

Colf near Windsor Castle

What is the game of colf?

To prevent duplications, I refer to the introduction under the button 'Colf'.

The colf club heads

My friend and expert on colf, Do Smit, former curator of the Webmuseum www.colf-kolf.nl, recently changed into <https://golfgeschiedenis.nl>, is excited by the site where these colf club heads were found: in the Thames near Windsor Castle. He wonders who could have been playing with them near the Thames: Netherlanders, Belgians, Englishmen or a mixture? Where did the people play: on land, on ice or onboard a ship?

To be honest, the colf club heads themselves are rather standard. Do Smit classifies all three club heads from (the first part of) the 17th century. They are products of home crafts or made by the local forger or woodworker without any detailed drawing. Therefore, he can define the origin nor the exact date. However, having familiar decorations as clubs earlier found in the Netherlands, it is pretty sure that the showed artefacts originate from that country.

Except for a few bronze colf club heads, colf club heads usually are made of a lead or a lead-tin alloy, reason why they are not magnetic.

The colf club heads wear traces of use. To find rests of wood in the entrance of the heads is quite normal. The sticks themselves have rotten away or been reused.

The price paid for the three is a bargain! In the Netherlands, the number of amateur archaeologists has increased with the arrival of metal detectors and with that more 'slofs' (colf club heads; in Netherlandish 'slofs' [one slof, plural slofs]) are found. All the same, one should have paid there around € 30 per item.



With a length of about 10 centimetres, this item is a club for an adult right-handed player. It is quite well possible that the reddish marks are highlighted by iron oxide, originating from the filthy sludge on the bottom of the Thames, because colf club heads made of a lead-iron alloy are so far unknown.



Also, this colf club head, with its length of 8 centimetres, is a club for a grown-up right-handed player.



With a length of 6 centimetres, this item is a club head for a right-handed younger person. Regarding the spot, one could think of the club of a ship-boy. For an explanation of the reddish marks, see the first picture.

I thank Kieran George, Assistant Curator at the R&A World Golf Museum, for his confidence by having asked me to answer the questions of one of the R&A contacts. And of course, thanks to Do Smit for his kind and professional help.