



BY THE WAY

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Where Was Wodehouse? And When?: 1907–1911 (by Norman Murphy)

1907. *January*. PGW writes ‘More Mind Readers’ for *Books of Today* under Herbert Westbrook’s name; they share the money. (PGW did this with various people several times; see *Not George Washington*.)

April 27–May 4. Away from *Globe*. Where? **Emsworth? Cheltenham**, maybe?

May 17. The *Daily Mail* publishes an article by N. A. Knox, PG’s ex-Dulwich College friend; it was ghost-written by PG. (See *Not George Washington* again.)

May 24/25. PG is judge at **Emsworth** House Sports Day (*Hants & Sussex County Press*. This local newspaper’s files (less 1908 and 1912, which are missing) provided invaluable information on Emsworth events.)

June?. During a visit to **Cambridge**, PGW writes the lyric for ‘My Grassy Corner Girl’ for *Honorary Degree*, New Theatre, Cambridge.

July 14–29. PG away from the *Globe*, probably in **Emsworth** (likely at Tresco, Beach Road).

August 3. PG plays cricket for **Emsworth** House v. Mr G. White’s XI. He takes 3 for 16 and scores 30 as opening bat. (This is the first record I found of a series of Emsworth House summer cricket matches in which he played for seven years. Wodehouse and Baldwin King-Hall, the school’s owner, plus some other adults, were semi-permanent players; the team also included pupils who either lived nearby or had not gone home for the holidays. The names of three schoolboys, the Durand brothers, appear often; one, Alan, came back to play in these games regularly later up to the age of 21 or so. He and Wodehouse were clearly the best players, and that is probably why PG later dedicated *Mike* to Alan Durand.)

Also on the 3rd, the end of summer term is marked by an evening entertainment at Emsworth House. The boys sing and perform a pantomime written by Ella King-Hall, then the adults present a burlesque entitled *The Baker of Bruges*. “Mr P.G. Wodehouse filled the part of Count Nitte splendidly and Mr H. Westbrook as the baker’s boy was great.”

August 10. **Emsworth**. Cricket v. Mr White’s team, return match. PG 30 runs, Durand 62.

August 15. Plays for Authors v. Actors at **Lord’s**, with Doyle.

August 17. Plays for **Emsworth** House at cricket.

August 24. Ditto. PG scores 29.

September 7. More cricket for **Emsworth** House. PG top scorer on 50.

September 21. Cricket at **Emsworth**. PG gets 10.

December 6. PG leaves Seymour Hicks and gets a job at £2 a week as lyricist at the Gaiety Theatre, the most famous musical comedy theatre in London.

December 19. **Emsworth** School Christmas pantomime, one by the boys, one by the adults. “A number of the gentry of the district attended.” The adult show was a cheerful burlesque on Guy Fawkes. Baldwin King-Hall played Catesby, Justice of the Peace, Mr P.G. Wodehouse “cleverly acted the part of Lord Mounteagle, while Miss Nellie Seppings-Wright* was charming as Lady Mounteagle.” Westbrook played Guy Fawkes and Ella King-Hall played the Queen of England.

* *Baldwin King-Hall married Eleanor Seppings-Wright in 1927. She was the daughter of the well-known artist Henry Seppings-Wright, who painted Ella King-Hall. This was sold at Bonham’s in May 2011.*

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1908. PGW’s first *Who’s Who* entry. It mentions *The Beauty of Bath* and *My Darling* (another 1907 Hicks show). His hobbies are cricket, boxing, swimming, football, and motoring; his addresses are given as **22 Walpole St** and **Casey Court, Emsworth** (a fictitious address). (David Jasen believes PG and Westbrook were living at Emsworth and running the ‘By the Way’ column from there, sending their material to London by an early train. One day the train was late and they were ordered to return to London. I have never been happy with this theory, but it is not impossible.)

July 16. Plays with Doyle for Authors v. Actors at Lords.

August/September. I am certain PG was still playing regularly for the **Emsworth** House cricket team, but the British Library has no copies of the *Hants & Sussex County Press* newspaper for 1908.

September 12. Handwritten letter from **3 Wolseley Terrace, Cheltenham**, whither his parents had moved from Royal Terrace, Cheltenham.

September 26. PG writes from **Emsworth**.

1909. January 13. Wodehouse writes from **124 Clements Inn, Strand**. (I do not know when he left 22 Walpole Street, but I suggest New Year 1909 would be a likely date. Clements Inn, beside the Law Courts, featured in *Psmith in the City* (1910), but the whole block was rebuilt in 1934.)

April 23. Arrives in **New York** on the *Lusitania* (**third crossing**).

May 11. 36 East 58th Street. This was the flat belonging to Norman Thwaites of the *New York World*. Wodehouse sold two of his short stories at such good rates that he moved into The Earle hotel, resigned from the *Globe*, and presumably gave up his tenancy at Tresco in Emsworth and at Clement's Inn.

May (exact date unknown). At **The Earle, 103 Waverley Place, Washington Square**. He buys a copy of *Bartlett's Dictionary of Quotations* and a secondhand Monarch typewriter.

June–August. Possibly at the **The Earle**, but when L. H. Bradshaw writes "Impressions of P. G. Wodehouse" for *The Captain* (10 March 1910), he says that PG has been 'summering in **Maine**'.

September 7. Wodehouse writes from **The Earle** to Leslie Havergal Bradshaw.

November 9. Writes to Bradshaw from **The Earle**.

November?/December. Back to the **UK (fourth crossing)**. (PG's initial success did not continue, and most biographers say he returned to the UK in early 1910, but I hit lucky with the year's last edition of the local Emsworth paper.)

December 18. At **Emsworth**. On December 18, the families of the boys at Emsworth House School, plus "the gentry of the district" (*Hants & Sussex County Press*), enjoy a short comedy, *Thickhead*, performed by the boys, and then a musical play performed by adults, *The Dresden Shepherdess*. Written by Herbert Westbrook and Ella King-Hall, the cast list includes PG playing the part of 'Hamish McTavish, a Scots gillie'.

1910. Did Wodehouse go back to his old job at the *Globe* as editor of the 'By the Way' column? It is possible, but in view of his trip to New York March–May 1910, I think it more likely he worked as deputy or 'stand in third man'. As to where he lived, I believe he moved into **Threepwood in Record Road, Emsworth**, in early 1910, but was this sufficient? He needed some sort of base in London.

January 19. PG writes to Bradshaw from the **Constitutional Club**.

March 18. Arrives **New York** on the *Mauretania* (**fifth crossing**). (McCrum says it was for producer William A. Brady's stage adaptation of *Gentleman of Leisure*.)

March 30. He writes to Bradshaw on headed paper now changed from 'The Earle' to '**Hotel Earle**'.

April 29. Wodehouse writes to Bradshaw from the **Hotel Earle**: "The fight was awfully good. Ketchel finished in great style, clear lead at the end." (This was Ketchel v. Langford on April 27 at **Philadelphia**.)

May 18. Wodehouse sails to **London (sixth crossing)**.

May 27, June 11. He plays cricket for **Emsworth** House.

June 18. PG one of the judges at the **Emsworth** House Sports Day.

July 31. Plays cricket for the **Emsworth** House team.

August 2. Writes from **Emsworth**. On the 6th he plays for the Emsworth House cricket team.

August 9. PG plays for the **Emsworth** House team. He and Alan Durand take just about all the wickets.

August 27. Plays for the **Emsworth** House cricket team.

September 3, 5, 10, 17, 22, 30. Ditto.

1911. PG's *Who's Who* entry includes *The Intrusion of Jimmy* but no addresses and no clubs.

January 19. Writes from the **Constitutional Club**.

February 10. Writes to Bradshaw; says he is staying at **Emsworth** House School.

March 17 & 24. Writes from the **Constitutional Club**.

April 23 (Census Day). PG one of three boarders living at **101/99 Ebury Street**, a small hotel owned by John Holborn. (My thanks to Murray Hedgcock)

April 3. Writes from **Constitutional Club** that he is sailing on the *Lusitania* on Saturday next.

April 14. Arrives New York on *Lusitania* (**seventh crossing**).

April & May (undated). **Hotel Earle** again.

June 18. Back in the **UK (eighth crossing)**. Writes 'At the Play' for *London Chronicle*.

June 22. PG dines with Westbrook at **Cafe Royal, London**, and faints with severe chill (though it's very hot).

July. PG reporting in *July Captain* on Public School boxing championships at **Aldershot**.

July 8. Cricket for **Emsworth** House; PG scores 38 and takes 1 wicket.

July 18. Ditto.

August 5. Ditto. PG takes 8 wickets and scores 37.

August 12. PG plays for Authors v. Publishers at **Lords**, goes in fourth and scores 60; Doyle goes in fifth and scores 14.

August 26. PG plays cricket for **Emsworth** House. Alan Durand, now 18, scores 48, PG scores 58.

September 23. Cricket at **Emsworth**.

November 13. Writes to Bradshaw from **Emsworth**.