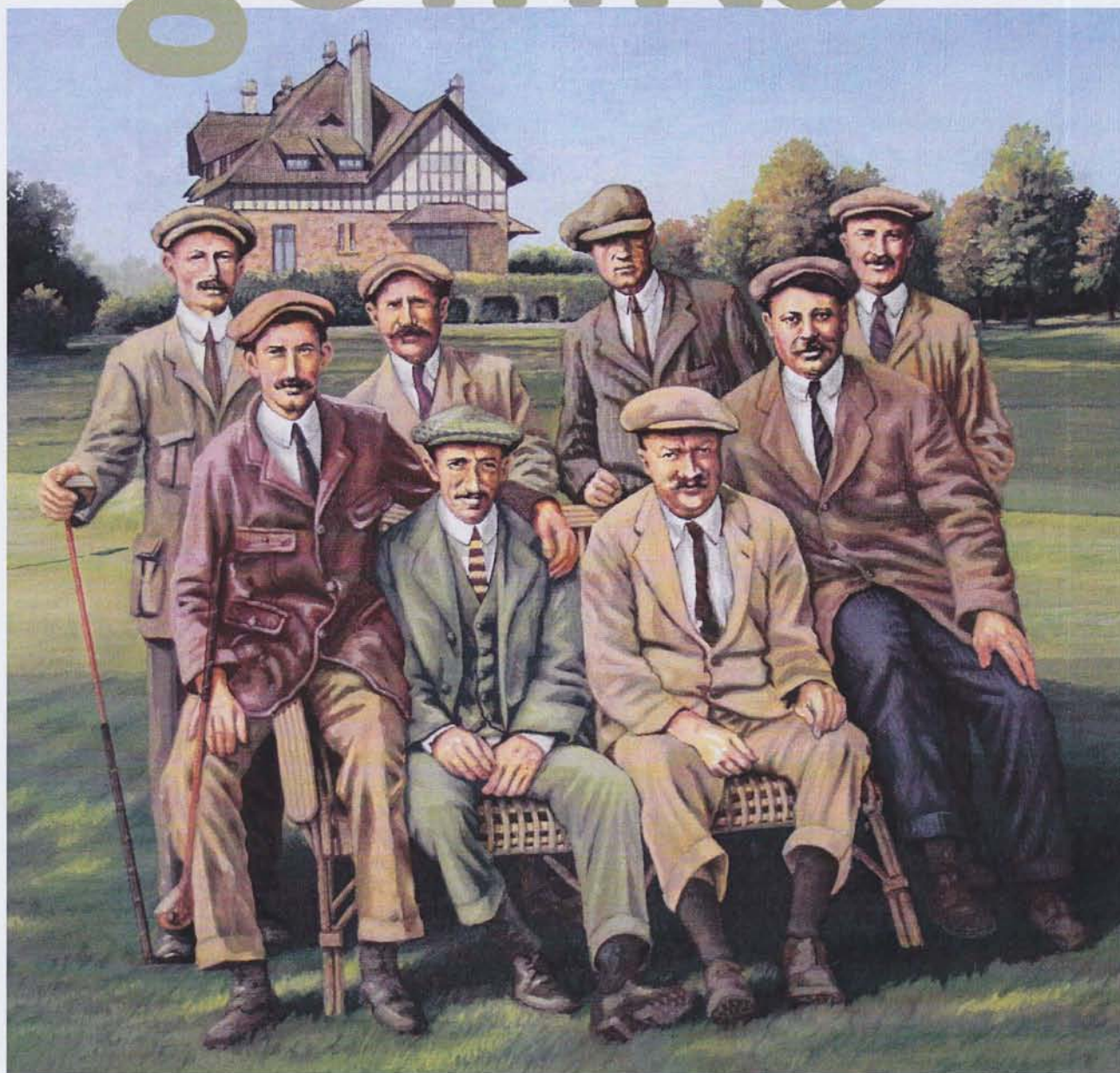


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The front cover of Golfika Magazine n°10 is after a painting of one of our EAGHC fellow members, Viktor Cleve, Germany's leading golf painter. The original painting is now from JBK's collection. It represents the French team at the Inter-Allied Games, Paris, 1919.

Viktor Cleve is a former art director he kindly designed the title page and donated it to us. You can see more of his work on www.cleve-golfart.com

Illustration credit: Authors, EAGHC, Dietrich Quanz and DGA (p.23) and Dale Cancannon (p.31)

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Something about the origin of Golf Holland or Scotland?

J.A. Brongers, father & son



The text below was first published in the French Magazine "LE GOLF" n° 220, Dec. 15th, 1934. It was written by the late J.A. Brongers. His son (born in 1933) is a member of the Board of the Dutch *Early Golf Foundation* and also a member of the EAGHC. As an introduction to this paper, J.A. Brongers jr kindly offered to write some biographical information about his father – an early golf historian.

Introduction. Already during his secondary school period Johannes Aijolt Brongers (1906-1954) wrote about sport matches for the local paper of his hometown Haarlem. In 1928 he started to work for what later became the Royal Dutch Shell Group. He ended his professional career as Head of the Public Relations Department. In his leisure time he continued his sport journalistic activities and in 1937 he founded the Dutch monthly "GOLF". He died in an air-crash.

Around 1930 he began to collect information (books and objects) about the history of golf and especially about the possibility that the ancient Dutch game of kolf was a precursor of

golf. In "GOLF" he published during the years several of his findings. The publication in "LE GOLF" is one of his first attempts to forward his ideas. His final publication on the subject was in the 1953 Christmas-edition of *The Shell Magazine* entitled "The Birthplace of Golf".

In 1982 the collected material was the nucleus of an exhibition on kolf and golf; the fact that I had talked much with my father about his collection and thoughts was of help during the production of the catalogue. Finally his collection came in the *Early Golf Foundation* at Utrecht¹. After his sudden death the golf-historical work was continued by S.J.H. van Hengel (1925-1985).



¹ – A small group of EAGHC members, after the Kennemer meeting, in 2010, accepted the invitation of the Sint Eloyen Gasthuis, in Utrecht, where the *Early Golf Foundation* is hosted. Those who were present will never forget, neither the extremely warm welcome they received, nor the presentation of the collection by J.A.Brongers (see also page 15 for pictures of this meeting).

Golf is an old, a very old game. For a long time past many historians in the sports world – specially the Britons – have lost themselves in a study about the origin of this game. Even the old Romans and Greeks are named and in some of the games practised in those early centres of civilization, fore-runners of golf were seen. Or is in Normandy the germ to be found for the interesting and now so popular game? William the Conqueror is said to have brought the game from Normandy to the British Islands.

Another hypothesis is that a Scottish shepherd touched unintentionally, with his staff, a round object or a little stone, which then just went into a hole, and he then cultivated this art as a pastime.

We have even read somewhere that the Americans claim the honour of the origin of golf and the inventor to be a certain Mr. Golf...



Let us pass over these hypotheses and search on well-known grounds, namely in old writings; in which mention is made of golf – in old Scottish laws and church sessions – it then seems that certainly to Scotland the honour is due of first having played a far-advanced form of golf, which is still being practised nowadays with a few alterations. However, whether a fore-runner of golf was not already played in Holland much earlier is a question which need be taken into serious consideration, and it is not at all impossible that the honour of it is due to Holland.



At the same time that in Scotland "golf" became suddenly extra-ordinarily popular, we meet in Holland a game which the early Dutchmen very much enjoyed and which was called « kolf » (the kolf game, in short « kolf »). The pronunciation of both words is almost the same and etymologically the word "golf" has been derived from the word "kolf", which would be an indication of an earlier practice of the game in Holland.

The Scots always maintain that already in the middle of the 15th century the game was so popular that the then ruling King thought it advisable to put restriction upon its practice and to force the Scottish youth to archery, which sport was thought to be more necessary for the defence of the people.

Already in those days football was as popular as golf, for in the relating document, dated March 1457, in which mention was made of the restraint of enthusiasm for golf, the following is stated : "Parliament decreeted and ordained that wapenschawingis be halden by the Lordis and Baronis spirituale and temporale, foure times in the zeii, and that the Fute-ball and Golfe be utterly cryit doune, and nocht usit; and that the bowe merkis be maid at ilk parochie kirk a pair of buttis, and schutting be usit ilk Sunday." In the year 1471 it was ordered that "the Fute-ball and Golfe be abusit in tyme cuming" and in 1491 people once more agitated against « Fute-ball, Golfe, or uther sik unprofitabill sportis. »



That in that century « kolf » was none the less popular in Holland, appears from the many prohibitive regulations regarding this game, whereby people were only allowed to play "kolf" on definite spots, i.e. outside the ramparts or whereby it was forbidden to practise the game at definite places and hours. At that time people were already so fond of the game that it was even played in the churchyards and in the churchsquare during the services, which did not please the pastors at all. In this connection a regulation was proclaimed at Utrecht, whereby it was forbidden to play at dice or to play "kolf" during the church services. At Leiden, in the year 1463, "kolf" was already forbidden by the Magistracy, because it was being practised in the streets in such a way that it endangered the passers-by. In fact, in history even still older places are mentioned in which reference is made to golf, witness a document of the Duke Albrecht of Bavaria, dated 1390, in which the inhabitants of Brielle were allowed "te caetsen ende den bal metten colven te slaen."

Besides the many performances, shown on the pictures by early Dutch painters, representing the game of golf as it was played in the streets as well as on the ice, we would mention another typical indication, which shows that golf has had its origin in Holland. Here we have in mind the so-called "Golfbook," a Flemish breviary of the 15th century, which manuscript is to be found in the British Museum and in which a miniature occurs showing some players, two of them apparently engaged in putting on a grassfield. As at that time Flanders and the North-Netherlands were still united, we may

assume that on the Continent the game of golf was being played already in the 15th century.

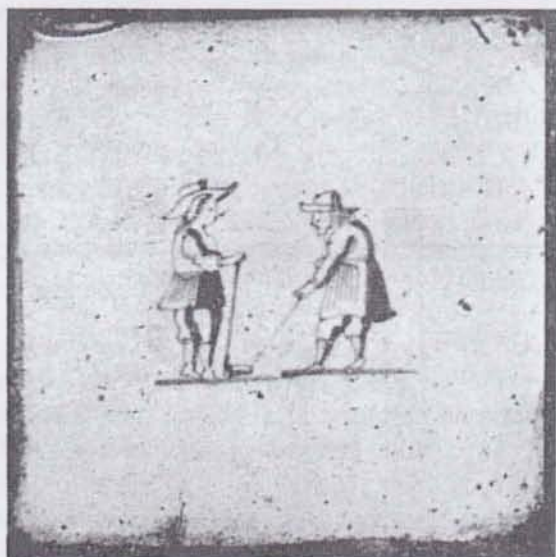
Finally we would still point out that in Holland, already very early, an industry existed which exported such large supplies of golf-balls to Scotland, that Jacob VI of Scotland thought it advisable to impose high import-duties and later-on even to prohibit the importation of Dutch balls, since too much gold was withdrawn from the country.

From the fact that in Holland golf-balls were manufactured, we may conclude that a similar game to golf was also played there.



So there are many points, which go to show that in Holland a primitive form of golf was played, but there is a weak point in that there is no date available, from which we can conclude, how "kolf" was played in these early times. We know the way in which the game has been played since about 1700; we can follow the development of this game from that time, but not before then. We know that it was first played in the streets or outside the ramparts, later-on special "kolf" courts were laid out and the rules were quite different from those prevailing now. Only on a few points there still was a similarity with golf. For instance the stick, with which was beaten, was spoken of as a "klik" (compare "cleek", one of the golf clubs) and at the beat the ball was laid on a "tuitje" of sand (compare the "tee" in golf, until recently also of sand). Later-on the "kolf" courts were constructed as covered play-rooms, close to inns and tea-gardens and in this form the game still enjoys to-day a rather great

popularity along the Zaan and in West-Friesland.



As stated in the above, both on the British Islands and in America, where golf has developed to a national game, they have been fully occupied with the history and, of course, full attention has also been given to the Dutch "kolf" game. So the Golf museum, founded by the late Mr. Wood, in the clubhouse of the Manchester Golfclub, possesses a most remarkable collection of old Dutch tiles of the 17th century, representing pictures relating to the "kolf" game. The collection is fairly complete and Mr. Wood will, no doubt, have had much trouble to collect same. An odd tile is still "discovered" every now and then, but you don't see many of them to-day. With this article we reproduce a series of those tiles; they give a good impression of the game of those days, the favourite sport of the early Dutchmen.

There is one typical tile among this series; on one tile the collector has thought he has discovered a fore-runner of the present caddie,

armed with his caddie-bag. However, it seems unlikely to us, that at that time the game was played with a caddie, for it was played with only one club, which the player himself could, of course, carry quite easily. From the stature of the tile figure one might presume that the illustrator had been inspired by the wide gesture of a mower; however, the possibility of some other profession is not excluded and we think of a peddler with his box.



May we now conclude from the above that golf had its origin in Holland? Could not Scottish merchants, when visiting Holland, have noticed the game and introduced it into their own country? Probably it will never be possible to give an exact reply to these questions, but that Old Holland too has played a part in the development of the games – and more especially in regard to the game of golf, which all over the world is experiencing a growing popularity – may be taken for certain.



Utrecht 2010, in the Sint Eloyen Gasthuis, hosting the Early Golf Foundation – after the EAGHC Kennemer meeting: David Hamilton and A.J. Brongers (left) and Kuno Schuch, Dietrich Quanz, JBK, Geert Nijs, A.J. Brongers and Saar Nijs (right)