

Early Golf in Scotland and England (1504-1606)

Neil Millar



James IV
(r. 1488-1513)



James V
(r. 1513-1542)



Mary
(r. 1542-1567)



James VI
(r. 1567-1625)

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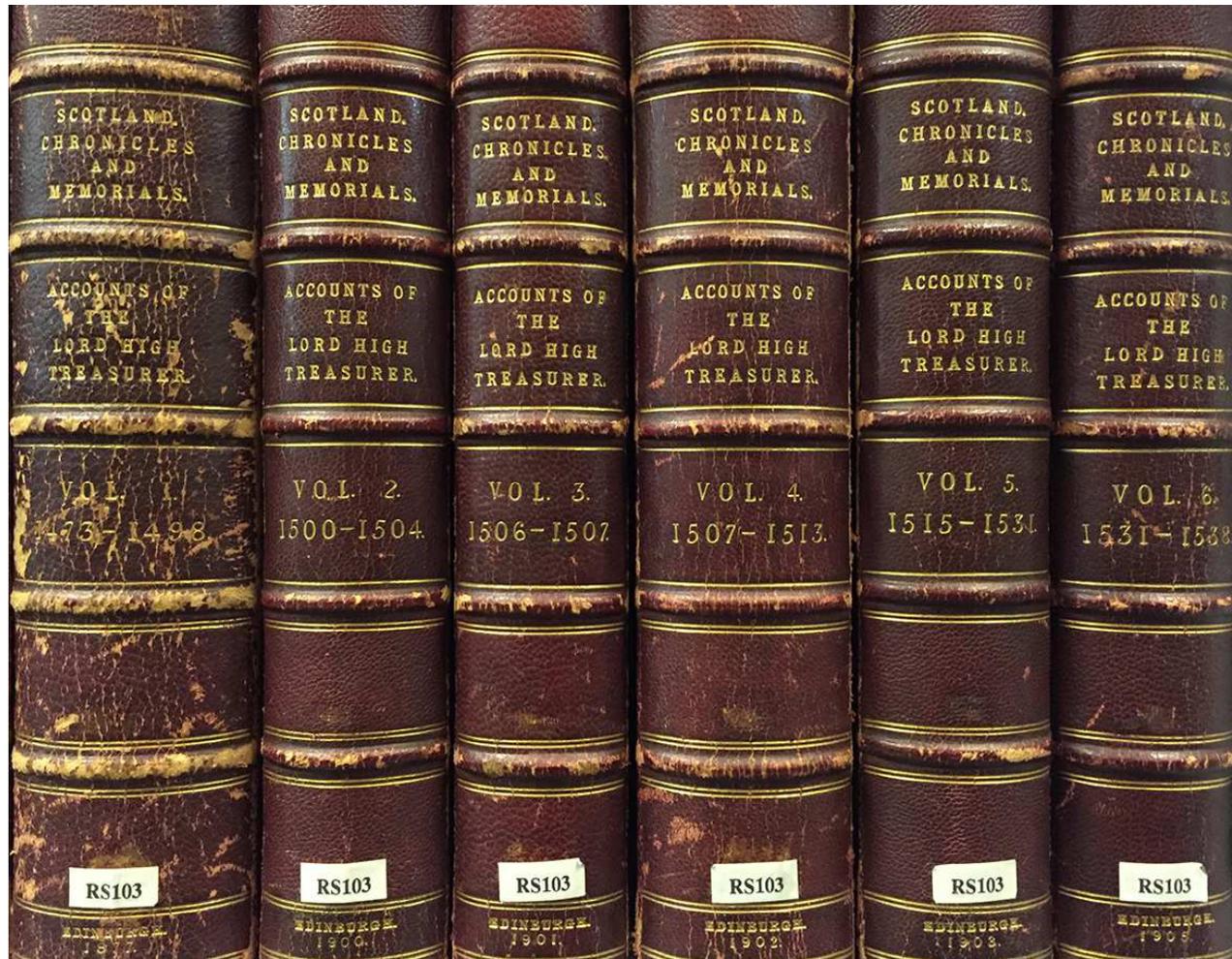
James VI
(r. 1567-1625)

Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland

Item to baron sumt and hys in bound to pass wth ye gudyns
of Wyke to yad in england to gud rompt ————— p^l h
and to hys in england at ye hys g^l g^l ————— p^l h
Item to aw sumt to pass wth hys in hand p^l h and
in england p^l h ————— in h
Item for aw op bocht at Dalbuth for aw op y^t a radub
zaw our a brak hys w^l ————— p^l h
Item ye playm op gebyng to ye w^l h to et
Item to aw sumt in Dalbuth y^t w^l h in g^l holt fur
shyngt a zolugor ————— p^l h
S^l hys ————— y^t p^l h in h

Saturday ye xx day of august to p^l w^l h y^t w^l h
ye w^l h p^l h and at ye furth putting of ye gudyns clost
r^l p^l h a w^l h and all ye ordinaus y^t hys in ye
w^l h ————— in h ————— p^l h in h

Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland



Published in 13 volumes (1877-1978) from the reign of James III to the early part of the reign of James VI

The earliest identified golf match



James IV
(r. 1488-1513)

3 February 1503-4*

to the King to play at the golf with the Erle of Bothuile
[to the King to play golf with the Earl of Bothwell]

6 February 1503-4*

for golf clubbes and balles to the King that he playit with
[for golf clubs and balls to the King that he played with]

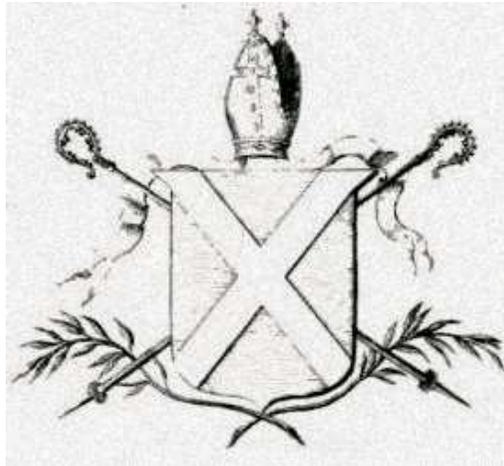
* Note: the year began on 25 March but dates will be adjusted for the modern calendar

Locations suggested for James IV's golf match

Bruntsfield	'Bruntsfield Links, where James IV played golf'
Edinburgh	'James IV spent the month of February entirely in Edinburgh'
Falkland	'on a visit to Falkland Palace'
Gosford	'on the new royal links at Gosford Sands near Edinburgh'
Holyroodhouse	'on the lawn at Holyroodhouse'
Leith	'played over historic Leith Links'
Musselburgh	'James IV is supposed to have played at Musselburgh in 1504'
Perth	'on the North Inch parkland fields near Perth'
St Andrews	'perhaps it was St Andrews [rather than at Falkland]'
Stirling	'played a match at Stirling with the Earl of Bothwell'

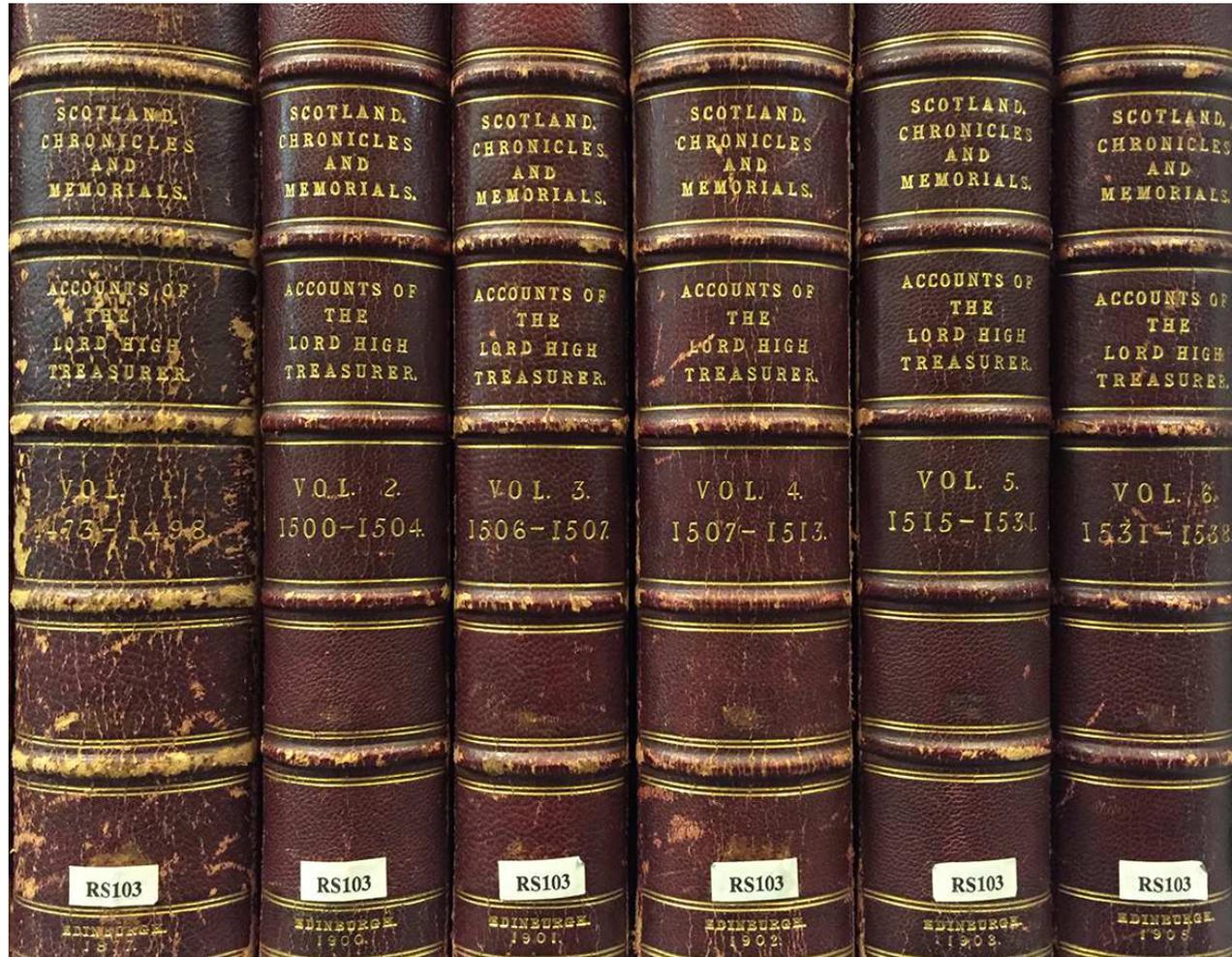
Events leading up to James IV's golf match (3 February 1503-4)

James IV appointed his **brother** (James, Duke of Ross)
as **Archbishop of St Andrews** in 1497



The Duke of Ross **died** in Edinburgh on 13 January 1503-4
and was **buried** in **St Andrews Cathedral** on **29 January 1503-4**

Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland



Preparations for the funeral

13 January

‘to Maister Thomas Dikson for the expens maid on the tursing [transportation] of the **Beschop of Sanctandrois** to **Sanctandrois** to be **beryt** [buried], in wax, in fraucht [transportation by boat] an all othir expens’

15 January

‘the King passit [proceeded] to **Faukland**, to the feryaris [ferryman] at the **Quenis Fery** [Queensferry]’

17 January

‘to the feryaris [ferryman] of the **Quenis Fery** [Queensferry] for the fraucht [transportation] of divers [various] botis [boats] with the Court’

18 January

‘to [various people are listed] with lettrez for the **Beschop of Sanctandrois**’

The king in mourning

25 January

‘Ristlis blak [**black cloth**] to be ane dule gown [**mourning gown**]... to the King, eftir the **dede** of the **Archbeschop of Sanctandrois**’

‘Ristlis blak [**black cloth**] to be ane riding gown [riding gown] for dule [**mourning**] to the King’

Scottis blak [**black cloth**] to lyne the said gown.

Scottis blak [**black cloth**] to covir the Kingis hors [horse], eftir the **deces** of the **Archbeschop of Sanctandrois**’.

‘for ane blak hors [**black horse**] to the King’

Preparations for the funeral

25 January

‘payit to William Foular for **torches** and prekatis [**candles**] and ane coffir [coffer] to turs [pack up] the prekatis [candles] in to **Sanctandrois** for the **Archbeschopes tyrment** [funeral]’

‘for iij^c iij [300 & 3 dozen] dosan armes [**arms**] for the said **tyrment**’ [funeral]’

26 January

‘in **Faukland**, to the King to play at the tables’

27 January

‘in **Faukland** to the King to play at the cartis [cards]’

28 January

‘to tua lutaris [two lute players] in **Faukland**, be the Kingis command’

‘to the man that tuke the deir [deer] in **Faukland** and kept thaim’

The funeral and the king's golf match

29 January

'in **Sanctandrois**, to the preistis for my **Lord of Sanctandrois tyrment** [burial]'

'to the Gray Freris [Greyfriars] of **Sanctandrois** be the Kingis command, for the archdene of **Sanctandrois**'

3 February

'to the King to **play at the golf** with the Erle of Bothuile'

'be the Kingis command to Johne Barbour with the **Beschop of Sanctandrois**'

6 February

'for **golf clubbes and balles** to the King that he playit with'

'to George Robison for **mail** [rent] quhair the **King occupiit in his innys**'

Locations suggested for James IV's golf match

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Stirling	'played a match at Stirling with the Earl of Bothwell'

Early golf in St Andrews



‘playing at golf’

Charter by John Hamilton, Archbishop of St Andrews
25 January 1552-3

It has been suggested that golf may have been introduced into England by James IV prior to 1513

‘Credit for introducing golf to England may well be due to James IV’

A Swing Through Time (1992)

‘He introduced the game to England on his visits to the royal court of Henry VIII’

Women in Golf (2008)



James IV
(r. 1488-1513)

It has been suggested that golf may have been introduced into England by James IV prior to 1513

‘I shall not so often hear from the King.
And all his subjects be very glad, I
thank God, to be busy with
the goff, for they take it for pastime’

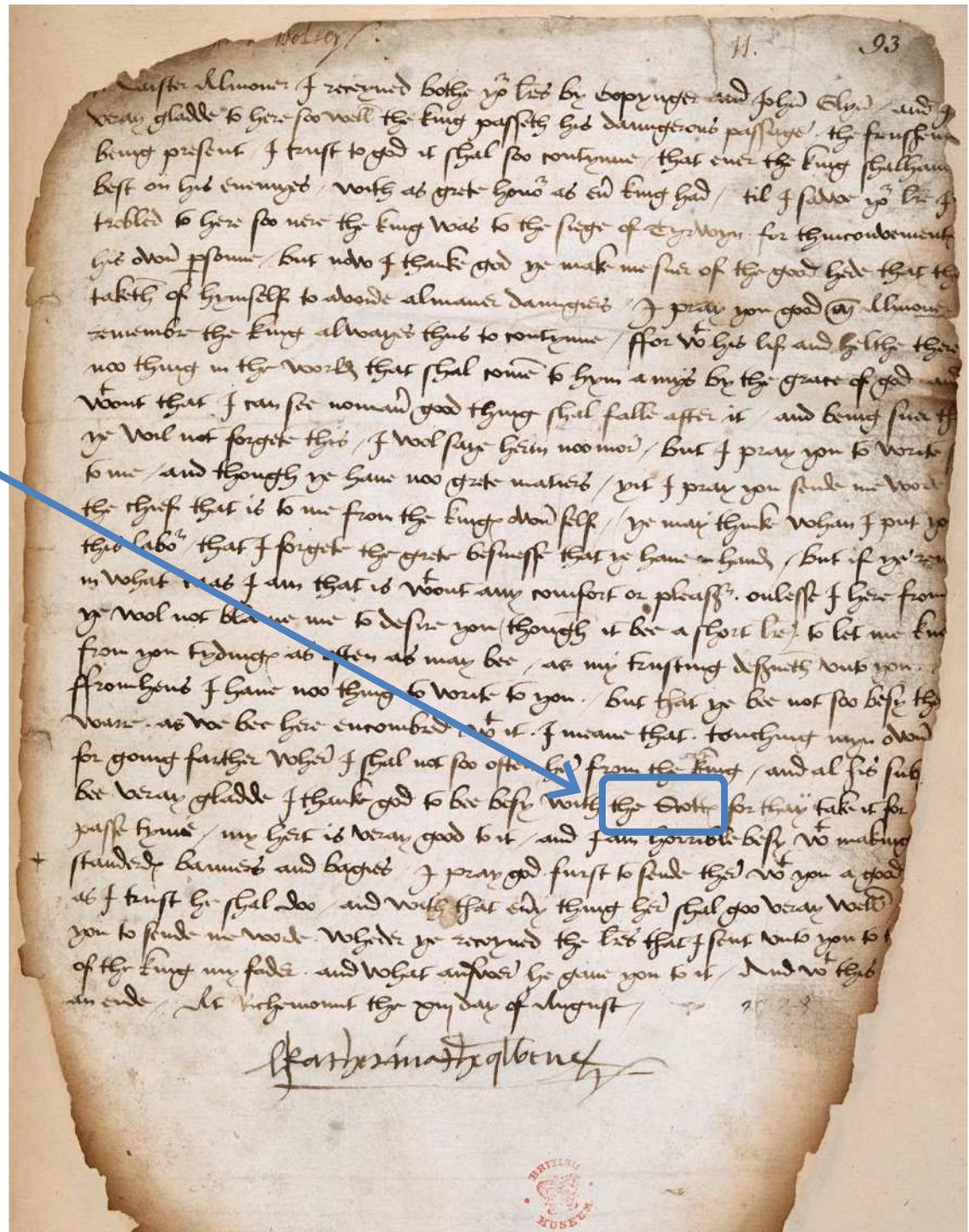
Letter from Catherine of Aragon to Thomas Wolsey
(13 August 1513)



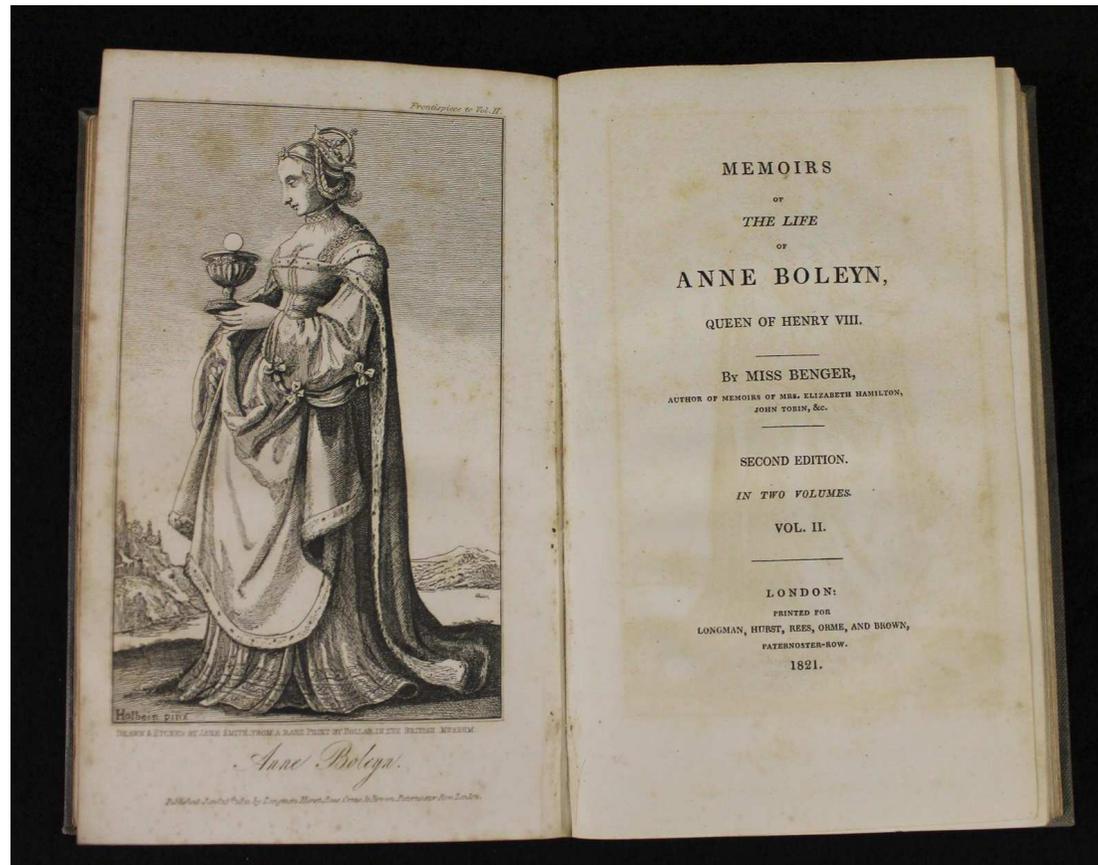
Catherine of Aragon
(Queen of England 1509-1533)

I thanke God, to bee besy
with **the Scotts** for thay
take it for passe tyme.

My hert is veray good to it,
and I am horrible besy wt
making standerds, banners,
and bagies.



The origin of the story...



Memoirs of the Life of Anne Boleyn Miss Benger (1821)

The story repeated...

Handbook of Manchester Golf Club (c. 1821)
The Golf-Book of East Lothian (1896)
World of Golf (1898)
The Royal and Ancient Game of Golf (1912)
A History of Golf in Britain (1952)
Golf (1954)
A History of Golf (1955)
The Story of Golf (1972)
A History of Golf Illustrated (1975)
The World of Golf (1982)
Golf: a Women's History (1987)
Playing the Game (1988)
The Illustrated History of Women's Golf (1991)
A Swing Through Time: Golf in Scotland 1457-1743 (1992)
Golf: the Lore of the Links (1992)

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Golf (1993)
Curiosities of Golf (1994)
Golf Anecdotes (1995)
Golf: The Early Days (1995);
Tee Times (1997)
The PGA Manual of Golf (1997)
Golf History & Tradition (1998)
The Complete Idiot's Guide to Women in Sport (2001)
Classic Golf Quotes (2002)
The Golfer's Companion (2005)
Golf's Book of Firsts (2007)
Women in Golf (2008)
Golf: an Unofficial and Unauthorized History (2009)
Golf: a Very Peculiar History (2011)
Historical Dictionary of Golf (2011)
Golf's Royal Clubs (2014)

The story developed...

‘one of the first female golfers’

The Rotarian magazine (1995)

Whereas Henry VIII played tennis, Catherine ‘preferred golf’

Golf Anecdotes (1995)

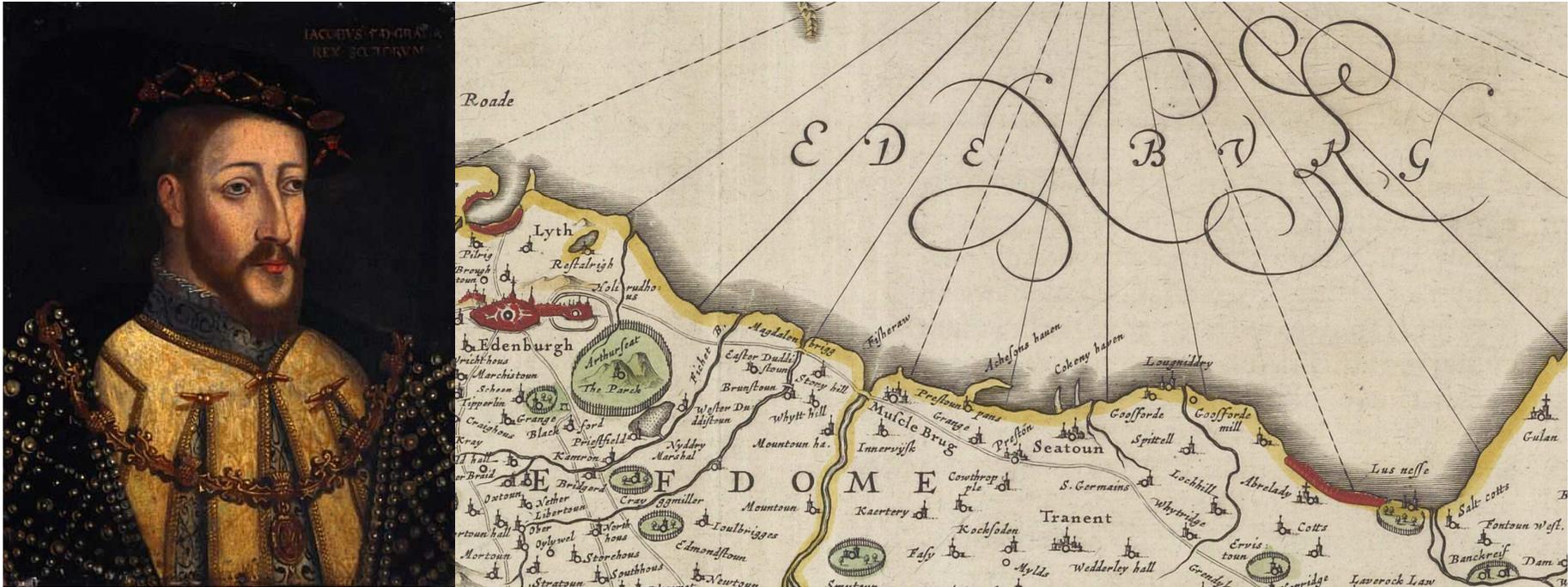
Catherine ‘amused herself with golf while her husband
was away on state business’

Golf: The Early Days (1995)

‘Henry VIII used to play golf with Catherine of Aragon’

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Golf (2010)

James V and golf at Gosford?



James V
(r. 1513-1542)

The story...



James V
(r. 1512-1542)

‘there does not appear to be any doubt
[that James V played golf in Gosford]’

The Golf-Book of East Lothian (1896)

‘James V frequented Gosford with his
golf-clubs under his arm’

Pall Mall Gazette (1896)

‘James V was also very partial to the game’

Encyclopaedia Britannica (1910)

‘James V was a regular on the links’

Mammoth Book of Fascinating Information (1980)

‘James V often played at Gosford’

World of Golf (1982)

The story developed...



James V
(r. 1513-1542)

‘There [in Gosford] he set up a private links’
Golf, it's History People & Events (1966)

‘James V ... had time to set up his
own golf course’
Discover Australia's Golf Courses (1987)

‘James V ordered that only wooded-headed
clubs were to be used
[on his private golf course]’
Golf: The Early Days (1995)

‘There is documented evidence that James V...
visited Gosford frequently in order to play golf’
Golf: History & Tradition (1998)

The origin of the story...



James V
(r. 1513-1542)

‘King James V is said to have been fond of Gosford, and that it was suspected by his contemporaries, that, in his frequent excursions to that part of the country, he had other purposes in view besides golfing and archery’

Topographical Description of the Parish of Aberlady
Reverend Dr Neil Roy (1792)

Mary Queen of Scots



*Few dayes eftir the murther remaining at halyrudehouse she past to seytoun, excercing hir one day richt oppinlie at the feildis with **palmall and goif**. And on the nicht planelie abusing hir body with boithuell.*

[a few days after the murder, staying at Holyroodhouse she went to Seton, taking exercise one day right openly in the fields with **pall-mall and golf**, and at night clearly dallying with Bothwell]

The Hopetoun manuscript (1567) [British Library, Add MS 33531]

Mary Queen of Scots



‘an **avid** golfer’

‘a **talented** golfer’

‘a **golf fanatic**’

‘golfing **obsession**’

‘**addicted** to the game’

‘a **keen exponent** of the game’

‘early female **pioneering** golfer’

‘capable of enjoying golf **in all weathers**’

‘famously **enthusiastic** about playing golf’

‘the first woman to have **played regularly**’

She played golf ‘**very often and quite well**’

Mary Queen of Scots



Bruntsfield Links
Burntisland
Craigmillar Castle
Dunbar
Edinburgh
Falkirk
Falkland Palace
The Firth of Forth
Holyrood Palace
Leith

Leven Links
Longniddry
Musselburgh
North Berwick
Perth
St Andrews
Scoonie Links
Seton Palace
Tantallon Castle
Wemyss Castle

Mary Queen of Scots in St Andrews?

‘Mary Queen of Scots
playing golf at St Andrews’

The Illustrated London News (1905)



‘Certain it is that Mary [...] played golf and pell-mell at St Andrews’

Mary is ‘amongst the most famous people to ever play at the Old Course at St Andrews’

Mary ‘frequently indulged in the pastime [in golf] on the windy dunes of St Andrews’

Mary ‘commissioned the building of the golf course at St Andrews’

Was James VI a golfer?



James VI

‘There is a tradition extant that James VI played golf at Perth on the South Inch’

Golf in Perth and Perthshire, Peter Baxter (1899)

Early Golf in England



Elizabeth I



James VI/I

Following the death of Queen **Elizabeth I** in 1603, James VI acceded to the English throne as **James I** and moved his court from Edinburgh to London

A gift of golf clubs to James VI (in Scotland)



As a child in Scotland,
James VI received a gift of
two golf clubs
from the Laird of Rosyth

'2 golf cloubbis, L. of Rossyth'

Account Book of Peter Young, tutor to James VI (1573-1583)

Golf at Royston (England) in 1624

Oct 1624

Paid to the Gofball keeper for clubbs and balles
at Roiston 4 Octobr.

Lost to S^r Robert Deale at Goff the 4th October.

Dec 1624

Paid to the Gofman for Balles and Battes.

Jan 1625 (1624-5)

Given to the Gofman at Royston the 15th for balls
& battes.



James VI/I

A snippet of a handwritten account book entry. The text is written in cursive and reads: "Given to the Gofman at Royston the 15th for balles & battes of".

Sir Sackville Crowe's Book of Accounts (1622-1628)

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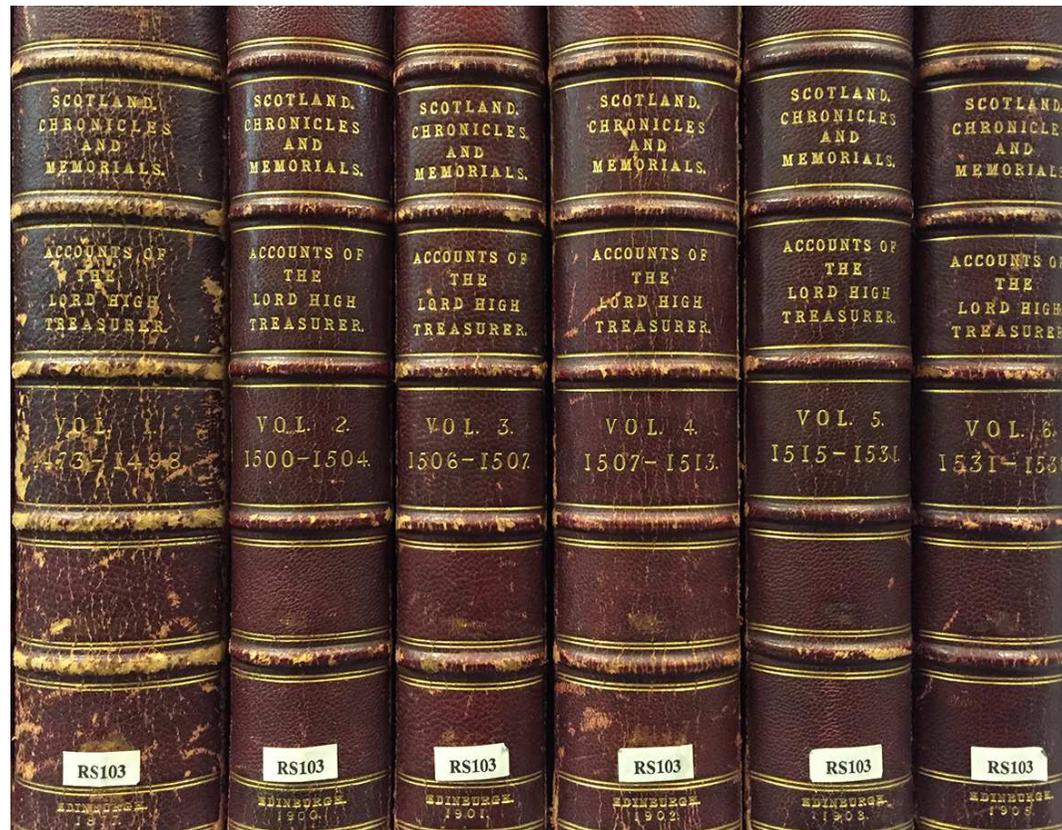


Duke of Buckingham

A close-up of a handwritten entry from a book of accounts. The text is written in cursive and reads: "Given to the Gofman at Royston the 15th for balles & battes of".

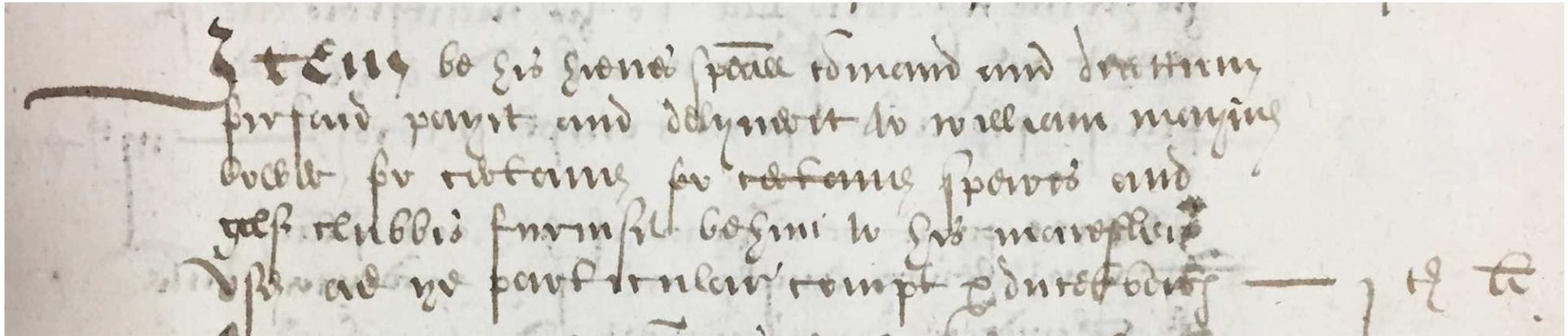
Sir Sackville Crowe's Book of Accounts (1622-1628)

Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland



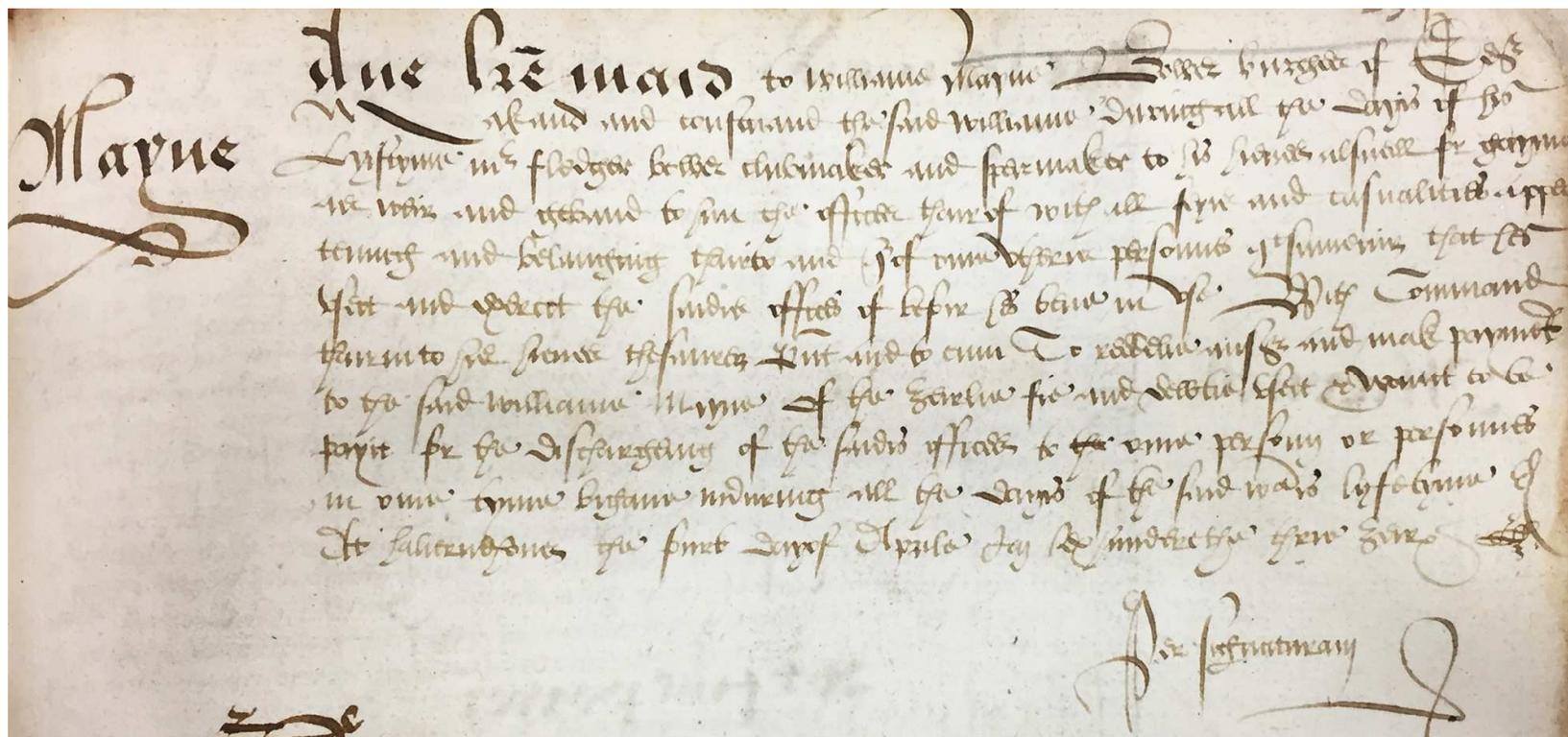
The accounts that were published in 13 volumes cover only the period up to **1580**

Treasurer's accounts April 1608



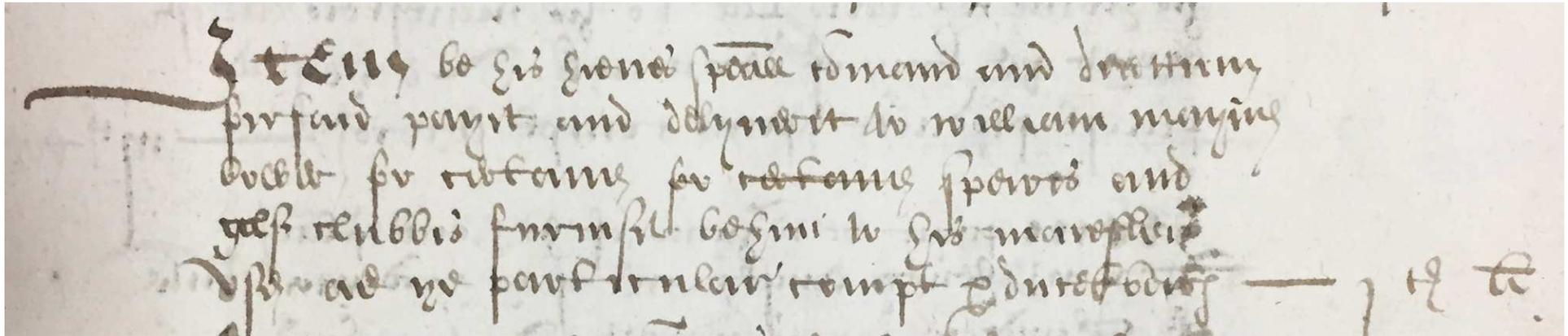
Item, by his Highness' special command and direction aforesaid, paid and delivered to **William Mayne bower**, for certain sound spears and **golf clubs** furnished by him to his Majesty's use, as the particular account and docket bears

James VI appointed William Mayne as 'clubmaker' (4 April 1603)



'fledger, bower, clubmaker and speirmaker to his Hienes'

Treasurer's accounts April 1608



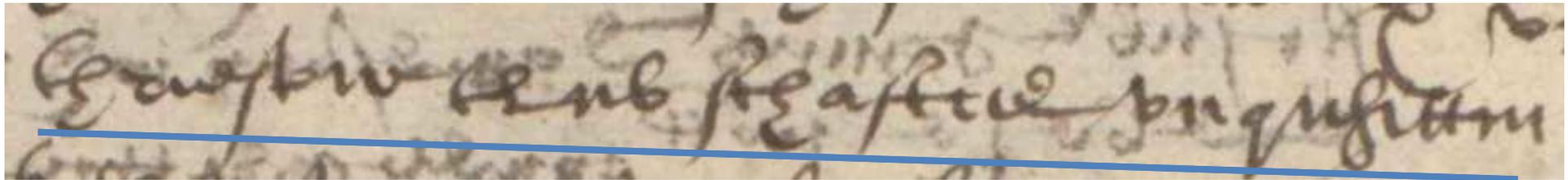
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Testament Dative of William Mayne

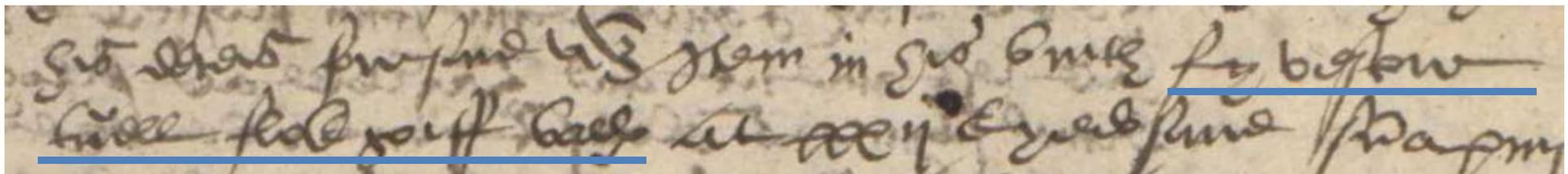
10 July 1612

The image shows a page of a handwritten document in an old script, likely a testament. The text is dense and difficult to read, but some words are visible, including "Testament Dative" and "10 July 1612". The document is written on aged, yellowed paper. The handwriting is a cursive script, possibly a form of early modern English or a related language. The text is arranged in several lines, with some words appearing to be in a different script or language, possibly Latin or French, interspersed with the main text. The overall appearance is that of a historical legal document.

Testament Dative of William Mayne



Thriescoir club shaftis vnquhittin
(Three score [60] club shafts uncut)



Fyve scoir tuell flok goiff ball
(Five score and twelve [112] flock golf balls)

Early Golf in England



Elizabeth I



James VI/I

Following the death of Queen **Elizabeth I** in 1603, James VI acceded to the English throne as **James I** and moved his court from Edinburgh to London

Early Golf in England

The orthodox view...

James VI of Scotland brought golf to England in 1603 when he became James I of England

James I's court was based at Greenwich Palace.

The Scottish members of court would have played golf locally.

Consequently, golf in England originated in the area of Greenwich/Blackheath



Evidence of Prince Henry (son of James VI/I) playing golf at Greenwich?

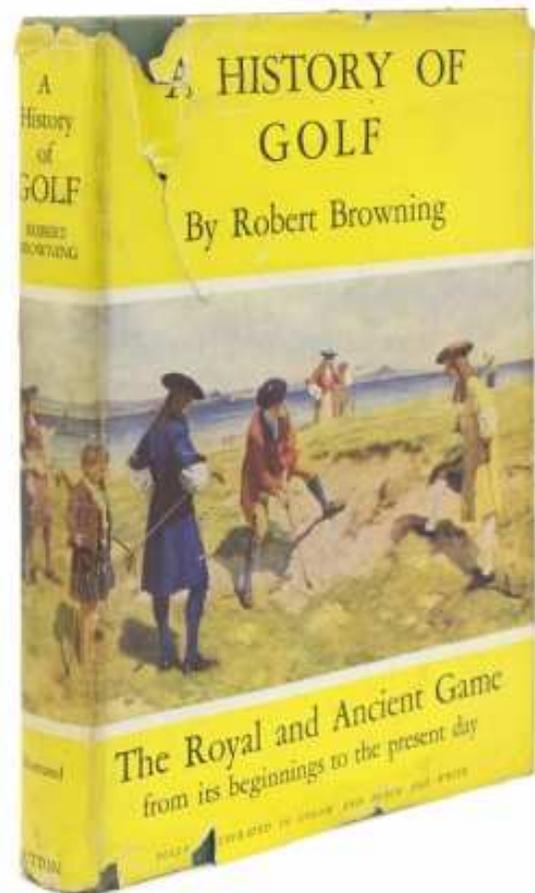


Prince Henry Stuart
(b. 1595, d. 1612)

Two pieces of evidence are often cited:

- 1) A report of Henry playing Golf, under the supervision of his tutor, Adam Newton (c. **1600-1609**).
- 2) A letter from the French Ambassador, reporting that Henry played a 'scots game very like pall mall' (**1606**).

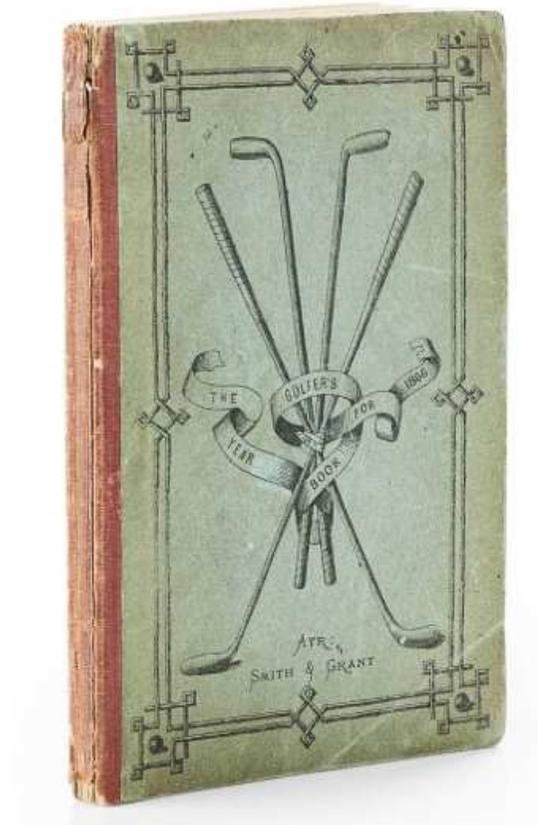
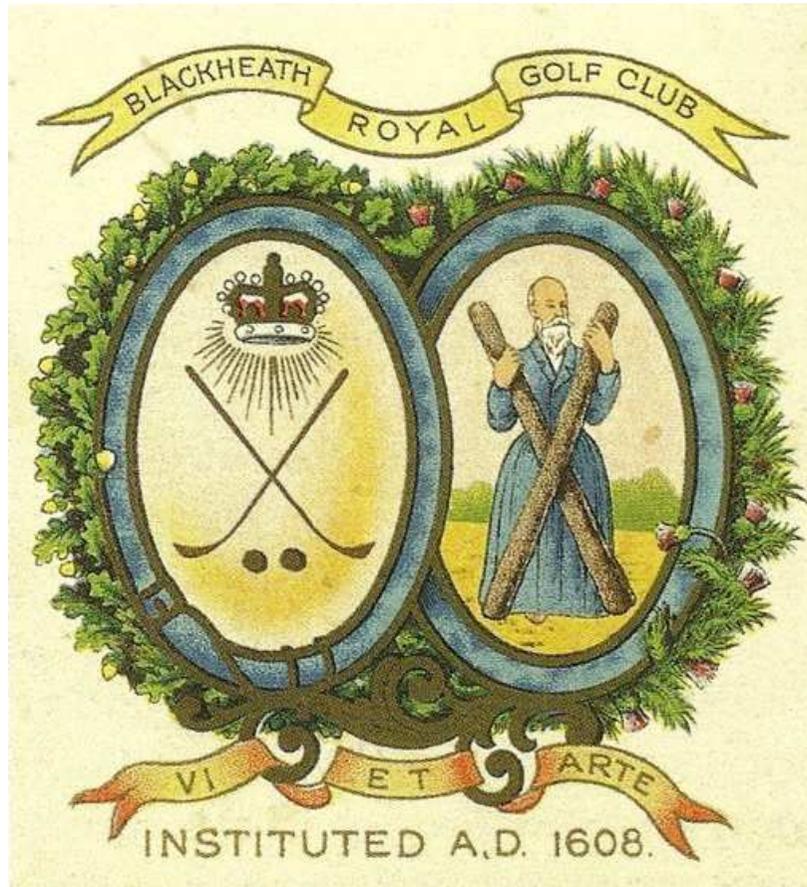
Evidence of Henry playing golf (1)



‘I have no doubt that Prince Henry’s games were played in the park of the royal manor of Greenwich’

A History of Golf, Robert Browning (1955)

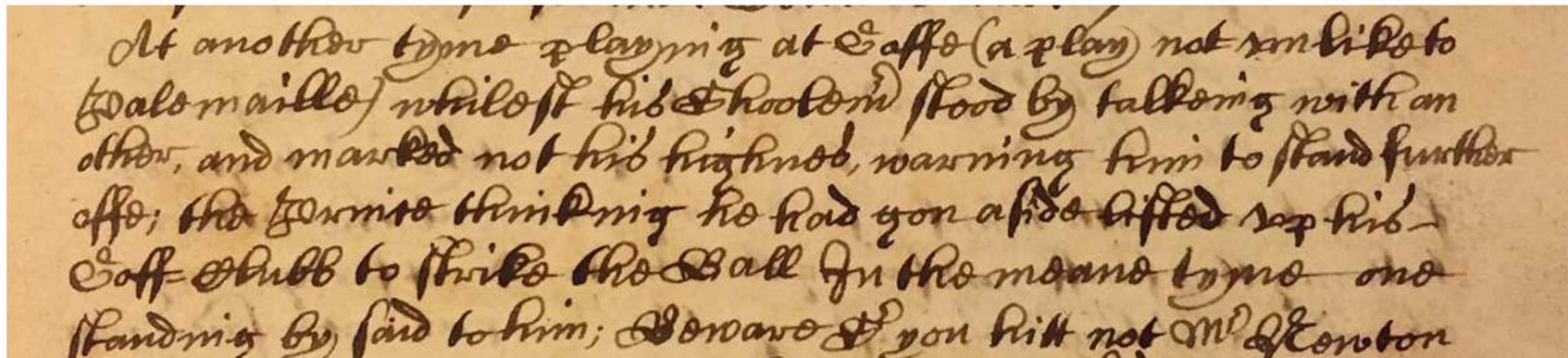
Blackheath Golf Club 'Instituted in 1608'



'Instituted in 1608'

The Golfer's Year Book for 1866
Robert Howie Smith (1867)

Evidence of Henry playing golf (1)



At another time **playing Goffe** (a play not unlike to Palemaille) whilst his Schoolmaster stood by talking with an other, and marked not His Highness, warning him to stand further off; the Prince thinking he had gone aside **lifted up his goff-clubb to strike the ball**. In the meanetyme one standing by, said to him; Beware you hit not M^r Newton

Jacobean Royal Palaces



King James I

Palace of Whitehall, Westminster

Queen Anne

Palace of Placentia, Greenwich

Prince Henry

**St James's Palace, Westminster
Richmond Palace, Surrey**

Evidence of Henry playing golf (2)



A letter from the French Ambassador,
Antoine Le Fèvre de la Boderie,
dated 31 October 1606

*'Il joue volontiers à la paume, & à un autre jeu d'Ecosse
qui est quasi semblable au Pallemail'*

[He plays willingly enough at tennis, and at another Scots game
that is very like pall-mall]

Ambassades de Monsieur de la Boderie en Angleterre, Tome I , Antoine Le Fèvre de la Boderie (1750)

Henry was at Richmond in Oct 1606



In October 1606 ‘the Prince resided at Richmond, where the French Ambassador, who had been obliged to quit London on account of the plague, and could not follow the King, because he made so little stay in any place, was a frequent attendant at his Highness’ [Henry’s] court’

The Life of Henry Prince of Wales, Thomas Birch (1760), confirmed by **contemporary letters** written in **1606** by the French Ambassador and published in *Ambassades de Monsieur de la Boderie en Angleterre*, M. de la Boderie (1750).

Boderie's letters: 'De Londres'



Roi. Cependant après vous avoir très-humblement baïsé les mains, je supplierai le Créateur conserver leurs Majestés, & vous donner, &c.

De Londres, ce 31 May 1606.

'De Richemont'



de sa Majesté. S'il vous plaît lui en tou-
cher un mot, & me faire sçavoir sa
volonté, vous l'obligerez, & moi
aussi.....

31 Octobre
1606.

De Richemont le 31 Octobre 1606.

'De Richemont'

Lettre dudict Sieur de
La Boderie.
a Monsieur de
Puisieux.

De Richemont ce dernier
Octobre 1606.

Monsieur.

Celle qu'il vous a pleu m'escrive du xx.
arnua icy le xxvi.^e mais comme elle
ne contient rien ou il eschéé grandes
responce, et que cette maudite peste de
Londres tient tout le monde escarté

Early golf in England at Richmond



Prince Henry at Richmond Palace
[National Portrait Gallery]

*De Richemont ce dernier
Octobre 1606.*



Richmond (c. 1630s)



James IV
(r. 1488-1513)

Evidence that the earliest recorded game of golf (in 1504) took place in St Andrews.



James V
(r. 1513-1542)

There appears to be no contemporary evidence that James v played golf at Gosford (or anywhere else).



Mary
(r. 1542-1567)

Claims that Mary played golf in some 20 different locations is not supported by the single contemporary historical reference (from 1567).



James VI
(r. 1567-1625)

Evidence that the James VI/I played golf himself.

Evidence that bowmaker William Mayne made golf clubs.

Evidence that the earliest record of golf in England took place at Richmond Palace.

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