



# BY THE WAY

Occasional Newsletters from The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

Number 40

June 2010

## *Plum's Politicians*

While Society members in the UK still have feelings of euphoria or despair following their latest visit to the polling-booths, we are taking the opportunity to remind readers of the Members and prospective Members of the House of Commons about whom Wodehouse wrote. While doing so, we should take note of Bertie Wooster's comment in *Right Ho, Jeeves*:

It just shows, what any Member of Parliament will tell you, that if you want real oratory, the preliminary noggin is essential. Unless pie-eyed, you cannot hope to grip.

## *Members of the House of Commons*

### **Filmer, Rt Hon A B**

A cabinet minister who learned the hard way that it was unwise to report the misbehaviour of a schoolboy such as young Thomas to parents such as Bertie's Aunt Agatha, particularly if that schoolboy had recently been impressed by the style of Captain Flint in *Treasure Island*. The minister "was a tubby little chap who looked as if he had been poured into his clothes and had forgotten to say 'When!'".

### **Gandle, Clifford**

A starchy and pompous MP, who was a former President of the Oxford Union. His habit of expressing his views with a trained verbosity on the Gold Standard (or, as the case may be, Unemployment, for Clifford was not a politician whose mind can only cope with one subject at a time) got him thoroughly disliked by all except Lady Wickham.

### **Piper, Sir James**

An ex-Pelican Club friend of Gally Threepwood, who used to be thrown out of the Gardenia with him. He matured into membership of the Athenæum and proved so successful in the House of Commons that he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. For many years he had loved Diana Phipps, Lord Emsworth's most delightful sister, of whose existence we were unaware until the last moment, but he felt inhibited from proposing in the presence of his bodyguard, Sergeant Murchison.

### **Underhill, Sir Derek**

In those far-off days when a baronetcy was a pass to a safe Parliamentary seat, the precious Sir Derek was a pretty example of privilege in action, proving that even Winchester and New College have their disasters. A strikingly handsome, tall, well-built man of about thirty, his dark, clean-shaven face and heavy eyebrows gave him a forbidding appearance. His large brown eyes, long upper lip, thin firm mouth and prominent family chin made him look as though he never quite escaped from permanent misery.

Becoming engaged to Jill Mariner, who worshipped him, should have made him one of the happiest men in London, but he cynically discarded her in the supposed interests of his political career. His comeuppance was not long delayed. Despite the world's tendency to let down its Dereks lightly, even his most loyal friend, Freddie Rooke finally saw through the veneer and cut him stone dead.

### **Venner, Sir Alfred**

A modern MP, with homes in London at 49A Lancaster Gate, and at Badgwick Hall, close to St Austin's School. A restless, security-conscious man, his extensive forests were full of birds' eggs and other good things of considerable interest to the schoolboys of the surrounding district, especially when an attempt to acquire them necessitated the thrill of trespassing.

## Candidates and Prospective Candidates

### **Bastable, Sir Raymond**

Men might have been discovered in London who thought more highly of Sir Raymond than Sir Raymond did, but they would have been hard to find. Once an Oxford rugger blue who had joyfully jumped on the faces of his opponents, and suavely submitted to ejection from the old Empire on Boat Race night, his manners had deteriorated as he first became a barrister and then sought the Parliamentary seat of Bottleton East. Having written, under a pseudonym, an angry young novel in the style of Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies*, he suffered many vicissitudes in his attempt to preserve his anonymity from the voters.

### **Bickersdyke, John**

The one candidate whom the reader saw through to success, when by the landslide majority of 157 he became the Unionist Member for the Kenningford North constituency. He thereby completed a U-turn of immense proportions – first from the days when he sat in the radical Tulse Hill Parliament (during the proceedings of which he had publicly referred to the Royal Family as ‘bloodsuckers’) and later when he stood for Parliament in a northern seat as a Liberal. He had once been at school with Psmith's father, but it was his intermediate career as a bank manager which brought him to the reader's attention as the subject of withering contempt, not merely for walking behind the bowler's arm.

### **Bostock, Sir Aylmer ‘Mugsy’**

An Old Etonian acquaintance of Lord Ickenham and former Colonial Governor, he took unwarranted possession of the best rooms of the family home, Ashenden Oakshott, which properly belonged to his nephew Bill. He proposed to stand for Parliament in the local seat, but was to meet retribution for his many sins as Lord Ickenham pursued his invariable policy of spreading sweetness and light.

### **Huxtable, Herbert**

One of the two rival candidates in the Redbridge Parliamentary by-election, he ran as generously

to ears as his opponent, ‘Boko’ Lawlor, did to nose. Like Boko, his facial characteristics were considered appropriate for caricature in a poster campaign, in which his image, except for a mean, narrow face with close-set eyes and a murderer's mouth, seemed to be all ears, drooping and flapping about him like carpet-bags.

### **Lawlor, B V ‘Boko’**

An Old Wrykynian candidate in the Redbridge by-election, his affectionate soubriquet was derived from the handsome, rather prominent beak referred to above, which was displayed publicly on an election poster. Ukridge's active support of his old friend (which included the composition of a campaign song) might, or might not, have been to his benefit, but there is no doubt that his election campaign was one of the most unusual of the contemporary period.

### **McCorkadale, Mrs**

The Labour candidate opposing Ginger Winship in the by-election at Market Snodsbury. She was a local barrister and, in view of her upright honesty, many will doubt her capacity to flourish in the Palace of Westminster.

### **Upjohn, Aubrey**

Another prospective candidate for the Market Snodsbury constituency, his malign influence would have caused comment even in the House of Commons. Since on his last appearance in print he was no longer referred to as *the Rev* Aubrey Upjohn, we have cause to hope that his cumulative sins had been exposed to the higher authorities and he had been unfrocked.

### **Winship, Harold**

A friend of Bertie Wooster since Oxford days, his engagement to Florence Craye led to his fighting a by-election at Market Snodsbury. His election address, prepared with the help of his spin-doctor Jeeves, was succinct and positive:

“Listening to [my opponent] this evening has changed my political views completely. She has converted me to hers, and I propose, when the polls are opened, to cast my vote for her. I advise all of you to do the same.”