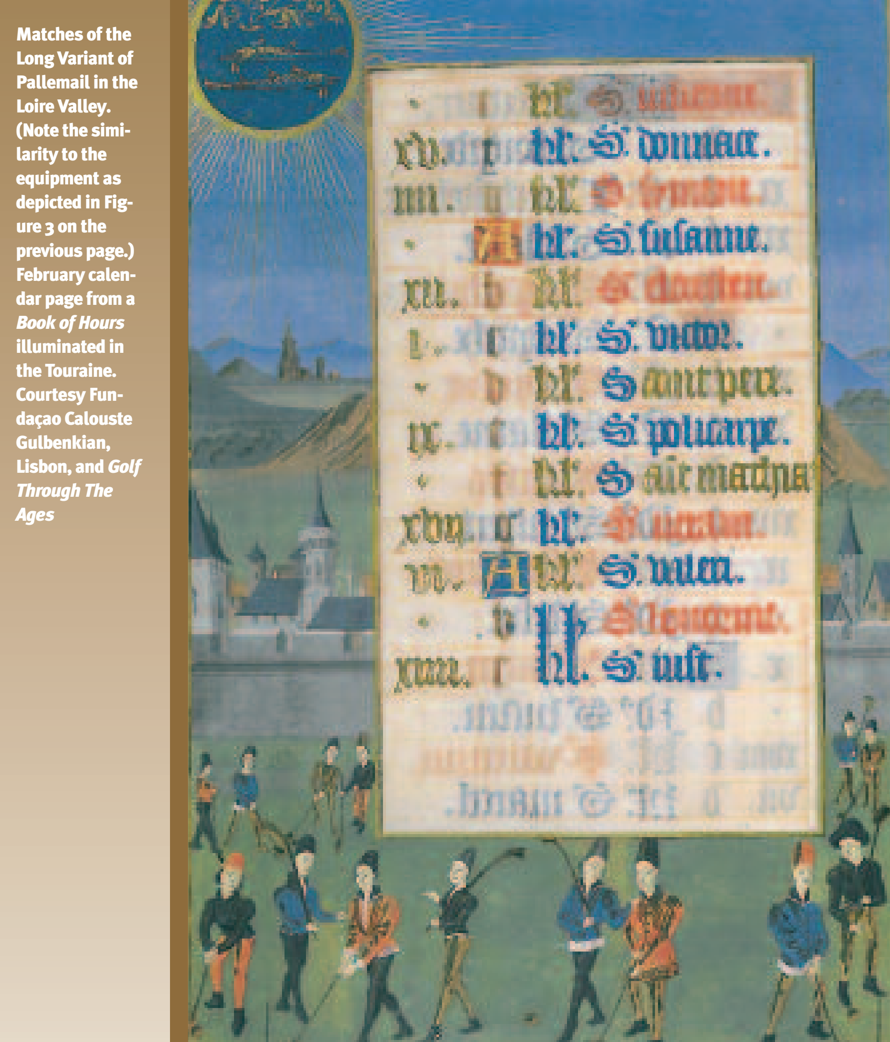
What was it about Paris that made it so special in the medieval world? Thanks to Hercule Pierre Joseph François Géraud, who in 1837 edited a copy of the original manuscript containing Le Rôle de la Taille, we have a clear picture of a highly advanced culture – a vital basis for sophisticated ball games. The Taille, which includes a detailed listing of addresses, trades and professions, is a godsend as a historical starting point in tracking down the origins of early ball games, including tennis, billiards and, of course, golf.

The statistics, anything but dry, reveal a great deal about the lifestyle of medieval Parisians, its quality, and the importance of sophisticated recreation, evidenced by the number and variety of artisan club and ball makers. This booming mini-industry employed 17 full-time masters and assistants to provide adequate supplies of tennis balls (éteufs), for jeu de paume (the game played with the palm), and specialist clubs for ground billiards, the hockey-like game of crosse and its target variants. Thanks to precise 700 year-old documentation, we have our first concrete proof of the existence of professional equipment makers for precursors of noble games which would be played throughout Western Europe for centuries.

An analysis of the sporting trades reveals thirteen male paumiers or ballmakers, and one woman paumiere, possibly the keeper of a court. In one instance, members of a large family all made balls in a single atelier. Jehan, Thomas, Guiart, Jehan le veil (the elder) and Thomas la Fillatre (son of Thomas), all registered outside the city walls at La Queste du Temple, were taxed

individually as paumiers. The existence of two generations of paumiers is particularly interesting, since it indicates that the tradition of ball making dated back at least one generation before 1292.

The first evidence of early golf is in the form of a single billardier (named Nicolas) who made long-shafted clubs for billiards which, until about 1480, was played on the ground, the ball propelled through arches with a push shot. Confusingly, this trade also made another type club known as the billart, which was used in golf-like target games. The presence of two crosetiers (Thomas and Pierre), makers of the hockey stick-like club, the crosse, takes us another big step towards establishing the existence and popularity of multiple early golf variants.



Matches of the Long Variant of Pallemail in the Loire Valley. (Note the similarity to the equipment as depicted in Figure 3 on the previous page.) February calendar page from a *Book of Hours* illuminated in the Touraine. Courtesy Fundaçao Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, and *Golf Through The Ages*

BEING FRENCH, NOT ONLY BALL GAMES BUT FOOD AND DRINK WERE WELL REPRESENTED...

According to the French historian, Jusserand, the crosetier's task was to meet the needs of the game as played on streets, lawns and fields. Depending on the size and nature of the ball and the type of the game – i.e. hockey-like or target – different forms of playing instruments were required. 'The crosse was the principal instrument used in the menu of games in the Middle Ages. The playing club with a curved head preceded the racket and the mallet; its transformations and varieties were infinite'. Illustrations from the twelfth through the nineteenth century show a vast diversity of crosses, confirming Jusserand's thesis.

Being French, not only ball games but food and drink, were well-represented trades in the great city. Paris, in 1292, was home to 21 caterers/restaurateurs, 35 brewers, 3 wine brokers, 2 sellers and 4 vintners; 41 fishermen/fishmongers, 36 butchers, 49 poultry sellers, 43 vendors of cooking oil, 94 public bakeries, 23 fruit and 18 cheese sellers, 68 pastry makers, 7 prepared sauce sellers, 10 mustards makers, and 7 each, sellers of cooking herbs and salt & pepper. There were also vendors of garlic (9), onions, tripe, eels, peafowl and baked pies.

(Below left) Ladies Playing Cricket, as depicted in an illuminated manuscript page from Chansonniers de Montpellier, 1280-90. The target 'guichet', became 'wicket' in English. This makes a strong case for re-baptising the famous cricket ground in St John's Wood, as 'Ladies' rather than 'Lords'. Courtesy Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire de Montpellier, and *Golf Through The Ages*

(Below right) A Game of Paume played in front of a stylised private chapel or 'Penteis'. Chalons sur Marne, probably from the atelier of Jean Pucell, ca. 1320-1325. Winterteil eines Brevarium Romanum, courtesy the Schnütgen Museum, Cologne

The hardware and trappings of war and chivalry were supplied by 8 bow makers, 5 makers of crossbows, 41 diverse armour and helmet makers; 15 squires and their wives, 1 decorated shield maker, 4 pike makers, 35 sword re-furbishers, and 24 knife or blade makers, complimented by 52 sheath and scabbard makers. Trumpeters three, a batallier and 10 champions – professional seconds for duels – rounded out the offer.

Unlike their unwashed brethren across the Channel, at the end of the thirteenth century Paris had 7 soap makers, 22 registered bath proprietors, 151 barbers, 199 chambermaids, 43 laundry workers and a token dishwasher. Literacy and art were served by 13 manuscript/picture illuminators, 24 painters and sculptors, 8 book sellers, 17 bookbinders, 19 parchment makers, one female ink seller and 24 scriveners. Clothing and fashion were catered to by 47 tailors and 46 dressmakers, 214 leather and fur sellers, 81 makers of leather, silk and silver belts; artisans for buttons, lace, gloves, mittens and buckles; felt makers and silk spinners. There were a staggering 226 Cordovan-leather shoe makers. Jewellery and accessories to set off la mode were crafted by 116 goldsmiths and 6 gold beaters; 4 gilders and 5 enamellers. To round off Géraud's list were 49 Lombarts, as bankers, lenders, and money changers were known; 2 fouchieres or priest's concubines, 26 coffin makers (22 of them, curiously, women), and a single, doubtlessly overworked, hangman.

Left: The Putting Variant of Pallemail. The Nativity, Heures de la Duchesse de Bourgogne, ca. 1460. Courtesy of Musée Condé, Chantilly, and *Golf Through The Ages*

Above: A Game of Earth Billiards (detail) from the life cycle, Les Amours de Gombault et Macée, depicted in a series of superb tapestries. Unlike Pallemail (and golf), the ball was not struck, but propelled by a push shot, to pass through an arch and arrive at the target goal, known as 'Tiquet'. The clubheads, like the mails in figure 3 and 4, are near parallelepipeds, possibly with lead-tin sheaths similar to those we will encounter in a later chapter on Dutch kolf. Courtesy Musée des Beaux Arts, St Lô, France

FRANCE EMERGED AS THE CRADLE OF SOPHISTICATED BALL GAMES

By now, the reader could be forgiven for saying – 'Get on with it!', but there are good reasons for emphasising the relatively advanced economic and cultural climate of Paris, compared to the rest of medieval Europe – fundamental reasons why France emerged as the cradle of sophisticated ball games. These included not only tennis and billiards, which we have mentioned, but cricket, bowls, pall-mall, and other early club and ball target games that led to golf.

The tantalising similarity between playing clubs illustrated in medieval texts and the crook has always encouraged supposition about the role of the shepherd as the 'inventor' of hockey and golf-like games – usually met with knee-jerk dismissal by academics. The authors of *100 Jahre Golf in Deutschland*, the official German golf history, for example, wrote: 'Let's take leave from a further universally beloved legend: It wasn't the shepherds in their natural environment who in their free time experimented with club and ball, and in an idyllic early phase of golf had the idea to drive their ball to a pre-determined goal, and in no case, (did they) steer it into a hole. Golf, in its first centuries was an aristocratic game since it was expensive.'

Academic omniscience in full flower! In one brief paragraph the authors demonstrate unique insider knowledge of how shepherds did or didn't while away their hours; establish that a hole was the target goal in early golf (it wasn't); and, with no supportive documentation, conclude that the early game was both aristocratic and expensive. A little knowledge...

It was only when games of the people were adopted by their vastly better-off social superiors, to be played with custom-made equipment on purpose-built playing courts, that they became expensive. Golf, in its early days, like other games played by the common people, made do with whatever was at hand for its equipment and playing areas. 'Courses' could be a road or path, clearing, grazed field, park, dry moat, town square or building or some sort. Cathedrals, with seemingly endless smooth vertical and horizontal surfaces (and dry inside), proved irresistible to medieval ball players. In 1385, confronted with the increasing popularity of St Pauls Cathedral for ball games, Robert de Braybrooke, the Bishop of London, saw red:

'There are also others – insolent, idle persons answering to no-one, troublemakers by nature, who would rather cause mischief than make themselves useful – who throw or shoot stones, arrows, and various other missiles at the crows, pigeons and other birds that nest or perch in the walls and recesses of the church. Not only that, but they play ball-games inside and outside the church, and engage in other destructive games, breaking or seriously damaging the glass windows and the stone carvings in the church ...and also expose their souls to grave danger.'

Since the simple, intuitive games played by commoners, were of no interest to the aristoc-

Left-hand image: Detail of Putting to a Piquet using a Mail

Right-hand image: A Match of Soule à la Crosse, showing the sturdy one-piece crosse required to drive the large soule and withstand the shock of violent attacks. Note the careful finish of the clubs and the stitched ball, indications of professional craftsmanship.

racy they are un-documented. Therefore, to answer the question about the role of peasants generally, and shepherds specifically, in developing golf-like games, we must use our imagination and extrapolate from what we know. Fit, lonely and bored, any boy anywhere, over long months of herding his sheep or goats, would have established the playing properties of his crook. With a certain swing he could roll a stone or nut in a given direction; with another, strike it in the air to a target; and with a third – letting out the shaft – drive it long distances. Competing against other shepherds would have been an inevitable extension of man's compulsion to measure skills against his peer group.

FOR AN OBSERVER FROM TODAY, THE CREATION OF GOLF WOULD NOT HAVE HAD A 'EUREKA' MOMENT

Although there are manuscript illustrations of peasants and shepherds with crooks playing the hockey-like variant of crosse – basically finger wagging to remind the viewer that this violent sport was forbidden by both temporal and ecclesiastical authorities – there is no picture of a golf-like game until 1400. Early golf, like food, drink, music, clothing, transportation and most other things in life, took its own sweet time to evolve, become standardised and codified.

Had it been possible to fly in an observer from the 21st century, there would have been no medieval 'Eureka' moment when he could have said: 'That's golf!' But, over centuries, a golfer would have noted a constant stream of details and practices that he would have been able to associate with the game that eventually emerged from Scotland. Nonetheless, it's safe to assume that prior to the late 1300's, the violent hockey-like variant of crosse (forbidden in 1457, under the name 'golf', in Scotland) held sway in France, as it would continue to do in Britain and the Low Countries.

Evidence for the 'Shepherd Theory' comes from numerous medieval documents and illustrations. In 1277, an English manuscript refers to a tragic end of a game between two boys playing hockey (ad pilem ludendo altercantes). One, Geoffrey, a shepherd and son of le Pasteur (in English, 'the Shepherd'), accidentally killed his friend Robert with a blow behind the ear. In another fatal ball game accident, a fourteenth century French Letter of Remission relates: 'Nothing more than bad luck was behind the blow with a crook (in French: crosse or masselote) which the cowherd, Pierre Columbard delivered to Jehanin Ravinal, who died eleven days later.'

A Match of Flemish Colf, a single-club, cross-country game in which the ultimate scoring shot was played to a hole in the ground. Anonymous Flemish Master, ca. 1505. Courtesy of Real Colegio de Corpus Christi, Valencia, and *Golf Through The Ages*

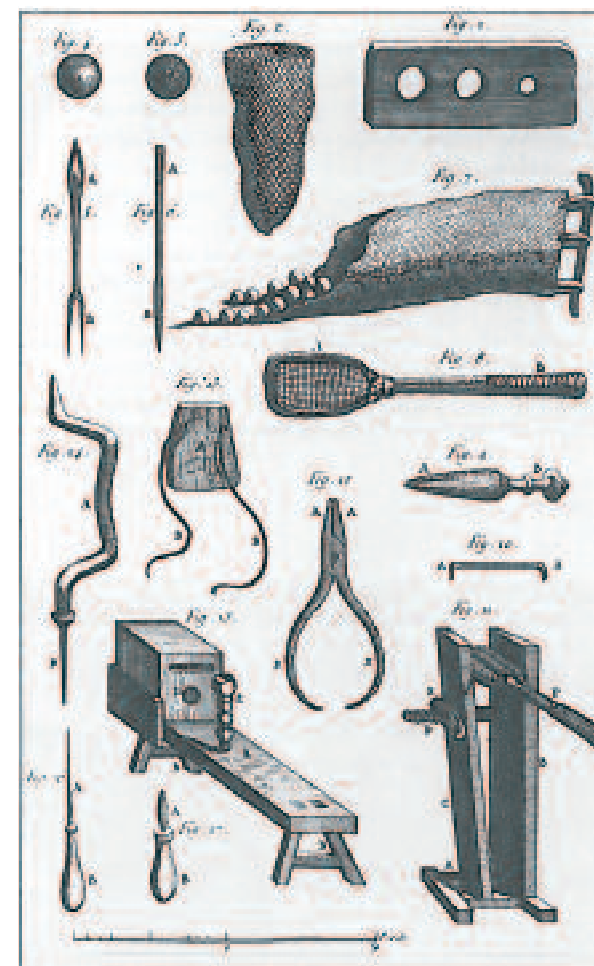
The earliest comprehensive records of ball games are found in French medieval Lettres de Remission (legal documents drawn up to plead for clemency in royal courts). Jean-Michel Mehl, who analysed tens of thousands of these letters, concluded that in 6-7% of all cases the deaths and injuries which had resulted in sentencing were caused by ball games. These documents offer an invaluable source of insight into the status of the players, manner of play, terminology and equipment.

While most of the earliest records refer to brutal hockey-like games, the DNA of golf was well established. The skill needed to strike a stationary object accurately to a target was part of the shepherd's job description. Violett le Duc, the architectural historian who rescued Carcassonne from ruin, then supervised its restoration, wrote: 'Until the XIVth century, shepherds carried a club terminating in a large end, or crook, in order to strike clods of earth to drive breakaway lambs back to the flock'. In 1933, the brilliant young German sport historian Albrecht Wettwer, concluded that the genetic material for both hockey and golf was present in fourteenth century games played with a crosse and a relatively small, solid ball.

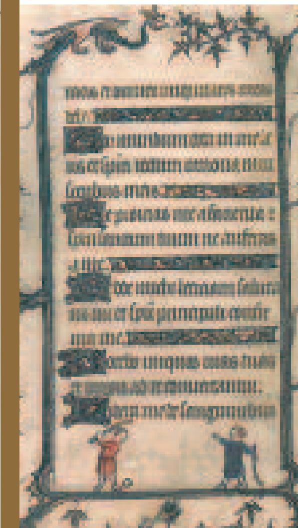
By the turn of the fifteenth century, we read of the first flowerings of golf in judicial documents that reveal a fledgling game that was both experimental and evolutionary. In 1426, a letter of remission records that the purpose of a game of Grande or Longue Boule (the long ball game) was to reach a neighbouring village 'with the fewest strokes of the wooden ball' (avec le moins de cops de la boule de bois). A 1449 document reveals a more flexible variant: the winner could be either the first player to reach a distant goal, or the one who took the fewest strokes to get there. In other forms of competition, matches were decided by the longest drive – a practise that we will see continued in pall-mall. Both singles matches and teams of as many as 6-8 players were popular.

Mehl notes that players were obliged to play around obstacles or turn them to their advantage, which as we know, is easier said than done. This is possibly the reason why, in 1398, a match begun at midday ended at sunset. The hallowed rule of golf – playing the ball where it lies – found favour with early French golfeurs. In 1384, in the bailiwick of Melun, a player whose drive had strayed into a pile of stones, brazenly attempted to replay the shot. The ensuing dust-up confirmed that this was a breach of playing etiquette. Before the emergence of man-made goals, first illustrated in 1450, the ultimate scoring stroke was often played to a boundary stone or a convenient landmark. Early golfers, in some instances, insisted on playing to an elevated target – sometimes a mark on a tree trunk or a church or graveyard door.

In a prayer book illustrated in Paris about 1400, for the first time we see a game in which each player has his own club and ball, playing a match without physical opposition. The two players, a young man (left) and an older, white-haired man, are dressed in simple tunics indicating their peasant status. Their ball and clubs (the crosse) are crude, lacking the finesse of artisan-made products, but the young man's swing is practiced, hands together on the shaft, wrists cocked. The older man has his right hand raised, signalling caution – a silent Fore. There are too few clues to enable us to decipher the message and its symbolism.



Instruments for making balls and rackets for jeu de paume. From the Middle Ages on, the contents and construction of French 'tennis' balls was regulated by royal edict. Players considered balls from Paris as la crème de la crème. Encyclopedie de Diderot et d'Alembert. 18th century



(Above) Earliest-known Depiction of an Un-Opposed Golf Swing, in the target variant of crosse. Paris, 1400-1410. Anonymous French Master, Courtesy Bodleian Library, Oxford and *Golf Through The Ages*

Sixty years later, ca. 1460, we hit pay dirt – the first unequivocal depiction of early golf being played in both a short putting variant and a multi-club long game. For the next 20 years several more images surface, all from La Touraine, best known for its paradisiacal Loire Valley. There is a satisfying symmetry to finding the earliest evidence of golf-like games in the Loire region, for while the Capets governed from Paris, La Touraine was the traditional residence of the Capetiennes lords and their allies, home to France's most beautiful and famous châteaux.

These decorate an exquisite prayer book known as La Duchesse de Bourgogne (The Duchesse of Burgundy), a former owner, and are attributed to Jean Fouquet and an anonymous Master of the School of Tours, the cultural centre of the Loire, and capital of the Touraine. The first early golf game illustrated is a putting variant of Pallemail, shown in the context of a Nativity. Two shepherds holding clubs stare upward in wonder at the Herald Angels announcing the Virgin Birth, while three others, each with his round wooden ball and putter – a mail or billart, compete in a peaceful contest on a smooth path, putting to an elevated 'green' cropped close by grazing sheep.

The pin – known as a 'piquet' – has been fiendishly placed just off the path on a point of the green where, with the difference in height, the ball is bound to spring off course. The purpose of the game (like boules, which probably had a formative influence) is to leave the putt as near as possible to the pin. (It's not until 1500 that we see, for the first time, a hole being used as the target goal on a green in Flanders.)

The mail, the first known two-piece golf club, has an exotic shape and an equally exotic description. It is a socket-joint parallelepiped, the wooden head composed of three sets of nearly parallel planes. A similar club appears as a putter in the second seminal image of early golf, the February calendar page of the same prayer book, dedicated to celebrating Candelmas and the arrival of Spring (in the Middle Ages, 2 February). But here, it is only one of two variants being used in a multi-club game, together with our old friend, the crosse. The club with the curved head is used to play the initial drive (volée) and elevated approach shots, while the mail is reserved for putting. Two teams of four men, each with its own ball, are shown putting to piquets. Another team of four plays up to the green from the distant background.

IT MAY BE THAT THE END OF THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR ENCOURAGED GENTLER PURSUITS

Captured in time, five and half centuries ago, we have our first clear picture of an early form of golf, a multi-club game, each team with its own clubs and ball, playing a stationary ball without physical opposition over long distances, to terminate in a putting stroke to a pre-agreed target. Mysteriously, despite the apparent appeal of the game, by the mid-1470's depictions of Pallemail ceased. Perhaps the end of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) that had raged over La Patrie, devastated the countryside, led to occupation and terror at the hands of mercenaries and outlaws, had encouraged new forms of harmonious and refined sports. Perhaps the benevolent effects of the Renaissance accelerated evolution of club and ball target games, through new concepts and improved equipment that extended their parameters.

Whatever the reasons, the next stage of evolution, from about 1480-1700, was arguably the richest and most diversified in golf's history, manifested in two very different forms of early golf. One was Flemish Colf, a single-club game played only with a crosse; the other, Jeu de Mail/Pall-Mall, was played with a wooden ball and mallet. Known as 'The Game of the Upper 10,000', Mail/Pall-Mall would captivate European society and produce the grandest and most beautiful courts and alleys ever built – their name lingering today in the word 'mall'.

These two games would bequeath golf a number of its priceless characteristics including the concept of harmonious cross-country play, refined equipment, a diversity of shots, putting to a hole, and rules and etiquette – an enduring blueprint for popularity and pleasure.

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Golf

THE TRUE HISTORY: PART III

BY MICHAEL FLANNERY

JEU DE MAIL – THE GENESIS OF GOLF

'At another time playing at goff, a play not unlike to pale maille, whilst his schoolmaster stood talking with another, and marked not his highness warning him to stand farther off, the prince, thinking he had gone aside, lifted up his goff club to strike the ball; mean tyme, one standing by said to him, "Beware that you hit not Master Newton"; wherewith he, drawing back his hand, said, "Had I done so, I had but paid my debts."

Joseph Strutt, The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England (1801), quoting Harl. MS., 6391. The passage refers to Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales (1594 -1612)

London, 1661

The winter had been extraordinarily unseasonable, with January temperatures in London as hot as they usually were in June. In the Turk's Head at Cornhill, there was talk of a mysterious plot against the new 'Reformation' government, and more still, about Nature gone mad. The bewildering climatic change had grave implications for farming, since England, despite its great Navy and merchant fleet, depended on home-grown crops to survive. Mention of earlier famines brought involuntary shivers. Worse yet, as everyone knew, warm weather encouraged the plague, a regular deadly visitor to the great city. Grey heads vividly remembered the calamitous visitation of '03, which killed 30,000 London residents.

Little did the scarred survivors suspect that the next assault was lurking just over the horizon poised to decimate the population, with no respect for wealth, age, race, colour or creed. In 1666, Black Death would pounce on unsuspecting England in a final devastating strike, claiming the lives of 100,000 Londoners. The process from infection to death was lightening-like. Boccaccio, who estimated that that an equal number of citizens had died in the Florence's 1348 Black Death, wrote that plague victims 'ate lunch with their friends and dinner with their ancestors in paradise.'

Fear of an Apocalypse moved Parliament to order a day of fasting during which the citizenry could pray for more seasonable weather. It didn't help. Spring had now arrived and the weather remained hot. Frost on window panes, a frozen Thames with its beloved fun fares and ball games on the ice, were dreams of the past. Daffodils, narcissus, daisies and even roses, had long since bloomed and withered.

It was mid-morning, the 2nd of April 1661, as 28 year old Samuel Pepys (who himself had lost brothers to the Plague), strolled leisurely towards St James Park, time on his hands before his first appointment at the Admiralty. He had heard that a new mall – whatever that was – had just been constructed in the park for pall-mall. The game, so they said, had been played on what was now a busy street called Pall Mall, since the time of James I. During Cromwell's reign it had been built over and, although brought back in use, was rendered unplayable by the clouds of dust stirred by passing carriages and wagons. The unseasonal warm weather added to the problem, bringing out crowds of gaily dressed ladies and flâneurs, oblivious to the danger of being struck by a heavy wooden ball. Even though the French cry, 'Gare' to warn of an errant drive, was well-established, few who heard it knew what it meant. Strollers, felled by the half pound wooden balls, were an annoying distraction for the players.

English society had been increasingly caught up in pall-mall since Dallington's trip across the Channel in 1598, and the book, 'View of France, in which he published his observations. The Master of Charterhouse had bemoaned the fact that Palle-Maille, as he spelled it, wasn't played in England: 'Among all the exercises of France, I preferre none before the Palle-maille, both because it is a Gentleman-like sport, not violent, and yeelds good occasion and opportunity of discourse, as they walke from the one marke to the other. I marvell, among many more Apish and foolish toyes, which wee have brought out of France, that wee have not brought this sport also into England.'

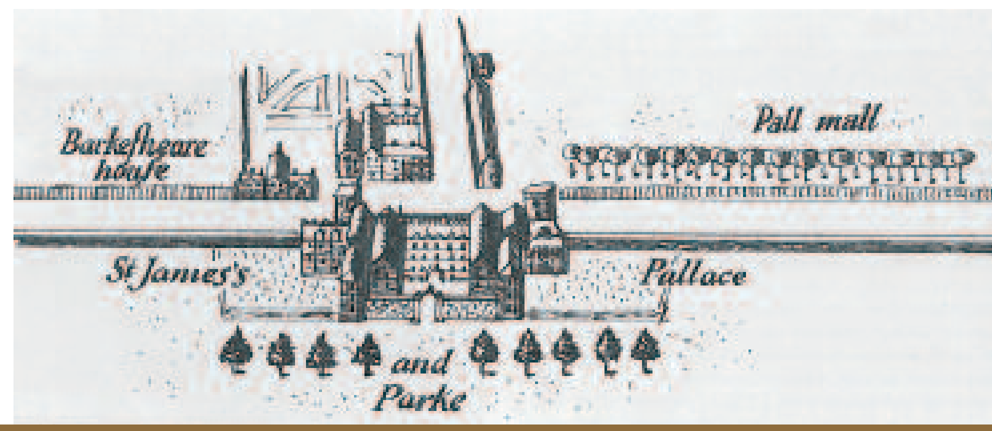
That was most puzzling, Pepys thought, since in Basilikon Doron, the book of guidance that James wrote and had privately published in 1599 for his infant son, Henry, Prince of Wales, the king had recommended the game as a preferred recreation. And hadn't James' own mother, Mary Queen of Scots, been observed playing pall-mall in Scotland as early as 1567? The sport, known by its playing equipment – the palla (ball) and mallaeus (mallet) – had a long tradition in Italy and was acceptable for the nobility, thus for anyone. It was an ancient favourite of the French, Scotland's Auld Ally, who claimed that the rules went back to the time of the Gauls. One would have thought that the English would have adopted the game much earlier.

Although intrigued by the idea, Pepys had little time for strenuous games, preferring to devote his days to stimulating conversation while supping on oysters and tasty brawn. Washed down with cider, ale, wine and sack, his socialising usually kept him occupied until late at night. The consequences, including his head 'akeing all day' from the previous night's debauch, were not conducive to sports. The diarist stopped for a moment, to catch his breath, wipe his brow, and regard the darkened sky above London. Could the unseasonable weather somehow be the result of the ubiquitous seacoale fires that produced such a fuliginous, filthy vapour? The fuel's dangers were legendary and as far back as the reign of King Edward I 'Longshanks' nearly 400 years earlier, anyone caught burning sea coal was to be tortured or executed. Still, what were the alternatives? Pepys began to jot a reminder to travel out to Wotton to discuss the matter with John Evelyn, when he was distracted by an unfamiliar sound – not unlike the hammering of tent pegs with a wooden mallet – but sharper – a distinctive pistol-like report.

Curious, he crossed the road to the edge of the park and drew in his breath when he say that the whip-cracking sounds were emanating from their highnesses, James, Duke of York, and his brother, Charles Stuart, soon to be crowned King of England. Following his battlefield loss to Cromwell at Worchester in 1651, Charles had been forced to flee and had spent nine years in penniless, nomadic exile in the Spanish Netherlands, The United Provinces and, France. With his charm, Italianate dark good looks and masterful horsemanship, he had little difficulty in finding companionship, often joining his hosts at the popular ball games of their countries. Now, home again, Charles would ascend to the throne in three weeks time.

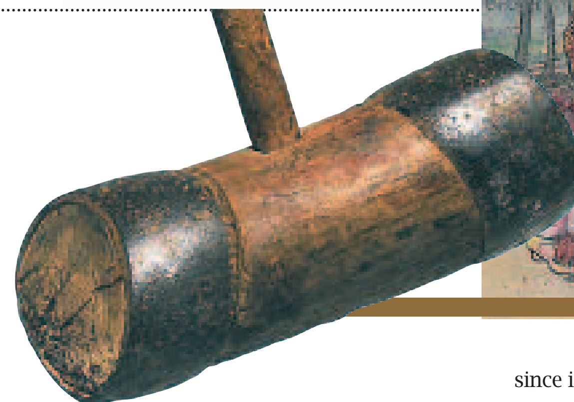
Pepys saw that the future king and his brother were standing at the end of an 800 yard-long, smooth-surfaced alley, its sides lined with low boards – the wood so freshly sawn and planed that it sent off a pungent scent in the warm morning air. James stood, feet wide apart, opposite a large wooden ball, raised on a mound of dirt. His gloved hands encircled a grip made of white leather straps wrapped around the end of a nearly 4 foot-long wooden shaft. At the other end was a barrel-shaped head re-enforced with iron bands.

Fascinated by the novel sight, the diarist lingered to see what would happen next. In a flash of movement, the Prince took back the mallet over his head and swung violently downward to strike the ball at his feet. The



(Above) The Pall Mall at St James, London, from a 17th century map by Faithhorne and Newcourt. The original mall was over 1000 yards long. Illustration courtesy David Stirk, *Golf: History of an Obsession* and *Golf Through The Ages*

(Left): Mary, Queen of Scots, playing golf with her courtier, Pierre de Boscosel de Chastelard at St Andrews. Amadee Forestier, first published as 'Early Days of Sport' in *Illustrated London News*, 1905. The young queen was, in fact, seen playing golf on the fields of Setonm near Edinburgh, in 1567



(Below): A rare 'Coste' hardwood, iron-bound mail, mid-18th century. The dual-purpose head offers two different lofts, one for driving, one for approach shots. The 'Torpedo', based on this type of mail was introduced in England at the turn of the 20th century, as a single-club alternative to sets. Torpedo salesmen, who all played off 5 or less, dazzled with their dexterity, including bunker shots. Photograph courtesy Sotheby's and *Golf Through The Ages*

(Left): A match on the Maliebaen in Den Haag. The exiled 'Winter King', Frederick V, Elector Palatine, prepares to play a scoring or positioning shot to the tall post marking the centre of the mall. The distant players on the 1073m long mall, are well beyond his range. Adrien van de Venne, 1626. Artwork courtesy of British Museum and *Golf Through The Ages*

boxwood 'boule' took off in a low skimming flight, touched the surface, bounced slightly and continued skipping, then rolling down the alley, before it slowed and stopped. 'Demned fine shot, Jamey', said his brother, as he stepped up to play his own Début or Volée'. An impressed Pepys recorded the event in his diary, encoded in a cipher that wouldn't be cracked until 1825: 'To St. James's Park, where I saw the Duke of York playing at Pelemele, the first time that I ever saw the sport.'

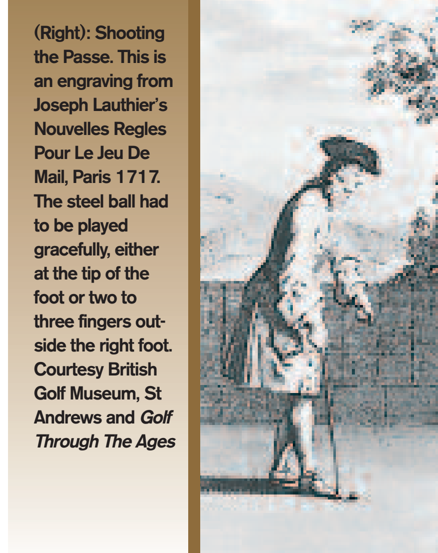
The poet Edmund Waller, another who had seen the future king in action on the mall, penned an account unlikely to cause royal displeasure: 'To see our Prince his matchless force employ; His manly posture and his graceful mien, Vigour and youth in all his motions seen; No sooner has he touched the flying ball, But 'tis already more than half the mall. And such a fury from his arm has got, As from a smoking culverin 'twere shot.' Waller can be forgiven his attempt to curry favour from the most influential of patrons, but his account of Charles' tee shots is wildly exaggerated.

Swinging a 'mail' that weighed some two pounds, to drive a ball weighing between 5 and 7 ounces, required power, technique and timing. Despite the fact that the rules permitted the use of a tee made of dirt or a rolled card for the initial drive, it was unlikely that amateur players, such as the Stuart princes, could have driven more than 70 – 100 yards. When compared to the greatest of the professionals, Louis Brun, an 18th century master from Provence, who drove a series of balls 400 paces or 300 yards, to end grouped within a foot of each other, this was very small beer, indeed.

But Pall-Mall, as the game was known in English, wasn't just about distance. The width of the alley was no more than 10 – 14 feet, and the low boards running its length on both sides, kept only rolled shots in play. That, coupled with penalty strokes for out of bounds shots (the marque), placed a premium on accuracy. The malls themselves were magnificent constructions, the grandest of which was at Den Haag in the Netherlands – a mind-boggling 1073 metres or over 1100 yards long! And that of the Reggia di Veneria (the Royal Hunting Lodge) in Turin, was over 1000 metres long and 'U' shaped. Gracious rows of trees, sometime double rows, ran the length of the sides to provide shade. In 1673, Richard Bloome wrote that the St James mall '…was said to be the best in Christendom'. Evelyn took issue, contending that the mall at Tours, the cradle of early golf '…with its seven rows of tall elms, was the noblest in Europe for length and shade.'

Thanks to carefully-constructed bedding, a surface optimised over generations and an ingenious drainage system, malls were playable most of the year. January, 2, 1664, Pepys recorded: 'Afterwards to St Jame's Park seeing the people play of Pell Mell; where it pleased me mightily to hear a gallant lately come from France, swear at one of his companions for suffering his man, a spruce blade, to be so saucy as to strike a ball while his master was playing on the Mall.' The prospect of a public course was not bright.

Much like a private golf club today, the mall had a 'pro shop' (loge du maître) which included a cloakroom, served refreshments and offered club and ball rental. In the event of damage or loss, the fine was fixed by the professional (maître de mail or palemardier), who, like pros today, gave lessons and assigned caddies (laquais or port lèves) to the players. Since the caddies, like their Scottish descendents, were not adverse to improving the lie of their players ball, they were required to stay outside the mall. Could the French saying, 'To lie like a laquais', have been born on the mall? The alleys varied in length, usually between about 400 – 800 yards, and were enclosed by low, smoothly-planed oak walls (palisades), a feature insisted on by the all-round sportsman, King Henri II, of France and his wife, Catherine de Medici, for their own malls. It was at Henri's châteaux that young Mary Stuart, later Queen of the Scots, spent her girlhood years and learned to play Pall Mall.


(Right): Shooting the Passe. This is an engraving from Joseph Lauthier's Nouvelles Regles Pour Le Jeu De Mail, Paris 1717. The steel ball had to be played gracefully, either at the tip of the foot or two to three fingers outside the right foot. Courtesy British Golf Museum, St Andrews and *Golf Through The Ages*

(Above): The professional (Maître Palemardier) offers a boule for consideration, while his valet 'plays in' a large Voguet with careful hammer strokes. Landscape with Men Playing Mail a la Chicane (detail). Pall Brill, 1624. Artwork courtesy Minneapolis Institute of Arts and *Golf Through The Ages*

(Left) A collection of six jeu de mail balls and two rare coste hardwood mails. Three of the boules – which range from 6.5 to 10 cm diameter – are decorated with brass nail patterns. Photograph courtesy Sotheby's and *Golf Through The Ages*

Eternally curious, prying into every corner of London, Samuel Pepys returned to the St James mall May 15, 1663. His diary records: 'Up betimes and walked to the Park, discoursing with the keeper of the Pell Mell, who was sweeping of it; who told me of what the earth is mixed that do floor the Mall, and that over all there is cockle-shells powdered, and spread to keep it fast; which, however, in dry weather turns to dust and deads the ball.'

The earliest-known 'green' keepers regularly sanded and packed down the surface to provide optimal roll, usually equal to the distance of the carry. Depending on the conditions, one of two types of balls was played: With a following wind and light and dry soil, the large Voguet, which weighed 6 oz or more, was the boule of choice. When the air and soil were heavy, the smaller Tabacan was played. In France, boules made in Naples of medlar roots were state of the art, although boxwood was also popular. In England, balls were made of chestnut or boxwood roots. Seasoning balls until they were properly dried and sturdy enough to resist splitting, was a long and elaborate process including storing in sacks of dirty linen – believed to possess the right humidity – and playing them in over months, with progressively stronger strokes.

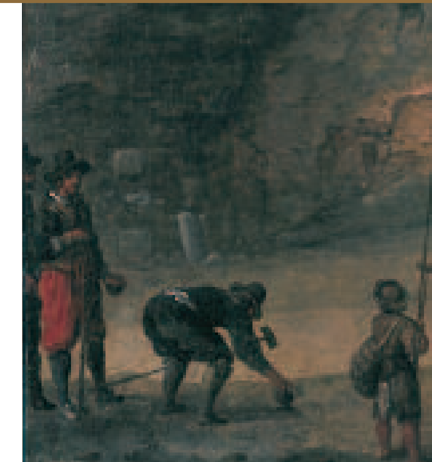
(At far left): Chawgân or polo, played on foot. Boys with mallets and a wooden ball contest a match of chawgân under the eye of the king. Shiraz School, Anonymous Master, end 16th century. Courtesy of the Musee du Louvre, Paris and *Golf Through The Ages*

(Left): M. Sudre, Le Noble Jeu de Mail de la Ville de Montpellier, 1822. Believed to be the 'birthplace of mail', the game was played in the city until 1938. The illustration shows a match of 'Tir'. Traditionally, the target was a glass demijohn (the bon-bonne) raised on a pole 4.80m above the ground. The shot, played form 30-40m away, had to break the bottle. Courtesy Sotheby's and *Golf Through The Ages*

Unlike early attempts in Scotland, when wooden balls flew irregularly – if at all – French balls offered amazing accuracy. Coupled with artisan-crafted well-balanced clubs having shafts of date palm, and heads fashioned of medlar (or later, evergreen oak), good players, particularly professionals, could drive 200 yards or more, and keep the ball in play within the narrow confines of the mall.

In the middle of the mall was a post or a pivot (a swivel-mounted iron ring), while at each end was either a stone, known as la Pierre (which the ball had to touch) or an elevated arch, the archet or fer, through which players were obliged to play the scoring shot, or passe – the equivalent of holing out in golf. This stroke was taken with a small steel ball (bille), scooped up in the spoon-like head of a short light 'putter' known as the lève, and hurled in one smooth motion through the 'horns' of the archet.

Pall-Mall was played on the mall in two variants. The usual was a game contested either as a singles match (au rouët – in the manner of the Roy, or King), or a team match (en partie), ending with a scoring shot to the archet, The other variant was a long driving contest (au grand coup) in which the rules specified the use of a tee for the initial drive, and handicapped weaker players through advancing them to take their drive opposite a designated tree. If the players were even when they reached the end of the mall, the player whose ball landed the farthest beyond the archet on the next shot won the match.


(Left): A player places his ball on a tee observed by his partner and a caddie (porte lève) with a sack full of reserve balls. Landscape with Men Playing Mail a la Chicane (detail). Pall Brill, 1624. Courtesy Minneapolis Institute of Arts and *Golf Through The Ages*

Simple arithmetic shows that getting a start time on the Old Course today, is a piece of cake compared to booking a match of pall-mall in the 17th century. St James' new mall, even though it was 800 yards long, could probably have supported no more than four or five matches at any given time. Since social order in the Renaissance and Reformation was based on precedence, and malls although numerous in France, were sparse in England, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany, the chances for lesser nobles and merchants to play were marginal, and for commoners, nil. Fortunately, there was an alternative, the ancient French variant mail à chicane (pall-mall played in the manner of polo) a sport the Crusaders are documented as having seen played on horseback and on foot during the fourth Crusade (1204) which ended in Constantinople.

The game, according to the 17th century philologist, Du Cange, was old hat in France: 'It seems that these people (the 'Greeks', observed by the Crusaders playing Tzykanion) owe the origin to our French, and basically it wasn't anything other than that still in use in Languedoc, which one calls the game of mail, except that in Languedoc the game is played in the countryside and on long pathways where one drives a boxwood ball with a small mallet at the end of a shaft of proportional length.'

The early presence of mail à la chicane in Picardy, Toulouse, Bigorre and Comminges, is well-documented. As M. Sudre, the author of Le Noble Jeu de Mail de Montpellier, wrote: 'The noble game of mail is extremely ancient: Most of the rules of play having been lost through the lack of use; the Gauls attempted to re-publish them in writing; but, since with time the terms of a language change, as all things perishable, these rules become almost unintelligible. The French, successors to the Gauls, desired to conserve in the game the rules of their ancestors; for which they interpreted the terms and inserted them in L'Académy des Jeux.' The original French rules may have been lost, but Les Loix Du Paillemail in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, dating to before 1655, provided guidance and clarity to modern Scottish golf when the first rules were drafted in Edinburgh in 1744.

Golf would not be golf without the trail-blazing of jeu de mail. Its substance and spirit are based on the royal and ancient French game which contributed the concepts of unopposed singles or team matches – each player with his club and ball – caddies, pros, clubhouses, penalties, handicapping, the cry, Gare that led to Fore, the use of a tee for the initial drive, greenkeepers, and much more. In the next chapter, we'll trace the emergence of the multi-club, cross-country variant, mail à chicane, in Italy; take a peek into Flanders, where around 1480 a hole was introduced as the scoring target, and visit the Netherlands, where high tech and new clubhead alloys would revolutionise Dutch kolf.

Golf
THE TRUE HISTORY: PART IV
BY MICHAEL FLANNERY

Young Men Playing Flemish Colf. In the style of Simon Bening, ca. 1505. Illustration courtesy Real Colegio de Corpus Christi, Valencia, and *Golf Through The Ages*

GOLF 1480-1625.THE FINISHING SCHOOLS FRANCE, ITALY, FLANDERS AND THE NETHERLANDS

About 1470, visual evidence of the early golf-like sport, pallemail, ceases. However, in a most satisfying, amoeba-like fission, two ball games emerged to fill its shoes. The first was pall-mall – in French, *jeu de mail*, or simply *mail* – played with wooden mallets and balls and a putter shaped like a long spoon known as the lève. The other was Flemish *colf*, a single-club game played with a shepherd crook-like club and small ball. Each would contribute essential elements to the new game of golf that would emerge in Scotland towards the beginning of the seventeenth century.

In 1907, James Cunningham in cooperation with the distinguished golf writer, Andrew Lang, one of the most important literary figures of his age, decided to bring his talent to bear on an English translation of *Nouvelles Regles Pour Le Jeu De Mail*, (New Rules for the Game of Mail), 1717, written by the French professional, Joseph Lauthier. The publication of rules for popular recreations acceptable to the establishment had long been a French tradition. As witnessed by the 1292 Taille de Paris (Part I of this series), with its unique documentation of the earliest artisan club and ball makers, the French can no more resist researching, analysing, recording and publishing data about their society, than a chat, crème. One can imagine William, sand from the beaches of Hastings still damp on his spurs, rubbing his hands while admiring his new conquest and thinking: 'Best get started on an inventory of this island and publish it in the Doomsday-Book'. Projecting potential tax revenues from a new fiefdom left monarchs as giddy as butterflies in a hash plantation.

Cunningham and Lang can be admired for their brave undertaking (dedicated to their friend, Harry Sterling Crawfurd Everard, who inconveniently kicked the bucket and left them to get on with the translation that Harry was supposed to do), for the ancient rules of mail were enveloped in linguistic armour which had become progressively arcane and impenetrable with each successive generation. Although Lang never offered an explanation as to why he and Cunningham continued the project, one is be tempted to think that finally two members of the British golfing establishment had grasped the fact that golf was not Scotland's Immaculate Conception, but the product of a long club and ball game evolution. Pall-mall, the last tangible link in the ancient sporting chain was a logical starting point. Then, too, there was a romantic side to mail that would have appealed to Lang. Hadn't Mary Queen of Scots celebrated the assassination of her husband, Lord Darnley, with a round of pall-mall in the fields nearby Seton?

Alas, poor old Cunningham had to make much ado about a text that defied golfing logic. Following a competent translation of Lauthier's Foreword, the content becomes increasingly cryptic, as reflected in Rule XXIII: 'When one player is at three more and another is about to play one off three, being in the pass, the one playing three more has no need to shoot because he is not longer in it.' Whew.

Eventually, Cunningham and Lang, four-putting Nouvelles Regles' tougher passages, limped through the round and their wee translation, New Rules for the Game of Mail, was published at St Andrews in 1910. Lang's Introduction (tainted by an anti-Semitic attack on an antiquarian book dealer who had crossed him) was proof that he learned little, and could contribute nothing to the understanding of golf's antecedents. He made no attempt to show the influence of mail in the use of a tee for the initial drive, handicapping weaker players, penalty strokes and a myriad of other conclusions that could and should have been drawn from Lauthier's text.

Smarting from the reverse Waterloo, Lang, in the best fox and grapes tradition, sought solace in his oft-quoted, appallingly parochial statement: 'The history of golf as it should be done demands a thorough study of all Scottish Acts of Parliament, Kirk Sessions records, memoirs, and in fact of Scottish literature, legislation, and history from the beginning of time'. This was, of course, sheer nonsense and not worthy of a historian of Lang's stature. Worse yet, the chauvinistic false scent encouraged generations of golf historians to waste their time following Lang's advice, when there was really nothing other than the history of Scottish golf to be found in the documents and literature he recommended. Although it required hard graft, informed sleuthing and a working knowledge of European languages, the history of the origins of golf was waiting to be discovered in the ancient countries separated from Britain by that narrow aqueous divide known as The English Channel – or La Manche – depending on which side of the water your ball is bunkered on.

Cavaliers contest a singles match of mail a la chicane. Willem Schellincks, 1678. Illustration courtesy Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, and *Golf Through The Ages*

Italy

For centuries, mail in its many forms, was a staple of recreation for monarchs and aristocracy throughout Europe. Emphasising the game's importance is Lettera sulla pallamaglio (a letter about pall-mall), ca. 1553, written by Bartolemeo Ricci to Count Alfonso Calcagnini, nephew of Alfonso I, which contains the earliest detailed description of playing equipment for the game. The ball had to be perfectly turned, as large as, but not much more than a round egg, and made of a hard and solid wood, from corniolo, sorbo, olive and other trees of that nature. The size and shape of the ball made it easy to drive. The mallets described by Ricci differed from those used in the rest of Europe. Instead of having two flat faces with varying lofts, the early Italian mallets had only one lofted face for driving the ball, while the other was crafted with a small cavity – perhaps for a scooped and hurled scoring shot, or for getting out of bad lies.

Over the next two hundred years, artisans from Montpellier to Naples and Avignon to London experimented with woods including chestnut, boxwood and boxwood roots, medlar, ash, date palm and evergreen oak to perfect the playing characteristics of their equipment. The results were sensational: Carry was progressively longer – important on the mammoth malls of Den Haag, Tours, London and Turin, all of which stretched 1000 yards or more. Balls flew truer – vital on alleys a skimpy 10 – 14 feet wide, with low walls that kept only errant rolling shots in play, and rules that levied stiff penalties for out-of-bounds.

But there was a worm in the apple called mail. Equipped with high-tech equipment and perfectly tended, state-of-the-art surfaces, shots which were once a challenge became a piece of cake for better players – particularly the pros/palemardiers. (Inevitably, a parallel with modern professional golf springs to mind.) Rather than solving them, expertly balanced and matched equipment exacerbated mail's problems. As play became more and more predictable, spectator appeal diminished. Wagers – a feature of the game so important that they are addressed as the very first rule of the pre-1650, *Les Loix de Paillemail* (The Laws of Pall-Mall) – dried up. Gimmicks, including running after each shot, were introduced. The medicine wasn't strong enough. The once-healthy patient was in terminal decline.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 78) wrote: 'The game is extremely tiresome and subject to many drawbacks. One frequently sees people crippled by being struck by the ball: others succumb to pleurisy which lands them in the grave. The Turks, who have seen the game played here (France), say that our people are absolutely crazy to propel a wooden ball with powerful blows and then run madly after it, to drive it again from the place where it stopped.' The philosopher's

final salvo was devastating: 'Of all the professions, it (that of the palemardier) is the most useless! A skilful player is no more than a despicable layabout.'

Much like poodles, once admired as fine hunting dogs, mail had become over-bred. Its sportive soul and irresistible charm had been progressively suffocated by fulsome etiquette, pedantic rules, perfect alleys and the dictates of fashion. Lauthier added to the malaise, when he carped: '…it is not pleasant to see persons of quality playing in public without jacket or waistcoat or without a wig'. When it came, confirmation of the game's demise was bitter but not unexpected. In 1752, two years before the founding of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, St. Simeon wrote in his Memoirs: 'Mail is an almost forgotten game. Louis XIV took great pleasure in watching mail being played. Only Le Noble Jeu de Mail de Montpellier managed to cling tenaciously to its hold on sporting favour. Yet even this ancient game was vulnerable to the vagaries of fashion and history. In 1939, as guns rumbling in the East presaged a new devastating war, a handful of spectators heard the final crisp click of chestnut on boxwood in Montpellier.

But hundreds of years earlier, another variant of mail was already being played passionately in the French and Italian countryside by men who rolled up their sleeves, sweated, cursed and laughed as they stamped through gorse and briars, muddy pastures, creeks, hills and dales. Playing on Nature's courses – free from dress codes, precedence and disapproving eyes – was an exhilarating experience. These were the pioneer players of mail à la chicane, a hardy breed of sportsman who defined the spirit of what would become golf. The laws of the game were enforced by an uncompromising code of honour. Despite regularly finding their boule in a lie that would have their modern brothers reaching for Valium – the keystone rule was merciless: 'Play your ball where it lies'. The earliest rules of golf (Edinburgh, 1744) paraphrased this particular clause, but retained the sense: 'You are not to remove stones, Bones or any Break Club, for the sake of playing your ball'.

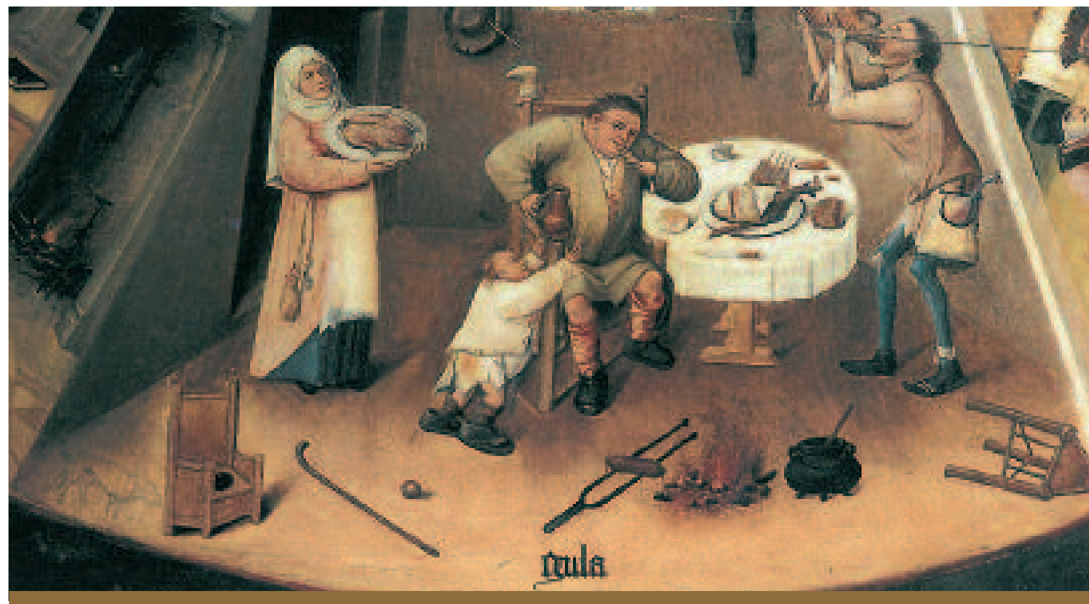
In a continuation of rules begun before the time of the Gauls, the Académie Universelle Des Jeux, Regles Generales Du Jeu De Mail (1739), wrote: For the game called Chicane, one plays in the heart of the countryside, on alleys, paths and everywhere where one meets; one usually commences with a teed-up drive after which one plays the ball from whatever stony or difficult lie in which it is found, and one finishes the round by touching a tree or a marked stone which serves as the goal, or in passing through certain narrow goals (détroits) which have been agreed, and he whose ball goes farthest, if the players are even, or the former, one-up, will have won.

As seen in Willem Schellinck's beautiful 1678 painting of a match near Rome, sometimes early players of mail à la chicane were blessed with a dry river bed in which they could build a course for summer play. Usually, however, they played across the countryside. Judged by today's standards, the 'courses' offered conditions approaching the impossible, while the equipment was hopelessly inadequate for the job at hand. Think about playing through stones, streams, bushes and rough – in the truest sense of the word – driving a 6-8 oz wooden ball with a mallet that has one face lofted about 5°, and the other, 15°! The art of shot-making had achieved its zenith.

Mail à la chicane blazed the trail for golf. The spirit, nature of play and even the rules of mail would be adopted by Scottish golf. The most distinctive moves away from traditional game of were seen in the modification of playing equipment and, eventually, the manner of making the scoring shot. A club (eventually multiple clubs) replaced the mallet, while the large wooden boule was replaced by a small, elastic, leather-covered, feather-stuffed sphere. The Scots, unlike Continental artisans, simply didn't have the necessary skills to produce small wooden balls that would fly true. But when all was said and done, the featheries turned out to be surprisingly accurate and carried much farther than their wooden counterparts.

In the absence of documentation and pictures showing how early golf was played in Scotland, we have no idea what type scoring shot was played, nor when a hole was introduced as the target goal. Generations may have passed before the first longnose putter was hurled into the whins after a four-putt green. Perhaps early Scottish golfers played to stones, churchyard doors or marks on trees – all, for hundreds of years, features of golf-like games.

Despite its obvious charm and passionate devotees, sometime in the mid-eighteenth century mail à la chicane silently disappeared from the sporting scene. The reasons were many, including urban expansion, a shift away from robust sports in favour of effete games such as billiards, and general changes in social practices and recreations. Meanwhile, however, a new club and ball game had emerged in Flanders, one that represented another giant step towards forming the character of golf, as we know it today.



(Above) The Seven Deadly Sins, depicting Gula (Greed). Hieronymus Bosch (1450 - 1516). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, and *Golf Through The Ages*

(Left) Putting to a Hole on a Frozen Canal. Calendar page for January. Illuminated breviary from the School of Tours, ca. 1500. Courtesy Muzeul Brukenthal, Sibieu, and *Golf Through The Ages*

"Madam, please keep your eye on the ball!" The first kolf lesson, 17th century Flemish painting from an unknown master. Courtesy Christies' Images, London, and *Golf Through The Ages*

(Below) A Game of IJskolf. Hendrik Avercamp, ca. 1625. Courtesy Gemälde Galerie, Dresden, and *Golf Through The Ages*

Flanders

The Flemings, an independent-minded lot, have always been bonkers about ball games. As early as 1300, they were depicted playing medieval hockey and batting and fielding games. Better still, they have always had a dab hand when it comes to conceiving and making quality products. In Chronicles, Jean Froissart, in the midst of observations about the Hundred Years' War, noted that practically every sophisticated artisan-made product (such as saddles and bridles) came to Scotland from Flanders. So it was really no surprise when sometime in the second half of the fifteenth century, illustrations in devotional books show that the Flemings were playing a new variant of golf, which they called 'colf', also the name for the wooden club with which it was played. The first depiction of the equipment is seen in a vignette entitled Gula (Gluttony), an admonitory Hieronymus Bosch painting of the 'Seven Deadly Sins'. The subject is a hungry colver (probably after a round on the Old Course at Ghent) attended by his doting child, wife and caddy, enjoying a snack at the nineteenth hole. In the foreground, a colf and a tennis-sized ball lie on the beaten dirt floor.

The next insight into Flemish colf is an eye-opener – a 'Eureka Moment' in the history of golf. For generations, the Scottish establishment has contended that the distinctive element that sets golf apart from all other earlier club and ball games is the putted scoring shot to a hole. An illumination from a Flemish prayer book dating from about 1480, depicts a kneeling golfer (the classic putting technique in Flanders), stroking a ball into the hole on a frozen canal. A copy of this scene painted in a breviary some twenty years later, confirms the existence of putting in Flemish colf. Other depictions – petering out about 1550 – show colf being played on ice and on land. Thus, two-hundred and sixty years before the earliest picture of golf in Scotland ('View of St Andrews from the Old Course' ca. 1740), we have incontrovertible evidence that putting (as well as driving and approach shots) was an integral part of Flemish golf.

The Flemings, who would eventually take their recreations with them as their diaspora led them to Scotland (and St Andrews, itself), had developed a game model based on un-opposed cross-county play, terminating in a putted stroke to a hole that was very close to the structure of golf, as we know it today. The major flaw was that their kolf – a one-piece

wooden club, first illustrated in a match of hockey ca. 1250 – was severely obsolete. Compared technologically to French-built mallets – particularly those from Montpellier, the Rolls-Royces of playing instruments – the Flemings were still driving ox carts. But change was in the air. Just a quick skate away were their Low Country neighbours, masters of metal technology. The Dutch would herald in a new era of club making, using steam to bend and shape wooden shafts, while introducing the use of alloys and metals for clubheads, technology practically unknown in earlier European ball games.

The Netherlands

When not exploring, trading, colonising, fishing, painting, leading the wave of Humanism illuminating Europe, planting bulbs, firing kilns, making lace, being pious or celebrating boisterously, the Dutch – somehow always in step with the times – were playing games. Their recreational cornucopia is recorded in paintings, drawings, watercolours, engravings, sculptures and ubiquitous tiles known as wandtegeln. The games included tennis (kaatsen), ringball (beugelen or clooten), nine pins, bowling, stone throwing, badminton, sailing on beaches in wooden boats, and at least three variants of kolf (or colf), a single club game played year round.

'Als het hard vriest, kolft men op het ijs.'

The old proverb summed it up: 'When everything is frozen hard, one plays kolf on the ice.' Winter in the Netherlands, was a time for sporting activities, skating, strolling, sledding and socialising. Intoxicated by nature, the Dutch, en masse, took to the ice. The vast surfaces created by frozen rivers, inland seas and lakes, inspired new variants of kolf, which, when played on ice was called ijskolf, or kolf op het ijs. Some of these were based on pall-mall) played from the early 1600's on gracious, tree-shaded malls (the maliebaen) in Amsterdam, Utrecht, den Haag and other Dutch cities.

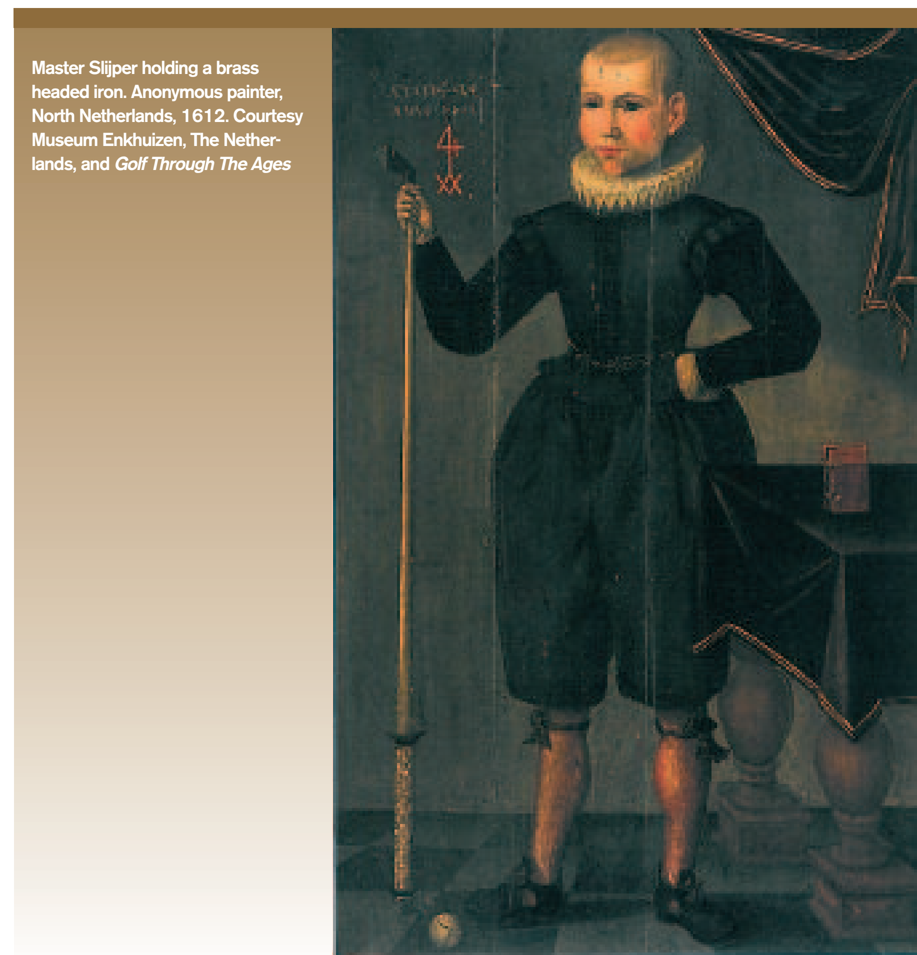
The same basic short and long variants they enjoyed on land were transferred to the cold unforgiving slippery surface that was the focal point of Dutch life until early spring. The equipment for the short variant of kolf on ice was the same as on land: A sheepskin-covered wool-stuffed ball called a kolfbal or cloot (which was also used for hand-tennis) and a kolf, its curved head clad in a sheath made of pewter, lead or a base alloy of lead and tin. Play was to improvised targets such as a stick or rowing- boat, or to a purpose-made target such as a stake (the staeken) or post (the paal), anchored or frozen in the ice. Kolvers are usually depicted playing in ordinary footwear, which limited the swing to a compact hands and arms stroke to avoid losing balance and taking a tumble on the unforgiving surface.

The combination of a soft metal club head and a soggy ball meant that the game could be contested on a modest surface, with no more than a few dozen yards between the initial shot and the scoring stroke – usually played near the banks of a canal, lake or river. The proximity to the shoreline attracted the curious, whom Dutch artists regularly included in their pictures. The soft cloot, when struck off line, posed no more danger to spectators than a snowball. Longer ijskolf variants which required a full stoke, depended on a thin coating of snow for firm footing; otherwise, the players were obliged to wear ice spurs (the i-spoor). Since kolf had been played for generations, written rules were no more necessary than for a game of cards in the tavern, or pulling sleds on the IJssel. Kolf op het ijs was a harmonious social game, a logical extension of the Dutch need to get together, play a round for a few beers, and uncomplainingly make the best of long winters, short days and constant cold.

While the short variant of ijskolf was never more than a putting game – although the final scoring shot into rowing-boats and targets on land required an elevated chip – the Royal & Ancient game owes a debt to the Dutch for the first true iron, a stout-shafted wedge with a sharply lofted brass head (messingsloffen) designed to be played off bare lies without shattering. Along with ordinary variants kolf, there was another exclusive type of kolf played cross-country and on ice by the Dutch upper classes– a game that would illuminate one of golf's greatest mysteries – the state of the Scottish game in the early seventeenth century.

In Scotland, evidence of golf in the form of pre-eighteenth century woods and balls simply doesn't exist. This, compounded by the fact that there is no visual or written record showing how the game was played, has created a Caledonian Dark Ages of golf. But analysis of Dutch documents and paintings from this period provides an astounding insight into what early Scottish golf may have been – a game already in possession of elegant, sophisticated equipment, refined stroke technique, cross-country courses, forecaddies, and much more.

In the next issue of Golf International, 'Golf Arrives in Scotland – The Dutch Connection', for the first time ever, the secrets of the early Scottish game will be revealed.



Master Slijper holding a brass headed iron. Anonymous painter, North Netherlands, 1612. Courtesy Museum Enkhuizen, The Netherlands, and *Golf Through The Ages*

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Golf
THE TRUE HISTORY: PART V
BY MICHAEL FLANNERY

'Boys Playing Kolf on a Road.' Nicolaes Eliasz. Pickenoy, ca. 1624. Courtesy The Six Collection and *Golf Through The Ages*

EARLY SCOTTISH GOLF HISTORY IS VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT – a historical haggis made up of scraps from letters, laws, accounts and diaries; a series of documentary nods and winks that leaves the reader to interpret whether it really was golf, as we know it, that was being discussed. Since there are no artefacts pre-dating the eighteenth century, nor are there pictures of golf in Scotland prior to c. 1740, we have no clear impression of the Scottish game in its formative years. Was it a multi-club game? Was it played cross-country? Was golf played on iced surfaces in winter? Did it involve putting to a hole? What kind of playing equipment did it use? For answers we must turn elsewhere.

History demonstrates that like food and drink, legislation, medicine, music, clothing, transportation, literature, science and practically everything else, golf would have adopted characteristics from both earlier and contemporary models to form its nature. One of these, we know, was *pall-mall*, a passion of Scottish royals and nobility throughout Europe, a club and ball game which clearly influenced the manner in which golf would be played. But let's turn the sport-historical riddle around. Is it possible that golf, as played in Scotland over four centuries ago, was no longer derivative but, rather, already served as a role model for ball games popular in neighbouring countries?

EARLY GOLF IN SCOTLAND

THE DUTCH CONNECTION A PHRASEBOOK, PAINTINGS AND A POEM REVEAL THE SECRET OF EARLY SCOTTISH GOLF

To find the answer, we turn to the Netherlands, the year-round game known as *kolf* or *colf*, and the three 'A's: *Afferden, Avercamp,* and *'s Amsterdamsers winter.* When analysed together, these most diverse elements provide an astonishing insight into what may have been the state of Scottish golf in the 17th century.

OUR STORY BEGINS 464 YEARS AGO IN HARDERWIJK, A sleepy hamlet in the Netherlands province of Gelderland. The sturdy medieval buildings, pastoral landscape and broad river caressing its shores, paint a deceptive picture, one that conceals brooding political unrest that would soon erupt into seemingly endless warfare.

The Netherlands was on the brink of an era of turbulence and bloodshed unprecedented in its history. In 1543, under the rule of Charles V of Habsburg, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and Duke of Burgundy, the Duchy of Guelders (Gelderland) had been the final regional sheep to be herded into a political flock known as the 'Seventeen Provinces' – a minute part of an empire that would eventually span four million square kilometers. The move was an early step in a volatile religious and political policy that in 1568, would ignite into the devastating 'Eighty Years War', which in its bloody terminal phase, ran in parallel with the Thirty Years War.

Bent over his sturdy oak desk, the thoughts of Pieter van Afferden, a 35-year-old Dutch schoolmaster, were far from war. After years of research and writing, he had finally completed *Tyrocinium lingue Latinae*, an ambitious Latin-Dutch phrasebook, to which, in the manner of Renaissance Humanists everywhere, he signed his Latinized name, Petrus Apherdianus. His thoughts may have been troubled. Was the subject matter sufficiently diversified and stimulating to have broad popular appeal? Would his fellow burghers be interested enough to buy the phrasebook? Would he find a printer of stature, who was prepared to make the substantial investment in paper, typesetting and bindings, and then promote and distribute the work throughout the Netherlands and the key foreign markets where scholars played a decisive role in successful sales?

Afferden had already contacted Johannes de Laet, a highly influential publisher and director of the Dutch West India Company. The imprimatur of the distinguished geographer and cartographer would practically guarantee success of any work. And in his heart, the young author felt that Tyrocinium filled a vital niche in the book market created by Guttenberg's introduction of moveable type in the Europe print industry. Mechanical printing had dramatically reduced the cost of books, while making them accessible to a broad public, and demand for self-improvement works was booming. Pieter van Afferden was certain that the content and novel format of Tyrocinium filled a vital niche in the marketplace.

Instead of hewing to the largely inflexible word and definition structure of the recent dictionaries written by Murmelius, Curius and Paludanus, Afferden's didactic work actually facilitated the use of Latin (the language of the educated class) in daily conversation. Its 47 numbered chapters offered complete phrases for a range of topics that covered the daily spectrum: health and home; meat, fish, bread, milk and beer; school and schoolbooks; animals, birds and insects; seafaring, commerce, divine service and the royal court. The final four chapters, *De Lusu* (The Games) were the icing – a 'How to Play' manual with terminology, rules and etiquette for the most popular of Dutch sports, including ball throwing to a hole; tennis played with the palm and racket; the wildly popular ancient game of ringball or cloish – the longest chapter in De Lusu; and, for the posterity of sport, Dutch kolf, presented as a dialogue between players. Chapter 24 gives us a strikingly detailed picture of early golf in the Netherlands, including banter that wouldn't be out of place on the Old Course, today.

Left: 'Kolfing to Stakes', a short putting variant of kolf, also played on ice. Dutch ceramic tile, first-half 17th century. Image courtesy Jan Pluis, Kinderspelen op tegels, and *Golf Through The Ages*

Below: 'Winter Landscape with Snowfall near Antwerp.' An ijskolver plays an approach chip to a concealed goal. Lucas Valkenborch, 1575. Courtesy Staedelisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, and *Golf Through The Ages*

Although Johannes de Laet had died in 1549, the first Latin-Dutch edition of Tyrocinium was published under his imprint in Antwerp, 1552. The work soon caught the eye of Johannes Gymnich of the famous Cologne printing dynasty, who followed up in 1575 with the first Latin-German edition. Tyrocinium was a runaway best seller. By 1653, fourteen Latin-Dutch and nine Latin-German editions had been published. There is little doubt that its success in the Netherlands and Germany was due in part to Chapters 21 - 24, De Lusu devoted to the most popular adult ball games of Holland, equally popular across the border shared with Germany.

As the 25 phrases of the golf dialogue reveal, before teeing off players had to decide what type club they would play. The choice was between a club with a lead head (*clava plumbata*), and a 'tough and useful club' (*Clave lenta & commodious*), possibly a one-piece wooden club such as that used in the Flemish game. The match – apparently stroke play – then began with a drive.

Examples of the text follow, with English equivalents of the Latin, German and Dutch phrases, offered from a golfer's perspective:

Move back a bit while I drive. Step back a bit, you're in my light.

What do you think of that? Not bad! That's a great shot!

Whoever misses the ball loses a shot.

I'm not far from the target (cuyl). I'm going for it! (When the Aberdeen school master David Wedderburn, wrote his own golfing dialogue about 1636, he lifted this phrase almost literally for the golf text of his own Vocabula.)

The match continues:

Who's up? Johan has the honours.

But I'm playing first. No way, that's not the way it's done. You wait your turn. And finally,

a phrase we can all identify with:

I didn't play badly. It just wasn't my day.

In Tyrocinium, we find clear evidence of a mid-16th century early form of golf – i.e. each player equipped with his own club and ball, playing in the countryside without physical opposition or distraction, until the final scoring shot, described by one of the players: "ick will den bal lichtelijck in doen" (I want to stroke the ball in). Were they putting? If so, was it to a hole?

From illuminations in Flemish and French devotional books dating from about 1480 to 1550, we know that a hole on ice or on a green was used for the putted scoring shot in the game of colf. The Dutch, however, seem not to have adopted this practice. The word used in Afferden's text is 'cuyl', meaning ditch, hollow or depression, which in 1575 was translated into German as 'Gruben', with the same basic sense. Chapter 22, entitled de Sphaeris missilibus or cloot werpen, describes a game in which the ball was thrown to a target hole. Here, Afferden, always precise in his descriptions, uses the term 'cuylkens' (a diminutive) rather than cuyl, to describe the target, a hole cut into the ground with a knife.

Clearly, the Dutch were playing a game which, seen in the context of Afferden's dialogue, had many features of golf. But was it truly golf as we know it today, or rather some variant of kolf played with soft balls and lead headed clubs – ill-suited for a true cross-country game? All known Dutch clubs at the time, were designed for short game variants, which is logical when we consider the limited, highly-cultivated and heavily-grazed, densely-populated land mass that made up the Netherlands.

By the mid-16th century, the Dutch had launched a new wave of clubmaking, incorporating state-of-the-art technology, using traditional materials – lead and a lead-tin alloy for club heads, and ash for shafts. Analysing conventional club heads shows that they had a basically triangular section which meant that both faces were lofted, perhaps as much as 15°. Decorative grips made of tow or leather, often with fringes, offered a sure hold, particularly in winter, although players, with the exception of long driving and point-point variants of ijskolf, are usually pictured barehanded.

The underwater archaeological excavation of the 'Biddinghuizer kolfschip' (dating to c. 1540) shows there were already at least two other club variants available to kolvers. One had a solid cast head, the other, a sheath-like cast club head, both made of lead. The clubs, perfectly conserved, included models for adults and children in both left and right-hand variants. They offered one non-lofted face for putting, while the other face had a loft of about 30°, for elevated scoring shots.

Above: 'Somer'. A monkey with a smooth 'modern' swing, prepares to drive a teed-up ball. Julius Saedeler, after Pieter van der Borcht, c.1620. Courtesy of Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam, and *Golf Through The Ages*

Right: A Boy Wearing Ice Spurs Plays a Long-Variant of IJskolf. Adriaen van de Venne, 1626. Courtesy Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, and *Golf Through The Ages*

Below: 'Winter Landscape' (detail). A Long Variant of Ijskolf Played with 'Scottish Cleeks' and Feather Balls. Hendrick Avercamp. Courtesy Teylers Museum, Haarlem, and *Golf Through The Ages*

So despite an impressive choice of equipment, the question remains: Did the Dutch in the mid-16th century have the equipment necessary to transform a mundane short variant of kolf into a game that we would recognise as being similar to Scottish golf? The answer is no. Nothing in the extensive documentation and iconography of Dutch kolf until the first quarter of the 17th century, gives any hint of a true golf-like long game – although a copper engraving by Justus Sadeler, (1583 - 1620) after Pieter van der Borcht, shows a monkey with a fine left-hand swing driving a teed-up ball – indicating the requisite technique to propel a ball a long distance. But before reading too much into this unique illustration, we have to consider that it could simply have been a long-driving contest – perhaps based on Mail au Grand Coup – and not the tee shot of golf.

As we know, the absence of proof is not necessarily the proof of absence. Still it is with a sense of amazement that around 1620, we find indisputable evidence of a golf-like game being played on Dutch ice with long nose clubs and feather balls. The second key figure in deciphering the mystery of early Scottish golf was the most unlikely of candidates – a mute painter living in a village transformed by winter into a booming centre for sports and recreations on ice.

Above: 'A St Nicolas Party' (detail). A young boy excitedly shows his presents, a 'Scottish Cleek' and a feather ball. Jan Steen, c. 1670. Courtesy Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, and *Golf Through The Ages*

Right: 'Master Slijper' – a solemn boy in a ruff collar poses holding a brass-headed kolf. Unknown North Dutch Master, 1612. Courtesy Museum Enkhuizen, and *Golf Through The Ages*

'De Stomme van Kampen'
– The Mute One of Kampen

Hendrick Avercamp (1585 - 1634), born in Amsterdam, was only a year old when his family moved to Kampen, a medieval village nestled along a dike near the shore of Zuider Zee. Hendrick's parents were cultured and well-travelled. In Kampen, his father first held the town post of apothecary and later became its physician, ensuring a comfortable life style and an opportunity for the 18-year old Hedrick to study art in Amsterdam with the Danish painter, Pieter Isacksz, where his silence in the studio led other students to nickname him 'The Mute'. In fact, it was a birth defect that made him turn to his sketchbooks, canvases and wood panels to communicate with his friends and family, and to earn a living from his artistic talent.

The nearby Zuider Zee (now IJsselmeer) became his open air studio – its giant surfaces transformed in winter when the Dutch moved en masse onto the ice. Avercamp became the most prolific and popular winter scene painter of the Dutch Golden Age – the first decades of the 17th century, known as the 'Small Ice Age'. His paintings are filled with strolling couples, ice sleds with oars, and vignettes of citizens going about their daily chores. Most important for us was his fascination for IJskolf, golf on ice. No other painter has left us such a precise visual documentation of a club and ball game. From the wealth of detail captured by the mute painter, we can extrapolate visual evidence of the probable state of Scottish golf in the early 1600's.

About 1625, Avercamp painted the first of his depictions of golfers driving from the ice, using clubs remarkably similar to the earliest surviving 18th century Scottish long noses. (Although the artist usually monogrammed his works, he did not date them, thus dating – usually determined by the costume worn – is approximate, probably accurate to within 10 years.) Like the long noses, the small balls, too, recall what we know of early Scottish featheries. At the address, as a result of the clearly visible ice spurs (the i-spoor) worn to achieve firm footing, the players, are tipped slightly on their toes. The metal spurs, fastened in front of the golfers' boots, are designed to bite into the ice under the arches.

The kolver's stance is closed, arms and shaft extended at roughly 45° from his body, gloved hands close together in a 'natural' grip, with the ball positioned squarely in the middle of the club face. A forecaddie, eyes fixed on the ice golfers, cloth dangling from his hand, stands in the distance, signalling the line. Beyond the forecaddie is a ship, masts bare, perhaps frozen in the ice. Could this be the target?

The drive (and perhaps all subsequent shots) was taken without a tee off the bare ice – a testimony to an extraordinary stroke technique – something we observed in 1676, in a painting by Willem Schellincks of Mail à la Chicane (published as an illustration in Chapter IV, *Golf The True History*). Considering the fragile nature of the long nose playclub (driver), to avoid shattering it on the ice required consummate deftness of stroke. Although whipping (the tarred cord) which secured the scare (joint between the head and shaft) is not visible in this painting, it, along with other characteristic details of a Scottish long nose, is clearly evident in the delightful c. 1670 painting by Jan Steen, 'A Nicolas Party', showing a little boy proudly flourishing his feather ball and long nose club.

The chase quickens – the end in sight. We now know, unequivocally, that in the first half of the 1500s, a golf-like sport was being played in the Netherlands countryside. All that was missing before it could spread its wings and soar to the level of the Scottish game, was the right equipment – a high compression ball and a complimentary club. Thanks to the immortal art of 'De Stomme van Kampen', we know that by the early 17th century, such equipment was available and used in long variants of IJskolf on the frozen courses created by the 'Small Ice Age'.

At the same time, we are aware that the Dutch tradition of kolf making was limited to two clunky variants, the most popular of which was based on a lead sheath into which an ash shaft, bent with steam into the desired curve, was inserted. The second category of clubs featured cast-metal heads made of lead, lead/tin alloys or, less-commonly, brass – all basically unsuitable for a true long game. Dutch balls, often those used for kaetsen (hand-tennis/paume), were low compression, stuffed with cow hair. This leaves us confronted with a crucial question. If the clubs and balls Avercamp depicted in these pictures weren't Dutch, where on earth did they come from? It is not until the mid-seventeenth century that we have a definitive answer and the final piece of our puzzle.

J. Six van Chandelier and
's Amsterdamsers winter

Son of a merchant from a Huguenot family, Johan Six van Chandelier (1620 - 1695) lived a life most of us only dream of, gallivanting around Europe, while doing just enough business to justify his expense accounts with the tax collector. The talented merchant, who spoke fluent Hebrew and a handful of other languages, travelled twice to England – not really his cup of tea – and spent agreeable years basking in the warm charm of southern Italy.

Many of his works, including Poetry from a Spa, were based on his experiences. In 1657, Poësy (Poetry), which included a chapter entitled 's Amsterdamsers winter – The Winter of the Amsterdam Citizen, a tribute to his birthplace, was published.

At the time, the poem, which contains a narrative of a typical point-to-point match of IJskolf, was simply delightful literary entertainment. Today, it can be viewed as a golf-historical bonanza. The precise description of equipment and the manner of play, give us a vital insight into not just Dutch kolf in the 17th century but, by inference, the state of early Scottish golf. A part of Chandelier's text is devoted the two variants of IJskolf; a long-driving game and a point-to-point contest, both played over an extended course. The first stanza translates as follows:

The golfer ties his ice spurs on
or finds something rough to stand on,
When slippery ice is snowless it laughs and
mocks smooth soles,
After the sides have been drawn,
standing surely strikes his ash with lead
weighted
or his Scottish cleek
of boxwood, three fingers wide, one thick,
with lead in it, the feather ball
from the tee, invisible until its fall
observed by fore-caddies.

We note that two different clubs were used to drive the feather ball (pennebal), in the long variants of Ijskolf. Both were weighted with lead in the Scottish clubmaking tradition. One type was possibly made of ash (the Dutch word 'esp' was used, which could also mean maple – a wood available from Dutch Colonists in the New World), while the other is described as a Schotse Klik (Scottish cleek), made of boxwood, measuring three fingers wide and one thick. These are close to the measurements of the earliest extant Scottish long noses.

Both clubs must have been exciting novelties to warrant such precise description in a sporting culture that had been making kolf stokken for at least 150 years. Judging by Avercamp's depictions, the Scottish cleek – racy, elegant and exotic – was a thoroughbred in a stable filled with plough horses. Since the weight of the Schotse Klik was concentrated in the clubhead, and the shaft was long, thin and whippy, the club could be swung with speed, generating great force at impact.

Cross-country ijskolf players either carried a rough mat or cloth to stand on when striking the ball, or wore skates or i-spoor to gain firm footing on the frozen surface. This enabled them to strike an elevated shot with such force that it flew out of sight – its flight traced by fore-caddies (the ballemerker). Since the customary hair-filled kloot, also used in tennis, would have offered only modest flight and distance, a new small leather-covered ball stuffed with feathers had been introduced. Had the pennebal (similar to the Scottish featherie) evolved to match the size and characteristics of the Scottish cleek, or was it the other way round? We'll never know but it is probable that the Dutch had been spared the evolutionary process, and had imported the tried and true duo together – equipment already being used for the long game of golf, played contemporaneously on the links of Scotland.

Left: A Kolver Playing the Point-To-Point Variant of IJskolf. Semi-permanent goals indicate that the course was used through the winter. Note that the kolver is playing on skates. Romeijn de Hoogh, c. 1700. Courtesy Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam, and *Golf Through The Ages*

Above: An Eighteenth Century Long Nose Club (by Hugh Philp) and Feather Ball. Note the similarity to those pictured in 'A St Nicolas Party', in 1670. Courtesy Brian Anderson and Bob Pringle, Troon, and *Golf Through The Ages*

's Amsterdamsers winter continues with details of the wagers. Each player kept his score notched on A slender stick (the kerfstok), the first scorecard. Failure to do so meant disqualification: For he who does not mind his tally-rod shall erase the sum altogether. Thus we see that Dutch ijskolvers suffered from the same difficulty of remembering all their strokes that has traditionally afflicted golfers. Using a kerfstok solved the problem, while whittling probably helped high-handicappers keep their hands warm. Long variants of ijskolf were contested by teams, although as seen in Avercamp's art, in the first 25 years of the 17th century, singles matches were the preferred manner of play.

While Dutch documentation and pictures present us with a bountiful historical harvest, there are no images of golf balls or clubs in Scotland prior to about 1740, nor have any early clubs resembling the Scottish cleek survived – although some wooden clubs conserved from the 18th century closely resemble the type playing instrument depicted by Avercamp and, later, Jan Steen. The evidence, although circumstantial, is compelling. We may surmise that by the first quarter of the 17th century, the Scots had developed and exported a club with a weighted boxwood head, that in skilled hands, could drive a compatible ball so far in the air, that it was invisible from the driving point at its fall.

Based on the three 'A's – Afferden, Avercamp, and 's Amsterdamsers winter – we have a new perspective of what Scottish golf may have been at the beginning of the 1600's: a single-club game played with an elegant long nose club (the Scottish cleek) and feather ball (the pennebal); equipment designed for long drives and approach shots, both at the heart of the modern game. And Scots being Scots, while enjoying the game at home, managed to finance their pleasure and a wee dram after the match, by exporting clubs and balls to their neighbours in the Netherlands.

In the sixth and final chapter of *Golf – The True History*, we'll take a look at the early days of golf in Scotland, its near demise and recovery; and its exportation to a welcoming world in the hands of Scottish ex-pats.

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Golf
THE TRUE HISTORY: PART VI

BY MICHAEL FLANNERY

SCOTLAND
END OF THE ODYSSEY

THE DUTCH CONNECTION

In the preceding chapter, based on the analysis of an extraordinary poem about golf on ice (IJskolf), a Latin-Dutch phrase-book containing etiquette and rules for popular ball games, and artwork spanning 50 years, we were able to show that, by 1625, an early variant of Scottish golf was alive and well in the Netherlands. The wealth of detail in the documentation and artwork enabled us to form the picture of an already sophisticated sociable recreation played with equipment never before seen or described in European club and ball games. The prototype playing instrument at the heart of Dutch golf was known as a 'Scottish Cleek', but in reality was a long-nose wooden club very similar to those we encounter in collections of the earliest extant Scottish woods. This type of club, and its inseparable companion, the feather ball, would be basic staples of playing equipment until the mid-19th century, when the introduction of a new type ball turned the centuries-old game on its ear.

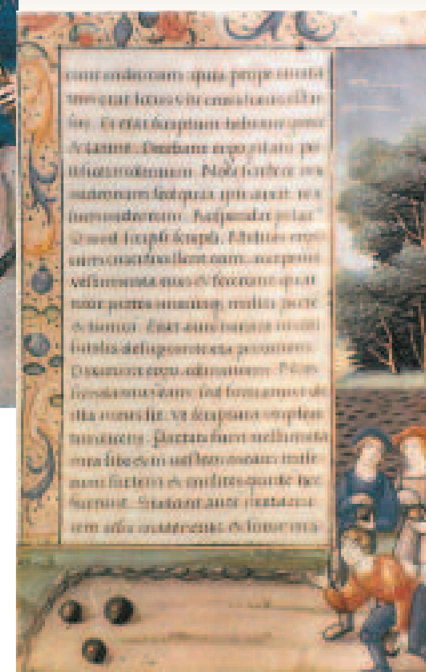
The robust, affordable gutta-percha ball, which appeared c.1842, brought seismic changes to golf, ranging from a shift in playing primacy from woods to irons, and a struck, rather than swept, shot to propel the ball. Since it was impervious to rain and damp, the introduction of the gutta-percha ball extended the season from a few dry, cold months, to year-round play.

At the same time, the relatively low cost of the gutty opened the game to tradesmen and workers, resulting in an exponential increase in the number of players. The hearty broth in the Petri dish of Victorian golf encouraged growth in all directions: new courses, clubs, and associations of working men, more public matches and tournaments, improvements in equipment and increased public interest. The gutty was at the heart of golf's 'Recreational Revolution', and the driving force in shaping golf, as we know it today.

But, while golf from the mid-18th through the nineteenth century, is relatively well-documented, earlier evidence is sparse, and in most cases, interpretive. When we attempt to plumb the darkness that surrounds early Scottish golf, we are confronted with a total dearth of artwork, exacerbated by the lack of descriptions of how the game was played. Scotland's first picture showing golf, '*A View of St Andrews from the Old Course'* dates to c.1750, whereas our earliest, precisely-detailed continental European artwork of a golf-like game is c. 1450. Even putting to a hole, relentlessly reiterated by the Caledonian golf establishment as the distinguishing feature of their game, is illustrated in Flanders, as early as 1480.

Above: Portrait of a four-year old boy with a club and ball. Paulus Moreelse, c.1600. Dutch kolf was a favourite prop in portraits of children of wealthy burghers, since it symbolised a sense of purpose and moving towards a goal. Art courtesy of Iziko Museums of South Africa, and *Golf Through the Ages*

Right: Longnose Playclub by Andrew Dickson, showing the original lead weighting and long scare. Photo courtesy Brian Anderson, Royal Troon, and *Golf Through the Ages*



Left: Flemish Colf, showing putting to a hole on a green, perhaps near Bruges (detail). Attributed to Simon Bening, c.1500. Image courtesy *Golf Through The Ages*

Below: A Game of Boules, Northern France, early 16th century, Ms. Douce 275. Note the feather used as a target goal, a practice documented in golf at Westward Ho!, England, 350 years later. Artwork courtesy Bodleian Library, Oxford University, and *Golf Through the Ages*

DEATH IN THE GRAVEYARD

We know that in 1460, the term 'gol(f)-staff' appeared in a Scottish translation of the Book of Alexander, but the game in question wasn't golf, but rather, the rough and tumble hockey-like game often played in churchyards, forbidden in 1457 by James II. The numerous Scottish interdictions of the churchyard games of 'golf' and shinty, appear to have addressed a single game, possibly played with two different types of clubs. Part of the problem confronting researchers is semantics. The word 'golf' encompassed two radically different types of games played at opposite ends of the social spectrum. One (the workers favourite), played in churchyards, was a mad dog, foaming with gratuitous violence. Accounts of deaths inflicted by 'golf' appear in Breeching (1508), Sterling (1561), and Kelso (1632). David Hamilton writes of a 1639 incident in Falkirk, in which the victim had been struck with a '*...golfclub and bleding of him thairwith upone the face'.*

While blood flowed on churchyard stones, the royalty, aristocracy and eventually, merchants, professionals, clerics and army officers, had taken up the Golden Lab variant, a social game played without physical opposition. We can only guess at its exact nature, but documentation suggests a short game, possibly played with soft balls and shinty sticks, and a long game with artisan-made equipment, which Hamilton labels, 'Noble Golf'.

MORE SEMANTICS – WHEN DID GOLF BECOME GOLF?

Our research into the origins and nature of early Scottish golf reveals a tentative evolution of an unopposed club and ball game – profoundly influenced by pall-mall, but busy developing its own quite distinct character. Until the 20th century, golf was in a constant state of flux, punctuated by major changes in equipment, courses and swing technique. From the earliest documentation of a Scottish golf-like game around 1500, until the mid-18th century, there was never a 'smoking gun' moment when the observer could say, 'There it is! That's finally golf!' On the contrary, the game inched its way towards an unidentified goal, gradually coalescing as, with the help of historical and contemporary models, it adopted, changed and discarded equipment; modified the manner in which it was played and fiddled with its structure until a satisfying sport emerged that was compatible with the local landscape, climate, laws and customs, technological competence, economics and recreational tastes of the Scots.

Our difficulty is that we have to define exactly what makes golf. Would golf have been golf when played to a stone or stick stuck in the ground or a mark on a tree trunk? Did the scoring shot have to be a rolled putt, or could it have been the chip of Dutch IJskolf, or the scooped and hurled 'putt' of pall-mall? When contested by eight or more on a side, was it golf? If only played over two holes, or as many as 22, was that golf? Did the game require multi-clubs to receive its appellation, or was a single club enough? Were either the early short variant or long-driving contests, truly golf? Can the nebulous, ad hoc game, played until 1744 without commonly agreed rules, be considered golf?

The questions outnumber the answers. Most of Scottish golf's historic watersheds are simply un-recorded. At the time they occurred, innovations were no more than new twists to make an established game more enjoyable or to confront some aspect of play which hadn't been encountered before. Imagine an eight-ball match, outward bound towards the Eden Estuary, suddenly discovering that a favourite target tree had been cut down for firewood. In the absence of other physical features to serve as the 'hole', wouldn't they – in the manner of the Dutch in ball throwing contests – simply decide to cut a hole in the ground with a knife and play to it?

The next problem would have been how to mark the hole so that it could be seen when playing an approach shot. On the beaches of Westward Ho! Devon, historic accounts refer to the use of gull feathers to mark holes, a target known to have been used in medieval boules.

Flag sticks or something similar, would have been the next stage in that particular evolution. As in the development of other club and ball games we have studied, particularly in the hands of the people, golf would, out of necessity, become a game of innovation with an elastic structure. It had to be affordable, accessible and enjoyable. Elements not meeting these criteria would have been ruthlessly eliminated, replaced with others that did. Today, we are only aware of those features that survived the passage of time to become integrated into the structure of the game. Even these, such as the stymie rule – the highlight of countless matches – was, to the great regret of many traditionalists, deleted in 1951.

In today's commercial atmosphere, even the ancient, traditional, characteristics of golf are vulnerable to the whims of big business.

MICHAEL FLANNERY

MYSTERIES OF THE EARLY GAME

Exactly when the hole appeared as the target goal of Scottish golf is unknown. First evidence of play to a hole is found in a Latin text for Aberdeen school boys, published in 1636. Even the origin of the verb 'putt' is unclear. Writers who have argued Dutch origins for the word are simply dabbling in historical sophistry. The word 'putt' was not used in any ball game played in the Netherlands. In fact, for years, the Scottish game used the verb, 'tip' to describe putting. We are equally ignorant about the emergence of the first purpose-built course, where it was and how many holes it may have had. The first appearance of man-made hazards is another mystery, as is the beginning of multi-club play. Even the date of the introduction of the feather ball, which dominated play for at least two centuries, is unknown.

The earliest account of Scottish golf comes from a Lord High Treasurer entry dated, September 21, 1502, detailing disbursements for the athletic, 29-year-old King James IV: *'Item the xxi day of September to the bower (bowmaker) of Sanct Johnstoun (Perth) for clubbes xiiij (14) shillings.'* Unfortunately, the Treasurer's accounts provide neither details of how the game was played nor its equipment. The use of the word 'clubbes' neither confirms nor refutes the possibility that the king was playing a multi-club game. Perhaps early clubs were fragile and subject to breakage. Maybe James ran a rental service for his noble guests.

It is most likely that the inspiration for a long variety of golf came directly from the Flemish single-club game of colf, illustrated as a cross-country game from about 1505. As well as a substantial migration of Flemings to Scotland – in particular, St Andrews – Scottish diplomats, merchants, agents and bankers all maintained ties to their counterparts across the 'German Sea', and would have been aware of the popular recreations of their amiable, ballgame-mad trading partners. Flanders was, as well, a traditional exporter of finished goods to Scotland. 'Noble Golf', the antithesis of the game played by the poorer class, may simply have been colf, adapted to Scottish soil.

Further entries in 1503, less than a year after the king's first recorded purchase of clubs, reveal the continuation of an ancient French tradition of playing a peaceful club and ball game as an adjunct to Candlemas, the celebration of the purification of the Virgin Mary. February 3, James on a visit to Falkland Castle, is recorded to have played a game of golf with the Earl of Bothwell in which he lost *'iij Franch crounis'* (three French crowns, or forty-two shillings). A later entry confirms that as in France, the game was played to celebrate the arrival of spring and Candlemas.

Right: Pall Mall à la Chicane. Detail from a painting by Paul Bril, 1624. Note the caddie with a reserve of balls and long lève, which performed the functions of 'putter', indicating the line, and marking a ball. The player is clearly teeing his boule. Artwork courtesy Minneapolis Institute of Fine Arts, and *Golf Through the Ages*

Only two days later on February 5, royal accounts record, *'an item, for golf clubbes and balles to the King that he played with'*, which cost nine shillings. James, no doubt, was already hooked and convinced that if only he had the right equipment his permanent companion off the tee – a life-threatening slice – would disappear. And, that so-and-so Bothwell, was hitting 'em 100 ells down the middle, as straight as a falcon's dive. A new custom-made clubbe was the only answer. We can only guess at the bower's sales pitch:

'See here your Majesty, I just bought a fine auld batch of St Rules yew saplings for shafts (only thing that's whippier is a River Dee lamprey) and a bale of baby peacock down for stuffing the featheries. High compression? Drop one on an oak floor and it'll still be bouncing when you finish your port and join the ladies. Trust me, Jimmy, you'll hit it a league.'

It is unlikely that Falkland, the vacation resort of the Stuart kings, had a golf course per se, but it would surely have had adequate parkland to permit an *ad hoc* game, perhaps played in the manner of mail à la chicane, with selected trees and stones as target goals. The major step needed to transform early target golf into the game we know today – the establishment of permanent courses broken down into stages, each terminating in a scoring shot – was still a good two centuries away.

There is no record that any purpose-built course existed in Scotland earlier than the eighteenth century. Rather, play as at Falkland Castle, was on private parkland or estates, or surfaces such as the common land set aside near all towns for recreation – sometimes on the low, sandy land separated from the sea by dunes, known as links. St Andrews University conserves a parchment manuscript dated January 25, 1552, signed 'Jhon Archybyshop' (John [Hamilton] Archbishop), incorporating a concept of common property reserved for, among other activities, the practice of sport by the citizens of St Andrews, ultimately to be manifested in golf and the Old Course. A diary kept by a James Melville, a student at the university from 1569–1574, shows that he and his classmates played golf there.

DALLYING WITH BOTHWELL

More important to our hypothesis of what early Scottish golf may have been, is a document in which Mary Queen of Scots is cited by her half-brother, James Stewart, the Earl of Moray, to have played ball games a few days after the death of her husband, Lord Darnley – claiming that she 'indulged in sports that were clearly unsuitable to women'. Moray specified in the Articles he put before the Westminster Commissioners on 6 December 1658 (here translated into modern English) *'Staying at Holyroodhouse for a few days after the murder, she then went to Seton, taking exercise one day right openly in the fields with pall-mall and golf, and at night clearly dallying ('abusing her body') with Bothwell'.*

Well, in Scotland pall-mall (and dallying) may have considered unsuitable for women, but in France, where Mary was raised in the household of King Henri II and his wife, Catherine de Medici, it certainly wasn't. Henri had malls constructed at their various residences and both he and his queen (a break-neck horsewoman) were passionate players of the game of mallet and ball. Linking the two games is proof that this 'golf' variant would have been suitable for a Queen. Since Mary was seen playing both games, they must have had specific characteristics that lent them a distinct identity and made them equally appealing. Both were played in the fields near Seton Castle, which tells us that the pall-mall variant was mail à la chicane (the cross-country game), and the golf variant, long, or 'Noble Golf'.

The fundamental differences between the two games lay in the playing equipment. Pall-Mall used a mallet and heavy wooden ball to produce a skimming shot where roll was the determinant of distance. Golf moved away from this to a light club and complimentary ball that produced a long, high shot, where carry determined distance. The swing technique and the concept of playing without opposition to a pre-determined goal in the fewest number of strokes were common to both games. When the first set of written rules for golf was published in Edinburgh in 1744, they clearly reflected their source, the pre-1650 Les Loix de Paillemail (The Laws of Pall-Mall), and adopted many clauses almost literally.

We don't know when the concept of multiple clubs was introduced into Scottish golf, but since pall-mall mallets had different lofts at each end of the clubhead, and a separate lofter (lève) for scoring shots, it wouldn't have taken long for the bawbee to drop. Perhaps they were already on hand in 1624, when King James I/VI, in the best of family tradition, played golf at Royston and dropped a bundle to his opponent, Sir Robert Deale at 'Goff'. On December 7 in the same year, Sackville Crowe of Braested, Kent, keeper of the Duke of Buckingham's Privy Purse, recorded, *'Paid to the Goffman for Balles and Battes, £1 5s 0d'.* The term 'Goffman' is indicative of an artisan club and ball maker/cum professional, or perhaps, in the mould of pall-mall, an attendant responsible for playing equipment. The term 'battes' for clubs, was in vogue in the eighteenth century.

FROM BUNKARD CLUBS TO SETTES

During the 17th century, we find the first mention of an iron rescue club – a crude, sturdy tool used for recoveries from rock and shingle – often fatal lies for the longnose, with its slender, spliced neck. The first such clubs, known as a spur irons, were blacksmith-made with long hosels, massive iron heads and a squared off toe. The decision to use the rescue club must have been pure torment for the frugal Scots, since striking a feathery on its cover with an iron meant the end of an expensive ball. Worse yet, the ball had to be holed out before it could be replaced. Still the concept of multiple clubs had arrived.

A manuscript entry in 1627, records, *'Bunker clubis, a irone club, and twa play clubis (drivers) of my awin'*, and in 1663, *'For mending bunker club 1s 6d'.*

In 1636, a lively Latin-English phrase book modelled on Pieter van Afferden's Tyrocinium linguae Latinae (1552), was published in Aberdeen. To make Latin more palatable to his wards, the author and schoolmaster, David Wedderburn, created dialogues about ball games, including golf. One passage reads:

Immissa est pila in Foveam – the ball is goated (possibly in a ditch).

Cedo baculum ferreum – let's have the bunkard club (probably a heavy iron with a concave face, or a spur iron, both made by armourers or blacksmiths.)

In the vocabulary of early golf, a bunker did not mean sand-filled bunkers or traps, but, rather was a generic term to describe all features of the course except for the 'hole green' (putting green) and the 'fair green' (fairway).

By 1691, multi-club play seemed to be well-established. Olive Geddes, drawing on National Library archives, writes that on April 27, 1691, John Mackenzie received a letter from his friend, Alexander Monro, a Regent at St Andrews University, informing him that he had dispatched to him *'ane Sett of Golfe-Clubs'.* A century later, Hoyle defined the standard set: *'…the Common Club used when the ball lies on good Ground; the Scraper and Half Scraper, when in long Grass; the Spoon, when in the hollow; the Heavy Iron Club, when it lies deep among Stones or Mud; and the Light Iron ditto, when in the Surface of chingle or sandy'.*

The golfers' search for suitable courses was rarely as successful as at Aberdeen. A 1661 account by Parson James Gordon describes the idyllic ground reserved for Aberdeen players: *'Upon the east syd of the citie and of Futtie* (today, 'Footdie' or 'Fit-

Below: A spur Iron from about 1690. This blacksmith or armourer-made club was a last resort when playing out of nearly impossible lies. Photo courtesy of Bob Gowland, and *Golf Through the Ages*

Left: Frontispiece of Vocabula by David Wedderburn, Edinburgh 1713. Although first published in 1636, there are no copies extant of the original edition. Courtesy National Library of Scotland, and *Golf Through the Ages*

Right: Putting on a mid-19th-century green. Attended by fashionably-dressed caddies, three men putt on a green that would, today, be considered heavy rough. Photos courtesy of Grant Books, Worcestershire, and *Golf Through the Ages*

Portrait of John Whyte-Melville by Sir Francis Grant, captain of the Royal & Ancient Golf Club, painted 1874, with Swilcan Burn and the R&A clubhouse in the background. Note the two-man action cleaning the burn, then still fed by tides. Art courtesy the R&A, and *Golf Through the Ages*

tie" is an old fishing village at the east end of Aberdeen Harbour) *ther lyes many fair fields near the sea side called the Lynks. Thes are marched by the feilds near the sea side called the Lynks. The most remarkable among thes is the fair plaine called the Queens Lynks, the reason for the name unknown. The Lynks extend themselves almost between the two rivers Done and Dee. Heer the inhabitants recreat themselves with several kinds of exercise, such as foot ball, Goffe, bowling and archerie'.*

It didn't take long for men (with the exception of the 19th century fisherwives of Musselburgh, golf was a masculine preserve) to band together in clubs and play matches with like-minded souls – often meeting in taverns near the links, where the round could be celebrated and wagers laid on future challenges. The hearty, often boisterous atmosphere did much to foster the spirit of golf. Tobias Smollett wrote of the Leith Links Old Guard: *'Among others I was shewn one particular set of golfers, the youngest of whom was turned of fourscore: they were all gentlemen of independent fortunes, who had amused themselves with this pastime for the best part of a century without having ever felt the least alarm from sickness or disgust; and they never went to bed without having each the best part of a gallon of claret in his belly.'* Despite the quantity of claret consumed, club spirit (and eternal optimism) was captured in the toast proposed by the Captain of Muirfield Golf Club: *"Stiff shafts and hard ba's".*

Clubs, until the mid-19th century, the preserve of 'gentlemen', provided an ideal venue for men with a passion for golf. Their members – all from the same social caste – nurtured ideas, refined rules, and encouraged competition (within their peer group) through regular contests; the winners often rewarded with splendid trophies. They also exchanged tips on technique such as high approach shots with a spoon. David Stirk notes the player had to 'baff' the ball, striking the ground just behind it causing the lofted clubhead to bounce up and forward sending the ball into flight. Poetry of the 'Roial Society O'Gowffers', at North Berwick in 1831, gives us a taste of early golfers' skills: *'The next stroke – a prime ane! – the ba' deeply doon/Is lifted out nately by help o' the spoon'.*

THE LONG-OVERDUE ARRIVAL OF 'ARTICLES AND LAWS AT PLAYING IN GOLF'

In 1744, the urge to measure their mettle against the rest of the golfing world led Leith Golfing Society, later known as the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, to stage a Scottish amateur open tournament restricted to *'Noblemen or Gentlemen, or other golfers from any part of Great Britain or Ireland'.* There was, however, a problem that first had to be solved. Despite some 200 years of play, golfers still lacked a code of rules to govern the rigorous and infinitely varied long game contested on the links, where lost and damaged balls, broken clubs, grazing animals and their dung, burns and whins, sticks and stones, rabbit holes and scrapes, all influenced the outcome of scores and matches. The Honourable Gentlemen hastily hammered together *The Thirteen Articles*, rules which provided a common base for contesting the game. This was a vital step forward; one that provided the legitimacy and structure necessary to move golf from the realms of an interpretive *ad hoc* fringe sport, to an established recreation capable of being contested not just on a regional basis, but, even internationally.

Two feather-filled balls, or featheries, somewhat the worse for wear. Photo courtesy of Harry Valérian. Published in *Golf, Fazination eines Weltsports* and *Golf Through The Ages*

Increasingly, the gentry realised that the caddies who carried for them – the first professionals – were often talented players in their own right, in fact, a damn sight better than they themselves and their peer group. Within a short time, high-stake wagers on matches between caddies were established, with the winner, while not sharing the purse, was still rewarded – sometimes handsomely – for his victory. Having established that the caddie/professional was not only a superior golfer, but sometimes exhibited signs of human behaviour and traits of intelligence that gentlemen believed were a monopoly of their class invested by a Divine Power, noblemen took another audacious step and arranged Pro-Am, best ball matches within their clubs, in which the professional partner shared the purse.

The St Andrews Swing, first illustrated in Horace Hutchinson, *Golf, The Badminton Library of Sports*, 1890. The swing was characterised by a dipped left knee, crooked left, and flying right, elbows. Designed for playing a low draw on Scottish links, it was hopelessly at sea abroad. Still, it was all the Scottish pros knew, thus it became dogma. Courtesy of *Golf Through The Ages*

The timing was right. Not only had Victorian prosperity (despite all attempts by their betters) trickled down to the working class, but tradesmen, proud of their skills and their vital role in the Industrial Revolution, asserted their rights to a lifestyle and institutions that emulated those of their betters, albeit, on a far more modest scale. One of these, fundamental to the development of the game and its exportation, was the golf club. September 29, 1843, the most famous of them all, St Andrews Golf Club, was founded. As Eric Clark tells us, its 11 original members, mostly tradesmen, *'…included a Dancing Master and a Butler (George Morris, brother of Tom). At that time, a feather ball cost around 2/- (10p) and a day labourer might earn 1/6. Golf was not a poor man's game and our first members were men of some substance'.*

The founder members were soon joined by Allan Robertson, the finest golfer in the first half of the 19th century, and his friend and successor, Tom Morris. Allan's inspiration and fiery competitiveness set the club on the path to championship dominance, while Old Tom's example (four Open titles) and guidance saw to it that players associated with St Andrews Golf Club would win 20 Open Championships between 1860 and 1902.

Scots, and particularly St Andrews professionals, became a watchword wherever golf was played – even if their instructions could rarely be understood by their eager pupils. The game and its popularity spread rapidly. By the late-19th century, golf's beachhead in Canada and the United States, became a full fledged invasion, fervently adopted by high society.

Despite the best effort of the magnates who sought a monopoly on early golf in America, the fertile, meritocratic soil saw the gates stormed and the game wrenched from the hands of a wealthy few, to become truly a sport of the people.

By the beginning of the 20th century, America had developed the best golf ball the game had ever seen, while mass producing first-class clubs – some of which were shipped back to the Cradle of Golf. Within another decade, there were more players in the United States than the United Kingdom. By the 1920s, the former colony had even begun to dominate matches with their golfing ancestors from Britain.

In many ways, it was an astonishing denouement to golf's centuries-long Odyssey. But today, wherever golf is played, its soul remains in Scotland. We smell the faint salty tang of links flowers and grasses; hear the skirl of pipes; sense gulls hovering over wind-swept dunes and the muted click of golden beech on pristine featheries.

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