

Delft blue tiles

The first Netherlandish tiles look like those made in the Southern Netherlands (today's Belgium) by Italian potters who came to live there in the 16th century. However, multi-coloured at the beginning, around 1600, the tiles get a more Netherlandish character. The ornamental pattern of the tile disappears gradually, and the potters start to depict today's life: horse riders, soldiers, ships, playing children, animals, flowers, landscapes, men and women at work, and, of course, biblical scenes.

From 1620 onwards, the potters also made the well-known blue tiles; the blue Chinese porcelain, arriving around 1600 in the Netherlands, inspired them. The 'Delfts blauw' (Delft blue) became world-famous and is still today a generic name for earthenware and tiles with decorations in blue, even when it does not originate from Delft.



*As you will see on the following pages, persons with a stick and a ball are often called 'golfers'. Most sellers do not know the games of colf and kolf or use the word 'golf' for commercial reasons. – Early to mid 17th century – £ 90
Description: Antique Delft tile – golf classics*

The 17th century was not only part of the Little Ice Age but also part of the Golden Age. The 17th century's general prosperity raised the demand for tiles, ornamenting the houses, a.o. mantle-pieces, halls, landings, kitchens and skirting boards.

Source: <https://nederlandstegelmuseum.nl>

The prosperity coincided with the Little Ice Age. People searched divertimento on the ice, one of them being the game of colf. On the internet, one can find several colf tiles for sale. Mainly, the descriptions refer to golf erroneously or rather for commercial reasons.

You find a small collection of colf tiles through the ages. On the following pages they are sold not only in the Netherlands, as you can see from the prices. I present them in chronological order, i.e. I followed the dates indicated by the sellers.



The game of colf disappeared in the
c1650 – € 750
Tile with a golf player

course of the 17th century to be followed by the game of kolf, played on courts in the gardens of the rich, and the publicans in town laid out courts for the ordinary people. In the 18th century, the new game of kolf became a craze all over the Netherlands. The illustrations on the tiles did not change, for both colvers and kolvers used a stick and a ball.

c1660 – € 225
Antique Delft tile with cupid, playing a game of golf
If you want to read more about stick and ball playing putti, click here <https://ancientgolf.dse.nl/pdfs/putti.pdf> to read my article in Golfika (Magazine of the European Association of Golf Historians and Collectors), no. 29, spring 2022.



c1675 – € 625
Treibball / Golf

I copy the text that the antique seller from Amsterdam adds to this tile: *"In the 17th and 18th century, treibball was the national game played by everyone. In the 17th century, the field consisted of a rectangular bed with two posts (stakes). People played with a stick with a wooden base and a ball made from it. They placed the ball on a spout (pile of sand) and knocked off. The aim is to play the ball in as few strokes as possible to a specific point/post. The game of treibball partly inspires golf."*



Curious as I am, I have been looking on the internet to know more about the history of 'treibball', a game/sport I had never heard of; I only came across ... dogs: *"Originating in Germany in about 2003, formal competitions were first held in 2008. Treibball is thought to have started as a substitute sport for herding dogs who did not have access to sheep, but who require mental as well as physical stimulation."*

In February 2023, I published the article 'Balderdash', some funny and erroneous publications collected by my late husband Geert (<https://ancientgolf.dse.nl/pdfs/balderdash.pdf>). With this treibball one, I have the beginning of another collection 😊.



17th / 18th century – US \$ 99
Delft handpainted Dutch tile/fragment,
kolf, sport, golf



*c1700 – € 285
Kolven / golfen*

*c1740 – € 150
Antique Delft tile with two children
playing a game of kolf*

In this pink October month, where women are everywhere present, one certainly notices that there are no images of women playing the game. Also, in today's tiles (see page 6), the producers only depict boys and men. Talking about the past, we know that women were condemned to the household, but since the 20th century, times have changed for the better.



*c1790 – € 259,27
Antique Dutch Delft golf tile*

1800--1820 – Sold
Game of golf, c1800



c1875 – € 195
Kolven / golfen

In the second half of the 19th century, there were two reasons for declining tile production. The economic situation decreased, and the competition from England and Germany increased. In addition, wallpaper became en vogue, a cheaper way to decorate your house. Around 1900, the tile industry revived for a certain time by using different colours (see underneath) and Jugendstil designs.



c1890 – € 218,02
Antique Dutch Delft golf tile; Delft
brown and white golf tile



*Contemporary – € 20
Even the 'Royal Delft', founded in 1653 as
'De Porceleyne Fles' (porcelain bottle),
don't hesitate to talk about a golfer when it
presents a new tile with an old design.*

Today, tiles and tile pictures are again fabricated as centuries ago, but the process is simplified. However, the painting is according to the ancient manner.

As one can see in this series of pictures, chosen randomly, the illustrations did not change much. Only the 'golf' playing putti have disappeared.

Still today, on the internet, you can find a great collection of copied 17th-century colf images on new Delft(ware) tiles sold as ... golfers! Business is business!