

WOOSTER SAUCE



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PIG~HOO~O~O~EY!

Norman Murphy writes about his greatest triumph



The Hunstanton pig, source of the immortal Empress

Picture copyright: Mr Tom Mott

I had been looking for the original of the immortal Empress of Blandings in a desultory manner for fifteen years, but it was only recently that I managed to make the final identification. Two factors kept me going. I had found Wodehouse was always accurate in his descriptions and in her article about him in *Strand* magazine, January 1929, his daughter Leonora wrote of his faithfulness to places and things:

“An old pigsty, if he once knew the pig that lived there, is Heaven to him for always.”

There had to be a real pig somewhere.

The Empress appeared first in 1927 (in *Pig-Hoo-o-o-ey*) and she became established as the centre of Blandings life in 1929 (with *Summer Lightning*). These dates took me back to Hunstanton Hall in Norfolk where, in 1986, I had found the remains of an old pigsty. But how on earth was I to find out what sort of pig had been in it back in the mid 1920s?

It was only this year that I managed to contact Mr Mott, who had lived at the Hall as a small boy. He

remembers Wodehouse very well; he remembers the pigsty and he remembers that in the mid-1920s there was only one pig in it. I then asked my last question – was it a white pig or a black pig? It was a black pig. I had come to the end of a long search and I got my reward when Mr Mott added:

“I’ve got a photograph of the pig somewhere”.

I do not claim for one moment that this was the only pig that Wodehouse knew in his long life, but I now know his movements at an average of every twelve days or so from 1920 to 1930. There wasn’t a pigsty at the houses he lived in in London or Long Island or at the flats in New York. I have visited them all. And in that decade I can only find two other visits to country estates, each for a few days at a time. But he spent two months at Hunstanton in 1926, a month in 1927 and another month in 1928 – at exactly the time he was developing *Summer Lightning*.

There HAD to be a real pig somewhere and now, courtesy of Mr Mott, we know what she looked like.

Christmas in New York

by P G Wodehouse

When I yielded to popular clamour and consented to write an article on Christmas in New York it was, I must confess, with the feeling that it would consist of the words "Christmas in New York is much about the same as Christmas anywhere else," which would, of course, have made the thing run a bit short. But now that my staff of researchers have rolled up with their material I begin to see that there are certain features of the festive season in these parts which distinguish it from the f. s. in – say – Ashton-under-Lyne or such places as Little-Wigmarsh-in-the-Dell and Higgleford-cum-Wortleberry-Beneath-the-Hill. One of these is the high pressure advertising of the department stores, which at this time of year take off the wraps and really let themselves go.

I don't want to do anyone an injustice, but the thought has sometimes crossed my mind that some of these department stores are trying to make money out of Christmas. I asked Mr Macey and Mr Gimbel about this, and they were horrified at the suggestion. "Absurd," said Mr Macey. "Good heavens, no, dear old chap," said Mr Gimbel. But I still have my doubts. I cannot help thinking that to certain persons in New York – I name no names – Christmas is not just a season of homely good will but an opportunity to gouge the citizenry out of what little savings it has managed to accumulate in the past year.

And the silly thing is that their efforts are wasted unless they happen to sell ties and scarves. New York at Christmas becomes a seething maelstrom of people buying each other scarves and ties. The man in the street reads an advertisement like:

MEN!!!

Have you bought her Christmas present yet?

She is expecting something good, remember.

Why not get her a

WILBERFORCE-KRAMER

SELF-COMPENSATING CONCRETE MIXER

and watch her face light up?

And it leaves him unconvinced. "What shall we give Mabel?" says Mrs John Doe. "A scarf," says Mr John Doe. "And George?" "A tie," says Mrs John Doe. While over at George and Mabel's it is being decided that what John and Mrs John draw respectively are a nice tie and one of those nice scarves. Unless, of

course, both parties come to the conclusion that what will be really appreciated is a jolly Christmas card showing two cats playing the banjo in the snow.

Just at the moment there is something of a crisis in this matter of Christmas cards, due to the activities of the extremists. For some reason these last few years the normal-sized card has lost favour with the addicts, who have been going in either for things the size of the *New York Times* or minute objects of about the dimensions of a postage stamp, these last being considered cute. And the Post Office authorities have now exploded a bombshell by announcing that anything in an unsealed envelope measuring less than four inches by two and three-quarter inches will require three cents postage instead of the customary two cents. It has caused consternation in a million homes of those who believe in being cute at Christmas.

Christmas in New York brings out the Santa Clauses like flies. Go into any store, and there is a Santa Claus sitting in a chair with children crawling all over him. "Our humble heroes!" are the words that spring to my lips as I see them, for these stores are always warmly central-heated, and you cannot be a Santa Claus without covering your face with beard and whiskers and padding yourself liberally about the middle. At the end of a business day these devoted men must feel like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and also probably not unlike King Herod, a Biblical character of whose forthright methods I have heard several of them speak with admiration.

I interviewed one of them the other day in a drug store whither he had gone in his brief time off to refresh himself with a small wassail bowl.

"Don't you ever falter?" I asked.

He gave me a look.

"A Santa Claus who faltered," he replied stiffly, "would receive short shrift from the rest of the boys. Before you could say 'Saks Fifth Avenue' he would find himself in a hollow square of his fellows, being formally stripped of his beard and stomach padding. We are a proud guild, we Santa Clauses, and we brook no weakness. Besides," he went on, "though the life of a department Santa Claus is admittedly fraught with peril, he can console himself with the reflection that he is by no means as badly off as the shock troops of the profession. Take the case of a Santa Claus in

What Ho for the Millennium!

Many members will recall that, in the traditions of Wodehouse's classical education, the Society has taken the view that the next Millennium starts on January 1, 2001. It was nice to have our stance vindicated, as reported by *The Times* on September 11 this year:

"The Millennium Commission has conceded that it is celebrating the wrong date. However, Lord Falconer of Thoroton, the minister responsible for the Government's millennium project, justified the deliberate mistake by claiming that Britain would look 'proper Charlies' if we commemorated 2001 and the rest of the world marked the year 2000."

It is a shame that Lord Falconer had not read about Edwin Plummer. Eric Coulton, a member from Rhyl, recalls that in *A Damsel in Distress* George Bevan was forced to listen to an interview between Lady Maud Marsh and Edwin Plummer during which the latter was proposing marriage:

George did not know who Mr Plummer was. He did not want to know. His only thought regarding Mr Plummer was a passionate realization of the

superfluity of his existence. It is the presence on the globe of these Plummers that delays the coming of the Millennium.

So Plum was conscious of the frisson of excitement that the Millennium would bring, even in 1919, and again in 1923, for he wrote in *The Adventures of Sally*:

If actors and actresses are like children in that they are readily depressed by disaster, they have the child's compensating gift of being easily uplifted by good fortune. It amazed Sally that any one mortal should have been able to spread such universal happiness as she had by the simple act of lending her brother Fillmore twenty thousand dollars. If the Millennium had arrived, the members of the Primrose Way Company could not have been on better terms with themselves. The lethargy and dispiritedness, caused by their week of inaction, fell from them like a cloak.

The Committee hope that all members have a most enjoyable Christmas and New Year, whether they plan to celebrate the Millennium in 2000 or 2001.

Christmas in New York by P G Wodehouse

(Continued)

whose whiskers a child deposits semi-liquefied chewing-gum."

"Not pleasant," I said.

"Far from pleasant," he agreed. "A man who has had to comb chewing-gum – or for the matter of that almond chocolate – out of the undergrowth at the close of a working day becomes a graver, deeper man. He has seen life. But do we quail?"

"Don't you quail?"

"No, sir, we do not quail. We say to ourselves that this is as nothing compared to what a man like, for instance, Butch Olberholtzer has to go through. Butch is the Santa Claus attached to a prominent monthly magazine, and it is his task to circulate among the advertisers during Christmas week and give them a hearty greeting from his employers. Well you know what sort of condition the average advertiser is in during Christmas week. A surfeit of office parties has left him a nervous wreck. Let so much as a small fly stamp its feet suddenly on the ceiling and he leaps like a jumping bean. You can picture his emotions, then, when as he sits quivering in his chair a

Santa Claus steals up behind him, slaps him on the back and shouts 'Merry Christmas, old boy, merry Christmas!' On several occasions Butch has escaped with his life by the merest hair's breadth. I wonder if his luck can last."

"Let us hope so," I said soberly.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, well," he said, "if the worst happens, it will be just one more grave among the hills, and he will have done his duty." He finished his wassail bowl and rose. "Ho, hum," he said. "Back to the old grind."

I have little more to add. Oh, yes, the Yule log. The ceremony of bringing in the Yule log is one that – for reasons of space – has almost completely fallen into desuetude in New York, if desuetude is the word I want. Some lovers of the old customs still, I believe, bring in the Yule wooden toothpick, but even that is not generally done. You know what these modern apartments are like. You need every inch.

This article first appeared in Punch on December 23, 1953

George Orwell on Wodehouse

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

Keep the Aspidistra Flying also suffers from a certain lack of credibility. The hero, Gordon Comstock, has a good job at an advertising agency but not wanting to be a slave to the Money God he quits in order to lead the life of a poet. He works first at a second-hand bookshop in Hampstead, just as Orwell once did, later at a similar if far seedier bookshop in Lambeth. Among those who worry about him are his friend Ravelson, a parlour socialist (what today one would call a champagne socialist, or in the U.S. a limousine liberal), and his devoted girlfriend, Rosemary. Here are all the ingredients for, say, a Mulliner story. In his single-minded effort to descend the social ladder, to lead the life of the poor, struggling artist, Gordon is hard to take seriously. The relationship between Gordon and Rosemary, for all his efforts to get her into bed, belongs more to the fantasy world of Wodehouse, because in the real world no girl would put up with such behaviour as meekly as Rosemary does for long.

What precipitates Gordon's move from Hampstead to Lambeth is a drunken binge. After an American magazine pays him fifty dollars for one of his poems, he treats Rosemary and Ravelson to a lavish dinner at a smart restaurant. Like Bertie Wooster on Boat-Race Night, Gordon gets carried away — though of course Bertie Wooster would never round off the evening by picking up a couple of tarts in Soho. The next day Ravelson and another friend have to bail him out:

Ravelson looked miserable. He had been up since the very early morning, looking for Gordon. This was the first time he had seen the interior of a police cell. His face shrank with disgust as he looked at the chilly white-tiled place with its shameless WC in the corner. But Flaxman was more accustomed to this kind of thing. He cocked a practised eye at Gordon.

"I've seen worse," he said cheerfully. "Give him a prairie oyster and he'd buck up something wonderful. D'you know what your eyes look like, chappie?" he added to Gordon. "They look as if they'd been taken out and poached."

"I was drunk last night," said Gordon, his head between his hands.

"I gathered something of the kind, old chappie."

"Look here, Gordon," said Ravelson, "we came to bail you out, but it seems we're too late. They're

taking you up to court in a few minutes' time. This is a bloody show. It's a pity you didn't give them a false name when they brought you here last night."

"Did I tell them my name?"

"You told them everything. I wish to God I hadn't let you out of my sight. You slipped out of that house somehow and into the street."

"Wandering up and down Shaftesbury Avenue, drinking out of a bottle," said Flaxman appreciatively. "But you oughtn't to have hit the sergeant, old chappie! . . ."

Get rid of the reference to the WC and change "oughtn't to have hit the sergeant" to "oughtn't to have stolen the sergeant's helmet" and you have a scene out of Wodehouse, complete with promise of a hangover remedy. In the dock Gordon tells the judge he is a poet, a reporter picks up on this fact, his employer and his landlady in Hampstead read of his arrest in the newspaper, and — after a respite at Ravelson's flat analogous to Dorothy Hare's stay with Sir Thomas — our Orwellian hero is headed south of the river for further degradation.

To resolve matters Orwell resorts to a melodramatic, if un-Wodehousean device — the first time the lovers sleep together Rosemary gets pregnant. Gordon has to think about it a while, but his sense of decency prevails. In a denouement as neat and satisfying as any in Wodehouse, he goes back to his old job and marries his sweetheart. (One has to wonder whether Orwell's own marriage, a few months after he finished the novel, had anything to do with this uncharacteristically happy ending.)

It is interesting to see that the makers of the reasonably faithful movie version of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1997), called *A Merry War* in the United States (those damn' Americans, they never know when to leave an English title well enough alone, what?), with Richard E. Grant as the insufferable Gordon and Helena Bonham-Carter as the patient Rosemary, elected to leave out the picking up tarts in Soho bit. No doubt they recognised that such sordidness would never do for a light comedy.

Finally, *Appendix 11: Books Owned by Orwell in 1950*, in the last volume of *The Complete Works of George Orwell*, lists among the author's library at the time of his death two Wodehouse novels, *Psmith*

Letters to the Editor

From Barry Day of Weston, Connecticut

(Barry is the Editor and annotator of the recent *Noel Coward: The Complete Lyrics* (Methuen, 1998))

Even many fans who have read every word of Plum's fiction over and over again remain unaware of the extent to which he was enjoying a totally separate career as librettist and lyricist on the Broadway and West End stages. From 1905 until the mid-1930s, most often in collaboration with Guy Bolton, he was turning out shows that shaped the future of popular musical theatre on both sides of the Atlantic.

With the assistance of Tony Ring, I am now collecting and placing in its historical context his work as a lyricist for a book *Lyrics of P G Wodehouse*. We are currently trawling libraries and personal collections for relevant material.

While we have turned up most of the known published material, in some cases dating back almost a century, there are tantalising references to songs cut from shows, and Plum himself makes frequent reference to the fact that he kept his hand in as a lyricist until the end of his life.

If any of our members has any material (letters, lyrics, sheet music, libretti, notes, programmes, posters, photos), either original or copies, which they believe could be of interest, Tony or I would love to hear from you.

Orwell, continued

in the City and *Ukridge*. Orwell discussed *Psmith in the City* at length in *In Defence of P G Wodehouse* because it and *Psmith Journalist* "display a certain amount of political consciousness. Psmith at this stage chooses to call himself a Socialist. ..."

Wodehouse would surely have been more comfortable with Eileen Blair's less intellectual response to *Psmith*. The week before her fatal operation she wrote her husband: "Dearest thank you very much for the books — *Psmith in the City* has been making me laugh aloud."

Note: New members who have missed earlier parts of Peter's review may obtain back-copies, while stocks remain, for £2.50 per issue, post-free.

From Louise O'Connor of Richmond

Re the article *Was P G Wodehouse descended from Henry VIII?* in the March 1999 issue, I should think this is very doubtful.

Henry VIII was absolutely famous for being hopeless at having children. Out of a total of six wives he managed to produce only three living offspring, one from each of the first three wives, and he had only one acknowledged bastard, his son Henry Fitzroy, by Bessie Blount. Mary Boleyn was his mistress, but he never acknowledged any of her children as being his.

Henry's acknowledged bastard, Henry Fitzroy, also died young and without issue, unless we are to believe the Canadian fantasy writer Tanya Huff, who has written a marvellously entertaining series of novels in which Henry Fitzroy did not die but became a vampire, and is currently living in Toronto where he earns a living writing bodice-rippers, and in his spare time helps private detective Vicky Nelson solve a series of crimes involving demons, werewolves, mummies, zombies and ghosts.

From Tom Kreitzberg of Maryland

Yesterday, I received an email from a Fr Peter Walters who wrote:

"I find re-reading [P G Wodehouse's] books a wonderful antidote to some of the stresses of working with street-children in Columbia."

The next time someone tells me some variant on, "Wodehouse is merely funny," I shall reply:

"Yes, and by being merely funny during his life-time, he is supporting the care of street-children in Columbia today."

If you are interested, Fr Walters's organization is on the web at: www.LetTheChildrenLive.org

From John Perry of London

If on a fairly decent roadmap you locate the area in North Wales between Wrexham and Mold, you will find a road some eleven miles from Wrexham at a place called Pontblyddyn which leads after a mile or so to a hamlet or village called *Pontybodkin*.

Could this be more than just coincidence, knowing PGW's penchant for borrowing and amending names? Memory tells me that amongst his myriad aunts and Reverend uncles were some in the Welsh borders. Could he have known the name of the place, either from family visits or from when he lived in Shropshire at the turn of the century?

Notes on the History of Rosalie

During member Bill Edwards's long career in the film industry, he spent a period working in the MGM studios in Hollywood, where Wodehouse fulfilled two contracts. On leaving, he was given a copy of a typescript headed Rosalie – A Novelized Version by P G Wodehouse. He very kindly lent this to Tony Ring, and the article which follows seeks to piece together part of the strange story of this artistic property.

PGW's first encounter with *Rosalie* had been in relation to the musical comedy which opened in Boston in December 1927 and transferred to the New Amsterdam Theatre in New York in January 1928. William Anthony McGuire and Guy Bolton were responsible for the book, and the original plan had been for the music to be by Sigmund Romberg, lyrics by P G Wodehouse. Romberg was working elsewhere but agreed to help with the score if George Gershwin would do likewise, and George brought along his brother Ira to help with the lyrics.

The plot of this production had been inspired by the visit to the United States in 1926 by Queen Marie of Romania, whose regal progress across the country had been covered lavishly by the newspapers. Brought over at the expense of the US government, she was seeking political support for her husband's unpopular reign and financial assistance for the country's failing economy.

McGuire and Bolton produced a plot about the Princess Rosalie of Romanza, who had met Dick Fay, an American airman, whilst in Paris, though as their meeting had been at a masquerade he had not discovered her identity. A year later Fay emulated Lindbergh and flew to Romanza to find her and, transatlantic air travel still being something of a novelty, on his arrival there were great celebrations. Not surprisingly, he soon found Rosalie, but after discovering she was a princess, and only able to marry a commoner if her father abdicated, he returned home smartly.

Shortly afterwards, Rosalie joined her parents, the King and Queen, on a goodwill visit to the US from which they were seeking a loan, during the course of which they visited the cadet camp at West Point. Dick's friend Delroy is returning to the US by the same boat as the royal family, and discusses with Rosalie a plan for her to meet Dick again. On their arrival at the camp Dick, a Captain, is detailed to lead the royal guard of honour, though he tries to get out of the obligation.

Rosalie appears at the camp dressed in a soldier's uniform and is immediately spotted by the duty officer, Captain Banner, who is told that she is a new

OH GEE ; OH JOY !

ZIEGFELD PRODUCTION

MARILYN MILLER IN **ROSALIE** WITH JACK DONAHUE

BOOK BY
Wm. ANTHONY
MCGUIRE
AND
GUY BOLTON

MUSIC BY
SIGMUND
ROMBERG
AND
GEORGE
GERSHWIN



LYRICS BY
P.G. WODEHOUSE
AND
IRA GERSHWIN

BOOK STAGED BY
Wm. ANTHONY MCGUIRE
MUSICAL NUMBERS AND
SKELETONS STAGED BY
SEYMOUR FELIX

New World Music

Russian March
 West Point Song
 Why Show We Always Be
 Dreaming
 Everybody Knows I Love
 Somebody
 Oh Gee! Oh Joy!
 Say So
 How Long How Long Is Been
 Going On

Made in U. S. A.

recruit, a cousin of Delroy's rejoicing in the name Gerald Kicklebush of Kalamazoo. She is forced to share Delroy's quarters, a matter of no little concern. Dick Fay calls in to see Delroy and finds Rosalie there, and is most sympathetic when he hears what she has been through to find him.

All the time it has been made clear that the King is an unhappy individual who would be only too happy to abdicate, and this he finally achieves, the announcement coming in the 'Ex-Kings Club' in Paris, after which he immediately announces his daughter's engagement to Dick Fay.

Plum's contribution to this farrago was five songs, three to Romberg's music and two gems, *Oh Gee, Oh Joy*, and *Say So*, written with Ira Gershwin to his brother's melodies. The show, surprisingly, was a massive hit, running for a year in New York.

Plum met up again with *Rosalie* some two and a half years later, during his first contract with MGM in Hollywood. Let Plum explain:

The Story of Rosalie, continued

MGM bought that musical comedy *Rosalie* . . . for Marion Davies. Everyone in the studio had a go at it, and then they told me to have a try. After I had messed about with it with no success, Irving Thalberg, the big boss, worked out a story on his own. . . . Unfortunately [he] wanted me to write it not in picture form but as a novelette, after which I suppose it will be turned into a picture. The prospect of this appals me and I am hoping that the whole thing will eventually blow over, . . .

His wish did not come true, though, and this was the work which Bill has safely stored away. Wodehouse's novelized version of the story, really no more than a long scenario, reflects the changes in emphasis of the plot suggested by Thalberg. It is not written in the typical Wodehouse style: there was no need to have the narrative littered with telling metaphors and adjectives which were the *mots justes*. The dialogue was not in the class of Bertie and Jeeves, for this would be handled by the scriptwriters during the next phase. There is really only one classic piece of Wodehouse. when, reflecting his comments about Balboa, stout Cortes and the Pacific Ocean in his *Introduction to The Clicking of Cuthbert* from 1922, he had Rosalie say, on being caught in a compromising position:

“Just kissing. Lovers' Lane is open for being kissed in at this time, isn't it?”

In the new version of the story the idea that Rosalie's love-interest (here named Bob Warwick) had flown to Romanza was dropped. Possibly, a few years on, the idea of flying solos had lost its glamour. Instead, Warwick and his friend, Runt O'Day, were on vacation in Romanza. Bob, a wealthy man, was to be guest of honour at the Princess's reception, but he did not attend and went to a festival with his friends instead. Rosalie had learned of his intentions and she also went to the festival, disguised as a lady-in-waiting, hoping to take him down a peg or two. Bob was suspicious of her interest in him, and pretended to be the much less wealthy Runt. Their mutual

affection was reinforced by a day spent together in a fairly isolated spot but, copying the musical, Bob's feelings were shattered when he discovered her identity.

The major change in the second act was to replace the abdication theme by the actions of Rosalie's brother Sergius. Once again the Romanza royals visit West Point and Warwick is put in charge of the guard. He finds himself left alone with Rosalie, they reveal their true feelings and Runt rehearses them in how they should approach the Queen. She overhears the conversation and effectively imprisons Rosalie on their boat. Sergius now steps in, firstly providing a key and a soldier's uniform to help Rosalie escape, and then insisting that the King and Queen allow her to marry Bob Warwick, or he will refuse to go through with what he regards as a distasteful arranged marriage to secure the succession.

In an unguarded comment to the *Los Angeles Times*, Plum told what happened next:

They set me to work on a story called *Rosalie*, which was to have some musical numbers. It was a pleasant little thing, and I put in three months on it. When it was finished, they thanked me politely and remarked that as musicals didn't seem to be going so well they guessed they would not use it.

The final irony in relation to *Rosalie*, of course, is that when Wodehouse returned to the MGM fold in 1936 he was immediately asked to resume work on the film of *Rosalie* with William McGuire, the wild Irishman who had been part author of the original book. Wodehouse got on well personally with McGuire, but was edged out of the project, and the film was actually made as a fantastic spectacle with script credits that made no mention whatsoever of Plum's contribution. Furthermore, all the Romberg and Gershwin songs were deleted, a new score being composed by Cole Porter.

How did he find time to write books?

Did You Know

Printers' Errors – 12

I don't suppose I have ever come closer in my life to saying 'Viola'?

(from *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, chapter 7. It was corrected to 'Voilà' in later editions.)

Sylphides à la Crème d'Écrevisses

Albert Roux's final recipe from Anatole's menu

Ingredients for four servings

24 live freshwater crayfish
1 recipe of lobster mousseline (see separate recipe)
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
100 grams butter
1 small carrot, finely chopped
2 small shallots, finely chopped
2 tablespoons of brandy
500 millilitres fish stock
300 millilitres double cream
4 round puff pastry shells
Salt and pepper to taste

To prepare the Lobster Mousseline

Ingredients

1 large lobster hen
2 small egg whites
400 grams double cream
Salt, to taste

Method

Kill the lobster with a trussing needle, by plunging it deep into the head between the eyes.

Plunge the lobster into boiling water for 10 seconds and refresh under iced water. This process will make the removal of the flesh easier. Make sure not to cook the lobster. Crack the claws and the legs, and scrape the flesh into a bowl.

Cut the tail in half and remove the flesh with the coral, if any. Keep the lobster bones for another use.

You should now have 300gm of lobster flesh with coral. Place into a food processor, equipped with a cutting blade. Process for a few minutes until you have a fine purée. Add the egg white and process for a few seconds.

Rub the purée through a fine sieve into a bowl set into crushed ice.

Using a spatula, incorporate the cream into the purée a little at a time.

Season with salt.

Poach a little lobster mousse into salted simmering water to see whether the texture, lightness and seasoning are as they should be. If necessary, add a little cream or salt.

Keep refrigerated.

The Crayfish:

Bring the fish stock to a boil.

Meanwhile, remove the intestine from the crayfish, plunge the crayfish into the boiling fish stock and cook for 1 to 2 minutes. Lift the crayfish out with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Shell 4 crayfish, leaving the head attached to the tails and reserve.

Separate the heads and tail from the remaining crayfish, shell the tail and keep the 4 whole crayfish.

The Sauce:

Heat up a pan with the butter, add the carrot, shallot and sweat until tender. Crush the crayfish heads, put them in a sauté pan and set over high heat. Cook for a few minutes.

Add the brandy and ignite, then add the fish stock. Lower the heat and reduce the liquid to one-third. Add the cream and cook over low heat for 10 minutes.

Place the mixture into a food processor and process for a few seconds.

Rub the sauce through a fine conical sieve into a saucepan. Set over high heat and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and cook until the sauce is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. Stir in 30gm of butter a little at a time. Season to taste. Keep warm.

The Mousse

Bring a pan of salted water to a simmer. Using two large spoons, shape 4 quenelles of fish mousse and poach gently on both sides for 5 minutes.

Remove the mousse with a slotted spoon on to a plate with a cloth and keep warm.

To Assemble the Dish

Gently reheat the whole crayfish and meat with a little fish stock.

Warm the puff pastry cases in the oven. Place a puff pastry case on each plate. Place a quenelle of fish mousse into each casing.

Arrange the drained crayfish meat with the whole crayfish around the fish mousse. Spoon the sauce over the mousse and the crayfish, and around the pastry shell. Sprinkle the chopped herbs and place the lid on each casing.

What Ho, Wodehouse!!

You will see from the enclosed order form that the production of the new Anthology *What Ho, The Best of P G Wodehouse* is not now expected to be available until the New Year. It will contain a several thousand word introduction by Stephen Fry.

The full list of contents is shown on the attached order form and represents a stunning array of Wodehouse material. Though of particular value as an introductory volume for the new reader, there is a small quantity of previously unpublished material to attract the established fan.

Most of the selection was chosen by Wodehouse Societies by ballot amongst their members to represent the best of his writing. It thus becomes the definitive anthology, and we wish the publishers well.

The official publication date is not until February, so you will be stealing a considerable march over non-members by ordering promptly. The offer price, of £11.99 post-free in the UK (higher elsewhere) against a recommended retail price of £15.99 will be valid until the end of April provided that the appropriate ordering procedures are followed.

Second Kid Brady Story Published

Instead of producing *By The Way* with the December circulation, the Society sends a Christmas present of a specially published Kid Brady story to Society members of longer-standing. Those who received the first story, *Kid Brady, Lightweight*, last year should now find enclosed *How Kid Brady Broke Training*, which was first published in the American edition of *Pearson's* for November 1905.

Members who have paid two full subscriptions should be receiving a copy of *Kid Brady, Lightweight*, while readers in their first year of membership must,

alas, wait another year for their first story. There are seven in total, which will be sent annually until the supply, like that of Ikey Llewellyn's wives, eventually runs out.

We do our best to be efficient but, unlike Jeeves, are not infallible and, also unlike him, we do not draw a weekly envelope. Occasional errors do occur with the circulation, so if you are a victim, and have not received the *Kid Brady* story to which you believe you are entitled, please contact the membership secretary, Helen Murphy.

Sylphides à la Crème d'Écrevisses, continued

Sylphides à la crème d'écrivisses featured in four stories. In *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, chapter 11, Bertie was sitting at the dining table with, amongst others, Stilton Cheesewright, and not enjoying the experience very much, despite the menu which also included *Le bird of some kind with chipped potatoes*. Incidentally, although Bertie's attempt to sneak away from his fellow guests after dinner was somewhat foiled by Uncle Tom's discourse on such matters as his wife Dahlia and income tax, he nevertheless reached the sanctity of his room in one piece, where he settled down to read the appropriately titled *Mystery of the Pink Crayfish*.

In *Jeeves in the Offing* the dish was briefly mentioned with reverence in a conversation between Bertie and Kipper Herring, while in *Much Obligated*, *Jeeves* Bertie was speculating on the dinner to come, and the extent to which his enjoyment of a dish such as the *Sylphides* would be spoiled by the presence of Spode, Madeline Bassett, Florence Craye and L P Runkle.

Finally, in *Jeeves Makes an Omelette*, it was one of the dishes which Aunt Dahlia mentioned when, in one of her blackmailing moods, she reminded Bertie what he might be missing if he failed to cooperate with her scheme.

Guildford Literary Festival

A combined report from Hilary Bruce, Matthew Alexander, Tony Davies and Andrew Bishop

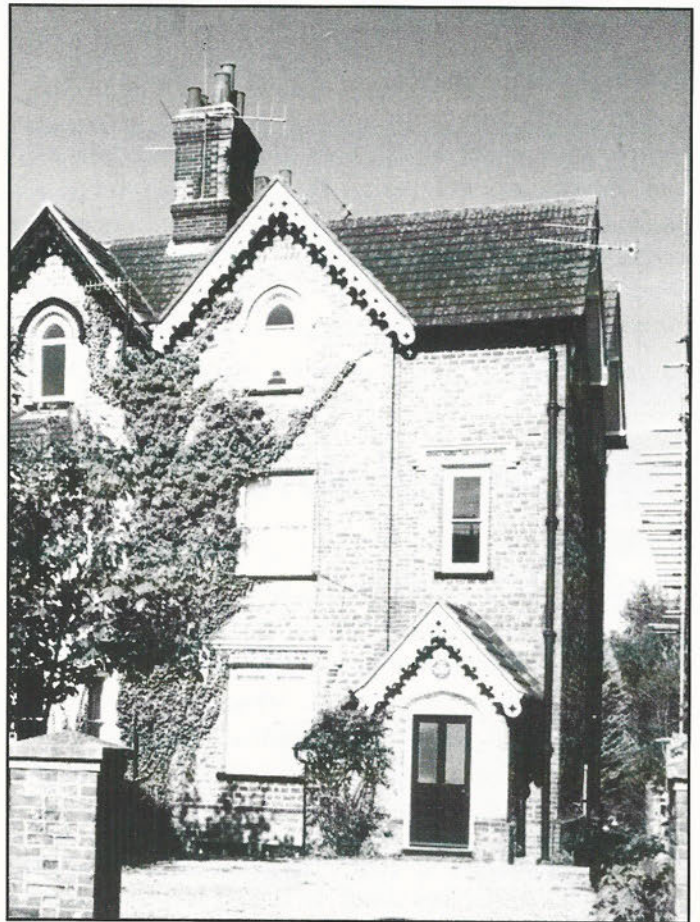
Number 25 High Street, Guildford, is less than a quarter of a mile from the substantial, though undeniably Pooterish, house where Plum was born on October 15, 1881. In those days, No 25 was a saddler's and tent-maker's shop but today, restored and renamed Guildford House, it has a new role as Guildford's own gallery. Through most of October, it played host to an exhibition and series of events to honour one of the city's most enduringly popular sons.

The catalyst was the annual Guildford Book Festival, a bonanza of book and poetry readings, signings, discussions and debates. Matthew Alexander, the Museum Curator and member of our Society, was determined to place Wodehouse firmly at the centre of this year's celebrations, and as well as the three-week long exhibition in the panelled splendour of the Garden Room at Guildford House, he organised five special events.

Although Plum was actually born at 59 Epsom Road, Guildford, his residency of just two weeks left the city with little tangible evidence of his tenure, or the genius he was to become. Naturally the Society was delighted to assist and prepared a display which took the viewer through Wodehouse's life and work with 50 narrative panels and many accompanying illustrations.

Andrew Bishop commented that the panels covered all the salient facts, from his Dulwich schooldays, through all aspects of his subsequent career to his knighthood and death in 1975. He added that there was little new for the Wodehouse connoisseur, but plenty of interesting information for the 3,500 casual visitors, a point also emphasised by Nick Townend. (The preference of the Museum for copies of material rather than originals, and the security and insurance implications of exhibiting valuable originals did limit the scope for 'specialist' material somewhat.)

To the accompaniment of our President Richard Briers's taped tones, visitors learned that Wodehouse started writing at the age of five, earned four guineas for three early stories in the *Public School Magazine* and, much later in his career, wrote under six pseudonyms as well as his own name for the American magazine *Vanity Fair*. Details such as these lent real life and colour to the story of Plum's long and prolific life, and his evident hard work, instances of



P G Wodehouse's birthplace: 59 Epsom Road
© Guildford Museum

luck both good and bad, and his shy good humour, must have been quite a revelation to those less well versed in his work. It is cheering to think that a fragment of song, a phrase or a character, seen or referred to in the exhibition, might have reminded many of those visitors what they had been missing, and sent them scurrying to the local bookshops.

Tony Davis reported on the first of the special Wodehouse events at the Festival, *Plum Sauce* at the Electric Theatre on Sunday 24th October. This was a performance of 'Words and Lyrics by Wodehouse'. Most of the lyrics chosen were written to Jerome Kern's music and, as Jonathan Cecil said in his introduction using the words of another showbiz personality: "Not a lot of people know that".

No two performers could have brought the wonderful gallery of PGW's hilarious characters to life better than Jonathan and his charming and talented wife Anna Sharkey, wrote Tony. Of the seven songs

Honours One Of Its Citizens

and several prose items, Anna's beautifully sung *Bill* from *Showboat* and Jonathan's hilarious reading of Freddie Widgeon's cat-throwing antics at Matcham Scratchings (*Goodbye to All Cats*, from *Young Men in Spats*.) stood out most in his memory.

On October 27th, Richard Burnip introduced a showing of the film *A Damsel in Distress*. He went through the history of the 1919 book which became a silent movie the following year, and a play (co-written with Ian Hay) in 1928, before being transformed into a 'talking picture', indeed a musical, in 1937. He explained how the plot had changed between the four productions and how particular adaptations had been made to accommodate the star qualities of Fred Astaire and the comedy duo George Burns and Gracie Allen. His talk was laced with a fascinating account of Hollywood studio politics of the late 1930s.

On the following night the Society Chairman, Norman Murphy, presented a talk on real locations of Wodehouse scenes. His rapid-fire delivery quickly established that just about every location in the works was based on places Plum had known, though they were often combined and relocated for fictional purposes. The highlight of the evening was the first showing in Britain of the photograph of the black pig who had been the Empress's model.

The last formal event of the Wodehouse celebration was *Ladies' Night at the Drones*, a delightful evening of entertainment held at Guildford House. Students from the Guildford School of Acting donned 1920s costumes to bring their readings, poems, sketches and songs to life for the assembled multitude, to the

multitude's evident enjoyment. Formally attired and balancing glasses beaded with bubbles with a plate of canapes, the self-styled Drones moved from room to historic room in the wake of the entertainers as they progressed around the lovely building.

A bomb scare which sealed off central Guildford was thoughtfully provided to add drama to the evening, although it unfortunately prevented some Drones from arriving at all. It was soon forgotten by those present, though, as classic songs such as *Bill*, *Anything Goes* and appropriately *Someone to Watch Over Me* (from the musical *A Damsel in Distress*) were put across with verve and brio. In addition there were recitations of four poems, a performance of the scene between Bill Paradene (Daren Blanck) and Doctor Sally Smith (Leann Young) from *Good Morning, Bill* in which she gives the reluctant invalid a medical examination, and the scene from *The Crime Wave at Blandings* in which Jane (Jacci Wilkie) reveals that she had been a witness to the reawoken marksmanship skills of Lord Emsworth. The Drones were quick to express their pleasure and thanks to the dozen nascent actors and singers who entertained us with such charm.

Wodehouse week ended on Saturday afternoon with *Games for Silly Asses*, a children's entertainment based round games inspired by PGW's fiction. Extracts were read, Constance Keeble's necklace was hunted for, Baxter's trouser-seat (without Baxter, more a prototype for the forthcoming *Guy Fawkes's Night*) was the target for a pop-gun and the event finished with brazil nuts being catapulted at a top hat.

A fitting way, perhaps, to end a splendid festival.

Why Not Arrange a Wodehouse Exhibition?

The Society is now in a position to make available copies of the text and supporting illustrations used in the successful exhibition on *The Life of P G Wodehouse* at Guildford.

The text consists of 50 pages of A4 text (using a large, highly legible bold 18pt font) each of which contains something between two lines and a whole page of material. There are about 40 illustrations, mostly in colour, including his birth certificate, his certificate of US citizenship, book covers, sheet music, photographs and much else. (Additional copied material could be provided.) This forms a sound basis for an exhibition by any small museum

or library, which could be enhanced by such 3-D exhibits such as books, sheet music, magazines, audio- and video-tapes, theatre posters, programmes and so on as the resources of local members and the security capability of the proposed exhibitor permit. The Society will make available a set of the basic material for £100 within the UK, and a little more, to cover the higher cost of postage, overseas. (Most of this represents the cost of obtaining the necessary colour photocopies.)

Members who would like further details should contact the Editor, who would also be pleased to hear directly from libraries or museums.

My First Wodehouse Experience

Joe Harkins, a member based in Glasgow, contributes to the series

As a confirmed bibliophile with over a thousand books in my possession – I won't call it anything as grand as a library, it's actually shelves on my dining room wall – I have only recently come across the genius of Plum. I had, of course, heard of the man and his characters but they were just names in the background up till now. "Better late than never," I would definitely say.

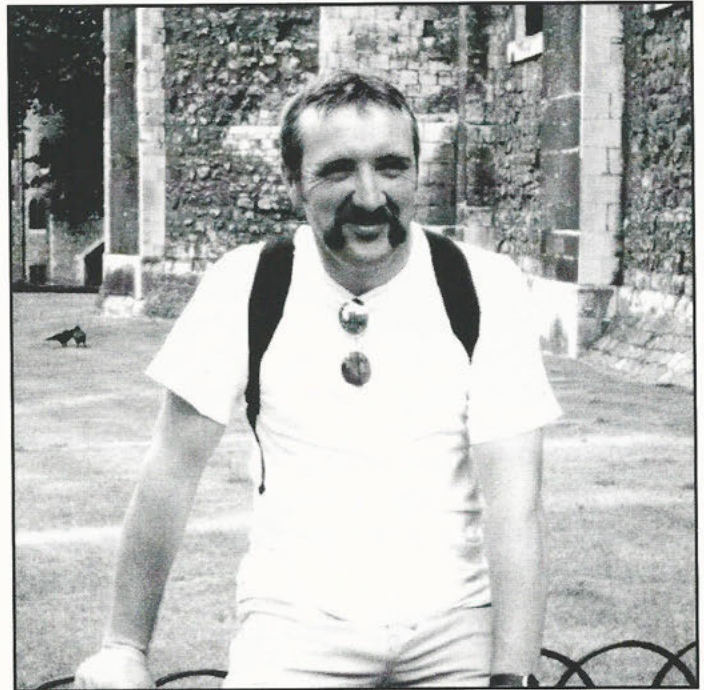
As a member of the Folio Society I purchased a set of *Jeeves and Wooster* and became an instant and fervent Wodehousean. As a chronologically-challenged 'child' of the computer age I popped the old PGW moniker in the Internet and out sprang the Society's webpage. I whizzed off my application form and am now the proud possessor of as much *Wooster Sauce* as would make a Moroccan's moustache melt.

I have now set sail on the long voyage to distant Wodehousean lands, hoping to complete a collection of the works of the Master. I strongly advise all fellow Society members to invest their hard-earned dosh – or long-awaited inheritance – in shares in a carpet manufacturing business. Second-hand bookshops the length and breadth of these isles will be submitting orders for new carpets as this devotee scours their dusty shelves for 'little nuggets' of perfect prose. They will soon be forming themselves into anti-Wodehouse leagues and sticking CAT – Carpet Added Tax – on to all the works of Plum. I humbly apologise to all fellow-members in advance.

Not that all antiquarian booksellers 'moon about with an air of crushed gloom that would cause comment in Siberia'. One of these good people – in Fife – has the habit of including in his catalogue some free books which can be included in your order, on the proviso that you order one or two other tomes. On receiving his latest catalogue I quickly spotted a First Edition PGW, *Money In The Bank*, leaping out at me from the free books list.

Agreeing with Plum that I was rather fortunate not to have to rely on some rather lacklustre Nubian slave who 'only hurried themselves when someone was behind them with a spiked stick' to transport my message, I got on the blower and after a word or two the said First Edition was winging its way to the old dining room shelves in Glasgow.

It may not be very difficult to 'distinguish between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine' but after this heartwarming experience Maudie



Joe comments that the photo is provided to dispel the stereotypical imagery of a massively built Scotsman with wild unruly hair, straggly ginger beard down to the chest, who bites the heads of new-born babies and eats them for breakfast. "That's my wife you're thinking of," he adds.

Montrose/Stubbs would need to enlist the help of Gridley Quayle were you to place a ray of sunshine alongside THIS grievance-free Scotsman! Even then I think I could outgeneral the both of them.

My life is now full of pink-coloured clouds and leaping minstrels as I wander through each day in a state of anticipation. I still have the absolute joy of discovering and enjoying more than three-quarters of the complete works of the Master. I can settle down, rest my tootsies and drift off to the welcoming worlds of Blandings, the Drones Club *et al* while reading them for the first time. There are definite advantages in sometimes being a new boy!

AND CALLING ALL SCOTS

Joe has tried to contact all Sottish and northernmost English members to arrange a local meeting next summer. If you haven't heard from him and would like information, please contact Joe

Future issues of *Wooster Sauce* will provide full details of actual arrangements which may be made.



PROFILE OF A PATRON

Old Etonian Henry Blofeld kept wicket for Norfolk aged 16, scored centuries at Lord's for Public Schools against the Combined Services and, his only first class century, against the MCC, got his Blue at Cambridge and looked set for a brilliant cricketing career. But the delayed effect of an accident whilst still at Eton, when a bus knocked him off a bicycle, caused him to turn to writing and broadcasting, and he has become one of the game's most recognised and best-loved media characters. A larger-than-life personality, with fruity voice and engaging mannerisms, he has made the most of his unique assets within the *Test Match Special* radio broadcasting team. Having been weaned on to Wodehouse by his father (after whom Ian Fleming named James Bond's legendary arch-enemy) he carefully weaves mentions and quotations of Plum into his broadcasts for the alert listener to pick up. Henry had a most serious heart operation in the spring this year, but such was his power of recovery, assisted by a programme of rereading Wodehouse, that he was able to rejoin *TMS* for the matches against New Zealand in the late summer.

A Wodehouse Double Whammy by James Hogg

When Wodehouse decided to give the name 'Oofy' Prosser to the Drones Club's richest member, he was making good use of slang expressions still current in his youth. Norman Murphy's *In Search of Blandings* indicates that in the 1890s 'oof' was a colloquial term for money, but Norman did not have space to elaborate on its interesting derivation.

In *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* Eric Partridge says that 'oofish' was used as a synonym for money by East End Yiddish-speakers (Partridge cites as his authority *The Sporting Times* of 26 December 1891 – the staff were apparently prepared to work on Christmas Day to get this sort of information to their readers).

The word evolved from the German expression '*auf Tische*' (properly '*auf dem Tische*') meaning 'on the table'. According to *The Cassell Dictionary of Slang*, also quoting *The Sporting Times*, 'the aristocracy of Houndsditch were in the habit of refusing to play cards unless the money were on the table'.

The phrase was shortened to '*auf*', anglicised into 'oof', and came to stand for money in general. It seems to have gone out of fashion around the turn of the century, judging by the music-hall song *No Show*

Tonight popularised by Herbert Campbell. When published in 1899 it contained the line 'I've made some oof with a little penny show . . .', but by the time Campbell recorded it in 1903 'oof' had been changed to 'brass'.

Norman Murphy also points out that a 'prosser' was one who borrowed money or was mean with it. Partridge, whose etymologies have sometimes been found to be fanciful, says that 'pross' was originally a low theatrical expression for 'one who throws money to an itinerant actor'. He claims that in this sense it came from 'prosperous'. The meaning then became inverted to stand for a cadged drink.

A cadger or sponger was widely enough known as a 'prosser' for the bar of the Gaiety Theatre to acquire the nickname 'Prossers' Avenue'. Partridge quotes these lines from *The Referee* in 1883:

For he don't haunt the Gaiety Bar, dear boys,
A-standing (or prossing for) drinks.

So 'Oofy' Prosser was the victim of a double whammy when Wodehouse landed him with a name which meant rich sponger. Enough to send a poor unfortunate millionaire crying all the way to the bank.

Blackstone Audiobooks Offer to Members on Unabridged Wodehouse Readings

Blackstone Audiobooks is a major producer of unabridged audiobooks in North America, and has issued more titles (34) by P G Wodehouse than by any other author. All the readings except *Uneasy Money* are by Frederick Davidson, an Englishman who has been living in the USA since 1976.


The stated and thoughtful philosophy of the company's President, Craig Black, is that the prose, ideas and dialogue of various characters in the book should be allowed to surface through the reading rather than through any personal arrogance of the reader. Members used to the Chivers Wodehouse readers – Jonathan Cecil, Nigel Lambert, et al – will surely have had nothing at which to complain along these lines, but they will find Frederick Davidson's readings slightly understated in comparison. They are extremely easy to listen to, the characters speaking from time to time are easy to identify, and Wodehouse's prose emerges as compelling and entertaining as ever.

Of the 34 titles in the present Blackstone list, 13 are not available from a UK production company, and represent the only way at present of obtaining unabridged readings. The Editor has been able to listen to five at the time of writing (*A Gentleman of Leisure*, *Uneasy Money*, *Not George Washington*, *The Adventures of Sally* and *Piccadilly Jim*) and enjoyed them all. While the quality of prose in *Not George Washington* was far from amongst Plum's best, this is the only edition in 'print' of which I am aware, other than the Italian translation!

Blackstone Audiobooks is offering 25% discount off their published prices to all members who order by letter, phone or e-mail, mentioning that they are members of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

Prices, which before discount vary from \$23.95 to \$49.95 depending on the number of cassettes in the package, are shown by title on the order form enclosed, which should be used for orders by post. Alternatively, telephone your order to 001 541 482 9239 (1-800-729-2665 within the USA) or by e-mail to orders@blackstoneaudio.com

BLACKSTONE AUDIOBOOKS



P.G. Wodehouse

U • N • A • B • R • I • D • G • E • D
read by Frederick Davidson

Shipping to Europe is \$15 for the first book by air, plus \$4 per additional title. For surface mail the shipping charge is \$10 for the first book, plus \$2 per additional title. US purchasers should check directly.

One problem of which European members need to be aware relates to import duty and VAT. Audiobooks come within the charge to both these duties at least in the UK, and it is possible that members will be asked to pay around 12% of the pre-discounted price by way of tax. Any charge of this nature will be for the members' account. That this tax will not always be collected may be seen from one of the items in Editor's Tailpieces on page 20.

THE SMILE THAT WINS

Favourite Nifties – 9

Red hair and meekness are two things which seldom go together, and Lottie Blossom specialized in the former.

The Luck of the Bodkins, chapter 13 (1935)

Frolics and Fun in Houston by Elaine Ring

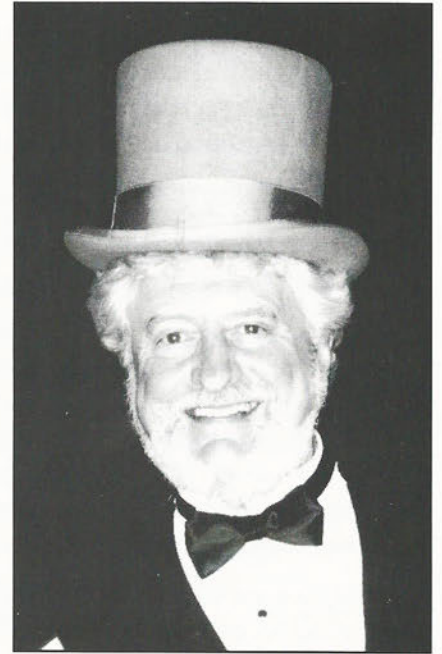
The biennial convention of the Wodehouse Society was held Texas in October where 170 enthusiasts met in warm sunny weather which belied Houston's reputation for humidity.

Friday's varied programme for delegates arriving early included trips to the NASA Space Centre, the San Jacinto battlefield and The Reginald Jeeves Memorial cricket match played at Hermann Park under special TWSCC rules. Murray Hedgcock had donated copies of his book *Wodehouse at the Wicket* as prizes, which were awarded to participants who best met the spirit of the TWSCC motto: *Risus, Vestimenta, Convivia*. Tim Andrew's colourful Great Missenden Pelicans CC cap won the prize for *Vestimenta*, Anne Cotton that for *Risus* and Charles Bishop for *Convivia*. Statisticians may care to note that Pongo's team batting first made 23 for 11 wickets, while Gussie's, reinforced by those who joined in at lunchtime, managed 70 for 15 in reply. In the evening, a superb local production of *Oh, Kay!* by the Main Street Theatre Co was all but taken over by the convention.

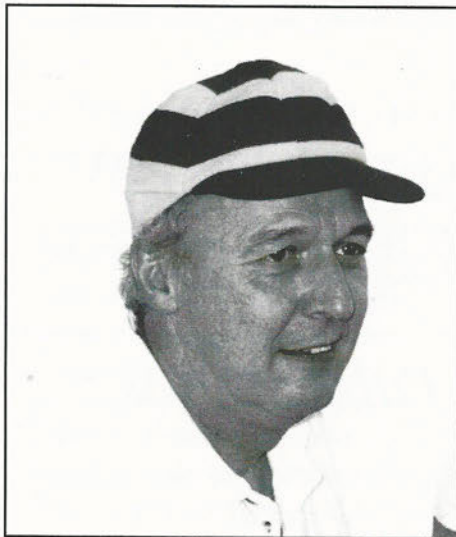
Saturday, the working day, featured talks on a variety of subjects. Your editor started proceedings with a review of Wodehouse's approach to poetry in a talk entitled *Limp Lavender Leather*. Incoming President Elin Woodger celebrated her last hours of freedom with a thought-provoking slander on Lady Constance Keeble in *Lady Constance's Lover: Sex and Romance à la Wodehouse*. Local member Mike Skupin then presented and played a number of Wodehouse's poems set to music, before Norman Murphy's dramatic disclosure (see page 1).

After lunch Dan Cohen (whose appearance in a bright red beard at the banquet rather spoils his claim not to be one of the Cohen Brothers) led us through a medley of drinking prose. The only cause any of us had for complaint was his failure to buy the first round. Another Drone Ranger, Wendy Westfaul, completed formal proceedings by mentioning a motley medley of miscellaneous medicinal marvels.

Even that was not all. David Landman wrote an original sketch, *Bertie and the Bum Steer*, an imaginative piece about Bertie's and Jeeves's visit to Texas which showed the quality of the frustrated acting talent within the Newts (New England chapter) membership. The Blandings Castle chapter responded with Neil Midkiff's adaptation of *The Story of William* which was also thoroughly entertaining.



Outgoing President of TWS,
Dan Garrison



Tim Andrew and the winning cap

To the extent that there was a formal aspect to the proceedings, we can report with pleasure that one of our members, Elin Woodger, succeeded another, Dan Garrison, as President, while yet another, Susan Cohen, was elected Vice-President. But you don't really want to know about that, do you?



Hermione Wedge (Elaine Ring) and Madeline Bassett (Wendy Westfaul) pose for the *Bridgnorth, Shifnal and Albrighton Argus*

What Do You Understand by Two Little ffs?

While no one would pretend that it was the only reference book relating to the origins of surnames, *The Collins Dictionary of Surnames* by Leslie Dunkling (1998, HarperCollins) is of some interest to the Wodehousean. Seven of its specific entries have reference to Wodehouse characters, and in an appendix of surname distribution around 1890, amongst the list of names ‘peculiar to Buckinghamshire’ is **Wooster**.

The entries referred to are as follows:

Finch: a reference to the bird, which had once had a reputation for stupidity. The surname may therefore have been given as a nickname which commented on that quality.

P G Wodehouse, in *A Slice of Life*, has a character who spells his name ffinch-ffarrowmere, the doubling of the initial letter being a mediaeval alternative to a capital letter. “Sir Jasper Finch-Farrowmere?” said Wilfred. “Ffinch-ffarrowmere,” corrected the visitor, his sensitive ear detecting the capital letter. Mrs Gaskell had earlier made fun of such spellings in Cranford: There was a deal in a name – she had had a cousin who spelt his name with two little ffs – ffoulkes – and he had always looked down upon capital letters and said they belonged to lately-invented families. When he met a Mrs ffaringdon, at a watering-place, he took to her immediately. Mr ffoulkes married her; and it was all owing to her two little ffs.

Jeeves, Geaves, Geves, Jeves: descendant of *Geva*, itself a short form of *Genevieve*, a Germanic name usually explained as composed of elements meaning ‘people’ and ‘woman’. (He goes on to comment in basic terms about PGW’s character.)

Prebble, Preble: possibly a form of a French place name, such as *Préval*, ‘old meadow’. He then refers to *The Rise of Minna Nordstrom*, the Mulliner story set in Hollywood where the aspiring actress Vera Prebble is considering possible *noms de théâtre*.

Rockmetteller: does not have an actual entry. But under the entry Rockefeller, a name taken to the USA by German emigrants whose forbears came originally from Rockenfeld in the Rhineland, named after the rye which grew in its fields, the author reminds the reader that Wodehouse jokes about a similar name (‘though it is one which he presumably invented’) in *The Aunt and the Sluggard*. ‘He had this aunt in Illinois; and, as he had been named Rockmetteller after her (which in itself, you might say, entitled him to substantial compensation) and was her only nephew, his position looked pretty sound.’

Smith: he makes the inevitable reference to the change promulgated by Psmith.

Wilberforce: from residence in the Yorkshire Wilberfoss, a place so named because it was *Wilburg’s* foss (ditch). He goes on to report how Bertie Wooster was saddled with his middle name.

Woodhouse, Wodehouse, Woodus: apparently of both English and Scottish origin, it is said to mean, not surprisingly, a descendant of one who came from a place named because of a wooden house.

An Evening at Ottakar’s

On September 8th, Ottakar’s Bookshop in Haywards Heath held an open evening for Wodehouse fans, with a programme of readings and songs.

Prominent was Lara Cazalet who sang *Bill* as it should be sung, and she joined Ted Hands first in singing *Till the Clouds Roll By*, and then in a short extract from the play *Good Morning, Bill*. Finally Ted introduced, and then sang, *Sonny Boy* from *Jeeves and the Song of Songs*. Peter Mitchell supported the pair on keyboard piano.

Ottakar’s offered a prize of a set of the new Penguin publications in a draw of those attending, and it was won by new member Eileen Hollingdale.

New Publications

The third series of Granada TV’s *Jeeves and Wooster* is now available on video, reference GVO127.

Wodehouse in Woostershire, the sixth volume in the *Millennium Wodehouse Concordance* has been published at a retail price of £22, and may be obtained from Book Systems Plus BSP House Station Road Linton Cambs CB1 6NM (Tel: 01223 894870; Fax 01223 894871; e-mail: BSP2B@aol.com)

A set of 3 BBC audiotape dramatisations (of *Stiff Upper Lip*, *Jeeves*, *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* and *The Inimitable Jeeves*) boxed as *The Jeeves Collection*, ISBN 0563 552247, is available from Audio Book Collection, Freephone 0800 136 919, at £19.99.

SOCIETY GOLF DAY IN PROSPECT

John Wilson is prepared to organise a second Society Golf Day at Tandridge Golf Club, near Oxted, Surrey, on Tuesday 20 June, 2000. However, he does need to be satisfied that there will be a minimum of 12 members who will wish to participate before he is able to finalise the arrangements.

LAST CHANCE FOR THE TOUR

Interest in the Millennium Tour, described more fully in the enclosure sent with the last issue of *WS*, is running at a level sufficiently high that we can be sure that it will proceed. A major constraint for the Shropshire element is the choice of coach size, and although a deadline for registration was set originally for October 31, we have been able to extend this to November 30.

Furthermore, if you have not booked for this element of the Tour by then, but remain interested, please contact Hilary Bruce to explore possibilities. There is a fine balance to be drawn between accommodating the needs of as many members as possible and ensuring the Society does not lose bookings or deposits by failing to confirm in time.

Hilary may also be able to create a reserve list for members who are not yet sure if they can participate but would like to be contacted if members who have booked should be forced to pull out. But please don't delay in contacting her.

CHRISTOPHER OWEN'S PLANS FOR HIS ONE-MAN PERFORMANCE

Christopher Owen is an accomplished presenter of one-man shows, his *A Parson's Tale* having been performed in a large number of small theatres throughout the country over a period of several years. He is presently finalising his next presentation, a biography of P G Wodehouse told in word and song by a Lord Emsworth who is distracted both by the Empress of Blandings who is not showing her normal mid-season sparkle, and by the threatened arrival at the castle of Dame Daphne Winkworth. Christopher has selected a number of apposite Wodehouse lyrics, with music by Jerome Kern and Ivor Novello, to augment the narration, and tells me he is close to perfecting Lord Emsworth's 'reedy tenor' voice so that he can provide an authentic rendition.

He expects to be introducing this show in the summer and autumn next year, and the locations and details of how to book should be included in the March 2000 edition of *Wooster Sauce*. Details will also be posted to our website as they become available. In the meantime, if any very tall member has an old tweedy 3-piece suit (any condition) or pork pie hat they would care to sell to Lord Emsworth, please contact Chris

POETS' CORNER

The Prodigal

Time was when baby rarely strayed
From out the nursery door.
With rocking-horse and bricks he played,
Nor found the task a bore.
With soldiers deftly wrought of tin,
He'd wage a mimic battle;
The pleasant humming-top he'd spin,
Or work the gleesome rattle.

But then a fatal day there came,
He asked to join a club.
A friend (aged two) put up his name –
I had to pay his sub. –
Twelve guineas down, an annual eight –
And baby was elected;
The net result, I grieve to state,
Was not what I expected.

His habits altered for the worse,
For toys he cared no rap;
He sneered when offered by his nurse
Some quite delightful pap.
With 'Nanna' he declined to stay,
Though knowing she adored him;
Off to the club he'd wend his way;
He said that females bored him.

But now that time of sorrow's o'er,
And past those days of pain;
At length upon his native floor
Our baby's back again.
He says he couldn't stand the wine –
I heard the true cause later –
It seems they asked him to resign
For playing with a waiter.

This first appeared in the *Evening News and Evening Mail*, 15 March, 1903, and was written in response to a report that a club for babies had been formed in Paris.

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges – 12

"You told them you were expecting to sell a hundred thousand copies?"

"We always tell them we're expecting to sell a hundred thousand copies," said Russell Clutterbuck, letting him in on one of the secrets of the publishing trade.

French Leave, chapter 8

Recent Press Comment

Unfortunately, Press comment this quarter was dominated by the so-called revelations which hit the front pages on September 17. The major part of this survey represents our reflections on the matter.

P G Wodehouse himself put it this way:

“If an interviewer says to you ‘What do you think of our high buildings?’, and you reply ‘I think your high buildings are wonderful,’ and it comes out as ‘I think your high buildings are wonderful. I’d like to see some of those income tax guys jump off the top of them,’ no harm is done. The sentiment pleases the general public, and even the officials of the Internal Revenue Department probably smile indulgently, as men who know they are going to get the last laugh. But when a war is in progress, it is kinder to the interviewee not to indulge this imagination.”

It would seem that this creed was not taught at the schools of journalism attended by reporters for PA News and seven national dailies who on Black Friday, September 17, 1999, created a series of outrageous headlines. The misreporting and misunderstanding was really something to be marvelled at, and were it not for the bizarre law in this country that a libel suit cannot be brought on behalf of a dead person, there can be little doubt that writs would have flown.

These journalists were evidently Acolytes of stout Cortez, judging by what they phrased with wild surmise on a p c in Docklands. *Private Eye* hit the nail on the head with great accuracy in their October 1 issue and we reproduce their article with their gracious consent.

The release of the MI5 papers had been accompanied on the Public Records Office website by a short summary of contents. This mentioned Plum twice, as follows:

“The two of the three cases [concerning ‘Renegades’] covered by these files are of particular interest as they concern the literary figure P G Wodehouse and the son of a Conservative MP, John Amery. Both were concerned with broadcasting. Wodehouse was cleared . . .”

Not a point made with too much clarity by the Acolytes who rather preferred to rely on a summary prepared by the chief reporter for PA News. In fulfilling the brief he had been given, he had looked solely at the newly unclassified files, which was rather unfortunate, but he did at least include in his summary the statements that “There was no conclusive evidence that the monies were payments” and that “MI5 acknowledged the possibility that the embassy were simply transmitting to the Wodehouses their own funds left behind in Berlin when they moved to Paris”.

This should have eliminated the public interest in the story but each Acolyte sought to be more sensational than the others. None seem to have thought of using the Internet to check with the PRO what other relevant files were available or, if they did, to have made the fifteen mile journey across London to look them up. Had they done so, they would have discovered that files which clarified matters quite considerably had been in the public domain for many months! In file FO 369, for example, they would have found a letter dated 25 July 1947 from G E Wakefield of MI5 admitting they had found ‘no evidence whatsoever’ that Wodehouse had done anything to earn the payments from the Nazis (despite assiduous searching for such evidence over several months). And they would have also found a manuscript memo dated 4 June 1947 in the handwriting of Mr G Allchin of the Foreign Office which read:

“Assuming that the present payments prove to have been innocuous I would suggest that in any reply we may make to Mr Wakefield we should take occasion to deprecate MI5’s apparent enthusiasm for the chase and to indicate that in our view this matter is trivial in itself and at the distance of time, cast off into oblivion . . .”

To maximise the impact of their ‘stories’, the Acolytes had to disagree with the contemporary Foreign Office view and suggest the matter was far from trivial. The issue was evidently clearer to them at a distance of fifty years than it had been to Mr Allchin after two. Thus the reports reflected the common reticence to utilise unhelpful facts and combined exaggeration with unjustifiable insinuation. They even referred to special Nazi payments of hundreds of thousands of pounds when drawing attention to the existence of four items, totalling £1,000, which the Foreign Office had said were probably “advances from his own funds in France or derived from Switzerland or elsewhere”.

After the knee-jerk tabloid journalism came somewhat more considered pieces, including those from Francis Wheen (circulated with *WS 11*), Iain Sproat (in *The Times* and, most comprehensively on 29 October, the *Times Literary Supplement*) and Boris Johnson.

But isn’t it depressing to read articles about a subject on which the reader has as much or more knowledge than the writer and can recognise the serious shortcomings contained within a piece? One asks whether one can ever trust the reporter again. And as Plum hinted in the introductory quotation, when the topic is as serious as this, unprofessionalism in researches is unforgiveable. The original summary has appeared with many different glosses, usually exaggerated, in the press worldwide. For their own sake we should hope that the Acolytes are never themselves the subject of their colleagues’ investigations.

Other Examples of Press Comment

Daily Telegraph, September 10 (from James Wood)

An editorial concerning Michael Portillo's political prospects compared his position to that of Roderick Spode, with a guilty secret which for years he feared would be exposed.

Daily Mail, October 1

The *Bookworm* column received an enquiry about novels by PGW based on his theatrical experiences. The answer mentioned *Barmy in Wonderland*, *A Damsel in Distress*, *Jill the Reckless*, *The Adventures of Sally* and *The Small Bachelor*, and the inclusion of a Society phone number resulted in four or five new members.

Daily Mail, October 1

Andrew Alexander suggested that Jeffrey Archer was like an unworldly character in a PGW story, always landing in the soup.

Times (Saturday Magazine, about October 2)

A feature on Bill Bryson revealed that when a teenager he read his dad's books, including James Thurber, Robert Benchley and PGW.

Daily Telegraph, October 15 (from James Hogg)

Peter Fitzsimons, a former Australian rugby international, introduced an article on the need for physical contact in rugby as follows:

Why do they call it 'rugby'? Because they found 'assault and battery' was already taken.

Or how about this contribution from P G Wodehouse on the subject of rugby: "The main scheme is to work the ball down the field somehow and deposit it over the line at the other end . . . In order to squelch this programme, each side is allowed to put in a certain amount of assault and battery and do things to its fellow man which, if done elsewhere, would result in 14 days without the option, coupled with some strong remarks from the Bench."

Observer, October 17 (from Peter Wightman)

Sir John Mortimer introduced his review of Sue Townsend's *Adrian Mole and the Cappucino Years* thus:

One happy day, when we have recovered our sanity, the Booker Prize will be awarded for a book with a laugh on every page and P G Wodehouse will replace *The Lord of the Flies* as compulsory school reading.

Houston Chronicle, October 23 (from John Baesch)

Carried a very favourable report of the production of *Oh, Kay!* mentioned on page 15.

★ Exclusive to all lazy newspapers ★

WAS WOODHOUSE A NAZI?

by Our Illiterary Staff **Gussie Fink-Little**

ONE OF the country's best-loved literary figures was yesterday revealed to be a Nazi sympathiser by a set of documents released under the Thirty-Year-Old Story Rule.

The papers appear to show that Barbara Woodhouse, author of *Fetch!* and *Heel Boy!* was in the pay of the German High Command for the latter part of the First World War. (*Subs - please check.*)

The circumstantial evidence against Woodhouse is overwhelming, say experts I haven't

had time to talk to, who point out the following sinister facts:

1. She insisted on her orders being obeyed.
2. She liked wearing a "uniform" of tweed skirt and sensible shoes.
3. She went walkies into the Sudetenland. (*No, she didn't. This is rubbish. Ed.*)

All in all, the picture now emerging of P.G. Woodhouse, known as "Tips" to her colleagues, is of a committed dog-handler who would stop at nothing to bring about the Thousand-Year Reich. (*You're fired. Ed.*)

PROOF FROM THE ARCHIVES



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Last Few Copies of Yours, Plum

New members in particular may care to know that the Society still has a small stock (less than a dozen copies) of *Yours, Plum*, the book of his letters edited by the late Frances Donaldson. They are available for sale to UK members at £5.50 post-free, and anyone interested should contact the editor.

Drones 10th Anniversary Dinner

The Drones Club, the Belgian Wodehouse Society, celebrated its tenth anniversary with an extraordinary dinner on November 6th at Millfleet Hall, the Club Headquarters owned by musician Walter Rens. Walter had composed a special Drones March, which was played in a marquee by a small band for the forty or so attending. It was then reprised half a dozen times during the evening on a tape recorder for us all to join in the mixed English and Dutch lyric.

Kris Smets, the Drones President, and Jelle Otten, President of The P G Wodehouse Society based in the Netherlands, were both present, and the principal guests were David Colvin, KCMG, British Ambassador to Belgium, his wife Caroline, and his father-in-law Gordon Smith, coincidentally a member of ours. Dinner lasted from 8pm until 2am and was punctuated by song, multi-lingual speeches, presentations and general jollity. It broke up soon after the guests left at 2.30am. Your UK representatives, Oliver Wise and the Editor can say that, if you have never been to a dinner organised by one of our fellow European Societies, you haven't seen the Flemish interpretation of Wodehouse companionship. And you should!

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

February 15 – Informal meeting at the Savage Club
Join other members from 6pm. 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.

April 1 (Yes, really!) – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk
The first of the Chairman's popular walks round Wodehouse's London to be held this year. Please contact Norman Murphy on [redacted] for more information and to reserve a place.

June 16 – Cricket Match
The Gold Bats v The Dusters at Dulwich College, with light refreshments. Please contact [redacted] if you are interested in playing for the Society XI. No recent experience necessary.

June 20 – Golf Day
Provided sufficient members indicate their interest in playing (see page 17) a Society Golf Day will be held at Tandridge Golf Club near Oxted, Surrey.

July 17 to 23 – Wodehouse Society Millennium Tour
If you have not booked your place on the Tour (partly in London and partly in Shropshire) and are interested, please see page 17, and contact [redacted]

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.

August/September – Meeting in Scotland
It is hoped that a meeting will be held in Scotland on a Saturday in late August or early September. See page 12 for more information.

October 12 OR October 19 – Society Dinner
The 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 at the Club of which Plum was once a member.

EDITOR'S TAILPIECES

It is with much regret that I have to inform members of the deaths of two of our founder members, Jimmy Moxon and Victor Bolwell. Jimmy was a larger-than-life figure who recently completed a three-part personal reminiscence for *Wooster Sauce* concerning Weston Park and its Blandings pedigree. Vic organised the first meeting in Birmingham last year, and if any of our West Midlands members would care to arrange another meeting during the year 2000 in tribute to him, would they please contact the Chairman, Norman Murphy, on [redacted] or the Editor.

Sidney Kitson, President of The P G Wodehouse Society (India) tells me that Philatelists J & M Arlington of 45 Lakenheath, London N14 4RL are distributing a commemorative cover with a P G Wodehouse cancellation which was issued to celebrate the presentation of a Wodehouse Golf Trophy to the Royal Calcutta Golf Club last year.

Member Christopher Owen had a shock when his bank wrote to confirm his standing order arrangements for payment of Society subscriptions. "We understand," they wrote, "that you will pay to The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), from May 31, 2000, the sum of £2,000 per month." Christopher tells us that, love us never so dearly, it was not as dearly as that, and he felt obliged to contact the bank who corrected their error.

The edition of the radio programme *Quote Unquote* which was broadcast on October 4th had been recorded in Glasgow and naturally had a Scottish theme. When asked for favourite quotations on a Scottish topic Joyce McMillan, journalist and culture critic, put a new gloss on PGW's famous statement that it is never difficult to tell the difference between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine by commenting that a considerable number of Scottish women would agree.

Having been informed how to acquire from an American supplier a video of *Dizzy Dames*, a 1935 movie loosely based on the story *The Watchdog*, I duly placed an order. When it arrived the package had been opened by UK Customs, and in view of the title, probably watched. How disappointed they would have been! But they did not ask for import duty or VAT.

I understand that one wing of Plum's former residence at Le Touquet has now been opened to the public as a Bed-and-Breakfast apartment.

Bibliophile (0207 515 9222) is looking for good homes for the 6-volume sets of the translations of *The Great Sermon Handicap* into over 50 languages which were published by James Heineman before he died. They ask £25 per set plus £2.50 postage