

# WOOSTER SAUCE



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

Number 34

June 2005

## Robert Bruce Hears About a Plum Test Match!

Cricketers from both the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and the Gold Bats XI of the P G Wodehouse Society (UK) gathered in mid-March for their second annual cricket dinner. The undoubted highlight of the evening was the contribution from guest speaker Henry Blofeld, patron of The Wodehouse Society, world-renowned cricket commentator, and the man who asked for his chosen book on *Desert Island Discs* to be *A Pelican at Blandings*.

He revealed that a selection committee at Lord's, consisting entirely of himself, had that very day chosen the definitive teams for a match between Beach's side and Jeeves's team. He then proceeded to announce the teams and provide some justification for the more controversial selections.

Beach's team would feature Uncle Fred as an opener but under his full name and title in order to bamboozle both the scorecard printers and Bill Frindall. Mike Jackson would be Captain of the side.

<i>Jeeves's XI</i>	<i>Beach's XI</i>
1 Sir Roderick Glossop	The Hon Galahad Threepwood
2 Sir Watkyn Bassett	Frederick Altamont Cornwallis Twistleton, (5th Earl of Ickenham)
3 Spode	Mike Jackson
4 Rockmeteller Todd (or Gussie Fink-Nottle)	Soapy Molloy (or Lord Tilbury)
5 Bertie Wooster	Psmith
6 Thomas Portarlington Travers	Alaric, Duke of Dunstable
7 Anatole	E Jimpson Murgatroyd
8 Rev Aubrey Upjohn	George Cyril Wellbeloved
9 Jeeves	Beach
10 Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps	Clarence, 9th Earl of Emsworth
11 Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright	The Efficient Baxter

Psmith at No 5 would be "a pretty useful player" who "would make Muralitharan look second-rate". After him would come Alaric, Duke of Dunstable, "who would not be good between the wickets". Coming at No 8 would be George Cyril Wellbeloved to bowl "gentle seamers". Lord Emsworth would bat at No 10 "if he remembers to turn up".

Blofeld defended the Emsworth position at No 10, despite the fact that "he can't bat and couldn't bowl", on the grounds that the Efficient Baxter couldn't take precedence in the batting order to his Lordship.

On the ticklish question of who should be Twelfth Man Blofeld hedged his bets. He suggested George Threepwood, who had "the guts to call the Duke of Dunstable 'big boy'" or Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe. The Empress of Blandings herself, of course, would be team mascot, and Parsloe would be required to lead her out before the playing of the National Anthem.

For the Jeeves XI Roderick Spode would be at No 3. Spode would be "a master in the art of sledging" and so would be "an absolute master fielding at silly point" and he "would be very hard to get out because he certainly wouldn't accept the umpire's decision". At No 4 there was another doubling up with a fitness test to decide who would play out of Rockmeteller Todd, "another puzzle for the printers of the scorecard", and Gussie Fink-Nottle.

Next man in, of course, would be Bertie himself who "would make lots of runs". Following him would be Tom Travers and then Anatole, "the supreme French cricketer". "The running between the wickets would be interesting", he added. The Rev. Aubrey Upjohn would not only "supply the biscuits for a dressing-room snack", but would "make a jolly good 30 and bowl seam up". Jeeves, "with his leg-breaks", would occupy the No 9 slot. After him would come "an unstoppable combination with the new ball – Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps and Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright". He designated Mr Filmer and Stilton Cheesewright as twelfth men for the Jeeves team.

As final touches he suggested that Lady Constance Keeble and Mrs Spenser Gregson preside over the tea, and that Jno Robinson should arrange the transport. The teams would adjourn after the match to the Drones, before moving on to Barribault's Hotel for dinner.



# A Guide for the Linguistically Challenged

by The Right Hon. Sir Konrad Schiemann, Judge of the Court of Justice  
of the European Communities, Luxembourg

“Where’s the other idiot?” Such a greeting from a passable imitation of Aunt Agatha would have made Bertie Wooster feel at home. It had much the same effect on me. I had come back from serving Queen and country for 18 months in Cyprus and had spent some idle moments speculating on the nature of the welcome which would await the returning hero. The voice belonged to my Irish substitute grandmother, a former vice-president of the Mothers’ Union, married to the rector. She, expecting the arrival of my brother, knew a missing idiot when she did not see one. That, in any event, was how I construed her greeting when I reported it to my brother.

This formidable lady, faced after the war with a German orphan speaking no English, took the view that the sooner I could disguise myself as an English gentleman the better it would be for all concerned. Instruction in the mysteries of English behaviour and linguistics took the form of reading PGW aloud to the rector during the week and learning the collect for the day and other prayers from the *Book of Common Prayer* at weekends. I confess that the young boy found PGW easier to absorb than the latter – for some years there was a slight confusion in my mind between ‘sundry’ as in ‘places’ and ‘sun dried’ as in ‘raisins’ – but a loyalty to both sources of instruction has remained with me. Both are, to my mind, better spoken aloud in the presence of others than read to oneself. By contrast, the other inhabitants of the rector’s bookshelves – quantities of Browning’s verses, an episcopal autobiography entitled *A Bishop Amongst Bananas*, and innumerable genteelly-worded thrillers by Agatha Christie remain in the memory – were best read in solitude. Skipping is so much easier when alone. It is the rector’s library which I must thank for my ability to linger lovingly on some phrases and move swiftly over pages which, as Jeeves must surely have said, were *nihil ad rem*.

With such aids, English soon ceased to be a problem. But PGW later came to my help when learning other languages. In the early sixties I found myself working in Holland and billeted in a student’s room during his vacation. Imagine my surprise and delight when I found the room lined with books describing in Dutch the passions stirred in the noble Earl’s breast by the Empress of Blandings. Add to this a familiarity with the romantic nature of Madeleine Basset who thought that the stars were

God’s daisy chain, and you will readily understand that I encountered the beauties of Amsterdam with weapons unknown to my rivals. Now, Dutch is a language which, if one has a familiarity with German and English, seems accessible. So, with the help of the old familiar faces, the language of Rembrandt and Pieter de Hoogh seemed within my grasp.

However, there are traps. On reflection, a knowledge of the *Indiscretions of Archie* and the like, was perhaps more of a hindrance than a help. By a set of curious chances I found myself invited to Soestijk Palace after a long drive in a *deux chevaux* from Paris. A welcoming tray of drinks stood beside Queen Juliana and she pointed in a well-timed gesture to the restorative liquor. Anxious to impress with an easy use of Dutch, I bowed and said something such as “Graag. Ik bin nog nooit zo aan een borrel toe geweest”. The sudden stiffening of some surrounding courtiers brought with it the realisation that “Thanks. I never needed a snifter more in my life” is perhaps not what you would find as the appropriate phrase in a book dedicated to equipping you for light conversation with royalty. However, perhaps I made my mark. Ten years later at a wedding, a nice old lady came up to me and said with a smile “How are you, Mr. Schiemann?” I smiled back and, desperately searching for the name of my interlocutor, said apologetically “Forgive me, can you remind me of your name?” The lady appeared puzzled. My dear wife placed herself behind her and cast her eyes to heaven, mouthing “Queen Juliana”. I longed for Jeeves.

Now life has taken me to Luxembourg as a judge at the European Court of Justice where we talk to one another in what we hope is French. When I confided to my old friend Edward Cazalet that this in my case necessitated a refresher course, he immediately saw what the situation required and presented me with *Jeeves et la saison des amours* – the French version of *The Mating Season* which I only had in English. There was Aunt Agatha: *celle qui mange du verre pilé et tue les rats avec les dents*. A brief look at *The Mating Season* reminded me that the redoubtable lady was killing rats with her teeth rather than killing rats who had teeth. Après une nuit bien arosée with a generous host, a reference to Jeeves’s spécialité anti-gueule de bois goes down rather well. I like to think it gives the impression of a man about town. Thank you, Edward.



# What Ho Today, St Gussie

by Patrick Kidd

*This article first appeared in The Times on February 14, and the sentiments it endorsed received substantial support when it was read out in full at the Savage Club meeting of members on February 15. It is reprinted with the approval of the author, Patrick Kidd, who, we are delighted to say, has since become a member of the Society*

Thirty years ago today one of Britain's most prolific and funny writers died at the age of 93. And while the bores at the Romantic Novelists' Association have this week predictably nominated *Pride and Prejudice* as the greatest novel of all time, surely P G Wodehouse is long overdue recognition as one of our finest romantic treasures.

No writer, not even Shakespeare, has mastered the simile with the power of Wodehouse. Consider such brilliant descriptions as 'A tubby little chap who looked as if he had been poured into his clothes and forgotten to say "when"', or 'She fitted into my biggest armchair as if it had been built by someone who knew they were wearing armchairs tight about the hips that season'. It is impossible to read a Wodehouse and not smile.

Throughout his work, love is his guiding force. You cannot move for men falling over each other in an attempt to woo. Characters such as Bingo Little or Gussie Fink-Nottle crumble helplessly under the power of woman after woman, whether they are simpering poppets like Madeline Bassett or the sporty Honoria Glossop with her laugh 'like cavalry charging over an iron bridge'.

Wodehouse is often dismissed as being frivolous, but that is the point. Love shouldn't be some angst-ridden chore, it should be whimsical with a capital W. He captures the truth that love makes quaking fools of us all. Real life isn't about knee-tremblers up against the wall or hunky men wading out of lakes. It is about smitten people trying desperately hard to impress and often messing up. There is something of the Gussie Fink-Nottle in all of us.



The messiness of sex isn't allowed to besmirch the world of Wodehouse. For him, beds are not places for lust, but a convenient piece of furniture to hide beneath when you are trying to escape a rival. And the only way to solve the catastrophe of two men being in love with the same woman is not to fight, but to settle it over the golf course. Chivalry and courtesy are everything. Wodehouse's novels are innocent in the literal meaning of that word. His characters have no wish to cause harm. It is a rather charming lesson for life.

We ought to honour the achievements of this most romantic of writers today. A tradition should be started for lovers to give each other a Blandings or a Jeeves book every February 14. And perhaps the day's name should be changed from St Valentine's to St Gussie's.

## I SAY!

### Favourite Exchanges - 34

"The hopes and dreams of my brother Clarence depend on Maudie, and so, Beach, does the little bit of stuff which you and I have invested on the Empress. Get her on the phone at once."

"Is the Empress on the telephone?" asked Penny, surprised, though feeling that something like this might have been expected of that wonder-pig.

From *Pigs Have Wings* (1952)



# A Sauce of Misquotation

by Nigel Rees

I have noted before how PGW has a store of well-known phrases and sayings to which he returns repeatedly in the complete works. Revisiting quotations and such that took his fancy, he fiddles with them, a bit like a dog with a bone. For example, *Right Ho, Jeeves*, ch9 (1934) has: ‘There was a death-where-is-thy-sting-fullness about her manner which I found distasteful’ – a biblical allusion that pops up in at least three other works.

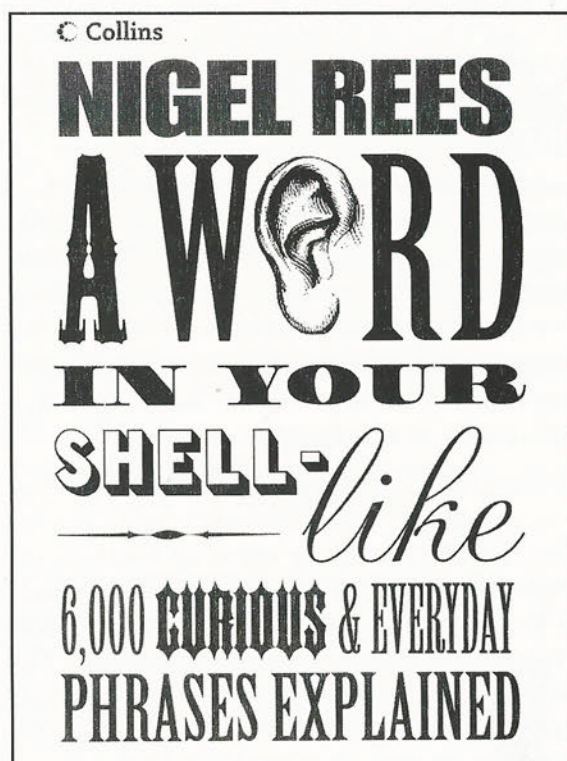
Then there is what the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius is supposed to have said: “Does aught befall you? It is good. It is part of the destiny of the Universe ordained for you from the beginning. All that befalls you is part of the great web.” This is much favoured by Jeeves, especially in *The Mating Season* (1949). Jeeves says to Bertie: “I wonder if I might call your attention to an observation of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius . . .” This Bertie repeats word for word to Gussie Fink-Nottle and then, in turn, Gussie reminds Bertie of the last sentence.

As to expressions that are not actually quotations, how about ‘raised/reared its ugly head’? Before PGW, Anthony Trollope had already used ‘raised her hideous head’ – and this was long before ‘sex’ became the standard subject of the phrase – but our man chimed in with: ‘The moment he entered the club-house Disaffection reared its ugly head’, in *The Heart of a Goof*, ch5 (1926) and with other variations elsewhere.

But one of these expressions is a bit of a puzzle to modern readers: Wodehouse several times described his characters, both male and female, as having their ‘hair in a braid’. From *The Amazing Hat Mystery*, in *Young Men in Spats* (1933): ‘. . . his hair in a braid and was the life and soul of the party.’ From *Jeeves in the Offing*, ch1 (1960): ‘You will observe me bowling up in the Wooster sports model . . . with my hair in a braid and a song on my lips’ – that’s Bertie. From *The Girl In Blue*, ch13 (1970): ‘It was just one of those trifling good turns which allies are entitled to expect of one another. If one of the three Musketeers had asked the other two Musketeers to push Cardinal Richelieu into the Seine, the other two Musketeers would have sprung to the task with their hair in a braid.’ The Editor tells me that PGW contributed additional lyrics to the UK version of a show called *The Girls of Gottenberg* (1909) but that the production managed to leave out a song from the American original, *Queenie Was There With Her Hair In a Braid*. At least this suggests that PGW was

familiar with the usage that early on and the meaning of the term is straightforward.

The *OED* defines ‘braid’ as ‘anything plaited, interwoven, or entwined – especially a plait of human hair. . . . In the 19th century, sometimes applied to the flat bands of hair, worn at one time by ladies over the side of the face, as in early portraits of Queen Victoria.’ But PGW seems to be suggesting something else by remarking on this fashion, particularly with regard to men. I am inclined to think it has to do with the fact that, traditionally, warriors who had long hair – whether they be Vikings, Comanche Indians, George Washington or Lafayette, to name but a few – tidied it away in a braid. In that way, it did not interfere with their warrior-like activities. Wodehouse used the phrase in this sense – to indicate that the men in question were somehow properly ready for action, of whatever kind.



*Nigel Rees's most recent publication*

Back to a direct quotation that only occurs once in the Wodehouse corpus, I think. *Joy In the Morning* (1947) contains this from Jeeves in chapter 25: “I fear not, sir. For know, rash youth – if you will pardon me, sir – the expression is Mr Bernard Shaw’s, not my own . . . For know, rash youth, that



## Letter from Annamaria Radici of Brescia

Annamaria Radici wrote in reply to Alan Hall's query (*Sauce*, December 2004, page 24) as to whether *Plasmon Biscuits* really exist:

Oh yes they do!. To these days, in Italy, they are believed to be THE biscuits for babies and young children, being free from 'heavy' ingredients while rich in substances apt to 'mould' (= *plasmare*) bones and muscle, at least in the opinion of most mothers in this country.

Now I wonder how Mr Wodehouse got acquainted with Plasmon Biscuits . . .

Annamaria kindly sent as evidence a packet of the biscuits, the wrapping to which appears below!



### *A Sauce of Misquotation, continued*

in this star crost world / Fate drives us all to find our chiefest good / In what we can, and not in what we would.' I wondered at first if this was teasing at Shaw's expense but, no, the spelling of 'crost' should have told me that this was genuine Shaw: the lines come from his only blank-verse play *The Admirable Bashville*; or, *Constancy Unrewarded*, Act 3 (1901).

I am still puzzling over whether this is an allusion to anything in particular: the very last words of *The Code of the Woosters*, Ch14 (1938), are: 'Sleep which does something which has slipped my mind to the something sleeve of care poured over me in a healing wave.' And here we are again (without Shakespeare's 'ravelled sleeve of care') in *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen* (1974): 'It wasn't long before sleep poured over me in a healing wave, as the expression is.' Byron has the more literal 'I am tainted, and must wash away / The plague spots in the healing wave' in *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice* (1821), but does anyone know of a 'healing wave' being linked to sleep, outside of PGW?

## A Point of Orthography

by Nicholas Aldridge

who has long been puzzled by PGW's  
putting an apostrophe at the  
beginning of the word ere

Sir Pelham Wodehouse! There are few  
Writers who write as well as you.  
Correctness is your middle name.  
(In fact it's Grenville. All the same,  
Whene'er you write, you get it right)  
Your ev'ry turn of phrase is quite  
What it should be; your *mots* are *justes*;  
And when the birds come home to roost,  
You have indited (and I quote)  
English the way she should be wrote.

But in your seat among the gods  
You know that even Homer nods;  
And one small point, Sir (do I dare?):  
You can spell *air* and *heir* and *Ayr*;  
But oh dear me! What happens when  
You opt for *ere*? Why then your pen  
Indulges in apostrophe,  
Gratuitous and not for me:  
*Ere* is the cockney form of *here*  
And has no business to appear  
In that small word which means *before*.

You will not do it any more  
Because your writing days were o'er  
Ere you arrived at ninety-four.

*Editor's Comment: Nicholas provided three examples of this foible from Joy in the Morning, and another from The Mating Season, though he fairly pointed out that when in this book the word was used a second time, it was spelled correctly.*



# Jeeves and the Job Hunt

by Ann Elizabeth Perret

Jeeves is truly a man for all seasons and a man for all ages. It is difficult to retain him in the realms of fiction – Jeeves is very much a fact. Whilst there is probably a little of him in all of us, there will never be a whole Jeeves in any of us – he is unique.

By a twist of fate, Jeeves was born into buttlery. Uncle Charlie Silversmith, the butler of Deverill Hall, was a formidable forebear. Yet if Jeeves were to have compiled a *curriculum vitae*, (he would never have used the nondescript term *cv*), he would have proved a pertinent pretender to any chosen throne.

Wodehouse, himself, was poignantly aware of Jeeves's omniscience and sober resourcefulness. He was a character larger than life; for life itself has never produced such a phenomenon who, at any turn, or, in any crisis, could calmly control – meeting vacuity with vision, dithering with decision.

So, let us consider but a few of the possible career moves Jeeves could comfortably contemplate:

## Shepherd

Seeing the wolf on the horizon, he would, with quiet haste, pack the needs of the flock and guide them off to safer pastures:

“I would advise that we omitted to communicate with Mrs Spenser Gregson . . . I have your suitcase . . . packed.”

*Indian Summer of an Uncle*, 1930

## Epicure for TV Makeovers

As a man of exquisite taste, he could advise on matters of ‘maisons’, ‘manners’ and ‘menus’; Jeeves being alien to offending *outré*:

‘[Jeeves] lugged [my purple socks] out of the drawer as if he were a vegetarian fishing a caterpillar out of the salad.’

*The Inimitable Jeeves*, ch 9, 1919

## Psychiatric Counsellor

On many occasions Jeeves displayed the required qualities, teasing out a tantrum or calming and controlling a calamity:

‘He is magnetic . . . something that seems to soothe and hypnotise . . . [even] a charging rhinoceros . . . meeting his eye, would check itself . . . roll over . . . [and] lie purring with its legs in the air.’

*Right Ho, Jeeves*, 1934

## Diplomat

His worldly wisdom and eminently superior stature would fit him well for a role as a dignitary:

‘[Jeeves] entered . . . tall and dark and impressive. He might have been one of the better class ambassadors.’

*Ring for Jeeves*, 1953

## Mediator or Arbitrator

‘In less than five minutes he had reduced this ravaging Stoker from a sort of human wildcat to a positive domestic pet.’

*Thank You, Jeeves*, 1934

## Scout Leader

He was always prepared:

“[Jeeves], do you always carry [Mickey Finns] on you?”

“. . . I am seldom without a small supply . . . opportunities for their use are constantly arising.”

*Much Obligated, Jeeves*, 1971

## Illusionist

A former-day David Blaine, he was of the highest calibre:

‘Jeeves doesn’t have to open doors. He’s like one of those birds in India [who] . . . having gone into thin air in Bombay . . . appear two minutes later in Calcutta.’

*Right Ho, Jeeves*, 1934

## Army Commander

He has a proven ability to assemble the troops, give them the low-down, arm them for battle and then melt meticulously into the background like a loving father bird watching his fledgling offspring take to the air and fly into their fate. But he would always be near enough to throw out the safety net for those who dopily divert from their *devoirs*:

“I think your Lordship should be starting as soon as possible. If ’twere done, ’twere well ’twere done quickly.”

*Ring for Jeeves*, 1953



# *Psnobbish Discoveries at the Psavage Club*

## *The first use of the name Psmith?*

At the last Savage Club meeting (see March's *Sauce*, p 16) the Society's Remembrancer, Norman Murphy, asked what Wodehouse was likely to have been doing one hundred years previously, and answered his own question by suggesting he had been reading the new issue of *Punch*, in particular page 109, on which the following may be found.

### **Psnobisme?**

[It is said that a gentleman of the name of Smith proposes, by way of differentiation, to adopt the signature of 'Psmith', on the analogy of the mute *p* in 'psalm'.]

Hear, all ye countless Smiths and Schmidts,  
Who long have exercised your wits  
In numerous ways to mask or mimic  
Your world-pervading patronymic!

Ye Smits and Schmitzes, Smyths and Smythes  
Or Smijths (whereat my tongue-tip writhes),  
A Mr Psmith has added lately  
His variant, which arrides me greatly.

It shouts aloud, this silent *P*,  
A patent of gentility,  
To match, with little extra trouble,  
Those small initial *f*s writ double.

Soon in the Landed Gentry books  
We shall be meeting Pnokes and Psnooks,  
And last, with rival ardour whetted,  
Ptompkins and Ptubbs will get Debretted!

### *Editor's Comment*

The author of this piece is identified in the semi-annual index as one A A Sykes, who was a regular contributor to *Punch* between 1902 and about 1914.

By one of those coincidences that encourage one to believe in a form of serendipity, in early May I saw some correspondence to and from Elmer W Flaccus, an American collector who was in contact with PGW from 1934 to 1975. Included was a letter to him from Basil Davenport (of the *Book of the Month Club*), dated October 4, 1939, in which Davenport wrote:

In an old volume of *Punch*, which I wish I had noted at the time, there was a verse making fun of a man who had changed his name from Smith to Psmith, with the 'p' silent, to be more distinguished. I have often meant to run that down, check the dates, and see if that could have suggested the idea to Wodehouse.

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## *Jeeves and the Job Hunt, continued*

### *Senior Churchman*

At the drop of a mitre, he had the essential saintly presence:

'Jeeves . . . seeing us off like an archbishop blessing pilgrims.'

*Joy in the Morning*, 1947

With his conciliatory, quietly saucy temperament, he could teach politicians a new slant on political correctness, or even have become Pope.

Yet, having whisked Jeeves on a lightning tour of the job market, we must ask if it would be wise to force him into one box, which would undoubtedly be a loss to all other boxes. With his current box full of so many entertaining compartments whence he calls on appropriate qualities as and when needed; I, for one, would irrevocably recommend that the inimitable Jeeves continues as the most punctilious and most personal of gentlemen's personal gentlemen.

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## *More at the Savage Club*

Oliver Wise spent an instructive few minutes at the last Savage Club researching their copy of the OED as to the various entries for 'Murphy' in honour of our Remembrancer. The first definition was 'an illiterate perversion of Morpheus', which he may not be too pleased to see, but the various meanings under the second group of definitions are none too complimentary, either:

- 1 Murphy's countenance: 'a pig's face' (what would the Empress say?)
- 2 A potato
- 3 Murphy's law: a name humorously given to various aphoristic expressions of the apparent perverseness and unreasonableness of things
- 4 Name given (the Murphy game) to a confidence trick in which the victim is duped by unfulfilled promise of money or sex, etc. So, *to Murphy* (verb trans), to dupe, to swindle by means of such a trick.

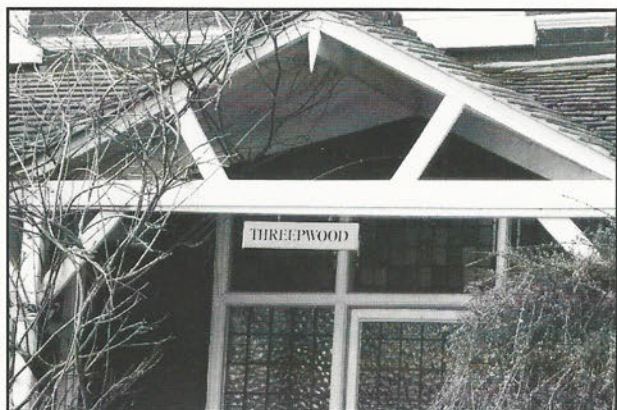


# 'Threepwood Again'

by Tim Hart

By way of introduction, this article is about my and my wife's association with the world of P G Wodehouse, as a result of buying our current house at 6 Record Road, Emsworth, in Hampshire.

We bought the house in June 1989 and at the time it was rather grandly called 'Holyrood House', which was something of a misnomer for a fairly modest double fronted detached, typically Victorian four/five-bedroomed house located in England and having no royal (as far as I know) connections. At the time we were unaware of the P G Wodehouse connections of the house and duly proceeded to spend in the region of £60,000 generally undoing the sixty/seventy-isation and renovating to restore many of the original features. This included the restoration of the dining room at the front of the house which had been rather hideously turned into a garage. In doing this I unwittingly threw away what looked like an old house name sign called *Threepwood*, thereby proving my ignorance of all related to PG.



## *Threepwood Again!*

During 1991 we were told by friends of the probable former ownership by PG of our house so I set about trying to establish whether this was so. I found a book in the Chichester library called *In Search of Blandings* by NTP Murphy of which no doubt many of you will have heard ( and I now have a copy). In there are several references to *Threepwood* on Record Road in Emsworth and indeed a photograph of the front of our house, which I estimate was taken around 1970.

One interesting aside to this photograph (to me at least!), is the alignment of the decorative roof ridge tiles which shows how they were originally, before we moved in. When we bought the house the ridge tiles were a plain, modern non-decorated type and when we had the roof overhauled I asked the roofer

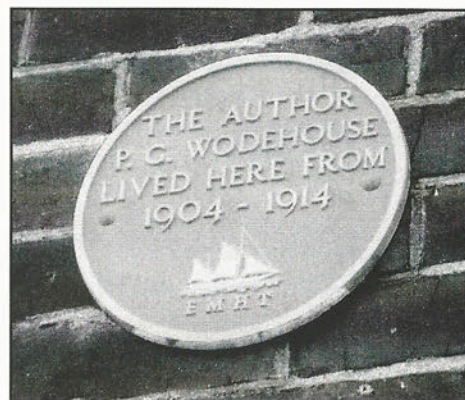


to put old ones up as they would originally have been. By sheer fluke he followed the original pattern as seen in the Murphy photograph, with no point of reference, as the similar houses around have totally different patterns.

Later that year, confirmation of PG having lived at 6 Record Road was obtained from the Emsworth Museum. Given that after a period of doubt we had decided to stay at No 6, we had a decent quality black and white house sign *Threepwood* made by a local sign maker/painter and so we were 'Threepwood again'.

## *The plaque*

In the mid-nineties we were approached by the Emsworth Maritime Heritage Trust to find out whether we would permit a 'blue plaque' to be put up on the front of the house. We agreed, subject to not having to pay for it!! Accordingly the Trust in conjunction with Havant Borough Council commissioned a plaque which I duly hung. One particularly hot day, during the summer of 1998, the plaque was officially unveiled by Ian Carmichael (and a fine job he made of it too), followed by a small reception at the Emsworth Museum.





# The Back the Berkshire Campaign

Members will have found the *Back the Berkshire* supplement distributed with this edition of *Wooster Sauce*.

As part of the Society's *Back the Berkshire* campaign, a silk tie bearing an image of the Empress on a plum background has been commissioned and is available for members to purchase for themselves or for friends. The price is £ 17.50 post-free in the UK, and £ 20 post-free overseas.

Please note that the price includes a contribution to an appropriate Rare Breeds organisation. It is not intended that the Society will itself profit from this initiative.

In support of the Society's campaign to *Back the Berkshire* (see the special supplement), we would

like to inform members that a sculptor, Christine Cummings, makes models of Berkshires in Ormskirk, Lancashire, and is happy to take orders from members of the Society.

The Editor can vouch for the appearance of the model as he was given one of the larger size by his daughter a few months ago, and a number of committee members have had the chance to inspect her! The price charged for the large model (almost 15 inches from nose to tail) is £ 100, and for the small is £ 55. Shipping costs, which would have to be confirmed at the time of placing an order, are in the region of £ 9 and £ 5 respectively within the UK.

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## 'Threepwood Again', continued

The surprise to me in all this was the relatively large number of people who turned up, most welcome as they were. Since the 'unveiling' we have had a number of (scheduled) visits from various PGW groups including The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), the American Wodehouse Society and a group of budding writers from Earnleigh College.

### *The future and book collecting*

For the future, we shall certainly continue to enjoy living here although I can foresee a time when the house will appear too large for us. One advantage of a spare bedroom or two is that I have been able to devote one to my burgeoning book collection (I collect modern(ish) firsts) and the author of whom I have most titles is one P G Wodehouse. In fact he started me on the slippery slope to becoming a book collector when, four years ago, I bought a box of his old hardbacks in an auction, several of which turned out to be firsts. Since then, this box of books has become a roomful.

No doubt many reading this article will recognise the collecting symptom and I have no doubt that P G would approve, particularly in his old house.

### *Editor's Comment*

In the adjacent column members will find details of the summer opening times for the Museum at Emsworth. If you have a spare hour and are in the area, do go and have a look.

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## The Demise of Vine St Police Station

Murray Hedcock noted in *The Observer* on March 27 that Vine Street is all set to disappear in the redevelopment of the Regent Street area planned by the Crown Estates, part of the steady sale of historic London police stations and court buildings. The report added that Vine Street, at the back of Piccadilly, was immortalised by P G Wodehouse as the place where, after being charged with knocking off a policeman's helmet, Bertie Wooster had shown unexpected awareness in giving his name as Eustace H Plimsoll of The Laburnums, Alleyn Road, Dulwich.

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## Emsworth Museum: Opening Times

The Emsworth Museum will be open again this summer, and is well worth a visit. There is a special display dedicated to P G Wodehouse which includes letters, books and photographs. This year it has been enhanced with postcards showing Emsworth during the years Wodehouse lived there. Also new are views of Portsmouth and Southsea in the early 1900s.

The Museum, located above the Fire Station at 10b North Street, Emsworth, is open from 10.30 to 4.30 on Saturdays and Bank Holidays until the end of October, and from 2.30 to 4.30 on Sundays.



# The Humourweight Champion of the World

by Sidney Kitson

Those who wrote about his life and writings mention that Wodehouse was very fond of boxing. He commented on this liking for the sport when writing about himself and, had it not been for poor eyesight, might even have had some success at the sport. He was probably a heavy cruiser weight, as the British called it (equivalent to the American light heavy). In writing for *The Alleyman* he covered both rugby and boxing matches.

He recalled:

The yearning I had to visit America, rather similar to that of a Tin Pan Alley songwriter longing to get back, back, back to his old Kentucky shack, was due principally, I think, to the fact that I was an enthusiastic boxer in those days, and had a boyish reverence for America's pugilists – James J Corbett, James J Jeffries, Tom Sharkey, Kid McCoy and the rest of them. I particularly wanted to meet Corbett and shake the hand that had kay-oed Sullivan. I had a letter of introduction to him, but he was in San Francisco when I landed, and I did not get to know him till a good many years later, when he was a charming old gentleman and one of Broadway's leading actors.

Readers who saw the 1942 film *Gentleman Jim* (about Corbett, with Errol Flynn as the champion) may recall an early scene when a typical barfly goes up to the great John L Sullivan, the reigning champion, and asks to shake his hand. This character says "I shook the hand that shook the world." Did someone learn about the quote from Wodehouse?

Wodehouse wrote about acquiring a TV set and enjoying the Friday night boxing. The last important fight he saw from the ringside was the second Louis-Walcott heavyweight championship bout at the Yankee Stadium, but he grumbled that he and Ethel were given seats too far back.

He built the story *Black for Luck* (*Strand*, June 1915, included in the collection *The Man with Two Left*

*Feet*) from an incident he recounted in *Performing Flea* about a reporter at a Jack Johnson-James J Jeffries fight, who mistook the meaning of a coded message and bet on the winner. Jeffries, incidentally, was known as 'The Great White Hope', a name most of which Wodehouse passed on to William Bannister, the subject of family disputes in *The Coming of Bill*. Indeed, when this was published as a single issue novel in *Munsey's Magazine* in May 1914 it was under the title *The White Hope*.

In a letter to his step-daughter Leonora, Wodehouse mentioned 'jolly old Carp', who must have been the favourite (at least from the European side) when the French boxer Georges Carpentier crossed the Atlantic to fight the redoubtable Jack Dempsey for the Heavyweight Championship of the world. Carpentier had demolished two British heavyweight champions, Joe Beckett and Billy Wells, and possessed a terrific punch. Although he lost to Dempsey, he did succeed in shaking the champion with one of his haymakers.

There had been a tremendous amount of publicity over the fight, as Carpentier was very popular, having caught the public imagination. Even the

eminent vegetarian George Bernard Shaw, no slouch when it came to knowledge about boxing (see his novel, *Cashel Byron's Profession*), had written several articles about it.

Students of English literature may know that many renowned literary figures, such as Byron, took a liking to pugilism.

Even Shelley, while at Eton, was supposed to have taken part in a fight with one Thomas Styles in 1809, which ended when a 'solar plexus punch' to

Shelley's midriff caused him to flee from the ring. (For more detail, see *Lilliput*, December 1949, *Shelley in the Ring*.)

Those were the days of Thackeray, Conan Doyle (who I believe boxed as an amateur), Dickens and Hazlitt. They were also the days when the

## Battling Billson

Billson is the man who invented fighting. . . . Never picks a quarrel, you understand; but once he started – golly! I've seen that man clean out a bar at Marseilles in a way that fascinated you. A bar filled to overflowing with Abs and firemen, mind you, and all capable of felling oxen with a blow. Six of them, there were, and they kept swatting Billson with all the vim and heartiness at their disposal, but he just let them bounce off, and went on with the business in hand. The man's a champion, laddie, nothing less. You couldn't hurt him with a hatchet, and every time he hits anyone all the undertakers in the place jump up and make bids for the body.

From *The Debut of Battling Billson*, in *Ukridge* (1924)



# Norman's New Planet Swims into our Ken

## News of his long-awaited new book

For more than twenty years the Society Remembrancer, Norman Murphy, has been working on his new book about sources used by Wodehouse for plot and text. He has provided this insight into his objectives:

I would stress that the point I am trying to make throughout the book is that Wodehouse's jokes, references and comments were all topical to a contemporary readership, generally within an eighteen-month period. That's why his stories were so popular.

What [my wife] Elin calls the 'social history' chapters are my attempt to show that the *Wodehouse World* was based on facts. Curates did get their vicarages by sporting prowess, *then*. 'Buck-U-Uppo' is based on a real incident. Every golfing drama he described was equalled in real life. People recognised this *then*, and all I'm doing

is showing he dramatised and made funny a world his readers knew existed at the time.

Such a book is, of course, never finished, and Norman is only reluctantly accepting that, like Gally Threepwood's *Reminiscences*, time must be called, sub-editing started, and the weary work of cross-checking and cross-referencing started. He believes it will be privately published in a small run, either late this year or early next, and to cover his costs the price will be commensurately and regrettably high. But it would help him, I'm sure, to decide on both the print run and the cost if he had an indication of the number of likely buyers.

So would members who have a high degree of interest on the relatively sparse facts given here

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## *Humourweight Champion of the World, continued*

champions mentioned above, and many other famous figures, not champions but of almost equal popularity, were frequently mentioned in the press, an era that ended with Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson. Boxing has changed a lot since those days to become the *tamasha* it now is. How Wodehouse would have taken to the current lot is anybody's guess.

He did strike up an acquaintance of sorts with two of the most remarkable pugilists of all time. Young Griffo was an Australian lightweight who, though he never won a title, was famous for demonstrating particular skills in ducking and slipping punches while standing on a handkerchief. This art was shown on bar-room floors, not in the ring. But he was one of the figures of which boxing legends are made.

Kid McCoy, whom Wodehouse met in 1904, spawned Kid Brady, the hero of the seven short stories which the Society has reprinted as Christmas gifts to members. Brady also had a substantial role in *Psmith, Journalist*, while he was training for a championship fight, and received a brief mention in *A Gentleman of Leisure*, when the hero won a hundred dollars by surviving three rounds with him without being knocked out.

Other references to boxing are scattered through various stories. The cat fight involving Webster

could very well have taken place in an East End ring, and there is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the former champion John L. Sullivan, a known frequenter of bars, in *Cats Will Be Cats* after Webster had sampled some spilt whisky.

In *Open House*, Eustace Mulliner's visitor Orlando Witherspoon of the Dumb Chum's League was compared in size to Primo Carnera, a massive Italian heavyweight, to Orlando's advantage. Ukridge, that man of wrath, fought in the ring at the Oddfellows' Hall, Llundnno (*sic*), and pictured himself introducing Porky Jones and Slugger Smith at the start of their four-round bout.

But the real hero of Wodehouse's boxing stories is Battling Billson, the heavyweight managed by Ukridge. Among the more memorable of scenes is the description of a bartender doing a backwards foxtrot out on to the street after being hit by Billson. What he would have done to Tyson or Foreman (in the ring, or as competitors in a pie-eating contest!) is anybody's guess, but I don't think he would have been complimentary.

Sadly, the old *RING* magazine, the Bible of boxing, no longer carries the authority it once had. There was always someone from *RING* at all big bouts, and their photo archives must surely have undiscovered pictures of Wodehouse at the ringside.



# Wodehouse's Hollywood and Mine: Part 3

by Curtis Armstrong

Remarkable as they are in their surrealism, the Hollywood stories startle us with their bitterness. These are not the work of Plum, purveyor of sweetness and light. While undeniably funny, these tales are as close to mordant and cynical as Wodehouse would ever get in his career. This is all the more evident when one compares the fictional Hollywood tales to their closest literary sibling – Wodehouse's account of his spell in a Nazi internment camp.

Whatever the similarities between these two significant events in Wodehouse's life, there were differences, the most obvious being the relative cheeriness of the camp diary as compared to his recollections of his stretches at MGM and Paramount. For example, Plum complained to Bill Townend about his inability to get any work done in Hollywood, while at Tost and Huy he seemed to be churning the stuff out. This beaver-like industry may well have had something to do with not having Ethel around throwing parties every ten minutes, but for whatever reason he produced, among others, *Money in the Bank* and *Joy in the Morning*. Even the titles sound bright with optimism.

By contrast, the best-known novel to come out of his time in Hollywood was *Hot Water*. Interestingly enough, the time spent in Nazi internment and in the Hollywood studio system resulted in the only two times that Wodehouse, that most uncontroversial of men, found himself embroiled in controversy. The broadcasts from Berlin resulted in his estrangement from England for the remainder of his life, while his famous interview in the *Los Angeles Times* revealing the amount of money he was being paid to loll around Marion Davies's swimming pool and play with Maureen O'Sullivan's Peking ended with Plum effectively banned from Hollywood forever – or at least until they needed him again and figured everyone had forgotten about the whole thing. Hollywood's response to Wodehouse's naïve revelation of reckless studio spending was of the sort of outraged indignation we remember from Captain Renault in *Casablanca*: They were 'shocked, shocked to find there was gambling going on here'.

Wodehouse would find a very different environment these days. What reckless spending there is now tends to go into the extensive computer-generated destruction of the planet or morphing actual actors into something even less appealing. But Wodehouse's mistakes stemmed not just from a

generally conceded mutton-headedness when it came to dealing with the press. Nor should blame necessarily be laid on Wodehouse's naïveté, though that was considerable. Regarding his *Los Angeles Times* fiasco, he wrote, apparently without irony:

It was a casual remark I happened to drop off the record – though, like an ass, I didn't say it was off the record.

No, in Plum's defence it should be remembered that any extended period spent in a Hollywood studio, surrounded by Hollywood people, in that relentlessly charming climate, can lead to a dislocation from reality in even the shrewdest and most worldly of people. Your apparent ability to think and move about freely is a highly deceptive thing in Hollywood. If you're not very careful, your reality becomes Hollywood's reality, which has nothing to do with what's happening in the real world, as Plum learned to his cost.

It is intriguing, if pointless, to speculate what would have happened had Wodehouse succeeded as a screenwriter in Hollywood. As Hollywood's product evolved from the romantic and musical comedies of the thirties (a genre which, we must not forget, Wodehouse helped create) to more 'serious', less stage-based fare in the forties and beyond, would Plum have evolved with it? Can we imagine Jack Warner, in this alternate universe, putting down the first draft of Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* and barking, "Put Wodehouse on it. They went to the same school. Maybe he'll understand it." Or Billy Wilder reading Wodehouse's draft of *Double Indemnity*, in which the Barbara Stanwyck character blackmails Fred MacMurray into sneaking into her husband's room in the dead of night and puncturing his hot water bottle with a darning needle? Not really the same, is it? More chilling than what cinema might have gained in this scenario, though, is what would have been lost to literature: *Louder and Funnier*; *Thank You, Jeeves*; *Blandings Castle*; *Young Men in Spats*; *The Code of the Woosters*; and *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* might never have been written. Even *Anything Goes* might not have appeared.

By the fifties, of course, Hollywood waters would have become so culturally muddy – what with juvenile delinquents, giant insects, invaders from Mars, rock and roll, and beach movies – that Plum would have seen the writing on the wall. The work



# Worth The Wait

## The American Premiere of The Beauty Prize

Reviewed by John Graham

Eighty-two years after it premiered in London on September 5, 1923, *The Beauty Prize*, with book and lyrics by George Grossmith Jr and P G Wodehouse and music by Jerome Kern, finally had its American debut this spring in New York City. The Off-Broadway theatre company, Musicals Tonight, which last year staged a successful revival of Bolton, Wodehouse and Kern's first collaboration, *Have a Heart* (1917), presented a semi-staged production of this long neglected musical from April 26 to May 8. A genial group of eager Wodehouseans attended the matinée performance on May 7.

Musicals Tonight's producer Mel Miller welcomed everyone to the show and explained why *The Beauty Prize*, which ran 214 performances in London at the Winter Garden Theatre, never moved on to New York: simply put, Broadway was too crowded with other musicals during the 1923-24 season (including Plum's own *Sitting Pretty*).

*The Beauty Prize* was the second Jerome Kern musical that Wodehouse co-wrote with actor-producer George Grossmith Jr. In 1922, the pair had worked on *The Cabaret Girl* which ran 462 performances in London.

In *The Beauty Prize*, Wodehouse and Grossmith pen a simple Anglo-American farce about of pair of rich

young lovers who enter into ill-matched engagements to spite each other before happily reuniting in the end. (To this observer, the story lacks that touch of sophistication so often provided by Guy Bolton.)

To accompany these odd entanglements, Kern adds some delightful tunes with often inspired lyrics by Wodehouse and Grossmith. Devotees of Hal Cazelet's 2001 CD will be familiar with two of the songs: *You Can't Make Love By Wireless* and *Non-Stop Dancing*. In addition, if *A Cottage In Kent* also seemed familiar, that is because Wodehouse and Kern revised *A Bungalow in Quogue* from their 1917 New York show, *The Riviera Girl*.

The New York cast was strong across the board. Justin Sayre gaily played Flutey Warboy, the comic role originally undertaken by Grossmith himself. Equally fine were Mike Masters as Odo B Philpotts, the self-absorbed bachelor who was the beauty prize; Kelly Grant as the rich American beauty Carol Stuart who wins him; Sean Hayden as Carol's handsome fiancée John Brooke; and Annie Ramsey who played Lovey Toots, the simple hat shop girl who yearns for that cottage in Kent.

Top-notch piano accompaniment was provided by music director Rick Hip-Flores.

## Wodehouse's Hollywood and Mine, continued

would have dried up. Without the nearly unbroken chain of Wodehouse books through the war years, the popular taste for them might have diminished, had he even been able to write them at all. His well of creativity might have gone dry after years of writing screenplays in Hollywood. Faced with this sort of calamity, Wodehouse might even have become one of those tragic statistics too common at the time and been driven to commit an unthinkable act: He might have gone into television. But there's no point in getting morbid about it.

It is safe to say that Hollywood has changed much in the years since Plum walked six miles a day from his home in Beverly Hills to his office in Culver City. For one thing, anyone caught walking in Beverly Hills these days would be courting arrest and imprisonment. Indeed, in most respects, he would

find the City of Angels unrecognizable. But I will close with one true story as an example of how much has stayed the same.

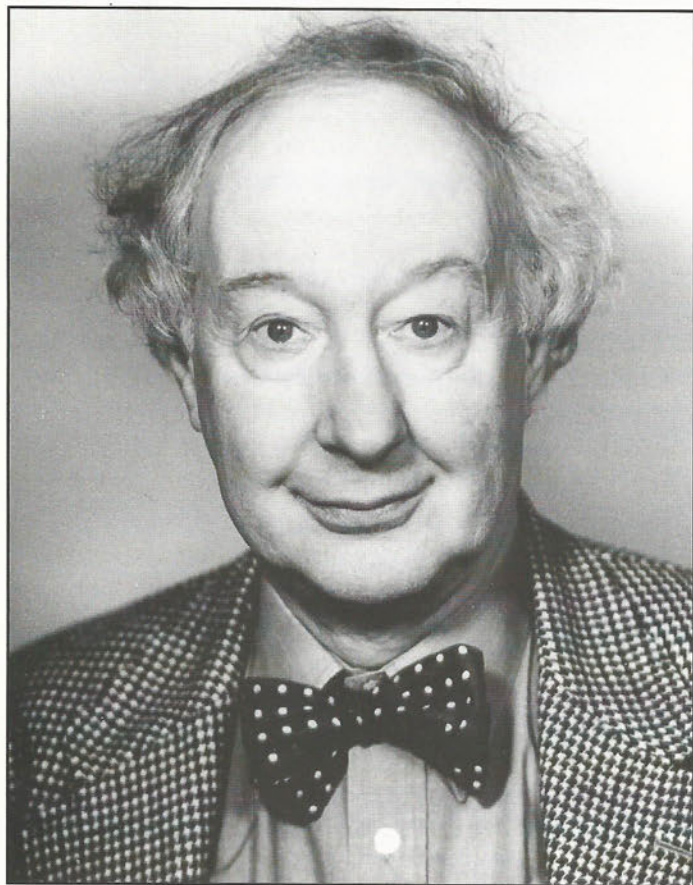
The story is set in one of the great Hollywood studios, not far from the studio where Plum had laboured over *Rosalie*. It was the morning after the Academy Awards a few years back, when *Shakespeare in Love* had won the Best Picture award, beating out a film produced by this organization. The top executive was in a staff meeting, surrounded by his top noddors, everyone licking their wounds. The bitter silence which had fallen upon the room was shattered when the studio head burst out in frustration, "Who the hell is this Merchant Ivory guy anyway?!" It was a cry from the soul that Izzy Schnellenhamer would have understood and a moment Wodehouse would have savoured.



# Reading Wodehouse for Audio-Books

by Jonathan Cecil

If my work as an actor is remembered at all, I would as soon it was for my Wodehouse audio-tapes as for anything else. According to Tony Ring, over the past twenty years I have recorded 168 hours of the Master's work. This seems incredible but, if so, working all those hours has been a constant joy – never wearisome.



It all came about by chance. My old friend Richard Briers had been asked to read *The Inimitable Jeeves* by Chivers Books and Richard, inundated with work as usual, recommended me instead. Some time after recording the book I read a very friendly review in a Sunday newspaper and suggested to Chivers that I might record more Jeeves stories. They agreed and here I am, twenty years on with, I hope, still more books to come from Plum's massive oeuvre.

My approach has remained much the same over the years. First I read the book through as if for pure pleasure, soaking up the atmosphere and noting the comic highlights. Then the real hard work starts. With pencil in hand I take two or three chapters at a time and go through them thoroughly – always amazed at the small felicities I have missed even in quite a careful first reading.

Years ago I worked with that consummate broadcaster Derek Guyler. I noticed how he marked up his radio script like a musical score, underlining pivotal words and indicating with his own personal hieroglyphics where to speed up, slow down, speak louder or softer, and so on. I have in my own way copied his method. It is particularly handy for Wodehouse whose sentences in his glorious middle to late period are often very elaborate with the key word quite hard to locate.

Then there is the question of finding the climax. Every story has one – often a frantic night scene with pyjamas and nightgowns flapping about in frenzied bewilderment and perhaps someone menacing them with a gun. From this point on, the action winds down with a few more mishaps leading at last to a delectably calm conclusion.

Meanwhile I choose the voices: casting the characters as if employing a troupe of actors. The voice I decided on first was Bertie Wooster's – not too difficult as I empathise with him almost completely. I use my own naturally posh voice just a touch heightened with a few old upper class pronunciations from my father's generation – 'gel' or 'gal' for 'girl'; it is still pronounced thus by cockneys, as with 'awf' and 'gawn'.

I find Bertie a thoroughly likeable young man – a bit slow-witted and literal-minded but by no means bone-headedly stupid, or how could he possess his creator's outstanding descriptive powers? It infuriates me to hear Bertie read as a stagey, silly-ass stereotype – a giggly, effeminate fop. I read him like he is me: if that means I am a natural twit so be it.

Bingo I had already played on radio. I've distinguished him from Bertie by a weak 'r'. I try to make each Drones Club member as distinctive as possible within obviously public school limits.

A harder task is suggesting female characters. I have heard them read falsetto like an embarrassing squadron of castrati. I just lighten my voice and let sappy Madeline, hearty Honoria and pedantic Florence come alive through their words. Aunt Agatha does have her shrill moments – she's a bit like a crosser, less monumental Lady Bracknell.

The hardest voice to find was Aunt Dahlia's. I thought of the late Cicely Courtneidge's breezy, Edwardian, masculine voice. Then when I played myself back on my cassette recorder, I realised it was no good: a



## Wodehouse on Audio, continued

man imitating a masculine woman sounds just like what he is – a man. I chose instead the plummy tones of a cousin of mine. An otherwise well-disposed critic said I hadn't got Aunt Dahlia right; I was inclined to agree but it was the best I could do.

The other criticism I had in an otherwise friendly fan letter concerned the Trotters, (the Liverpool mayor and his wife in *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*). The letter said I had made them stock northerners rather than Liverpudlian. The problem was that my scouse accent – such as it is – is of the rough Lily Savage type, not suitable for a mayor. You cannot please everyone.

After two or three weeks of solitary rehearsal – sometimes listening to earlier tapes to remind myself of characters I'd played perhaps several years before – I am ready to go into the studio. I reckon on recording a hundred pages a day – any more and my voice starts to get hoarse and my tongue numb; quite incapable of negotiating the trickier words.

It helps to have a sympathetic producer – I've only encountered one man who didn't find Wodehouse funny. A young woman and I found a particular sentence in *Piccadilly Jim* so hilarious that we had to break for a cup of tea, dabbing our eyes.

In the studio I enter the Master's unique world and find myself totally immersed in it. In fact after two and a half days in the Drones Club or at Blandings Castle it is not an altogether pleasant feeling to encounter real life again.

Regrets: like Frank Sinatra, I've had a few. It's easier reading in the first person as with Bertie Wooster – like having a conversation with the listener. The first novel I read in the third person sounds to me now over-stilted at the beginning; I'm not going to divulge its title as it might put readers off. After a certain age – another regret – the voice deepens and darkens. For my young characters I have to lighten up – Jeeves has become easier than Bertie.

My third regret is that I have read only twelve out of the fourteen Jeeves books, the remaining two having already been read by other accomplished actors. I'd like to have my own shelf-ful of the entire canon.

Finally, I find it difficult now to read Wodehouse for pure relaxation. No matter; I have got more sheer pleasure from him than from any other author save Shakespeare, Tchekov and Jane Austen. What a privilege it has been to enter his idyllic world.

## Review of Ukridge on Audio, by the Editor

Jonathan Cecil has continued his march through the Wodehouse canon by turning his attention to Ukridge, one of the characters who has the power to divide the Wodehousean fanbase. Some adore the slightly disreputable rogue (Ukridge, not Jonathan), while others think that the innate calm of the Wodehouse world is disturbed too much by his anarchic approach to life.

Jonathan, though, goes along in his placid way, bringing the stories to life with his expected skill. It becomes increasingly difficult to comment constructively on one of his audiobook readings compared to another, but in this one at least Jonathan has lent himself to controversy. For he has adopted the longer and fuller pronunciation of 'Featherstonehaugh', rolling each of the four syllables round his tongue as though he were Freddie Threepwood tasting one of Donaldson's Dog-Joy biscuits. Not for him the popular abbreviation of 'Fanshawe', although, strangely, during the time I was listening to the recording, Inspector Lynley stated most authoritatively in one of Elizabeth George's televised mysteries that 'Fanshawe' was precisely how the name should be pronounced.

Jonathan also seemed to struggle with another proper name, the Welsh town Llundainno, the setting for *The Exit of Battling Billson*. There was a distinct hesitation when he first bumped into it, as if he was saying to himself "Why did I ever let myself in for this?", although the uneasiness faded slowly as the story proceeded. And by the end, the tricky pronunciation had been mastered, with any earlier hesitation having been replaced by a flamboyance which bordered on enjoyment.

Ukridge *aficionados* will be pleased to learn that the next unabridged recording from Chivers, *Love Among the Chickens*, is now available.

To order either, telephone Freephone 0800 136919, visit the website [www.audiobookcollection.com](http://www.audiobookcollection.com) or write to The Audiobook Collection, Freepost, Bath BA1 3QZ. Details are:

*Ukridge*, either in cassette form (1 4056 0018 7, at £ 15.99) or on CDs (1 4056 7117 3, at £ 20.99)

*Love Among the Chickens*, in cassette form (1 4056 0019 5, at £ 14.99) or on CDs (1 4056 7203 X, at £ 19.99)



# Contrasts in the Middle and Late

## Elliott Milstein Considers Aspects of

This is the final extract from Elliott's excellent talk at the 2004 TWS Convention in Detroit, and follows on from pages 6 and 7 in the March issue.

All the changes I have enumerated from the Middle to Late Period are communicated to us through the change in narrative voice.

The Middle Period begins with the emergence of a unique style, and that style is characterized by the main character, Psmith. Psmith had been unique in the Early Period, where he floated through public school, a bank and a New York newspaper with a languid insouciance and bemused detachment, but his distinct voice ultimately became, as Voorhees pointed out in his 1966 book, the source of four styles of Wodehouse speech in the Middle Period: the young hero; Wodehouse's morons – Bingo Little, Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps, *et al*; Jeeves, whose speech stems from the formal strain in Psmith; and Wodehouse's own narrative voice. In the Early Period, Wodehouse had experimented with various narrative voices, but Psmith's narrative voice dominated the Middle Period.

Beginning with *Full Moon*, however, the tone shifts gradually to another voice, that of Bertie Wooster.

The first person narrative voices in the Wodehouse canon are pretty much limited to short stories: The Oldest Member, Mr Mulliner, James Corcoran (Ukridge's biographer), and the various Eggs, Beans and Crumpets of the Drones (whose styles are, admittedly, very Wooster-like). Bertie is the only narrator to cross over from short story to novel, which he does fairly early in the Middle Period. (Only one other novel is written in the first person,

*Laughing Gas*, a bizarre and atypical novel, the narrator of which, Reggie Havershot, in both style and temperament, is pretty much a Bertie clone.)

In a word, one can say that 'Psmith' is essentially the narrator of all the Middle Period novels and 'Bertie', when he is not writing his own stories, is the narrator of the third person Late Period stories.

In the last article I mentioned the decrease in emphasis on romance, using as evidence the passages from the two Lord Uffenthams. This is clearly a Woosterish approach to a story. The Middle Period books are replete with romantic scenes, though when they occur in the Wooster novels, Bertie is squirming in agony. In the Late Period, they are almost completely absent.

Another aspect of this change in narrative voice is seen in the ratio of narration to dialogue. The Wooster novels of the Middle Period have far more dialogue than the third person novels. In the Late Period, the ratio is about the same – though the third person novels now also have description and detail pared to the bone.

But really the change is an almost ineffable alteration in style.

Psmith's flowery formality gives way to Bertie's zippiness. We see many of Bertie's verbal signatures in the Late Period narration, which, in the Middle Period, are evident only in Wooster/Jeeves stories. The Late Period third person narration is not pure Bertie Wooster, of course, but it is close. One might say that it is the style of a Bertie Wooster who has spent a little more time around Jeeves.

This is not mere speculation and fancy. There is something a little odd about Wodehouse's use of

### The Smiles That Win Favourite Nifties - 31

Four examples of the Late Period narrative style of Bertie Wooster, appearing in non-Jeeves and Wooster novels

From *Ice in the Bedroom*, 1961:

As he latch-keyed himself into Peacehaven, one would not be far wrong in saying there was a song on his lips.

From *Service With A Smile*, 1961:

It was one of those avant-garde plays which bring the scent of boiling cabbage across the foot-lights and in which the little man in the bowler hat turns out to be God.

From *Pearls, Girls & Monty Bodkin*, 1972:

Correction. A word as weak and inadequate as 'say' should never have been employed when such verbs as 'chanted', 'caroled', or even 'fluted' were at the chronicler's disposal.

From *Galahad At Blandings*, 1969:

If ever he had seen a fermenting aunt, this fermenting aunt was that fermenting aunt.



# Periods of P G Wodehouse's Writings

## Wodehouse's Use of the Narrative Voice

time, which, while it moves slowly, does not stand still. We see the Empress win the silver medal, not just once, but thrice, so we know that at least three summers have passed between *Pighooey* and *Galahad at Blandings*. Also, in *Jeeves in the Offing*, Bertie refers to Gussie's prize-giving at the Market Snodsbury Grammar School as having taken place the previous year.

Bertie ages over the course of his saga as well. Beginning as a young man with a thirst for parties and desire to get married, he slowly gives up the hectic nightlife and his early interests in a female partner give way at first to a strong desire to avoid entangling relationships and ultimately to a condition where matrimony is no longer considered reasonable or, indeed, possible.

In the final Wooster books, Bertie comes off as a rather middle-aged bachelor. And with *Jeeves and the Tie That Binds*, when Jeeves destroys the Club book section on Bertie, they become, essentially, married to each other.

Now, in the opening chapter of the Wodehouse's last completed novel, *Aunts Aren't Gentleman*, Bertie refers to 'my American pal, Tipton Plimsoll, with whom I had dinner last night to celebrate his betrothal to Veronica'. In *Galahad at Blandings*, Tipton refers to this same dinner, but in a tone that suggests it was in the more distant past. *Aunts Aren't Gentleman* is meant to take place immediately after the events recorded in *Full Moon*. Therefore, by extrapolation, since all the novels of the Late Period are interconnected in one way or another, we can see that all the third person novels of the Late Period take place after the last Wooster/Jeeves novel, or, in other words, after Bertie has spent a little more time around Jeeves.

By the time Bertie has completed writing the dozen novels and handful of stories that make up his saga, he might be in a position to begin writing about others. I rather like to think that, when I am reading a Late Period Wodehouse, I am reading the non-autobiographical works of Bertram Wilberforce Wooster.

## Report of Frank McCourt's Literary Dinner at the Savoy

The Savoy Hotel in London has recently instituted a 'reader-in-residence' programme and earlier this year invited Frank McCourt to take the position while he completed, *Teacher Man* the third volume of his autobiography, dealing with his experiences as a school teacher in New York, which is due to be published in September.

Frank McCourt, longstanding members of the Society may recall, contributed an article to *Wooster Sauce* in the *My First Wodehouse Experience* series in March 2001 (number 17). He recently reviewed Robert McCrum's biography of Wodehouse for the *Toronto Globe*, and the Savoy invited Robert to join Frank as hosts of a literary dinner on April 26th. Among the other guests were James Naughtie and Catherine Heaney, the daughter of Seamus Heaney, who, we were told, is a big fan of the Wodehouse style.

Frank McCourt made one of the most eulogistic addresses about the power of Wodehouse's prose to relieve unhappiness and depression that I have yet heard. He referred to the grotesque paradox of a nine-year-old boy in the Limerick slums reading and enjoying *The Code of the Woosters*, set in the stately

homes of England, and asked rhetorically what there was about the writing which could achieve that effect. His answer was that it was a 'magic carpet style', up there with Dickens but not given the scholarly attention it deserved because it dealt primarily with silly characters. He told us that he had considered writing his Master's thesis on the works of Wodehouse, but had been handed a firm *nolle prosequi*. He added wryly that this was before he learned that you must do what you want to do, so he had selected a more serious subject for his thesis.

He let on that the character he could most relate to was Ukridge, and that *Ukridge's Accident Syndicate* was his favourite story, but that he read avidly the whole genre and even today kept some Wodehouse by the bed.

Much of what Robert McCrum had to say will be familiar to readers of this journal, although the revelation that Gerry Adams had inscribed a copy of his autobiography to Robert with the comment 'Bertie Wooster for ever' in Gaelic brought a ripple of surprise. The evening as a whole was an example of Frank McCourt's summing-up of the relevance of Wodehouse's work today: pure enjoyment.



# Links Between Wodehouse and Leslie Charteris

Alan Day asks for information

In W O G Lofts and Derek Adley's compendium *The Saint and Leslie Charteris* (1970) P G Wodehouse is mentioned as an admirer of the Saint books. For his part, Leslie Charteris dedicated *Getaway* (1932) to Wodehouse in the words illustrated in the adjacent column.

Before that, in the second chapter of the first Saint adventure, *Meet the Tiger* (1928), we read:

Algernon De Breton Lomas-Cooper was one of the genial Algys made famous by Mr P G Wodehouse, and accordingly he often ejaculated "What? What?" to show he could hardly believe his own brilliance.

The only other anecdote I can trace linking those two best-selling authors appears in Barry Phelps's *P G Wodehouse – Man and Myth* (1992):

... writing to Usborne in old age Wodehouse relates how annoyed he was when picking up Leslie Charteris's *Saint Detective Magazine* to find in it a detective story – he thought it lousy juvenilia and no credit to him – which he had sold to *Pearson's Weekly* somewhere around 1910.

Phelps adds that it was, in fact, *The Harmonica Mystery*, which was printed in New York's *All-Story Cavalier Weekly* in 1915.

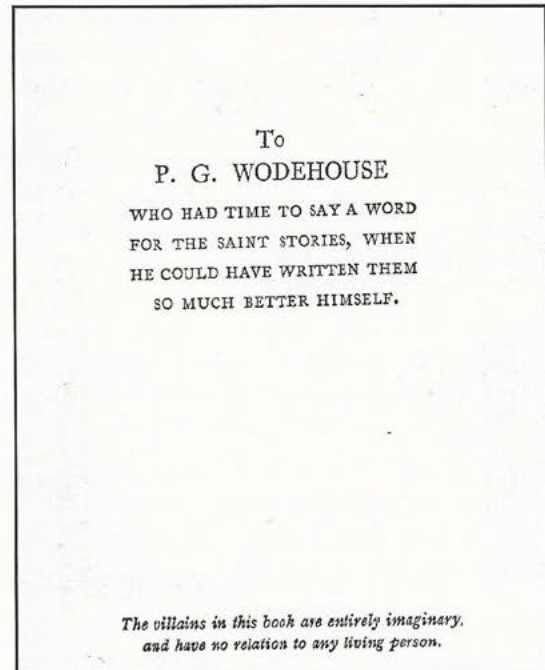
All the usual authorities available to me have nothing more to add as to the regard each may have had for the other or whether they ever met or corresponded. If they did meet, Hollywood in the 1930s would seem the most probable time and place.

Can more light be thrown on this?

## Editor's comment:

Please send replies to the Editor.

Barry Phelps was unusually incomplete in his *obiter dicta* as, although the story appeared in *Saint Detective Magazine* as *The Harmonica Mystery*, and it also appeared in *All-Story Cavalier Weekly*, this was only the second of the three titles by which it is known. The first was *The Education of Detective Oakes*, and it was under that title that it had been sold to *Pearson's* for their December 1914 edition. (It was even translated into French as *Le Triomphe de M. Oakes* for *Le Saint* magazine in March 1956!) The third title, used in the *Ellery Queen Magazine* in May 1978, was *Death at the Excelsior*.



## A New Production of The Coming of Gowf

The Committee have agreed to allow Ken McClymont, author and director of the production, to make this appeal to our members.

At long last the revival of *The Coming of Gowf* and other *Golfing Tales*, adapted from P G Wodehouse's *The Clicking of Cuthbert*, will tee off at the Gilded Balloon, 13 Brito Square, Edinburgh at 2.45pm each day from August 3 to 28. Those of you privileged enough to have witnessed the original production in London in 2001 will appreciate the lengths that we have gone to bring the show to an international festival and audience. From hand-varnishing golf clubs to butchering chequered trousers and argyle socks we can safely say that we know how to work (despite our dreams and aspirations!) within a restricted budget.

On that note, we would kindly request that if you are in a position to help us stage this Wodehouse Championship of misplaced tee shots either by financial support or practically (by help with accommodation in Edinburgh, printing or costume) we would be more than grateful.



# My First Wodehouse Experience

by Larissa Saxby-Bridger

I fell in love with Wodehouse in an instant. It was like finding one's true home in life and literary soul-mate, my first encounter being *Heavy Weather*. Wodehouse is human and literary perfection: charming, incredibly humorous and silly. He always strikes me as being acutely aware and piercingly accurate in his display of understanding the human condition: our wishes, desires, attitudes and ambition; and also the absurdity of life, that life can be this crazy. Plum delves deep and discloses expertly.

I decided to join the Society as a way of bringing something positive and new to help me progress through a recent bereavement. My Godfather Anthony Jordan died almost two years ago and I miss him sorely. The hardest thing is knowing that for as long as I live, I will never see him again. Anthony's great (six times) Uncle was the Theologian Richard Hooker, Bishop of Exeter, and his mother was the first lady to work in an English bank.

*Larissa is a Careers Adviser and Artist's Model*

Two other great-great-uncles were the Hookers of Kew Gardens. Anthony also worked for and co-founded the Japan Animal Welfare Society and was a Naval Officer. He was the living epitome of a Wodehousean gentleman, so much so that I found it too painful to read Wodehouse. I could just hear Anthony's voice and see his mannerisms and persona in the characters. I rather feel that the thought of joining the Society was a gift from Anthony; whispered as an idea from the heavens.

Eventually, I discovered the Society through the website. I duly printed the form and sent it off. Membership has helped me move forward and embrace the future; somehow I feel close to Anthony through my membership and meeting fellow enthusiasts. Wodehouse was one of his favourite writers too even though, as is not uncommon amongst gentlemen, he wasn't really a fiction reader.

Long live the Spirit of Wodehouse. It catches us all.

## Lord Uffenham's Dilemma

Despite the splendid prize on offer for the best solution, Gwendolin Goldbloom was the only reader to try to explain the reappearance of Lord Uffenham's tobacco jar in *Something Fishy*, after it had been extracted from his Lordship's possession in *Money in the Bank*. (See *Wooster Sauce*, March 2005, p7, for Bernard Lewis's query, and the context of the relevant incidents, which featured in Elliott Milstein's article.) Her response was:

As Dolly was really rather fond of Lord Uffenham, she might not have wanted to take the tobacco jar away from him (as it had no earthly use for her; the diamonds would have been another matter).

She could just have left it by the side of the road in a conspicuous but safe place where anybody driving from Shipley to London would have seen it, presumably recognised it and, in keeping with the feudal spirit, returned it to Lord Uffenham.

Alternatively, Dolly and Soapy might just have left the jar in the car when they sold the latter at a wayside garage, as they intended to. Then the jar would have been returned, once the law was taking its course with regard to stolen cars, fugitive con men, and so on.

## The Mystery Story Genre

Gwendolin Goldbloom also drew attention to a sentence from Simon Brett's *The Hanging in the Hotel*, in which the Country Hotel is described thus:

The hotel . . . played its part in nurturing the delusion of wealthy Americans that England had been created by P G Wodehouse and Agatha Christie.

An avid reader of mystery stories, like PGW, as an aside she invites suggestions of titles or authors of good examples of the genre.

Members' ideas would be welcomed by the Editor, who will start the ball rolling by mentioning the late Susan Caudwell, who wrote four murder mysteries which uniquely utilised her professional experience as a tax barrister in Lincoln's Inn! She died in 2000, aged 60.

The following titles are all in print, in paperback, from Robinson, and should ideally be read in order:

*Thus was Adonis Murdered*

*The Shortest Way to Hades*

*The Sirens Sang of Murder*

*The Sybil in Her Grave*



## Letters from Members

### From John Slim

It is ironic, in an issue brimming with praise for The Master, that *Wooster Sauce* No 32 (December 2004) should have found David Rathbone using a quotation from *Bill the Conqueror* that reveals PGW's grammatical fallibility.

'One of the things that makes the lot of the reader of a story . . .' as he pointed out in referring to it – though not to its lack of accuracy – is on the first page of *Bill the Conqueror*, published in London in November 1924.

Plural subject, singular verb.

It is a mistake that goes back – so you, Mr Editor, tell me – for slightly longer than that. It was included in the *Saturday Evening Post* serialisation on May 24, 1924, and also in the US first edition in book form. It continued to appear in the Canadian edition (printed from UK plates), Germany's 1925 Tauchnitz paperback, and the postwar Mayflower (1962) and Sphere (1972) editions.

It is clearly time for some publisher's editor to spare the Wodehouse blushes. Peter Washington, editor of the new Everyman series, tells me that he is always grateful when his attention is drawn to such problems, and that he will take this into account when *Bill the Conqueror* appears, probably in about two years' time.

Remarkably, precisely the same mistake – again, with equal irony, in pursuit of giving praise – is to be found on the front panel of the jacket of *Wodehouse: A Life*, the Robert McCrum biography. This time it is made by John Le Carré, who writes: 'Wonderful – one of those biographies that lives up to all one's hopes and expectations and then goes a step further.'

This particular pæan itself goes a step further by having not one but two singular verbs with their plural subject in a sentence that does not have a main clause.

It's a popular mistake, usually caused by turning 'one', the complement of the verb 'to be', into the subject of the verb that follows. Keith Waterhouse made it in the *Daily Mail* of February 12 ('Tessa is one of those trusting souls who believes . . .') and Robert McCrum himself keeps us guessing: correct on page 12; wrong on page 217; correct (quoting Wodehouse) on page 223; and correct on page 329, for instance. Incidentally, the title of his book – *Wodehouse, A Life* – becomes just plain Wodehouse

on the page preceding the half title, at which point it reverts to agreeing with its cover.

So there are distractions – none of them, fortunately, big enough to hide the value of a fascinating tome or reduce the enjoyment it offers.

### From Mr B A Pike

I wonder if you can answer a basic P G Wodehouse question: in which book did the mature Wodehouse manner first take hold of the narrative? I recently read *The Little Nugget* (1913) in which it is certainly not present, and *The Girl on the Boat* (1922), in which it certainly is. Between those two is the question – but which?

**Editor's comment:** In the hope of encouraging members to respond, I am listing below the novels (not short story collections) which were published in the UK for the first time between the two books Mr Pike mentions. I have excluded *Psmith Journalist* (1915) as it was serialised as early as 1909. *The Coming of Bill* first appeared in print in *Munsey's* in 1914 as *The White Hope*. Please contact me at the address at the foot of page 28 with your views.

<i>Something Fresh</i>	1915
<i>Uneasy Money</i>	1917
<i>Piccadilly Jim</i>	1918
<i>A Damsel in Distress</i>	1919
<i>The Coming of Bill</i>	1920
<i>Jill the Reckless</i>	1921

### From Eric Coulton

Eric Coulton has written to ask which novelist first referred to Jeeves, or any other PGW character, in their fiction. Members are invited to write to the Editor with their suggestions, bearing in mind Eric's champion, a quotation from Dorothy L Sayers's *Strong Poison*, from 1930.

"Pardon me, my lord, the possibility had already presented itself to my mind."

"Do you ever overlook anything, Bunter?"

"I endeavour to give satisfaction, my Lord."

"Well, then, don't talk like Jeeves. It irritates me."

**Editor's comment:** Do any members know when *Strong Poison* first appeared, presumably in serial publication in or before 1930? If another 1930 contender appears, this information might be needed for a tie-break!



# More on the TWS Convention

This is the last issue of *Wooster Sauce* before the TWS convention in Hollywood from August 11 to 14, so this note is meant both as a reminder to book your place if you intend to go and to let members know what to expect when they get there.

The main day for talks is Saturday the 13th, with the following on the schedule:

Plum in Hollywood – Just the FAQs	Brian Taves
Red Hot Stuff – But Where’s the Red Hot Staff?	Hilary & Robert Bruce
Remembrance of Fish Past	Chris Dueker
‘That Instrument’: Wodehouse on the Ukelele	Melissa Aaron
Published Works on Wodehouse	Tony Ring
Animal Crackers	Elin Woodger
The Master’s Beastly Similes	Dennis Chitty

Other major activities include: a Bus Tour of Hollywood (with Paramount Studios thrown in) on Friday the 12th; a reading of *Uncle Fred Flits By*; a film made by members of TWS (*Hollywood Comes to Blandings*); and three skits: *Penny’s from Hades*; *Jerry Shoosmith and the Gendarme*; and *The Rise of Minna Nordstrom*.

## *Bibliography of Colonial Editions*

John Loder, an Australian and long-time reader of Wodehouse, is a retired research scientist who over the years has amassed a collection of colonial first editions from Herbert Jenkins. Aided by Bill Matthews of City Basement Books, Melbourne, who has a complementary collection, John is planning to publish a booklet to record the details they have of these publications.

John reports that the booklet will probably be in B5 format. It is likely to have some 40 pages, to include: eight pages of coloured illustrations; four more pages of illustrations in black and white; a three-page preface; and a three-page description of the Indian and colonial libraries of British Publishers; with the remainder devoted to descriptions of the books themselves.

He points out that the only way of distinguishing a Herbert Jenkins Colonial Library edition is by the dust jacket, so reproduction of dust jackets is vital as a means of facilitating identification. Apparently there were many cloth variants, but as John says, without the wrapper there is nothing to indicate that the books were colonial issues.

Further information about the booklet and how to order a copy will appear in the September issue, assuming that its appearance is then imminent. If it goes on sale earlier, information will also be placed on our website.

## *Artie Shaw*

Artie Shaw, the last big bandleader of the Swing Era, died recently. A long and appreciative obituary in *The Atlantic Monthly* by Michael Steyn mentioned his eight wives, who included Ava Gardner and Betty Kern, Jerome’s daughter.

He added:

Artie Shaw loomed so large at the height of his fame that he has the distinction of being one of the few real, live, flesh-and-blood contemporaries to invade the Wodehouse canon. In *The Mating Season* (1949), a Hollywood starlet recounted to Bertie Wooster her encounter with an elderly English spinster, who turned out to be something of a movie fan:

“She knows exactly how many times everybody’s been divorced and why, how much every picture for the last twenty years has grossed, and how many Warner brothers there are. She even knows how many times Artie Shaw has been married, which I’ll bet he couldn’t tell you himself. She asked if I had ever married Artie Shaw, and when I said no, seemed to think I was pulling her leg or must have done it without noticing. I tried to explain that when a girl goes to Hollywood she doesn’t *have* to marry Artie Shaw, it’s optional, but I don’t think I convinced her.”



# Reviews of Wodehouse Theatre: 1

**Anything Goes** in Penzance, reported by Peter Coleman

Peter wrote to say that he had seen *Anything Goes*, performed in February by the Penzance Amateur Operatic Society, a good and well-supported amateur organisation playing in a region rarely visited by top class professionals.

He noted with regret that Wodehouse's contribution to the development of the show was not mentioned in the programme, but added that the large cast gave an enthusiastic performance. The leading lady, Kate Wood, who played Reno, he said, was excellent for her singing, acting and comedy and carried the show, but was very well supported by the other leading players.

The local press review endorsed this opinion, extolling in turn the virtues of those actors, and the overall impression was that it was a shame the production did not run for longer than the week which it was allowed.

**Ring For Jeeves** in Carshalton, reported by Christine Hewitt

Also in February, the voluntary co-operative Exit Theatre Company presented *Ring for Jeeves* at the Charles Cryer Studio Theatre in Carshalton, Surrey.

Many Wodehouseans are troubled by *Ring for Jeeves* which features Jeeves as a butler rather than a gentleman's personal gentleman and acting as a bookie's clerk to his employer's 'Honest Patch Perkins'. Exit overcame any possible loss of dignity by fielding rather a good Jeeves. Keith Brown maintained serene grace and well-bred manner throughout.

In other good performances Javona Gustave gave us a feisty Jill and Brian Butler as Rory, Lord Carmoyle, was completely credible as an employee of 'Harrige's'. Roberto Prestoni exploded on to the stage as Captain Biggar; rough, tough and loud he even struck and lit a match under his chin, though he was later reduced to putty by the charms of Mrs Spottsworth. Exit's open casting policy had resulted in Warren Jansons, a man, playing Mrs Spottsworth and, just about in control of his skirts and handbags, he gave a delightful comic performance that was at times reminiscent of Madame Arcati at a séance.

I am sure that loyal fans of Exit coming across Wodehouse for the first time were favourably impressed.

**Editor's Note:** The original title of this play was *Come On, Jeeves*.

**By Jeeves** in Norwich (and lunch beforehand), reported by Paul Rush

"The largest gathering of Society members outside of London" declared our esteemed chairman Hilary Bruce as she addressed the 42 Society members and their guests gathered in Norwich on Saturday 30 April.

The occasion was the first Society event organised in Norfolk, and comprised a lunch followed by a trip to the Maddermarket Theatre to see a production of *By Jeeves* – the Andrew Lloyd Webber/Alan Ayckbourn musical comedy.

Lunch was held at Reeds, a private members' club adjacent to Norwich's cathedral – the latter home not only to the second highest spire in England, but also a stained glass window and a number of plaques commemorating a variety of Wodehouse family ancestors. A number of members took the opportunity to visit these memorials that clearly highlight the link between P G Wodehouse and the County of Norfolk. Nosebags were donned and the assembled multitude lunched heartily and well. A brisk walk through the spring sunshine saw the group arrive at the theatre in good time to take their seats for the show.

Behold how Jeeves with sleight of hand  
Conceives a scheme so carefully planned  
Even we can understand  
If he takes it terribly slowly.

.....  
By all his mighty brain achieves  
By every spell the master weaves  
By heck! By George! By Jove! By Jeeves!  
By Jeeves! By Jeeves! By Jeeves!

Jeeves was his unflappable self – a constant calming presence in the flurry of impersonations and loves lost and regained. Bertie was suitably goofy. Anxious to 'entertain' us with his lost banjo, he narrated the unfolding drama as he awaited the arrival of a replacement instrument. Having saved his young master and friends, Jeeves engineered our collective escape from this sword of Damocles when the long awaited instrument duly arrived. To find out how, you will, of course, have to catch a performance of this worthy show.

The group made their respective ways home talking of new friends met and old ones met again – and, for many, the party continued in coach K of the London-bound express.



## Reviews of Wodehouse Theatre: 2

*Indian Summer of an Uncle*, reported by Tony Ring

The Jeeves and Bertie short story *Indian Summer of an Uncle* has been adapted as a one-act play for five actors by Chris Harris, and he entered the production (by the Sinodun Players) for four drama festivals this spring: Maidenhead, Henley (Kenton Theatre), Oxford and Wallingford.

His script remained very faithful to the story. Chris incorporated the technique (which is almost *de rigueur* for narrated Bertie stories) of stopping the action while Bertie explained to the audience what was happening. This was quite effective, especially as Bertie (Alex Rogers) was the most impressive of the cast. He also borrowed, wittingly or unwittingly, the *By Jeeves* idea of props being handed from the side of the stage, which makes better theatre than this sentence makes it sound!

Chris Pratt, as Jeeves, needed more rehearsal to improve the timing of his dialogue with Bertie. His Jeeves was rather overwhelmed by Bertie, lacking somewhat the authoritative dignity that it needs. Sheila Walker, as ex-barmaid Mrs Wilberforce, was not as blowsy or obviously lower-middle-class as she could have been. But the play, which lasted thirty-five minutes or so, was very enjoyable and Chris has said he would be happy for it to be made available, by arrangement, to other theatre groups who may be interested.

At the Kenton Theatre Festival, where I saw it, the play won the competition for 'New Plays', which surprised me a little as I would not personally describe an adaptation as a new play, and Alex Rogers won the award for 'Best Actor'.

*Oh, Clarence!*, reported by Peter Read

The sign 'Gunshots discharged during performance' displayed in the foyer of the Abbey Theatre, St Albans, warned a packed house, including 40 Wodehouseans, of fireworks to come during *Oh Clarence!* presented for a week in May by the Company of Ten.

The play, by John Chapman, draws on the plots of five Blandings stories and they were delightfully and seamlessly merged together. However, the script only draws lightly on Wodehouse dialogue and the cross-talk owed more to the tradition of farce.

I enjoyed Beefy Bingham's performance (*Company for Gertrude*) as he strewed broken crockery around the stage and fell over numerous items of furniture. Clarence appeared brighter than the Blandings books portray, and his acquisition of the scarab (*Something Fresh*) looked forced, but he created a memorable

character and, by the end his being discovered on the bed with Dame Daphne Winkworth (*Galahad at Blandings*) brought the house down.

Constance's long-standing friendship with Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe made it unlikely she would have discharged an air rifle at him (*Crime Wave at Blandings*), but the appearance of Baxter would have strained the plot too far.

Empress of Blandings threaded her way through the plot (*Summer Lightning*), although given the Society's supplement on the Berkshire breed, we should have preferred the picture of the pig dominating the drawing room to be black rather than a traditional pink!

All in all, a most enjoyable evening, with thanks to Graham Elliott who organised our invasion, including a traditional pre-theatre meal at the sedate Café Rouge. Wandering into another review (see page 22), thanks also to Paul Rush for all his hard work at the Norwich production.

### And A Preview

*Good Morning, Bill* at Beckenham

Malcolm Jones, of the Theatre Museum, will be directing a production of *Good Morning, Bill*, Wodehouse's most frequently performed play, at Beckenham Theatre Centre from August 15 to 20, at 7.45pm. The theatre is a members' theatre, so that although guests are welcome, they have to be introduced by a member. That complication, added to the low capacity of the fringe-style theatre, makes it impractical for the Society to try to arrange a group visit.

Nevertheless, Malcolm would be very happy to arrange for tickets for members of the Society. He asks me to encourage our members to book for the Monday to Thursday night performances, when fewer theatre members will plan to go, but he will do his best to accommodate any requests.



# Another Salmagundi

*A little bit of this and a little bit of that*

## Reggie Pepper on Radio

In March's *Wooster Sauce* (page 19) we referred to the forthcoming transmission by the BBC of Reggie Pepper stories adapted and read by Martin Jarvis. We now understand they will be broadcast from August 8 to 12 at 3.30pm on Radio 4.

## Member Paul Tubb's New Book

Society member Paul Tubb has published a collection of Children's Poetry *Raining in the Library*. Paul, who now lives in Cork, refers to Wodehouse, Spike Milligan, Ogden Nash, Roald Dahl and Ray Davies as his influences, and believes that libraries are 'the coolest places to be'.

## The Film *Piccadilly Jim*: Latest News

The world première of the long-awaited film of *Piccadilly Jim* was held at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York in April, when audiences (who included a number of North American members of Wodehouse Societies) were offered three showings. We understand that the Julian Fellowes script followed the plot of the book fairly faithfully. The director created a very visual film with lots of colour and spectacular costume, but created a timeless Wodehousean world by not restricting himself to any one time-period as a setting. Nearly all of those members who commented liked it very much, and we look forward to its launch in the UK. (The Editor hopes to publish a somewhat fuller review in September.)

## Original *Ionicus* Artwork for Sale

The Rae-Smith Gallery has an unusual piece of Wodehouseana for sale: a watercolour illustration by *Ionicus* (J C Armitage) which was designed as a cover to the Penguin publication of *A Damsel in Distress* in the 1970s. It is larger than that used for the book and is in landscape, not portrait, format.

The Gallery are offering the artwork which they say is in excellent condition at £ 950.

## More on Green Swizzles!

*The subject of the Green Swizzle, its origin and make-up, continues to attract attention.*

Charmian Valentine of British Columbia wrote to say that according to a Trinidadian friend ('an expert on drinks'), the Green Swizzle is not of West Indian origin at all, but more likely to have come from Hawaii.

She adds that there is such an implement as a swizzle stick, a twig from a bay tree with a long stem with three or four fingers, and smaller twigs, growing at the bottom, which you roll between your palms to mix whatever needs mixing.

### Editor's Comment:

*I feel, not without regret, that it is time to call it a day on this subject. Mind you, if anyone is an authority on mint juleps ...*

## New and Recent Publications

### Everyman

The four titles in the Everyman series to be published in Autumn 2005 will be

*Do Butlers Burgle Banks?*    *The Little Nugget*  
*The Coming of Bill*            *Very Good, Jeeves*

On publication, the Everyman series will have reached 44 volumes, and will have become the longest uniform series of Wodehouse titles, beating the 41 of the Herbert Jenkins *Autograph Edition* of the 1950s and 1960s.

### Penguin

Penguin have celebrated their 70th anniversary by issuing 70 special editions to demonstrate the range of their authors over the year. Number 63 is *Jeeves and the Impending Doom*, which features the title story and *Jeeves and the Song of Songs*, and has artwork by Harriet Russell. It is priced at £1.50.

It would appear that originally the book was going to include *The Clicking of Cuthbert* as that story's bibliographic details also appear on the copyright page!

### Granada

At the end of July, Granada will be offering a boxed set of DVDs of the four Jeeves and Wooster ITV series from the early 1990s.



# The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

## Novels in Magazines (Part 1)

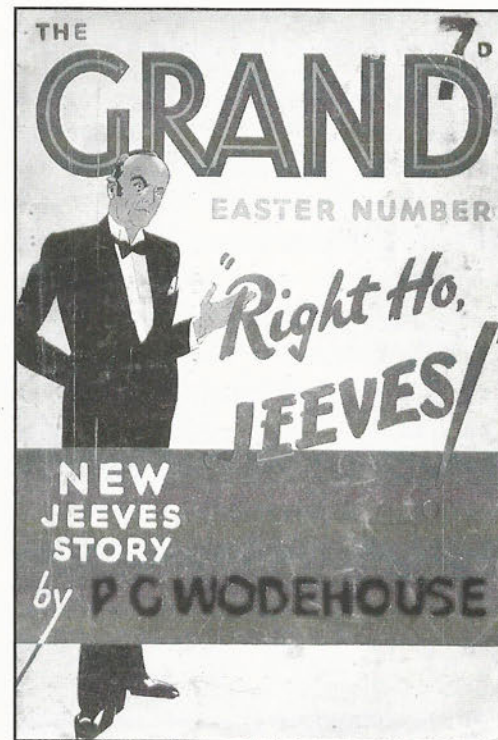
Which magazine published more Wodehouse novels than any other? Of course, any self-respecting Wodehousean knows that the answer is *The Saturday Evening Post*, famously starting with *Something New* (published as *Something Fresh* in the UK) in 1915. Wodehouse himself knew that the *Post* was his best market, writing that ‘I had twenty-one serials in the *Saturday Evening Post*, but I never felt safe till I got the cable saying each had got over with Lorimer [the editor]’. In fact, he actually only had fourteen published in the *Post*, but that is merely splitting hairs. His final serialisation for the *Post* was *Money in the Bank* in 1942.

In that 27-year period from 1915 to 1942, Wodehouse had 27 novels published. It can therefore be seen that just over half of his novels during that time appeared in the *Post*. The simple fact is that throughout his career Wodehouse was so prolific (especially when one considers the number of his short stories also appearing) that he had to look for several outlets for his stories.

So, who knows which magazine comes second to the *Post* in terms of Wodehouse novels published?

I imagine most readers would instinctively imagine that it was *The Strand*, as that was the other magazine with which Wodehouse was most closely linked. It was certainly Wodehouse’s best outlet in the UK, but it mainly published his short stories, rather than his novels. During Wodehouse’s 35-year association with it, from July 1905 to December 1940, it only published at most four of his novels. I deliberately say ‘at most’ as that four includes *A Man of Means* (April to September 1914), which was only published in book form posthumously, and excludes *Indiscretions of Archie*, which appeared in the magazine as short stories and was only worked into novel format for book publication. The other three were *The Prince and Betty* (February to April 1912), *Uneasy Money* (December 1916 to June 1917) and *Thank You, Jeeves* (August 1933 to February 1934). So of Wodehouse’s 218 appearances in *The Strand*, a mere 23 related to novels.

In the UK, Wodehouse had novels published in 17 magazines apart from *The Strand*, yet only three of them published more than two. The first of these was *The Captain*, which, if one counts *Mike* as a single novel, took seven of his early titles, from *The Gold Bat* in 1903 through to *The Eighteen-Carat Kid* (revised for publication in book form as *The Little Nugget*) in 1913.



*The Grand* published four novels in Wodehouse’s prime. Three came in a rush in the early 1920s, namely *Jill the Reckless* in 1920-21, *The Adventures of Sally* in 1922 and *Leave It to Psmith* in 1923. The fourth was *Right Ho, Jeeves* in 1934.

The weekly magazine *John Bull* published three novels: *French Leave* in 1955; *Something Fishy* in 1956; and *Jeeves in the Offing* in 1959.

Back in the US it was a similar picture: Wodehouse had novels published in 16 magazines apart from the *Post*, but only three of them published more than two. *Collier’s* published nine over 36 years, from *The Little Warrior* in 1920 to *Something Fishy* in 1956. *Liberty* published *Money for Nothing* in 1928, *Full Moon* in 1947 and *Uncle Dynamite* in 1949. *Playboy* published three in the 1960s: *How Right You Are, Jeeves* (*Jeeves in the Offing* in the UK) in February 1960; *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* in 1963; and *Biffen’s Millions* (*Frozen Assets* in the UK) in 1964.

(Bear in mind that while most pre-war serialisations included substantially the full text of the published book, most of those which appeared after the war were either severely cut for the magazine or were short versions specifically created for the journal and then expanded for book publication.)

But, to repeat my question from earlier, which magazine comes second to the *Post* in terms of novels published? You’ll have to read the second part of this article in September to find out.



## Recent Press Comment

### **Radio 3, February 13 (from Bob Miller)**

Josceline Dimpleby chose *Bill* sung by Helen Morgan as one of her selections on *Private Passions*.

### **Times, February 18**

Simon Barnes attacked those who always sneer at English sporting prowess. Example: 'Any cheerful remark about the England cricket team smacks of naivety of the most absurd kind, as if the stars were God's daisy-chain and every time a baby laughs a wee fairy is born.'

### **Radio 4, February 18**

On the programme *With Great Pleasure*, John Sargeant selected some Wodehouse.

### **Sunday Times, February 20 (from Charles Park)**

Reported that President Mwai Kibaki had taken to his bed to flee his two bickering wives, 'where his only satisfaction is the novels of P G Wodehouse'. A number of other papers carried the story (thanks to John Hayzelden and others), which was reported by the *Today* programme on February 16.

### **Independent – Review magazine, March 3 (from Murray Hedgcock)**

On World Book Day '100 leading lights of British letters' named fictional characters which gave them most reading pleasure. Philip Downer, MD of Borders, proposed Rupert Psmith, and author Marian Keyes (see below) Bertie Wooster ('a wonderful example to anyone who takes it all a bit too seriously').

### **Daily Mail, March 11**

Author Marian Keyes would like to take 'the collected works of PGW' to a desert island. 'All of his books make me feel as if I've spent time with a beloved friend – handy if I was alone.'

### **Daily Express, March 11**

In a rival paper, Bernard Cornwell nominated *Carry On Jeeves* as one of his six favourite books. 'Or anything by P G Wodehouse. Or everything by P G Wodehouse. It has become a cliché to describe Wodehouse as the best prose stylist of his time. That may be true – but who cares? He is the funniest writer of any time, and an indispensable companion to alleviate this vale of tears.'

### **Belfast Telegraph, March 19 (from Murray Hedgcock)**

Asked for ideal holiday reading, Mark McFadden, Ulster TV's correspondent, wrote 'Give me some P G Wodehouse at the end of the day, and I'm a happy camper'.

### **Evening Standard, March 21 (from Rona Topaz, Michael Taylor and others)**

Peter Osborne regretted the absence of authors such as Wodehouse and Betjeman from the *Cambridge History of 20th Century English Literature* when 'a large number of imposters and duds get respectfully written up'.

### **Sunday Times Magazine, March 27**

The *Bookwise* quiz required readers to identify Muriel Branksome as the suitor of Mr Mulliner's nephew Sachaverell.

### **Financial Times, April 7 (from Sandy Kinnear)**

The first story in the Roger Blitz notebook parodied Tony Blair (as Bertie) and Gordon Brown (as Jeeves) at the start of the general election campaign.

### **The Day, Connecticut, April 18 (from Murray Hedgcock)**

A columnist described Prince Charles and Camilla as 'the very models of some classic English eccentrics in P G Wodehouse novels ...'

### **Times, April 19**

Ben McIntyre's election article about Boris Johnson's campaign was sub-titled 'Tailing the Tory candidate Boris Johnson is like becoming trapped in a novel by P G Wodehouse', with veiled references throughout. Such as:

'Boris was on his best Bertie Wooster form yesterday, surrounded by an air of calculated vagueness, chaotic hilarity and half-disguised ambition.'

### **Book and Magazine Collector, May 2005 (from Eric Coulton and Alan Wood)**

In an interview, the author and book reviewer Patrick Skene Catling revealed that he had become a close friend of Wodehouse while they were neighbours

living on Long Island.

### **Daily Mail, May 6**

One of a number of papers to carry articles on the 70th anniversary of Penguin, mentioning Wodehouse as an author appearing frequently on their list and included in the new *Penguin 70* edition.

### **Observer, May 8 (from Murray Hedgcock)**

*The Golf Omnibus* had been voted no 28 in the readers' list of top sports books, and Robert McCrum contributed a short piece about PGW's golf stories, pointing out that they were written from an 'intimate, even profound, love and understanding of the game'. He added that the Oldest Member, narrating the stories from the 19th hole, became one of Wodehouse's most enduring characters.

### **The Hindu, May 13 (from Murray Hedgcock)**

Vijay Parthasarathy argued that some of the best sports writing had sprung from seasoned novelists, and quoted extensively from the house cricket match in *Mike and Psmith*.

### **Sunday Times Magazine, May 22**

An article about British sportsmen lost in the First World War included two paragraphs on Percy Jeeves, who so impressed Wodehouse while playing for Warwickshire.

### **Radio 4, May 23**

With immaculate timing Barbarella, a Berkshire sow in pig, has joined the cast of *The Archers*. Her owners, the Grundys, commented on the Berkshire's qualities both as a living animal and a source of meat and crackling.



# Poet's Corner

## The Ballad of Success

The hero of the tale I tell  
 (Demetrius Biddle was his name:  
 Unhappy man! I knew him well)  
 Aspired to literary fame.  
 He'd gladly undertake to sing  
 On pretty nearly anything.

Day after day the gifted boy  
 Hawked round his verses in a sack;  
 But editors, alas! were coy,  
 And sent his contributions back.  
 Nipped in the bud were all his hopes  
 By long, unsightly envelopes.

Week followed week: the months slipped by:  
 His fortunes did not seem to mend.  
 He thought it wisest to apply  
 For counsel to a prudent friend;  
 A man who'd written with success  
 Through many seasons on the Press.

"A man who'd earn his bread and cheese  
 By means of paper, ink, and pen,  
 Must write," replied his friend, "to please  
 The dullards. That is – other men.  
 This once achieved, he names his price."  
 Such was the expert's sound advice.

When next I called at his address  
 (Two weeks had sped, or maybe three)  
 I saw a sight which I confess  
 Astonished, even frightened, me:  
 With ill-concealed dismay I viewed  
 His most unusual attitude.

He hung, feet upwards from a hook,  
 Which he had forced into the wall.  
 He noticed my astounded look;  
 "Be not," he said, "alarmed at all;  
 I'm going to write on 'How it feels  
 To be suspended by the heels.'

"I strive no more for lyric fame:  
 I'm working on another plan;  
 It has become my dream, my aim,  
 To interest the common man.  
 And people tell me I succeed  
 In writing what he likes to read.

"I have adventures every day:  
 A week produces half a score:  
 Men read what I have got to say,  
 And ask delightedly for more:  
 Last week I did a racy par  
 Called, 'Run down by a motor-car.'

"Before enthusiastic crowds  
 I've looped the loop and circled the circ:  
 In airships I've essayed the clouds;  
 Hard, but remunerative work.  
 The trade has dangers, I allow,  
 But, still, my stuff is taken now."

Ah well! Demetrius has gone.  
 (Perhaps a merciful release):  
 He perished while engaged upon  
 What would have been his masterpiece,  
 An article on, 'How it feels  
 To swallow arsenic at meals.'

From *Vanity Fair*, 8 September 1904

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### *This Little Piggy Went to Market*

Murray Hedgcock spotted this item by Christopher Hirst from *The Weasel* column of *The Independent Magazine* on May 7, and in the light of the Supplement distributed with this edition of *Wooster Sauce*, it is too good to omit.

*Pig Hoo-o-o-o-ey!* In more reflective moments, I occasionally ponder on the P G Wodehouse story of this name. I am not alone in this respect. The Wodehousean devotee Stephen Fry once told me that *Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!* was one of his favourite works from the Master's oeuvre. As you will doubtless recall, the title is a phrase that, if expressed with sufficient brio, can be used to call pigs anywhere in the world. In the yarn, a porcine expert informs Lord Emsworth: "This magic combination of syllables . . . is to the pig world what the Masonic grip is to the human."

I'd always believed this to be a fictional device, an invention by the most fertile comic brain of all time. But during a visit to Southwest Spain last week, I discovered that it was the literal truth. This is how Julio, a pigman from Western Andalucia, called his herd: "Hooo-Waaaay! Hooo-Waaaay!"

Sure enough, he was soon trailed by maybe 40 or 50 Iberian porkers, who sauntered after him like chatting peers on their way to the House of Lords.



## FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

### July 9, 2005 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Join a walk round Wodehouse's London conducted by Norman Murphy. Contact him to arrange your booking and the meeting-place and time.

### July 12, 2005 – The Savage Club

Advance notice of the date of the summer meeting. Graham Seed (Nigel Pargeter from *The Archers*) will read an extract from a PGW book.

### August 3-28, 2005 – *The Coming of Gowf*

Theatre production in Edinburgh: details on page 18.

### August 11-14, 2005 – TWS Convention, Hollywood

The date of the next convention of the American Wodehouse Society, which will be held on the UCLA campus in Hollywood: details on page 21.

### August 15-20, 2005 – *Good Morning, Bill*

Theatre production in Beckenham: details on page 23.

### September 17, 2005 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Another opportunity to see Wodehouse's London.

### September 18, 2005 – Royal Berkshire Show

The winner of the Berkshire Breeders Champion of Champions, an award sponsored by the Society, will be chosen at 10am on the Newbury Showground. See the *Back the Berkshire* supplement for details.

### October 11, 2005 – The Savage Club

Advance notice of the date of the autumn meeting, which is expected to include the AGM.

*The Savage Club is within the premises of the National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London, close to Charing Cross and Embankment stations, and members meet from 6pm.*

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## EDITOR'S TAILPIECES

Gwen Millar wrote to say that in the BBC1 programme *Points of View* on April 3rd, one of the quoted correspondents was Roderick Spode. So he did give up his peerage.

The Martineau Society are holding a Bicentenary celebration conference in Liverpool in July. One of the 'shorter papers' on the agenda is *James Martineau and P G Wodehouse*. Martineau, of course, was the author of *Types of Ethical Theory*, so beloved by Florence Craye.

Iain Sproat came across this extract from a letter written by Sir Isaiah Berlin to Arthur Schlesinger (later a member of J F Kennedy's kitchen cabinet) in 1955:

My mother is calling. I must go down to dinner. I quail like some hero in P G Wodehouse before my mother's stern, all-perceiving, all-penetrating eye.

I have just acquired a programme for a performance of *Leave It To Jane* at Mt Gretna, Pennsylvania, in 1962, which includes in its credits 'Book and lyrics by Guy Bolton and P G Wodehouse'.

George Adamson died in March, aged 92. He was a skilled illustrator and in 1981 was commissioned by the Folio Society to illustrate their *Short Stories of P G Wodehouse*.

James Hogg was 'momentarily startled' to see in a copy of *The Times* for 6 December 1927 that a decree nisi had been granted against 'Wodehouse, PG' on the grounds of his adultery at the Haymarket Hotel, Jermyn Street, in November 1926 with a woman unknown. The penny dropped when he realised the petitioner was a Mrs Beaujolais Theresa Constance Wodehouse, and the respondent was Commander Philip George Wodehouse, RN.

Wodehouse often used variations of the phrase 'Every Little Bit Added to What You've Got, Makes Just a Little Bit More'. I have learned that this was the title of a 1907 song recorded on cylinder by Collins and Harlan, and on a Victor label disc by Arthur Collins.

The Folio Society is understood to be publishing an illustrated version of the Blandings novel *Summer Lightning*.

Simon May spotted an advertisement on the front page of *The Times* VE Day edition from May 8, 1945, recently reissued in facsimile form:

Naval officer requires complete works of P G Wodehouse. Any editions. What offers? Write Sub-Lieut Gordon Johnson, Buglawton Hall, Congleton, Cheshire.