

A Royal and Ancient Game

Sam Henry Collection courtesy of Coleraine Museum

a golf like backstroke.

During the Middle Ages many types of stick and ball games were played. The Dutch game of 'kolf' was similar to golf except that the ball was aimed at targets above ground. The difference with the game of golf is that the target is a hole in the ground. Scotland is credited as the home of golf because it was here that the sport evolved into the game as we know it today.



Winter scene depicting the game of 'kolf' on the frozen ice of a river. Courtesy of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews

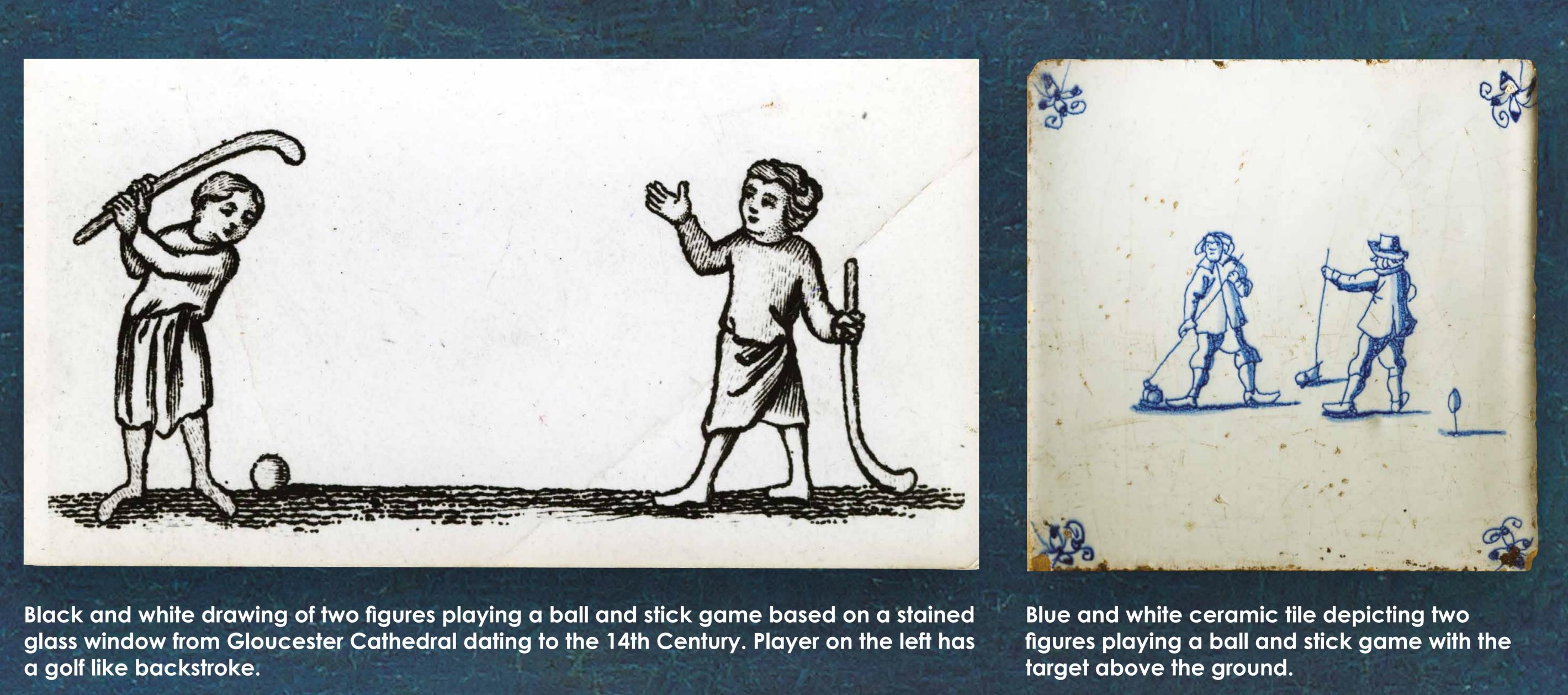
Queen of the Green

regulate against the playing of it as it was considered to interfere with the practice of military skills such as archery.

Mary, Queen of Scots was accused by her enemies of playing golf just days after the murder of her husband Lord Darnley. However, historians have not been able to prove that she did in fact play golf.

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS KOLF





Courtesy of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of

St Andrews

In the 15th Century golf had become so popular that in 1457 Parliament found it necessary to

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A view of St Andrews from the Links

Golf was played on open common ground and developed naturally on the undulating sandy areas between the sea and arable fields called linksland. This landscape was harnessed into golf links with putting greens, fairways and water hazards. Golfers wore red jackets to make them stand out when playing golf to signal to others to keep an eye out for flying balls.

The Magic Number

Courtesy of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews

In the mid-1700s the links at St Andrews had twenty two holes. Shorter holes were combined to make longer holes at the beginning and end of the course. Golf clubs looked to St Andrews for guidance and hence this number became the standard for golf courses.

The first Rules of Golf were penned in 1744 in Edinburgh for the Silver Club competition held at Leith, Scotland. Before then there were no rules or guidelines.

Rule Number 10: If a Ball be stopp'd by any Person, Horse, Dog or anything else, The Ball so stop'd must be play'd where it lyes.

This rule was to feature prominently in the 1949 Open at Royal St George's when a ball rolled into a broken beer bottle.

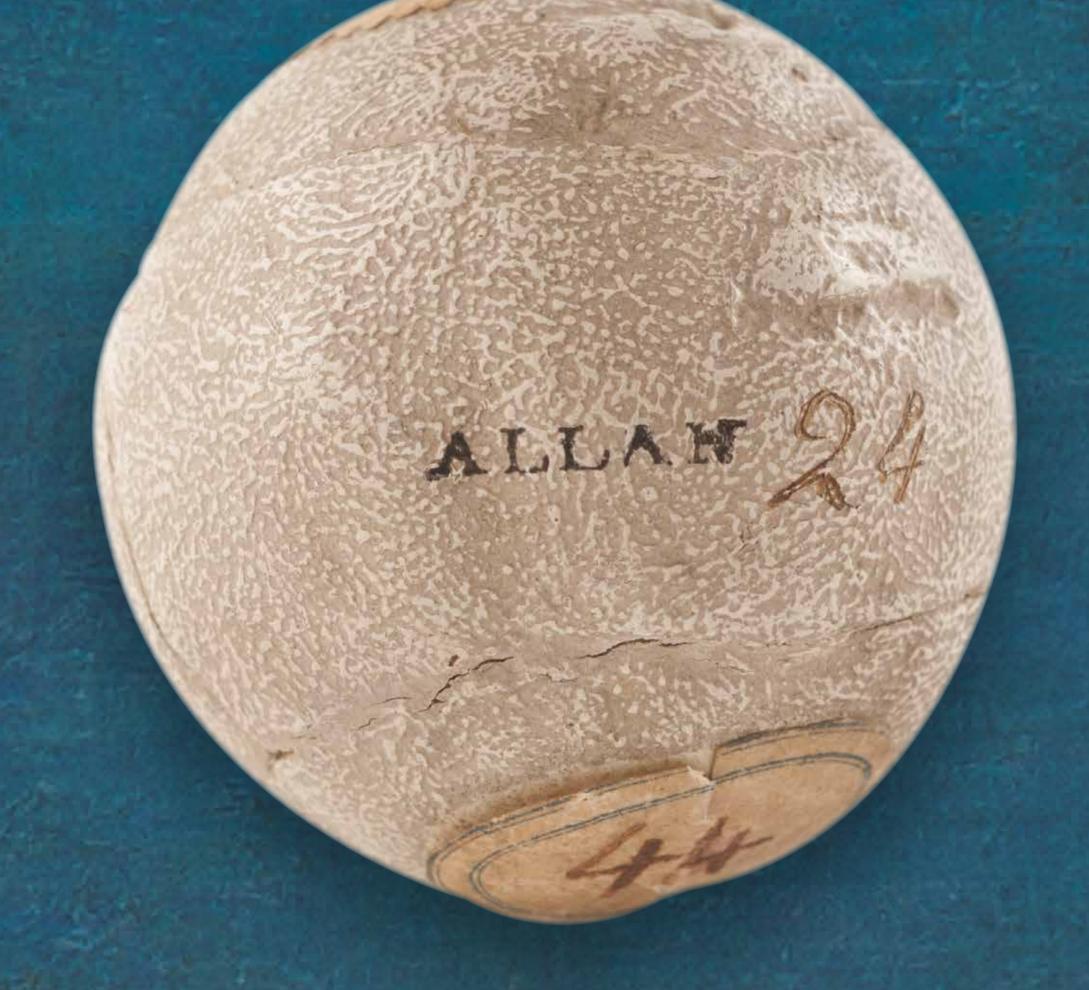
lew Balls Please

The first golf balls were called featheries which consisted of pieces of leather stitched together and stuffed with boiled feathers. These were then sealed and painted. This was very time consuming and made golf balls expensive.

In 1848 a new material called gutta - percha was used made from the sap of the Sapotaceae ree. It was boiled with water and shaped into a ball. Gutta-percha balls were less costly and quicker to produce.

The first gutties were smooth but it was soon discovered that marking a ball with a pattern would make it go the distance by creating less drag.

> Hand me my Spoon, Niblick or Mashie alls meant new challenges and golf clubs



An early golf ball made of leather and stuffed with feathers. Courtesy of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews

The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews was founded in 1754. As golf progressed it

came to be viewed as a governing authority and developed responsibility for the running of 'The Open'.

St Andrews had been a place of pilgrimage for centuries because of its ecclesiastical ruins but today it is now a place of pilgrimage for golfers from across the world.

In 2004 the R&A was formed and organises The Open and a series of other Championship events. Along with the United States Golf Association (USGA) the R&A governs the sport of golf worldwide. Recently in 2017 the R&A merged with the Ladies Golf Union (LGU).

Origins of The Open



Early professional golfers at St Andrews: Allan Robertson at the centre, Willie Park Snr to the left and Tom Morris Snr to the right. Image dates from c.1855 Courtesy of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews

The first Open was played on October 17, 1860 at Prestwick Golf Club, Scotland to determine the champion golfer following the death of the great Allan Robertson. Willie Park Senior won the inaugural championship and was presented with a red Moroccan leather belt with silver panels depicting golfing scenes called 'The Challenge Belt'.

By 1870 Young Tommy Morris had won The Open for the third time. The rules stated that if a player should win three times in a row he could keep the belt. A new trophy was needed. In 1872 when Young Tom Morris won The Open for the fourth time, he was rewarded with a gold medal.

The Claret Jug

The following year in 1873 Tom Kidd won the The Open at St Andrews and was presented with a new trophy called the Golf Champion Trophy. It was designed in the style of a jug used for serving claret and that is why the trophy is famous the world over as 'The Claret Jug'.

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