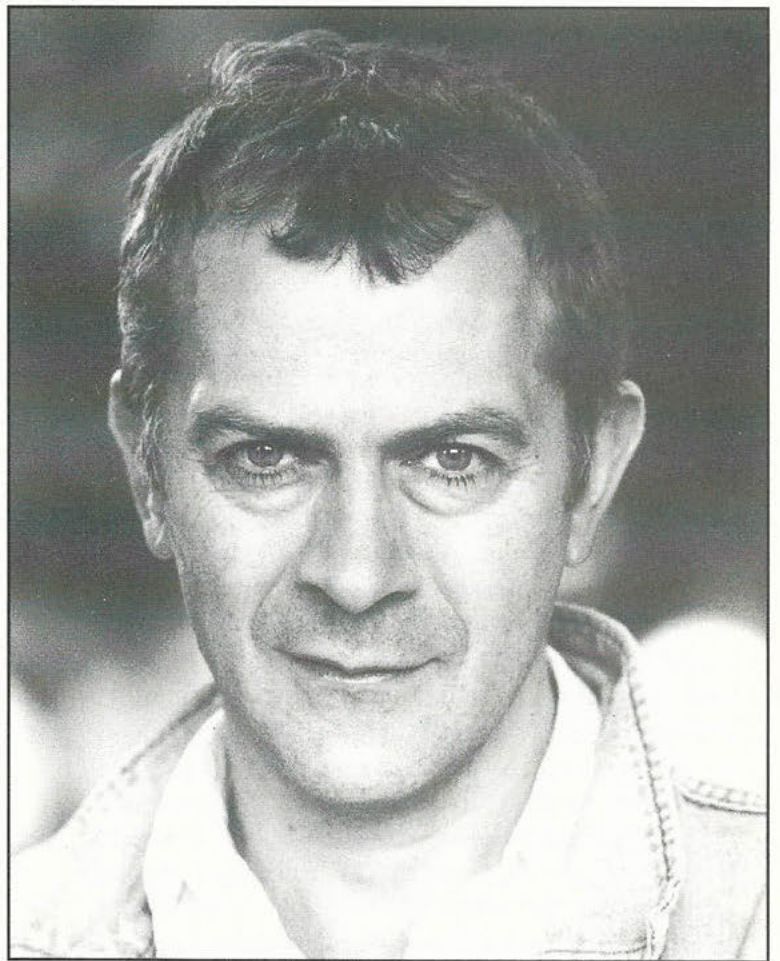




One-Man Shows Grow Fashionable *reports Tony Ring*

Robert Goodale, pictured right, is one of a number of artists who are developing new shows with a Wodehouse theme. Geoff Hales, whose more extensive Wodehouse weekend is outlined on page 5, is another, while Jonathan Cecil has involved his wife, the singer Anna Sharkey, in creating *Plum Sauce*, part of which has already been performed at a members' meeting at the Savage. Yet another, with a Blandings theme, is also under development and more information will be given on this when it is available.

Robert could be said to be one of the oldest hands in relation to one-man Wodehouse shows. Some years after studying at the Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama, he moved to East Dulwich and came across a newspaper cutting concerning P G Wodehouse while clearing out his attic. Almost immediately, in 1986, he had an opportunity to appear at the Edinburgh festival, and chose to create a one-man Wodehouse show based on the *Stiff Upper Lip*, *Jeeves* story, not being aware of Edward Duke's activities in this area at this time. His show, which ran for a week, was well attended and received good reviews, and Robert was invited to return for three weeks the following year. This time he performed *Stiff Upper Lip* alternately with *Right Ho, Jeeves* at the Greyfriars Kirk House. In



1991 he was invited back to a larger venue at the Festival, the Assembly Rooms, for his version of *The Code of the Woosters*, and he returned yet again in 1993 with a variation of his *Right Ho*.

Like most actors, Robert has a second string to his bow and for a number of years taught English and drama at an inner city secondary school. His acting career has included spells with the RSC, playing Rosencrantz to Alan Rickman's *Hamlet* and taking the role of Prince Charles in Sue Townsend's *The Queen and I*.

In June this year, he performed a one-off show of *Right Ho, Jeeves* to a potential producer in New York, as a result of which he is modifying his approach to create a rounder performance. Having watched Robert entertain in New York, I can only say that members should look out for an opportunity to enjoy his interpretation of the Master's words. More generally, the interest in presenting Wodehouse in this form, as so popularly demonstrated by the late Edward Duke, goes some way to reinforcing the popular view that, because so much of the best of Wodehouse is to be found in the narrative, attempts to adapt his work into the traditional play format come up against major problems. With versatile individual presenters, many of those problems are minimised.

Silly Village Names – Who Started It?

David Mackie investigates.

In researching any subject – in my case it was *The Influence of W S Gilbert on P G Wodehouse* – intriguing questions often arise, questions that can usually only be answered by further research, diverting one – however agreeably – from the subject in hand. One such question is: ‘Who first started inventing silly names for English villages?’

Before attempting to answer this question one might ask ‘Why invent such names?’ – and that is probably easier to answer. One only has to look at specimens of the real thing – Kenchester Sugwas, Little Snoring, Nempnett Thrubwell, Sinderby Quernhow, Wormelow Tump; can there really be such places? Indeed there are! Such names cry out to be imitated and where else should one look for such imitations but in humorous writing? Agatha Christie’s Miss Marple lives in St Mary Mead – a fictitious name, perforce, but a sober one appropriate to a work of detective fiction.

So, what of the humorists? In Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749) some of the action takes place in London, some in the Inn at Upton (upon Severn), both of them real places. Dickens, in *The Pickwick Papers* (1837) invents Muggletown (though there is a Muckleton in Shropshire and a Muckletown in Grampian), but he is also happy to refer to real places such as Bury St Edmunds and even specific addresses such as the famous Leather Bottle, at Cobham, Kent. There is, of course, Dingley Dell – the sort of name one would expect to find in a comic novel with its alliteration so beloved of humorists. In *The Ingoldsby Legends* (1840) by the Rev R H Barham we also find real places (Folkestone, Hythe, Lympne) but the author gives Thomas Ingoldsby’s address as the manor house of Tappington Everard. (There is a Papworth Everard in Cambridgeshire.)

Coming now to W S Gilbert, we find that *The Sorcerer* (1877) is set in the village of Ploverleigh – again a fictitious but straightforward name which, together with the plot, is derived from his short story *An Elixir of Love*, published in *Graphic*, 1876. However, in his earlier *Bab Ballads* (first collected edition 1869) we find names that are anything but straightforward. In *The Reverend Simon Magus* the eponymous hero has ‘the Cure of Otium-cum-Digge’, while in *The Rival Curates*, we read both of a ‘... Mr Clayton Hooper/Who had a cure of souls/At Spifton-extra-Soper’ and of a ‘... Hopley Porter/Who holds a curate’s rank/At Assesmilk-cum-Worter’.

Could Gilbert, then, be the first writer to emulate those real but improbable sounding village names, with multiple words and generally with hyphens? Consider the following real places: Aston juxta Mondrum, Frisby on the Wreake, Hinton-in-the-Hedge, Holme-on-the-Wolds (but not Holme-on-the-Range), Thorpe in the Fallows, Sutton-under-Whitstonecliffe and, yes, Barton-in-the-Beans. There are numerous such examples, most of them English, although the grand-daddy of them all is the Welsh Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch, which seems to translate as ‘The Church of St Mary, in a hollow of white hazel, near to a rapid whirlpool and to St Tysilio’s Church, and near to a red cave’.

As with Llanfair . . ., these other whimsical sounding names clearly have a significance, often being used to distinguish one village from another, such as Steeple Claydon, Middle Claydon, East Claydon and Botolph Claydon, all grouped around Claydon House in Buckinghamshire. It is, however, the longer names such as Knott End-on-Sea, Marske-by-the-Sea, North Leverton with Hablesthorpe, Sutton-on-the-Forest, Thorpe in the Fallows and Willoughby on the Wolds that tend to serve as the models for the more entertaining, and often longer, fictitious ones.

And so to Plum, and in particular *Meet Mr Mulliner* (1927). In the first story, *The Truth about George*, we read first of East Wobsley, which one might expect in a comic novel as compared to, say, Ploverleigh or St Mary Mead. However, we are then deluged with a string of village names that make our East Wobsley seem staid by comparison: Little Wigmarsh-in-the-Dell, Higgelford-cum-Wortlebury-beneath-the-Hill and Lesser Snodsbury-in-the-Vale. There is also Pondlebury Parva, which recalls the alliteration of Dingley Dell (cf Peatling Parva in Leicestershire with its corresponding Peatling Magna).

Mulliner’s Buck-U-Uppo, which actually mentions Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Sorcerer*, refers to the vicar of Lower Briskett-in-the-Midden, while Wilfred Mulliner, the inventor of *Buck-U-Uppo*, resides at The Gables, Lesser Lossingham. In *The Bishop’s Move*, Augustine Mulliner’s new address is The Vicarage, Steeple Mummery (qv the real Steeple Claydon).

So, who did start it? Was it Dickens, with his Muggletown, or are there earlier examples? Was it

Fingers Crossed for the Anthology

The appearance of a new Wodehouse Anthology, representing the best of Wodehouse as selected by Wodehouse enthusiasts, comes ever nearer. The publisher, Hutchinson, tells us that the arrangements are on schedule for the formal publication date of February 10, 2000. The exciting news for members of Wodehouse Societies around the world is that a special offer will mean not only that you can buy an unlimited number of copies at a discount from the retail price but that you may even be able to obtain possession of your copies in time for Christmas.

The book, introduced by Stephen Fry, will contain around twenty short stories (including most of those chosen by Society members as their favourites but also one or two surprises such as *The Eighteenth Hole*), and extracts from novels (including a scene from the American *Something New* which does not feature in *Something Fresh*), essays, poems, and extracts from letters and other material, much of which has had limited, if any, previous public exposure. There will be a number of illustrations from the contemporary magazine appearances of the stories.

The full list of contents (the book will be around 500 pages), will be detailed on an order form to be enclosed with the next issue of *Wooster Sauce*, (which you will receive around the end of November).

We have worked very closely with Hutchinson to provide an opportunity for UK-based members, at least, to take delivery of the book before Christmas. If a completed order form with payment is received from a UK address by Hutchinson by 14th December, then, *unless there is an unforeseen delay in the publication process*, the books will be despatched in time to arrive for Christmas. Hutchinson cannot make the same promise, for fairly obvious reasons, in relation to overseas orders.

The book will be in hard covers, retailing at £15.99, but until the end of April 2000 the post-free price to UK Society members will be £11.99. Members in Europe will be asked to pay £14.99 to include postage, and those further afield £15.99. Members will be able to order as many copies as they like.

We hope it makes an ideal Christmas present.

THE SMILE THAT WINS

Favourite Nifties – 8

"It did indeed, sir," said Keggs, looking reproachfully at Roscoe, like a bishop who has found his favourite curate smoking marihuana.

From *Something Fishy*, 1957

Silly Village Names (continued)

Barham, with Tappington Everard, or was it the quirky Gilbert? Is there anything earlier than Gilbert of the quality of Otium-cum-Digge or Spifton-extra-Sooper? But even these have a surreal quality which few later writers have sought to emulate. When reading Wodehouse you can almost believe that there was a Little Wigmore-in-the-Dell, or a Lesser-Snodsbury-in-the-Vale, and certainly a Pondebury Parva.

It is a facet of humorous writing which has persisted over the years. Two further manifestations are the eponymous setting of the famous post-war radio show *Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh*, written by and starring Kenneth Horne and Richard Murdoch, and, bringing us right up to date, Annie Tempest's strip cartoon illustrating the chronicles of Tottering-By-Gently. Long may fertile imaginations continue to delight us with such gems.

P G Wodehouse's Great-Great-Uncle Stands For Parliament

by James Hogg

P G Wodehouse's great-grandfather, the Revd Philip Wodehouse, was the brother of the 6th Baronet in the Wodehouse line, Sir John, who was thus PGW's great-great-uncle. Sir John was a politician, serving as MP for Norfolk from 1784 till 1797 when he became Lord Wodehouse, the first member of the family to be raised to the peerage. Fortunately for Wodehouse historians an account of his first election to parliament exists in the Revd James Woodforde's *Diary of a Country Parson*, published in five volumes in the 1920s.

Parson Woodforde (1740-1803) was a bachelor, who busied himself with the cure of souls at Weston Longville in Norfolk during the last 28 years of his life. Curiously it is the accounts of day after day of uneventful rural domesticity (with particular emphasis on what was eaten and drunk) which make his journals so hypnotically readable. The parson had a hearty appetite and one of the many gargantuan dinners he put away features in the story of Sir John Wodehouse's election.

Sir John makes his first appearance on April 3, 1784, when Parson Woodforde writes: 'Hurly, Burly Times at Norwich, an Election coming on . . .' (he is echoing the Second Witch in *Macbeth*:

When the hurlyburly's done
When the battle's lost and won).

He goes on to record the list of candidates for the city, including Sir Harbord Harbord, a name even PGW might have hesitated to invent. The parson then notes: 'Mr Townshend and Sr John Wodehouse rejected at Yarmouth and obliged to retire peaceably.'

But all was not lost for Sir John. He reappears in the story four days later, when Parson Woodforde's friend Mr Custance, the squire of Weston Longville, attends a committee meeting in Norwich to consider Sir John's candidature for the county, as opposed to Norwich itself. The next day, April 8, Parson Woodforde journeys to Norwich to hear the nomination of the candidates, including Sir John Wodehouse and Thomas Coke (because of his great agricultural improvements the latter was to become known simply as 'Coke of Norfolk', and was made Earl of Leicester in 1837). Parson Woodforde complains that, in the crush in St Andrew's Hall, 'the noise was so great the whole Time that I could not hear a single word.'

Elections were robust affairs in those days, and Sir John's supporters made their partisanship abundantly plain. When a board bearing the names of Coke and the third candidate, Sir Edward Astley, was put up, 'it was no sooner exposed than it was pulled down and broke all to Shivers. And then all for Wodehouse.'

By April 13 the talk is that it would be 'a severe contest'. Election day, April 14, finds the parson again in Norwich, where things are looking good for Sit John: 'About 10 o'clock the Market Place and Streets were lined with People and almost all with Wodehouse's Cockades in their Hats.' He decides that he and his household must follow suit, though the lower orders only qualify for the economy version. 'After breakfast I went to Mrs Brewsters and got 6 Cockades all for Wodehouse – 3 of them blue and Pink with Wodehouse wrote in Silver on the blue, the other 3 plain blue and Pink for my Servants at home. About 11 o'clock Sr John Wodehouse preceded with a great many Flaggs and a band of Musick, made his public Entry on horseback, attended with between two and three Thousand Men on Horseback.'

Later at the Shire House Sir John was unanimously chosen as Member for the county, together with Sir Edward Astley. Parson Woodforde watched them being 'chaired round the Market Place amidst an innumerable Number of Spectators and the loudest acclamations of Wodehouse for ever [215 years later we can still say 'bravo!' to that]. Sr Edwd Astley met with little applause. I never saw such universal Joy all over the City as was shown on behalf of Sr John Wodehouse.'

The great day ended less joyously for the Parson, who was staying the night with friends: 'I slept, if I can call it so, at Mr Priests and very uncomfortably indeed – did not get to bed till near 2 in the morning.'

By the following evening he was back on good form and went with his niece Nancy to see *The School For Scandal*, put on 'by desire of Sr John and Lady Wodehouse. Soon as ever they made their appearance – an universal Clap with Wodehouse for ever resounded from all Parts of the Theatre and the same on their leaving the Theatre.'

A Wodehouse Weekend

Geoff Hales, actor, Wodehouse enthusiast and Society member, is running a residential course, *A Weekend With Wodehouse*, at Maryland College, Woburn, Bedfordshire, from 5-7th November 1999.

The course, which is aimed at the general reader who would like to know more about the life and works rather than at the buff who already knows the times of all the trains from Paddington to Market Blandings, begins on Friday evening after dinner with a look at what Wodehouse read, concentrating on Conan Doyle and W S Gilbert. On Saturday we review the school stories and Psmith, Blandings and Bertie Wooster, and on Sunday morning there are sessions on the musical comedies and Wodehouse's career in Hollywood. The course ends with a celebration of the comic verse.

In addition, on the Saturday night, Geoff Hales, distinguishable from Wodehouse himself only by a

beard (supplied by Clarkson) will speak to the assembled multitude on the subject of his life and times as a writer of fiction and musical comedies, which will end with a reading of the scene in which Gussie Fink-Nottle presents the prizes at Market Snodsbury Grammar School.

Maryland, though marginally less spacious than Blandings and regrettably pigless, has been called by discerning visitors *The Thinking Man's Brinkley Court*, and the browsing and sluicing are excellent. Those wishing to get out the old two-seater and tootle down for the weekend should book by writing to Maryland College, Leighton Street, Woburn, MK17 9JD, or by ringing The cost of the weekend is £100 for residents and £86 for non-residents. Those wishing to attend only on the Saturday evening can do so for £18 (to include dinner) or £6 for the talk alone.

The Society has no involvement with this presentation, but we wish it well and hope it receives your support.

The Election of Sir John Wodehouse, MP

(Continued)

Squire Custance had also been a Wodehouse man, and no doubt with an eye to re-election in due course, Sir John did not forget his supporters. Later that year, on August 27, Parson Woodforde spent the afternoon with the Custances, who laid on a spread that was nothing out of the ordinary for these magnificent trenchermen and women: 'We had for dinner some Pike, a Couple of Fowls boiled and Piggs Face, green peas Soup and a prodigious fine and fat Haunch of Venison given by Sr John Wodehouse to Mr Custance – The second Course was a Fricasse, a Couple of Ducks roasted, green Peas, plumb Pudding, Maccaroni etc.' (Parson Woodforde was a martyr to wind, but never seemed to make the connection.)

There is only one more reference to Sir John in the journal, when three years later (still keeping the electorate sweet) he is recorded as giving Squire Custance another 'very fine fat Haunch of Venison'. He left the House of Commons in 1797 and, like his great-great-nephew Plum, lived till he was 93.

There is a curious sub-plot to the story, with national and international dimensions which put it way beyond Parson Woodforde's quotidian concerns. It links those same events in Norfolk with two revolutions of worldwide significance – one violent, one peaceful. It will be remembered that in the 1784 elections a Mr Townshend was rejected, along

with Sir John Wodehouse, by the voters of Yarmouth. He was the grandson of Viscount Townshend, the great agricultural innovator who introduced turnips into crop rotation on his Norfolk estate, thus encouraging the over-wintering of stock to the benefit of the whole country, and earning himself the title of 'Turnip' Townshend ever since.

Another grandson of 'Turnip' Townshend, and cousin of Sir John Wodehouse's fellow-candidate at Yarmouth, was the Hon Charles Townshend. As Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1766 he imposed the high taxes on tea and other necessities in the American colonies which ultimately provoked the American War of Independence. And who should be the Member of Parliament to put forward the Commons motion recognising American independence in 1783? None other than Thomas Coke, 'Coke of Norfolk', who was to be Sir John Wodehouse's opponent the following year. Coke's own celebrated farming improvements in the county link him with 'Turnip' Townshend, as do his actions over America with Turnip's grandson. Thus did Sir John Wodehouse's election, apparently so insignificant, connect with the momentous turning points of the 18th century. Yes, it's all a far cry from Jeeves and Bertie, but how intertwined was their creator's Norfolk ancestry with the history of England.

George Orwell on Wodehouse

Peter Cannon continues his study of Orwell's relationship with P G Wodehouse

Orwell's last word on Wodehouse is in a letter to Evelyn Waugh, dated 16 May 1948, thanking him for "a very good and sympathetic review in the *Tablet* of my book of essays". *Critical Essays* (1946) included *In Defence of P G Wodehouse*. Orwell wrote to Waugh:

In discussing the one on P G Wodehouse, you mentioned the 'pacifist strain' in his writings. This started me thinking about him again, and on looking up a rare early book called *The Gold Bat* I found passages which suggested that Wodehouse had had some kind of connection with the Liberal Party, about 1908, when it was the anti-militarist party. I will add a footnote to this affect <sic> if I ever reprint the essays.

Critical Essays was not reprinted until after Orwell's death in 1950. No footnote was added, according to Mr. Davison.

If Orwell and Wodehouse could get along well personally, it is also true that they were about as different as two writers could be who belonged to the English 'lower-upper-middle class', to use Orwell's term. Like Wodehouse's father, Orwell's father served the empire as a civil servant, in his case as a sub-deputy in the Indian Opium Department. Eric Blair, as he was before he adopted the pseudonym George Orwell, was born in Bengal, in 1903. The following year his mother brought him home to England. Young Eric would not see his father again, apart from a three-months' leave in 1907, until the senior Blair retired in 1912. Orwell attended private school as a boarder, and later won a King's Scholarship to Eton. ('Odd him being an old Etonian', Plum commented to William Townend in that letter of 29 April 1945.)

Like Wodehouse, Orwell was unable to go to university and had to spend some time, in his case five years in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma, before he could start pursuing a writing career. 'From a very early age, perhaps the age of five or six, I knew that when I grew up I should be a writer', Orwell says in his essay *Why I Write* (1946). Like Wodehouse, he was a great reader of the popular literature of the day, as revealed in his essay *Boys' Weeklies* (1940). The soppy authors like Ethel M. Dell and Rosie M. Ayres that Wodehouse gently parodied in his fiction, Orwell discussed forthrightly in his non-fiction. The hero of his novel *Keep the*

Aspidistra Flying finds consolation in reading *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

Orwell, however, was not, as Wodehouse remarked, your typical old Etonian. After returning from Burma, he deliberately sought out the underside of life. He washed dishes in Paris hotels, went hop-picking in Kent, and spent weeks on the road as a tramp, all of which went into his first book, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933). He claimed to have been miserable at his private school, as described in painful detail in *Such, Such Were the Joys*, a long essay completed around 1948 but not published until 1952 for fear of libel. From autobiographical writings such as these it is fair to conclude, as Wodehouse did, that Orwell enjoyed being unhappy. After a certain point Orwell became a purely political writer, as he explains in *Why I Write*:

The Spanish war and other events in 1936-7 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written, directly or indirectly, against *totalitarianism* and for democratic Socialism, as I understand it. It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think that one can avoid writing of such subjects.

Elsewhere in the same essay he observes:

No book is genuinely free of political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude.

It is no wonder that Orwell criticized Wodehouse's unwillingness to abandon his fantasy world during this period when he felt politics were so important, while it is equally no wonder that Wodehouse should on later reflection resent Orwell's chiding him for not being what today is known as 'politically correct'.

In real life Wodehouse ignored politics at his peril. In his fiction, on the other hand, he was perfectly right to remain true to his own muse. Besides, he did poke fun at Sir Roderick Spode and his 'Black Shorts' in *The Code of the Woosters* (1938). (Orwell probably missed this Jeeves novel as it was published the month after he and his wife arrived in French Morocco, following a serious bout with the tuberculosis that would ultimately kill him. They did not return to England until March 1939.)

George Orwell on Wodehouse

(Continued)

If Orwell was too hard on Wodehouse's 'politics', it should not be forgotten that he admired the man as a humorist. And if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then it is no surprise to find the Wodehouse influence in two novels that pre-date his conversion to polemicist, *A Clergyman's Daughter* (1935) and *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936). Orwell later considered both these novels failures and asked that neither one be reprinted in the standard edition of his works that his publisher was beginning to issue in the late 1940s.

A Clergyman's Daughter has an unlikely scenario. Dorothy Hare, the eponymous heroine, cracks under stress, mostly financial, and loses her memory. This provides the pretext for her to disappear from her village and undergo the kinds of down-and-out experiences Orwell relished, such as hop-picking in Kent and sleeping overnight in Trafalgar Square. Because her father and neighbours believe she has run off with the local cad, the newspapers report her disappearance as a scandal — which comes to the attention of a wealthy, titled cousin, who seems to have wandered in from one of the Blandings books:

Sir Thomas Hare was a widower, a good-hearted, chuckle-headed man of about sixty-five, with an obtuse rosy face and curling moustaches. He dressed by preference in checked overcoats and curly-brimmed bowler hats that were at once dashing smart and four decades out of date. At a first glance he gave the impression of having carefully disguised himself as a cavalry major of the 'nineties, so that you could hardly look at him without thinking of devilled bones with a b and s, and the tinkle of hansom bells, and the *Pink 'Un* in its great days, and Lottie Collings and *Tarara-BOOM-deay*. But his chief characteristic was an abysmal mental vagueness. He was one of those people who say "Don't you know?" and "What! What!" and lose themselves in the middle of their sentences. When he was puzzled or in difficulties, his moustaches seemed to bristle forward, giving him the appearance of a well-meaning but exceptionally brainless prawn.

Naturally Sir Thomas sends for his butler, "who was also his confidant and intellectual guide", and they have the following conversation:

"Look here, Blyth, dammit," said Sir Thomas prawnishly (Blyth was the butler's name), "I suppose you've seen all this damn' stuff in the

newspapers, hey? This 'Rector's Daughter' stuff? About this damned niece of mine."

Blyth was a small sharp-featured man with a voice that never rose above a whisper. It was as nearly silent as a voice can be while still remaining a voice. Only by watching his lips as well as listening closely could you catch the whole of what he said. In this case his lips signalled something to the effect that Dorothy was Sir Thomas's cousin, not his niece.

"What, my cousin, is she?" said Sir Thomas. "So she is, by Jove! Well, look here, Blyth, what I mean to say — it's about time we got hold of the damn' girl and locked her up somewhere. See what I mean? Get hold of her before there's any *more* trouble. She's knocking about somewhere in London, I believe. What's the best way of getting on her track? Police? Private detectives and all that? D'you think we could manage it?"

Blyth lips registered disapproval. It would, he seemed to be saying, be possible to trace Dorothy without calling in the police and having a lot of disagreeable publicity.

This is about as close to straight comedy as Orwell ever comes in his fiction, and his model is obvious. Blyth, by the way, does locate Dorothy and bring her home to Sir Thomas, who lives in a big house 'on the borderland between Knightsbridge and Mayfair.' She remains under her cousin's care only a short while, though, before the family solicitor finds her exactly the sort of dismal job that Orwell held at the time he wrote the novel, teaching at a third-rate school in the London suburbs.

Note: The third and final part of this series, in which Peter looks particularly at aspects of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, will be included in December's *Wooster Sauce*. In the meantime, turn to page 16 for Peter's review of the radio play *Plum's War*, in which Orwell was given the role of narrator.

Did You Know?

Printers' Errors - 11

P G Wodehouse's first published lyric was from the show *Sergeant Brue*. When *Put Me In My Little Cell* appeared, under the imprint of Hopwood and Crew Ltd, it read:

WRITTEN BY

G. E. WODEHOUSE

Portrait of a Members' Evening

Tim Andrew reports on the AGM and what followed on 13th July

With our customary foresight, about 50 Wodehouseans chose one of the hottest evenings of the year to gather at the Savage Club for the usual flow of reason and feast of soul. (Or is it vice versa? I can never remember.). A temperature in the 80s and humidity of the same order gave the proceedings a special intimacy.

Our gathering was spiced this time by a reading of *Portrait of a Disciplinarian*, a revelation by Murray Hedgcock and the ever-popular Annual General Meeting.

Sadly, our Chairman could not be with us. The AGM was therefore chaired by our *Wooster Sauce* Editor Tony Ring, who early on declared his intention of at least equalling last year's record by getting through the business in 7 minutes. Olympic athletes long ago realised that when attempting a world record, it can be helpful to have a timekeeper lurking somewhere in the offing. This aspect of the matter had escaped the normally meticulous planning of our esteemed ed., and he had to content himself with the muttered assertion that he was pretty sure he'd done it. And the business was indeed briskly done. Committee officers and members were elected and accounts approved - after our Treasurer, standing cannily at one end of the room, had waved them cheerily in the air for all to see - by that oft-invoked Kampuchean warlord *nem con*. Enjoyable as this was, we were able to pass quickly to the real substance of our meeting.

One member even entered into the spirit of the thing by keeping his contribution until afterwards. "Can we look at the accounts," he plaintively cried? "Yes," said the Treasurer, and showed them to him, her thumb remaining firmly fixed over the columns of numbers, "but if I show you I'll have to show everyone." Which is why an extract from the figures for the fourteen months to 31st May, 1999, appears below:

Subscriptions	£ 4,473	Cash at bank	£ 8,585
Other income	723	Dinner Receipts	3,640
Printing costs	2,759	Subs in advance	2,510
Postage etc	1,735	Loans	550
Other expenses	65	Creditors	297
Surplus for year	£ 637	Surplus to date	£ 1,588

Murray Hedgcock then told us how he had found a previously unknown photograph of Plum as a young man among the Bourton Vale cricket team that played against the MCC in August 1906. Murray promised to keep it short, by which he said he meant - in sharp contrast to the AGM - something less than 40 minutes. It was very enjoyable and we were disappointed when he kept to his word and did speak for a relatively short time.

As the main entertainment, we were treated to a reading of *Portrait of a Disciplinarian*, arranged by Helen Murphy and read by Georgina Beer (a seasoned professional), Bernadette Reddy, Bob Miller and Helen herself. The fact that not all the amateur readers seemed to have the pages of their script in the same order combined with the absence of a prompter gave the performance an added sense of the danger that makes live theatre so much more gripping than anything on a screen. It was great fun, much appreciated by all present.

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges – 10

"... I assure you, on the word of an English gentleman, that this lady is a complete stranger to me."

"Oh?" said the bloke. "Then what's she doing in your lap?"

Fate, in *Young Men in Spats* (1936)

Wodehouse as GCSE Therapy

Kirsty Bennett contributes to the 'My First Wodehouse Experience' feature

I only happened upon P G Wodehouse because I read *Moab is my Washpot* by Stephen Fry, and he incessantly refers to Wodehouse's works. I figured there must be something in it, and I bought a copy of *Right Ho, Jeeves* at Oxfam for 25p. The rest, as they frequently say, is history.

I happened to remark on this new found obsession to some friends, who found it hysterical, and I was bestowed with blank looks, and questions of the intellectual calibre of "Who?", "What?" and the truly arresting "Huh?"

It is hard for me to admit that I am a Wodehouse fan. My family thinks it is amusing, and as I have said, my friends look like they are going to explode into fits of laughter when I bring out a book. At my age it is a sensitive subject. Admitting to an interest in books is like, well, *treason*. It ranks up there with going to art galleries for *fun*, liking set texts, going into extra lessons in *anything*, or making friends with teachers. You see I am only sixteen, and as my associates will inform you, there is no greater treason than publicly admitting you like to *read*.

My friends, at least, seem to have accepted it as one of my quirks. I am the weird one, who quotes Oscar Wilde, uses long words like 'equanimity', uses phrases like "One must revise" or "One supposes that . . .", and reads 'big books' at breaktime.

At my tender age there are many ways to unwind, and whatever my associates may choose, I am only too content to escape the pressures of GCSEs with a Wodehouse novel, and drift into his world of elegant farce.



Kirsty, pictured with one of her books at her Birmingham home, hopes to study English Literature at University. She is one of a number of students who have joined the Society in recent months.

Will You Be in Washington in November or December?

In conjunction with an exhibition *John Bull and Uncle Sam: Four Centuries of British American Relations*, the Library of Congress will hold a five-part series looking at P G Wodehouse's work for stage and film, as well as how his writing was adapted for movies and television. Programs, which are free, are scheduled for Tuesdays November 16, 23 and 30, and December 7 and 14, and will be held in the Mary Pickford Theater in the Library of Congress.

The program includes films not seen for decades, and is sure to be of interest to all members who just happen to be in the Washington area at the right time.

Plummy Penpricks

Murray Hedgcock confesses to having occasional self-doubts

This anarchic study, if by any faint chance approved for publication, will no doubt be printed on asbestos, or at the very least, issued as an appendix, under plain cover, with a note that it is unsuitable reading for those of tender years, impressionable mind, or simple belief.

But I must be strong and speak up – and admit, with a shudder, that just now and then, once in a full moon, very occasionally – I DO WORRY ABOUT PLUM. To be blunt, there are little Plummy Pinpricks – or as I think of them, Penpricks – which bring the faintest crease to the marble brow, the merest hint of a raised eyebrow.

Heaven knows, I have fought; I have lain awake at night, tossing and turning, telling myself: “You MUST be strong - you MUST keep the faith.” But there is no escape: I speak up in hope that the adage on confession being good for the soul will prove true, to cleanse me and send me into tomorrow a better, nobler man, shriven of sin, an indulgence granted, allowed by the generosity and greatness of the Wodehouse heart to make a fresh start.

But what – you insist impatiently – am I rambling about? What is this terrible burden I bear, this disorientating revelation, this heresy, that makes me Not As Other (Wodehouse) Men? Well, Doctor – it comes gradually, as I embark on the periodic exercise of reading my way steadily through all the PGW titles. This happens every few months, when I feel the need for my sustained fix of Wodehouse, a private and personal indulgence usually arranged for bedtime, so that I can lie back and wallow with Psmith and Jeeves and Bertie and Lord Emsworth and The Empress, and the rest.

The symptoms are always the same: at a certain point, perhaps after a couple of books, maybe after half a dozen (depending on the order in which I devour them), I feel unease nibbling into my brain, as I lie with lips curved in the perpetual smile that steady doses of Wodehouses bring to the devotee.

I am gradually aware, as one so often is in the dim, small hours, of Something being there, Something niggling, Something knocking, Something intruding. And it is this: that for all the marvellous inventiveness and endless freshness of The Master (whisper it. Small type please, Mr Editor) HE CAN, JUST ONCE IN A NOW AND THEN, REPEAT HIMSELF. REPEAT HIMSELF. REPEAT HIMSELF.

Still whispering, and trying to curl myself into a ball in hope I may perhaps not be noticed, I list samples:

- 1 The occasions when debate sparks a rebuke, to the effect that ‘such-and-such is open for being whatever-it-is at this time of year’;
- 2 the gyrations of those afflicted by physical discomfort repeatedly recorded as like those of ‘ouled nail dancers’;
- 3 the definition of some dilemma as ‘a nice bit of box fruit’;
- 4 those stray cats in a strange alley, who always expect halfbricks to be bunged at them (to a cat-lover, this is unforgiveable cruelty: a halfbrick is Not Good for any cat);
- 5 the riposte after someone has indicated, ‘I don’t get your drift’, which is, of course: ‘I shall continue snowing’; and
- 6 that obsession Bertie develops with the phrase, ‘the fretful porpentine’, once he discovers it.

But perhaps most unforgiveably, just now and then, once in a while, once in a blue moon, so occasionally-as-not-really-to-happen-at-all-but-distinctly-there-in-the-background, I am truly irritated by Bertie’s continuing inability to take the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune with any sort of equanimity. Doesn’t B W Wooster, admirable in so many respects, learn anything, develop any sort of resilience, build up a thickish hide, accumulate some ability to deal with the blows and buffets of fate?

Doesn’t he know that nothing is ever as awful as he instantly assumes, that he is one of Nature’s protected, that Jeeves will assuredly come to the rescue, that he will always be saved in some fashion and either escape the scene quite unharmed, or else find all problems resolved somehow, even at the expense of his donning cap and bells as the fool of the party?

I make these points with trembling fingers: if only I knew the innermost secrets of my computer, I should record them in some form of information technology invisible ink, so that you would digest its terrible significance in gradual stages, only after application of a hot iron, lemon juice, or perhaps a Jeeves pick-me-up.

Please deal kindly with me as I seek absolution for this sin of doubt. Hear me declare, loudly and fervently, that in the end, and from the beginning, and along all the rose-strewn pathways in between, such minor quibbles merely make me love Plum all the more, reinforcing a welcome realisation that he

Noix de Riz de Veau Toulousaine

Albert Roux's third recipe from Anatole's menu

Ingredients for 4 servings

900 grams of veal sweetbread
 100 grams of butter
 1 small carrot, peeled and chopped
 1 small onion, peeled and chopped
 ½ small leek, chopped
 1 clove of garlic, crushed
 1 litre of chicken stock
 200 millilitres of double cream
 200 grams of coq combs
 100 grams of coq kidneys
 200 grams of white mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
 1 small truffle
 1 tablespoon of chives, chopped
 Salt and pepper, to taste

The Combs

Using a needle, lightly prick the combs. Place the combs under running water for several hours until they are clean of blood.

Place the combs in a saucepan, cover with cold water and bring to 45°C. Drain and rub each comb with a tea towel with salt to remove the skin.

Soak the combs again in cold water until they become white in colour. Cook them with 500ml of boiling chicken stock for 35 minutes. Remove from heat and leave to cool. Drain from the liquid when needed.

The Sweetbreads

Place the sweetbreads into a large pan and cover with cold water. Soak for 4 to 5 hours, changing the

water from time to time. Blanch the sweetbread in boiling water for 5 minutes, refresh, drain and remove the skin and outer membrane. Place the sweetbreads between two tea-towels with a light weight on top. Keep cool..

To Cook and Assemble the Dish

In a saucepan, melt the butter, add the carrots, onions and leeks. Cook until pale golden. Add the crushed garlic and cook for one minute. Place the sweetbreads over the vegetables and cook them on both sides, but do not allow them to colour.

Meanwhile, bring the chicken stock to a boil and pour over the sweetbreads. Season lightly and simmer for ten minutes.

Remove the sweetbreads from the cooking liquid, cover with a damp cloth and keep warm. Strain the cooking liquid through a fine sieve. Place in a saucepan and reduce by two-thirds. Add the double cream, bring to a simmer and cook until slightly syrupy. Add the sliced truffle, season to taste and keep warm.

In the meantime, sauté separately the coq kidneys, combs and mushrooms with a little butter. Keep warm on a paper towel.

Slice the sweetbreads and arrange in the centre of each plate. Divide and spoon the kidneys, coq's combs and mushrooms equally over each plate of sweetbreads.

Spoon the sauce over and sprinkle each plate with chopped chive.

Timbale de Riz de Veau Toulousaine has the honour of being the dish of Anatole which was mentioned most frequently in the Jeeves and Wooster saga. After being listed as one of the constituent parts of the *Dinner of Legend and Song* in *The Code of the Woosters*, Aunt Dahlia threatened to deprive Bertie of the chance to taste a reprise in *Jeeves Makes an Omelette*.

In *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, Bertie wondered about the consequences of meeting Stilton Cheesewright after tasting the dish. ('It cannot ever, of course, be agreeable to find yourself torn into a thousand pieces with a fourteen-stone Othello doing a *Shuffle Off To Buffalo* on the scattered fragments, but if you are full at the time of Anatole's *Timbale de ris de veau Toulousaine*, the discomfort unquestionably becomes modified.')

Kipper Herring showed his pleasure on being reassured that the dish was still in Anatole's repertoire in *Jeeves in the Offing*. Gussie complained to Bertie that one consequence of his being forced by Madeline Bassett to become a vegetarian was that he had to turn down the *Timbales* two nights in succession, and if it hadn't been for the presence of cold steak-and-kidney pie in the house this might almost have prepared Bertie for Gussie's elopement with the cook, Emerald Stoker.

Finally, in *Much Obligated, Jeeves*, a sombre Bertie expressed his doubts that even the thought of the dish outweighed the presence at the dinner table of Spode, Madeline, Florence Craye and L P Runkle.

A Famous Victory, But What Would Plum Have Said? Murray Hedgcock ponders the Dulwich question

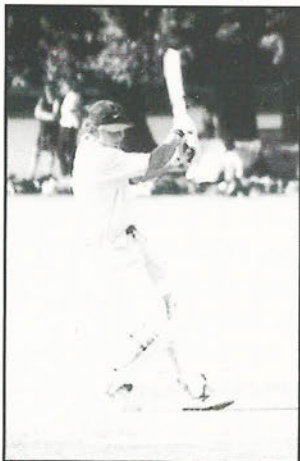
Dulwich College in many respects – not least its cricket field – looks much as it did when the young Pelham Grenville Wodehouse arrived in 1894. But it was impossible not to wonder on June 18, 1999, ‘What would Plum have thought?’ as the Society XI – The Gold Bats – tackled the Common Room team who play as the Dulwich Dusters.



The All-conquering Gold Bats

On the far side of the playing fields, boys were booting a football. Cricketers in coloured rig batted in the nets against bowlers using yellow balls, and the first wicket in the match went to a sharp catch by a female square leg wearing shorts. Dulwich of 105 years ago would not have dreamed of

offering Italian on the curriculum taught by an athletic young woman, and would have gaped at the prospect of her appearance in footer bags alongside the masters. Who says the public schools do not advance?



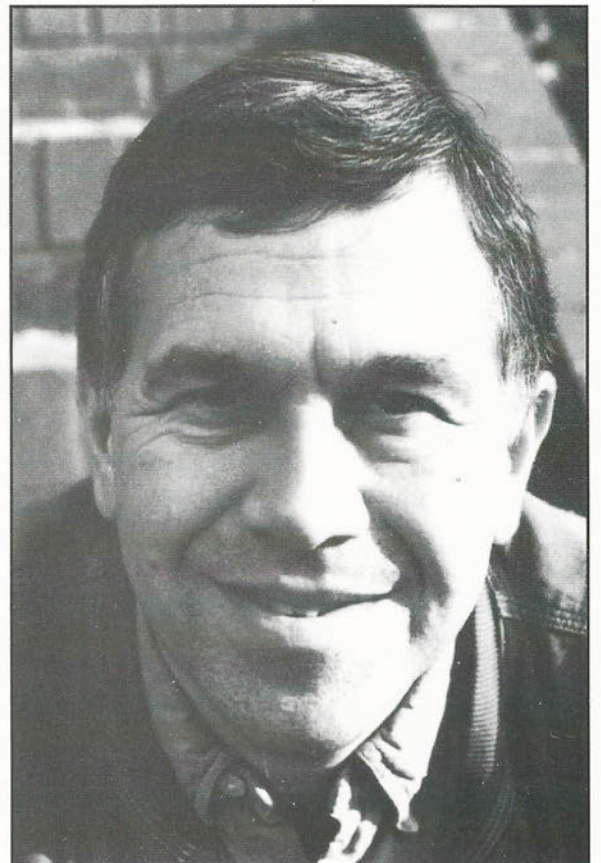
David Cazalet in action

But the key to PGW is that capacity to make his vanished world strike a ringing chord in today’s time of change and upheaval, providing endless inspiration of the sort that sparked the 1999 Dulwich celebrations. Cricket in sunshine entertained a considerable crowd as The Gold Bats atoned for 1998 defeat. Plum would have been proud of David Cazalet, Lorenzo Austin and Alan Hurley who made the runs in the Bats’ 134 for 8 wickets, and of Bob Miller, Paul Rush, Austin and Hurley, as they humbled the Dusters for 101 in a match sprinkled with slips and sixers, imagination and execution, attacks and errors.

Cooling beverages courtesy of *Jeeves of Belgravia* provided the stimulant to ‘prep’ – the early evening session when visitors browsed at the PGW exhibition set up by archivist Dr Jan Piggott, strolled in the gardens, or milled in the Lower Hall before 120 members and guests took their seats in the Great Hall for dinner.

The toast to Plum’s most famous fan, HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, was proposed by Sir Edward Cazalet, while Old Alleynians, Test cricketer Trevor Bailey and writer Simon Brett (sadly impervious to cricket but fully receptive to Wodehouse), entertained with fact and fantasy linked to Plum, his cricket and his college.

We loved it, while being aware that the intensely shy PGW would have performed the famous ‘Wodehouse glide’ (the family name for his disappearing trick in company), and vanished through the nearest exit, in genuine embarrassment at the enthused indications of this celebration in his honour. ‘If he perseveres, he certainly will succeed,’ wrote headmaster A H Gilkes of the 17-year-old PGW, exactly 100 years ago. Spot on, Gilkes, old chap.



Simon Brett responds to the toast

By The Way: Your Comments

Several members wrote in with comments on the selection of authors put forward in the recent By The Way (June 1999)

Michael Greener of Barry regrets the exclusion of H H Munro ('Saki'), and he is not alone in querying the omission of George and Weedon Grossmith's *Diary of a Nobody*. He also suggests Stella Gibbons's *Cold Comfort Farm* and A G Macdonell's *England, their England*.

Michael has reservations about some of the authors listed, however, as lacking either masterly control of the English language or a great gift of humour. He would eliminate on these grounds Kingsley Amis, F Scott Fitzgerald and (surprisingly, as far as your editor is concerned) Dorothy L Sayers.

Ken Krober of Shirley, Solihull proposes Arthur Binstead's books *A Pitcher in Paradise*, *A Pink 'Un* and *a Pelican*, and *Mop Fair*, the later Pelican books written by J B Booth and *Chestnuts* by Swears.

Donald Daniel of Swansea, whose original idea this exercise was, favours E M Dellafield's *Provincial Ladies* novels and Havelock Ellis's *Diary of a Prep Schoolmaster*.

David Hudson of Milton Keynes queries whether C P Snow is truly relevant, even though he admits to having read and enjoyed all the *Strangers and Brothers* series. He thinks Victor Canning should be included for his *Mr Finchley* books.

Plummy Penpricks

(Continued)

may have been The Master – but he was also, thank heaven, only human.

And in the end, I stand back, note and consider in admiration the extraordinary output from PGW over those continuing decades, and marvel that he should produce so much that is fresh, different and stimulating every time he put finger to Royal, for our ultimate and endless delectation, and that so little ever is repetition.

FOOTNOTE: Sudden thought. Are these repetitions deliberate? Is it all a trick of wily old Plum to maintain our interest and revive it every time we come on a familiar phrase, when we are pleased to recognise something we have read before? And if I had the benefit of a proper English education, instead of being a simple colonial brought up in the distant bush, might I have understood this from the start? I clearly have more thinking to do . . .

Penguin Progress

Proposed plan for 2000 issues

Penguin have told us that the systematic reprint of more than forty titles with David Hitch covers is progressing smoothly. Apart from the *Jeeves and Wooster* titles, *Eggs*, *Beans and Crumpets* and the *Mulliner Omnibus* are available and the *Blandings* series (except *Sunset at Blandings*) is due in October. The three other omnibuses (*Blandings*, *Jeeves and Wooster* and *Uncle Fred*) have been deferred from November 1999 until the end of 2000, but their provisional plan for the rest of next year is:

March	Hot Water Laughing Gas The World of Psmith Ukridge
April	The Small Bachelor A Damsel in Distress
May	Sunset at Blandings Big Money Summer Moonshine The Adventures of Sally The Girl in Blue
June	Money for Nothing The Luck of the Bodkins Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin Piccadilly Jim

A Pelican at Blandings

Has it ever occurred to you that the personality of the irascible Duke of Dunstable matches that of a number of characters played by the late Jimmy Edwards? Or that in one's imagination the Duke, with his walrus moustache, would look just like the comedian? In Chivers's latest unabridged reading, *A Pelican at Blandings*, Nigel Lambert goes further, for the way he interprets the Duke's lines brings the whole personality of that misguided peer to the fore. Nigel is building a nice library of the *Blandings* titles, and this is another successful production. In the copy I reviewed one of the six tapes had a fault, an occasional problem which will, of course, be remedied by a free replacement.

Chivers's final release of this year will be available in December: *Uncle Dynamite*, read by Jonathan Cecil. *A Pelican at Blandings* may be obtained for £15.99 by calling Freephone 0800 136919; or from Chivers North America (1-800-621-0182)

A Sunny Day at the Shaw Festival

The Shaw Festival of Theatre is an annual celebration which takes place from April to November at the charming tourist resort of Niagara-on-the-Lake, just over the Canadian border from Buffalo, New York. Eight productions are being performed in repertory at the three theatres and, as was the case in its first season in 1998, the first to sell out for all its 126 performances has been *A Foggy Day*, performed at the 320-seat Royal George Theatre.

This is a musical based on *A Damsel in Distress*, to which 16 Gershwin songs, from *The Goldwyn Follies*, *Funny Face*, *Treasure Girl*, *Tip-Toes*, *Oh, Kay!*, *Pardon My English* and the film of *A Damsel in Distress*, were added. I am delighted to report that the music and the book meshed neatly. One problem which the librettist had to overcome was the need to find a meaningful introduction to each of the songs, which severely restricted the extent to which the original Wodehouse book dialogue could be used. Nevertheless, the show remains far more faithful to the main strands of the plot of the book than was the case with the 1937 film, and in some of Ira Gershwin's lyrics (such as that rhyming 'lorgnette' with 'born yet') we can recognise the Wodehousean influence to which he so often confessed.

Many of the cast have been part of the repertory company for many years, Richard Farrell, a noted Shavian actor playing Lord Marshmoreton, being in his 19th season. It was surprising to learn that it is his first appearance in a musical. Nora McLellan as Billie Dore is in her 15th year. Although her casting as someone whom I had always assumed to be on the petite side at first sight appeared surprising, her robust appearance accurately reflects the role her character was given.

In this plot it is Billie, not George Bevan, who resorted to physical means to preserve the hiding-place of the heroine (named Jessica rather than Maud Marsh for this production) and it was the Marshmoreton butler Keggs, and not Maud's brother Lord Belpher, who was on the receiving end. (It is always necessary to reduce the number of characters in translating Wodehouse for the theatre, and the changes here would not have been visible to a lay audience.)



Several cast members of *A Foggy Day* find themselves tied up in knots.

Photograph: David Cooper

In Shaw Festival musicals no microphones are used. This gives the sound a purer quality but clearly represents a more difficult challenge to the performers. Although sitting in the fourth row from the back of the stalls, I had no difficulty at all with the volume of sound, either of the dialogue or the song.

A number of changes were made to the text this year to increase the spoken exchanges between Keggs and the maid Albertina, to reduce the conversational element of the main love interest and to insert into the most spectacularly choreographed routine, *Stiff Upper Lip*, a spoken interlude. I was told that the main object was to add further to the humour in the show, which was very popular with the audience, at the expense of the relatively routine love affair.

The audience would have appreciated a return to the seemingly defunct habit of providing encores for the show-stoppers. Wodehouse was all in favour of the concept of the encore, of course, and in some cases prepared additional lyrics which were marked down as 'First Encore' or 'Second Encore' for what were thought to be the strongest songs.

The Shaw Festival is to be congratulated on producing *A Foggy Day* for a second season, and demonstrating that interpolated numbers can be used to create or enhance an existing adaptation. We would love to see it visit the UK. (T R)



PROFILE OF A PATRON

Whilst at Oxford, Iain Sproat helped to found the University's P G Wodehouse Society, which 'flourished pleasantly on laughter and mulled claret', and joined one of the its Presidents (Richard Mawrey, now an eminent QC) in a birthday telephone call to Plum on Long Island. Iain visited Tolstoy's house whilst in Russia, and saw on a table by his bedside six books he had been reading shortly before he died in 1910. Five were in Russian; the odd one out was a bound volume of *Captain* magazines including early Wodehouse stories. In 1981, drawing on then unpublished and unreleased MI5 files, he wrote *Wodehouse at War* which finally and conclusively cleared Wodehouse of charges arising from the 1941 broadcasts. Iain also found time for a political career, sitting as an MP for 18 years, and being Minister of State in the Department of National Heritage in the last government. He has just published the *Complete Works of Pushkin* in English, in 15 volumes.

Come and See Wodehouse at Guildford *says Matthew Alexander*

Matthew Alexander is Curator of the Museum at Guildford, Surrey, Plum's birthplace. He writes:

"PGW was born on the Epsom Road in 1881, and baptised at St Nicolas Church. Alas, this seems to be his only connection with Guildford for he left soon afterwards. His mother was staying with friends at the time, and shortly afterwards returned to her husband in Hong Kong, leaving little Pelham Grenville to the care of a series of aunts.

I have long wished to have him more prominently acknowledged as a son of Guildford. There is a plaque on 59 Epsom Road but nothing in the town centre to commemorate his connection. I would like eventually to have a suitable piece of public art in a prominent location. As a prelude to this, though, I am anxious to raise public awareness that Guildford was his birthplace and accordingly I have organised a series of events for the Book Festival between 9th and 30th October."

The Society regards this initiative as an important step in developing a greater awareness of the broader aspects of Plum's career. The material being created for the exhibition will be available for similar exercises in museums, libraries or other locations up and down the country (and beyond), and members' ideas on how it can be improved would be welcomed.

Preliminary information about various activities was given in the June edition of *Wooster Sauce*. It can be summarised as follows:

9th to 30th October – Mr P G Wodehouse from Guildford

An exhibition on the life of the author.

24th October – Plum Sauce

A celebration of Wodehouse in word and song by Jonathan Cecil and Anna Sharkey

27th October – A Damsel in Distress

A talk, glass of wine and showing of the film starring Fred Astaire for which Wodehouse wrote the script.

28th October – Wodehouse's England

An illustrated lecture by Norman Murphy

29th October – Ladies' Night at the Drones

A party with fizz and nibbles, with a dramatic and musical entertainment by the Guildford School of Acting. Formal Dress is compulsory!

30th October – Drones Club Games

Games and pranks for children and silly asses.

Details of locations and admission prices may be found on the enclosed form. Please try to support these events, and if you can spare time to help, contact

Plum's War

reviewed by Peter Cannon

(*Plum's War* by Michael Butt was broadcast on Radio 4 on 7th July.)

Plum's War, Radio 4's enjoyable dramatisation of how Plum came to make those broadcasts on German radio during World War II, opens with his famously brief speech ("Thank you.") upon receiving his honorary degree at Oxford. The action proceeds to Le Touquet, where he and Ethel (and their Pekes) fail to escape the advancing Germans, to internment camp, to a meeting with a German friend from Hollywood days who invites him to broadcast to America (he has to think about it), and eventually to Paris, where he takes Major Cussen's advice that it would not be a good idea to return to England. Pointing up the connection between his life and work are extracts from the books, including the passage where Bertie overhears Jeeves describing the young master as mentally negligible.

Plum's War presents a sympathetic and I dare say fair portrait of Plum as a political innocent, as a man willing to put up with almost anything so long as wives and enemy captors allow him to write. The villain of the piece is Duff Cooper, Minister of Information, who against advice from the Board of the BBC permits the journalist William Connor (Cassandra) to attack Wodehouse as a traitor – and who gives George Orwell, the ostensible narrator of *Plum's War*, the idea for Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

My one complaint is that the author for the sake of the story has been unfair to Orwell, who comes across as the unhappy, gloomy bird of myth. Big Brother would surely approve of the fictions used to explain how Orwell came to write *In Defence of P G Wodehouse*. The real relationship between the two writers was far more complicated and interesting than one would guess from *Plum's War*.

Note: for the second part of Peter Cannon's article *George Orwell on Wodehouse* see page 6.

Letters to the Editor

From David Hudson of Milton Keynes

I rather enjoyed the fanciful article: *What if the HSBC . . . (WS10, p8)*. My first job after leaving school in 1948 was with the Midland Bank in Mill Hill, a not dissimilar suburb to Dulwich. Practices there had not changed much in 50 years: letters were typed in purple ink and copied into a huge bound book by means of damp cloths and a heavy press. My first job in the morning was to dampen the cloths, which had to be just right, otherwise the copies were smudged, or didn't come out at all. We used to sit on high stools at sloping desks, using scratchy pens and inkpots, just like Psmith or Bob Cratchitt.

(David also commented on the result of the ballot for the *Anthology*. He said that, on rereading his overall favourite, *The Great Sermon Handicap*, recently, he had noticed that one of the runners listed was Rev Cuthbert Dibble.)

"The name," writes David, "sounded familiar. And then it came to me. In every programme of *Camberwick Green* the firemen used to parade for roll call, which was read out, and it went: 'Pugh, Pugh, Barney McGrew, Cuthbert, Dibble, Grubb.'"

No coincidence, surely.

From Chris Bowles of Hemel Hempstead

Was that remarkable actress, the late Irene Handl, a closet PGW fan? For evidence, merely turn to a track she wrote for a 1959 album on which she appeared with her great friend Peter Sellers, *Songs for Swinging Sellers*. Entitled *Shadows on the Grass*, the track involves a randy widow, played by Handl, wildly dropping Malapropisms while getting off with an equally eager Frenchman (Sellers). At one stage she rebukes him and declares: "I'll set Bill Oakshott on you."

Surely such a name could only come from someone who had read *Uncle Dynamite*? You don't just pick a name like that out of the phone book.

More Audiotapes for Members!

Chivers Audio's main competitor in the United States is Blackstone Audio, which offers 34 unabridged readings by Frederick Davidson of Wodehouse titles, fifteen of which have not been recorded by Chivers.

The Society has negotiated a 25% discount off the published price (\$32.99 to \$44.99) for their cassettes, and is working on the practical details such as how to order and pay for the tapes, and what shipping arrangements will be made. This is thus no more than early notice of what is to come in December, when a list of the titles and a note of the final arrangements will be given. But to whet your appetites, we will merely say at this stage that one of the books offered is the elusive *Not George Washington*.

Professor Philip Thody

1928-1999

Margaret Slythe pays a tribute

For twenty-eight years until his retirement in 1993, Philip Thody was Professor of French Literature at Leeds University. As an academic with a wit, irreverence and pleasure in human foibles, PGW became a natural resource for him and his contribution to the Dulwich Pilgrimage of 1989, *P G Wodehouse and English Literature*, remains a highlight. Philip Thody, needless to say, found Plum's description of an Englishman about to speak French useful all his life and performed by him in French, it always brought the house down.

PGW's desire to be more English than any other young English writer formed the basis of Philip Thody's international lecture circuit. He searched in vain for a comparable French author in the Wodehouse tradition: one who makes you laugh, without feeling guilty or uncomfortable, who rejects sentimentality and is steeped in the writings of his own countrymen.

Philip Thody shared with Plum a golfer's joy and, Tom Sharpe excepted, his laughter was the loudest heard in the Dulwich Archive throughout the 1980s. He understood perfectly why Plum played only against himself, aspiring to the longest shot he ever made. In Jeeves and Wooster, Thody acknowledged as irresistible the ultimate dissoluble pair; the contrast between knowledge and innocence, bafflement and the calm removal of complexities. Like James Bond's survival against all odds, there is always the comforting reassurance that Bertie will be rescued and that common sense will prevail beyond privilege.

Philip Thody was intrigued by PGW's accurate accounts of life for the more fortunate in the 20th century and considered that Plum's portraits of male/female relationships explain the ease with which the women's movements triumphed in English-speaking countries. Wodehouse gave to the world the Englishman losing gracefully in the face of strong female intervention. 'I shall have glory by this losing day' was a Brutus quotation that Philip Thody liked to use; it might have been claimed by Wodehouse as his own. With his words of elegance and perfection, PGW inspired Philip Thody, and *Right Ho, Jeeves*, which he considered the best among them all, travelled with him everywhere. Philip was a Wodehouse devotee for all the reasons we understand and the most charming companion.

POETS' CORNER

My Forte

I'm not a good dancer, I freely admit,
 Though the tune be a nice one of Strauss's:
 And my partner, I fear, says, when I disappear,
 "How clumsy that Mr Wodehouse is!"
 But I shine at that function beloved of each class,
 The middle, the low and the upper –
 In the ball-room I seem an incompetent ass;
 But, by Jingo! I sparkle at supper.

I never was taught in the days of my youth
 The waltz with its intricate movements;
 I don't know the tricks of the steps (which are six)
 Let alone all the latest improvements.
 As I plough round the room, on the train of a dress
 I oft with a blundering shoe step,
 The Lancers I shun, and I score even less
 At that horrid invention, the two-step.

I feel that my partner regards me with hate
 Before I've completed the circuit.
 (I hide from the start in a corner apart
 If I only can manage to work it.)
 But soon comes the moment that lightens my grief,
 And my limbs, which were rigid, grow supple,
 And I lead off a lady, with sighs of relief,
 To a table that's built for a couple.

My features, once long, are relaxed in a smile,
 My faculties, frozen, again work;
 And my talk as we eat would afford quite a treat
 To those who appreciate brain-work.
 Do I try the pathetic? Look close, you will see
 Her form with a half-suppressed sob stir:
 Am I humorous? Mark how she chuckles with glee
 Till she cannot proceed with the lobster.

My pithy remarks never fail to impress,
 My wit never known to grow stale is;
 I discuss with a gay flow of satire some play
 At the Haymarket, Waldorf or Daly's.
 On matters of taste in the region of Art
 I prove a most useful adviser,
 On politics, too, I have views to impart
 Which render her better and wiser.

I'm not a good dancer, I freely admit;
 I'm what you would call a bad starter.
 And I sometimes surprise in my partner's blue eyes
 The agonised look of a martyr.
 With heart in my shoes I advance to my doom,
 And shuffle along till I'm dropping;
 The air appears heavily laden with gloom,
 But at supper, by Jingo! I'm topping.

This first appeared in Pearson's in November 1906

Recent Press Comment

Times, May 27 (from John Hayzeldean)

In its daily *Word-Watching* game, the word 'preux' appeared and was defined as:

'Brave, valiant, gallant. Chiefly in *preux chevalier*, a gallant knight, much used by that rascal Wodehouse. From the Old French *preu*. Late Latin *prodis*. Barham *Ingoldsby Legends* 1840: Preux Chevaliers, in friendly rivalry/Who should best bring back the glory of Chivalry.'

The Salisbury Review, Summer 1999 (from James Hogg)

Writing on Shakespeare and the Book of Common Prayer, Margot Thompson said that 'Shakespeare was a master of the embedded quotation in which a word or two, or a sentence or two, is skilfully worked into the author's own material', and added that 'Kipling and P G Wodehouse have been the supreme masters of the technique in the present century'.

Times of India (from Alekh Burke)

Reported on an attempted burglary at a London bakers, foiled when the shop assistants rose to the occasion in true Drones Club style, throwing buns and Cornish pasties at the intruder. "There was just the one pasty, to be honest," one of the assistants was quoted as saying, "but it was a direct hit and certainly slowed him down. I'm a pretty good shot. I think it was the shock of being hit by a pasty more than anything that held him up."

The News, June 12 (from Tessa Daines)

This local paper reported the Society's visit to Emsworth and to 'Threepwood' in Record Road.

Times, 17 June (from Erica Kirby)

Dr Thomas Stuttaford claimed that prunes had now been rehabilitated, being rich in anti-oxidants as well as retaining the traditional benefits beloved of matrons of private schools. "All those who spent their early childhood at boarding school will share P G Wodehouse's opinion of prunes and, like him, will thereafter have looked at them with suspicion." (*Editor's note: see Laughing Gas*, chapters 9 to 12)

Daily Mail, June 21 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Keith Waterhouse wrote as follows on the Earl and Countess of Wessex's choice of title:

How quaint, how Ruritanian, that the happy pair should be given titles of a non-existent territory that belongs to a lapsed Anglo-Saxon kingdom and is now known only as the setting for the novels of Thomas Hardy.

No reason why a fairytale bride and groom should not take their new names from fiction, but why

Hardy, who is hardly read these days? A far more popular author is P G Wodehouse, who created the most celebrated fictitious earl ever.

The Earl and Countess of Emsworth would have been a splendid title. They could keep pigs and rename their lovely home Blandings Castle, and every so often Lord Emsworth would be let off the leash to potter off to the Drones Club.

It would be no more surreal than what they have been saddled with in Improved New Labour's Cool Britannia Wonderland.

Here's hoping they lead a quiet and uneventful life. But that prize sow the Empress of Blandings would give added zest to it.

Sunday Times, 27 June

Godfrey Smith wrote an extensive column about the Society and its Dulwich day.

Times, July 1

Matthew Parris's political sketch of John Prescott's attendance at Prime Minister's question time referred to him as 'a working-class Wooster with a hundred Jeeveses in attendance'.

Financial Times, July 2 (from John Ross Phillips)

One of several papers to report that *Ask Jeeves* had become the latest stunning success among Internet public stock offerings, closing more than 360% above its offer price.

Spectator, July 10; *Observer*, July 11; *Sunday Telegraph*, July 11

All carried favourable reviews of *Plum's War*, the Michael Butt radio play reviewed on page 16.

Times, July 16

In one of her excellent articles on the British Open Golf Championship, Lynne Truss wrote of the day of hell when the defending champion Mark O'Meara could only return an 83. Another competitor with a similar score said "Your pride is hurt a bit when you shoot in the eighties – I mean, I'm a professional golfer", after having been 'obliged to excavate the rough stuff just like the cameo character in P G Wodehouse's golf stories referred to as the Second Gravedigger'.

Scotland on Sunday, July 25 (from J Melvyn Haggarty)

Neil Drysdale, in an article about the footballer Ally McCoist wrote: 'If Caledonia requires a personality to refute P G Wodehouse's oft-quoted reference to the difference between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine, they should simply cite the inspirational qualities of a certain Alistair McCoist.'

Millennium Tour News from Hilary Bruce

An air of expectancy hung over Planning HQ for a day or so after the Millennium Tour was mooted in the last *Wooster Sauce*. Would the idea prove to be The People's Choice? If only a few thought so, then the tour would not be viable. But if, in sharp contradistinction, enough People voted with their phones and their e-mails, we could pretty well bank on having an extraordinarily good time next summer.

And that's what is on the cards. The first call came from Portugal and expressions of interest have rolled in from India, the UK and the USA. If bookings go as well as these indications suggest, Shropshire should start stiffening its sinews right now.

A booking form is enclosed with this issue of *Wooster Sauce*. It will also appear on the Society's website. We are offering places to members of the US Society through their newsletter *Plum Lines*. Places are limited so please, if you want to join in the fun, book early . . . book NOW.

As you will readily detect from the booking form, the week-long Wodehouse-fest, July 17 to 23, comes in two sections. When London gets too hot for us, we make for the country and, disguising ourselves as a charabanc tour, attempt to insinuate ourselves into the grounds of Blandings Castle and even, perhaps, into the Castle itself. Each part can be booked separately and no charge will be made to local members who wish to join us at a London activity.

We are expecting to add a number of optional events to the very full basic programme such as, in London, a Savage Club evening, a dinner or so and, we hope, a Wodehousean entertainment, for which the extra cost we will have to make will be kept to as modest a level as possible.

So, get Jeeves to chuck a sock or so in the old valise and make your reservation now. With a following wind, next July (the 17 to 23rd, if you've forgotten) will surely be a memorable marker for the true Millennium to follow.

Recent Press Comment, continued

Times, July 30

The paper's *On This Day* feature referred back to July 30, 1923, specifically to a period of depression for London Theatres, with nine productions in the process of closing. Of these, *The Cabaret Girl* had been very successful at the Winter Garden and was to be succeeded by *The First Prize*, a new musical comedy by George Grossmith with lyrics by P G Wodehouse and music by Jerome Kern.

(Editor's Comment: The Cabaret Girl had also been a Grossmith/Wodehouse/Kern musical and had run for 361 performances. *The First Prize* was renamed *The Beauty Prize* before opening and ran for 213 performances.)

Daily Telegraph, July 30 (from William Hardwick)

Carried an advertisement for videos of the first two series of the TV programme *Jeeves and Wooster* for £29.99 plus postage, which could be ordered on 0541 557 115, quoting reference DT00193.

Times, 31 July

Broke a diary story that Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman had bought a house in Dulwich and were considering sending their son Connor to Dulwich College.

(Editor's Comment: This was followed up in the *Evening Standard* on August 2 and August 4)

Shropshire Star (from Hilary Bruce)

Mark Waugh reported on a plan to restore Apley Hall, Norton, Shropshire (where he claimed PGW had stayed), and suggested it had been the inspiration for Blandings Castle.

(Editor's Comment: This was followed up in the *Daily Telegraph* on August 2 and August 4)

Sunday Times, August 8

Christopher Hope named *The Code of the Woosters* as the comfort book to which he returns to get his bearings again. "Sane and funny."

Guardian, August 9

Frank Keating wrote a long, well-researched article about sport featuring in Wodehouse's prose.

Times, August 24

In an article about Anne Widdecombe, Libby Purves wrote:

She is rude, she is harsh, she is unyielding. She has a perverse appeal which cuts across social barriers. The nation which nurtured Donald McGill [of seaside postcard fame] and P G Wodehouse has a sneaking fondness for the big, strict landlady with a rolling pin, for Bertie Wooster's Aunt Agatha and the sound of 'aunt calling unto aunt like mastodons bellowing across the primeval swamps'.

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

October 9 to 30 – Exhibition and related events at Guildford Museum

For full details, including information on how to obtain tickets for the various evening events, please see page 15 and the enclosed booking form.

October 16 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Join the Chairman on one of his famous walks round Wodehouse's London. Please call Norman on to register your interest and confirm where and when to meet in central London.

October 22 to 24 – TWS Convention in Houston

There remain vacancies for this Wodehouse carnival.

November 6 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

For instructions, see October 16.

November 16 – Informal meeting at the Savage Club

Join other members from 6pm and hear Peter Barker read from *Something Fresh*. The Savage Club is to be found in the premises of the National Liberal Club, 1

Whitehall Place, which is close to both Embankment and Charing Cross underground stations.

2000

February 15 – Informal meeting at the Savage Club

Advance notice of our regular evening meeting.

June 16 – Cricket Match

The Gold Bats v The Dusters at Dulwich College

July 17 to 23 – Wodehouse Society Millennium Tour

For full details, including information on how to make a booking, please see page 19 and the enclosed booking form.

July 18 – Informal meeting at the Savage Club

Advance notice of our regular evening meeting, which will probably include the AGM, and will form part of the Society's Millennium Tour.

October 12 OR October 19 – Society Dinner

Expected date of the Society's formal (black tie) dinner. More details in a future issue.

November 14 – Informal meeting at the Savage Club

Advance notice of our regular evening meeting.

EDITOR'S TAILPIECES

Those of you who ever met Charlotte Murphy, wife of our Chairman, will be very sorry to learn of her recent death. Our sincere condolences to Norman, their daughter Helen (our Membership Secretary) and the other members of the family.

The hit film *Notting Hill* which was released earlier this summer contained a nice reference to Plum. About half an hour after the start, the character Bernie, a failing stockbroker, mentioned that he had done some amateur acting in the past, and if I've got the words right, added: "P G Wodehouse farce. 'Hello, Vicar' and that sort of thing."

Peter Wightman has a spare copy of the 7 December 1946 edition of *Illustrated* (which contains PGW's *I've Been a Silly Ass*) that he is prepared to give free to any member who would like it.

James Hogg follows up his note about Professor Jeeves in the last issue with a small ad claiming that for a donation of £42, Dr Wooster can analyse 5,000 genes in the fight against cancer.

Nick Townend wrote to say that for him the most Wodehousean moment at the Dulwich day out was watching Robert Bruce stop a sharp drive with his shins, which reminded him of Scott's comment to Pillingshot, in *How Pillingshot Scored*: "You're coming on as a deep field, young Pillingshot. You've got a knack of stopping them with your stomach, which the best first-class fields never have. You ought to give lessons at it."

On the 26th July edition of *Wireless Wise*, one contestant was asked for the connection between four voices, one of which was PGW talking about Jeeves. The other three were the song 'Yes, We Have No Bananas', Martin Bell speaking about the Orange Order, and Brian Johnston reporting Ian Botham's pair, so with our Plum, the connection was fruit.

In July/August Radio 2 ran a four-week series of half-hour programmes about Jerome Kern on Friday evenings at 10pm. The main mentions of Plum were in the second programme, on 6th August, although his songs also appeared at other times.