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## **DECEMBER, 2019 NEWSLETTER**

NEXT MEETING THURSDAY January 2, 2020 – Collingwood Legion

### **BREAKIN' NEWS OF THE IMPORTANT KIND**

#### **▶ HAPPY NEW YEAR !**

#### **▶ OUR HOLIDAY \ CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON WAS A GREAT SUCCESS !**

#### **▶ January Speaker's Topic**

Erika Engel will present on her chosen career – journalism! Erica graduated top of her class in print journalism at Sheridan College. She worked as an intern at The Hamilton Spectator, and Hamilton News. She was hired as a reporter for the Metroland group – writing mostly for the Meaford Express and Thornbury Courier-Herald. Later she became the editor of the Collingwood Connection and the Wasaga/Stayner Sun. She subsequently took a year off from newspapers and is now excited to be back in journalism doing what she loves — telling stories. She has written extensively ( and well ) on the Collingwood Inquiry.

#### **▶ To keep current check out our up-to-date website:**

[www.probuscollingwood.ca](http://www.probuscollingwood.ca).

#### **▶ Updated Member Incentive Program**

Upon bringing a friend as a guest to any of our meetings, the Membership Chair will generate a “Guest Pass” card that captures the guest's contact info, plus the name of the introducing Member. If the guest ends up joining the Club then the introducer will receive a LCBO gift card certificate or, if he prefers, three fifty \ fifty tickets at the next monthly meeting following payment of the new member's annual dues.

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**SOCIAL – UPCOMING**

**JANUARY 15 , 2020** ( Wednesday ) Cocktails & Conversation - chez Doug Brown – 29 Hughes Street, L9Y 0W7. 705.293.1098 \ 4 to 6 pm, BYOB.

For info contact Doug - doug55brown@gmail.com

**JANUARY 29 , 2020** ( Wednesday ) - Snowshoeing at Bud and Sue Christensen's – 10:30am – 1:30pm. There may be an offering of the 'famous' Christensen soup for lunch! This is always a great event, don't miss it!

For info contact Doug - doug55brown@gmail.com

**FEBRUARY 5 , 2020** ( Wednesday ) Agnora Glass Tour – sign up list is full.

**FEBRUARY 6 , 2020** ( Thursday ) Annual Probus Inter-Club Curling in Collingwood - Doug Brown & Tom Chisholm - Tom has three teams entered – there is a wait list.

**JUNE 9, 2020** ( Tuesday ) – Stratford Theatre Trip – matinee production of the popular “ Chicago” – prior to the show we will enjoy an included tour of Stratford's Costumes and Props Warehouse and on site buffet lunch ( well received ). We will have an early morning start – travel by bus – maximum of 56 tickets. All inclusive price of approximately \$170 - good value as seating for Chicago is expected to be superior. Tickets go on sale Thursday, January 2.

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## **SOCIAL - ONGOING:**

### **► Investments**

Informal talks from area financial guys & gals - 2nd Tuesday each month, 10 am, Collingwood Library, \$4. This event is sponsored by Blue Mountain Probus. Doors open at 10 am - see you on Tuesday, January 14, 2020.

### ► **Technology**

Wide variety of current tech topics - 4th Thursday each month, 12 noon, Collingwood Library, \$3. Bring your lunch if you wish. An e-mail setting out the date, time, and place of the meetings will be sent out on a monthly basis to all participants who have signed up for either of Investment or Technology.

### ► **Billiards**

At Moguls - 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month [ 1-3pm] . Contact Jim Theobalds [ jayco68@gmail.com ] for further info.

### ► **Seniors' Computer Café**

Hands on assistance with computer & phone issues - intermittently - Community Connections group will send an email to all who have signed up with details of future meetings which are held at 199 Campbell Street, Collingwood. No cost.

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## **OUR CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON**

### **THE OPENING**

- Ian was in excellent form & dress - thank you Ian.
- President Mike warmly welcomed all members and their guests.

### **MISSY ROSEN – THE FINAL EPSIODE**

We were captivated by Rueben's final story on his Family's beloved Missy ( a 15 year old Shih Tzu ) and her final few weeks prior to her recent passing last May. The Family wanted to hear from Missy on what she had to say about her deteriorating health and her feelings about moving on . The Family contacted Sheila Trecartin, the animal communicator, for assistance, and provided her with a recent photo as Sheila could not attend in person. Sheila reported to Rueben and Judy Rosen by e-mail dated May 4, 2019.

**Some Highlights from Sheila Trecartin's Communications with Missy:**

- Missy says she is not seeing well – this makes her uncomfortable and uncertain of things.
- She apologizes that she isn't doing well and that she is worrying you.
- She says that she is sad . She knows that her time is coming to an end and she is disappointed. She has brief moments of strength \ energy and then feels weak again.
- She would like you both to sit and talk to her about memories that you have of being with her that are good and positive. This is her last wish – to have an hour of joyful reminiscing with you.
- She hopes that her vet won't be disappointed in her for not trying more. She says that there isn't much point at this time. Living a few more months isn't going to make anyone feel better and it isn't going to change a thing.
- She says that it has been a pleasure to live this life and she has no regrets at all. She asks that NO one feel sorry for her .... she despises pity.
- The Tuesday that Missy specified that she wanted to be put to sleep was the anniversary of the passing of Rueben's mother.

**CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON SPEAKER – DR. AMY BARRON**

Dr. Amy Barron gave a much enjoyed talk on:

“Agatha Christie, Archaeology and Alzheimers”

Agatha Christie once quipped, “An archaeologist is the best husband a woman can have; the older she gets, the more interested he is in her.”

Christie's literary corpus is now being used to try to unravel the mysteries of the human mind, as she is one of

the subjects of a University of Toronto study examining the works of prolific writers for signs of Alzheimer's disease. A selection of her novels written between the ages of 28 and 82 indicated a dramatic drop in her vocabulary as she neared the end of her life.

### **SOME OF THE MANY HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Mousetrap celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012
- Four billion books sold \ translated into 103 languages
- Hercule Poirot – the most loved by the public – however AG found him “insufferable” by 1930
- Miss Marple – second most famous series – AG loved her to the end
- Wrote her last novels during the Blitz
- Agatha Christie was born in 1890 in Devon, England \ youngest of three \ born to the Upper Class \ she was her father's darling \ no formal education \ very, very sly \ no great ambition \ father died when she was young
- Father squandered his money
- At age 16 – “First Season” in Cairo, Egypt \ turned down many marriage proposals
- During WWI worked as a volunteer hospital nurse – learned a lot about medicine & poisons
- Meets & marries Archibald Christie – a “brilliant” pilot. One daughter, Rosalind Christie [ 1919-2004 ]
- Late 1920s – her mother dies \ Archibald announces that he wants a divorce
- The famous eleven day missing episode
- Decides to accept husband's divorce request

- Subsequently meets Max Mallowan [ 1904-1976 ] at age 40 – he was 26.
- They were happily married for over 40 years
- Agatha Christie was knighted in 1971 \ She died in 1976 – Max followed eighteen months later
- In later live, it was noted that AG’s vocabulary declined \ repetition increased \ as did use of vague expressions such as “anything” and “things” – Dr. Barron noted that that were apparently no such indicators in the later works of Iris Murdock \ P.D. James

A Q&A with the audience followed.

Amy was warmly received . Our speaker was thanked for her riveting & informative presentation . Following gifts of flowers and the Club’s famous pen & pencil set she was then asked to pick our fifty \ fifty winners.

▶ [www.agathachristie.com](http://www.agathachristie.com)

▶ Come, Tell Me How You Live ( Autobiography )  
By Agatha Christie Mallowan

▶ Fifty \ Fifty Winners - Congratulations to winner Serge LaPointe and ( I guess, to your editor ) !

▶ The formal meeting then adjourned with members & guests retiring to the “dining room” at 12:30pm to enjoy a well organized and delicious Christmas Luncheon presented by Men With Knives.

▶ Sincere thanks to Terry Billio and all those who made our 2019 Christmas Luncheon such a wonderful success!

► HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL IN 2020 ! THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR FELLOWSHIP IN 2019 !

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Note: Any opinions expressed herein are solely those of the newsletter editor unless otherwise specifically indicated \ source attributed. Errors are the responsibility of the editor. Feedback\ Suggestions are most welcome ►►gord@halllaw.com.

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The Legion's new Heart Defibrillator is located behind the bar. Atrial fibrillation is an irregular and often rapid heart rate that can increase risk of stroke, heart failure and other heart-related complications. We now have a team of volunteers, trained in the operation of the Automated External Defibrillator. If you would like to volunteer your services, contact Steve Hawker.



FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN MORE INFORMATION ON AGATHA CHRISTIE SEE BELOW FOR EXTRACTS ON THE LIFE OF AGATHA CHRISTIE FROM WIKIPEDIA:

## Life and career

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### Childhood and adolescence: 1890–1910

Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller was born on 15 September 1890 into a wealthy [upper-middle-class](#) family in Torquay, Devon. She was the youngest of three children born to Frederick Alvah ("Fred") Miller, "a [gentleman](#) of substance", and his wife Clarissa Margaret ("Clara") Miller née Boehmer.<sup>[15]:1–4[16][17][18][19]:16</sup>

Christie's mother Clara was born in [Dublin](#) in 1854<sup>[a][20][21]</sup> to Lieutenant (later Captain) Frederick Boehmer ([91st Regiment of Foot](#))<sup>[22]</sup> and his second wife Mary Ann Boehmer née West. Boehmer died aged 49 of bronchitis (although biographers often claim he was killed in a riding accident) in [Jersey](#) in April 1863, leaving his widow to raise Clara and her

three brothers alone on a meagre income.<sup>[23]</sup> Two weeks after Boehmer's death, Mary's sister Margaret West married widowed dry goods merchant Nathaniel Frary Miller, a U.S. citizen.<sup>[24]</sup> To assist Mary financially, the newlyweds agreed to foster nine year old Clara. The family settled in [Timperley, Cheshire](#).<sup>[25]</sup> Margaret and Nathaniel had no children together, but Nathaniel had a seventeen-year-old son, Fred Miller, from his previous marriage. Fred was born in [New York City](#) and travelled extensively after leaving his Swiss boarding school. He and Clara eventually formed a romantic attachment and were married in [St Peter's Church, Notting Hill](#), in April 1878.<sup>[15]:2-5[16]</sup>

Fred and Clara's first child, Margaret Frary ("Madge"), was born in Torquay in 1879,<sup>[26]</sup> where the couple were renting lodgings. Their second child, Louis Montant ("Monty"), was born in [Morristown, New Jersey](#), in 1880<sup>[27]</sup> while they were making an extended visit to the [United States](#). When Fred's father died in 1869,<sup>[28]</sup> he left Clara £2000; they used this money to purchase the leasehold of a villa in Torquay named [Ashfield](#) in which to raise their family. It was here that their third and final child, Agatha, was born in 1890.<sup>[15]:6-7[18]</sup>



Christie as a girl, date unknown

Christie described her childhood as "very happy".<sup>[29]:3</sup> She was surrounded by a series of strong and independent women from an early age.<sup>[15]:14</sup> She lived primarily in Devon, but made occasional visits to the homes of her step-grandmother/great-aunt Margaret Miller in [Ealing](#) and maternal grandmother Mary Boehmer in [Bayswater](#). One year of her childhood was spent abroad with her family, in the [French Pyrenees](#), [Paris](#), [Dinard](#), and [Guernsey](#).<sup>[15]:15, 24-25</sup>

Christie was raised in a household with various [esoteric](#) beliefs and, like her siblings, believed that her mother Clara was a psychic with the ability of [second sight](#).<sup>[15]:13</sup> Christie's sister Madge had been sent to [Roedean School](#) in Sussex for her education, but their mother insisted that Christie receive a [home education](#). As a result, her parents were responsible for teaching her to read and write and to master basic arithmetic, a subject she particularly enjoyed. They also taught her music, and she learned to play both the piano and the mandolin.<sup>[15]:20-21</sup> According to one biographer, Clara believed that Christie should not learn to read until she was eight. However,

thanks to her own curiosity, Christie taught herself to read much earlier.<sup>[30]:18</sup> One of the earliest known photographs of Christie depicts her as a little girl with her first dog, named George Washington by her patriotic father but which she called Tony.<sup>[29]:20–21, 42</sup>

Christie was a voracious reader from an early age. Among her earliest memories were those of reading the children's books written by Mrs Molesworth, including *The Adventures of Herr Baby* (1881), *Christmas Tree Land* (1897), and *The Magic Nuts* (1898). She also read the work of Edith Nesbit, including *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899), *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1903), and *The Railway Children* (1906). When a little older, she moved on to reading the surreal verse of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll.<sup>[15]:18–19</sup> In April 1901, at age 10, she wrote her first poem, "The cowslip".<sup>[31]</sup>

Although she devoted much time to her pets, Christie spent much of her childhood apart from other children. She eventually made friends with a group of other girls in Torquay, noting that "one of the highlights of my existence" was her appearance with them in a youth production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Yeomen of the Guard*, in which she played the hero, Colonel Fairfax.<sup>[15]:23–27</sup> This was her last operatic role for, as she later wrote, "an experience that you really enjoyed should never be repeated."<sup>[29]:114</sup>

By 1901, Christie's father's health had deteriorated, due to what he believed were heart problems.<sup>[30]:33</sup> Fred died in November 1901 from pneumonia and chronic kidney disease.<sup>[32]</sup> The family's financial situation had by this time declined significantly. Christie and her mother Clara continued to live in their Torquay home. Christie's sister Madge married the year after their father's death and moved to Cheadle, (historic county of) Cheshire. Christie's brother Monty was overseas, serving in a British regiment. Christie later claimed that her father's death, occurring when she was 11 years old, marked the end of her childhood.<sup>[15]:32–34</sup>

In 1902, Christie began attending Miss Guyer's Girls' School in Torquay but found it difficult to adjust to the disciplined atmosphere. In 1905, she was sent to Paris where she was educated in three *pensions* – Mademoiselle Cabernet's, Les Marronniers, and then Miss Dryden's – the last of which served primarily as a finishing school.<sup>[15]:22–23, 37</sup>

### Early literary attempts and the First World War: 1910–1919

After completing her education, Christie returned to England and found her mother ailing. They decided to spend time together in the warmer climate of Cairo, then a regular tourist destination for wealthy Britons. They stayed for three months at the Gezira Palace Hotel. Christie attended many social functions and particularly enjoyed watching polo. She visited ancient Egyptian monuments such as the Great Pyramid of Giza, but did not exhibit the great interest in archaeology and Egyptology that became prominent in her later years.<sup>[15]:40–41</sup> Returning to Britain, she continued her social activities, writing and performing in amateur theatricals. She also helped put on a play called *The Blue Beard of Unhappiness* with female friends. Her writing extended to both poetry and music. Some early works saw publication, but she decided against focusing on writing or music as future professions.<sup>[15]:45–47</sup>

Christie wrote her first short story, *The House of Beauty* (an early version of her later-published story *The House of Dreams*,<sup>[33]</sup>) while recovering in bed from an undisclosed illness. This was about 6,000 words on the topic of "madness and dreams", a subject of fascination for her. One of her biographers has commented that, despite "infelicities of style", the story was nevertheless "compelling".<sup>[15]:48–49</sup> Other stories followed, most of them illustrating her interest in spiritualism and the paranormal. These included "*The Call of Wings*" and "*The Little Lonely God*". Magazines rejected all her early submissions, made under pseudonyms (including Mac Miller, Nathaniel Miller, and Sydney West), although some submissions were revised and published later, often with new titles.<sup>[15]:49–50</sup>

Christie then set her first novel, *Snow Upon the Desert*, in **Cairo** and drew from her recent experiences in that city, writing under the pseudonym Monosyllaba. She was disappointed when the various publishers she contacted all declined.<sup>[15]:50–51</sup> Clara suggested that her daughter ask for advice from a family friend and neighbour, the writer **Eden Philpotts**, who obliged her enquiry, encouraged her writing, and sent her an introduction to his own literary agent, Hughes Massie, who rejected *Snow Upon the Desert* and suggested a second novel.<sup>[15]:51–52</sup> Meanwhile, her social activities expanded. She entered into short-lived relationships with four separate men and an engagement with another.<sup>[30]:64–67</sup> She then met **Archibald Christie** at a dance given by **Lord and Lady Clifford** at **Ugbrooke**, about 12 miles (19 kilometres) from Torquay. Archie was born in **India**, the son of a **barrister** in the **Indian Civil Service**. He was an army officer who was seconded to the **Royal Flying Corps** in April 1913. The couple quickly fell in love. Upon learning that he would be stationed in **Farnborough**, Archie proposed marriage, and Agatha accepted.<sup>[15]:54–63</sup>

With the outbreak of the **First World War** in August 1914, Archie was sent to **France** to fight the **German forces**. They married on the afternoon of Christmas Eve 1914 at Emmanuel Church, **Clifton, Bristol**, which was close to the home of his mother and stepfather, while Archie was on home leave.<sup>[34][35]</sup> Rising through the ranks, he was eventually stationed back to Britain in September 1918 as a colonel in the **Air Ministry**. Christie involved herself in the war effort as a member of the **Voluntary Aid Detachment**. From October 1914 to May 1915, then from June 1916 to September 1918, she worked a total of 3400 hours in the Town Hall Red Cross Hospital, Torquay, first as a nurse (unpaid) then as a dispenser (at £16 a year from 1917) after qualifying as an apothecaries' assistant.<sup>[36][15]:69</sup> Her war service ended when Archie was reassigned to London, and they rented a flat in **St. John's Wood**.<sup>[15]:73–74</sup>

### **First novels and Poirot: 1919–1926**

Christie had long been a fan of detective novels, having enjoyed **Wilkie Collins's** *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, as well as **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's** early **Sherlock Holmes** stories. She wrote her own detective novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, featuring **Hercule Poirot**, a former **Belgian** police officer noted for his twirly large "magnificent moustaches" and egg-shaped head. Poirot had taken refuge in Britain after **Germany** invaded **Belgium**. Christie's inspiration for the character stemmed from real Belgian refugees who were living in Torquay and the Belgian soldiers whom she helped to treat as a volunteer nurse in Torquay during the First World War.<sup>[15]:75–79</sup> She began working on *The Mysterious*

*Affair at Styles* in 1916, writing much of it on [Dartmoor](#).<sup>[31]</sup> Her original manuscript was rejected by such publishing companies as [Hodder and Stoughton](#) and [Methuen](#). After keeping the submission for several months, [John Lane](#) at [The Bodley Head](#) offered to accept it, provided that Christie change the ending. She did so, and signed a contract which she later felt was exploitative.<sup>[15]:79, 81–82</sup> It was finally published in 1920.<sup>[31]</sup>

Christie, meanwhile, settled into married life, giving birth to her only child, Rosalind Margaret Clarissa, in August 1919 at [Ashfield](#).<sup>[15]:79[30]:340,349,422</sup> Archie left the Air Force at the end of the war and started working in [the City](#) financial sector at a relatively low salary, though they still employed a maid.<sup>[15]:80–81</sup> Her second novel, *The Secret Adversary* (1922), featured a new detective couple [Tommy and Tuppence](#), again published by The Bodley Head. It earned her £50. A third novel again featured Poirot, *Murder on the Links* (1923), as did short stories commissioned by Bruce Ingram, editor of *The Sketch* magazine.<sup>[15]:83</sup>

In 1922, the Christies joined an around-the-world promotional tour for the [British Empire Exhibition](#), led by Major [Ernest Belcher](#). Leaving their daughter with Agatha's mother and sister, in ten months they travelled to [South Africa](#), [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), [Hawaii](#), and [Canada](#).<sup>[15]:86–103[37]</sup> They learned to surf prone in South Africa; then, in [Waikiki](#), they were among the first Britons to surf standing up.<sup>[38][39]</sup>

Following their return to England, Archie resumed work in [the City](#), while Christie continued to work hard at her writing. After a series of apartments in London, they moved to the country, eventually purchasing a house in [Sunningdale, Berkshire](#), which they renamed [Styles](#) after the mansion in Christie's first detective novel.<sup>[30]:154–155[15]:124–125</sup>

Christie's mother died in April 1926. They had been exceptionally close, and the loss sent Christie into a deep depression.<sup>[30]:168–172</sup>

## **Disappearance: 1926**



*Daily Herald*, 15 December 1926, announcing Christie had been found

In August 1926, Archie asked Christie for a divorce. He had fallen in love with Nancy Neele, who had been a friend of Major Belcher. On 3 December 1926, the pair quarrelled after Archie announced his plan to spend the weekend with friends, unaccompanied by his wife. Late that evening, Christie disappeared from her home. Her car, a [Morris Cowley](#), was found at [Newlands Corner](#), perched above a chalk quarry, with an expired driving licence and clothes.<sup>[15]:135[40][41]</sup>

The disappearance caused a public outcry. The home secretary, [William Joynson-Hicks](#), pressured police, and a newspaper offered a £100 reward. Over a thousand police officers, 15,000 volunteers, and several aeroplanes scoured the rural landscape. [Sir Arthur Conan Doyle](#) gave a [spirit medium](#) one of Christie's gloves to find her.<sup>[6]</sup> Christie's disappearance was featured on the front page of *The New York Times*. Despite the extensive manhunt, she was not found for 10 days.<sup>[43][42][44]</sup> On 14 December 1926, she was found at the [Swan Hydropathic Hotel](#)<sup>[45]</sup> in [Harrogate](#), Yorkshire, registered as Mrs Tressa<sup>[c]</sup> Neele (the surname of her husband's lover) from "Capetown S.A." (i.e. [Cape Town](#), South Africa). The next day, Christie left for her sister's residence, [Abney Hall](#), Cheadle, where she was sequestered "in guarded hall, gates locked, telephone cut off, and callers turned away."<sup>[46]:1,4,9[47]:1[15]:146[30]:196</sup>

Christie's autobiography makes no reference to the disappearance.<sup>[29]</sup> Two doctors diagnosed her as suffering from "an unquestionable genuine loss of memory",<sup>[47]:1[48]:12</sup> yet opinion remains divided over the reason for her disappearance. Some, including authorised biographer Janet Morgan, believe that she disappeared during a [fugue state](#).<sup>[15]:154-159[42][49]</sup> In contrast, Jared Cade's research led him to conclude that Christie deliberately planned the event to embarrass her husband, but did not anticipate the public melodrama that resulted.<sup>[50]:121</sup> Laura Thompson provides the alternative view that Christie disappeared during a nervous breakdown, conscious of

her actions but not in emotional control of herself.<sup>[30]:220-221</sup> Public reaction at the time was largely negative, supposing a publicity stunt or an attempt to frame her husband for murder.<sup>[51][d]</sup>

### Second marriage and later life: 1927–1976



Christie's room at the [Pera Palace Hotel](#) in Istanbul, where she wrote *Murder on the Orient Express*

In January 1927, Christie, looking "very pale", sailed with her daughter and secretary to [Las Palmas, Canary Islands](#), to "complete her convalescence",<sup>[52]</sup> returning three months later.<sup>[53][e]</sup> Christie petitioned for divorce and was granted a [decree nisi](#) against her husband in April 1928 which was made [absolute](#) in October 1928. Archie married Nancy Neele a week later.<sup>[54]</sup> Christie retained custody of their daughter Rosalind and the Christie surname for her writing. During their marriage, she published six novels, a collection of short stories, and a number of short stories in magazines.<sup>[55]</sup>

Some years later, reflecting on the whole period, Christie said, "So, after illness, came sorrow, despair and heartbreak. There is no need to dwell on it."<sup>[29]:340</sup>

In autumn 1928, Christie left England and took the [\(Simplon\) Orient Express to Istanbul](#); she subsequently went on to [Baghdad](#). In [Iraq](#), she became friends with archaeologist [Leonard Woolley](#) and his wife, who invited her to return to their dig in February 1930. On that second trip, she met a young archaeologist 13 years her junior,<sup>[56]</sup> [Max Mallowan](#). In a 1977 interview, Mallowan recounted his first meeting with Christie, when he took her and a group of tourists on a tour of his expedition site in [Iraq](#).<sup>[57]</sup> Christie and Mallowan married in September 1930.<sup>[58][30]:284-285[15]:178-179</sup> Their marriage was happy and lasted until Christie's death in 1976.<sup>[30]</sup>



Christie with Max Mallowan in [Tell Halaf](#), 1930s

Christie frequently used settings that were familiar to her for her stories. She often accompanied Mallowan on his archaeological expeditions, and her travels with him contributed background to several of her novels set in the Middle East.<sup>[57]</sup> Other novels (such as *And Then There Were None*) were set in and around Torquay, where she was raised. Christie's 1934 novel *Murder on the Orient Express* was written in the [Pera Palace Hotel](#) in Istanbul, Turkey, the southern terminus of the railway. The hotel maintains Christie's room as a memorial to the author.<sup>[59]</sup>

The [Greenway Estate](#) in Devon, acquired by the couple as a summer residence in 1938, is now in the care of the [National Trust](#). Christie often stayed at Abney Hall, Cheshire, owned by her brother-in-law, James Watts, basing at least two stories there: a short story "[The Adventure of the Christmas Pudding](#)" in the story collection of the same name, and the novel *After the Funeral*. "Abney became Agatha's greatest inspiration for country-house life, with all its servants and grandeur being woven into her plots. The descriptions of the fictional Chimneys, Stoneygates, and other houses in her stories are mostly Abney Hall in various forms."<sup>[60]</sup>



Cresswell Place

During the [Second World War](#), Christie worked in the pharmacy at [University College Hospital](#), London, where she acquired a knowledge of poisons that she put to good use in her post-war crime novels. For example, the use of [thallium](#) as a poison was suggested to her by UCH Chief Pharmacist Harold Davis (later appointed Chief Pharmacist at the UK Ministry of Health), and in *[The Pale Horse](#)*, published in 1961, she employed it to dispatch a series of victims, the first clue to the murder method coming from the victims' loss of hair. So accurate was her description of thallium poisoning that on at least one occasion it helped solve a case that was baffling doctors.<sup>[61][62]</sup> Christie lived in [Chelsea](#), first in Cresswell Place and later in Sheffield Terrace. Both properties are now marked by [blue plaques](#). In 1934, she and Max Mallowan purchased Winterbrook House in [Winterbrook](#), a hamlet adjoining the small market town of [Wallingford](#), then within the bounds of [Cholsey](#) and

in [Berkshire](#).  
<sup>[63]</sup>



Christie's obituary in *The Times* notes that "she never cared much for the cinema, or for wireless and television". Further, Dame Agatha's private pleasures were gardening – she won local prizes for horticulture – and buying furniture for her various houses. She was a shy person: she disliked public appearances: but she was friendly and sharp-witted to meet. By inclination as well as breeding she belonged to the English upper middle-class. She wrote about, and for, people like herself. That was an essential part of her charm.<sup>[19]</sup>

Death Blue plaque, 58 Sheffield Terrace, [Holland Park](#), London

This was their main residence for the rest of their lives and the place where Christie did much of her writing.<sup>[30]:365</sup> This house, too, bears a blue plaque. Christie led a quiet life despite being known in the town of Wallingford,<sup>[1]</sup> where she was for many years President of the local [amateur dramatic society](#).<sup>[64]</sup>

Christie at [Schiphol](#), 17 September 1964

Around 1941–42, the British intelligence agency [MI5](#) investigated Christie after a character called Major Bletchley appeared in her 1941 thriller *N or M?*, which was about a hunt for a pair of deadly [fifth columnists](#) in wartime England.<sup>[65]</sup> [MI5](#) was afraid that Christie had a spy in Britain's top-secret codebreaking centre, [Bletchley Park](#). The agency's fears were allayed when Christie told her friend, the codebreaker [Dilly Knox](#), "I was stuck there on my way by train from Oxford to London and took revenge by giving the name to one of my least lovable characters."<sup>[65]</sup> In honour of her many literary works, she was appointed [Commander of the Order of the British Empire](#) (CBE) in the [1956 New Year Honours](#).<sup>[66]</sup> The next year, she became the President of the [Detection Club](#).<sup>[67]</sup> In the [1971 New Year Honours](#), she was promoted to [Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire](#) (DBE),<sup>[68]</sup> three years after her husband had been [knighted](#) for his archaeological work in 1968.<sup>[69]</sup> They were one of the few married couples where both partners were honoured in their own right. From 1968, owing to her husband's knighthood, Christie could also be [styled](#) Lady Mallowan.

From 1971 to 1974, Christie's health began to fail, although she continued to write. Recently, using experimental tools of textual analysis, Canadian researchers have suggested that Christie may have begun to suffer from Alzheimer's disease or other dementia.<sup>[70][71][72][73]</sup>

### Personal qualities

In 1946, Christie said of herself: "My chief dislikes are crowds, loud noises, gramophones and cinemas. I dislike the taste of alcohol and do not like smoking. I DO like sun, sea, flowers, travelling, strange foods, sports, concerts, theatres, pianos, and doing embroidery."<sup>[74]</sup>

The Agatha Christie Trust For Children commenced in 1969<sup>[75]</sup> and shortly after Christie's death a charitable memorial fund was set up to "help two causes that she favoured: old people and young children."<sup>[76]</sup>



Christie's gravestone at St. Mary's church, Cholsey, Oxfordshire



Winterbrook House



Memorial to Christie in central London

Christie's first book, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, was published in 1920 and introduced the detective [Hercule Poirot](#), who became a long-running character in Christie's works, appearing in 33 novels and 54 short stories.<sup>[100]</sup>

[Miss Jane Marple](#) was introduced in the short-story collection *The Thirteen Problems* in 1927. Although Christie states that, "Miss Marple was not in any way a picture of my grandmother; she was far more fussy and spinsterish than my grandmother ever was", her autobiography does establish a firm connection between the fictional character and Christie's maternal great-aunt Margaret Miller ("Auntie-Grannie")<sup>[f]</sup> and her "Ealing cronies".<sup>[29]:422–423</sup><sup>[101]</sup> Both Marple and Miller "always expected the worst of everyone and everything, and were, with almost frightening accuracy, usually proved right."<sup>[29]:422</sup> Marple appeared in 12 novels and 20 stories.

During the Second World War, Christie wrote two novels, *Curtain* and *Sleeping Murder*, intended as the last cases of these two great detectives, Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. Both books were sealed in a [bank vault](#) for over thirty years and were released for publication by Christie only at the end of her life, when she realised that she could not write any more novels. These publications came on the heels of the success of the [film version](#) of *Murder on the Orient Express* in 1974.<sup>[29]:497</sup><sup>[102]</sup>

Christie became increasingly tired of Poirot, much as Sir [Arthur Conan Doyle](#) had grown weary of his character [Sherlock Holmes](#). By the end of the 1930s, Christie wrote in her diary that she was finding Poirot "insufferable", and by the 1960s she felt that he was "an egocentric creep".<sup>[103]</sup>

However, unlike Conan Doyle, Christie resisted the temptation to kill her detective off while he was still popular. She saw herself as an entertainer whose job was to produce what the public liked, and the public liked Poirot.<sup>[104]</sup> She did marry off Poirot's companion [Captain Hastings](#) in an attempt to trim her cast commitments.<sup>[29]:268</sup>

In contrast, Christie was fond of Miss Marple. However, the Belgian detective's titles outnumber the Marple titles more than two to one. This is largely because Christie wrote numerous Poirot novels early in her career, while *The Murder at the Vicarage* remained the sole Marple novel until the 1940s. Christie never wrote a novel or short story featuring both Poirot and Miss Marple. In a recording discovered and released in 2008, Christie revealed the reason for this: "Hercule Poirot, a complete egoist, would not like being taught his business or having suggestions made to him by an elderly spinster lady. Hercule Poirot – a professional sleuth – would not be at home at all in Miss Marple's world."<sup>[101]</sup> However, *Three Act Tragedy* does feature both Hercule Poirot and the elderly bachelor Mr. Satterthwaite (confederate of Harley Quin).<sup>[105]</sup>

Poirot is the only fictional character to date to be given an obituary in *The New York Times*, following the publication of *Curtain*. It appeared on the front page of the paper on 6 August 1975.<sup>[106]</sup>

Following the great success of *Curtain*, Christie gave permission for the release of *Sleeping Murder* sometime in 1976 but died in January 1976 before the book could be released. This may explain some of the inconsistencies compared to the rest of the Marple series—for example,

Colonel Arthur Bantry, husband of Miss Marple's friend Dolly, is still alive and well in *Sleeping Murder* although he is noted as having died in books published earlier. It may be that Christie simply did not have time to revise the manuscript before she died.<sup>[107]</sup>

In 2013, the Christie family gave their "full backing" to the release of a new Poirot story, *The Monogram Murders*, which was written by British author Sophie Hannah.<sup>[108]</sup> Hannah later released a second Poirot mystery, *Closed Casket*, in 2016<sup>[109]</sup> and *The Mystery of the Three Quarters* in 2018.

Christie's reputation as "The Queen of Crime" was built upon the large number of classic motifs that she introduced, or for which she provided the most famous example. Christie built these tropes into what is now considered classic mystery structure: a murder is committed, there are multiple suspects who are all concealing secrets, and the detective gradually uncovers these secrets over the course of the story, discovering the most shocking twists towards the end. Culprits in Christie's mysteries have included children, policemen, narrators, already deceased individuals, and sometimes comprise no known suspects (*And Then There Were None*) or all of the suspects (*Murder on the Orient Express*).

At the end, in a Christie hallmark, the detective usually gathers the surviving suspects into one room, explains the course of their deductive reasoning, and reveals the guilty party, although there are exceptions in which it is left to the guilty party to explain all (such as *And Then There Were None* and *Endless Night*).<sup>[110][111]</sup>

### **Use of archaeology in Agatha Christie's writing [ from**

Many of the settings for Christie's books were directly inspired by the many archaeological field seasons spent in the Middle East on the sites managed by her husband Max. The extent of her time spent at the many locations featured in her books is apparent from the extreme detail in which she describes them. One such site featured in her work is the temple site of Abu Simbel, depicted in *Death on the Nile*. Also there is the great detail in which she describes life at the dig site in *Murder in Mesopotamia*. Among the characters in her books, Christie has often given prominence to the archaeologists and experts in Middle Eastern cultures and artefacts. Most notable are the characters of Dr. Eric Leidner in *Murder in Mesopotamia* and Signor Richetti in *Death on the Nile*, while many minor characters were archaeologists in *They Came to Baghdad*.

Some of Christie's best known novels with heavy archaeological influences are:

*Murder in Mesopotamia* (1936) – the most archaeologically influenced of all her novels, as it is set in the Middle East at an archaeological dig site and associated expedition house. The main characters include archaeologist Dr. Eric Leidner, his wife, many specialists and assistants, and the men working on the site. The novel is noted most for its careful description of the dig site and house, which showed that the author had spent much of her time in very similar situations. The characters in this book in particular are also based on archaeologists whom Christie knew from her personal experiences on excavation sites.

Death on the Nile (1937) – takes place on a tour boat on the Nile. Many archaeological sites are visited along the way and one of the main characters, Signor Richetti, is an archaeologist.

Appointment with Death (1938) – set in Jerusalem and its surrounding area. The death itself occurs at an old cave site in Petra and offers some very descriptive details of sites which Christie herself could have visited in order to write the book.

They Came to Baghdad (1951) – inspired by Christie's own trips to Baghdad with Mallowan, and involves an archaeologist as the heroine's love interest.