



Severn End
(Brinkley Court)



Cheney Court
(Deverill Hall)

Oh, Gee, Oh, Joy!

What a splendid seven days it was, surpassing all expectations, and not even the occasional spot of rain (or downpour one day) could spoil the sheer exhilaration of our Week With Wodehouse. Though planned as a celebration of the Society's 10th anniversary, it really was a celebration of Plum himself, bringing together members from nine countries who visited Wodehousean sites in and around London, Hampshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire. The core group of 43 dedicated Plummies who participated in all events bonded so well from the first day that many of them were hoarse by the end of the week, such was the roar of voices amid tidal waves of laughter. In the wettest summer for nearly a century, we were blessed with good fortune – no rain during the Wodehouse Walks, nor during the visits to Hanley Castle and Sudeley Castle – and an unexpected bonus when one of our members confirmed the location of the Angler's Rest. "Jolly good" doesn't begin to sum up our feelings. For one week England became a Wodehouse Elysium for a lucky few, as the following pages should make abundantly clear! (And see also pages 11–16 in *Wooster Sauce* for more reports and photos.)



Happy grins from the Week With Wodehouse entourage after their visit to Sudeley/Blandings Castle.
(Photo provided by Sushmita Sen Gupta)

First Sunday: Let the Games Begin!

by Alison Pitman

Wodehouseans from an amazing nine different countries gathered for the Welcome Reception in the very aptly named Theatre Bar of the Shaftesbury Hotel. Before becoming a hotel, it was once allegedly home to the Victorian actress Lillie Langtry, who also resided in Norfolk Street – as, of course, did P G Wodehouse later!

Our Chairman, Hilary Bruce, commenced the proceedings by offering a warm welcome to us all. Our President, Richard Briers, was sadly absent due to work commitments, but he sent a message to the assembly, which was read by Edward Cazalet (see below). Richard's 'sex and violence' comment was greeted with much hilarity. I mean to say, after all, Stilton only ever *threatened* to break Bertie's spine in five places!

We then listened to some wonderful reminiscences by Plum's nephew, Patrick Wodehouse, who recalled memories of holidays, matinee trips with Leonora, and the tale of a most unfortunate canary and its sad demise. But aside from the humour, the overriding impression one received from Patrick about his

uncle was of an extremely generous man. He made the point that while many benefited from his uncle's generosity, very few people knew about it.

Tony Ring gave us a flavour of the entertainment we could expect on our travels, warning that there would be 'no escape', while Norman Murphy outlined his masterpiece of military planning for the week ahead. Suffice to say, there was to be no excuse for being late on parade!

With the formalities over and in true Wodehousean style, the assembled throng needed no encouragement to fraternise and say "what ho" to each other. It seemed hard to believe that many of us had only just met, such was the immediate rapport, and one felt certain that it would only grow stronger as the week progressed.

As the reception drew to a close, everything was looking pretty oojah-cum-spiff for the coming week. The first chapter had reached its conclusion. But we all looked forward with keen anticipation to the week ahead as we bade each other "tinkerty-tonk" until the following morning.



Patrick Wodehouse enthralled the crowd with stories about his uncle.

Our President's Address to the Troops

Ladies and Gentleman, or as I prefer to think of you, Fellow Wodehouseans,

I am sorry not to be with you tonight at the start of what I know will be a wonderful week.

It has been many years, far more than I care to count, since I had the privilege of playing Eustace Hignett in the film *The Girl On the Boat*. I can't have done it too badly since, only 33 years later, I was asked to play one of Wodehouse's most famous characters, the immortal and irrepressible Galahad Threepwood. It was a role actors would die for since Wodehouse had made it clear exactly how Gally acted and reacted to the world around him; all I had to do was to follow his script.

I was therefore delighted and very proud to be asked to become president of the UK Society 10 years ago and even more delighted to see how successful it has become.

Well, I suppose in my role of president I should say something presidential so I shall conclude by reminding you that one of Wodehouse's unique characteristics was that he made people laugh for 70 years without recourse to sex or violence. I look to Hilary Bruce and her committee to ensure there is no sex or violence on the Week With Wodehouse either.

Have a marvellous time.

Richard Briers



Edward Cazalet reads out Richard Briers's letter at the opening reception.

(Photo by Carey Tynan)

Monday and Tuesday: The Wodehouse Walks

The 'masterpiece of military planning' that Alison refers to (opposite) primarily had to do with the coordination of the Wodehouse Walks. Participants were divided into three groups who, on Monday and Tuesday, rotated among three Walks: the well-known Walk through Bertie Wooster's Mayfair, led by Norman Murphy; a new Walk Norman devised covering Wodehouse's Early London, led by Christine Hewitt; and a stroll through Dulwich, led by Elin Murphy.

A Classic Walk: Bertie Wooster's Mayfair

by Ian Alexander-Sinclair

At 9.30 sharp, we met Norman Murphy, who marched us down to 15 Berkeley Street, where Wodehouse occupied a flat in 1922 and which promptly appeared as Bertie Wooster's flat in 'Sir Roderick Comes to Lunch'. Then we turned left into Charles Street and admired Ian Hay's home at No. 47, where Wodehouse worked with him for two years on three plays. It appears as Aunt Dahlia's house in two novels, while Hay's Mews opposite features as Halsey Court in *Money in the Bank* and other novels. Beside us was the I Am The Only Running Footman pub, originally built in 1749 and once famous as the meeting place for servants in Mayfair. Wodehouse made it into the Junior Ganymede.

We proceeded to Dover Street, where Wodehouse placed the Drones Club, originally a fictional alternative to the Bachelors' Club. The Drones swimming pool was taken from the Bath Club, then at 34 Dover Street, and Tuppy Glossop's looping back the last ring in the swimming pool so Bertie ruined his dress suit was based on fact; Norman had this confirmed by an elderly judge who had suffered this indignity in 1938. We then walked to the real Drones, Buck's Club, still at 18 Clifford Street. Wodehouse was never a member but his son-in-law was, as was Guy Bolton. In *The Inimitable Jeeves* Bingo Little tells Bertie of his love for Honoria Glossop in front of McGarry, "the chappie behind the bar"; McGarry had been the barman at Buck's. 'Fred Thompson' coming

into the bar is another private Wodehouse joke: the real Fred Thompson, a PGW friend, was also a member of Buck's.

We walked to St James's Street to admire White's (Brown's in *Uneasy Money*), then Boodle's (the Buffers) with Brooks's (the Senior Buffers) opposite. We stopped briefly outside DR Harris, the chemist whose hangover cure, like Jeeves's, made one's eyes pop out. It contained ammonia and is no longer available – a pity in the view of the writer as it was singularly effective.

After a brief call into picturesque Pickering Place, we entered Pall Mall and were suitably shocked to see a French Renault in the frieze above the Royal Automobile Club. We then admired the Athenaeum, which appears as the Mausoleum, Lord Uffenham's club, in *Something Fishy* and *Money in the Bank*.

In Trafalgar Square, Norman pointed out historical landmarks before taking us to Northumberland Avenue and the site of Wodehouse's favourite club, the Constitutional, which appears often as the Senior Conservative. In *Psmith in the City*, Psmith, a junior clerk, and his manager belong to the Senior Conservative, as did Wodehouse, a junior bank clerk, and his chairman, Sir Ewan Cameron.

Our last stop was in the passage beside the Sherlock Holmes pub to admire the Moorish doorway that marked the Turkish baths where Psmith had prevailed upon Mr Bickersdyke to reinstate Mike in the bank. It was a thoroughly enjoyable walk, identifying many of the originals of the places which appear in Wodehouse's novels. We were particularly lucky as, sadly, this was to be Norman's antepenultimate Wodehouse walk.



47 Charles Street, the onetime home of Ian Hay as well as the London address for Aunt Dahlia. (Photo by Tamaki Morimura)



Norman and the gang chat with the Senior Beadle at the Burlington Arcade. (Photo by Andrea Jacobsen)

The Newest Walk: Wodehouse's Early London

by Ken Clevenger

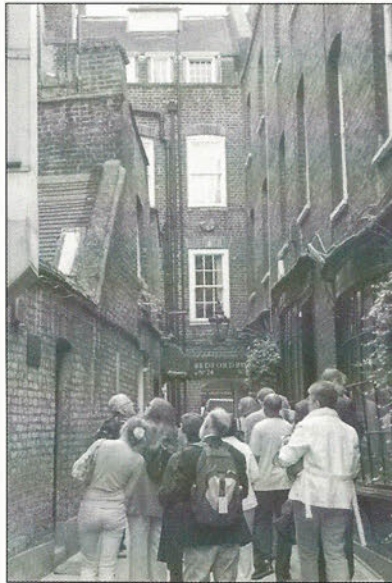
Some things make the mind boggle. Imagine Fortnum flogging food without Mason. Suppose Marks sold suits without Spencer. What if there was a Wodehouse Walk without Norman Murphy? And so it is pleasing to report that a Wodehouse Walk without Norman's inimitable presence can be really rather good.

Dozens of lucky Wodehouseans enjoyed Christine Hewitt's outstandingly presented Wodehouse's Early London Walk. The Society's membership secretary, standing in *locum tenens*, rather like the Rev. J. Bates, winner of the Great Sermon Handicap, had a wonderful script for which she gave Norman full credit. Like Norman, Christine had to overcome the London traffic noise, obscuring scaffolding, and idling rubbish lorries to make the names, places, and characters of Plum's early years in London (1902–14) come alive or clear to the meanest of intelligences, as Bertie might say. And, as a bonus, Christine both walks and talks more slowly than Norman!

We admired Gally Threepwood's Criterion restaurant, stood outside Mario's (Café de Paris) – still there, amazingly – and looked awestruck at the shabby building in Rupert Street where Wodehouse and Westbrook, better known to us as Stanley Ukridge,

heard from Bill Townend the story of a friend's disastrous attempt at chicken farming. We learned why Plum sometimes used "Moss Bros" in his stories and at other times called the firm Cohen Brothers. Christine told a rather racy tale about Boswell, Dr. Johnson, and other "bookish" people that, à la Honoria Glossop, I decline to repeat in a family publication. We heard some splendid stories of the Savoy Hotel as we walked by and under it before finishing our Walk at the Coal Hole pub. Fittingly, the pub stands at the "centre of Wodehouse's early London" near the location of Plum's first regular writing job for the *Globe's* By The Way column with the offices of the *Strand* magazine just a few yards away. Only a little imagination and/or a deep draught of British beer is necessary to envision a young Plum in the pub savouring a sold story or a well-received rhyme over a pint with Westbrook.

Christine's wonderful presentation of the world of Plum's early years in London, so carefully researched and recorded by Norman Murphy's 30 years of diligent enquiry, is a great treat. One cannot but think that behind this high degree of excellence lies the guiding principle of all of Jeeves's efforts: an endeavour to give satisfaction.



The group travels back in time through an ancient London byway.
(Photo by Carey Tynan)

A Walk Through Dulwich/Valley Fields

by John Graham

Our third walking tour was to Dulwich, a short train ride south from Victoria Station, escorted by Elin Woodger Murphy. It is safe to say that there is no spot in England for which Wodehouse retained greater affection than Dulwich, home of his beloved alma mater, which he attended from 1894 to 1900. The College provided the inspiration for many of his school stories (up to and including *Psmith in the City*), while the surrounding SE21 suburb (as Dulwich or Valley Fields) was immortalized in seven novels from *Sam the Sudden* (1924) through *Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin* (1972).

Like Wodehouse himself, we took the train to West Dulwich, turned left out of the station onto Park Road, walked past the news stand where he used to buy his *Strand* magazine, and turned left again at

Croxted Road. It was here (at number 62) that Plum's parents lived briefly when they returned to England in 1895. Sadly, their semi-detached house (which Norman claims as the basis for Mon Repos) was destroyed by bombs in WWII, although further down the road two similar houses survive. Just before these to the left is Acacia Grove, which Wodehouse renamed Mulberry Grove in *Big Money*. We took a



One of the sphinxes at 'Peacehaven' keeps an eye on Paul Abrinko and Sushmita Sen Gupta.
(Photo by Monika Eckfield)

circuitous route to get there, passing by the Alleyn's Head Pub, where Lord Biskerton refreshed himself and where Wodehouse frequently lunched, though it has been rebuilt since the war.

Then it was on to Acacia/Mulberry Grove, where Lord Biskerton lived at Peacehaven; one can still find two stone Sphinxes gracing its entranceway. From there we went back up Acacia Grove, crossed under the railway bridge, and made our way across the verdant playing fields of Dulwich College, where a youthful game of cricket was underway. Our destination was the splendid Victorian red-brick building, home of the Wodehouse Library, where we were warmly welcomed by the archivist, Calista Lucy. We stared in reverence through



Calista Lucy (far right) introduces the group to some of the Wodehousean treasures at the Dulwich College archive. (EWM)

glass doors at a recreation of Plum's own study, complete with his desk, typewriter, books, and assorted pipes. Calista had prepared a small display of Wodehouse treasures for us to handle, including Plum's cash book in which he recorded earnings from his early writings.

It was with great reluctance that we finally returned to the station, on our way passing the grace-

ful mansion of Elm Lawn, where Plum had boarded during his school years and where he invented the 'po game'. Those who missed the tour can follow our footsteps in chapter 9 of *A Wodehouse Handbook* by (of course) Norman Murphy.

Tuesday: Final Night at the Savage

by Tom and Betty Hooker

We knew we were in the right place when we spied the porter at the reception desk and the grand marble staircase ascending to the second floor. The Savage Club lies just beyond the staircase, on the ground floor. Its walls are bedecked with many menus featuring caricatures of Savages, and people had difficulty making themselves heard as we Wodehouseans greeted each other. So much sluicing occurred that the barman ran out of regular glasses and had to resort to his special supply of pewter mugs. A few Savages who had dropped in for a quick one soon fled – perhaps to the more dignified precincts of the National Liberal Club upstairs.

Hilary Bruce called the meeting to order and introduced Tony Ring, who reported that his opus, *The Wit and Wisdom of P G Wodehouse*, will be published in the autumn, just in time for Christmas [see *Wooster Sauce*, p. 18]. Next, Hilary announced that The Royal National Institute for the Blind has published *Summer Lightning* in Braille in four volumes, each about two inches thick. A prior Braille Jeeves book had been published, but this one is particularly special because it had been sponsored and paid for by the Society. [See report in *Wooster Sauce*, p. 7.]



Robert McCrum, surrounded by a sea of Plummers. (Photo by Tom Hooker)

Then Hilary introduced the evening's speaker, Robert McCrum. "It was the happiest, most entrancing experience of my life," said Robert, commenting on writing *Wodehouse: A Life*. The book, which was published two years ago, sold 30,000 copies in the United Kingdom and 55,000 in the United States. He felt that "Wodehouse's life goes on. . . . The picture is essentially unchanged. . . . He will have to be reinterpreted by another generation." With regard to the

wartime controversy, Robert considered his account was definitive. His source was a journalist who interviewed Wodehouse in Cannes in 1951. Robert said, "I nailed it! Whatever you think, it will never go away. It was the one big event [in his life.] . . . It is very sad, but there it is." Robert said that he made a timeline of Plum's life. "I knew roughly where he was every day of his life." He had to limit the coverage of Wodehouse's work on Broadway and with musicals because he was determined to keep the length of the book to approximately 500 pages, so it could be read over a weekend.

The evening – the last Wodehouse gathering to be held in the Savage – concluded with more cheerful talk and a visit to the National Liberal Club's huge salon conducted by Norman Murphy.

Wednesday: A Good Innings at Lord's

by Ian Alexander-Sinclair

We were led from the Grace Gate at Lord's to the Harris Garden for a brief introduction from Murray Hedgcock. Wodehouse played here five times, notably on June 29, 1905, when Arthur Conan Doyle captained the Authors against the Actors. The team included E.W. Hornung and A.A. Milne alongside Wodehouse, who was bowled by C.A. Smith for a duck. (C.A. Smith is better known to us today as C. Aubrey Smith, who captained England at cricket and went on to found the Hollywood Cricket Club, with Wodehouse taking the minutes at the inaugural meeting.) Neither Wodehouse nor Bertie Wooster joined the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), probably in Bertie's case because Jeeves would not have tolerated the bacon-and-egg (orange and yellow) tie, as worn by one intrepid member of our group. While it added tone, Jeeves had a point.

Passing the basement door, through which the professionals emerged when summoned by bell from above, we entered the pavilion, with its famous Long Room, the club room for the 20,000 members, including ladies, admitted in 1999. Sitting on the white benches outside, we saw the world-famous cricket ground and heard how Thomas Lord acquired it in 1812. Not a wasp in sight! Glancing at the portrait of

W.G. Grace, the first sporting icon, with matching temperament, we ascended to the Visitors' Dressing Room with its honours boards; only ten bowlers have taken ten wickets in a Lord's Test since 1888.

From the Grand Stand we had a magnificent view of Verity's Victorian pavilion, the Mound Stand with its tented roof, The Tavern Stand, and the contro-versial media centre. The interior is light blue, which helps to calm fractious journalists. Above, a Society Patron, Henry Blofeld, presides over TMS (*Test Match Special*), occasionally

addressing colleagues in Woosterish terms, "My dear old thing". Lord's may lack 'architectural integrity' but certainly has architectural variety.

Minutes later we experienced the view from the centre and could appreciate the feat of Albert Trott, the only batsman ever to hit a ball clear over the pavilion. Finally we paid homage to the Ashes urn in the museum, keeping a sharp eye on our Australian member.



The famous Lord's pavilion. (Photo by Carey Tynan)



Enjoying the view from the Media Centre (our reporter takes notes). (Photo by Monika Eckfield)

Post-Tour Thoughts

The organization of the tour was irreproachable. Hilary Bruce surpassed herself! And certainly Tony Ring's efforts on organizing the entertainment – especially on the coach en route – produced splendid results.

– Masha Lebedeva

I think that what does really need to be said, and stressed very strongly, is the appreciation we all feel for the amount of work that Norman and Hilary and all the rest of the Committee have put into organising this week. How they've quite done it for the money I do not know, but it's a real achievement. – Elaine Ring

I was just thrilled with how everybody joined in the voluntary entertainment and helped out. Nearly everybody on the tour did something one way or the other, and it was just huge fun and very easy to do – and everybody had a whale of a time as a result. – Tony Ring

The best bit for me was the way everyone got on so well. We had a great bunch of people on this Week. Everyone bonded within about four seconds of arrival. You could hear us at the other end of the corridor wherever we were – at the other end of the county, even. And I think we've made good new friends this week. I hope so. I certainly have. – Hilary Bruce

Thursday: Emsworth Lives!

by Murray Hedgcock

Plum would never have recognised the Emsworth of 2007 – a century or so after he left the amiable little Hampshire watering-hole. Today it has a second-hand bookshop and the sort-of-local paper, the *Chichester Observer*, has just announced that Emsworth is “aiming to set an example by becoming plastic-bag free”, only the second town in Britain to take such a step.

These pointers to modern Emsworth were noted on our day trip to the town where Plum arrived around 1903, after leaving the bank for the much more congenial world of freelance writing.

As we left London, our Remembrancer and self-proclaimed “native guide”, Norman Murphy, was heckled for asserting that the big building just over Vauxhall Bridge is that of MI5 (as every schoolboy knows, it is MI6); and for announcing at The Oval that it was here Plum snatched a bank lunch-hour to see a famous Test match in 1901 (tut-tut – 1902 in reality).

The fact sheets Norman passed out, outlining what we were to see, gave him a break from non-stop commentary and allowed us to study our agenda for the day. MC Tony Ring then distributed the first of the quiz sheets which were to enliven our journeys. These were tricky, as we felt we knew the answers – but quickly realised we were not quite confident enough to inscribe them immediately in ink.

The in-flight entertainment began with a lively reading by Kris Fowler of ‘The Rise of Minna Nordstrom’ which took us on to Guildford and 59 Epsom Road. The hallowed birthplace of Our Hero is not inspiring, but it was good to view it. And we noted the property next door had been sold by ‘Townends’ – redolent of Plum’s friend Bill Townend, and pleasing Nick Townend in our group.

Back aboard, Tamaki Morimura told us of life as a Wodehouse translator in Japan. There had been a pre-war vogue for PGW which understandably faded away, but had lately revived. She had received appreciative letters from readers aged 16 to 76 – and she knew of a 12-year-old boy who liked Wodehouse: “My son.” She summed up simply: “I have been living with Wodehouse for three years.” Tony then invited Your Correspondent, umpire with the Wodehouse cricketers, The Gold Bats, to read

Plum’s poem ‘The Umpire’ – a reminder of the heavy authority vested in this official in an age before TV replays.

On to Emsworth, where the first call was to Threepwood – the house adjoining the site of Emsworth House School, and leased and then owned by Plum from 1904 to 1914. We were unable to see over Threepwood, which meant those of us fortunate enough to have done so on a visit in 1999 could feel sorry for those who had not.

We strolled down to the tiny harbour, where once oysters provided prosperity, before gathering at Nicolino’s restaurant, where the food was very different from the school fare Plum consumed in his Emsworth years. There Norman presented Chairman Hilary Bruce with the original artwork for the cartouche of our souvenir tea towel – the whole suitably framed.

We were greeted as old friends at the Emsworth Museum, which continues to expand – not least with its excellent Wodehouse display. Then we drove north to look at Stansted Park – a mansion which became Sanstead House in *The Little Nugget*.

The journey home was enlivened by a discussion on which of the “Parrot” poems of 1903 (with the refrain “Your food will cost you more”) were actually written by Plum. This was complex stuff, and eventually we agreed to differ. [See more about this in *Wooster Sauce*, p. 15.]

I left the coach in the wilds of South London to the concern of some colleagues who worried if I would ever be seen again. A handy bus took me safely home, and I was indeed seen again the next morning. The tour to Blandings and more lay ahead, and was not to be missed.



At Threepwood we met this old gent, who had been a neighbor of PGW’s housekeeper.

(Photo by Tony Ring)



Happy Wodehouseans browse through the Emsworth Museum.

(Photo by Geoff Higgins)

Friday: Wet – But Who Cared?

by Jelle Otten

When the happy group of Wodehouse Weekers took off at 8:00 A.M. from the Corus Hotel Hyde Park for the start of our three-day journey, it was fairly dry, but soon after we left London by the M1, we saw the first drops of rain falling down . . .

During the trip to our first destination, Weston Park in Shropshire, our Entertainment Officer, Tony Ring, distributed a sheet of questions for the daily quiz; today's theme was 'General Wodehouse Fiction'. Shortly after that he gave the microphone over to Ranjita Ashok for her superb reading of 'A Letter from Aunt Agatha about Bertie'. It was especially enjoyable if you knew that it was Ranjita's own work! The day's second reading was a dialogue by Masha Lebedeva and Arthur Findley, who read 'The Clicking of Cuthbert'. Arthur was the Oldest Member and Masha was Vladimir Brusiloff with his remarkable views on modern authors. For the reading Masha was dressed in a kind of shirt the Russian author Tolstoy usually wore. The next reading, given by Bob Rains, was 'Bertie Changes His Mind'. Then our Ent. Off. solicited 'Views about which of Bertie's fiancées he should have married'. (See page 14 in *Wooster Sauce* for details of this debate.)

In preparation for our visit to Weston Park, Tad Boehmer read Norman Murphy's list of identifying features of the Blandings Castle estate from *A Wodehouse Handbook*. All these features, says Norman, are to be found at Weston Park and nowhere else. Weston Park was the family home of the Earls of Bradford from the 17th century. It is the scene where so many events in the Blandings Saga took place.

At last we entered Shropshire by the A5 road, and just before the entrance of Weston Park, we passed Weston-under-Lizard, which we know as Blandings Parva. Although it was raining very hard by now, the whole group was very excited to enter Weston Park, with Norman in the lead. He pointed out the Greek temple overlooking the lake, took us across the terraces with their roses to Gally's cedar tree, and then around to the pigsty where Lord



Exploring the grounds at The Old House, Stableford. (Photo by Tamaki Morimura)

Emsworth moved the Empress of Blandings to keep her safe from nobblers. We discovered a giant chess set underneath a porch roof, prompting Tad Boehmer and Bob Rains to have an impromptu game, which Bob eventually won. Before lunch, some of us visited the gift shop, watched an audiovisual presentation on the history of Weston Park, or wandered the grounds. After a

delicious meal in the Stables restaurant, we visited the house.

Finally, we left Weston Park for Shifnal, which Wodehouse drew as Market Blandings. As we passed through the town, Norman pointed out the railway station and the last of the many pubs Wodehouse mentioned in his stories. We went on to visit The Old House (now Hays Bank) in Stableford, where the Wodehouses lived for seven years. The present owner, Peter Hollingsworth, welcomed us heartily, and we walked the grounds and gardens around the house, still very wet but happy.

From Stableford we drove to the Chateau Impney Hotel, near Droitwich Spa. Wodehouse and Ethel stayed at this hotel often in the 1920s, and he wrote about it in *Bring on the Girls*. We only looked at it from the coach, but it was enough to confirm that it is the spitting image of Sir Buckstone Abbott's Walsingham Hall in *Summer Moonshine*.



Chateau Impney, as seen from the coach. (Photo by Marjanne Otten)

During the afternoon coach ride, John Graham read excerpts from chapters 1 and 2 of his favourite novel, *Heavy Weather*. After that, on our way to our hotel near Tewkesbury, we enjoyed some selections from the Bolton, Kern, and Wodehouse musical *Sitting Pretty* (1924). We arrived at the Hilton Puckrup Hall

Hotel tired but very happy, and after a good meal, some of us stayed up carousing, while others went to bed at a decent hour, looking forward to the next day.

The meal [at Weston Park] started at a normal audible level, and as the alcohol flowed it got louder and louder, and I just thought the tour took off at that point. We made more friends that day as we sat down and had time to be convivial over a meal.
– Andrew Waters

Saturday: Simply Sensational

by Sushmita Sen Gupta

Thankfully, the sun was shining and our first stop was Upton-upon-Severn, where we looked for The Angler's Rest. Norman believed it stood beside the river, which meant it could be The Plough, The King's Head or The Swan, but he wasn't sure which.

Now the plot thickens. Doug Jeffords began chatting with a boat owner and explained the strangers in town and the Angler's Rest question. The Upton native promptly said it was common knowledge that it was The Plough. Confirmation! Cameras appeared and we all posed outside The Plough. [See Doug's account at page 11 of *Wooster Sauce*.]

We sought out the chemist where Buck-U-Uppo may have originated. Norman favours John Gibbs, MPS, Est. 1881 – the year PGW was born. Another coincidence. Then to the bookshop, where the radio was on and an agricultural expert was talking: "This year, we've had a marvellous crop of plums. They are delicious and make excellent jam." I could have told him that the year had seen a marvellous crop of Plummys, too!

Back on the coach, Norman told us of his anxiety about the coach squeezing through the gates to Severn End, the source of Brinkley Court. But Dave got us through after Norman wrestled with the branch of an obstructive tree. We took pictures of the lovely house, imagined Aunt Dahlia tally-ho-ing across the fields, and wondered through which window Gussie had "made faces" at Anatole!

Our next stop was Hanley Castle High School, the source of Market Snodsbury Grammar School. Our host, Mr Booth, took us to the old school hall, now lined with bookshelves and computers, but it was easy to imagine a prize-giving there. We kept quoting bits of Gussie's speech and dissolving in mirth. In fact "dissolving in mirth" pretty much described the Week!

We also visited St. Mary's Church, where Mr. Philip Tufton showed us the mammoth door key and explained how the church had grown over the centuries, "giving us this beautiful arcade and a dreadful draught on the backs of our necks".

Lunch was at The Three Kings, which Norman reckons goes back to 1550 or thereabouts. Sue Roberts's family has run the pub for over 100 years, and she produced a feast worthy of Anatole with a splendid dark ale.



It's a place out of time. Take the cars away, and you don't know where you are.

– Doug Jeffords on Hanley Castle

(Photo by Monika Eckfield)

We arrived at Sudeley Castle, where Norman's search for Blandings had ended. There was the imposing stately pile – turrets, battlements, rolling parkland. And wonder of wonders, the yew alleys, where Robert Bruce and Norman impersonated McAllister and Gally Threepwood in frivolous mood. So, here at last, we were at the "seat of the ninth earl" and most impressive it was, too. We visited the exhibition and garden festival and gawped at the tomb of Catherine Parr, Henry VIII's last wife.

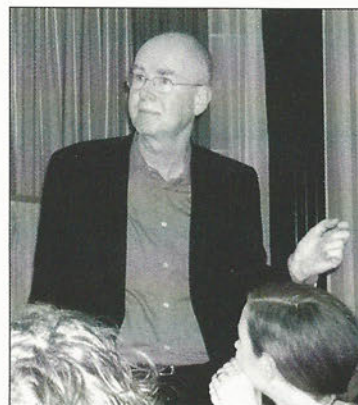
That evening, dinner was followed by a talk by Adrian Tinniswood, a writer on stately homes. He told us how post-World War I death duties caused the disappearance of many homes; between 1918 and 1945, 458 were demolished.

Some were transported to the USA and rebuilt there. Thanks to the National Trust, though, others have been saved, and an appreciation of their vanished way of life has helped to keep them alive as many owners opened them to the public. Mr. Tinniswood speculated what Blandings would look like today: maybe a hotel or corporate venue with a teashop and a gift shop at the end of the yew alley. He concluded, "By visiting

them, we celebrate them. By celebrating them, we remember them. By remembering them, we keep them alive."

After much applause, Hilary presented Mr. Tinniswood with a print of Sudeley Castle and the souvenir tea towel. I could almost read his mind – "Now I'll have to do the dishes!"

As we pulled in to Sudeley Castle, Paul [Abrinko] and I looked at each other and said, "This – this is where the good songs go." – Monika Eckfield



Speaker Adrian Tinniswood

Sunday: Awful Aunts but Porcine Perfection

by Robert Bruce

The day seemed less than promising as a steady drizzle hastened us onto the coach. Our spirits were raised on the journey to Wiltshire, though, when Karen Shotting did readings from 'Tom, Dick and Harry' and 'Damon and Pythias'. We arrived at Cheney Court (aka Deverill Hall), where Wodehouse had stayed with his grandmother and four maiden Deane aunts, some fearsome, some kind and jolly, who later became the recurring tribe of aunts in the books. It had stopped raining, but this was just temporary. Only when we were farthest from the coach and admiring the house from its gardens did the stuff drench us once more.

Then it was off to Corsham, where we walked to see Corsham Court, entering the grounds via a kissing gate at which our Remembrancer exacted the appropriate toll from many an unsuspecting Wodehousean lady. Through closed gates we gazed at the frontage of Corsham Court, where Wodehouse had spent time as a boy discovering the joys of escaping aunts and vanishing behind the green baize door for tea in the Servants' Hall. We then walked down to the church, where Norman told us more of Wodehouse's youthful visits. We discovered that a forthcoming organ recital was to be given by one Maureen McAllister, thus showing that previously unknown far-flung relations of fictional characters do have a real life.

We had hoped to snatch a passing over or two at the local cricket ground, but the match had been cancelled. Our resident inquisitive journalist, 'Scoop' Hedgecock, investigated and found that the groundsman had (for the first time in living memory) forgotten to put the covers on overnight. The relentless rain had done the rest.

After lunch in the Methuen Arms, it was back onto the coach and off through the Berkshire lanes. Along the way, Doug Jeffords read a selection from 'Pig-Hoo-o-o-o-ey!'; Sushmita Sen Gupta read 'To the Editor, Sir'; and Jelle Otten read from chapter 4 of *Leave It to Psmith*. There was an element of organised but competitive hog calling, but we were all outdone by Doug. There followed a prolonged argument on

hog-calling that could have lasted for days but for the last stop on our tour.

The closing event of the great Week With Wodehouse tour was a visit to see Truffle, last year's Newbury Show National Breed Champion, at her home in Lambourn. The joy of both NTP Murphy and

Truffle as he extended an umbrella and, in best Blandings fashion, scratched her back as she keeled over in delight was plain to see.

The crowd of Wodehouseans formed a proper line to photograph the event and to listen to Truffle's owner, Christina Dunlop. "She loves a crowd," said Mrs Dunlop, who then explained that Truffle was due, at any moment it seemed, to produce a new litter of Berkshires. "Previously she has been a mother of 18,"

we were told, and the current imminent event was the result of an organised "dirty eight weeks in April". Nearby, and squealing with equal joy at the attention, were innumerable of her previous offspring.

Ensuring that Truffle was in championship form, we were told, involved going for walks to get fit, a coating of baby oil to make her dark and shiny, extra white chalk on her white feet, and a bit of a backcomb to her tail "to give her a nice swing to her bottom". Throughout this listing of high-fashion tips, she was prone on the ground, having her back scratched as a steady queue of Wodehouseans fed her small chunks of apple. "Lovely trip," said someone. "We

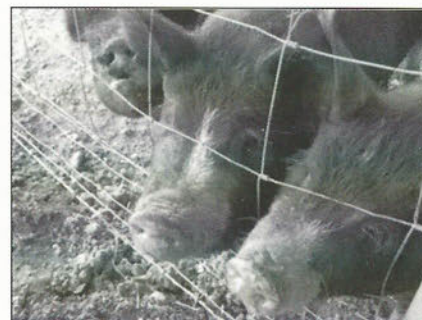
finished up in a pigsty."

After Lambourn we headed back to London. The tour was over. Regret at the close of such gloriously happy times amongst such a disparate bunch of lovely Wodehouseans was tempered by anticipation of even more fun to come.

This has stretched my knowledge of Wodehouse, leaving me rather ashamed of my ignorance – however, resolved to improve. – Arthur Findlay



There is nothing quite like the end of an umbrella to bring contentment to a pregnant Berkshire sow. (EWM)



Truffle's piglets greet their visitors. (Photo by Marjanne Otten)

Ending with Songs, Laughter, and Fun

by Margaret Slythe

There had been much rain, but by the time the Farewell Dinner to commemorate A Week With Wodehouse began, London looked at its best and so did the perfect venue, The Arts Club, Dover Street. It was all thanks to the Club's Chairman, Mike Godbee – also a Society member – that we were able to enjoy our celebration in such splendid surroundings.

The champagne reception drowned any chance of greeting a friend except at the top of one's voice, and we all had silly grins of contentment at the feelings of happiness around us. Clearly for those of us who had not been on the Tour, there was a need for reparation and work on inclusion strategy. The word *brilliant* was the reply to all questions about the Tour, which suggested it had been the greatest ever.

Sixty-five of us sat down to dinner in a truly exquisite room. The PGW Grace was received in awe, rendered by Roger Davies, and the food was delicious; one thought of this being Bertie's normal evening nosh, and indeed venue. We bellowed across round tables and purred. I found myself seated beside the familiar wonder of Henry Blofeld's voice, mercifully audible above the rest. Norman Murphy's point that this was the most happily vocal tour ever was retained to the end.

As always there was a heady mix of reverence and fun. The entertainment was of course brilliantly choreographed by Tony Ring, who was deservedly cheered. With guest performer Tony Britten at the piano, we sang ourselves into Plumland with gusto and stroked our elegant and much-autographed

programmes. Twenty-two Society members read exquisitely resourced Wodehouse quotations, some just a few words long but all of them clever and apt.

Another wonderful and familiar voice, that of Martin Jarvis, became our Chairman's assistant as he handed out prizes awarded for the Tour. Considerable hilarity ensued as particular treasures and a great many tea towels, designed especially for the Tour, found loving homes. This was the real moment of exclusion for many of us who were not in the loop. But soon it passed as Martin Jarvis performed his magnificent Jeeves and Wooster double act with a reading of 'Fixing it for Freddie'. Martin's friendliness and involvement with everything added considerably to a perfect evening.

Then there were individual musical contributions by those on the Tour, all received by adoring fans. Tamaki Morimura bewitched us with 'Bill', Paul Abrinko and Monika Eckfield were totally plausible with 'You Never Knew About Me', and Karen Shotting and Carey Tynan encouraged us to join in with 'Rolled into One'. Sadly, Lara Cazalet, Plum's great-granddaughter, had too little voice to sing that evening, but like all members of the Cazalet family, her presence alone was central to the occasion.

A great final moment was Norman Murphy conducting from the rostrum, unable to bear the puny community rendering of 'Burlington Bertie'. Then it was over, all too soon. We walked out into a perfect Mayfair night. Farewell is only for a while.



Triumph! Norman and Hilary at the finish, applauded by Tony Ring and Martin Jarvis. (Photo by Monika Eckfield)

Acknowledgements

Hilary Bruce, Norman Murphy, and Tony Ring wish to express their heartfelt appreciation to:

Dorothy Bone, The Emsworth Museum
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 Dave Simmons, driver extraordinaire
 Philip Tufton, Hanley Castle
 Scotland & Bates, Appledore, Kent
 Stuart Morris Textiles, Hadleigh, Suffolk

More Thoughts

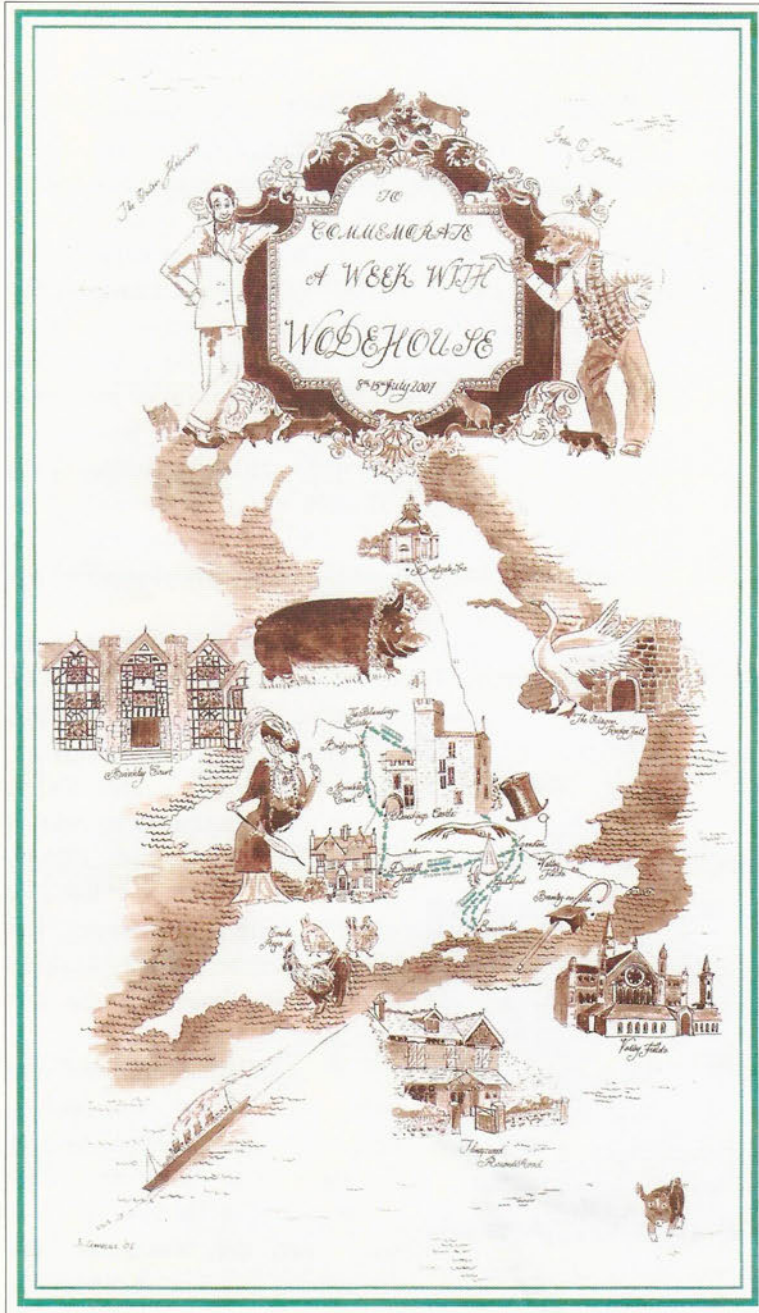
I think this tour has confirmed that Wodehouseans are the best variety of human beings in the world.
 – *Ranjitha Ashok*

I think I've died and gone to heaven. – *Paul Abrinko at Sudeley Castle*

It's been such a fun tour, seeing all these places that are in the books. – *Tad Boehmer*

I firmly believe that the UK Wodehouse Society will continue to flourish, and I dream of the next Wodehouse Week. – *Masha Lebedeva*

Memories of a Wonderful Week



Members can purchase the Week's fabulous tea towel, designed by Jane-Ann Cameron. (See Wooster Sauce, p.15)



A very contented Truffle relaxes for her admirers. (Photo by Tony Ring)



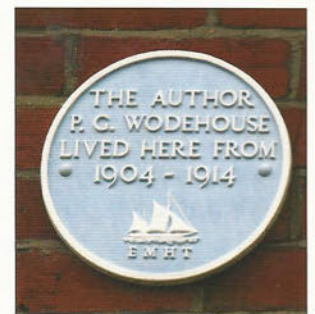
At Sudeley Castle, Angus McAllister and Gally Threepwood (aka Robert Bruce and Norman Murphy) indicate the route to the famous Blandings yew alleys. (Photo by Tamaki Morimura)



Above, Weston Park, the model for the Blandings estate. Below, Sudeley Castle, aka Blandings Castle. (Photos by Tamaki Morimura)



Above, the gang ogles Threepwood, Emsworth, where Our Hero once lived. (Photo by EWM)



Close-up of the plaque on Threepwood. (Photo by Tony Ring)