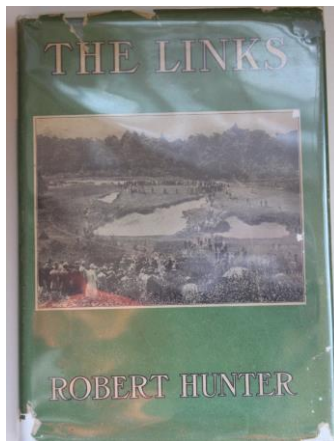


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Newsletter and Book Review for the Serious Collector

St. George's Hill Golf Club

I am a latecomer to the party regarding St. George's Hill Golf Club, which is located in the Surrey countryside. In my defense, there is so much rich golf in the sandbelt outside of London, with Sunningdale, Wentworth, Walton Heath, and Swinley Forest commanding all my attention for many years. What a pleasant discovery it was when I finally came around to St. George's Hill. The first clue to its greatness can be found on the dust jacket of Robert Hunter's 1927 classic *The Links*. Of all the great holes in the world that he could have put on the cover, he selected the par three 8th hole at St. George's Hill, which is high praise.

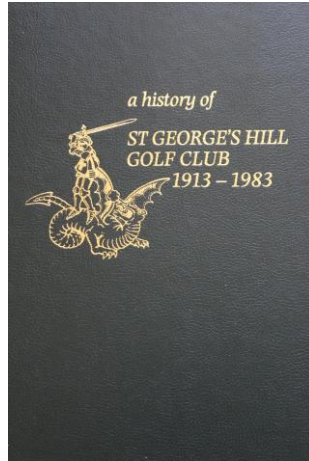


*The dust jacket of Hunter's *The Links* features the 8th at St. George's Hill*



The 8th hole today, which plays from an elevated tee to a green set on a plateau with menacing shaggy bunkers below

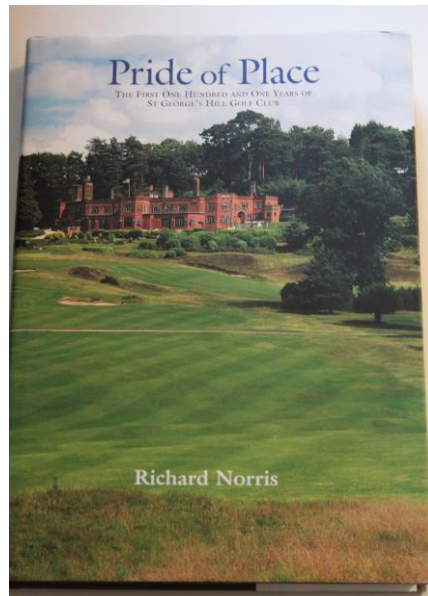
The club has four published histories: *A History of St George's Hill Golf Club 1913-1983* (D & J H8140), is the club's first. Written by a member of the club, George Hartley, it focuses mainly on internal club affairs and has many personal reminiscences as well. A small book of 90 pages, it contains black and white photographs only.



The club's first history features their crest on the front : A knight slaying a dragon

St. George's Hill Golf Club 1913-2001 (D & J C28240) is a 30 page softcover written by Jeremy Crowe. We have no details of this history other than what is listed in the Donovan and Jerris bibliography.

The most comprehensive history is *Pride of Place : The First One Hundred and One Years of St George's Hill Golf Club*, written by Richard Norris and published in 2014. Its 344 pages are chocked full of color and black and white images and illustrations. It is thoughtful laid out, extensively researched and well written.



St. George's Hill's third club history, the best and most comprehensive

The club was the brainchild of Walter G. Tarrant, whose idea was to create a private estate on 964 acres in Weybridge, 25 miles from Buckingham Palace, in 1911. St. George's Hill was the prototype of English golf and country club estate development, the earliest of its kind. As recounted in the Norris history, Tarrant's original idea was to have twenty prospective residents each lay out a hole. When a friend pointed out that a golf course has 18 holes and that he should hire an architect instead, he hired Harry Colt, then the Secretary at Sunningdale. The turn of fate is probably beyond compare in the golf world, going from a potential goofy course to one of the worlds best based on timely advice.

The course was carved out of a thick virgin forest on rolling hills and Colt used all his genius to design a world-class course. As Bernard Darwin describes it, with a sense of wonder, "The work from an engineering and landscape gardening point of view is as admirable as it is astonishing, and the pluck, energy, skill and taste displayed is deserving of the highest praise. How Mr. Colt evolved his scheme and made his plan on the ground that was absolutely hidden from view by thick undergrowth is a great mystery." The club has three sets of nine holes, with the primary course comprising the Red and Blue nines. The Green course is the third at St. George's Hill and represents the remnants of what was formerly another eighteen hole course designed by Colt in 1929, but its second nine were destroyed during World War II and never put back into use.

Highlights from the *Pride of Place* history include early images of the course being constructed by teams of men and horses clearing a thick forest. The property was so thickly wooded it took two years to clear the trees. The history also does a splendid job of showing side by side comparisons of the holes as they exist today in color compared to the club's archives showing the early holes in black and white, noting any changes.



A color spread from the Pride of Place history

The First and Second World Wars had a big impact on the club, with the clubhouse used as a military hospital during the First World War and the Army using the property during the Second World War. They set up a rifle range on the ninth hole of the second course and the roof of the clubhouse served as an observation post for the Home Guard. The course was bombed by the Germans and they blew out the windows on the clubhouse and left a crater that is still visible on the tenth hole.

After his success at St. George's Hill Walter Tarrant would go on to develop the Wentworth Estate in Virginia Water nearby in the early 1920s. To give some context on how ritzy the St. George's neighborhood is, two Beatles have lived there: John Lennon lived there at the peak of his career and Ringo Starr was a resident in the mid-1960s, buying his first home near Johns. The 440 homes (really, mansions) on the sprawling development are situated in a fantasy-level country setting dominated by tall pine trees and towering walls of rhododendrons.

The view of the castellated clubhouse looking back from the 1st hole or up the 9th or 18th fairways is among the most satisfying in the game. The clubhouse was built in 1913 and originally had a thatched roof, although after it was destroyed by fire it was never replaced.

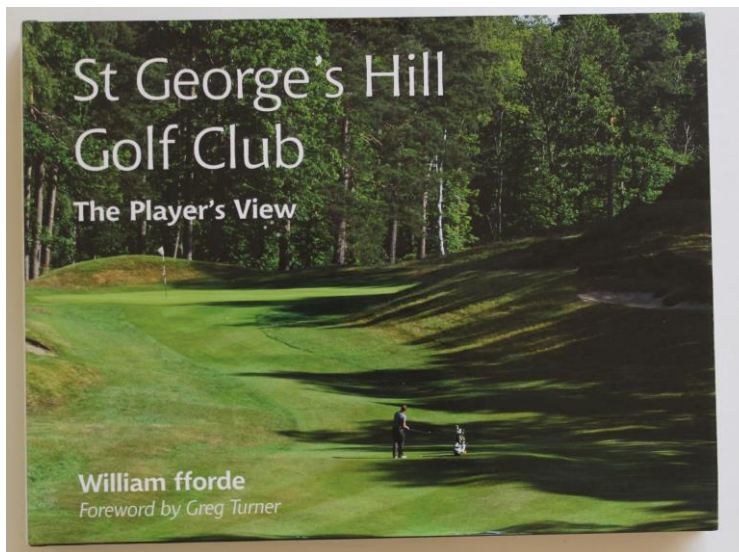


The clubhouse at St. George's Hill today



The clubhouse as originally built with a thatched roof

The last of the club's histories is *The Players View: St. George's Hill Golf Club*, written by William fforde, published in 2014 a limited edition of 1,000 to celebrate the club's centenary. The book contains thoughtful commentary and history and a double page color photo spread for all twenty seven holes at the club.



-- John Sabino