



North Berwick

# **The Dowcote Park Curling Club Curling Pond**

**Dowcote Park  
North Berwick**

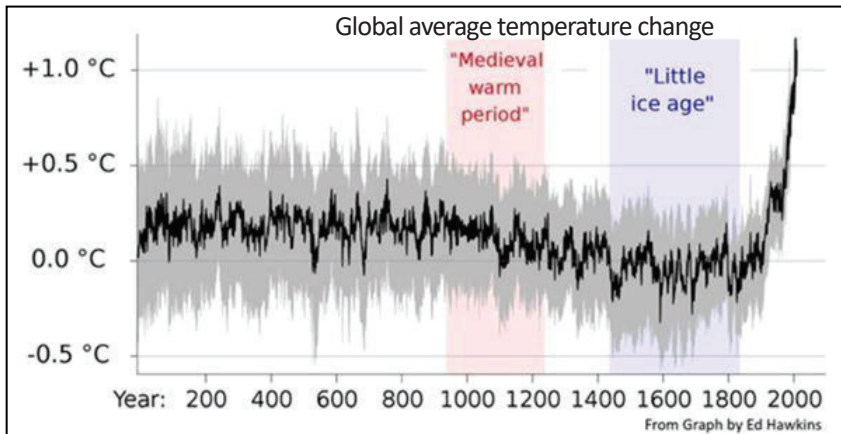
North Berwick Environment and Heritage Trust  
Heritage Guide

## Dovecot Park Curling Club Pond

A little like bowls but played with heavy stones, curling developed as a winter sport played on ice in both Scotland and Holland during the 16th century. The Scots, however, are the undisputed developers and formalisers of the modern game. The appearance of curling falls within the period of the 'Little Ice Age' when the mean global temperature fell about 1°C.



*Pieter Brueghel the Younger,  
'Winter Landscape'*



In the northern hemisphere this period was notable for very cold winters when even moving water froze. Between 1600 and 1814, it was not uncommon for the River Thames to freeze over for up to two months at a time. In Scotland curling was played on frozen lakes, lochs and ponds.



*Thomas Wyke,  
'The Great Frost  
Fair of 1683-4'*

**‘NORTH BERWICK.—The members of the North Berwick Curling Club competed yesterday for their medal on Sir Suttie’s lake at Balgone and was won by Mr John Wallace with nine points. Lord Elcho’s County Cup will be played for on Saturday if the frost continues. Sir George having kindly placed his pond at the disposal of the curlers for the occasion.’ *The Scotsman*, 18th December 1874**

In the early 1800s the winter temperature started to rise, and it became necessary to create shallow temporary ponds which froze more readily. The specific heat of water is high, and it can store large amounts of heat, so the smaller the volume of water the more quickly it freezes for a given air temperature below zero.

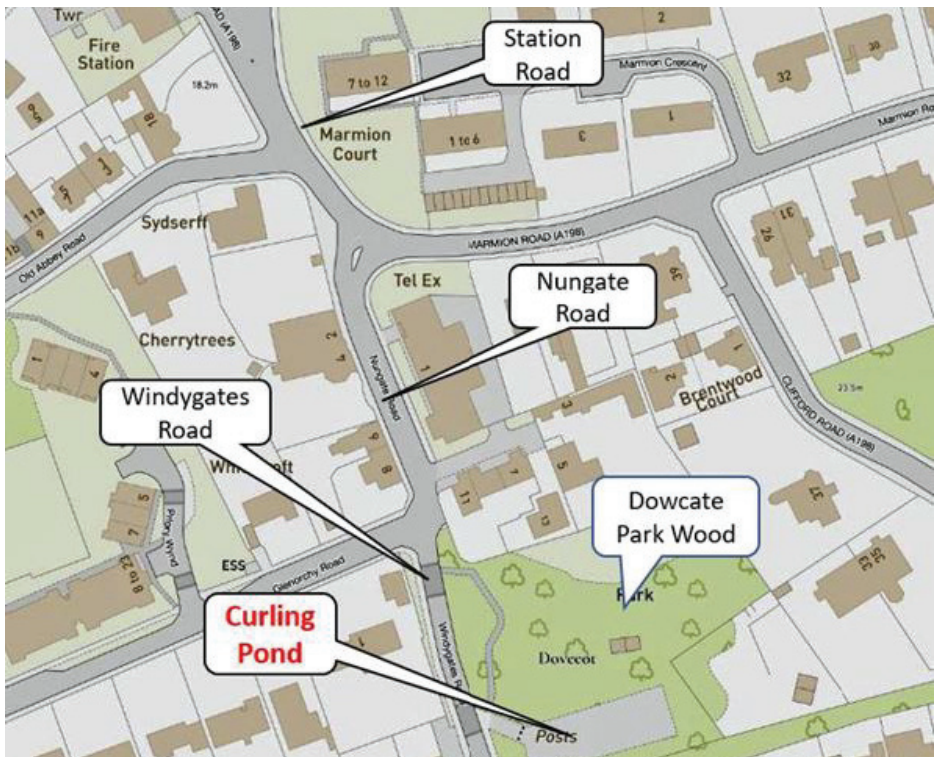


***‘Start of the Curling Season: a game in progress at Dowcate Pond, North Berwick’***

In 1833 Mr J. Cairnie published a book, *Essay on Curling and Artificial Pond Making*, describing how to build stone-lined ponds of regular dimensions with water only about 30cm deep. Cairnie ponds became popular. Towards the end of the 19th century tarmacadam became available. It can be rolled very flat and it became possible to build ponds where the water could be only a few millimetres deep and which froze much more quickly and frequently. Because they were

made with tarmacadam and required only a sprinkle of water, they were called sprinkle or tarmac ponds. In North Berwick the Dowcate Park Curling Club sprinkle pond was used until the 1960s.

**‘NORTH BERWICK.—With a continuance of the frost curling was in progress at the new pond in the Dowcate Park, North Berwick. A club designated the Dowcate Club Curling Club has just been formed, the office-bearers for the season being as follows:- President, Mr WJ Mure CB,; vice president, Sir William Gardiner-Baird Bart,; and hon. secretary and treasurer, Mr RM Mackochie.’ *The Scotsman*, 22nd December 1909**



Entering the wood by the second pathway opening, a little further up the hill, you will discover a small clearing with a small patch of tarmac. This is the site of the Dowcate Park curling pond.

