

Balderdash

I have tried to put the quotes logically and followed the centuries and not the chronicle order in which the quotes appeared.

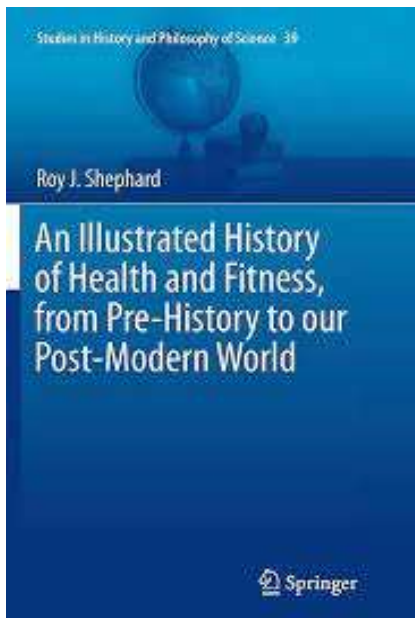
We start with the one that often occurs when authors dig into the past of stick and ball games. The quotes are in green.

No source mentioned

The history of pallamaglio can be traced back to ancient Egypt, Persia, China, Greece and Rome.

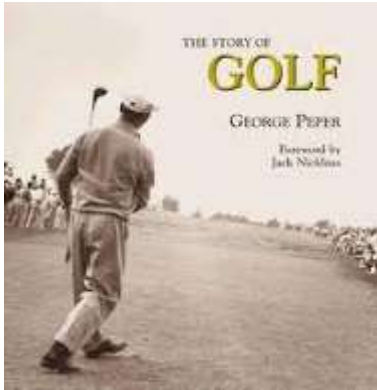
Repeating the introduction: whenever there is an illustration of people with a club in their hands and a ball on the ground: bingo, that's the origin of the game I'm researching!

'An Illustrated History of Health and Fitness, from Pre-History to our Post-Modern World', Roy J. Shephard, University of Toronto, 2015



The game of pall-mall was an ancestor of croquet. There are references to the game in 13th-century France.

It is generally accepted that the game entered France around 1535 with the court of Catherine de Medici, an Italian princess who would marry the king of France, Henry II. Mentions of the game of pall-mall in France start from then on; in Italy, they go back to the 15th century.



'The Story of Golf', George Peper, 1999

Across the English Channel, the French had taken to a rather genteel courtyard game called jeu de mail. Originally developed in Italy, it was a curious blend of billiards, croquet, and miniature golf, played with long-handled mallets and large wooden balls within a well-defined area. The object was to hit the ball through one or more iron hoops, using the fewest possible strokes.

The first time the word 'billart' appeared was in the part of the book 'Roman de la Rose', written by Jean de Meung between 1275 and 1280. The game became quite popular in France during the 14th and 15th centuries. That was before Catherina di Medici came to France with her Italian pallo maglio. So it is possible that billiard influenced the jeu de mail during the following centuries.

And now croquet: balderdash! Being no expert on croquet, I have looked on several sites, and often credit is given to the Jaques family for introducing it into the UK, even though they first saw a new game called 'crookey' being played in Ireland, which they brought to the UK in 1856.

Minigolf became en vogue at the beginning of the 20th century.

Conclusion: jeu de mail was no blend. The oldest known written rules for the royal and bourgeois game date from before 1642. They are in French and are meant for the long mail courts.



Encyclopædia Britannica

pall-mall, French paille-maille, (from Italian pallamaglio: palla, "ball," and maglio, "mallet"), obsolete game of French origin, resembling croquet. An English traveler in France mentions it early in the 17th century, and it was introduced into England in the second quarter of that century.

The game is of Italian origin. And it is the other way round: croquet (1856) resembles jeu de mail (1535).

Sportsillustrated.cnn.com/golfonline/history/storyofgolf by George Peper, Editor-in-Chief, GOLF MAGAZINE (in 2016 still online)

By the 18th century, however, this game (pall mall) had played out except for southern France, where a more expansive version saw the Basques hitting over hill and dale to targets such as the sides of barns and pasture gates. Shades of golf there, for sure.

Indeed, jeu de mail survived in the South of France until the Second World War. But not in the French Basques Country in the southwest of the ancient region of Aquitaine, bordering the Atlantic Ocean, but in the ancient Languedoc-Rousillon region bordering the Mediterranean. People played in town or on little, relatively flat country roads.



Map of France with all the assumptions of a jeu de mail. The yellow dots indicate the castles with (once) a jeu de mail on the property and the orange ones where the ordinary people played the game in the streets or on the country roads or tracks surrounding the town or village. The blue stips still need further research, while the black ones mean: definitely not!



*A picture from a private collection showing jeu de mail players at the beginning of the 20th century in relatively flat countryside. –
By courtesy of Philippe Estang*



[Wikipedia.org/wiki/palla](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/palla) (in 2016 online)

Pallamaglio is an ancient game called Pall Mall in the English language and his modern form named 'Skittles', is played in England, Germany, Austria and Switzerland currently.

Skittles is a historical lawn game and target sport of European origin. Many old pictures and books mention it, long before the oldest reference to pall-mall in Great Britain, which dates from 1568 (Lord Moray, 'The Articles').

At the top of the next page: An example of continental skittles, copied and painted around 1514, probably in the city of Rouen, France. It has nothing to do with pall-mall. – Detail of the illumination from the 'Heures de la famille Ango', NAL 392, page 156 verso – Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF)



Curious English words and phrases, Max Cryer, 2012

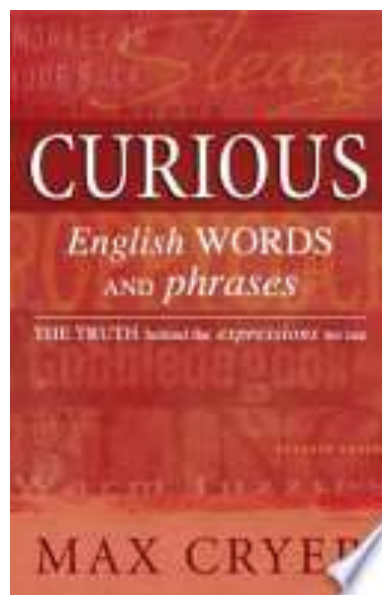
The game we call croquet had its origins in an Italian game, palla maglio, meaning to hit a ball with a mallet. ... In the meantime the actual game of palla Maglio took on a new name, based on the French word for hook, crotchet. ... And the game formerly known as palla maglio slowly came to be called croquet because, apparently the very early versions of the game did have a hooked mallet for hitting the ball.

I start with a quote from

<https://www.jaqueslondon.co.uk>:

“When it comes to asking, ‘Who invented croquet?’, there are almost as many potential answers as there are players, with its roots and alternatives traced to everywhere from France to Ireland.”

Again I repeat myself. On several sites, credit is often given to the Jaques family for introducing it from Ireland into the UK in 1856. I leave it to that.



World News (in September 2015 online)

The English invented pall-mall by changing the rules of Croquet.

Just read the preceding text about the introduction of croquet in England.