

WOOSTER SAUCE



The Quarterly Journal of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

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It Outshines Cora Bellinger!

The long-awaited Wodehouse lyrics CD is now available

The release of *The Land Where The Good Songs Go* represents a major step forward in reawakening the public awareness of the lyrics of P G Wodehouse. For members of this Society, it will not come as fresh news, for *Wooster Sauce* regards it as important that all aspects of his work be covered in its pages, but what may be a revelation to those who obtain a copy of the CD is just how well his songs stand up on their own. After all, together with Jerome Kern and Guy Bolton, Wodehouse was instrumental in revolutionising the nature of the American musical by creating songs based round characters, plot and setting, which were designed to move the action forward, an approach which is not necessarily conducive to the creation of stand-alone songs.



Hal Cazalet, receiving the applause of diners after entertaining at a Wodehouse Society function

Photo: Ginni Beard

The three musicians most closely involved with the project, Hal Cazalet, Sylvia McNair and Steven Blier, have taken time out to explain their involvement with the CD, and how they feel about the songs (see page 12). Hal, of course, is PGW's great-grandson and may be credited with an obvious motivation, but apart from singing on twelve tracks he has directed most aspects of the project as well. A young professional singer with a growing reputation, both for his tenor voice and his stage presence, he has recruited his musical team, been involved in the *minutiae* of the recordings, negotiated the distribution arrangements and overseen the preparation and content of the important accompanying booklet.

Hal trained at the Juilliard School of music in New York, where he was a student of Steven Blier. Steve

acted as Musical Director on this recording and demonstrates what an accomplished pianist he is. Sylvia McNair is an experienced operatic soprano who enjoys singing a wide range of material and threw herself into the project with much panache.

We are pleased to announce that arrangements have been made whereby Society members outside the USA can buy copies of the CD for just £ 10 plus postage, as explained in the enclosed flyer. We hope copies will be here by mid-July. Because the CD will be commercially available in the United States around three months earlier than in the UK and Europe, other arrangements are being made for members in North America.

Interpreting Timeless Prose

Simon Callow's recordings for Penguin recall a young man's enthusiasm

Right Ho, Jeeves was the first proper novel I can recall reading. I was nine, living in the small town Fort Jameson in the centre of what was then called Northern Rhodesia. I had been rudely uprooted from South London and was clinging rather desperately to whatever splinters of England and Englishness I could lay my hands on; Wodehouse proved to be a positive raft of the stuff.

Once started, I was unstoppable. I cantered through the Blandings novels, Psmith and his gang, everything I could lay my hands on, but in the end, quite inevitably, I came back, as one always comes back, to that immortal pair, Jeeves and Bertie, among the finest of all literature's double acts, in the direct line from Sancho Panza and Don Quixote, Diderot's Jacques and his Master, Holmes and Watson, Vladimir and Estragon interminably waiting for Godot, Laurel and Hardy, Morecambe and Wise. Often they're servants and masters, but they're symbiotically linked: neither can live without the other. We know what life without Jeeves is like for Bertie – after a moment of cocky relief, there is increasing pointlessness and helplessness, in fact, there is just *lessness*.

But does Jeeves miss Bertie during the trial separations which weave bleakly through the novels, unless reconciliation is triumphantly effected? I like to think he does; he must know that they are a perfect match, that their complementarity is ordained in heaven. Without the perfect vacuum in Bertie's brain, into what vessel would Jeeves pour his wisdom? And without Bertie's essential chivalry, to what barren end would all his genius be directed? They need each other, but in a sense, they need no one else. As with all the other great pairs listed above, it is essential that no intruder should be admitted into the relationship, above all not a significant other. Jeeves's attachments to which not infrequent allusion is made – all those young persons in Penge – seem to satisfy his needs, but they are strictly peripheral and transitory.

Of course, I didn't see it quite like that when I was nine. My ambition then was simply to be Jeeves, omniscient, omnicompetent, and, even more urgently, perhaps, to avoid becoming Bertie. At the time, alas, all the omens were pointing towards Bertie and away from Jeeves. I was known more for my idiotic blundering charm than for my powers of penetration or for the elegance of my comportment.

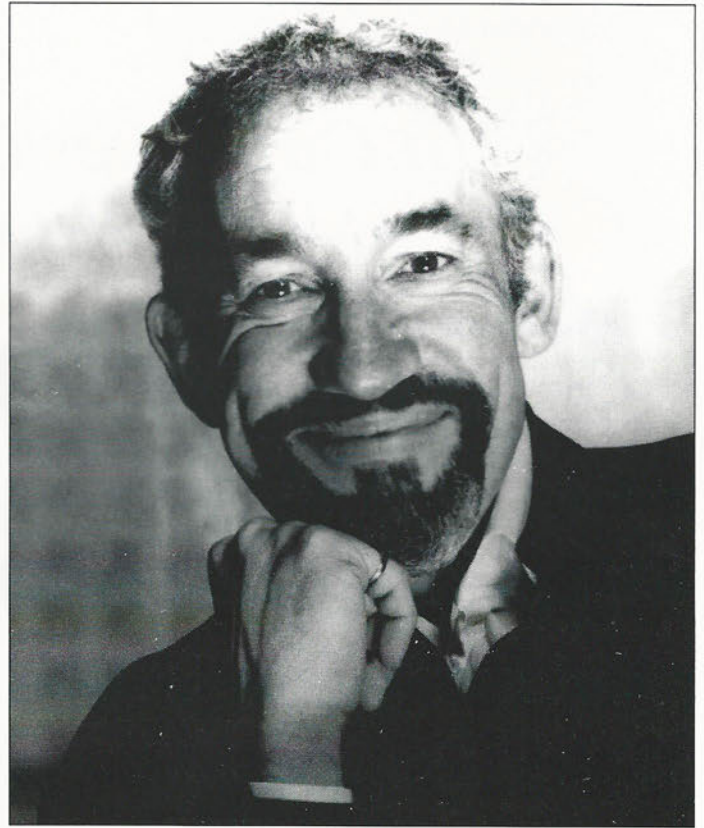


Photo: Hugo Glendinning

Over the years I improved; the balance shifted. I affected an extreme conservatism in my clothing to the extent that I was almost in uniform: I was always garbed in waistcoats, ties and suits, at the age when my contemporaries were throwing off as much as they decently could.

I don't think I ever seriously considered becoming a gentleman's gentleman, but the dream was always there. Once, very briefly, when I was eighteen and at University, I was dresser to a very famous Irish actor, who taught me how to iron clothes and how to fold them, how to pack a case. He taught me to know when he needed his gin and tonic, or when tea was appropriate. At last I had an inkling of this most intimate relationship. No man, I thought, is a hero to his dresser, but this grand *homme du théâtre* gave me the lie. Though I saw him at his least glamorous and his most vulnerable, this master of the stage, this lord of language, sitting there in his underwear, exhausted and frightened, I understood what real heroism meant, how he gathered himself up into the person the public expected, and how the horrors and uncertainty of his journey onto the stage – for by now he was nearly blind and of fallible memory –

Simon Callow's Latest Recordings Reviewed

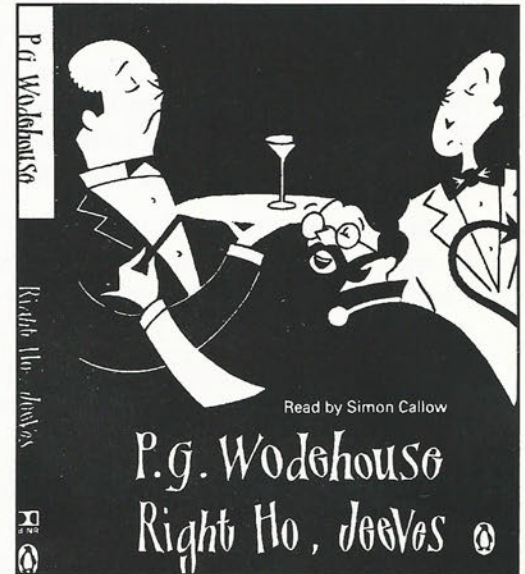
Penguin Audio's Right Ho, Jeeves and Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves

There is much to enjoy in Simon Callow's two new recordings of abridged Bertie and Jeeves novels. The abridgements themselves, by Martin Franks, have been well thought out, and the plots remain more or less intact. The reader says, in his accompanying article, that he had to differentiate many characters' voices within the confines of narrow parameters, and his choices, for example in *Stiff Upper Lip*, are illuminating. It may be no wonder that we can identify Gussie, Spode and probably Sir Watkyn Bassett at first hearing, and the gentle American accent adopted for Emerald Stoker is in the best possible taste. (Her use of the word 'noots' in conversation with Bertie makes one immediately look forward to the next TWS convention!) The big surprise is the somewhat nasal tone adopted for Plank, where a hearty, air-headed looniness might have been expected.

A nice touch, evident particularly in *Right Ho, Jeeves*, is the apparent slightly deeper voice given to Bertie when narrating compared to Bertie the conversationalist. It adds to the clarity of the story, which will be of particular value to the relative newcomer.

Right Ho, Jeeves ISBN 0141803150, available 28th June, £ 8.99

Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves ISBN 0141803258, available 26th July, £ 8.99



Interpreting Timeless Prose, continued

by now he was nearly blind and of fallible memory – were made possible by the order and precision of my work for him. At those moments, I knew what he needed better than he did himself, and I had a minor taste of what it might be to be Jeeves.

I hadn't, I confess, read the novels for a long time when I was enlisted by *Penguin*. When I started recording them, I was forcefully struck by the musical perfection of the prose, which I had hardly noticed before. Only when you read it out loud do you understand how unerringly it is phrased: like Mozart, though some of the imagery is as mad as anything from the pen of a French Surrealist or absurdist. It's the conjunction of formal perfection with the higher reaches of nonsense which creates the inspired effect. Then there is the dialogue: not for nothing was Wodehouse one of the most successful and skilled dramatists of the 20s and 30s, in both plays and musical comedies. It's dazzlingly effective and quite seriously nutty; the characters live in their lines as much as in the descriptive prose.

Finding timbre and tone for the Wodehouse menagerie is a nice little challenge. Women – aunts, in particular – are often fiercely masculine, men, not excluding Bertie, are so otherworldly they veer on

the ethereal. There is, too, the problem of class. How to find variations within a group of characters who live within a mile of each other in the metropolis, most of whom went to the same school and many of whose bank balances would be identical to within a decimal point? There are three essential strata in a Jeeves novel: Bertie's family and immediate circle; domestic; and outsiders, mostly Americans. There's no shortage of characterisation on the author's part; it's simply a question of how many voices as an actor one can come up with within the confines of those narrow parameters.

It is also useless to ask what period the novels came from. It is almost impossible to date them. They could have been written at any time within the fifty years during which the author wrote them. Wodehouse took a moment in history and made it immortal and eternal, a twenties Eden, mythic and pre-lapsarian, childish but immensely sophisticated, a skittish dance to the music of a time out of time.

To conclude, then, reading the books is like taking a dip in spring water on the edge of Eden in a world of Nymphs and Shepherds, except that the nymphs are sipping Manhattans and the shepherds are wearing monocles.

Plum The Crusader

When Alex Graham, creator of the Fred Basset cartoon strip, died in 1991, reference was made in his obituaries to the mutual admiration which existed between him and Plum. His daughter, Arran, and son-in-law, Alistair, have kindly made available copies of letters sent by PGW concerning the fate of the cartoon in the Long Island Press. In addition they have generously donated to the Society the original cartoon which appears on page 11.

The background to PGW's first letter was described by Alex Graham in an interview with Keith Mackenzie of the *Daily Mail* in *Cartoonists' Profiles* in 1976:

I was brought up on P G Wodehouse. I thought he was the greatest humorist of all time. One day I had a letter from him saying that they had cut the Fred Basset strip out of the *Long Island Press* and he and other readers had written in to say "Where is Fred Basset" and they restored it.

The correspondence then tells its own story: first, how Plum joined in the outcry, and later, when the size of the cartoon was so reduced as to make the words unreadable, and reader pressure again caused the editorial staff to rethink their policy so that the forces of right triumphed in the end.

P. G. WODEHOUSE
REISENBURG
NEW YORK

April 17, 1968

Dear Mr Graham.

I don't know if this will interest you, but the Long Island Press, an important paper over here, in a fit of temporary insanity dropped Fred Basset one day, substituting ... some rotten something for it. A great howl of protest went up all over Long Island, scores of letters poured in on the editor (mine included), and they hastened to put Fred back, much to my delight, as Fred is always what I turn to first when the paper arrives.

Yours sincerely

P. G. Wodehouse

Fred has won the hearts of Philadelphians in a big way. The management of The Inquirer didn't know just how big a way until they tried to drop the cartoon a while ago. The outcry from the public in mail and telephone calls was so great that the old boy was brought back post haste with apologies for his short departure. By the way, B.F., just because you are a nice person and kind to dogs, the Publishers-Hall Syndicate, which handles the feature in the United States, has sent you an original Fred Basset strip.

From the Philadelphia Inquirer



June 19, 1968

Dear Mr Graham.

How awfully nice of you to send me the Fred B book. It is just what I was wanting, for I never can bring myself to cut bits out of the paper. Now I have the book I am all right.

I hope you will be coming over in October, which is our best month. September is fine, but apt to produce hurricanes.

When you come, I must show you the P.G.Wodehouse Shelter for Dogs and Cats a mile or two from here. This is supposed to be its official letter paper. It was badly needed, for this locality is full of strays. Chez Wodehouse we have a Boxer and six cats, all strays. We also have a dachshund, but he is an aristocrat who was flown over from England.

Yours sincerely

P. G. Wodehouse

Though not strictly relevant to the cartoon strip's newspaper appearances, this letter is typical of PGW's appreciation of fellow-artists' work.

Many thanks for the
Fred B book. It is a
joy. Wonderful how
Fred has caught on
over here. I wonder
how many papers he
is appearing in. I only
see him in my Long
Island Express. On
Sundays I'm glad to see
he gets the big space,
while rival comics
are crammed into an
inch or two.

All the best
P.G.W.

P. G. Wodehouse
Remsenburg
Long Island, New York 11960
Jan 18.1974

Dear Mr Graham?,
Read enclosed. The right has triumphed, and
the forces of evil have had to climb down.
Fred is now his proper size again and
one can read his obiter dicta without a
magnifying glass.
Hurray!
Yours ever

YOU WIN
* * *
**Larger comics
back tomorrow**

Starting tomorrow, we're restoring the smaller
Press comic strips to their former, larger size.
Last fall, in order to conserve newsprint, we
reduced the size of some comics. Reader re-
sponse, after we explained the problem, was gen-
erally excellent.
However, some people told us the smaller
comics were hard on the eyes, and detracted from
the appreciation of their favorite characters.
We think those readers are right. And now
we're doing something about it.
The newsprint shortage is still with us, but
we'll find other ways to cope.

The letter on the left reads as follows:

*I am simply furious. The Long Island Press has started
printing the comics very small to make room for
advertisements, presumably. This means that Fred
Basset's dialogue can't be read without a magnifying
glass.*

*Fortunately the colour Fred in the Sunday edition is
still as large as ever.*

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Long Island Press has started
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Fred Basset's dialogue
can't be read without a
magnifying glass.

Fortunately the colour
Fred in the Sunday edition
is still as large as ever.

P.G.W.

Let the last words be with Alex Graham:

I had a letter from him just before he died. In fact
it was one of the nicest fan letters which I have
ever had from a man who had always been my
hero as a humorist.

Finding Facts Behind the Fiction: Fun or Foolishness?

Our Chairman, Norman Murphy, reflects on Louise O'Connor's letter in the March issue of Wooster Sauce

Like Charles Dickens, Wodehouse created a fictional world for his readers. Both made their characters larger than life, their heroes more heroic, their villains more villainous, their funny characters funnier. They exaggerated, they dramatized, and each based some of their best-known characters on people they knew.

They satirised public figures (Northcliffe as Lord Tilbury; Mosley as Roderick Spode; Leigh Hunt as Skimpole in *Bleak House*) and their contemporary readers, especially, enjoyed the joke. Both of them put much of their own lives into their books and both inserted private jokes that only a few friends would recognise.

The question is: does the identification of factual origins detract from a writer's skill? I am firmly of the opinion that it does not, but I am grossly prejudiced. I defend the search for the facts behind the fiction on two grounds. If one admires or enjoys a writer as much as I enjoy Wodehouse, there is always the desire to learn more about him and how he got his ideas.

Wodehouse had one basic plot: boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl. Around that simple idea, he assembled an unforgettable cast, who could not all have sprung from his imagination. Secondly, there are the settings: the golf-course, Valley Fields, the Drones Club and the country houses, led by that Paradise on earth, Blandings Castle.

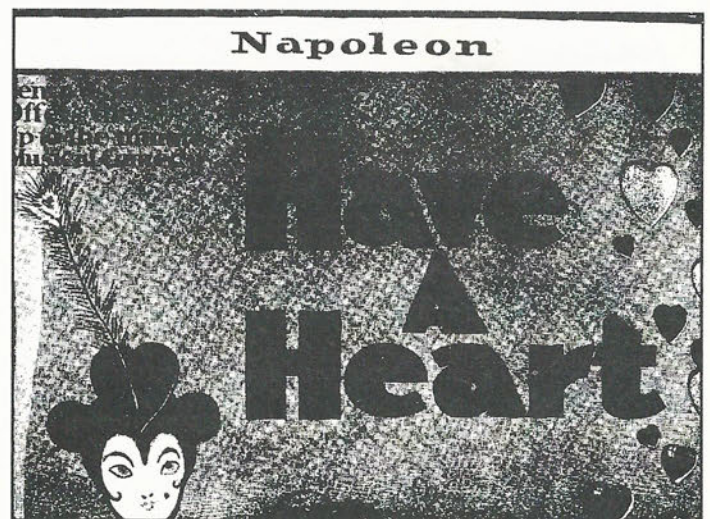
I think most enthusiasts were as excited as I was when I read the letter in which Wodehouse said he always liked using real places in his stories. The thought that there might be a real Blandings, a real Drones Club, made me feel like the war-horse saying "Ha, Ha!" among the trumpets. So I began the long tedious search. It might seem a fruitless exercise but I draw comfort from Wodehouse himself. He once said that although he enjoyed the humour in Catullus, how much more enjoyable it must have been to Catullus's contemporaries to know about whom he was joking.

And yes, I think I know why Wodehouse created the Princess von und zu Dwornitzchek, the only really evil character in his novels. But that's another story.

Eddie Grabham has also responded to the correspondence

I was intrigued by Louise O'Connor's comments, but cannot help feeling that she has taken it all far too seriously. I would be horrified if, for one moment, I thought I had cast aspersions on the character of Gloria Swanson. She was an actress I admired immensely; I recall a number of her performances with real pleasure. She may have drawn upon her own as well as other silent stars' careers when she created the monstrous Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*, but no one imagined that she or any of the other screen sirens or vamps behaved remotely like that in real life.

Equally, I do not doubt that P G Wodehouse could have created his characters purely from his own imagination. However, it should be remembered that, in addition to any number of characters in his books, he displayed a delicious sense of lampoonery in his witty lyrics. However slight it may be, satire relies on gross exaggeration; it is thought by some, for example, that Plum's lyric for *Napoleon* in the Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern 1917 musical comedy *Have a Heart* not only kidded the French Emperor, but was also a cheekily humorous dig at Broadway producer Abe Erlanger. I doubt that Mr Erlanger would have objected.



If one identifies real-life people reflected in Plum's characters, that only adds to the fun and in no way detracts from his brilliant invention. It was with this thought very much in mind that I dared to suggest that Gloria Swanson may have provided inspiration for Princess von und zu Dwornitzchek. Equally, I recognise that other actresses or Hollywood folk may also have provided elements which are reflected in the character.

Patrick Wodehouse remembers ‘Uncle Plummie’

Patrick Wodehouse, one of the Society’s Patrons, is the son of Armine Wodehouse and a nephew of PG. He remembers with affection many school vacation visits to his Uncle and Aunt.

I have always had a great affection for my Uncle, for he was always kind and most generous toward me. I felt we had a special link as we had both been abandoned to strangers at an early age.

Grandpa Ernest and Grandma Eleanor (PGW’s parents) had come home from Hong Kong on leave with Philip, Armine and Pelham, and left them in the care of a hired woman called Roper. Plummie, the youngest was not quite three years old at the time.

Similarly, my parents came on leave from India and parked me with two sisters who made a living looking after the children of expats. I was four years old. Plummie was in England at the time, and his friend Guy Bolton recommended the place; and later his daughter Peggy joined us there. I remember that it was a long up-hill walk to the house. My father and Plummie took me there, and Plummie, wearing a tweed cap, carried me on his head. They dumped me and sauntered back down the hill.

It was not the happiest of experiences, but what you have never had you do not miss, and I must say that neither Plummie nor I seemed to be any the worse for not seeing our mothers for several years. When I was seven years old my mother briefly returned to England and put me in a prep school as a boarder. It then became necessary to find somewhere for me in the holidays. Luckily I had two sets of grandparents and a few uncles and aunts amongst whom I was tossed back and forth like a shuttlecock, but, again like Plummie, there was nowhere that I could call home.

The holiday visits to Plummie and Ethel were the most exciting. When I stayed with them in Norfolk Street, they were often at a loss to know what to do with me, for there was no other child to play with. Although Leonora was in her late teens and at the flapper stage, she frequently took me to a matinée or a movie in the afternoon. In the mornings I would accompany Charles, the footman, as he exercised the Pokes in Hyde Park.

One glorious summer Plummie rented a large country mansion, Rogate Lodge, near Petersfield, and I spent two months with them. I was in my element: there were acres of woodland to explore and every weekend there was a house party and lots of interesting people. I was just eight years old and had started to read school stories when Plummie gave a complete autographed set of his. After he and Ethel moved to Hollywood, and later to Le Touquet, I did not see much of them, but he always remembered my birthday and Christmas.

My father retired from India in 1935, and as I was then at Cheltenham College, he took a house in Cheltenham and I became a day boy. He died the following year. He and Plum were firm friends, having been together at Dulwich where they both did rather well, particularly Armine, who won scholarships both to the College and to Oxford where he collected a row of distinctions. They were the two intellectuals of the family and carried out a regular, if infrequent, correspondence. I treasure two of Plummie’s letters in particular: one is the last letter written to my father before his death, the other is one written to my mother shortly after his death.

The Smile That Wins

Favourite Nifties – 15

She could not have gazed at him with a more rapturous intensity if she had been a small child and he a saucer of ice-cream.

From *The Clicking of Cuthbert* (in the collection of the same name), 1922

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges – 18

“Would you have me sell myself for gold?”

“Certainly, and the more gold the better.”

From *French Leave*, 1956

The Personal Links of Plum 'n Me

Murray Hedgcock is in contemplative mood

One of the private fun features about Wodehouse enthusiasm is to assemble the personal links you can establish with The Master. They may be tenuous, they may be remote – but they make you feel that much closer to PGW and his wonderful world.

Let me stake my claim. Starting at the beginning – P G Wodehouse was a product of the Victorian era. I too was born in the Victorian world. (Well, yes, MY Victorian world was the Australian State of Victoria – but why shouldn't that count?) PGW's father was in the service of the Crown: so was mine. I concede a difference between Wodehouse Senior as a magistrate in Hong Kong, and my father as a country postmaster – but the Crown was the symbol of the Australian Post Office in those imperial days.

Aunts were big in the youthful world of Wodehouse: for me, too. (Very big – I had one extremely large Aunt who delighted us all by smashing an outside staircase one memorable day, simply by descending it. She was Auntie Nell; there were also Auntie Doris, Auntie Ethel, even Great-Aunt Lou, and so on. Not ferocious like PGW aunts: just part of the family – but significant members of it).

Plum represented his school at cricket and football – like me. (Well – his was Dulwich College, a real public school with proper facilities and genuine quality, and mine was a modest country high school of just 120 pupils, where in the Sixth Form you could hardly fail to make all sports teams, so thin was the choice. I still stick by my honours).

Wodehouse hoped to go to university, or become a writer – but had to settle for a bank clerk's life. Now we're on firmer ground: I too wished for university, which somehow did not happen. I wanted to be a

journalist, but no vacancies were available – so I too finished up in a bank. (When Plum joined the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank in Lombard Street in 1900, he was paid 80 pounds a year. When I joined the Maffra branch of the State Savings Bank of Victoria in 1948, I got 152 pounds ten shillings a year. Given that the Australian pound was 20% below sterling, and allowing for inflation, I think I got the worse deal). Young athletic Plum played cricket and football for his bank. Hmm – there were only three on the staff of my branch, so I could hardly have represented it in anything more ambitious than a coxed pair. Let's skip that one.

Plum escaped after two years into newspapers – yes, that fits. Except that he linked up with Fleet Street in exciting London, and I simply moved to another country town, with a population of 10,000. But it had a daily paper, which employed me as a copy-holder. What's that? A proofreader's assistant.

Young Wodehouse had long wanted to cross the oceans for sports reasons – as I had. He sailed to America, aged 22, to see the boxer 'Kid' McCoy: I sailed to England, aged 21, to see an Australian cricket team (Hassett's side of 1953). Wodehouse found romance – as I did. (He met Ethel, his future wife, on ship: I met my future wife a few days after landing, which surely is near enough?)

P G Wodehouse quickly settled to a brilliant career in which his literary and humorous gifts brought fame, fortune, the acclaim of world audiences, an honorary Oxford degree, a knighthood.

On second thoughts, I pass: my extremely modest newspaper career suggests that relationship idea to be not such a good prospect after all.

A Guest Enjoys the Savage Experience

Angela Tuson from South Africa wrote:

Dear Wodehouseans

Thanks for a marvellous evening in your company at the PGW UK meeting in November. We have watched a video of John Fletcher reading Gussie's speech quite often. In fact I played it for the merriment of my parents in Zimbabwe. How your fame spreads!

Looking forward to another meeting someday.

Geoff Hales is at the Savage on July 10

Geoff is an actor with a PhD in English literature who has made a specialty of creating one-man shows on topics such as *Dickens*, *Kipling*, *One Man In a Boat* and *A Victorian Evening*, which combine his enthusiasm for theatre, literature and travel.

He participated in the recent presentation at the Theatre Museum, and at the Savage Club on July 10, from 6pm, Geoff will be reading extracts from *Over Seventy* on the theme of *P G Wodehouse: My Place in World Literature*.

My First Wodehouse Experience

Miguel Herrero de Jáuregui, a 22-year-old member from Madrid, remembers

No one would have suspected that that rainy morning was to be a historical one. I was spending Easter holidays in my grandmother's house in the country, and the unusual absence of cousins made reading the only possible entertainment. One could of course point out, always looking at the bright side, that this lack of cousins was due to the absence of aunts, but I was just a 12-year-old boy who wasn't yet aware of one of Bertie Wooster's strongest held opinions: "There should be a law about aunts." Only then would life teach me how right he is.

Having read already all the Agatha Christies in the house and having an intuition that titles on the style of *Economical Psychoanthropology*, though undoubtedly valuable, wouldn't prove extremely exciting, there were only left the old novels which once had belonged to my late great-grandmother. They didn't seem attractive to cope with, being dusty, with yellowish pages and full of spider-webs: oldish, in a word. I mean, when a book seems not to have been read for ages, one feels somewhat lazy to be the first, tending to think that the book deserves it. My father gave me one of them, saying: "Perhaps that'll amuse you." The title, however, *Money For Nothing*, suggested something more on the line of the Money-doesn't-make-you-



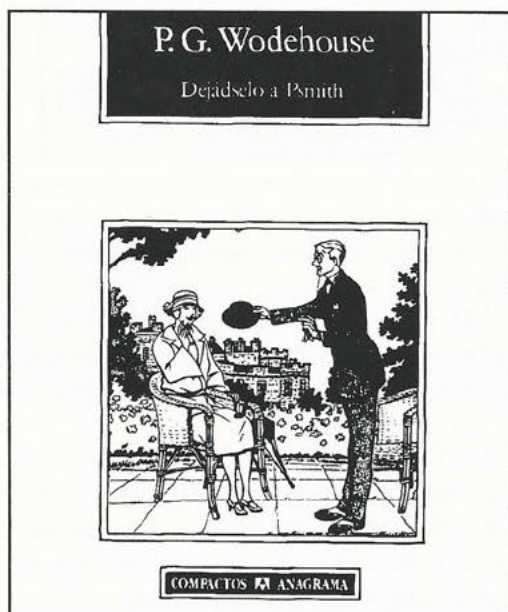
happy stuff and so on. But there was no alternative, so with a sigh of resignation I began to read.

It may be interesting for those who have always read him in English to know that in translation the wittiness of the vocabulary and many of the comical expressions are lost. (How would you translate, for example, Bertie's "What'd you call it?") On the contrary the comical situations and dialogues and, above all, Wodehouse's unique characters rest almost intact. That's why it wasn't instantly, but only when old Soapy and Dolly Molloy, and the unavoidable Chimp Twist, appeared that I began to realise that this was something different. And the supreme scene when Dolly gave Chimp a Mickey Finn pill and then put in his sleeping rival's hand a lily as consolation for the awakening opened a new world for me.

After that came *The Luck of the Bodkins* and others, but it was with *Leave It To Psmith* when I definitely saw Wodehouse as the Master. They say young people need models for their lives, and since I found Psmith, I've regarded this resourceful monocled young gentleman as my spiritual guide. So what promised to be a boring vacation turned to be one of those moments that mark one's life.

A year later I went to England and learnt English well. There I was able to enjoy his works in English – there was an infinite difference with the translation, because there's a twinkle in almost every word. There I found Jeeves and Bertie Wooster, with whom I think everyone tends to identify himself. Since then they've been my constant company.

If Anatole's sole name make one's mouth start watering, the mention of Wodehouse makes one's lips start smiling.



An Afternoon at the Theatre Museum

James Hogg reports on a wide-ranging review of Plum's work

Wodehouse scholarship was in the air as a large turnout almost filled the Picture Room of the Theatre Museum in Covent Garden on Sunday, April 22. The event, entitled *P G Wodehouse: Life, Verse and Lyrics*, comprised a series of illustrated talks by Tony Ring, editor of *Wooster Sauce*, and Rex Bunnett, historian of the musical theatre.

The combined knowledge of the two experts would be hard to rival, and their journey through Wodehouse's astonishing career, starting with the earliest poem of the five-year-old Plum, reminded us of his mastery of four art-forms – verse, drama, lyric-writing and prose. Geoff Hales recited extracts from the poems and plays as they arose in the narrative, and the husband-and-wife team of Jonathan Cecil and Anna Sharkey brought wit and sparkle to the songs which ended the performance.

Benny Green had contributed to Wodehouse appreciation through broadcasting and the printed word.

Tony Ring started proceedings with the story of Plum's early career, entitled *First Steps To Fame*. He made the point that our hero's classical education at Dulwich, which lent such breadth to his literary references, was a thing of the past, making the emergence of another Wodehouse well nigh impossible. Rex Bunnett took us through *The Early Musicals*, before Tony tackled *Journalism And The American Influence*. The first half ended with Rex's account of the influential *Princess Shows* – the Bolton, Wodehouse and Kern productions which did so much to shape the future of musical theatre. Before the interval we were treated to historic early television recordings of Wodehouse numbers performed by a well-drilled American song-and-dance team.

MR T.A.SHALE.

PUT ME IN MY LITTLE CELL

SONG

FROM THE MUSICAL FARCE

SERGEANT BRUE

WRITTEN BY

G. E. WODEHOUSE

COMPOSED BY


FREDERICK ROSSE

PRICE 2/- NET.

London
HOPWOOD & CREW, LTD 42, NEW BOND STREET, W.
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"SERGEANT BRUE"
(of the C. Division.)



A Musical Farce
by Owen Hall.

Lyrics by
J. HICKORY WOOD

Music by
LIZA LEHMANN.

Price 6/- net.

THE SONGS OF...
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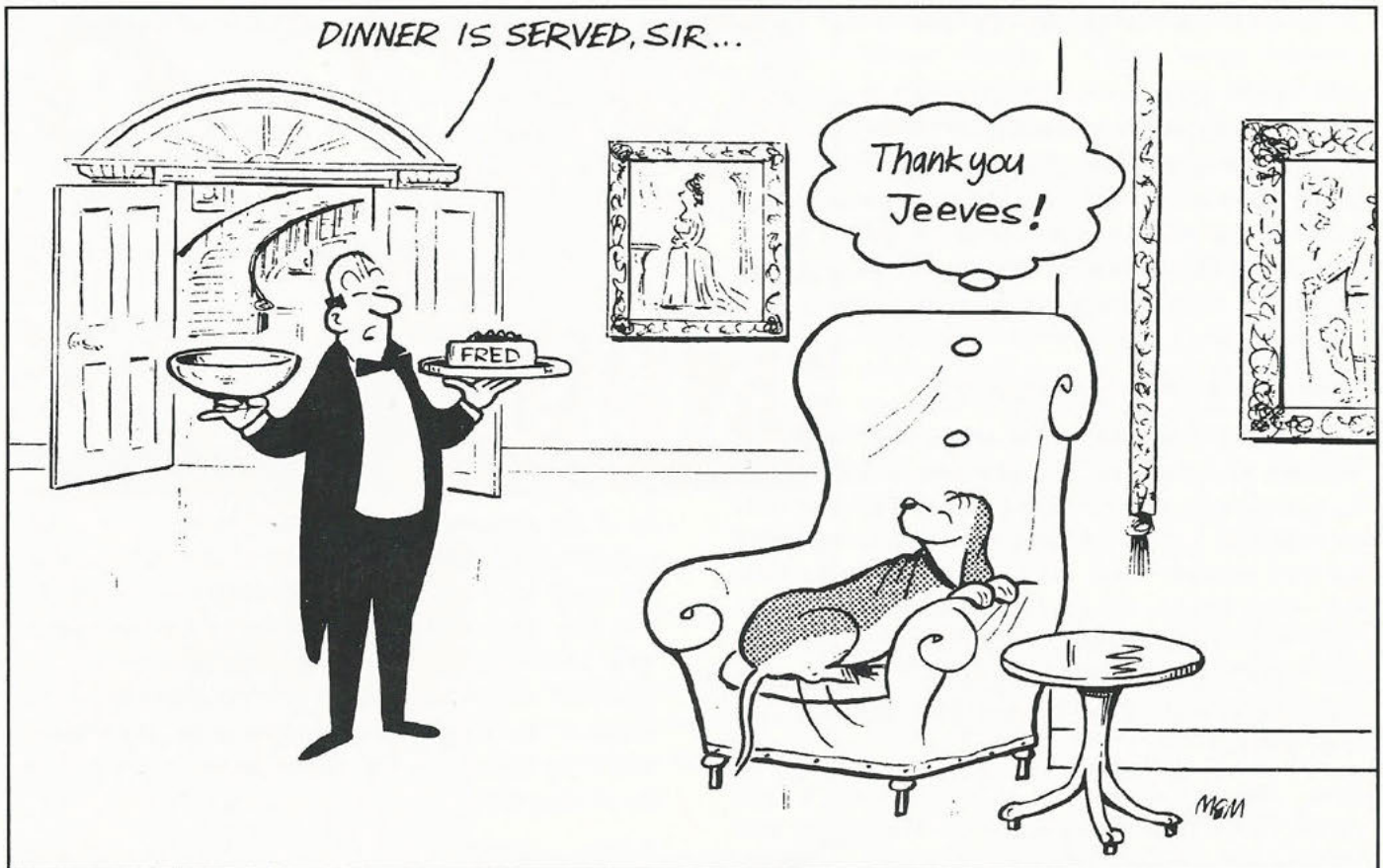
PGW's first published lyric, which was added to the show Sergeant Brue midway through its 1904 run in England. These two illustrations were accompanied by a recording from the 1905 American production.

Among the audience were several with Wodehouse connections, including two generations of Cazalets, to whom he was one of the family. Hal Cazalet has recently recorded a CD featuring his great-grandfather's lyrics and was there to listen to a selection played for our approval. Plum's cousin Charles Wodehouse was another family representative, and the presence of actress, singer and director Toni Kanal was a reminder of how much her late husband

The second-half talks covered *Wodehouse In The Twenties*, *The Later Musicals* and *Hollywood And After*, completing a two-man symposium that was as erudite as it was comprehensive.

As a *bonne bouche* Jonathan and Anna, with accompanist Stefan Bednarczyk, gave us some songs from their show *Plum Sauce*, bringing the afternoon to the most charming possible conclusion.

Mutual Respect in Cartoon Form



As is evident from the article on pages 4 and 5, there was mutual admiration and respect between P G Wodehouse and Alex Graham, the originator of the Fred Basset cartoon strip. In this tenth anniversary of Alex Graham's death, his daughter and son-in-law have presented the Society with the above cartoon. We have produced sets of notelets (120 gm paper) featuring the cartoon on the front, but with no greeting inside, so they can be used for thank yous, and similar messages.

Members may purchase the notelets with envelopes in sets of twelve, at a cost of £5 per wrapped set post-free in the UK (add £1 per set in Europe, or £2 elsewhere). Those who wish to order sets should write to

enclosing
cheques for the appropriate amount made payable to
The P G Wodehouse Society (UK). (Our initial order
from the printer will be available almost immediately;
if we need to reorder, there may be a delay.)

Will You Be Near Emsworth This Summer?

If you are, don't forget that the Emsworth Museum, located above the Fire Station at 10b, North Street, Emsworth, Hampshire, has started its summer season, which lasts until the end of October. It opens from 10.30am to 4.30pm on Fridays (in August), Saturdays and Bank Holidays, and 2.30pm to 4.30pm on Sundays.

The Museum has copies of PGW's books, including one signed edition, material and photographs relating to Emsworth House School, where he was often to be found with Herbert Westbrook, and which he used as the setting for *The Little Nugget*.

The Museum also has many photographs of the Emsworth which Plum knew on-and-off for about ten years, and described in *A Damsel in Distress* as the village called Belper.

In addition, the Museum has a map showing the towns, villages and parks which he adopted or adapted for his own purposes as names or settings, and is planning to produce a Wodehouse trail shortly.

Finally, it has its own website:

www.emsworthmuseum.org.uk

Enjoy your visit.

Hal, Sylvia and Steve talk about the CD

Interesting insights into the recording of 80+ year-old songs

Ever on the look-out for authoritative comment on matters Wodehousean, the Editor invited the three principal musicians on *The Land Where the Good Songs Go* (Hal Cazalet, Sylvia McNair and Steven Blier) to give their thoughts on a number of points concerning the recording. The result provides an interesting insight into the modern professional's view of Plum's lyrics.

What attracted you to the project?

Hal: I wanted to bring these songs to life again as they are so good, and to make people aware that Plum not only wrote books but was also the first great British lyricist. I simply wanted to assemble the best possible team (and I knew instantly who they were) but the one problem was that they hardly knew me! Well, I asked Sylvia and Steve and they said "Yes", and Steve brought in two brilliant guitarists, so really, I am an extremely fortunate and lucky person!

Steve: Hal was my student at Juilliard, and I have always had a keen appreciation for his singing and his musical culture. (He's a wonderful composer himself, you know, and wrote a show which they did at school – charming!) Hal is a persuasive advocate for P G Wodehouse, both in conversation and especially in his performance of these songs. When I heard him sing them, I knew I had to be along for the ride. The material is at a very high level: beautiful ballads and excellent up-tempo comic numbers. The songs embody the sensibility of the twenties. They're literate and elegant, and the ballads have a surprising depth of feeling.

Sylvia: In summer 1998 I was singing at the Santa Fe Opera. During the rehearsal and performance period I became acquainted with an amazing person who was an apprentice with the Opera that summer. As I got to know 'young Hal' (or 'Hal the 2nd', as my husband's name is also Hal (France)), I realised I was getting to know someone who was extraordinarily talented. In a world full of people who succeed without even being competent, here was a guy who was SO good at SO many things he could easily have a successful career as singer, actor, composer or producer. I was thrilled to join up with him on a project near and dear to his heart.

Do you have a favourite track on the CD?

Sylvia: I'm fond of both *Anything Goes* and *You're the Top*. But I also told Hal (both Cazalet and France) that I want *Go, Little Boat* played at my funeral.

Steve: The title track is a favourite, and also *Oh Gee, Oh Joy*. That one is like a great piece of naive art – so innocent and so hormonal all at the same time – as if it's trying to jump out of its skin.

Hal: I think *Oh Gee, Oh Joy*, because of its simplicity and sheer joyfulness.

How difficult was it to create a sound which would be appropriate in the 21st century for show songs from the start of the 20th?

Steve: I didn't find it difficult. The sheet music is amazingly well-written, and I guess I have heard a lot of the songs in original performances or original orchestrations. I really don't think a lot about adapting the songs for a different era. Their era just speaks to our era, no translation necessary. Collaborating with Mark Stewart and Greg Utzig also created an evocative sound. My hands reacted instantly to the sound of the banjo and cello obbligatos. Both Mark and Greg contributed a tremendous amount to the joy of the process. They're inspiring colleagues.

Sylvia: A great song is timeless. A great song can stand up tall under many treatments over many years. I'm more in the 'business' of trying to make a lovely sound while telling a good story than trying to 'create an appropriate sound' for a certain time period.


Hal: These songs are from an age that calls out for them to be sung. With Steve's extraordinary powers of improvisation and the addition of instruments like the banjo and ukelele we have evoked a fairly authentic sound but all of us as musicians had free range to add our personal flair to the songs, which also gives it a fresh feel.

Jerome Kern wanted songs in his shows to move the action and plot along in an integrated way. Could many of the Wodehouse/Kern songs hold their own in say a cabaret act?

Sylvia: These songs do hold their own outside the context of the shows. I have absolutely no idea what the show is about that *The Enchanted Train* came from, for example, but understanding its feeling, delivering its lines and enjoying it need only one thing: wanting to get home as quickly as possible to be with people you love.

Hal: Yes, they could. The material would particularly shine if programmed in a way to create some kind of a story line. A cabaret show would be the perfect vehicle for this.

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You Can't Make Love By Wireless is one track on the CD

Did you find it difficult to sing some of the songs like If I Ever Lost You and You Never Knew About Me with a straight face?

Hal: I barely sang any song with a straight face! Actually the humour of these songs comes across right if a song like *If I Ever Lost You* is sung straight without any insinuation or emphasis on the witty lyrics. Absolutely no twinkle of the eye or the song isn't funny.

Sylvia: *You Never Knew About Me* is one of the sweetest songs I've ever heard. It speaks of young love, a love controlled by destiny perhaps, love that is more heart-led than head-led. No, I didn't have an ounce of trouble keeping a straight face. I loved singing it.

Knowing that the principal purpose of the CD was to bring the Wodehouse lyric to the public ear, how difficult was it to determine an appropriate style and level of musical accompaniment?

Steve: When I accompany song, I am always thinking about bringing the lyrics across, amplifying them, highlighting them, illustrating them – all the while making enough space for them to be heard clearly. These songs needed accompaniments with a lot of specific colours – something innocent and child-like, for example, for *I Never Knew About You*, a quiet intensity for *The Land Where the Good Songs Go*, a slow build for the many verses of *Anything Goes*, a touch of the music-hall for *You Can't Make Love By Wireless*. I knew how I wanted each song to sound pretty much the moment I put my hands on the piano. Rehearsals and recording sessions were about getting the arrangements cleaned up, refining the choices, and getting to know how to build to the climaxes of each piece.

You and other singers have previously performed occasional Wodehouse songs on recordings of a particular composer's work. Were you aware of the Wodehouse connection when you did so?

Sylvia: In my previous recordings of like-repertoire (Kern, Arlen and George Gershwin) the choice was made to focus on the composer. I always paid attention to the creator of the lyrics, but no songs were deliberately chosen based on that criterion.

Are you a Wodehouse reader?

Sylvia: I am now!

Hal's sister Lara guests on the CD with the original 1918 lyric to *Bill* from *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* She has sung the *Showboat* version, in particular, on many occasions to Wodehouse groups, friends and family. I asked her how she found the prospect of recording the less familiar version in the rather different atmosphere of a professional New York recording studio.

Lara: Without the enthusiastic support of fans and friends in front of me, it was nerve-racking, though very exciting. I have made recordings before so it wasn't too testing, but hearing Steve, such a good musician, playing in the headphones was a novel experience and very uplifting. It was a relief to know that I could record more than one version and in fact we made five recordings.

I think we have selected the best of the recordings I made for the CD.

More Yorkshire Connections for Jeeves

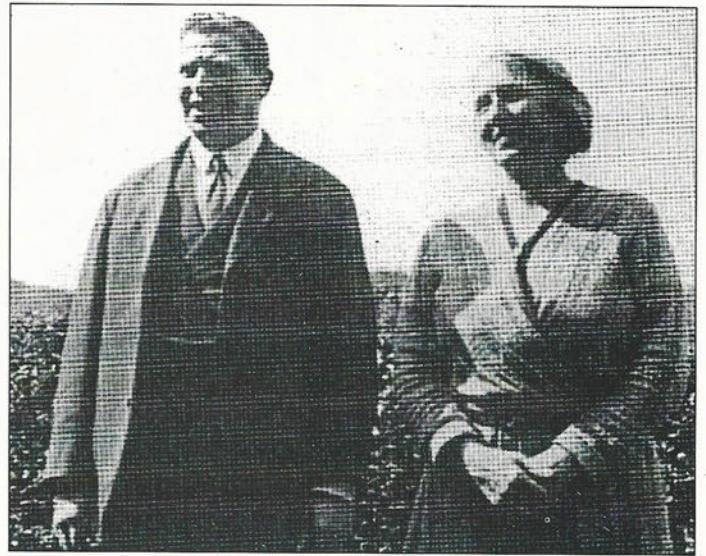
In the September 2000 *Wooster Sauce* (issue 15), we reported on a Yorkshire connection for the cricketer Percy Jeeves, the source of the immortal valet's name. We can now, courtesy of Gerry Bradshaw of Terrington Arts, offer a further pair of Yorkshire coincidences, involving the names 'Wodehouse' and 'Jeeves'.

Gerry points out that on May 8, 1311, Robert de Wodehouse was instituted as Rector of Terrington under the patronage of Sir Nicholas Stapleton, then Lord of the Manor of Wiganthorpe.

The name Wodehouse has, in its corrupted form 'Woodhouse', remained in the area as a suburb of Sheffield, an inner city area of Leeds, and a village between Wakefield and Castleford, all, as Gerry comments, 'more Alan Bennett than PGW'.

In 1933, Wiganthorpe Hall was owned by Lord Holden, and the butler then in his service, pictured alongside with his wife, was named Jeeves. Incidents involving characters at the Hall in the 1920s and 1930s, who may have been known to Jeeves, remain on the record, but it is wishful thinking that he could have passed them to his creator to turn into immaculate plotting. They include:

- 1 the occasion in the 1930s when a young man attending his engagement party at the Hall choked to death on a fishbone;
- 2 the daughter of the house, so delicate that she had to be carried downstairs by a footman, yet robust enough to ride to hounds; and



Jeeves, butler at Wiganthorpe Hall, with his wife

- 3 Rosalind, Countess of Carlisle, châtelaine of the neighbouring Castle Howard, whose personality would have made even Aunt Agatha quail. She is said to have organised rallies of trainloads of Abstainers to the Castle and at one such, to have emptied the contents of the cellar in the lake. She fell out with her son and did not go to his wedding, but pointedly attended that of her cook. After all, while heirs are numberless, a good cook, as Aunt Dahlia showed on many occasions, is irreplaceable.

Christian Aid Book Sale

Members may be pleased to know that the Christian Aid book sale in Edinburgh in May, in which member Mary Davidson played a prominent part, was extremely successful, raising over £90,000. The sale included a few PGW first editions in dust-wrappers, priced between £75 and £375, and about 40 other hardback editions.

Book and Magazine Collector

The leading article of the August issue of *Book and Magazine Collector* is planned to be a survey of the short story collections of PGW. The article, which is illustrated, is likely to be about 5,000 words long.

The previous Wodehouse feature in the magazine concerned the *Jeeves and Wooster* books, and appeared in February 2000.

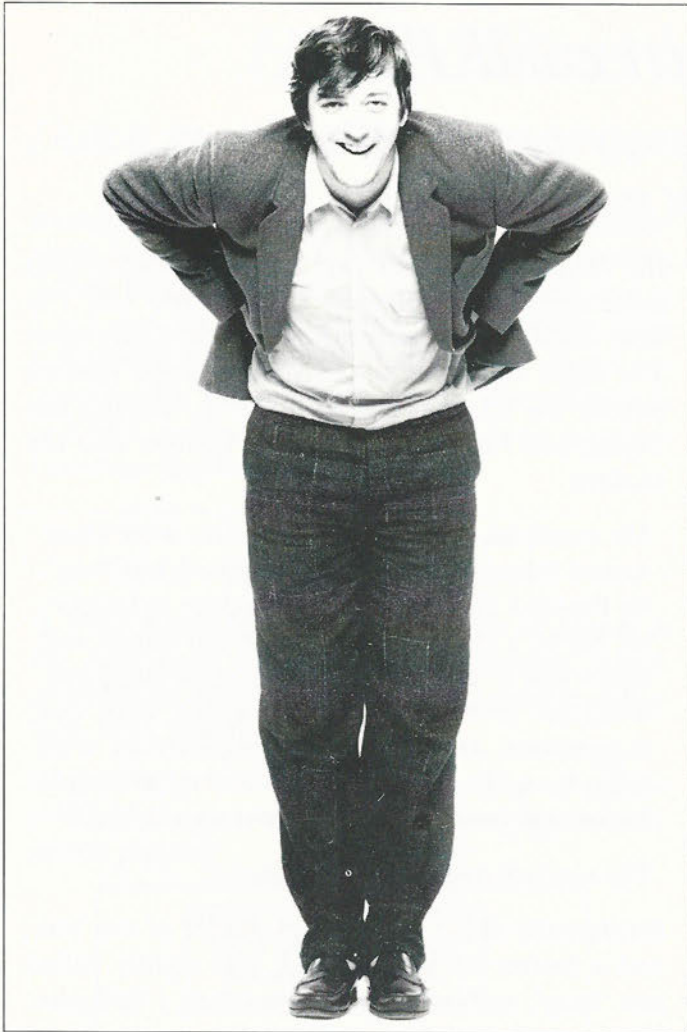
Gold Bats v Holmes & Watson

Unfortunately too late to be mentioned in March's *Wooster Sauce*, the Society's cricket team, The Gold Bats, were challenged to a match by The Sherlock Holmes Society of London. It was scheduled to be played on June 10, at West Wycombe, in Bucks, and was to be played under 1895 laws. A report will appear in the September issue.

Emsworth Horticultural Society

Congratulations to The Emsworth Horticultural Society, which was founded in 1919.

At this May's Chelsea Flower Show, the Society won a coveted Silver Medal for a courtyard garden entitled *A Fisherman's Retreat*. It featured authentic mud and seawater from Chichester Harbour, and many plants of which Angus McAllister would be proud..



PROFILE OF A PATRON

Having set out somewhat comprehensive details of his youth and adolescence in his autobiography *Moab is my Washpot* (the book which seems to inspire more new readers of Wodehouse than any other), Stephen Fry made clear the important role he considers Wodehouse to have played in his personal development in his introduction to the *What Ho!* anthology last year. Our reward has been a string of excellent television, film and theatrical performances including three series of *Blackadder*, several of *A Bit of Fry and Laurie*, four series of *Jeeves and Wooster* and the films *Peter's Friends* and *Wilde*. Stephen has written the book for the extremely successful 1984 revival of *Me and My Girl*, as well as four novels (*The Liar*, *The Hippopotamus*, *Making History* and, most recently, *The Star's Tennis Balls*, published in 2000), a book of journalism (*Paperweight*) and the screenplay for Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies*, which he is directing this year. He has recorded a number of unabridged audio-books, one of which, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J K Rowling, was broadcast on BBC radio in an eight-hour extravaganza last Christmas.

Romano's – a Gleam in Psmith's Eye?

One of the most successful entrepreneurs in the musical theatre of the end of the nineteenth century was the cousin of Michael Gunn, proprietor of the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin. Gunn suggested that this cousin, George Edwards, should seek employment in the new enterprise of another distant kinsman, Richard d'Oyley Carte, and it was at Romano's that the latter was persuaded to give the young Edwards a job in his box-office.

Edwards, whose ancestors were Irish, whimsically added an additional 'e' to his name, changing it to George Edwardes. As Guy Deghy said in his history of Romano's, he could have chosen Eedwards, Ededwards or even Edweards, but he insisted on being different to all the other Edwards.

PGW repeatedly admitted that the character Psmith was the only one whom he genuinely based on an existing person, in his case Rupert d'Oyley Carte. It is not stretching credibility too far to ponder on whether he knew the history of Edwards' change of name on joining the d'Oyley Carte company, and adopted the idea for Smith, exaggerating the impact in his own inimitable way.

Edwardes was destined to achieve fame, of course, as the manager of the London Gaiety Theatre in its heyday. Psmith also came to the public notice on more than one occasion.

And a Reminiscence from a Former Employee

Bernard Lewis of Marlborough writes:

I worked at Romano's for some time, but never heard it pronounced other than Ro-mah-nose, and this grandpa knows. I had never thought of the place as being particularly Bohemian, but I expect that word means something slightly different to other people.

It was a very smart place and in my day the clientele included a good sprinkling of boxers, book-makers, theatre people and race-horse owners. I well remember a very lively party given by the actor Tom Walls after his horse April the Fifth had won the Derby.

PGW Thought of it First

Murray Hedgcock shows how, yet again, Wodehouse is in the vanguard of modern thought

Way back in 1918, PGW wrote the tale *Jeeves and the Chump Cyril*, which in 1923 surfaced in two chapters of *The Inimitable Jeeves* under the titles *A Letter of Introduction* and *The Startling Dressiness of a Lift Attendant*. This introduced us to New York theatrical manager Pop Blumenfield and his ghastly son, regularly invited by Dad to sit in on rehearsals, and give his views.

As the long-suffering playwright George Caffyn explained: “My idea is that he thinks the kid has exactly the amount of intelligence of the average member of the audience, and what makes a hit with him will please the general public. While, conversely, what he doesn’t like will be too rotten for anyone.”

And the chump Cyril duly suffers, and so on. Right. Got that? It starts in 1918, is consolidated in 1923, and the essence is the behaviour of this ghastly young showbiz critic.

Now, jump to the year 2000.

The late Betty Box, Britain’s pioneer woman film director (responsible among others for the *Doctor in*

the House series) has just had her posthumous autobiography published (*Lifting the Lid*, The Book Guild). She describes how the Jon Cleary novel *The High Commissioner* (*Nobody Runs Forever* outside the US) was filmed in 1968, starring Rod Taylor, Lilli Palmer, Christopher Plummer and Leo McKern:

My American contact on the film . . . was a man named Seligman, never called anything but ‘Selig’. He brought his ten-year-old daughter to London, sat her in a viewing theatre with our editor, and asked him to cut the film as the child suggested. Needless to say, we did not agree with her suggestions, and when we remonstrated with Selig, he said: “Well, I reckon movies are made for her age group, and I thought it a good idea.”

The movie stayed as we had edited it.

Incidentally Selig, officially producer of the film, and a lawyer by background, was rightly called just ‘Selig’, as his full name was Selig J Seligman. Had he ever read *Jeeves and the Chump Cyril*, you wonder?

August meeting in Bolton

There will be a meeting of the Society at Bolton Little Theatre, Hanover Street, on Saturday 18 August, from 2.30pm to 5pm (doors open from 1.30). The programme will include dramatised readings of excerpts from books or plays, a talk on PGW’s verse and lyrics, and a musical presentation.

It would be appreciated if those intending to attend the meeting would confirm their interest with

_____ who will be glad to supply further details. Guests are very welcome.

Subscription Renewals

Members whose subscriptions expired on 31 May should already have received a renewal form. If you have not yet returned your form, please send it as soon as possible to

If you think you should have received a form, but have not, please contact him

September meeting in Coventry

There will also be a meeting of the Society at the Chace Hotel, London Road, Willenhall, Coventry on Saturday 29 September, from 2.00 until around 5.00. Lunches will be available in the hotel. An informal programme, still to be finalised, will include readings of members’ favourite passages and a musical presentation.

It would be appreciated if those intending to attend the meeting would confirm their interest with Denis Greenland _____ who will be glad to supply further details. Guests are very welcome.

This Year’s AGM

This year’s AGM will be held during the Savage Club meeting of the Society in London on 10 July.

The Agenda is set out on the enclosed paper, but no special topics have been raised for discussion by members. Routine business will include approval of the accounts for the year to 31 May and the election of officers and some Committee members.

Here, There and Everywhere

Dutch member Rob Kooy writes about his copy of Money in the Bank

Money in the Bank was written by P G Wodehouse while he was interned in the former lunatic asylum in Tost, Upper Silesia. It was published in the USA in 1942 and, later that year, by Clipper Books (The Continental Book Co AB) in Stockholm. It did not appear in the UK until published by Herbert Jenkins in 1946, printed by Wyman and Sons, London, Fakenham and Reading.

Printed in Holland by Drukkerij Holland N.V.

In 1991, I bought a second-hand copy of *Money in the Bank* from an Amsterdam bookseller, which proved to be a Dutch-printed reissue, possibly dating from 1947 (McIlvaine A64b.2).

Interestingly, the copyright page still states 'First printing' where it should logically read 'First edition, second printing'.

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The bookseller's label indicates that this copy was sold by Angus and Robertson Ltd in Sydney, Australia, while a pencilled ownership signature inside the front cover reads something like 'Kaminski, Gliwice, Konarskiego 17'.

Kaminski
Gliwice
Konarskiego 17.

The nearest town to Tost, where PGW was interned, was Gleiwitz, which when ceded to Poland in 1945 changed its name to Gliwice. So my copy of the novel, which was written in Tost, printed in Holland, published in the UK and sold in Australia was then owned by someone in Gliwice near to where it was conceived and has finally ended up in the country where it was printed!

Is Miss Postlethwaite Older Than She Looks?

Geoff Hales has discovered some compelling evidence

Those of us who have always known that PGW's work owes much to the influence of Ancient Assyria take heart from the appearance of *Siduri, the divine Barmaid* in a central role in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, a snappy little number bunged together in about 2000 BC and found in the library of King Ashurbanipal in Nineveh, where no doubt he and the boys had many a good chuckle over it of an evening.

In the *Epic Gilgamesh*, who had been having a bit of a rough time since his pal Enkidu handed in his dinner pail, is on his way to have it out with Utnapishtim on the subject of how to live for ever. (For those readers whose Ancient Assyrian is not what it was, think of Utnapishtim as the Babylonian equivalent of Noah.)

Siduri at once sees that Gilgamesh isn't looking too bucked, and on hearing the problem, tells him not to be so silly and go out and have a few quick ones.

Surely an ancestress of Miss Postlethwaite, our popular and respected barmaid at *The Anglers' Rest*, who would have done the same. Not her fault that the silly ass took no notice.

Our researches have not yet discovered whether Plum had the Old Babylonian or the Hittite version of the epic before him when he created Miss Postlethwaite, but we will keep you posted.

Everyman-Bollinger-Wodehouse Prize

The Observer reported that there had not been enough humorous books written this year to fill a list, let alone a short list, for the second award of the Everyman-Bollinger-Wodehouse prize for comic literature, announced at the Hay-on-Wye Literary Festival in May. Nevertheless the judges succeeded in identifying Jonathan Coe's *The Rotter's Club*, published by Viking (ISBN 0-670-8925-21), as a worthy winner.

Blandings Castle Audiobook Reviewed

Hilary Bruce has the latest unabridged Chivers recording taped

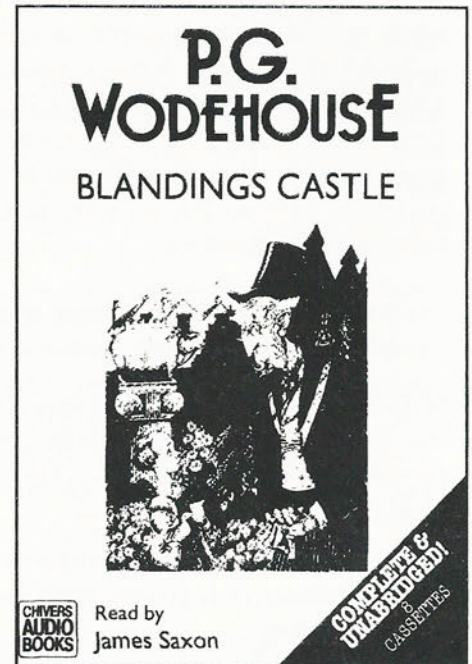
Most of us can conjure up an image of Blandings' rolling parkland more or less at will. Coupled with the reassuring mental soundtrack of the Empress absorbing her daily calories, this is the perfect backdrop for a day doing absolutely nothing except listen to eight and three-quarter hours of solid Wodehouse, unabridged and with the added interest of a new reader in James Saxon.

For any actor, reading Wodehouse to Wodehouseans is a tough brief. The characters are so well-known to us that inevitably – and especially at Blandings – the listener is tempted to shout "Impostor!" first and ask questions later. Certainly Saxon's Lord Emsworth was not what I was expecting. He was more assertive, stentorian even, than the Emsworth of my imagination and his accent not entirely consistent, at times reminiscent of the present leader of the Conservative Party, at others, recalling Leslie Phillips. Meanwhile Beach, though suitably stately, had travelled a little further down the social scale than seemed appropriate. There are six Blandings stories for you to form your own opinion.

We felt happier in Hollywood, with Mr Mulliner explaining how Messrs Schnellenhamer and Levitsky learned the truth about the call of the cuckoo, touching on talking gorillas and other unlikely manifestations in five tales from the Anglers' Rest.

Chivers deserve high praise for sticking firmly to Wodehouse's unabridged text and so, of course, *Blandings Castle* succeeds. James Saxon has a mellifluous voice and reads accurately and clearly and ultimately, this will provide ample reward for anyone prepared to put in the hours in the sunshine, listening to the sounds of summer at Blandings.

Editor's Note: *Blandings Castle* (ABC2009 for tape or ABC097CD for CD version) is available from The Audio Book Collection, Freepost (BA 1686/1) Bath BA1 3QX (tel: 0800 136 919). *Eggs Beans and Crumpets*, read by Jonathan Cecil (ABC2080, tape only) will be reviewed in September. *Young Men in Spats* will appear in October.



“Two dry martinis and a dividend”?

David Holt of Oxford seeks an explanation

The telegram was from my Aunt Dahlia, as mysterious a communication as was ever flashed over the wires. I studied it in a profound reverie for the best part of two dry Martinis and a dividend.

What, wondered David Holt, is meant by the term 'dividend' in this context, which comes from chapter 3 of *Right Ho, Jeeves?* To wonder was to act, and he invited the views of the *Oxford English Dictionary* Word and Language Service at the OUP. Mrs J E A Field, Senior Assistant Editor of the *OED*, suggested that it represented an example of PGWs 'Americanized' vocabulary, and referred to sense 1g of the noun *dividend* as defined in the 1961 edition of Webster's *Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*:

'a portion of a mixed iced drink remaining after the regular servings have been poured out'

Mrs Field believes that that definition fits, 'dividend' being a synonym for 'bit', and the 'bit' being what was left in the pitcher or shaker. Though the expression was not in the 1934 or 1951 editions, 'it would probably take a considerable time for a colloquialism of this kind to reach the pages of the dictionary. The term could thus have been current for a considerable time before being included.'

Thank you, David, for raising the question with the *OED* and sending in the solution for publication. If other members have similar queries, preferably with authoritative answers, the Editor awaits your call.

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

A Gentleman of Leisure

The novel known in England as *A Gentleman of Leisure* was first published in the USA on 11 May 1910 under the title *The Intrusion of Jimmy*. *McIlvaine* does not record any details for the dust-wrapper of the American first edition (A13a). A photograph of the dustwrapper did, however, appear in the Sotheby's catalogue for the sale of the Heineman collection. The front cover and spine of the dustwrapper are illustrated with a picture of Jimmy Pitt lifting a necklace from a box by torchlight while being disturbed by Molly McEachern. This illustration is different from the one that appears on the illustrated boards of the American first edition, although the detail of Molly on the boards is from the larger illustration of her on the dustwrapper. The title and Wodehouse's name appear in the bottom righthand corner of the front of the dustwrapper. On the spine of the dustwrapper, the lettering is the same as on the boards of the book, with the title at the top, the author's name in the centre, and the publisher's name (Watt) at the bottom.

The novel was not published in England until 15 November 1910, after having first been serialised in *Tit-Bits*, under its American title of *The Intrusion of Jimmy*. *McIlvaine* records only a single appearance, for 3 September 1910 (D137.3). In fact, the serialisation ran from 11 June until 10 September 1910.

McIlvaine's details for the first English edition are also incomplete. In addition to the first edition in royal blue cloth with gold lettering (A13b), there is also an unrecorded issue of 1910 which appeared in blue cloth with black lettering. *McIlvaine* merely describes the second issue as having red cloth (A13b2); in fact the lettering on the spine was in black and the pagination was identical to the first issue. All of these issues were published by Alston Rivers.

There are three other points of interest about *A Gentleman of Leisure*. Firstly, the dedication of the first edition confirms that Wodehouse was never afraid to re-use good material. It reads:

To Herbert Westbrook, without whose never-failing advice, help, and encouragement this book would have been written in half the time.

This is obviously a forerunner to the better known dedication of *The Heart of a Goof* (1926), which reads:

To my daughter Leonora without whose never-failing sympathy and encouragement this book would have been finished in half the time.

Secondly, changes to the dedication throw light on Wodehouse's friendship with Westbrook, who was partly the inspiration for the fictional *Ukridge* (*The Gold Bat* was dedicated 'To That Prince of Slackers, Herbert Westbrook'). Wodehouse's friendship with Westbrook was at least as tempestuous as the Corcoran-Ukridge friendship, and a sidelight on this is provided by the publishing history of *A Gentleman of Leisure*. The Alston Rivers issues of 1910 were followed by a George Newnes edition in August 1911. In connection with this edition (A13b12), *McIlvaine* calmly records 'No dedication', leaving us wondering what outrage perpetrated by Westbrook caused Wodehouse to withdraw it.

The book was subsequently published by Herbert Jenkins, probably in 1921, with a new dedication:

To Douglas Fairbanks who many years ago played 'Jimmy' in the dramatized version of this novel.

In connection with the Jenkins edition (A13b3), *McIlvaine* rather confusingly records 'February 1911, reissued March 1921'. February 1911 must be a misprint for February 1921: the play *A Gentleman of Leisure* opened at The Playhouse, New York on 24 August 1911, so the phrase 'many years ago' in the dedication makes more sense in 1921 than in 1911. (Interestingly, in the play, the name of the main character had been changed from James Willoughby Pitt to Robert Edgar Willoughby Pitt, so, strictly speaking, the dedication is inaccurate, as Douglas Fairbanks played Robert, not Jimmy.)

Thirdly, and finally, a textual revision in the Jenkins edition illustrates that Wodehouse did take notice of contemporary events. In 1921 he also revised *Love Among The Chickens*, so extensively that the new edition bore the legend 'Entirely Rewritten by the Author'. The revision to *A Gentleman of Leisure* was much more minor. In the first edition, at the start of chapter 6, there had been a reference to Asquith becoming Prime Minister; in the reissue, this was changed to Lloyd George becoming PM. This must obviously have been altered later than 1911 (Asquith became PM in 1908 and was succeeded by Lloyd George in 1916), and again supports a reissue date of 1921 rather than 1911.

Right Ho, Christopher

Elaine Ring reports

Members may recall that in *Wooster Sauce* Issue 15 (September 2000) there was a report on the inaugural performance of Christopher Owen's one-man show *Right Ho, Wodehouse*. On March 2nd we braved the elements of a cold and snowy night to attend a further production, this time in the more spacious surroundings of the Maltings Arts Theatre, St Albans.

As before, Christopher tells the life story of Plum in the convincing character of Lord Emsworth, embellishing his narration with the characteristics you would expect from the popular peer and singing a number of songs in the regulation reedy tenor. Furthermore, in the intervening months, he has developed considerable interaction with the audience and in St Albans, at least, the audience responded cheerfully and enthusiastically to his overtures.

This is a most worthwhile evening's entertainment, and we recommend that members in the appropriate geographical areas stay on the alert for next spring's bookings. Christopher has mentioned that he has provisional bookings on the Isle of Wight, and in Kent, Wiltshire, the Cherwell district, Oxfordshire and East Sussex. Full details including dates will be confirmed in a later issue of *Wooster Sauce*, and will be included on the website.

Serendipity, a music group which performed many PGW/Kern numbers in concert last year, have told us that this year their theme is *The World of Ivor Novello*, to be presented on Sunday 9th September at the Millfield Theatre, Edmonton. Information from Geoff Bowden,

Penguin have published the paperback edition of the anthology *What Ho! The Best of P G Wodehouse*. It includes the Stephen Fry introduction but is not illustrated. ISBN 0-14-029748-0; cost £ 10.99.

Porpoise Books announce that *Wodehouse with New Friends*, the final volume in *The Millennium Wodehouse Concordance* will be published around the end of September.

An auction of 40 years of correspondence between PGW and 'Billy' Griffith, the ex-England cricketer, was scheduled for Christie's on June 22nd, and the outcome will be reported in September issue of *WS*.

The Bonhams Auction

The Editor reports

The Bonhams sale on March 13 of a complete P G Wodehouse collection proved, in many ways, to be something of a disappointment, yet it had several interesting aspects and eventually generated a satisfactory take for its anonymous vendor.

First of all, of the 56 lots, 27 realised more than the upper estimate while only 12 failed to reach the lower. Not surprisingly, given this statistic, the total realisation exceeded the estimates, though only just, with bids of £15,530 against an estimated range of £10,270 to £14,680. The bidding was enlivened by the persistence of buyer number 98, who was not present in the room. Probably a new collector seeing an opportunity to make substantial inroads into a wants list, this buyer took 11 of the first 15 lots.

The sale was not a particularly good guide to the value of rarer Wodehouse editions. There was no *By The Way Book*, for example, and many of the other pre-first war books were second issues of the first printing rather than 'pure' firsts. The highest bid, just £1,100, was surprisingly made for a second issue of *Mike*, though it was in excellent condition. The second highest, £850, won each of *The Head of Kay's* (estimated at £300 to £400) and a batch of 65 individual copies of *Strand* magazines, estimated ludicrously low at £60 to £80. Only one first printing, first issue, fetched over £500, and that was a presentation copy of *The White Feather*.

Two other lots deserve mention. Three letters by Wodehouse, two of which contained rather more than the relatively common dutiful acknowledgement of a fan letter, fetched £260. But disappointingly, a copy of *The Man Upstairs*, described as a first edition, contained an advertising supplement which was later than that bound into the copy which I, for instance, possess. Although this was pointed out to the auctioneers two days before the sale, they did not mention to prospective bidders that it was no better than a second binding.

Overall, then, a reasonable return for the vendor on the disposal of what one dealer referred to as "an honest, competent collection, but without anything exciting".

David Herboldt has drawn attention to the Alibris website (www.alibris.co.uk) which featured the US title *Golf Without Tears (The Clicking of Cuthbert)* in the UK) as a book of the week, May 1 to 7.

Something New: A Misleading Title

This note is to advise members to be very careful when considering buying a new publication from Dover Publications Inc of New York. They have just brought out a version of *Something New* (ISBN: 0-486-41404-3) which proclaims the following on the copyright page and the rear cover:

Bibliographical Note

This Dover Edition, first published in 2000, is an unabridged republication of the work originally published by Daniel Appleton & Company, Chicago, in 1915, and includes a later preface written by the author.

As they should have known, the original version of *Something New* preceded its UK equivalent, entitled *Something Fresh*, which was published by Methuen. *Something Fresh* omitted some 20 pages which had appeared in chapter 9 of *Something New* as they duplicated a scene from the earlier novel, *Mike*, which had been published in the United Kingdom but not in the United States.

These pages should appear from page 158 onwards in the Dover edition, but they do not. It is, in fact, possible to define more precisely the source of the text which Dover did use by reference to the short last chapter. For many editions Penguin have omitted the second sentence:

“I fear, Freddie, my dear boy, this has been a great shock to you.”

Without this sentence the closing chapter does not really make much sense. Since the Dover printing excludes it, the conclusion is that their text is taken from the Penguin text.

Clearly Dover’s claim is false and misleading, as it encourages potential buyers to expect the original text, which has not been available in the USA for over 50 years and has never been included in a United Kingdom printing. Even the American paperback editions of *Something New* by Ballantine and Beagle in 1972 each adopted the UK text. Members are warned that the Dover edition may not meet their expectations.

Katherine Lewis reviews a stage production in Chicago

Members of the ‘Chicago Accident Syndicate’ chapter of The Wodehouse Society attended the City Lit Theater’s adaptation of *The Mating Season*, which ran from April 13 to June 10.

Mark Richards, our local Bertie, has now put several Bertie and Jeeves books on the stage. He has filled productions with actors and actresses who embody many of our favourite Wodehouse characters. He did not fail to satisfy us this time, with very British twists to his ingenuity. The creative talent includes Paige Hearn, as an imperturbable Jeeves, and a young man, Joseph Wycoff, whose portrayal of Esmond Haddock and Gussie Fink-Nottle seems to be the living and breathing embodiment of the illustrations of these characters, as drawn by Peter van Straaten. Two complicated acts of four romantic pairings rush by in one delicious moment.

The Mating Season has always been one of my favourite novels, with the music-hall and cross-talk slapstick humour. Gussie was suitably droopy, but was the only character besides Jeeves who spoke with some intelligence. How is it that so many Esmond-like males sound like royalty, with gestures that are all hand-in-pocket, or hand-under-lapel, exactly like the chaps we all recognise?

City Lit Theater continues to carry on the joyful spirit of Wodehouse by bringing many of our favourite characters back to life. Wodehouse in Chicago is great fun. Every production is worth the trip and the modest price of admission.

City Lit Theater Company presents
JEEVES and the MATING SEASON
 By P.G. Wodehouse

Adapted by Page Hearn
 Directed by Kevin Thers
 Scenery by Ann Bates
 Lighting by Joshua Melchior
 Costumes by Hannah Butler
 Venue by Robert Street

April 13 - June 10, 2001
 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue

773.293.3682
 for tickets

www.citylit.org

Recent Press Comment

The News [Portsmouth local paper], February 23
(from Tessa Daines)

Featured a two-page article on PGW's links with Emsworth in Hampshire and the house in Record Road, named *Threepwood*, in which he lived.

The Times, March 16

When Valerie Grove took temporary responsibility for the *Diary* column, she offended colleagues and friends alike by her comments on beards. In her defence she quoted from *Performing Flea*, when PGW explained why he continued to shave whilst fellow-internees stopped doing so:

What I felt was that there is surely enough sadness in life without going out of one's way to increase it by sprouting spade-shaped beards.

The Times, March 17 (from Nick Townend)

The *Modern Times* correspondence column carried a question as to whether socks should be matched to shoes, suit, shirt or tie. Philip Howard replied that a conservative Jeeves would suggest grey, black or subfusc, whereas the Bertie Wooster-type would go for dashing socks with magenta clocks or Old Etonian stripes.

Spectator, March 24 (from Murray Hedgcock)

In an article *Plum Job*, Robert McCrum surveyed responses he had received from *Spectator* readers in response to a request for material about PGW.

Daily Telegraph, March 26 (from Hilary Bruce)

The *Peterborough* column commented on Frank McCourt's article in March's *Wooster Sauce*.

The Times, April 10

Rodney Milnes, asking why the UK does not have a national company for light opera, pointed out that in pre-*Showboat* Kern there were riches available 'with scripts by Guy Bolton and P G Wodehouse, a string of glorious confections'.

BBC1 10 o'clock News, April 12

In commenting on reports that if Tony Blair wins the election Alistair Campbell will take a lower profile role, Andrew Marr, BBC Political Correspondent, said "When Jeeves becomes more important than Wooster, then Bertie has a problem on his hands."

Sunday Telegraph, April 15 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Carried half a page feature in its *House and Home* section: 'A cottage attached to the Hall [ie Hunstanton] that inspired Aunt Agatha's moated home in the Wodehouse stories is on the market'.

Daily Telegraph, April 24 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Had a half-page story on the forthcoming June 22 sale at Christie's of 40 years' correspondence between PGW and the cricketer Billy Griffith.

Harvard Magazine, May-June (from Charles E Gould, Jnr)

A correspondent asked for 'enlightenment on the phrases 'miss-in-baulk' and 'oojah-cum-spiff' as they occur in many PGW novels.

Daily Mail, May 5

In the column *What Book Are You Reading*, Lynne Truss confessed to *The Luck of the Bodkins*.

I don't read Wodehouse all the time – in fact I limit myself – but it's nearly my birthday, so that's my excuse for the treat. The marvellous thing about Wodehouse is that you don't need a system, you can choose at random, or just re-read your favourites. His style is so fresh and breezy (and his stories so gloriously forgettable), the books will always be a surprise.

Daily Telegraph, May 9 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Began its main leader the morning after the general election was announced:

There is a P G Wodehouse story in which Bertie Wooster finds himself having to give a speech at a girls' school

and sought to draw a parallel between Bertie's inept performance on that occasion with the Prime Minister's choice of a girls' school as a place suitable for announcing a general election.

Radio Times, May 10 (from James Hogg)

Praising the *Channel 4* series *The Real Cracker*, a correspondent wrote:

Urbane, gripping, dashing and with an endearing quirkiness of language that harks back to Jeeves or Billy Bunter, he holds us spellbound with his analysis of horrific crimes.

Daily Express, May 28 and May 29 (from Murray Hedgcock)

The *Beachcomber* column purported to run a two-part extract from a newly discovered story by PGW, entitled *What Ho, Woodward!* Its principal theme concerned the defection of millionaire and butlered MP Shaun Woodward to the Labour Party and suggested that he had failed to read the small print of the contract he had entered into at a Westminster hostelry, thus being parachuted into the St Helens South constituency at the general election.

Woodward, it is explained, is meant to have poured out his troubles to Bertie at the Drones, as a result of which Bertie hit on the idea of sending Jeeves to St Helens to buttle for Woodward, after which he would arrive, reclaim Jeeves as his own man, and leave the public assuming that Woodward is butlerless after all.

A Sauce of Misquotation

Clarified by Nigel Rees

In *Quote...Unquote* on Radio 4 on May 14th, Nigel Rees introduced a round featuring Bertie Wooster's misquotations, in which the panel members (the columnist on *The Independent*, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown; the novelist Penny Vincenzi; Professor and literary detective, John Sutherland; and Professor and Clint Eastwood's biographer, Sir Christopher Frayling) were invited to identify exactly what Bertie was trying to remember in quotations read by William Franklyn. Two of the challenges provide a flavour of the quiz:

(from *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*)

L.G. Trotter was a little man with a face like a weasel, who scarcely uttered during the meal because, whenever he tried to, the moon of his delight shut him up.

Source: Edward Fitzgerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, St 74 (1859)

Ah, moon of my delight that knows no wane
The moon of heaven is rising once again.

(from *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*)

It's pretty generally recognized at the Drones Club and elsewhere that Bertram Wooster is a man who knows how to keep the chin up and the upper lip stiff, no matter how rough the going may be. Beneath the bludgeonings of Fate, his head is bloody but unbowed, as the fellow said.

Source: W E Henley's poem *Invictus* (1875)

In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I have not winced nor cried aloud:
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Robert McCrum Reports Progress

Robert McCrum's preparations for the new PGW biography are progressing smoothly. A recent appeal for help in *The Spectator* engendered a major response, and he is presently sifting through the replies and pursuing contacts.

Robert will be writing a full progress report for the September issue of *Wooster Sauce* but if in the meantime members have material they think may be of interest, please contact the Editor.

POETS' CORNER

Our Literary Men

There once was a peer of the rellum,
Who was blest with a large cerebellum.
So a novel he writ,
And it made a big hit:
For a title that's good's bound to sell 'em.

There once was a brainy young Hon.,
Whom there were but few flies upon.
He won endless glory
By writing a story
Which the suburbs delightedly con.

A highly respectable dook
Succeeded in writing a book.
Its grammar and style
Were remarkably vile.
And its matter much worse. But it took.

His notices being but few,
A pushing young author felt blue.
But he published a tale
'By an Earl's Cousin (male)':
And he's now got a page in *Who's Who?*

There was an ambitious old Bart., full
Of schemes both ingenious and artful.
He took to the pen
And ever since then
Mudie's ordered his books by the cartful.

If ever I happen to write,
My pen-name, I think, will be bright.
On page 1 of my book
You will find if you look,
'BY ONE WHO HAS LUNCHEd WITH A KNIGHT'

From *Books of Today and Books of Tomorrow*,
August, 1908

(Written in response to the publication of a novel whose title-page bore the simple words 'By a Peer'.)

Last Chance to order a McIlvaine Addendum

The print order for the *McIlvaine Addendum* will be placed on July 15th. We are not planning to order for stock. If you have not yet reserved a copy, please let Tony Ring know not later than July 14th. As indicated on the order form sent out in March, the price is uncertain, but probably will be £ 12 plus postage. You need send no money now.

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

July 10, 2001 – AGM and Informal meeting at the Savage Club

Our regular evening meeting, at which actor Geoff Hales will entertain. The Savage Club is at 1 Whitehall Place, within the National Liberal Club, near Embankment and Charing Cross stations in London, and the evening commences around 6pm.

August 18, 2001 – Meeting at Bolton

See page 16 for details concerning the meeting to be held at Bolton Little Theatre at 2.30pm.

September 29, 2001 – Meeting at Coventry

See page 16 for details about the first Society meeting to be held at the Chace Hotel Coventry.

October 12 to 14, 2001 – TWS Convention, Philadelphia

The next convention of the American-based Society, with a plethora of events such as a cricket match, talks, question-and-answer sessions, cocktail party (with demonstrations), banquet, Sunday brunch and much more. If you need more information, contact Susan Cohen

October 20, 2001 – Seminar in Washington DC, organised by the Smithsonian Institute

A full-day seminar on the work of P G Wodehouse, with presentations by *Washington Post* journalist Michael Dirda, Brian Taves and Tony Ring and a live musical interlude directed by member Barry Day. It is understood that another member, Lorna Dallas, will sing some of PGW's songs, and that Wodehouse, Bolton and Kern will be represented by local actors. For information, contact Erik Quick

October 21, 2001 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Please contact Norman Murphy for more information and to reserve a place.

November 13, 2001 – Informal meeting at the Savage Club

Advance notice of our regular evening meeting, at which member David Colvin, CMG, who until January this year was British Ambassador to Belgium, will speak about his experiences as Patron of the Belgian Drones Club, and other matters.

EDITOR'S TAILPIECES

Donald Daniel has mentioned that the treatment recommended by his doctor to George Mulliner in *The Truth About George* was based on fact. When Donald had a stammer as a young man, he, too, was advised to sing to overcome it which he did successfully, though driving his parents to the edge of a nervous breakdown.

Patrick Barrett of South Carolina has identified an apparent mistake by PGW in *Something Fresh*, the first Blandings novel. When Lord Emsworth shot at Baxter, we are told that the sixth shot hit a life-size picture of his lordship's maternal grandmother in the face, improving it out of all recognition.

A few pages later, it is said to be a portrait of 'the late Countess of Emsworth', a genealogical *non sequitur*. Interestingly, both the *Saturday Evening Post* serial and the UK book editions describe the relative as 'maternal grandmother, but the American first edition (*Something New*) restricts itself to 'grandmother'.

Following the successful Pittsburgh run of *By Jeeves*, the company went to Canada for a week to record the show for video distribution. At the time of going to press, no release date had been fixed.

American member Tom Smith's researches have shown that J Edgar Hoover, the first and longest-serving director of the FBI, was personally involved in the investigation of PGW during the Second World War. Hoover believed that *Piccadilly Jim* (written as early as 1918) was a German code book, and directed all of his European agents to scour bookshops in allied-occupied France for copies.

The FBI also checked for codes, secret messages and secret inks a number of manuscripts taken from Berlin to Plum's literary agent in the US (before the US entered the war) by George Keenan of the State Department. All they found was that the Germans had already examined the material for codes, secret messages and secret inks!