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Newsletter and Book Review for the Serious Collector

World Renowned Writers on Golf – Agatha Christie First Editions

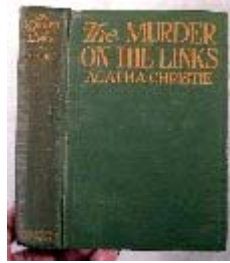
Agatha Christie is widely believed to be the most popular fiction writer of all time. Books she has authored have sold over 2 billion copies globally¹.

In this month's newsletter we will focus on her titles related to golf. Christie's first husband was an avid golfer and while married to him she learned the game. She states in her autobiography that after her husband Archie was elected to Sunningdale all he did was think about golf. Arguably she is one of the most famous "golf widows" of all time, as she calls herselfⁱⁱ. Christie and her husband had a house in Sunningdale, The Scotswood Estate, during the 1920s. Not a very good player, her handicap was the highest allowed by the Ladies Golfing Union in Britain – a 35. She says her husband got no fun out of playing "with a goat like me." During this time the Wentworth Estate was also in the process of being developed. They considered buying a house at Wentworth but she bought a debenture share instead for £100, which she was excited about, because it gave her the privilege of playing on Saturdays and Sundays. After the marriage ended she apparently gave up the game, but still used golf extensively in her writings.

The Murder on the Links

The Murder on the Links was published in London by The Bodley Head in 1923. It is 298 pages, orange cloth with black lettering imprinted artwork. The first American edition was published by Dodd, Mead in 1923 and is also 298 pages. The American edition was published in a dark green cloth with orange lettering. The Bodley Head dust jacket should have a price of 7/6 (7 shillings, 6 pence). Christie also recounts in her autobiography how she had an argument with her publisher about the proposed jacket for *The Murder on the Links*. She described it as "a man in pajamas on a golf links, dying of an epileptic fit." Since the man in the book who was murdered was fully dressed, she made them change it. It was changed to a close-up of a man overlooking a golf green with a flag in it.

This book is especially popular since it was only Christie's third mystery. Despite the title, there is actually not much golf content in the book. The story features her famous detective Hercule Poirot. The plot involves a millionaire, Monsieur Renault, who asks for Poirot's help. Unfortunately, before Poirot can help him he is found dead in an unfinished bunker on a golf course. Given Christie's popularity, the book has been printed in many reprint editions. Recently we found over 500 copies of *The Murder on the Links* for sale on-line. The original Bodley Head 1923 edition is a rare book. It is worth in excess of \$5,000 without the jacket.



Why Didn't They Ask Evans?

The Agatha Christie book with the most actual golf content is *Why Didn't They Ask Evans?* Published by Collins publishing house as part of their Collins Crime Club series in 1934, it is 252 pages, issued with a dust jacket priced at 7/6. The Collins Crime Club was a series of books published by the Collins publishing house between 1930 and 1994 featuring many authors. As was the custom of British publishers during this time, the book was published in the United States under a different title: *The Boomerang Clue* by Dodd, Mead in 1935 and is 290 pages. The book features Bobby Jones who uncharacteristically slices off the first tee, off the course and down a cliff. He comes across a dying man whose final words are the British title of the book. Jones is featured throughout the book.

Towards Zero

An Agatha Christie book with a golf illustration on the first edition cover is *Towards Zero*, also issued as part of the Collins Crime Club in 1944. As with most of the Collins Crime Club first editions, the jacket should be priced at 7/6. The novel is the last of five featuring her famous detective Superintendent Battle. The book was issued in orange cloth with black lettering. The American first edition was issued with the same name by Dodd, Mead in 1944.



4:50 from Paddington

4:50 from Paddington, also part of the Collins Crime Club was published in London in 1957. The U.S. edition of the book is titled *What Mrs. McGillicuddy Saw* and was published by Dodd, Mead in 1957. This mystery features the famous detective Jane Marple and the plot evolves around a women being strangled on a train. By this time the dust jacket price is 12/6, the first edition was published in orange/red cloth with black lettering.

Our last book is Agatha Christie's *Partners in Crime*. This book, published in 1929 as part of the Collins Crime Club series contains many short stories. One of them is *The Sunningdale Mystery* and features the golf course. The first edition dust jacket should contain a price of 7/6.

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ⁱ Agatha Christie, Ltd, London

ⁱⁱ *Agatha Christie, An Autobiography*, Collins, London, 1977