

# WOOSTER SAUCE



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## Cheltenham Comes to the Savage Club

At the start of the Savage Club meeting on Valentine's Day, February 14, our Chairman, Hilary Bruce, proposed a toast to the late P G Wodehouse, as it was the 31st anniversary of his death.

The main event of the evening was a talk by broadcaster and journalist Simon Hoggart, the *Guardian's* Parliamentary sketch writer and Chairman of *The News Quiz*. Since the Commons was even then voting on whether to ban smoking in pubs and private clubs from 2007, he wondered what the members of the Drones Club would have thought. Or even, he added with furrowed brow, members of the Savage Club.

Simon explained that Wodehouse had been a strand in his family's life, creating the sort of smile you see on a cat's face after it has swallowed a whole tub of cream. Robert Dawes, who played Tuppy Glossop in the renowned Granada TV series in the early 1990s, is a family friend, and his children always used to say that "Tuppy's coming round". He is happy to postulate the theory that his daughter may have earned the admiration of admissions tutors at Cambridge by naming Wodehouse amongst her preferred reading and not merely more traditionally 'serious' writers.

We heard an anecdote about an appearance he made alongside Will Self in Islington, at which each was speaking about a Dulwich-educated author. Hoggart said that Wodehouse and Chandler each had a love of language, could play with words, and described an imaginary world. Self apparently took exception to this and claimed that Wodehouse 'was an effete writer of a vanished and decadent establishment', while Chandler wrote of the 'world as it is'. We were left in no doubt that Simon Hoggart did not agree.

He then explained the reason for his invitation to speak to us. Each year, at the Cheltenham Literary Festival, four panellists propose books for a 'Booker' prize for a dim-and-distant year. Simon has been on the panel a few times, normally being asked to promote the interests of a book such as *Doctor in the House* against the competing claims of an Evelyn Waugh or *East of Eden*. So he had been delighted last year when asked to



propose *Blandings Castle* against Dorothy Sayers's *Murder Must Advertise*; Christopher Isherwood's *Mr Norris Changes Trains*; and Ernest Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*; although he had expected one of the heavyweights, Hemingway or Isherwood, to win as usual.

The audience of some 900 had first heard Erica Wagner defend Dorothy Sayers's book. Simon put forward the view that the author had created a detective she could fall in love with, and the reader felt like a gooseberry, and added

that in any event, the solution to the mystery was rather obvious. The panel discarded poor Dorothy first.

Alexander McCall-Smith had been given the task of promoting Mr Norris but, as Simon wryly pointed out, nobody had ever read the book because of its boring title! If you overcame that hurdle, it was a funny book written with warmth and vigour, but the audience, who had a say in the voting, were having none of it.

Simon himself had batted third, comparing the style of Hemingway, with his disparate sentences joined by the conjunction 'and', and the purer English of *Blandings Castle*. He had argued that the heroine of *Farewell to Arms* was a somewhat cardboard character and it was actually rather a bad book. Abandoning his defence of Hemingway, society member James Naughtie instead read from *Blandings Castle* to the enjoyment of the audience, who overwhelmingly agreed with the panel's assessment that *Blandings Castle* was the winner.

In his *Guardian* column following the Festival Simon Hoggart noted that when he had said that 'The noise of the cat stamping in the passage outside caused him exquisite discomfort' was one of his favourite PGW nifties, someone had suggested that this had not in fact actually been written by Wodehouse.

There were suggestions that Thurber might have been the author, but Society members referred Simon to *The Man Who Gave Up Smoking* (how appropriate in view of the Parliamentary vote!) in *Mr Mulliner Speaking*. He acknowledged our assistance in the following week's column, and from there to inviting him to the Savage had been but the work of a moment.

# Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow

## A Compendium of Wodehousean Views on Facial Hair

The featured verse in *Poet's Corner* on page 23 of this issue is *The Ballad of the Beard*, a topic on which Wodehouse was to have definite opinions throughout his life. His view was succinctly summed up in a letter to Bill Townend in May 1942, describing some of his experiences of internment:

A lot of us grew beards. Not me. What I felt was that there is surely enough sadness in life without going out of one's way to increase it by sprouting a spade-shaped beard. I found it a melancholy experience to be compelled to watch the loved features of some familiar friend becoming day by day less recognisable behind the undergrowth. A few fungus-fanciers looked about as repulsive as it is possible to look, and one felt a gentle pity for the corporal whose duty it was to wake them in the morning.

O'Brien, one of the sailors, had a long Assyrian beard, falling like a cataract down his chest, and it gave me quite a start when at the beginning of the summer he suddenly shaved, revealing himself as a spruce young fellow in the early twenties. I had been looking on him all the time as about twenty years my senior, and only my natural breeding had kept me from addressing him as "Grandpop".

Some seven years earlier, he had made a similar point in an article in the *Daily Mail*, in which he lambasted cronyism amongst book critics.

Some say that the reason for the tidal wave of sweetness and amiability is the fact that reviewers today are all novelists themselves. Old Bill, they claim, who does the literary page of the *Scrutineer*, is not going to jump on Old Joe's *Sundered Souls*, when he knows that his own *Storm Over Brixton* is coming out next week and that Joe runs the book column of the *Spokesman*.

This, of course, is not so.

The root of the whole trouble is that critics today are all clean-shaven. Whether the old critics were bitter because they had beards or grew beards because they were bitter is beside the point. The fact remains that all the great literary rows you read about were between bearded men, whiskered men, critics who looked like burst horsehair sofas and novelists who had forgotten to shave for years.

He went on to suggest that if you fail to shave, you feel 'hot and scrubby' and within twelve hours your outlook becomes 'jaundiced and captious', so that a

critic would write his criticism with 'the determination that the author will know he has been in a fight'. Wodehouse added that 'all whiskered things are testy and short-tempered – pumas, wild cats, Bernard Shaw and, in the mating season, shrimps'.

His suggested solution was for critics to go back to beards ('the old Assyrian stuff, the sort Hebrew minor prophets wore, great cascading spade-shaped things such as the great Victorians grew (whether under glass or not has never been ascertained)').

The article drew a response two days later from Compton Mackenzie, who pointed out that Wodehouse had 'a natural shaving face'. He added:

He is no gooseberry. Any barber would shave him just for the pleasure of hearing a hollow-ground razor go chirping over his epidermis like a cricket. Hairs on such a face would be as odious as greenflies on a La France rose, as hairs themselves in soup. But everybody does not have a shaver's face. What did Byron say in 1820?

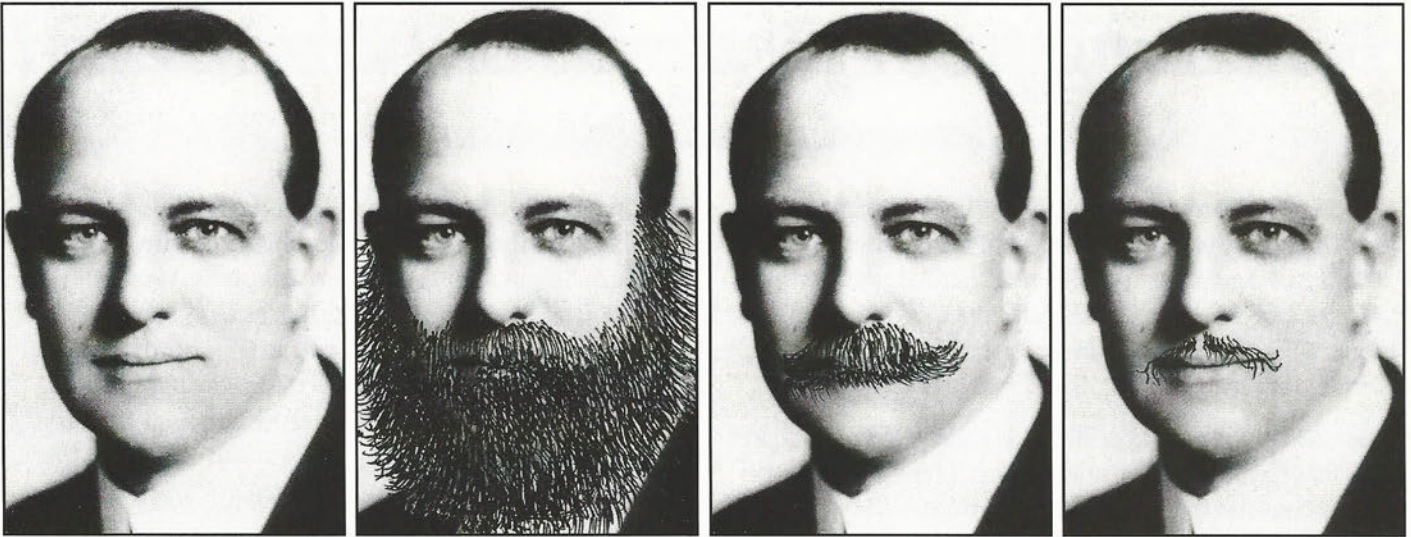
Men for their sins  
Having shaving, too  
Entailed upon their chins  
A daily plague

If Byron had grown a beard he might have founded a home for indigent Scots reviewers instead of stamping about in a furious temper all over the Continent.

Mackenzie concluded by saying that Plum didn't know anything about beards, having never had one. He, Mackenzie, had, and 'nobody could have a better companion'. He cut it off 'partly because I could not give it enough exercise'.

It is instructive, of course, to review the fate of some of Wodehouse's characters, on whom he inflicted beards or their younger siblings, moustaches. In more than seven million words of fiction, there are bound to be quite a few, but perhaps one of the most famous was Vladimir Brusiloff, in *The Clicking of Cuthbert*, 1922:

Doubtless with the best motives, Vladimir Brusiloff had permitted his face to become almost entirely concealed behind a dense zareba of hair, but his eyes were visible through the undergrowth, and it seemed to Cuthbert that there was an expression in them 'not unlike that of a cat in a strange backyard surrounded by small boys'.



*Wodehouse clean-shaven, and sporting the facial hairstyles preferred by, respectively, Vladimir Brusiloff, the Duke of Dunstable and Percy Pilbeam, as envisaged by member John Ashman*

Bertie Wooster never ventured further than to attempt to grow two moustaches, edited from his face by Jeeves (although one, at least, was approved by Florence Craye). But his bosom friend Bingo Little went one stage further during his attempt to woo Charlotte Corday Rowbotham, appearing at Speakers' Corner as 'a bearded egg in a slouch hat and tweed suit, slipping it into the Idle Rich with such strength and vigour that I paused for a moment to get an earful'. That the beard was a temporary adornment became apparent later in the story when his rival in love, Comrade Butt, exposed Bingo for his real self by the simple expedient of grabbing the false beard and pulling.

Gally Threepwood, of course, was never happier than when seeking to impose a disguise on an impostor, and when he sent Bill Lister to Blandings to woo Prudence Garland with the *nom d'amour* Messmore Breamworthy, he suggested a light, mustard-coloured exhibit as worn by Fruity Biffen to avoid the attentions of creditors. Two more beards appeared at Blandings in *Lord Emsworth Acts for the Best*; the Ninth Earl's causing Beach to tender his resignation:

"That beard is weakening his lordship's position throughout the entire countryside. Are you aware that at the recent Sunday school treat I heard cries of 'Beaver!'"

It was only after Freddie Threepwood had appeared 'with white hair and a long and flowing beard of the same venerable hue' (either 'a man of about a hundred and fifty who was rather young for his years or a man of about a hundred and ten who had been aged by trouble') and his wife Aggie said that he bore a likeness to Lord Emsworth, that his lordship sought the hotel barber shop.

The most spectacular example of all at Blandings was the bristly red affair of Angus McAllister (to which reproduction in black-and-white would not do justice); the least pleasant the almost non-existent moustache worn by Percy Pilbeam. There is something both sinister and rather disturbing about its treatment, per chapter 4 of *Summer Lightning*:

... producing a pocket mirror, [Pilbeam] began with the aid of a pen nib to curl his small and revolting moustache.

Perhaps the most memorable Wodehouse nifty about facial hair was that describing the Duke of Dunstable's emotion at a specific instant in time:

The Duke's moustache was rising and falling like seaweed on an ebb tide.

In *Buried Treasure* (from *Lord Emsworth and Others*, 1936), following the expressed opinion at the Anglers' Rest that Hitler was standing at the cross-roads and soon would have to stop shilly-shallying and do something decisive, either grow it or shave it off, we were introduced to two important moustaches, 'Love In Idleness' and 'Joyeuse'. These adorned the faces of Lord Bromborough and Sir Preston Potter respectively, and while a clean-shaven Potter merely looked like a man without a moustache, Lord Bromborough's naked face inspired Brancepeth Mulliner to invent the cartoon character Ferdinand the Frog, thus putting himself in a sufficiently strong financial position to marry Muriel, Lord Bromborough's daughter..

There were many other instances of beards and moustaches being twirled or used as a disguise, and even a poem, in *Punch*, in 1955, entitled *Song About Whiskers*, purportedly being an anthem in support of the habit. A suitable item for June's *Poet's Corner*, perhaps.

# Benefiting from the Fruits of Plum's Mind

Etienne Corlje offers an example

One of the interesting asides in Wodehouse's manual for intending writers, the book of letters to his friend Bill Townend which was published as *Performing Flea*, is the way he occasionally offered ideas for the sort of bizarre plot he did not believe he was capable of tackling himself.

Just as he was never afraid to ask for help in obtaining the germ of an idea for a new story, so he was generous with assistance from such a surplus.

In the letter to Bill Townend of January 26, 1924, he wrote:

Listen. Bill. Is this a crazy idea? I suddenly thought the other day, there are always rats aboard ship, so why shouldn't one rat, starting by being a bit bigger than the others, gradually grow and grow, feeding on his little playmates, till he became the size of an Airedale terrier? Then there begin to be mysterious happenings on board the ship. Men are found dead with their faces chewed off. And so on. Is it any good to you? It certainly isn't to me. I give it to you with my blessing.



## ON GREENSIDE ISLAND

A STORY

BY W. TOWNEND

"NOTHING ever happens in the Isle of Dogs after eleven p.m.," said Mr. Truscott as he and I walked along West Ferry Road in the dark. "Everyone's in bed and asleep."

As though to prove the folly of making rash statements about the East End of London, there came into sight, a hundred or so yards distant, a heavily built, stout man who ran toward us shouting.

We halted. Mr. Truscott took the pipe from his mouth and spat into the gutter.

"Whatever in the world's wrong with you?" he said.

As the stout man drew near I was amazed to hear that the words he shouted were:

"Save yourselves! They're on us! Save yourselves!"

He was as one bereft of all reason, crazy with terror, and not in the least responsible for what he said.

Mr. Truscott, as calm and levelheaded a chief engineer as I had ever met, clutched at my arm.

"For the love of God!" he muttered.

"Save yourselves," he yelled. "They'll kill us."

At that particular part of West Ferry Road where Mr. Truscott and I stood I could have sworn there was no one visible save only the running man; yet when a big young policeman ran out of the shadows and grabbed him by the arms and called to us, "Get to the side of the street, quick!" I was not surprised.

Nevertheless, though not surprised, I was afraid. I was terribly afraid. I was afraid without knowing why.

The dark mass in which were tiny pin points of reflected light was very near, yet even now I did not grasp the significance of what I saw.

Mr. Truscott who was, it seemed, as afraid as I was, explained.

"Rats," he said briefly. "See the devils!"

"Rats," said the big young policeman, "migrating from that old warehouse by the river. They're going to commence pulling it down to-morrow. The rats, they knew all right." His voice broke

story on the same theme, though dealing with an island in the South Pacific and not with a ship. This story was published in *Harper's Magazine* – and was, I suppose, one of the few good stories I ever wrote. The extraordinary part about the whole affair is that I had no idea Plum had given me the plot until reading over his letter of January 1924, when I suddenly realised the theme of the story had come from him.

Een zeeman vertelt....

## RATTEN

DOOR W. TOWNEND

N a elf uur 's avonds is hier niets meer te beleven," zei m'n gastheer, mr. Truscott, toen we samen nog een eindje in het oostelijk deel van Londen omliepen. „Iedereen is dan naar bed.“ Deze bewering werd onmiddellijk gelogenstraft door een man, die hard kwam aanhollen en al uit de verte iets tegen ons riep. Mr. Truscott nam zijn pijp uit den mond en vroeg, laconiek als altijd: „Wat is er aan de hand?“ „Maak dat je wegkomt," hijgde de man, „ze zijn al vlakbij!“ Hij scheen buiten zichzelf van angst en ik begreep er eerlijk gezegd niets van. Toen greep Truscott opeens mijn arm. „Kijk dáár schrik en afkeer op zijn gezicht. beste. 't Zijn natuurlijk weer die ratten.“ „Ja," zei Chuff vermoeid, „en die vent hier beweert dat hij nog nooit zooveel ratten bij mekaar gezien heeft. Gek hè?“ „Nu," zei mr. Truscott, „niet zoo gek als je denkt. Ik heb er evenmin ooit zooveel gezien. En jij ook niet, vriend, en niemand van ons.“ Chuff keek hem minachtend aan. „Baas," zei hij, „ik heb eens duizenden ratten gezien in alle kleuren, met een koning er bij... Ik moet d'r niet aan denken!“ Hij wilde wegloopen, maar de politie-agent en het oude mannetje hielden hem tegen, en de laatste zei: „Kom

Dutch member Etienne Corlje, an avid collector and bibliographer, came across the story *Ratten*, the Dutch translation of Townend's story, in *Katholieke Illustratie* no 24, dated March 11, 1937. He gave the synopsis of the story as follows:

Story about a shipwreck disaster and its crew. In it the only surviving seaman tells about an uninhabited island full of landcrabs and rats. One of the rats is clearly bigger than the others and he had seen this one earlier on his wrecked ship. Later, years after being rescued, he went back there and the only living thing on the island was a giant rat.

With the assistance of the American magazine supplier *Periodyssey* it didn't take long to find that Townend's story appeared in the February 1937 issue of *Harpers Magazine* (pages 239-246), which was more or less contemporaneous with the Dutch translation. It had the title *On Greenside Island*.

In sporting terms, a Wodehouse 'assist'.

Townend added a short commentary:

Plum's suggested giant rat story unexpectedly came to fruition ten years later when I wrote a

# Eleanor Wodehouse, My Grandmother

by Patrick Wodehouse

*Patrick Wodehouse is the son of PGW's elder brother Ernest Armine. After reading the article In Defence of Eleanor which Chris Garner wrote in the last issue, Patrick offered to provide members with a few reminiscences about the relative whom he probably knew as well as any of her descendants. It was not a difficult decision for the Editor to accept the offer with alacrity.*

Eleanor Deane was born in Bath, the seventh daughter of a family of nine girls and four boys. All the boys went to school, and two of the more strong-minded girls insisted that they be given some education. The rest were largely taught by the eldest sister who was twenty-two years older than the youngest, which meant that at least Eleanor could read and write. But she only read the *Daily Mirror* and an occasional pulp romance. She had no domestic skills, could neither cook nor sew, and seldom went near the kitchen. She did however have some artistic talent, producing some watercolours of the Hong Kong wild flowers and some excellent miniature portraits, and she married in 1877.

Because Plummy, Eleanor Wodehouse's third son, saw so little of his mother in his boyhood, it is said that the total time he was with her between the age of three and fifteen amounted to a total of six months. So I probably knew her much better than he did, as my family lived with her for several years and she lived with us throughout her latter years.

My first recollection was at Bexhill, when I was four years old. Plummie took me up the hill to Mrs Gordon's and left me there for the next four years, while my parents were in India. Every Sunday a housemaid took me to Grandma's for lunch and retrieved me again after tea. It was the typical Sunday ritual; Grandma sat at the head of the table and would correct me for every slight lapse of table manners.

The dessert course often included red jelly. On one occasion she placed a portion of jelly in the centre of a plate saying "This is an island in the sea", and taking up the cream jug, "and these are the ships". With that she made a series of small drips of cream around the jelly. To reach me the plate had to pass Grandpa, and as it came by he seized the cream and smothered the jelly saying, "This is the snow all over the mountains". Grandma said nothing, but her face is never to be forgotten.

I started attending Cheltenham College Junior School in 1929. That summer Grandpa died, and Grandma

decided to let her house and move back to Cheltenham. She took a flat in Royal Crescent and my Mother (Nella) and I lived with her for a while. At first Grandma had a living-in maid, but after a while she got rid of her and expected my Mother to look after her and run the flat.

This was bad enough, but when she took to her bed and expected all her meals to be brought to her Mother wrote to my Father in India telling him of her woes. It took one month to receive a reply, in which Grandma was advised not to treat Nella as a servant, but to get some help in the house. Grandma was furious, and the result was I went to board at the school and Mother returned to India and joined my Father.

I did not spend any more holidays with Grandma Wodehouse, but either stayed with Mrs Gordon and my old friends, or visited Grandma Harnett. This was much more fun as there were other children in the house.

When the tenants left Grandma's house in Bexhill, she gave up the flat and returned to live there with just the living-in maid for company. Both my Father and Mother came home in 1933 for a visit and finally my Father retired in 1935. When they went to visit Grandma at Bexhill they found her in good health but her memory was going. She would start to tell you something and after a couple of sentences she would forget what she was telling you.

Papa cabled Plummy and Ethel for a family conference. It was decided that my parents would take a house in Cheltenham big enough for Grandma to have her own suite and we would look after her. We furnished it for her with many of her own things, and made it warm and comfortable but she soon took to her bed. She had mellowed with the years and became quite fond of my Mother.

My Father died in 1936 but we lived on in Cheltenham until the summer of 1938 when I went up to Imperial College, and my Mother decided to move to Hampstead where her family was and we took Grandma with us. She still had no bodily ailments, but by now she had completely lost her power of speech and was very vague.

Eleanor died in 1940, spending her last few months in a nursing home in Maidenhead. I could not help feeling sorry for her, she came from another age and never came to terms with the present.

# Letters to Billy Griffith

## Wodehouse on the Theatre

In *Wooster Sauce* for December 2005, Mike Griffith described his First Wodehouse Experience, receiving at the font a Christian name derived from that of Mike Jackson, inspired by his Godfather's, PGW's, fictional cricketer. Mike's father, S C ('Billy') Griffith, corresponded with Plum for many years, and Mike has agreed that in this and the next few editions, with both his approval and that of the present owner of the letters, we can reproduce extracts from some of the letters.

In this issue, we are concentrating on comments which Wodehouse made on his return to the USA in 1947, concerning his immediate post-war hopes and aspirations for the theatre.

On July 4 he wrote:

The theatre world has changed entirely since I was here last. The old-time manager seems to have disappeared. What happens now is that you write a show and then go round hunting for people with money and an urge for trying their luck in the theatre. This is called 'giving auditions'. I am told that the fellows who wrote *Oklahoma* had to give thirty-nine auditions before they raised enough money to put the piece on. You can understand this when you realize that a big musical show has to have at least \$200,000 before the curtain can go up. An ordinary straight piece needs about \$ 80,000. That is what my manager friend, with whom I have done a new version of *Leave It To Psmith*, wants, and I am very doubtful if he will be able to raise it.

He followed this up a few months later:

A very hot proposition has suddenly emerged, a revival of a very famous old musical show called *Sally*. This was for years the biggest hit in the history of the American stage, and they cabled me in 1920 to come over to NY and do the lyrics. But the cable came just when the Dulwich team were going great guns (Bedford, Won 14-nil) and I couldn't bring myself to miss the Haileybury match, so I refused the job. My substitute cleared a cool \$ 50,000 out of it. Well, they are putting it on again, this time with lyrics by me, so I am hoping to clean up. We have got a very fine cast and the show is enormously strengthened by the fact that we can use a lot of songs from other shows which Kern and I wrote, so we shall have a score consisting entirely of song hits.



Billy Griffith

He described the problems he and Guy Bolton had with potential libel suits relating to the play *Come On, Jeeves* and its book version, *Ring for Jeeves*. He explains why Northamptonshire, Harrod's and Towcester needed to be changed to Southmoltonshire, Harridge's and Rowcester for use in the British publications:

That last book of mine, novelized from the play which Guy Bolton and I wrote and which I believe is to be produced in London in the spring, has as one of its characters a Bart who is working in Harrod's and a Chief Constable of Northants. Harrod's – who I thought would have been delighted with the advertisement – have kicked vigorously, so that we have had to call it Harridge's (*sic*), and the Chief Constable of Northants says that if we specify Northants he will put the matter in the hands of his solicitor. So I have had to invent a 'prop' name, which is always a nuisance. I can't stand Loamshire or Glebeshire, so I have suggested Southmoltonshire.

In 1957 he mentioned a most unlikely project – Wodehouse on the French stage:

A dramatization of my *Money in the Bank* is coming on soon in Paris. Another French author is dramatizing *Hot Water*. (I wouldn't have thought, by the way, that my sort of stuff would be any good for the Paris stage, but these fellows seem very confident.)

*The research staff at the Wooster Sauce offices lost no time in following up this wonderful notion, a translation of Money in the Bank in Paris.*

*Last summer Russian member Maria ('Masha') Lebedeva mentioned a planned visit to Le Touquet to Dutch member Jelle Otten, who provided her with some preliminary information about Trésor-Party. Masha started to follow this up but time prevented her from finding all the well-hidden information. Subsequent investigations, which proved to be a real 'treasure hunt' are described on the following page.*

# Trésor~Party

## Notes on a French Dramatisation of a Wodehouse Novel

One of the glorious features about the Wodehouse world is the way that international cooperation enables us to piece together histories of long-forgotten work with which Wodehouse was involved. Plum's mention of a play coming onto the French stage in 1959 is not detailed anywhere, and the Editor had been trying since a visit to Le Touquet in 1996 to find out something substantial about that production.

Masha Lebedeva reported what she had found out from sources in Le Touquet. The problem was then handed over to our exceptionally knowledgeable Parisienne Anne-Marie Chanet to see if she had any thoughts as to how the researches should continue. Anne-Marie soon established that the most likely source was the bibliothèque du SACD (ie, Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques), which you need a special appointment to visit. But, she was told, French bureaucracy must be permitted to play its part (rather like the opening scenes of *Frozen Assets*), for one cannot arrange an appointment by telephone, but only by a personal visit to 5 rue Ballu, Paris, 75009.

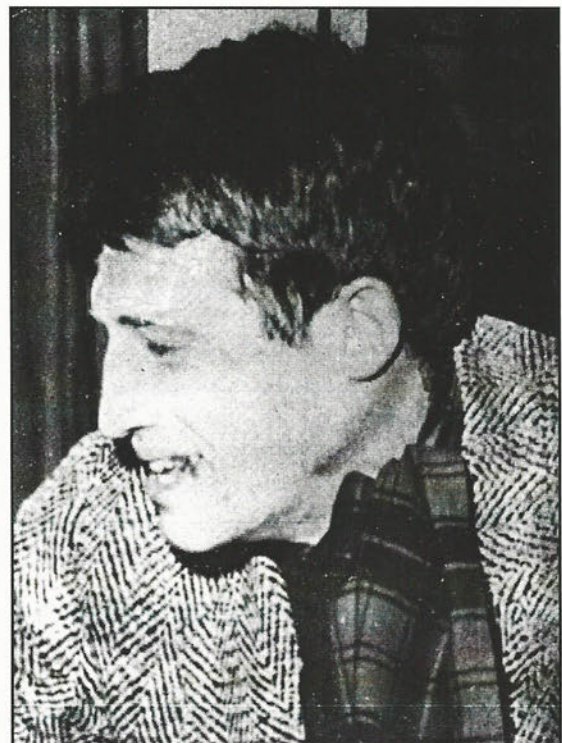
Anne-Marie very sportingly followed this up, and was pleasantly surprised at the cooperative attitude of the assistant she met. Searching the catalogue, and then the archive, she found a theatre programme for the 1959 production.

The notes below principally reflect her investigations.

*Trésor~Party* was an adaptation by Bernard Regnier of P G Wodehouse's *Money in the Bank*, in which Jeff Miller was played by Jean-Paul Belmondo and Eve Benedik [Anne Benedick] by Evelyne Ker. With the exception of Jeff and Lionel Green, all the characters in the play have either had their names altered (Clarice [Clarissa] Cork; Lili [Dolly] Molloy; and Demetrius [J Sheringham] Adair) or have been given completely new ones. It would seem that Lord Uffenham (who also took the role of Cakebread in the book) has become a mere Walter, while the original identities of the characters Bill Davenport, Eustache and Freddy are even more difficult to trace from the scant detail provided.

The play was first staged at the *Theatre La Bruyere* in Paris, opening on February 21, 1959 under the direction of Georges Vitaly. Though it had a fairly short run, it seems to have had the distinction of being the last time Jean-Paul Belmondo appeared on

stage before concentrating full-time on his movie career. He had worked in the provinces before appearing on the Paris stage in 1958. Minor film roles included Marcel Carné's *Les Tricheurs* (1958) before his first important film role in Jean-Luc Godard's ground-breaking *À Bout de Souffle* (*Breathless*). Though a versatile actor, his portrayal of a petty hood proved to be a defining role in a long and distinguished career.



Jean-Paul Belmondo, from the Programme of the Theatre La Bruyere

*Trésor~Party* was revived on March 22, 1975 at the Théâtre Edouard VII 1975 to be filmed for the 'Au théâtre ce soir' series on 'la Première' channel, where it was shown on June 13, 1975. Jeff Miller was played by Francis Perrin, and Eve by Nicole Jamet. Jacques Ardouin directed the play, assisted by Claude Brunat.

All that remains, therefore, is to find one of the actors, or directors, involved in either of the two productions who:

- a kept a copy of the playscript; and
- b could locate it; and
- c would allow it to be copied for preservation in a Wodehouse archive.

That's really not very much to ask!

# Where's the Red-Hot Staff – II?

## More of the Robert/Hilary Bruce reading of Murray Hedgcock's Paper

In the last issue, the first part of the paper prepared by Murray Hedgcock and presented by Hilary and Robert Bruce at the Hollywood convention started to answer the question: How did the various papers mentioned in Wodehouse run with so few staff?

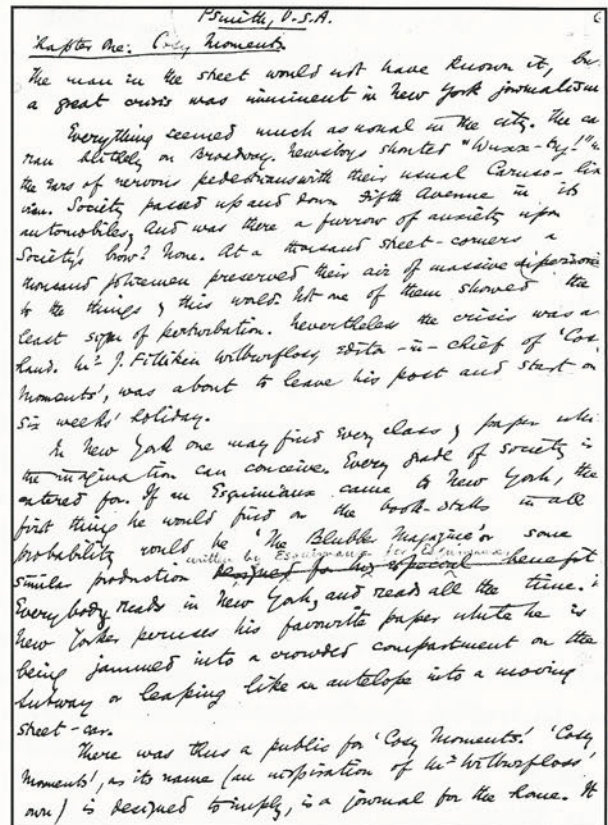
It was in *Psmith Journalist*, serialised in *The Captain* as early as 1909, that the public first met a Wodehouse weekly journal, although publication in book form was deferred until 1915. One J Fillken Wilberfloss was editor-in-chief of the New York-based journal, *Cosy Moments* (how could an editor with such a name ever lead an irreverent crew?) It was owned by an absentee proprietor, Mr Benjamin White, was founded 'as an antidote to yellow journalism', and was designed as 'a journal for the home', to be read aloud by the father of the family 'to his chicks before bed-time'.

There was a minimal staff on view, consisting of office-boy Pugsy Maloney, and sub-editor Billy Windsor. ('Subs' are desk-bound journalists who process reports, write headlines, correct errors, and prepare pages for production. The American usage, 'copy-editor', is more logical, and it is odd that this is not used in *Psmith Journalist*, as the setting is New York. Indeed, the manuscript's title was *Psmith USA*).

Billy was to take over when the editor-in-chief went on his ten weeks 'complete rest in the mountains'. He had begun on 'a local paper whose Society column consisted of such items as 'Pawnee Jim Williams was in town yesterday with a bunch of other cheapskates. We take this opportunity of once more informing Jim that he is a liar and a skunk', and whose editor works with one revolver on his desk, and another in his hip pocket. He had proceeded to a reporter's post on a daily in a Kentucky town, where there were blood feuds and other Southern devices for preventing life from becoming dull'. And so to New York where as a hard-up freelance, he was relieved in time to gain the modest security that the modest salary at *Cosy Moments* afforded him.

Billy dreamed of a post on one of the big dailies. 'The unfortunate thing was that *Cosy Moments* took up his time so completely. He had no chance of attracting the notice of big editors by his present work, and he had no leisure for doing any other.'

So at least there was one journalist in the Wodehouse oeuvre who was fully employed – but even a flat-out sub-editor, encouraged by a work-wearied editor-in-chief, seems a thin staffing. The



The first page of the manuscript of *Psmith USA*

offices included 'a small room, which would have belonged to the stenographer, if *Cosy Moments* had possessed one'.

Billy Windsor met Psmith, who was at a loose end as companion Mike Jackson was soon to continue American travel with an MCC cricket team. Psmith had a bright idea: "I happen to have a certain amount of leisure. I am at your disposal. I have had little experience of journalistic work, but I foresee that I shall be a quick learner. I will become your sub-editor, without salary."

Psmith indeed learned quickly – much faster than the preferred British method of a university media studies course, or the Australian four-year cadetship. He was inspired to make major changes, not least by sacking all its contributors, and *Cosy Moments* appeared in a new guise, every page bearing the headline *Look Out! Look Out!! Look Out!!! Look Out!!!!*, and the note *Next week! See Editorial!* – this 'snappy' effort being largely the work of Psmith, setting out the proposed changes. "I fancy I have found my metier. At last I have Scope."

(We have to assume that the magazine sold primarily on subscription – anyone glancing through a news-



## Letters from Members

### From Mr Merwyn Cunliffe of Suffolk

I read with interest your article about Judy Oppenheimer being the first to translate Wodehouse into Hebrew. This may be true of a complete novel, but *The Great Sermon Handicap* was translated into both Ancient and Modern Hebrew by J W Wesselius as part of the project inspired by James Heineman to translate the story in to a total of 58 languages, and published in six volumes from 1989 to 1994.

### From Mr Shepard Rifkin of Tel Aviv

Almost 40 years ago I was a book dealer in New York City. It was my passion to attend sales of old books, no matter where. One day, at a sale somewhere on Long Island – and at the time when PGW was living not far away on the North Shore – I came across a copy of *Mike* in flawless condition: ‘fine’, ‘crisp’ and ‘bright’ are the correct words for that copy.

It was a first edition. I paid all of fifty cents for it.

I found out where Wodehouse was living, and mailed it to him, as I remember with words to the effect that his writing had given me so much pleasure that I wanted him to have it, observing that, if he were like all the other authors, he probably did not have a copy of this early work.

His letter in return read ‘I cannot tell you how grateful I am! I have not seen *Mike* for over fifty years!’ We then began a series of letters, in one of which he complained that he was having trouble with the latest Jeeves.

Years later, when I was deeply involved in the out-of-print book business under the name of *Book Ranger*, I discovered from an English book dealer’s catalogue that such a copy was bringing \$ 500.

Too late to ask for it back!

*Editor’s note:* an immaculate copy of *Mike* today might have an asking price of as much as \$ 3,000.

**From Murray Hedgcock**, offering this dialogue from *A Touch of Frost*, February 3

DI Frost is being quizzed by his superior, Supt Mullett, about the progress of his new black colleague:

“How’s he shaping up?”

“Very well, Sir. He’s turning out to be a right little Black Berkshire.”

“Black Berkshire?”

“Yes, Sir – a superior kind of pig.”

## Where’s the Red-Hot Staff – II, continued

stand copy would hardly have felt this issue to offer value for money.)

The departed contributors were replaced by Billy Windsor’s friends: ‘certain stout fellows, reporters on other papers, delighted to weigh in with stuff for a moderate fee’.

What copy-processing was done is difficult to judge. Psmith was technically sub-editor – but ‘subbing’ is, if not an art form, then a very specific craft. With no experience recorded, it is hard to see how Psmith handled the task – not least as he spent much of his time on his tenement crusade, dodging the baddies, and in linked activities. However, in just three weeks, the paper bounded ahead, Billy’s friends doing him proud in their ‘best Yellow Journal manner’, while *CM* also adopted the cause of boxer Kid Brady, pushing his claims for a title fight. The Kid’s story, told by himself, was a major attraction. ‘He was grateful to Psmith for not editing his contributions. . . . The readers of *Cosy Moments* got Kid Brady raw.’ Again – the imagination boggles.

The driving crusade of the weekly was sparked when Psmith discovered the plight of residents of a block of appalling tenements in the ironically named

Pleasant Street. He launched a campaign to have them brought up to decent standards, incurring the ire of the heavyweight businessman who owned the buildings. New York gangs were hired in a bid to persuade *Cosy Moments* to drop its embarrassing interest in the topic, Kid Brady and a friendly gang leader backed Billy and Psmith, and the story raged on.

At the halfway point in the saga one other staff member was introduced – Wheeler, ‘the gaunt manager of the business side of the journal . . . He had been with *Cosy Moments* from the start, but he had never read a line . . . He was a distributor, and he distributed.’ And there is mention of his menial staff who physically distributed the journal.

After much mayhem, matters looked bleak for *Our Heroes*. All was resolved when the tenement owner caved in; Psmith was found to have bought the paper; Billy Windsor was re-engaged by his ‘late daily paper’ in recognition of his efforts with *CM*; – and Psmith returned to London, leaving J Fillken Wilberfloss to usher *CM* back into its old ways, and re-employ its old contributors.

*More on the subject will be revealed in June.*

# As Time Goes By – Or Not

by Chris Garner

As you drive from Worcester to Malvern, you could be forgiven for not noticing the tiny hamlet of Bastonford. You may catch a glimpse of the signpost just after passing the former site of the Worcester and District Paupers Lunatic Asylum at Powick, but when the main A449 was widened in the 1960s the hamlet of Bastonford found itself by-passed, and today lies behind the hedgerows, unseen by the passing traffic. And if you cannot see the hamlet itself from the main road, how on earth could you be expected to notice the fine white-faced clock that graces the wall of the most prominent house in the hamlet, a solidly built detached, Victorian residence appropriately named The Clock House.

The passing motorist may not notice the clock, but I suspect P G Wodehouse knew it was there. The small collection of houses that make up the hamlet of Bastonford would have been familiar to the young Wodehouse, who no doubt accompanied his Aunt Lydia Josephine when she took soup to the deserving poor of the district.

Aunt Lydia Josephine lived with her mother, Mrs Lydia Wodehouse, within a mile of Bastonford at Ham Hill House, Powick, where the Wodehouse brothers spent their school holidays. We know from his letters how much Wodehouse enjoyed his visits to Ham Hill, describing them as 'the highlight of the year.' We also know from church records how deeply involved Mrs and Miss Wodehouse were in the life of the parish. If nothing else, the clock at Bastonford stands as a memorial to the contribution they made.

Wodehouse's grandmother Lydia moved to Powick in the early 1860s, renting a property at The Terrace. In the early 1870s she took the family to Ham Hill House where she was to spend the rest of her long life. When she died in 1892 the following announcement appeared in the parish magazine:

The loss which the Parish has sustained by the death of Mrs Wodehouse is very great. A Lady so beloved and respected will be sadly missed by rich and poor alike. The chief aim of her life, even at the advanced age of over four score years, was to do good, not only by pious acts of benevolence to the poor and that loving sympathy with their wants which so marked her character, but also with the far higher motive of promoting God's glory and His kingdom on earth, even to the end

of her days amongst us. We had the enjoyment of watching the strength of her faith, the confidence of her hope in Christ and the sweet contentment of her waiting for the Master's call. It will be long before her memory will sink into oblivion; that courteous bearing, that heavenly wisdom, that humble piety and meekness ever seeking the welfare of others and working for her Divine Master, will not be forgotten by those who mourn for her, and yet thank God for having granted her so long a life amongst us.

It must have been the death of her mother that persuaded Lydia Josephine to leave Powick after living there for more than thirty years, and one result of that decision is the arrival of the clock at Bastonford.

The Powyke Parish Magazine of August 1892 records:

Every one in Powyke will regret the departure of the family from Ham Hill, the occupants of which have for so many years had the welfare of all classes at heart and have helped so very much to maintain the Church and Parochial Charities by continuous and most liberal support. At Bastonford where Miss Wodehouse has worked as a District Visitor many years and in which part of the Parish she has taken a special interest, the inhabitants were determined she should not leave without giving some proof of the respect in which she is held and the affection entertained for her. Accordingly they presented her with an elegant Jet Locket and Chain. It will be a long time ere so good a friend and kind helper as Miss Wodehouse will be met with for this portion of the parish. Almost simultaneously with their small tribute of regard paid to Miss Wodehouse, the Vicar and Churchwardens were appraised of her wish to present a Clock as a parting gift to the Parish, and more especially to the district of Bastonford, where she hopes it will be erected, subject to such conditions as they may think proper.

Lydia Josephine was obviously a woman who got things done. In the very next instalment of the parish magazine we read:

The Clock, which Miss Wodehouse has presented to the Parish with the consent of the Vicar and Churchwardens has been placed at Bastonford



# Even Asking Jeeves is Not New!

## Colin Brookes casts a new light on the name's origins

Around the end of September, the business press was agog with speculation that the internet search engine Ask Jeeves was about to drop its use of the character. Colin Brookes, retired collator of the *Tobacco* section of the Bodleian Library at Oxford (and author of the first history of the British Cigarette Industry in 1968) contacted the Society to tell us that a Jeeves character was used by the Kensitas Cigarette Co Ltd 'from around 1915 till the late 1950s'. He added:

'Jeeves' was not only used as a trademark (including the caption 'Ask Jeeves') but throughout their advertising campaigns. The most famous (introduced in the late 1920s) was their pack of 20 cigarettes with a small pack of four tacked on the side, with the caption 'And four for your friends', with a picture of Jeeves offering them.

We contacted Colin to ask if there were readily accessible examples of these products which we could illustrate in *Wooster Sauce*. He suggested that two collections worth trying would be the 'Errants' Collection of printed ephemera (though he conceded this might not be the correct spelling) and the 'Colin Brookes Collection' (last heard of at the Rembrandt Rothman Corporation head office in Stellenbosch, South Africa).

He added that the advertisements were fairly prolific, and possible sources would be *Lilliput*, *Picture Post*, *Illustrated News*, *Tit-Bits*, *News Chronicle*, *News of the World*, and even *Punch* and *Strand*. To date, we have not found any.

We have been in contact with the Sandra and Gary Baden Collection of Celebrity Endorsements at the National Museum of American History, who informed us that they had one advertisement for Kensitas in the collection (from *Illustrated London News*, May 30, 1936) in which Ralph Lynn (who appeared in Wodehouse theatre) promoted Kensitas, and a valet-type character was featured, though there was no mention of Jeeves or any character name. They also traced another advertisement for Kensitas with a valet named Jenkyn.

None of the Wodehouse archives we have seen have concentrated on Wodehousean characters being used in advertising. There would seem to be an opportunity here for a persistent, IT-skilled member to follow up some of these leads and verify Colin Brookes's recollections. The editor would be delighted to publish a summary of any findings, with examples of advertisements used, in a future issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

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## As Time Goes By – Or Not, continued

outside the house of Mr R Panniers who has agreed to take charge of it. The site is a very good one and the time of day may now easily be seen by the traveller and passer-by as he reaches half the distance between Worcester and Malvern. Upon a marble slab, beneath the Clock, is the following inscription: 'This Clock was erected by Miss Wodehouse of Ham Hill, Powick, 1892'.

There were, no doubt, mixed feelings about the clock, particularly amongst the children of the parish. The Clock House as it became known was the gathering place for local children to catch the horse-drawn bus that took them to the village school. Thanks to Miss Wodehouse, there was no longer any excuse for missing the bus.

Despite leaving Powick in 1892, Lydia Josephine did return. Following her death in London, her body was brought back to the village and today lies beside that of her mother in the churchyard, at the very heart of the community she served so conscientiously.

The one sad note is that the clock, still proudly in place, is no longer in working order. According to documents in the County Records Office, Lydia Josephine agreed to give seven and sixpence a year to the Vicar and Churchwardens of Powick for the upkeep of the clock.

By 1901 the annual maintenance fee had proved more than adequate and there was a balance of £3 in the fund. Lydia then agreed to deposit £14 in the Post Office Savings Bank in the names of the Vicar and Churchwardens so that interest on the money could be used to pay for future maintenance, freeing Lydia from any further responsibility for the clock.

'We do not know what has happened to this fund,' says Mrs Brenda Boaler, present owner of The Clock House, 'but we do know that there is an ongoing repair problem.'

If ever a clock needed a new movement, this clock is that clock.

# Wodehouse's Big Game Hunters

*More real than you might think!*

It is very often Murray Hedgcock who points out the inexorable truth that Wodehouse had already written about so many things which are reported with glee as newsworthy and original today, but occasionally other members, such as Fr Bovendeaard or Ian Michaud, are quicker on the draw.

This article reflects on two news reports concerning acts of heroism by men who could have been Wodehousean big-game hunters, resulting in the deaths of, respectively, a cougar and a leopard.

On June 23, 2005, Father Bovendeaard read a Reuters report from Kenya. A 73-year-old Kenyan grandfather and farmer, Daniel M'Mburugu, was tending his vegetables near Mount Kenya when a leopard charged from the long grass and leapt on him. Though M'Mburugu had a machete he dropped that, and thrust his hand down the leopard's mouth, eventually managing to pull out its tongue. The leopard bit his wrist, of course, and mauled him with its claws, but he held on until a neighbour finished the leopard off with his machete. He (M'Mburugu, not the leopard) was given free hospital treatment by astonished local authorities.

Ian Michaud's story concerned Dave Parker, who three years earlier had been walking along the deserted road two hundred miles north of Victoria, Vancouver Island, when he was attacked from behind by a 45 kilo adult male cougar. Despite being mauled, Parker grabbed his folding pocket knife, turned on his attacker, and slit his throat. He (Parker, not the cougar) walked a kilometre to a forest mill, from where he was taken by ambulance to Port Hardy and thence to hospital in Victoria.

Although a number of Wodehouse's disappointed fictional suitors thought of mending their broken hearts by a bit of grizzly bear-hunting in the Rockies, actual instances are few and far-between. No, the archetypal Wodehouse big game hunter adopted his or her profession deliberately. Since big game hunters are ranked alongside anglers in their ability to spin a yarn, it is hardly surprising to find some of the stories related by Mr Mulliner from his favourite perch at the Anglers' Rest.

One such was Desmond Franklyn, a lean, hawk-faced Empire-builder, who seemed to have had some difficulty in remembering the basic facts of the tales he told, evidenced by the following summary of his experiences as related to the readers of *The Story of William* in *Strand*, *Liberty* and *Meet Mr Mulliner*:

- a the day he killed four pirates with bare hands and saved Tuppy Smithers in the nick of time, an incident omitted from the *Liberty* account;
- b the time he killed three sharks with a Boy Scout pocket knife (but reduced this to two when addressing the less credulous readers of *Liberty* and *Strand*);
- c the one shot which brought down two lions, which was expounded perhaps more realistically in *Liberty* and *Strand* as three lions in three successive shots; and
- d his escape from a rhinoceros after being chased up a tree, by throwing pepper in its eye.

Nearly all the residents of Sir Alexander Bassinger's ancestral home, Bludleigh Court, Lesser Bludleigh, nr Goresby-on-the-Ouse, Bedfordshire, had a hunting pedigree. There are those who claim for this well-known Bart the signal honour of having cut off more assorted birds in their prime than any other men in the Midland counties. The galleries of his mansion vied with those of the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, in the rows of mournful, glassy-eyed heads of big game which gaze reproachfully from their walls.

Colonel Sir Francis Pashley-Drake, the brother-in-law of Sir Alexander, was even more bloodthirsty, claiming to have shot more gnus than any other big game hunter in history. However, the surviving friends and relatives (if any) of the wildebeest, not to mention the moose, elk, hartebeest, springbok, oryxes, zebus, giraffes, mountain goats and wapiti, which peered from every wall in Bludleigh Court with mild and reproachful eyes, received a reprieve by reason of the Colonel's lumbago. It perhaps brings a smile to the face to recall that Sir Francis would have reason to speculate as to whether the whole fascination of shooting, as a sport, depends entirely on whether one is at the giving or the receiving end of the gun.

Yet another of Mr Mulliner's reminiscences introduced us to Bashford Braddock, at whose approach ostriches would bury their heads, and even rhinoceroses, the most ferocious beast in existence, frequently edged behind trees and hid until he had gone. Then in *Strychnine in the Soup*, poor Cyril Mulliner found himself in simultaneous discourse with two big game hunters, Lady Bassett and Lester Mapledurham. The former pointed out that Cyril was a pipsqueak, ie a man who would not know

# Wodehouse's Use of Slang

Harshawardhan Nimkhedkhar has drawn attention to a very early article commenting on Wodehouse's skilful use of contemporary slang. It was written anonymously in *The American Legion Weekly* for October 24, 1919, and the following paragraphs are extracts from the article on its page 21.

To the doughboy who shared trench and billet with the Tommy and to the gob who chased subs with the Limey, the idea of an Americanised Englishman is preposterous. Our men found the English good brothers-in-arms, but they found them exasperatingly lacking in the ability to absorb, assimilate or even understand American expressions and mannerisms.

A magazine editor has called P G Wodehouse an Americanized Englishman. Few authors in America today are so prolific and entertaining. The short story, the novel, the musical comedy and the play, all are his fields. Last year twelve theatrical companies played shows in the writing of which he took part.

Through some strange adaptability, Mr Wodehouse has been able to write American, as distinguished from English. Usually, when an Englishman tries to write American, he produces results compatible with the worst effects of a hod carrier attempting embroidery work.

Wodehouse writes for his American audience as though he has been one of us from birth. When he writes American slang he writes it as it is slung, with the ring of sincerity. When he takes an American character into his fiction-framing mind, he makes it say just what an American would say under the circumstances.

The source of his slang vocabulary is unusual. He is a student of those fonts of slang perpetrations, *Mutt and Jeff*, *Judge Rumhauser*, *Happy Hooligan*, *Goldberg's Boobs*, and the other grotesque children of cartoonists' pens. He is a keen student of human nature: people interest him, and it is because they do that he is able to interest them with his stories.

## Wodehouse's Big-Game Hunters, continued

what to do with a charging rhinoceros, and would be at a loss if faced by a python extending its fangs towards him while he was stranded on a rude bridge with a puma at one end, two head hunters at the other, and an alligator in the stream beneath. Mapledurham's solution would be to drop from the bridge, wait until the alligator made its rush, insert a stout stick between the jaws, and hit it in the eye with a spear.

The other narrator who enjoyed telling tales of the scourges of the animal world was the Oldest Member. Eddie Denton commanded a surprising sympathy with his stories of how he brought down the bull *bongo* with his last cartridge after all the *pongos*, or native bearers, had fled into the *dongo*, or undergrowth. And when he was telling Betty Weston about how the wounded *gongo* cornered him in a narrow *tongo* when he only had a pocket-knife, with everything in it broken except the corkscrew and the thing for taking stones out of horses' hooves, the narrator declined to eavesdrop on her reaction.

Denton's tales are, perhaps, more believable than those of Capt Jack Fosdyke, and the report above concerning Dave Parker gives them added credibility. Fosdyke boasted that he once killed a lion with a sardine opener, a claim only put in doubt when he proved unwilling to pick up a Pekinese.

No account of Wodehouse's big game hunters would be complete without mentioning Captain Biggar, Rosalinda Spottsworth's wooer in *Ring for Jeeves*. Not all the notches on his elephant gun reflected his success in killing animals, a fact which somewhat perturbed Honest Patch Perkins. Wodehouse's report of the reason for the demise of Rosalinda's second husband, A B, (also a big game hunter) provided his neatest summary of the downside to the sport:

It was a confusion of ideas between him and one of the lions he was hunting in Kenya that caused A B Spottsworth to make the obituary column. He thought the lion was dead, and the lion thought it wasn't.

But the record must be set straight. Not all animals seek conflict, and I am not just referring to those generally regarded as harmless. On June 22, 2005, the day before the report of the leopard attack, *The Times* reported from Addis Ababa that three lions rescued a 12-year-old girl in southwestern Ethiopia from seven men who kidnapped her, beat her, and planned to force her into marriage. According to local police, the lions guarded the girl until she was located by her family and the police.

Really, rather like the actions of Cyril Waddesley-Davenport, the gorilla in *Monkey Business* (from *Blandings Castle*).

# My First Wodehouse Experience

by Harry Grove

Actually, I don't remember, but I remember falling about in my early teens and being advised by members of my family not to read Wodehouse in trains. I remember at boarding school an old paperback of (I think) *Summer Lightning* being passed around to general approval. So far as I can remember no other book received such an accolade. At school we had a system whereby the winner of a prize was entitled to choose any book from the local bookshop; in theory, if the book was not in stock it would be ordered. I chose *The Jeeves Omnibus* and was less than pleased to be told that it was not in print. I received a definite impression of what we now call political correctness. Perhaps it was not a book for serious schoolmasters to hand over on serious platforms during serious speechdays, but somehow I felt that was not the problem. Hank Janson I could have understood.

At my grandmother's house the bookshelves (known as the 'library') were in the toilet. Obviously this was not a very practical arrangement; you did not want persons to be stuck into old volumes of *Punch* (I was that man) whilst others waited outside in ever-increasing distress. At any rate, when I started to read Plum an aunt – Dahlia, of course, not Agatha – asked what happened to the Wodehouse volumes in the library. These were apparently hardback editions with dust-jackets that might be of some value now. The reply was a sort of mumble about German broadcasts – clearly not a subject to mention in front of the children.

Any child living in England throughout the second world war would understand, as Plum did not, the heinousness of the German broadcasts. I have always believed that the assessment of the work of an artist has nothing to do with his or her life; the life may explain the how and the why but it has no relevance to an assessment of quality. The work is

the real inner life of the artist; the life is the environmental garbage that gets dumped on us all. So, whatever dark secrets there were, I had no problem with continuing to enjoy Plum's work and continuing to revere its author.

Later, I did some research and came to realise that, astonishingly, the man who created that perfect England was not, in fact, particularly patriotic. His work came first. His only real attachment to England was Dulwich and for much of his adult life he chose to live abroad. Had he been living in England in 1940, of course, he would have avoided that encounter with foreigners that caused him such trouble in later life. Plum did nothing wrong after 1940, he simply led the life of an elderly English internee. I have long believed that if the Germans had shot Plum in 1940 he would now be one of our great British heroes alongside Nelson and Churchill. Don't mention the war.

*Editor's Note: Harry Grove's reference to Hank Janson meant nothing to me, and I suspect it may not to some other members. Here is a short summary of his career from a website:*

*Hank Janson [Stephen D. Francis] was a British writer of pulp paperbacks that were simply soft-porn tales under the guise of gangster novels. He wrote a couple of dozen of them, in a ludicrous 'American' style that was even then seen as hilariously off-key. In his hey-day – 1946-1956 – Janson enjoyed large sales in the UK despite his corn-ball writing style, entirely because of their lip-smacking descriptions of female bodies and sex scenes that went as far as a British writer dared to in those days of strict censorship. Finally, Jansen just managed to avoid criminal prosecution on pornography charges, by skipping off to live in Spain.*

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## England, Their England

*Simon Frazer spotted these lines in the 1933 book by A G MacDonell*

(Donald had just boarded a train for Aylesbury at Marylebone Station.)

"Do you wish to travel, sir?" asked the guard, gently.

Donald replied in the affirmative. The guard touched his hat and said in a most respectful manner:

"If you wish it, sir."

He reminded Donald of the immortal butler [sic] Jeeves.

# Society News

## *This Year's Cricket Fixtures*

Once again our intrepid Gold Bats have arranged to play two cricket matches in June, on Friday 16th and Sunday 25th.

The first match is at Dulwich College, against the somewhat youthful representatives of their staff-room. The twenty-overs-a-side match starts around 4pm, and features one of the Society's famous cricket teas between the innings. Application forms for tickets for the tea are included with this distribution, and it is stressed that all guests are welcome, whether members or not. Once again, last year, compliments concerning the quality of the tea flew round the pavilion, and we do urge members to come and see for yourselves.

The second match is against The Sherlock Holmes Society of London at the West Wycombe ground, near the location of the old Hellfire Club on the A40. It starts at 11am, and we look forward once again to seeing many spectators for a match played under the laws of 1895. Players and spectators bring their own picnics and other refreshments, not to mention binoculars to watch the local red kite population swoop over the ground in unhurried wonder.

Bob Miller is our captain for both matches. He would like to hear from members who wish to play in one or both matches, including confirmation from those old-stagers who have appeared before.

## *Subscriptions*

Members will be pleased to learn that once again no change in the level of subscription is planned for 2006/2007. It will remain at £ 15 per annum, as it has been since 1997.

However, further increases in the postage charges will come into effect in August, and at the same time the Royal Mail is moving from a system of charging by weight to a system of charging by a combination of weight and size. Although full details are not yet available, it is likely that this will cause an increase in the Society's costs, which may necessitate an increase next year.

We would like to remind members that those of you with standing orders in place at the time of an increase in subscription will benefit from an additional year at the old rate. If you wish to take advantage of this policy, please contact

## *Formal Dinner: October 5th*

The Committee is delighted to be able to inform members that arrangements are progressing smoothly for this year's black-tie dinner, which will be held on Thursday, October 5th, at Gray's Inn. As usual, there will be a half-hour cabaret featuring Wodehouse words and lyrics.

We have been very fortunate that once again the dinner is being sponsored, this year by the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers. As a result, the fully inclusive ticket price will be £ 75 per head. Application forms for tickets, which will initially be restricted to members only, will be distributed with June's *Wooster Sauce*, and **it is recommended that these be completed and submitted immediately**, as in previous years some members who delayed have been disappointed.

## *Wodehouse in Wartime Tour*

Member and professional tour guide Patrick Hinchy has arranged a five-day tour of central Europe which is called *P G Wodehouse in Wartime: In the Footsteps of Robert McCrum*.

The tour retraces the movements of PGW between 1940 and 1943 when he was moving around Germany, and participants will meet in Krakow for a Welcome dinner on August 20. The tour will proceed by coach and include visits to Tost, where he spent ten months in internment camp; an estate in Lobris where he spent summer 1943; the Harz Mountains, including Degenerhausen, where he stayed in 1941 and 1942; and Berlin, with a Farewell dinner on August 24 at the rebuilt Hotel Bristol Kempinski, where the Wodehouses stayed after leaving the Adlon.

The Tour is being operated by Travel Editions of London, a reputable ABTA and ATOL registered tour operator which complies fully with EU Package Tour Regulations. Patrick will be the guide. He has invited a retired professional actor to join the tour to narrate Wodehouse stories and perform after-dinner entertainments.

Because it is hoped to attract members from several countries, participants are invited to make their own air travel arrangements to Krakow and home from Berlin. The cost of the Tour excluding such flights is expected to be in the region of £ 500. The precise cost (and details of what that includes) will be available by the time you receive this *Wooster Sauce*.

# Announcement from the Wodehouse Estate

The Trustees of the Wodehouse Estate have announced that as from January 16, 2006, they have appointed Rogers, Coleridge and White of 20 Powis Mews, London W11 1JN (tel: 020 7221 3717) to act as their literary agents. Their affairs will be handled primarily by Peter Straus (e-mail: [peters@rcwlitagency.co.uk](mailto:peters@rcwlitagency.co.uk))

From the same date they appointed The Agency of 24 Pottery Lane, London W11 4LZ (tel: 020 7727 1346) to represent them as media agents, where their affairs will be handled by Norman North (e-mail: [nn-office@theagency.co.uk](mailto:nn-office@theagency.co.uk))

Both agencies said that they are honoured and excited to be involved with the work of one of the great writers of the twentieth century.

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## General Wodehouse News

### The film of *Piccadilly Jim*

There is good news and bad news about the film *Piccadilly Jim*, which was shot during 2003 and starred Sam Rockwell and Frances O'Connor, with such favourites as Tom Wilkinson, Brenda Blethyn, Geoffrey Palmer and Pam Ferris also appearing.

The bad news is to confirm that it will not be shown on the big screen at all. We will probably never know the full reasons why, but the decision has been made by the film-makers and there is nothing that anyone can do to get them to change their minds.

The good news is that the date for its release on DVD has finally been set as May 22, 2006, after a number of projected dates had been advertised. The distributors, Universal Pictures, will be arranging for Society members to be able to obtain copies on beneficial terms, and in June there will be a competition with copies of *Piccadilly Jim* as prizes. Universal's catalogue reference is 823 813 4, and the barcode 5050582381344.

The June issue of *Wooster Sauce* will include a four-page feature on various aspects of *Piccadilly Jim*, including a review of the new DVD. In addition, details of how to benefit from the special offer, and other material, will be posted on our website as soon as they are available. (It is unlikely that this will be before the beginning of May.)

### *Emsworth Museum Opening Times*

Emsworth Museum will welcome members to its premises (over the Fire Station) in North Street, Emsworth, Hampshire *between Easter and the end of October*. The Museum has a permanent PGW exhibit in recognition of his status as one of the town's best-known residents. It is open on Saturdays and Bank Holidays (and Fridays in August) from 10.30 to 16.30, and on Sundays from 14.30 to 16.30.

### New Audio-Recordings

#### *Piccadilly Jim*

Read by Martin Jarvis

This recording is on 4 CDs and has a running time of five hours, considerably longer than is usual for an abridged recording. A review in the *Observer* wrote that 'Martin Jarvis brings the book to life, switching deftly between American and English accents, domineering women and hen-pecked husbands'.

Published by CSA Word at £ 15.99, its ISBN is 1-904605-36-2

#### *Wodehouse: A Life*

Read by Bill Wallis

This is an unabridged recording of Robert McCrum's massive and well-received 2004 biography. It is spread over 16 CDs and has a playing time of 18 hours.

Published by Chivers Audiobooks (CCD 681) at £ 25.99, it is also available as 16 cassettes and its ISBN is 1 4056 7089 4.

#### *Wodehouse Playhouse: DVD*

Jeff Coates wrote to say that the complete series of *Wodehouse Playhouse* is now available on DVD for Region 2, which includes the UK. Until recently, the DVDs were only available for use on machines compatible with Region 1 (USA).

### *Sale of Important PGW Collection*

Clouds Hill Books of NY ([www.cloudshillbooks.com](http://www.cloudshillbooks.com); [cloudshill@cloudshillbooks.com](mailto:cloudshill@cloudshillbooks.com)) have been appointed to sell a substantial collection of Wodehouse material from the library of David A Jasen. It is listed in five catalogues: First Editions (including many signed by PGW); Letters; Sheet Music (though in entire shows); Photographs and Playscripts.



# The Indian Weekend Getaway

by Sushmita Sen Gupta

Our grandiloquent name for it is ‘The Convention’, but since it is actually about a dozen of us gathering for some revelry, I think I should simply call it the weekend getaway. In November, 2005, we met in a holiday resort outside Bangalore. We have held similar gatherings in 2002 and 2004, but this year, although the plan, as always, was to keep the weekend unstructured (as we find that we always have a great deal to talk about, and multiple conversations go on simultaneously), we were a little more organised and adapted three familiar party games to give them Wodehousean dimensions: ‘Plum Consequences’, ‘Plum Charades’ and ‘Plum-takshari’.

I wonder how many of you are familiar with the game called ‘Consequences’. A group of people sits in a circle, each equipped with a long-ish strip of paper and a pencil. Each writes the name of a famous man, adds the word ‘met’ below it and folds the paper over to hide what they have written. Each player then passes the paper to the player on the left. This player now writes the name of a famous woman, adds the word ‘at’ below, folds it and passes it again. The next one adds the name of a famous place. The next rounds add ‘He was wearing’, ‘She was wearing’, ‘He said’, ‘She said’ and the final consequence ‘And then . . .’.

Essentially, a story is built up by the whole group, where nobody has a clue as to what the others are writing. Once all the elements have been added, each player unrolls the strip of paper and reads out what has been compiled, with inevitably hilarious results. We decided to restrict the game to characters and places created by Wodehouse. Once the strips of paper were opened out, we got stories that read :

Sebastian Beach met Honoria Glossop at the Mottled Oyster. He was wearing a top hat. She was wearing a strange expression. He said, “Blimey, this was definitely not what I had in mind.” She said, “Oh, really!” And then they sang *Sonny Boy*.

Chimp Twist met Dolly Henderson at Eton. He was wearing pyjamas and hob-nailed boots. She was wearing next to nothing. He said, “Cor, chase my Aunt Fanny up a gum tree.” She said, “I think you’ve got your foot in your mouth. Can I help you take it out?” And then she hit him over the head with a picture frame.

Lord Emsworth met Florence Craye at Sing-Sing. He was wearing a horrible smirk. She was wearing heliotrope pyjamas with the old gold stripe. He said, “You look like a walnut.” She said, “You resemble an economy-sized gorilla.” And then they drove off in the two-seater.

You get the picture? Impossibly scrambled stories, where each reading was greeted with gales of laughter and demands to know who had written what. Made me nostalgic for school, where we had learnt the game!

Next came ‘Plum Charades’, which was the usual ‘Dumb Charades’ in a Plum avatar. Rashmi Rao, one of our Very Brainy Coves, had volunteered to put together a list of scenes from the canon. We divided ourselves up into two teams. Rashmi would take aside a volunteer from each team in turn and explain the scene. He or she would then have to act it out, without saying a word, and the other team-mates had to guess it.

We had a most impressive enactment of Ronnie Fish bouncing a tennis ball on the Empress’s back. Another memorable piece was Gussie sitting on the stage at the Market Snodsbury prize giving, elbows out, pebble-beach smile on face, trying to cross one leg over another and failing miserably. The actors did a marvellous job and almost every scene was guessed correctly. And since no one was keeping score, each team claimed victory.

Now, ‘Plum-takshari’ needs some explaining. In India, one of our favourite games is called ‘Antakshari’, literally meaning ‘the last letter’. The first player sings the first few lines of a song. Suppose the last letter of the last word in his song is ‘n’, then the next player must begin his song with ‘n’. Each player is given a few seconds to think of a song and break into it, however tuneless the recital may be. Or there may be two teams playing against each other.

In our case, we decided to replace songs with book titles and characters from the canon. Someone began with *A Damsel in Distress*, the next player added *Service with a Smile*, followed by *Eggs, Beans & Crumpets* and so on. Trouble came in the form of names like Stiffy, Biffy and Tuppy. Players were sorely tried in thinking up names beginning with ‘y’.

At the end of two days of a great deal of fun, we wondered what Plum would have made of it all, had he but known!

# More Puzzles to Try

In the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, we provided an acrostic for members to puzzle over during the Christmas and New Year break. We also asked for comments as to whether you would like further Wodehouse-related puzzles to be included. The positive responses suggested that a few more examples would be welcome, so in this issue we are offering a Wordsearch (courtesy of Charmian Valentine), and the first Wodehousean Su Doku, prepared by committee member Paul Rush. A second acrostic is likely to appear in the June issue, but please let the Editor know if you would like puzzles on a regular basis.

The Wordsearch below includes four Wodehouse titles from the seven listed. The letters in each word are in a straight line, and the last letter of each word within a title is adjacent to the first letter of the next. The titles do not connect, or cross one another.

The seven titles to choose from are: *The Heart of a Goof*; *The Clicking of Cuthbert*; *Young Men in Spats*; *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*; *A Pelican at Blandings*; *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*; and *Do Butlers Burgle Banks?*

J	E	E	V	T	S	D	E	R	F	L	G	R	U	B	I	N	U	R	G	L	P	A
P	H	H	Y	O	A	N	D	A	Y	S	T	A	P	S	N	B	E	H	T	E	T	B
T	I	E	O	M	S	P	A	T	S	O	F	T	R	A	E	H	O	M	L	B	L	L
I	G	A	U	A	G	O	O	F	A	T	T	H	E	H	E	A	R	I	G	A	M	I
N	B	R	N	P	E	M	I	T	G	N	I	R	P	S	E	T	C	N	N	O	S	P
F	O	T	G	S	F	E	R	E	C	H	F	F	M	H	O	A	U	D	T	B	R	J
A	I	N	O	M	B	E	F	R	E	D	I	A	T	F	N	O	I	T	U	D	E	E
D	G	B	T	H	E	L	G	O	O	F	K	N	A	A	Y	N	O	R	A	E	L	E
E	L	O	T	E	L	C	K	R	E	L	T	U	B	N	G	B	G	P	T	R	T	V
R	A	U	O	R	I	N	S	E	V	E	E	J	A	D	S	L	M	R	I	F	U	E
F	C	N	B	F	P	U	Y	A	C	S	K	N	A	B	E	L	I	P	F	O	B	S
S	G	N	I	D	N	A	L	B	I	L	C	S	T	R	E	B	H	T	U	C	O	D

The second puzzle is an alphabetic (rather than numeric) Wodehousean Su Doku, based on the letters in the name L E M S W O R T H. Every column, every row, and every 3x3 box must contain one, and one only, of each of the constituent letters, and a reasonable number of clues are provided.

E			R		T			S
		H	O		M	T		
M				S				O
		E				H		
			C		H			
		S				R		
T				W				M
		W	T		C	S		
S			M		E			R

# The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

## Leave It To Jane

The Bibliographic Corner this quarter casts its net somewhat wider than previously. For the first time we will be examining Wodehouse's musical output, in the form of *Leave it to Jane*.

*Leave it To Jane* was the fourth Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern musical comedy. After a brief out of town try-out starting in Atlantic City on 30 July 1917, it opened at the Longacre Theatre in New York on 28 August 1917, and ran for 167 performances. It was revived in Wodehouse's lifetime, opening at the Sheridan Square Playhouse on 25 May 1959, and running for 928 performances. It was revived thrice more in the 1980s, albeit for much shorter runs (McIlvaine, J13). According to Barry Day (*The Complete Lyrics of PG Wodehouse*, p93) 'the show was revived at the Princess Theatre in 1927', but neither he nor McIlvaine provide any further details. There have also been productions in the UK (1995) and Sydney, Australia (1925).

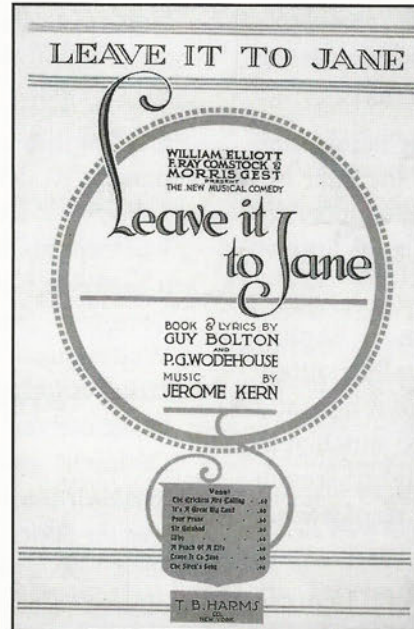
The 1917 New York production included the following lyrics, in the order shown, and most were also published as sheet music: *Good Old Atwater* (also known as *College Song*); *A Peach of a Life* (Gb106); *Wait Till Tomorrow*; *Just You Watch My Step* (Gb68); *Leave it to Jane* (Gb72); *The Siren's Song* (Gb124.1); *There It Is Again* (Gb133); *Cleopatterer* (Gb18); *The Crickets Are Calling* (Gb21); *Football Song*; *Sir Galahad* (Gb123); *The Sun Shines Brighter* (Gb128); and *I'm Going to Find a Girl* (Gb52).

During the try-out run, the following six songs had been dropped from the production, even though four of them were published as sheet music: *Why?* (Gb152); *What I'm Longing to Say* (Gb146); *It's a Great Big Land* (Gb61); *I've Played for You*; *Poor Prune* (Gb110); and *I've Had My Share*.

Collectors may obtain much of the published sheet music relatively easily and cheaply, for example on eBay, where many of the hits from the show are often listed. For obvious reasons, the four songs dropped during the try-out are much scarcer.

Following the 1959 production, a 32 page booklet containing a vocal selection of the songs was

published by T B Harms Company (Ga9). This contained eight of the songs from the show, as well as several photographs from the production.



Fortunately it is also possible to hear much of the music. The 1959 revival generated an LP (McIlvaine *Addendum* SA2; Strand SL 1002) containing the songs from the show. There are some differences from the original 1917 New York production. *A Peach of a Life* was cut from the 1959 production, and an altered lyric was used for *The Crickets Are Calling*. However, *Poor Prune* was restored to its rightful place, after *I'm Going to Find a Girl*. Once again, the LP appears regularly on eBay. There are actually two versions of the LP – the Strand issue and a later AEI issue (not listed in

the *Addendum*).

Somewhat scarcer is a 1988 CD (SD2; Stet 15017) containing the 1959 soundtrack. Fortunately, the CD also contains the soundtrack of a 1960 revival of *Oh, Kay!*, complete with four new lyrics by Wodehouse.

Scarcer still is a 1997 CD (not listed in the *Addendum*; AEI-CD 038) of the 1959 soundtrack. Importantly, it also includes three bonus tracks at the end: *Playout Music*, from the 1959 orchestra; *A Peach of a Life* (bizarrely, the CD retitles this as *The Life of a Peach!*), possibly from a 1961 Chicago performance; and a selection played by the Victor Light Opera, recorded acoustically in 1917. As the sleeve notes say, 'the VLO selection made at the time of the original production is of particular interest. Some tempi are different to the [1959] recording and this makes a fascinating contrast in performance. The whole feel of the piece is more genteel, perhaps indicative of a calmer pace of life.'

A more recent version of *Sir Galahad* can be heard on the Hal Cazalet and Sylvia McNair CD from 2001, *The Land Where the Good Songs Go* (SD18; Harbinger Records HCD1901).

Finally, performances of *Cleopatterer* and *Leave it to Jane* can both be heard and seen in the 1946 musical cinema biopic of Jerome Kern, entitled *Till the Clouds Roll By* (J83).

## More Perils of Translation

by Jay Weiss

In his classic collection of short stories, *The Inimitable Jeeves*, P. G. Wodehouse recounts in *A Letter of Introduction* a distressing episode that occurred during Bertie Wooster's exile to a New York flat after a disagreement with his formidable Aunt Agatha. Cyril Bassington-Bassington, Bertie says, had popped up . . .

one morning at seven-forty-five, that being the ghastly sort of hour they shoot you off the liner in New York. *He was given the respectful raspberry* by Jeeves, and told to try again about three hours later. . . .

As all right-thinking persons, and most English speakers, know, this means Bertie's valet politely asked the visitor to take a powder and to return at a decent hour. Once again there was too much spin on the ball in that phrase for the doughty French translator, Raymond Ory, to cope with. Here is what he came up with:

Il se présenta un beau matin à sept heures quarante-cinq qui est l'affreux genre d'heure on vous débarque du bateau à New York. *Jeeves lui donna respectueusement un jus de framboise* et lui dit de revenir à peu près trois heures plus tard . . .

or, translated back into English:

He presented himself one fine morning at seven-forty-five, that being the ghastly hour they shoot you off the liner in New York. *Jeeves respectfully offered him a glass of raspberry juice* and told him to try again about three hours later.

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## Now, Talking of Translations

Swiss Member Thomas Schlachter, who produces an annual translation into German for Editions Epoca as described in December's *Wooster Sauce*, has written to say that the German publisher Suhrkamp will be publishing his translations in paperback format. The first two (*Jetzt oder nie!*) and (*Onkel Dynamit*) will appear in June, with two more in each of 2007 and 2008.

Many Wodehouses were translated into German up to about 1937, and there was another major impetus with new translations and many paperback editions in the 1970s and early 1980s. Since then, until Thomas's initiative, there have been few titles in print in German, and Suhrkamp's decision will give a welcome boost to Wodehouse's visibility.

## Back in Print

Good Lord, Jeeves! by Julian Maclaren-Ross

The problem of parody is one which concerns any author, his (or her) fans and, in due course, his or her literary estate. Some authors are very easy to parody: strangely the Sherlock Holmes stories have been so successfully and seriously parodied by many writers that the secondary oeuvre is far longer than the original.

One of the earlier, more successful attempts to parody Wodehouse was by Julian Maclaren-Ross, a Soho stylist who wrote more essays than fiction, and was commissioned by Malcom Muggeridge to write a series of parodies in the style of authors such as Georges Simenon, William Faulkner and Wodehouse. *Good Lord, Jeeves!*, appearing in *Punch* on May 20, 1953, postulated the Drones Club being converted into a State Home for the Mentally Deficient under the control of the Ministry of Rehabilitation, whose Governmental Psychiatrist was Sir Roderick Glossop. The saving grace was that Lord Jeeves was the departmental minister, and he offered Bertie Wooster a job as secretary of the Junior Ganymede Club.

Maclaren-Ross's complete works were published in October as a single paperback volume by Black Spring Press as *Bitten by the Tarantula and Other Writings*, ISBN 0-948238-32-1.

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## The Provincial Lady in Wartime

Gwendoline Goldbloom recently discovered E M Delafield's work and found this passage, spoken to the Lady of the title by a colleague about a mutual friend:

J L wants cheering up – in fact he's utterly wretched. He's finished his novel, and it is all about a woman whose husband is a political prisoner in a Concentration Camp and she can't get news of him and she goes on the street and one of her children is an epileptic and the other one joins a gang and goes to the bad, and in the end this woman gets shot and the children are just left starving in a cellar. J L thinks it's the very best piece of work he has ever done, and his publishers say Yes it is, but they don't feel sure that anybody is going to want to read it just now, let alone buy it.

They have gone so far as to suggest that what people want is something more like P G Wodehouse and J L is greatly upset, not because he does not admire P G Wodehouse, but because he feels himself to be so entirely incapable of emulating him.

# Theatre News and Other Tit-Bits

## A Play About Bessie Marbury

Harshawardhan Nimkhedkhar drew attention to the world première of a play performed at the New Theatre, Coral Gables, Florida in December. Entitled *Ladies and Not So Gentle Women*, it was written by Alfred Allan Lewis, and told the story of Bessie Marbury and her friends Elsie de Wolfe, Anne Vanderbilt and Anne Morgan. Bessie Marbury was the most powerful woman on the New York theatre scene and the intimate musical comedy of which Wodehouse was such a master was her invention at the Princess Theatre. Wodehouse appears as a character in the play.

## The Garden of Allah

Harshawardhan also found an article in an old *American Heritage* concerning the 'Garden of Allah' hotel on Hollywood's Sunset Strip. The writer 'dropped' a lot of names of those who reputedly stayed there, and suggested that among the most loved residents was the humorist Robert Benchley. He claimed that Benchley once held forth to Wodehouse about the Hollywood Noddors while they were relaxing round the pool.

Wodehouse completed his first sojourn in Hollywood in 1931, before Benchley's arrival around the end of 1932, by which time the Hollywood-based Mulliner stories featuring Noddors were already appearing in British and American magazines. Since Wodehouse did not return to Hollywood until 1937, a time when Benchley was still present, it seems much more likely that their reported discussion, if it happened at all, was in 1937, with Benchley asking Wodehouse about the phenomenon rather than the other way round.

### I SAY!

#### Favourite Exchanges - 37

"Wear your thick woollies," [said Sweetie Carlisle].

"Oh, Sweetie! Must I?"

"Certainly you must. There's a nasty east wind."

"But they make me want to scratch."

"Well, go ahead, then. They can't jail you for scratching."

From *Cocktail Time*, 1958

## By Jeeves Productions

In the December issue of *Wooster Sauce* we mentioned the *Just Good Friends* Company production of *By Jeeves*, which is being presented at St Peter's Civic Hall, Carmarthen, from April 20 to 22, 2006. Our President, Richard Briers, has agreed to be the Company's President for this year. Members in the area who have never seen this show are recommended to give it a try. It is by no means a typical Lloyd-Webber production, as it has a tiny orchestra, and the relatively few but very clever props are deliberately amateurish in appearance. Book and lyrics are by Alan Ayckbourn, and although not based faithfully on any one Wodehouse novel, there are hints of Wodehousean plots and expressions which convey authenticity.

In February, the Sideshow Theatre Company presented the same show at the Kenneth More Theatre in Ilford. By public demand an additional matinée performance was added to the schedule. The company was formed in 1999 and one of its aims is to nurture the artistic and performing skills of its members, and so far more than 150 performers have appeared in over 40 productions. The Company is managed by Joint Artistic Directors, Phil Halpin and Lee Thompson, who directed *By Jeeves*.

## The Smile That Wins Favourite Nifties - 34

At the 2005 Convention of The Wodehouse Society in Hollywood, Dennis Chitty presented a quiz requiring identification of the characters involved in a number of Wodehouse's similes. We cannot present the quiz as such to our readers, but some of the similes, all referring to some form of animal life, will appear in *The Smile That Wins* this year.

He gave me a look, a kind of wide-eyed, reproachful look, such as a dying newt might have given him, if he had forgotten to change the water regularly.

From *The Code of the Woosters* (1939); with Gussie Fink-Nottle upbraiding Bertie for refusing to prod Stiffy Byng's legs to see if she had the small, brown, leather-covered notebook in her stocking.

## Recent Press Comment

**Various Italian publications**, October 2005 (from Sir Edward Cazalet)

*Corriere della Sera*, *Il Sore 24 Ore*, *Il Giornale*, *Il Tempo*, *Amica*, *Di Piu* and *Flair* all carried reviews of the latest reissue of Italian translations of Wodehouse. All were complementary, and their views are concisely summarised by *Il Tempo*: ‘Never out of fashion’.

**Spectator**, October 29 (from Alan Carter)

Michael Vestey’s review of schoolboy favourite authors included Anthony Buckeridge, and pointed out that both Jonathan Coe and Valentine Cunningham, Professor of English at Oxford, thought that Buckeridge was heavily influenced by Wodehouse.

**Times**, November 2

The long obituary of Mary Wimbush described her domineering Aunt Agatha in the Granada *Jeeves and Wooster* series as ‘the pick of her television work’.

**Metro**, November 3 (from Carolyn de la Plein)

A review of a TV programme *Brian Sewell’s Grand Tour* included the comment: ‘the ancient art critic twirled with decrepit dignity around Italy’s medieval plazas like some P G Wodehouse Grand Aunt’.

**Daily Telegraph**, November 26 (from Carolyn de la Plein)

Angus Watson wrote about the Berkshire Pig in a Rare Breeds article, referring to the Empress and the Society’s interest in the breed.

**The Week**, December 3 (from Alexander Dainty)

Among the six favourite books chosen by Professor Steve Jones, scientist, geneticist and author, was *Meet Mr Mulliner*. (Amongst his other choices were works by Darwin, Chekhov, Boswell and Powell.)

**Miami Herald**, December 6 (from Murray Hedgcock)

A columnist asked writers what book they would recommend as a gift for a friend who craves escape from the world during the holiday season. Tom Perrotta replied: One of the *Jeeves and Wooster* books.

**Times**, December 16 (from Anne Boardman)

Simon Barnes wrote about the impact of the English inability to take extreme government seriously on likely behaviour at the World Cup football competition being held in Germany in the summer. This included an analysis of *Dad’s Army*, *Fawlty Towers*, *Animal Farm* and *The Code of the Woosters*, and concluded that the history of the world would be very different if the Germans possessed the British sense of humour. A similar point was made by German film maker Baron Felix von Moreau in the *Daily Mail* on the same date.

**Washington Post**, December 18

Colman McCarthy wrote that golf hasn’t attracted many quality fiction writers. He suggests ‘Dan Jenkins’s golf novels are designed for 19th hole

guffaws’ but concludes that ‘that domain rightly belongs to the master of manic golf fiction, P G Wodehouse’.

**Jewish Chronicle**, December 23 (from James Hogg)

Mentioned the publication of *Right Ho, Jeeves* in Hebrew, as outlined in December’s *Wooster Sauce*.

**Toronto Globe and Mail**, December 31

Martin Levin wrote that he could not get enough *Book of the Year* lists. He conducted his own survey of books published in 1925, a ‘literary *annus mirabilis*’, and said that his own favourite was *Carry On, Jeeves*.

**Spectator**, January 14 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Charles Moore wrote:

The Government seems to be wasting almost as much time trying to ban smoking in public as it did on hunting. As with the latter, problems of enforcement do not seem to deter them. Here is a passage from *Psmith, Journalist*, [which first appeared in 1909]. The scene is a boxing match in a criminal part of New York. A ‘burly gentleman in shirtsleeves’ enters the ring, introduces the combatants, and says: ‘Gentlemen will kindly stop smokin’.’ Wodehouse adds ‘The audience did nothing of the sort. Perhaps they did not apply the description to themselves.’

**Business Standard (Mumbai)**, January 14

Another long article on the popularity of Wodehouse in India by Arati Menon Carroll, who interviewed Chandrima Bhattacharya and other local PGW fans.

**Times Weekend Magazine**, January 14 (from Alan Carter)

Included the *Carry On Jeeves* tea towel from the Penguin Classics collection in its selection of ‘Six Great Tea Towels’.

**Times Weekend Magazine**, January 14

Ruth Rendell defended her books from the criticism that they present a depressing view of the world or the people in it. ‘Who wouldn’t want to write like P G Wodehouse? To be so light and blithe would be wonderful. But unfortunately it’s not how things are or what I’m like.’ She effectively made the same point in *The Times* on February 18, in conversation with P D James. (‘If I want escape, I want it to be terribly witty, like Wodehouse’.)

**Independent**, February 1

Carried an obituary of another member of the Granada *Jeeves and Wooster* cast, John Woodnutt (Sir Watkyn Bassett).

**Times**, February 11

Yet another article on the Indian love for *Jeeves*! This time by Stephen McClarence.

**Guardian**, February 18

Simon Hoggart reported on his experiences at the Savage Club (see page 1).

# Poets' Corner

## The Ballad of the Beard

If you'll listen I will tell you,  
As concisely as I may  
Of Madeline Trevelyan  
And Alonzo Bamstead Grey,  
And how the latter's happiness  
Completely disappeared  
When, to satisfy his lady-love,  
He tried to grow a beard.

One evening, as Alonzo at  
His lady's feet reclined,  
"My Madeline," he murmured,  
"Would you tell me (be so kind)  
If you find me, as a lover,  
Lacking all defect and blot?"  
And she answered: "Well, Alonzo,  
To be candid, I do not!"

"My angel is it possible!  
You fill me with surprise!  
In what precise essential  
Would you have me otherwise?  
Oh, tell me, lest my character  
Be permanently seared."  
And she answered: "Oh, Alonzo,  
I do *wish* you'd grow a beard.

"You're nice and tall, and well set-up;  
You've *such* a lovely waist;  
You play the flute and Sousaphone  
Correctly and with taste;  
Your name is in Debrett and Burke;  
You've hazel eyes; but, oh!  
You will never be perfection  
Till your beard begins to grow.

"Remember how repeatedly,  
To prove that you were true,  
You have begged me, dear, to set  
You something difficult to do;  
Fierce bears and lions you've expressed  
Your eagerness to kill.  
Oh spare their lives, but grow a beard!"  
Alonzo said, "I will."

He embarked upon his mission  
Optimistic, brave, and gay;  
Neglected in his dressing-case  
His trusty razors lay;  
Till shortly, he observed with joy,  
The wished-for change set in.  
(He scratched his hand one morning  
When he tried to stroke his chin.)

His valet looked contemptuous,  
But Alonzo did not flinch.  
Within a week the crop had grown  
To more than half-an-inch;  
His heart was light; he knew no grief;  
He carolled, capered, hopped;

When suddenly to his dismay  
The growth abruptly stopped.

As when a merry motor-car  
Stops absolutely dead,  
And eke, to gain some private end,  
Declines to forge ahead,  
Though chauffeur toils and crowds collect  
And luckless riders rave –  
Precisely thus that nascent beard  
Elected to behave.

Alonzo's classic countenance,  
Once beautiful to view  
Resembled now a tooth-brush –  
And a tooth-brush far from new;  
His eyes assumed a haggard look,  
His brow was lined with care.  
His friends began to cut him;  
Passers-by began to stare.

His life became a burden.  
He was forced to shun the park;  
And theatres ceased to know him;  
He stayed in after dark;  
And when this lack of exercise  
His health began to wreck,  
He slunk about the Borough  
With a muffler round his neck.

At last his Madeline  
Reluctantly he called.  
She met him in the drawing-room,  
And staggered back appalled:  
"Alonzo! You're a perfect *sight*!  
Why ever aren't you shaved?"  
He didn't stop to argue, but  
He simply shouted "Saved!"

He saw she had forgotten what  
She'd ordered him to do,  
But he did not stay to tell her so.  
He took his hat and flew.  
And when the barber's razor  
Chanced to cut his stubbly chin,  
He gave the man a five-pound note,  
And said "Go in and win."

The moral of this story  
Is especially designed  
To be of use to gentlemen  
Whom love has rendered blind.  
Let not her will, persistently,  
Be thwarted by your won't  
But if she bids you grow a beard,  
Be warned in time – and don't.

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## FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

### April 15, 2006 Wodehouse Walk

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

### April 25 to May 7, 2006 *Oh, Lady! Lady!!*

The American theatre company *Musicals Tonight* will be staging the Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern musical *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* at the W45th St Theatre, New York.

### June 16, 2006 Gold Bats v Dulwich Dusters

The Society cricket team plays its annual match at Dulwich College at 4.30 pm. The famous cricket tea will be on offer to members (ticket applications with March's *Wooster Sauce*, see page 15).

### June 25, 2006 Gold Bats v Sherlock Holmes

The Gold Bats' annual cricket match at West Wycombe starts around 11 am (see page 15).

### July 11, 2006 Savage Club

Advance notice of the date of the summer meeting, at which Jonathan Cecil plans to present some of the more interesting songs and poems from the pens of others which appear in Wodehouse's fiction.

### July 15, 2006 Wodehouse Walk

Another opportunity to see Wodehouse's London.

### August 20 to 24, 2006 P G Wodehouse in Wartime Tour

Patrick Hinchy will lead a tour party to central Europe to retrace the route followed by Wodehouse during his wartime days in Germany. (See page 15 for details.)

### September 16, 2006 Wodehouse Walk

Another opportunity to see Wodehouse's London.

### October 5, 2006 Formal Dinner

Our formal dinner will be held at Gray's Inn. The application form for tickets will be distributed with the June 2006 edition of *Wooster Sauce* (see page 15).

### November 14, 2006 Savage Club

Advance notice of the date of the autumn meeting.

### October 12-14, 2007 TWS Convention

The next convention will be at the Biltmore Hotel in Providence, Rhode Island.

*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

As mentioned before in these pages, the name 'Wooster' seems to have at least partly originated in Buckinghamshire, where there remains substantial representation. A 91-year-old Mrs Wooster living in Prestwood told us recently that when she regularly attended local Women's Institute meetings, she always sat next to Mrs Jeeves, of Beamond End.

Hiro Kotani, a Japanese member, told us that his plan to meet Mike Iwanaga, translator of the two PGW books now available in Japanese, had been deferred because they were both very busy. While having drinks just before Christmas in the bar of the Foreign Correspondents Club in the centre of Tokyo, Hiro heard a voice which he recognised as that of a friend, who introduced his colleague as someone who had just published a humorous book about a pig, which was available for sale at the office. He bought a copy, saw Mike Iwanaga's name as translator, and pointed out the coincidence. Mike, in return, said that he had sent Hiro an e-mail that morning suggesting a meeting in January, thereby demonstrating once again the truism that Plum's fictional world is no stranger than life.

In the March 2005 issue we drew attention to a Wodehouse reference in Reginald Hill's then latest work, *Good Morning, Midnight*. In one of his earliest Dalziel and Pascoe mysteries, written in 1978, the following paragraph appears:

Wield meanwhile had been looking at the sheet Arany had been writing on and Pascoe was surprised to see a strange expression attempting to come to grips with his face, a kind of deferential embarrassment. Like a werewolf turning into Jeeves.

Nice to see modern writers maintaining affection for PGW's characters over a quarter of a century!

The news story in January about the fluorescent green pigs being bred for medical research in Taiwan conjures up the image of Gally Threepwood putting one (covered in a liberal coating of phosphorus) in Plug Basham's room after the Bachelors' Ball at Hammer's Easton in 1895, or in Veronica Wedge's room to encourage Tipton Plimsoll to propose to her. And now Gally would be able to obtain a pig already prepared for the purpose!