



# BY THE WAY

Occasional Newsletters from The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

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## Where Was Wodehouse? And When?: 1900–1906

This begins a new series written by Norman Murphy, which will appear in September editions of *By The Way*. (Note. The abbreviation ‘MTT’ means ‘My thanks to’.)

**1900.** In his last year at **Dulwich**, Pelham Grenville Wodehouse is a member of the Upper Sixth, a prefect, in the First XV and First XI, and an editor of *The Alleynian*, the school magazine. In February, he wins 10/6d for an article for the *Public School Magazine* on ‘Some Aspects of Game-Captaincy’. (This is the first entry in his notebook *Money Received for Literary Work*.)

*July.* He leaves Dulwich.

*August.* Holidays at **Stableford, Shopshire**. (Note. His parents had leased the house in late 1896, although his father did not retire until August 1898, two years later than thought by biographers. (MTT Patricia O’Sullivan))

*September.* PGW joins the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank at Lombard Street and takes lodgings in **Markham Square, Chelsea**. (Note. He called it 93A Manresa Road in *Not George Washington*, but used its correct name for Ukridge’s old lodgings years later.)

**1901.** From January onwards, Wodehouse is getting three to four articles a month accepted by magazines.

*March 31.* Census day. Wodehouse is staying with his parents at **Stableford**, perhaps on a pre-Easter holiday.

*June.* Ill with mumps, he spends three weeks at **Stableford**, during which he writes 19 short stories – all rejected.

*August 16.* To *The Globe* evening newspaper for one day to write seven paragraphs for ‘By the Way’ and ‘Men and Matters’. His notebook has the comment: “There is a reasonable hope of my getting the job permanently. Let the good work go forward.”

**1902.** From *Phrases & Notes*, we know that Wodehouse’s social life at this time comprises

playing Rugger for the Old Alleynians and regular visits to 22 Ovington Square to take tea and Sunday supper with Mrs Bowes-Lyon and her three young daughters. His school stories are now being published in *Public School Magazine* and *The Captain*, and he secures occasional days at *The Globe*.

*September 9.* The offer of five weeks’ work at *The Globe* is enough for Wodehouse to resign from the bank. Once those five weeks are over, however, he is on his own as a young freelance writer.

*December.* Wodehouse writes from **23 Walpole Street**, to which he had moved sometime in 1902. (Note. During the year he had shared his digs with Perceval Graves (Robert Graves’s eldest brother), who told me of PG’s habit of vanishing to the bathroom after supper to write.) For what the house and family were like, see *Not George Washington*. This address was subsequently the home of PG’s friend Denis Mackail, who drew it as *Greenery Street*. (Future researchers should note that the house numbers changed often between 1898 and 1915, not becoming regularised until 1920 or so.)

**1903.** Sometime early in this year, Herbert Westbrook, a master at Baldwin King-Hall’s school at **Emsworth, Hampshire**, calls on Wodehouse with a letter of introduction and invites him down to Emsworth. (Note. According to some accounts, Wodehouse got on very well with Baldwin King-Hall, the school’s owner, who invited him to stay. I doubt this very much; see *Wooster Sauce*, Sept 2016, pgs12–13.)

*May 22.* Plays for Authors v Actors at **New Road, Esher**; probably his first meeting with Arthur Conan Doyle. (MTT Murray Hedgcock)

*August.* William Beach-Thomas resigns from *The Globe*; Wodehouse takes his place on the ‘By the Way’ column.

*December.* Wodehouse visits his aunt and cousins, the Thompson family, at **Bridley Manor, Worplesdon**. He hears stories of Winchester College from Malcolm Thompson, who was at

- school there, including anecdotes about Rupert D'Oyly Carte, the source of Psmith.
- 1904.** In addition to his regular income from *The Globe*, Wodehouse is writing articles and verses for *Books of Today*, *The Daily Chronicle*, *The Daily Express*, and *Punch*.
- April 16.* Wodehouse sails to **New York** on the SS *St Louis* (first Atlantic crossing). Upon arrival, he stays with a friend from his bank days, Nesbitt Kemp, near **Washington Square**.
- April 25 or 26.* Attends a baseball game between the Brooklyn Superbas and the New York Giants at the Polo Grounds. (MTT John Dawson)
- May 4.* Leaves New York on SS *Lucania* for **London** (second crossing). (MTT John Dawson)
- June/July.* Four two-day breaks from *The Globe*. This is probably when he spent a few days with the Bowes-Lyons family at **Lyme Regis** (the setting of *Love Among the Chickens*). (Note. In a 1977 letter to me, Effie Bowes-Lyon (Lady Winter) confirmed that PGW stayed with them at Lyme Regis. She gave no date, but 1904 is the most likely.)
- August.* Harold Begbie resigns and PG becomes editor of 'By the Way'. (Note. According to McCrum and Donaldson, it is around this time that Wodehouse enrolled at a school of dramatic art in Victoria Street. They disagree on the name, but *Kelly's Directory* lists only one such establishment in Victoria Street: Miss Mouillot at No 92.)
- December 8.* Writes from **23 Walpole Street**. Two days later, *Sergeant Brue* returns to the Strand Theatre, now featuring PGW's first lyric.
- 1905.** PGW is still living and working in **London**, weekendening down at **Emsworth**. Jasen says this is the period when PG made a New Year resolution to learn the banjo and bought one, but Westbrook swiped it, pawned it, and lost the pawn ticket.
- February 1–13.* Away from *The Globe*. At Emsworth? Visiting parents at Cheltenham?
- March 3.* Letter to Bill Townend about the chicken farm story Townend had recounted. Wodehouse is now writing from **22 Walpole Street** (opposite No. 23); he probably left No. 23 because the owners sold the house.
- April.* At **St Paul's School**, PG converses with the school boxing coach, Jerry Driscoll (origin of Joe Bevan in *The White Feather*).
- June 20–25.* Away from office; probably at **Emsworth**.
- June 29.* Plays in Authors v Actors match at **Lord's** with Conan Doyle and Perceval Graves.
- Late July.* Lunches with W. S. Gilbert at **Grim's Dyke**, just outside London, with his cousin James Deane.
- August 1–6.* Stays with Conan Doyle at **Undershaw, Hindhead**, where he plays cricket.
- August.* Holidays in **Jersey** (see *Not George Washington*); also goes to the beach at **Bexhill on Sea**.
- September 1–4.* Away from *The Globe*.
- December 25–January 8.* Away from *The Globe*.
- 1906.** PG is still going down to Dulwich regularly; he organises at least two cricket teams to play the College.
- January 9.* Returns to work at *The Globe*.
- May 4.* PGW XI plays **Dulwich**; his team includes A. A. Milne and N. A. Knox.
- May 19.* He takes another team down to play Dulwich; scores 33 but takes no wickets.
- July 11–15.* Away from the *Globe*; probably at **Emsworth**.
- July 19.* Plays for Authors v Actors with E. W. Hornung (creator of *Raffles*) and Conan Doyle (Hornung's brother-in-law).
- August.* At **Undershaw, Hindhead**, for Conan Doyle's cricket week. Dates uncertain, and it seems likely PG only played the occasional game.
- August 24–25.* Plays for Bourton Vale v MCC at **Bourton-on-the-Water**. (MTT Murray Hedgcock) (Note. PG's favourite aunt, Miss Louisa Deane, lived at Bourton-on-the-Water, and it is my private belief that she got Bourton Vale to rope in young Pelham to play against MCC. She died a few months later.)
- September 5.* PG writes from the Constitutional Club to Elliott O'Donnell, saying he is back from holidays and can still be found at **Walpole Street**.
- December 22.* First mention of PG in **Emsworth's** local newspaper (*Hants & Sussex County Press*). The item concerns a play by PG and Westbrook at Emsworth House School. "We understand that Mr Herbert Westbrook has had another book accepted by Messrs Cassell and Co who will publish it in the new year. The title is *Not George Washington*."
- Christmas.* PG spends the holiday with Seymour Hicks and his wife, Ellaline Terriss, at their house, **The Old Forge, Merstham, Surrey**. Because he spends his time working in a summer house elsewhere in the grounds, they call him the Hermit.
- 1906–7.** I believe this is the period when PG began to spend more time at **Emsworth** and rented his own accommodation there. For more on the Emsworth years, see *Wooster Sauce*, Sept 2016, pgs. 12–13.