

Praise for *Murder on Page One*

‘Ian Simpson is a real find. *Murder on Page One* is a beautifully crafted, gripping piece of crime fiction that holds the attention from page one until the very end.’

Alexander McCall Smith

‘This well crafted, pacey, humorous whodunit from ex-judge Ian Simpson is an highly enjoyable read.’

Lovereading

‘An enjoyable, witty page-turner brought to life by the well drawn, believable characters.’

Journal of the Law Society of Scotland

‘The twists and turns keep pace with the rising body count in what is a highly enjoyable piece of crime fiction. A follow-up encounter with Inspector No would be most welcome.’

University of Edinburgh Journal

By the same author

Murder on Page One

MURDER

ON THE

SECOND TEE

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ISBN 978 1783065 868

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Typeset in 12pt Minion Pro by Troubador Publishing Ltd, Leicester, UK
Printed and bound in the UK by TJ International, Padstow, Cornwall



Matador is an imprint of Troubador Publishing Ltd



MURDER
ON THE
SECOND TEE

IAN SIMPSON



For Richard and Graham

'Money can't buy friends but you can get a better class of enemy.'

*Spike Milligan
Puckoon '63.*

1

The first blow took Hugh Parsley by surprise. It fractured his right temporal bone and tore the middle meningeal artery. He stumbled and fell face down on the grass. A blow to the back of his neck cracked the occipital bone at the base of his skull. He was struck several times about the left temporal area. His brain, penetrated by bony fragments and squeezed by bleeding within the skull, ceased to function. Hugh Parsley was dead.

2

The man was on his front, arms outstretched, dark blood staining the closely-mown grass on which he lay. The little that could be seen of his face was a red, pulpy mess.

Detective Inspector Flick Fortune curled her lip as she looked down on him. Then her stomach heaved. She straightened up, swallowed hard, concentrated. All in vain. Her mouth filled and she ran to the bushes several yards in front of the second tee of St Andrews' historic Old Course. She bent over then spewed her breakfast into a spiky whin.

Meanwhile, earnest as a primary teacher at a school sports day, PC John Robertson laid blue and white tape in a circle round the body. The gentle breeze preparing to test the golfers on this dull, soft, late November morning tugged the unsecured tape giving it a mind of its own. When Flick returned, trying to look as if nothing had happened, Robertson scurried round the perimeter of his plastic circle trying to flatten the tape on the grass.

She felt the red tide spread up from her neck. Nearly polluting the crime scene of your first murder as an inspector was as unimpressive a start as you could get. She longed to scream at the gangly young constable that

she had seen hundreds of bodies in the Met, but needing to explain was a sign of weakness, and for the next three weeks anyway the life inside her was to be a secret.

‘Who found him?’ she barked.

‘A greenkeeper, ma’am. They go out while it’s still dark to prepare the course.’

‘Has anything been touched?’

‘Macphail, that’s the greenkeeper, says he didn’t move anything, ma’am. But he did switch the green.’ He nodded at the expansive first green, clear of the dew covering the rest of the course. From the direction of play it was flat with hummocks at the back. In front, the Swilken Burn flowed along a channel between wooden sleepers, ready to swallow a shot which was short or topped.

‘Did he not think?’

‘He said he didn’t want to disturb him.’ Robertson looked at the body, feet on the right extremity of the green, head and torso on the second tee and shuddered. ‘Said he thought the guy was drunk.’

‘What on earth ...?’

‘It’s dark when they come out, ma’am, and he started sweeping the dew on the other side of the green. He says he went round him carefully then gave him a wee poke and saw he was dead.’

‘Right,’ she said quickly. The greenkeeper had ruined any evidence the killer had left on the green and she wasn’t in the mood for his lame excuses. The corpse was much more interesting. He looked about forty-five, probably just under six feet, with thick, dark hair. He wore a golf jacket which had ridden up his back, dark grey

slacks which retained their crease and black shoes sporting ornamental buckles. Some of the lining of his hip pocket protruded.

The call had come as Flick finished breakfast. It was Friday and her husband Fergus had suggested going out for dinner. Watching what she ate and not drinking, she had been unenthusiastic. Fergus's efforts to encourage her had been interrupted by the excited, very Scottish voice of the telephonist in the main office in Cupar. The relish with which she had announced a sudden death had been positively ghoulish.

Leaving Fergus with the dishes, it had taken Flick five minutes to arrive at the scene. Robertson had been there, clutching the crime tape and glancing uncertainly towards the first tee. He did not lessen her feeling that she was meeting this challenge on her own. In her rush she had forgotten gloves. She stuck her hands in the pockets of her padded coat and surveyed the humps and hollows forming the most famous golfing acres in the world. Behind them, pointing heavenwards, the roofs and spires of the Royal Burgh of St Andrews formed a jagged backdrop. Flick had not lived there long, but had already begun to think of it as home. Despite a history full of violent death, in this century it was a fine, safe place to bring up the child she was carrying. Visually unique, the golf course finished almost in the town itself, an irregular terrace of buildings, haphazardly designed, marking the boundary. This morning the whole scene had been painted over by a dark grey wash making everything monochrome and drab.

Perhaps the greenkeeper had not spoiled anything after all. Off the green the dew lay thick on the ground, undisturbed except by her feet and Robertson's. The body had almost escaped its pale shroud. She puzzled over this then remembered her physics; damp air condensed on hitting a cold surface, not a warm one. A shout of 'fore' from the first fairway disturbed her and a ball thudded into the turf, leaving a plug-mark in the soft green a few metres away.

'Stop these people, for God's sake,' she commanded.

Robertson picked up the ball and ran at the four approaching players, waving his arms and shouting. An animated dispute followed as the golfers saw no reason why a mere fatality should interfere with their game. Flick took a deep breath. Where on earth was the team supposedly coming from Cupar? It was just a few months since she had moved from London and policing the East Neuk of Fife was completely different to what she had been used to. Even the slobbish Inspector No seemed dynamic by comparison with some country 'bobbies'. She willed herself to be patient.

As the players reluctantly trudged back to the first tee, she looked round. In the opposite direction from the town, the five-star Old Course Hotel loomed over the seventeenth hole like a huge yellow cruise liner in a small port. A few people out on balconies craned for a better view. The news was bound to spread.

'They saw the point in the end, ma'am,' Robertson said, breathing heavily. 'They said they'd tell the starter not to let anyone else off the first tee. But we'd better talk to him soon. He won't be pleased.'

‘We need more police here. You did tell Cupar it was a murder?’

‘I said I thought it was. I didn’t want to alarm them, ma’am. In case ...’

‘Well give me your radio ...’

She was interrupted by a shriek of ‘Hugh, Hugh!’ A woman wearing sky-blue slacks and jumper was running across the golf course from the direction of the hotel. As she got closer, Flick reckoned she was in her mid-thirties. Her auburn hair was disheveled and she wore no make-up. ‘Is he alright?’ she gasped as Flick cut her off before she could see the full horror of the corpse’s face. Speaking softly and with authority, Flick put her arm round her and steered her back towards the hotel, walking slowly. She caught a whiff of stale perfume.

The woman’s name was Belinda Parsley and she spoke with the South of England accent that Flick often missed. She and her husband Hugh were guests in the hotel, attending a business weekend. The previous evening he had been up late with colleagues discussing work. She had gone to bed and fallen asleep. He had not been beside her in the morning and she had got up to look for him. She had heard someone talking about a body on the course.

‘Is a doctor coming?’ she asked.

‘The man is dead,’ Flick said quietly.

‘Please, please tell me it isn’t him,’ the woman implored, straining to look behind her.

‘What does your husband look like?’ Flick asked, tightening her hold round her waist.

‘Tall, nearly six feet. Dark hair. Handsome, well I think so ...’ She dissolved into tears.

‘What was he wearing last night?’

‘A shirt, no tie or jacket, grey slacks. They were new,’ she sobbed.

‘What colour were his shoes?’

‘I can’t remember. Black, I suppose.’

‘Did he have black shoes with buckles on them?’

Belinda Parsley shook uncontrollably and twisted free. ‘Oh no. It’s him, isn’t it? Dead? I can’t believe it. No.’ The last word came out as a long wail of anguish. ‘Why won’t you let me see him?’

Flick stood in front of her, arms out. ‘We can’t be definite, but I’m afraid it seems likely it’s him. If it is, you will certainly see him later.’

‘I want to see him now.’

‘Please, Mrs Parsley, no. He’s received some nasty injuries and this is a crime scene. We believe your husband was murdered.’

The distraught woman took a step back then stared at the body. Flick wondered if she was about to try to give her husband a last, bloody embrace, but to her relief Mrs Parsley stood still, composing herself.

‘How did he die?’ she asked, her voice catching.

‘I believe he was assaulted, but we’ll only know after the post mortem.’

‘Did he suffer much, do you think?’ She turned and locked her eyes on Flick.

This was part of the job that never got easier. ‘It was probably quick,’ she said, trying to sound authoritative,

hoping she would not be proved badly wrong.

To Flick's relief, three marked police cars parked on the road beside the seventeenth green. Four uniformed constables and a plain clothes officer plus scenes of crime officers and a civilian photographer walked over. They had with them the white tent needed to shield the body and, after the photographer had taken some longer shots, erected it quickly. Detective Sergeant Lance Wallace, a stolid man in his mid-forties whose competence Flick respected, directed this operation.

'We need a pathologist,' she said to him.

'Dr MacGregor's coming from Dundee, ma'am. He should be here shortly.' Wallace spoke slowly in a matter of fact tone roughened by a Scottish accent that was not pronounced. Flick found his presence reassuring.

'I don't want the body touched.' She looked towards the first tee of the Old Course, round which a small crowd had gathered, some of them making aggressive practice swings. 'And I don't want to have any golfers here until we're finished. You go and tell the starter.' Aware of sounding shriller than someone in control should, she saw no reaction on Wallace's face.

'I'll have a wee word,' he said and set off unhurriedly towards the first tee.

There was one female officer present, Constable Amy Moncrieff. She had immediately gone to the sobbing woman. Flick wished she had more experience, but reckoned that even an inexperienced female officer would get more out of Mrs Parsley than any of the men.

'Take her to her room in the hotel, obtain a

photograph of her husband and encourage her to talk,' Flick instructed. Amy gently took the ashen-faced woman's arm and escorted her back to the hotel.

For the first time that morning Flick began to feel in control. She hoped the pathologist would arrive soon. Her husband, Fergus Maxwell, was a detective inspector in the Dundee police and had many tales about Dr MacGregor, whose flamboyant style in the witness box had left a deep impression on many juries. She looked forward to meeting him.

As she gazed round the historic links and towards the old grey town, she began to think seriously about the course of the investigation. Should she set up the incident room in the cramped and lightly-manned St Andrews office or eight miles away in the main office in Cupar? She would have to interview the hotel guests before any checked out. The staff too. In her own mind she was sure Mrs Parsley was a widow, but that had to be settled beyond any doubt. If the dead man had known his murderer, his work colleagues should all be regarded as suspects. His wife as well, though her reactions had seemed genuine.

A man wearing a long, brown coat and a Cossack-style hat approached from the direction of the town. He carried a bulky case, smoked a cigar and seemed in no hurry. 'Mrs Maxwell, I believe,' he said, bowing his head, 'or should I say Inspector Fortune?'

Flick shook his outstretched hand. 'Inspector Fortune today,' she said brusquely. 'And who might you be?'

'My name is Robert MacGregor, ma'am. I believe you

are in need of a humble pathologist, and I just happen to be one.' His twinkling eyes disconcerted her, never happy when being made fun of, even in a minor way.

'Oh good,' she said. 'Well, there he is.' She nodded at the tent, where flashes of light shone through the material as the photographer snapped away.

MacGregor took a puff of his cigar before exhaling. He then summoned PC Robertson to hold his coat, hat and cigar as he donned a white sterile suit and gloves. He picked up the bag containing his instruments, muttered 'Into the valley of death ...' then drew aside the flap of the tent.

Flick was about to put on a sterile suit and follow him when the oldest of the constables, McKellar, shouted to her. He pointed into the Swilken Burn. In the opaque water she could make out something the shape of a golf club with a head like a branding iron. Nearby on the muddy bed of the burn lay a dark green pole about six feet long with a small mesh basket at one end.

'What's that?' she asked.

McKellar, a dour, angular man whose words were more respectful than his tone, smiled. 'It's a putter, ma'am. You use it on the green. The other thing's a ball scoop for wheeching your ball out of the burn.' He mimed a scooping action.

Cross with herself for asking, she snapped, 'Well fetch some polythene to wrap them. Then climb in and remove them. And be careful. The lab may be able to recover some evidence.'

'Right away, ma'am,' McKellar said in a sarcastic

monotone then ambled towards the cars. When he returned with the polythene sheeting he looked towards Robertson. ‘Hey, Robertson, I’ve a wee job for ...’

‘PC Robertson has his hands full, McKellar,’ Flick interrupted. ‘And seizing the likely murder weapon should be done by an experienced officer. So take your shoes and socks off.’

She supervised as the disgruntled McKellar bared his feet and rolled up his trouser legs. He winced when his white feet touched the cold, brown water, but in lifting the items, even wearing gloves, he took care not to touch them more than necessary and placed them, almost reverently, on separate polythene sheets. Instead of climbing out of the burn he bent down to pick up a golf ball.

‘A Titleist,’ he said, ‘with “HP” written on it.’ Flick could see black marker ink on the ball. It was another pointer to the identity of the corpse.

Kneeling to examine the putter, she could see that the shaft was bent. It had a blue grip and a clumsy-looking head, with bars protruding backwards from either end of the blade. She knew golfers used some strange implements but this one looked extraordinary.

‘Have you found the murder weapon?’ MacGregor asked from behind her.

‘Possibly,’ Flick replied. ‘What do you think?’

MacGregor squatted beside her and inspected the items closely. ‘It’s a mistake to make early assumptions, but my guess is that this putter was used on him. We’ll know better once we have the lab report and the PM.’

He peeled off the sterile suit and put on his coat and hat. He took from Robertson his cigar, which had gone out, and clamped it between his teeth. Observing his red bow tie, Flick remembered Fergus telling her that after inadvertently inserting a conventional silk tie into a corpse's rectum along with the examining finger, MacGregor never again sported a tie that might dangle. She would have liked to have been a fly on the wall that day.

'He was battered to death, poor chap.' MacGregor sounded matter of fact. 'A number of heavy blows to the head, possibly with more than one weapon. Some of the blows were inflicted by something that did not have a smooth surface. Could well have been the back of that odd-looking putter. Died about one this morning, give or take an hour or so, but the injuries were probably sustained earlier. I'll do the PM this afternoon and I'll phone you afterwards. Could I have your mobile number?'

They exchanged numbers then MacGregor said, 'A pleasure to meet you, Inspector Fortune. I've always enjoyed working with your husband. He's an outstanding officer.' He lit his cigar and sauntered back to his car.

Flick looked at Robertson, who was wiping his hand on the leg of his trousers.

'That thing he smokes is disgusting, ma'am. It's all slobbery to hold, too.'

'You should have dropped it. I'd have backed you. By the way, was that a real dead animal on his head?'

'Oh, yes, ma'am. There's even a wee paw at the back.'

She pursed her lips but said nothing. Like many who had lived all their lives in cities, she strongly disapproved of blood sports. She wondered what Fergus saw in the pathologist.

Sergeant Wallace came up to her.

‘They know we mustn’t be disturbed, ma’am, but there are some very disappointed golfers, desperate to play the Old. I said they could go round by the Ladies’ Putting Green and start.’ In answer to her bemused look he pointed to the hilly putting green bisected by a path on the other side of the second tee. He added, ‘They’ll play the second as a short hole. Someone’s coming to put tee markers down the fairway.’

‘Well make sure it’s a long way down the fairway. And if anyone sends a ball in my direction, I’ll prosecute them under the Police (Scotland) Act,’ she snapped. ‘When the SOCOs are finished, they can have all their golf course back,’ she added, not wanting to seem anti-golf.

‘I made sure they know to give us a wide berth, ma’am.’ Wallace smiled.

She looked at the tent and shook her head. ‘Why, Wallace, Why?’

‘Robbery or gay-bashing, depending on the gentleman’s proclivities of course, or something else, though I doubt if it was premeditated. As vicious an attack as I’ve seen, ma’am.’

Flick nodded. ‘Me too. It doesn’t seem a likely spot for gay-bashing. It could have been a robbery that went wrong. I wonder if he has his wallet.’ She went to the tent and asked the SOCOs to see if they could find it.