



# BY THE WAY

Occasional Newsletters from The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

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## Where Was Wodehouse? And When?: 1912–1917 (by Norman Murphy)

**1912.** Wodehouse was clearly spending much, if not most, of his time in Emsworth. I believe he no longer worked at the *Globe*, but he was still contributing to *Punch* and *Strand* and must have had some sort of base in London, even if it was only a hotel or the Constitutional Club. No copies of the Emsworth local paper have been found for this year, but it seems clear PG was still playing cricket there.

*January 26.* Writes to Bradshaw from **Mount Anville, Emsworth**. This was the house (still there in 2000) that was across the road from Threepwood and nearer to the main road. Either Threepwood was uninhabitable for some reason or, as is quite possible, PG just borrowed headed writing paper from a neighbour.

*April–May.* To London at least once because *The Pink Lady* opened 11 April at the Globe Theatre and PG met the cast.

*May 21.* From Emsworth to Bradshaw: PG reports he met nearly all the cast of *The Pink Lady* except Hazel Dawn (principal female lead). He then names other actresses, including Alice Dovey, who is “the nicest girl I ever met”. (NB. PG retained his friendship with Alice Dovey (1884–1969); see 6 May 1913, below. Although she was engaged(?) to the well-known illustrator Hamilton King, she married comedian/writer Jack Hazzard in 1916, and they were neighbours of the Wodehouses in Great Neck in the 1920s. In 1955 PG sent her a signed copy of one of his books. His 1969 letter of condolence to Alice’s daughter, Ann Garland, was sold at Bonham’s on 19 June 2013, along with pictures of himself PG had sent to Alice.)

*August 21.* PG plays for Authors v Publishers and gets 27 in 7 minutes before being stumped and rain stops play.

*September 9.* From **Emsworth** to Bradshaw: “I’m coming over on the *Olympic* either Oct 9th or 30th. Travelling with friend Thwaites of *New York World*. Last Saturday I got 50 for our village and took 7 wickets, had to run all runs and nearly killed me. Go and pal up with the Pink Lady crowd, especially Alice Dovey, the Hegemans (?) and Louise Kelly. You’ll like them.”

*November 22.* From **London**, no address given, to Bradshaw, apologizing for not sailing to New York: “I hope to go on Dec 4th.” PG went to **Cambridge** v South Africa Rucker match and attended the team dinner afterwards. “Daisy Wood is in London again. I am going to ask her to supper tonight.”

(NB. If I have got the right Daisy Wood, she was a younger sister of the famous comedienne Marie Lloyd. Reckoned to be the prettiest of the family, Daisy entranced audiences with her petite and innocent style of dancing. I suggest, no more than that, that PG had her in mind when he described Dolly Henderson, the girl Gally Threepwood loved.)

*1913. January. 3 Queens Club Terrace, West London.* MTT Murray Hedgcock for finding this as Wodehouse’s address in the January 1913 telephone directory. This has now changed its name, but, having consulted various directories, I believe it is part of either Normandy Road or Queens Club Gardens. Since his name does not appear in the July 1913 edition, I believe Wodehouse lived there from late 1912 but had left by mid-June.

*April 30.* Arrives **New York** on the *Olympic* (**ninth crossing**).

*May 6.* From **Hotel Algonquin** to Bradshaw: “I like the hotel. Fairbanks recommended me and the management can’t do enough for me. Alice Dovey and Louise Kelly welcomed me with open arms. I have quite got over my little trouble with the first named and we are now great friends. She is too devoted to Hamilton King for me to form a wedge and break up the combination.” Clearly they were ‘great friends’; see next entry.

*June 22. Richmond, Virginia, Times-Dispatch* notes that “P.G. Wodehouse, of London, author of ‘The Prince and Betty’ and other novels, is the guest of Hamilton King at **his studio near the Boone Log Cabin** (nr Richmond, Va). Mr. Wodehouse is having a play produced in London this month, and is said to be at work upon another soon to be produced in New York, the scene for which is to be laid in Arizona, where he will go later in the season for local color.” (MTT John Dawson)

*June?/July?/August.* Wodehouse returns to the UK (**tenth crossing**).

*August 14–16. Cheltenham.* PG visits his parents and watches Percy Jeeves play for Warwickshire against Gloucestershire.

*August 31.* PG plays cricket for **Emsworth** House; and again on September 3

*October.* Phelps and McCrum say C. H. Bovill invited PG to stay with him in Battersea. Bovill lived at **94 Prince of**

**Wales Mansions, Battersea**, at the Park Road end. Davis says Bovill was looking for a collaborator for a revue for the Empire Theatre. Late 1913 seems right since the revue, *Nuts and Wine*, opened on 3 January 1914.

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**1914. February 26.** Wodehouse arrives **New York** on the *Olympic* (**11th crossing**). He possibly stayed with Norman Thwaites again at **43 East 27th St.** Started writing articles for *Vanity Fair* (NY).

*April/May.* Returned to the UK, probably to stay with Bovill at **Prince of Wales Mansions, Battersea. (12th crossing)**

*July. Emsworth:* Plays cricket on the 11th & 18th; writes from Emsworth on the 13th.

*August 1.* PG arrives **New York** on SS *Kronprinzessin Cecilie* (**13th crossing**). He had been commissioned to write an article on John Barrymore and accompanied him on this trip. He stayed again with Norman Thwaites at **43 East 27th Street.**

*September 30.* PG marries Ethel at the **Little Church Around the Corner on 29th St.**

*October 1. Astor Hotel.* To Bradshaw from the Astor on his two-night honeymoon: “Tomorrow to **Melrose Grange, Bellport, Long Island.**” (Also called Axtell North Grange; Axtell was the land owner and developer.) The house was 2½ miles from Bellport Station. See *A Wodehouse Handbook* for further directions, though the house has now gone.

*October 10.* Letter from Box 478, **Bellport**, to Bradshaw. Wodehouse is now writing regularly for *Vanity Fair*.

*December 24.* Phelps believes PG first met Guy Bolton at the first night of *Tonight's the Night*. There has been much discussion on this point, but remembering PG was the *Vanity Fair* dramatic critic, it seems more than likely that they met well before the opening night of *Very Good, Eddie* in December 1915, as narrated in *Bring on the Girls*. I believe Phelps's theory is valid until more definitive information comes to light.

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**1915. January 20 or February 20.** Writes from Bellport to Bradshaw, saying he and Ethel are coming to New York for a short stay, probably at **St Andrew Hotel, Broadway & 72nd St.**

*May.* Ethel goes to the UK to bring Leonora to Bellport. (NB. I was puzzled by this because of the U-boat threat to British vessels, but American ships were not attacked until the US entered the war in 1917. I therefore go along with the biographers who say Leonora travelled to America in the summers of 1915 and 1916. Some have said she went to school in America; if so, it was only for the summer term.)

*Late May. Wyncote, Cheltenham Township, Pennsylvania.* PG spends a weekend at George Lorimer's farm; Lorimer reads and accepts *Uneasy Money* for the *Saturday Evening Post* (SEP).

*June 25.* To Bradshaw from **Bellport:** The McKenzies “lent us their apartment on 24th St when we went to town.” At some point he had been to Coney Island; see August 15 *Vanity Fair*.

*June 26.* First section of *Something New* appears in SEP.

*September.* Ethel takes Leonora back to England and returns to the US. The Wodehouses take **375 Central Park West** for the winter; Bellport for summer.

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**1916. April? May?** According to McCrum, the Wodehouses returned to **Bellport** and took a larger bungalow by a creek to accommodate Leonora. Address unknown.

*May.* Leonora came over for the summer from the UK.

*September.* Jasen says Leonora returned to the UK and the Wodehouses took rooms at **West 45th St.**

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**1917.** In 1917/18, PG did a lot of travelling with shows on their pre-New York tours. In a letter to Ira Gershwin, he said *Oh, Boy!* spent seven weeks on the road. In a later letter, he wrote that the UK system was different in that the pre-London tryout would be a two-week run in a provincial theatre. Wodehouse and Bolton had seven first nights in 1917, ending with *Oh!, Lady! Lady!!*. That is why I have not seen a single letter from PG for the year 1917. There must have been much business correspondence, contracts, etc., but none have come my way.

*January 11.* *Have a Heart* opening, Liberty Theatre.

*February.* *Oh, Boy!* at the Princess Theatre (opens 10 Feb), having already had tryouts at **Schenectady, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, and Albany.**

*May 31.* PG and Ethel rent **144 East Fortieth St.** (Source is publicity advert inserted in *The Sun* (NY) on 31 May by Pease & Elliman, who said Miss Blanche Underwood has rented her apartment to PG. MTT Ananth Kathairam)

*August 28.* *Leave It to Jane* opens, Longacre Theatre.

*September 10.* *Kitty Darlin'* opens, Teck Theatre, **Buffalo.**

*September 24.* *Riviera Girl* opens, New Amsterdam Theatre.

*November 5.* *Miss 1917* opens, Century Theatre.

*December 22.* *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* opens in Wilmington, Delaware.

*Winter 1917–18.* *Bring on the Girls* and Jasen say Ethel and PG had moved into the **Beaux Arts building:** “Ethel's taken an apartment for the winter in the Beaux Arts.” This was a handsome studio apartment “recently vacated by the well-known artist Leon Gordon”.

(NB. This could be either the Beaux Arts building on 9 East 41st St or the Bryant Park Studios, built as ‘the Beaux Arts’, at 80 West 40th. The history of the latter says Leon Gordon did have an apartment here, but not until 1938. And the Bryant Park Studios on East 40th was so near to his own address in East 40th Street, I reckon someone told PG of the Audrey Munson story related in BOTG, and he appropriated both the story and the address.)