



Quicker on the Draw; Slower on the Roadkill *suggests Murray Hedgcock*

Stung by the editorial comment in March's *Wooster Sauce* that 'occasionally Fr. Bovendeaard or Ian Michaud is quicker on the draw' than your correspondent in pointing out how PGW often wrote about matters which are reported with glee as newsworthy and original today, I leaped into retaliatory action.

The fight-back begins in chapter 4 of *Heavy Weather*, where Galahad Threepwood tells the story of the thrifty chef serving Eustace Potts in the South of France in '98. Entrusted with twenty francs to buy a chicken for dinner, this poor man's Anatole found a dead hedgehog in the road. It had been there for days, but was served up *en casserole*. Teetotaller Eustace turned green and took days to recover, while brother Freddie, 'his system having been healthily pickled in alcohol, throve on the dish and finished it up cold next day'.

So those were Plum's thoughts in the year 1933.

Fast forward to September 17, 2005, and the *Body and Soul* supplement in *The Times*. Reporter Nick Wyke wrote of an intriguing character who declared: "I'm a vegetarian, but I eat roadkill". Wyke had answered his door, to find a man holding out a dead fox which he wished to put in the family refrigerator, asking if the reporter "would like to roast and eat it later".

The explanation: 'Fergus Drennan is a professional forager. He is one of the few people in the country who genuinely lives off the land.'

His creed: 'If you haven't seen or heard the animal being killed, and it's not been killed on your behalf, then it's OK. A lot of the meat that people buy from supermarkets doesn't even look like it comes from an animal.'

Reporter Wyke preferred to accompany Fergus Drennan to Wandsworth Common to collect berries, nuts and leaves from what the forager termed 'one big salad bowl'. They found no roadkill. Drennan runs a company called Wild Man which 'touts the

freshest wild weeds, mushrooms, nuts and berries at the Goods Shed co-operative market in Canterbury, and to the kitchens of some of London's leading restaurants'.

Although not, it seems, roadkill. The story clearly inspired *The Sun*, frothy stablemate of *The Times*, to delve further into such impromptu meat supply. On October 10 it led a page with the report:

"I eat roadkill." Arthur's fave grub is badger sandwich.

This told of Arthur Boyt, a 65-year-old retired civil servant living in Cornwall, who 'has spent fifty years scraping up roadkill with a shovel'. He loves, it seemed, '... nothing better than a tasty stew or sandwich made of badgers, weasels or rats. The sprightly pensioner even dines on cats and dogs.'

He had also eaten hedgehogs, squirrels, otters, foxes, sparrows and pigeons – and 'once scoffed a porcupine he brought back from Canada'. The report added that 'Arthur, a former taxidermist, has a degree in biology, and so knows which bits of a dead animal are safe to eat'.

The Sun so liked the story that it returned to Arthur at Christmas, reporting on Boxing Day that his festive menu had been centred on a stew involving 'bits of badgers, pheasants and rabbits he found squashed on the roads near his home. And for Boxing Day, he planned a dish of cold cuts of badger left-overs'.

It all makes Gally's hedgehog story sound quite tame. Even edible. But as ever – PGW was first.

If readers wonder whether a response in September to an article in March doesn't suggest lethargy rather than action by the contributor, the Editor must spring to his defence by confirming that the rapid flow of material for the June issue meant that even though this article was received on April Fool's Day (which raises other questions), there was no space for our most regular contributor's offering.

Remembrance of Fish Past – 1

by Chris Dueker, M.D.

I dedicate this essay to the late Jan Wilson Kaufman who provided me the opportunity for expression. Jan confused my interest in drowning with an interest in Browning and thought I could be trusted. Nonetheless, she often fervently hoped that she should not be blamed for my excesses.

My parents introduced me to the world of P G Wodehouse when I was a high school student. Adolescent boys have two interests, one of which is food. I drooled over the many references to urban and rural delights. The world was real to me. For many years I thought being B Wooster would be quite fine if one could eliminate the cigarettes.

In 1977 I made my first trip to England. It was rather a shock. Definitely not a pleasant culinary experience. Things had rather deteriorated from the Wooster days. Subsequently, I have made several trips to the UK and am happy to report that with normal effort one can eat very well as far afield as Scotland and Wales. The question of defining English food remains challenging. Despite the setback of 1977, I have remained an enthusiast of the culinary arts. I count P G Wodehouse as one of my influences in company with my grandmothers and my mother.

My childhood dream of becoming a circus acrobat was not attainable. I compromised by going to medical school. Not surprisingly, I became interested in nutrition which is the science of eating. Reading Wodehouse on food was no longer mere pleasure. I sought truth. My interests in eating, nutrition, and Wodehouse drew me inexorably to the issue of fish in the Wooster & Jeeves saga.

Wodehouse wrote beautifully and provocatively on the art of eating. His discussion of the pompano in *Damsel in Distress* (Ch 26) combines food's importance with its sensuality. The Wodehouse writings on nutrition focused on fish. Where did Jeeves stand on fish?

Those who pronounce Wodehouse as it is spelled often call Jeeves a butler. Readers who are better informed, but who maintain a shred of sanity, often believe that Jeeves's intellect depended on fish. Those embroiled in the dispute of Wodehousean v Wodehousian have said that Jeeves did not rely on fish.

Could fish have helped Jeeves and did it help him? Where does fish rank in the pantheon of foods? Economics is commonly called the dismal science. Dismal science also describes much of the nutrition

literature. Investigations rarely rise to the level of true science. This must be well understood before one tries to make sense of conflicting claims.

A food can be described as healthful or as healthy. Healthful foods are those which promote the health of those consuming them. Healthy foods are those that are sound (uncontaminated, fit). Wodehouse neatly illustrated these categories in the following passages:

Healthful:

'Medical research has established that the ideal diet is one in which animal and vegetable foods are balanced.' (*Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, Ch 7*)

Healthy [not]:

'... the sausages on Sunday, which were made not from contented pigs but from pigs which had expired, regretted by all, of glanders, the botts and tuberculosis.' (*Jeeves in the Offing, Ch 13*)

All too commonly, sloppy writers call foods healthy when they mean the food is healthful. If a tubercular pig were properly butchered it could be quite healthful. A bush of brussels sprouts may be quite healthy, but one wouldn't want to eat them. Carelessness in word choice leads to more serious errors in judgment such as using tea bags or using 'gourmet' as an adjective instead of as a noun.

Fish are usually quite healthful. They are a very good source of protein and, unlike some other meats, their fat content may actually be helpful.

P G Wodehouse did not invent the idea that fish consumption increased intelligence. This is a very old belief. As an example, the Celts may have originated the theory that 'you are what you eat'. They believed that fish were very intelligent and that eating them would make the consumer intelligent. In truth, fish do not seem particularly intelligent, despite spending so much time in schools.

Possibly, fish consumption may help the brain. There are a few reports that persons with the delayed onset of Alzheimer's had a history of eating more fish than those who demonstrated Alzheimer's at an earlier age. This certainly does not prove that eating fish prevents Alzheimer's. It is suggestive enough that true experiments are being conducted in which young animals are fed varying amounts of fish and their intelligence is monitored as they age.

Does eating fish increase intelligence? Some very unsubstantiated investigations suggest that fish improves infant mentality. Any fish influence on

Remembrance of Fish Past – 1, continued

Jeeves's cleverness would probably have been due to childhood eating habits. Fish effects are long term. Fish is definitely not a *Buck-u-Uppo*. At times, Bertie seemed to understand this; at others he did not (especially in *Joy in the Morning*). On a few occasions, Bertie attributed the value of fish to its phosphorus content. Fish is a good, not a great, source of phosphorus. The shrimps Jeeves sought on his holidays contain more phosphorus per ounce than do fish. Phosphorus deficiency is very rarely a problem in normal diets. Increasing phosphorus consumption has not been demonstrated to help the brain.

The omega-3 fatty acids of fish do affect cardiovascular health. Fish eaters in several population groups have a lower death rate from cardiovascular disease than those who shun fish. Interestingly, the fish oils do not inhibit coronary atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). They act by preventing fatal rhythm disturbances (dysrhythmias) and by reducing coronary blood clots. A very recent report indicated that isolated fish oils might increase dysrhythmias in persons who have implanted cardiac defibrillators. The effect of actual fish consumption was not studied. Possibly the oils used in fish oil pills act differently than the oils ingested when fish meat is eaten. Many plants contain omega-3 fatty acids. But these are not the same oils that are found in fish. Vegetable omega-3 oils have not been demonstrated to have the same cardiovascular effects as those from fish.

Is fish always healthful? Even healthy fish may be unhealthful. Natural contaminants may make fish which harbour them unsafe to eat. As an example, the risk of ciguatera (caused by dinoflagellates) makes the consumption of large fish unwise in many warm water regions.

Fish may become unhealthful from chemical contamination. Currently, there is widespread interest in the risk of mercury poisoning from eating fish. This topic vividly demonstrates the dismal science aspect of nutrition. Pregnant women and nursing mothers are advised that ingested mercury can pass from them to the unborn or suckling child. However, the effect of this mercury remains unknown. Infant intelligence testing failed to show correlation between measured mercury and intelligence. In this investigation, another fish contaminant (polychlorinated biphenyls or PCBs) showed a direct correlation with infant intelligence. Caution, not panic, remains advisable. Unfortunately, the same fish (with dark flesh, such as tuna) that help the heart, and which may help the brain, are those prone to mercury contamination.

Finally, there are the poisonous fish who are perfectly healthy but of restricted healthfulness. The leading example is the puffer fish whose flesh is a Japanese delicacy (as 'fugu'). Eat this tasty fish only when it is prepared by a thoughtful professional.

We can conclude that fish would have been good for Jeeves, though not in the ways Bertie imagined. But, was fish important to Jeeves? You will have to wait until the next issue to find out.

Editor's Comment

This article is the first of two extracts from a talk presented by Chris at the TWS Convention in Hollywood in August 2005. The lessons of the talk were evidently studied by the British Government, resulting perhaps in the recent experiments involving the provision of fish oil capsules to young schoolchildren to improve brain-power.

P G Wodehouse and W S Gilbert – 1

by Jeff Coates

‘I shall always remember the glare of pure hatred which I saw in it’ (*Over Seventy*, ch 4). The ‘it’ was the eye of William Schwenck Gilbert (1836-1911) and the ‘glare of pure hatred’ was Gilbert’s reaction to a premature burst of laughter from a young P G Wodehouse, spoiling the punchline to what had been a rather long, slow story that was building towards a climax that would have Gilbert’s dinner guests rolling in the aisles.

Unfortunately, PGW’s mistimed chuckle, ‘something like the explosion of one of those gas mains that slay six’ ruined Gilbert’s story and probably spoiled the only meeting of these two great exponents of the English Language. To have the greatest humorists of the 19th and 20th centuries in the same room at the same time could and should have been an occasion of such significance . . . alas.

Wodehouse was one of a number of dinner guests at Grim’s Dyke, Gilbert’s palatial home in Harrow Weald near London. Although retired for many years by this time, Gilbert was regarded as the elder statesman of English musical theatre and his work was still enormously popular. The comic operas for which he was most famous enjoyed a popularity that transcended the classes, being as popular with the working man as with the Royal Family. Queen Victoria was a Gilbert and Sullivan fan and enjoyed private performances of their shows at Windsor Castle.

Links between PGW and Gilbert are many and very clear. That PGW was a devotee of Gilbert is equally clear and there are references and quotes too numerous to mention here in PGW’s books. The school stories from 1902 to 1907 are particularly well served with Gilbertian reference. There is little doubt in my mind that Gilbert’s work influenced that of PGW. The only question is whether that influence was conscious or unconscious.

There are also surprising parallels in many aspects of their lives. Gilbert was the son of a Royal Navy surgeon; PGW the son of a Civil Servant. Both enjoyed a classical education in Latin and Greek: Gilbert at King’s College, London; PGW at Dulwich College. Both had unfulfilled careers before finding their true vocations. Gilbert started as a Civil Servant, then practised at the Bar, dabbled with journalism before becoming a writer and eventually enjoyed success in comic opera. PGW worked in a bank before moving into journalism and then musical theatre, before settling as a writer of books

and short stories. Both men were married but didn’t father any children. Both men adopted a daughter. Both lived long lives before succumbing to heart failure: Gilbert whilst rescuing a lady who had got into difficulties whilst swimming in the lake at Grim’s Dyke; PGW more peacefully in hospital.

The parallels do not end there. Both were pioneers in musical comedy. PGW enjoyed huge success as a songwriter working in collaboration with Guy Bolton and Jerome Kern. At the height of their powers, Bolton, Wodehouse and Kern had five shows running simultaneously on Broadway. This feat remains a record to this day and although the shows are now largely forgotten and rarely performed, the legacy they leave is significant. Prior to Bolton, Wodehouse and Kern, live shows had been largely of the burlesque type. Bolton, Wodehouse and Kern virtually invented the genre we now know as situation comedy and they were inspirational to many of the greats who followed.

Comic opera was not a new concept before Gilbert came along but nobody had previously enjoyed the kind of success that Gilbert enjoyed, both in this country and abroad. Of course not all of the credit goes to Gilbert. He was helped in no small measure by his long suffering partner, Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1901) and the impresario Richard D’Oyly Carte (1844-1901).

The genius and creativity of Gilbert and Sullivan was matched by the business acumen of D’Oyly Carte and the three of them worked supremely well, but only on a professional level. Personality clashes between Gilbert and the other two partners caused tensions, difficulties and very famous fallouts. In spite of this they worked together producing work of outstanding quality from 1871 to 1896, forming their own company, the ‘D’Oyly Carte’ and playing at a theatre built exclusively for G&S – The Savoy.

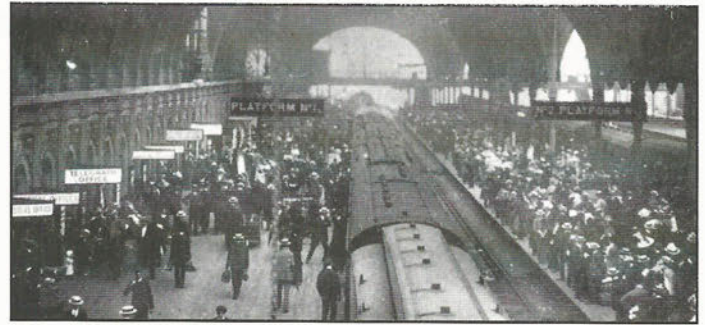
The mention of the name D’Oyly Carte provides another link between the two men. PGW always made it clear that he based his character Psmith on Rupert D’Oyly Carte, who was the son of the Gilbert and Sullivan man. Then there is the name Grossmith. In Gilbert and Sullivan terms, George Grossmith was their first big comedy star. He took all of the leading comic roles in the operas, and Gilbert wrote parts specifically to suit Grossmith’s personality and singing voice. George Grossmith had two sons – George and Lawrence. PGW first worked with Lawrence Grossmith when the latter

Lord Emsworth and Ariosto

Alexander Dainty has drawn attention to the photograph alongside, which depicts a scene at Paddington Station before the Great War, featuring the Telegraph Office from which Lord Emsworth sent his somewhat confusing telegram, see *Full Moon*, chapter 7.

ARRIVING TEATIME WITH LANDLADY

When Lord Emsworth composed telegrams in railway stations two minutes before his train was due to leave, his handwriting, never at the best of times copperplate, always degenerated into something which would have interested a Professor of Heiroglyphics. The operator at Paddington, after a puzzled scrutiny, had substituted on his own responsibility 'Arriving' for 'Ariosto' and 'teatime' for what appeared to him to be 'totem' but the concluding word had beaten him completely. It had seemed to him a choice between 'lingfear', 'leprosy' and 'landlady'. He



had discarded the first because there is no such word as 'lingfear' [or even 'lignfear', as the US edition of the book preferred]; the second because, though not a medical expert, he was pretty sure Lord Emsworth had not got leprosy; and had fallen back on the third. He hoped it would convey some meaning at the other end.

Lady Hermione Wedge was the confused recipient, who contemplated the possibility that Lord E had meant 'laryngitis', but she reached no conclusion.

Wodehouse and Gilbert – 1, continued

produced and acted in *Brother Alfred*, a play written by PGW and Herbert Westbrook, based on Wodehouse's short story *Rallying Around Old George*. *Brother Alfred* played 14 performances at The Savoy Theatre in London in April 1913.

The next collaboration with Lawrence Grossmith was in 1927 in *Good Morning, Bill*, a play adapted by PGW from Ladislaus Fodor's Hungarian original. Grossmith played the part of Lord Tidmouth, and played the same part when the play was revived in 1934. Lawrence Grossmith's final link to PGW was also in 1934 when he produced and starred in *Who's Who*, a play by PGW and Guy Bolton.

Wodehouse also worked with Lawrence's brother George Jnr who, along with Edward Laurillard, co-produced *Oh Joy!* in 1919 at the Kingsway Theatre in London, followed by *Kissing Time* in the same year at the Winter Garden Theatre, London. *Oh Joy!* ran for 167 performances, *Kissing Time* for a whopping 430. George Jnr also played the part of Max Touquet in *Oh Joy!*. He went on to produce and star in *Sally* in London in 1921. PGW and Guy Bolton wrote the book for *Kissing Time*, Bolton alone receiving the credit for *Sally*, but Plum wrote most of the lyrics for *Kissing Time* and a few for *Sally*.

PGW and George Jnr worked even more closely on *The Cabaret Girl* in 1922. They jointly wrote the book and lyrics, and Grossmith played the part of Mr Gripps. The show enjoyed a very long run of

462 performances at the Winter Garden, where it was followed in 1923 by *The Beauty Prize*, where once again PGW and George Jnr collaborated on the book and lyrics, with Grossmith playing the part of Flutey Warboy. Once again at the Winter Garden, *The Beauty Prize* ran for an impressive 214 performances.

The final link of this type is slightly more obscure, but worth a mention nonetheless.

It was traditional for first night audiences of a new Gilbert & Sullivan operetta to experience the thrill of seeing Sir Arthur Sullivan conduct the orchestra himself. Although he suffered ill health throughout his career, he always insisted on taking the baton himself for the opening performance. Occasionally he might even play a second night, but after that, the conducting would be left to his assistant. This was normally Francois Cellier. Francois Cellier had a son Frank Cellier and he was the producer of *Leave It To Psmith*, a play by PGW and Ian Hay based on PGW's novel of the same name. *Leave It To Psmith* opened at the Shaftesbury Theatre on 27th September 1930 and ran for 156 performances.

So there we have several links and parallels in the private and working lives of PGW and W S Gilbert. In the next issue of *Wooster Sauce*, I will explain why I come to the conclusion that PGW was influenced by Gilbert.

Wodehouse and Chekhov

by Masha Lebedeva

In June's Wooster Sauce, we started a series of articles by Russian member Masha Lebedeva on Russian influences on Wodehouse. They are based on her extensive researches amongst 90 of Wodehouse's books, in which she identified more than 150 relevant references. Many of these appeared in *By The Way for June* (including several alluded to in this article), and the issues of *By The Way for June 2007* and *2008* will reproduce others. Meanwhile, if members would like a comprehensive list of the references Masha found, they should apply to the Editor. In this second article, she concentrates on Wodehouse's understanding of the works of Chekhov.

Those Russians who could preserve their literary patriotism under the yoke of the school program, and those funny foreigners who see the novels of Dostoevsky as the principal reason for the study of the Russian language, would scarcely like Wodehouse's attitude towards Russian literature. The average, more light-hearted reader, however, will definitely approve.

The 1922 story *The Clicking Of Cuthbert* might be regarded as the real text-book on Russian literature, but I'll comment on this further in the next article. First, I'll consider three bearded Russian classics – Chekhov, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky – who symbolise, I presume, the grandeur of Russian literature in the opinion of the West, and I begin with Chekhov, as both the most intently studied and the most frequently quoted by Wodehouse.

I will justify including Chekhov's plays in a section on 'Literature' instead of attributing them to a separate part 'Russian Theatre' by pointing out that it was Chekhov's texts, rather than the work of the directors or the performances of the actors that so depressed Wodehouse's characters. From novel to novel Bertie Wooster recalled the agonizing experience when he was made by his Aunt Agatha to attend Russian plays at the Old Vic in order to improve the mind of her son Thos (for example, *Jeeves in the Offing*, ch4).

Admirers of the great Russian writer and dramatist would say that Bertie suffered torments rather because of Thos's company, than because of Chekhov's writing, but that is not quite right. Bertie had to see Chekhov not only with Thos, but also with Florence Craye at the time of their engagement – when on every Sunday night she took him to see

Russian plays, amongst which we can recognize the themes of Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* (see *The Mating Season*, ch22).

Another character who was not in raptures at the idea of attending a performance of Chekhov's plays – *Seagull*, at least – was Roberta Wickham (*Jeeves in the Offing*, ch4) although not everybody will consider young Bobbie as a competent authority. Especially – as we can deduce from the book – as she herself, unlike Phyllis Mills, never actually saw the play. But we should recollect here the genuine horror of the sweet Lord Uffenham – absolutely not a red-haired girl – when he recalled how an aunt of his once made him take her to something similar (*Something Fishy*, ch23).

Wodehouse will frequently describe briefly the plots of Chekhov's plays, and may even name some of the characters, though they are not always spelt correctly. We can thus suppose that Plum was very familiar with the dramatic works of Chekhov, or – to be correct – with those examples which made Wodehouse recall the Chekhov spirit when he put his characters in an atmosphere of distress and misfortune (see, eg, *Big Money*, ch7, or *The Mating Season*, ch2).

Curiously, the first Chekhov appearance in the pages of Wodehouse was absolutely unconvincing. The authorship of the play named *Six Corpses in Search of an Undertaker* (*Best Seller*, from *Mulliner Nights*) was imputed to him. We may suppose that in the 1930s Wodehouse knew Chekhov's works only by hearsay, and that may be why, while writing *Best Seller*, he produced a title which was a sort of cross between the Pirandello play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and the spirit of Chekhov. Only by the 1960s and 70s did this spirit, widely quoted by Wodehouse in the first half of the century, take the form of real plays with titles and personages.

Moreover, we can see that by then Russian plays had completely forced out mentions of Russian novels from Wodehouse's works, which had been dominant in the 1920s and 30s. Even the story of a relation who hanged himself in the barn, which evidently made a deep impression, being referred to several times as emanating from a Russian novel (see, eg, *Money For Nothing*, ch7, 1928), was apparently also found in a Russian drama by 1949 (*The Mating Season*, ch2).

Wodehouse's biographers – as well as experts in Russian literature – probably understand the causes

The Piccadilly Jim Competition

Winners and Answers

The competition to win a DVD of the new Universal Pictures film of Wodehouse's *Piccadilly Jim* attracted far more entries than we usually receive for our competitions, and they were, without exception, correct.

Fortunately for the Committee's peace of mind, we did not have to exercise any judgement in considering a tie-breaker to determine the names of the three winners. It so happened that on the day after the competition closed, a dinner was held at the Lansdowne Club to celebrate the 80th birthday of Marilyn MacGregor, who served a long sentence as Membership Secretary of the American Wodehouse Society, is a long-standing member of ours, and has been a contributor to these pages. She agreed with alacrity to pull the winners' names out of a hat, and their DVDs have long since been sent to:

Mr M Cunliffe

Mrs J P Inglis

Mr M Kershaw

Congratulations to the winners, and many thanks to all those who entered, and to Emilia Stojanoska of Universal, who provided the prizes.

Editor's Note

May I take this opportunity of reminding members who purchase the Piccadilly Jim DVD that they are entitled to obtain a limited edition poster which was commissioned by Universal Pictures especially for the Society.

If you send your receipt for the purchase to me at the address at the foot of page 28, to be received by November 15, I will send you a copy of the poster whilst stocks remain.

I should repeat the warning, for the benefit of overseas members, that the DVD is compatible only with Region 2 and Region 4 players.

The answers to the questions are:

'Do you recall telling me once about someone who told somebody he could tell him something which would make him think a bit? Knitted socks and porcupines entered into it, I remember.' (From *Jeeves in the Offing*)

Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 5 by William Shakespeare (The Ghost of his father speaking)

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine.

'The snail's on the wing and the lark's on the thorn, or rather the other way round, as I've sometimes heard you say.' (From *Much Obligated, Jeeves*)

Pippa Passes by Robert Browning

The lark's on the wing
The snail's on the thorn
God's in his heaven
And all's right with the world.

'Miss Halliday is a very old and valued friend of mine. We two have, so to speak, pulled the gowans fine.' (From *Leave It To Psmith*)

Auld Lang Syne by Robert Burns

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pu'd the gowans fine

'Hullo, fathead, what news on the Rialto?' (From *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*)

The Merchant of Venice, Act 1, Scene 3 by William Shakespeare (Shylock speaking)

I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you,
walk with you and so following; but I will not eat
with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.
What news on the Rialto?

P G Wodehouse and Chekhov, continued

of this substitution of the Russian novels by plays, but we may suppose that by the 1960s, at the rate at which the inhabitants of Russia were murdering one another, the supply of Russian novelists must have eventually given out.

As for us, we must regret the sad tendency of Russian culture to export its most dark and indigestible

species. Tolstoy might write joyful comedies and Chekhov humorous stories and sweet vaudevilles; even Dostoevsky contributed pretty melodrama.

All for nothing! To the annals of world literature the Russian classic authors are perceived as writers whose collective main character was Grandpapa, who had hanged himself in that barn.

Letters to Billy Griffith

Wodehouse's comments on his tax problems

In this third extract from letters to former England wicket-keeper and Old Alleynian Billy Griffith, published with the agreement of his son, member Mike Griffith, we turn to tax matters, a subject which was frequently in the forefront of Plum's (and old Tom Travers's) mind.

In March 1937 he lamented the problems which had made him leave his London home:

My wife and I have been discussing future plans and have come to the conclusion that what we want to do is to live in London again, keeping on the Le Touquet house for weekends and the summer. It would be an ideal life, as far as I am concerned, as I could see you all again and get down to all the matches. We have a lovely house in London, at the top of Park lane, and I was always very happy there.

My trouble was, of course, that when the income tax people started trying to tax me on everything I made in America, I had to go abroad. But now all that has been adjusted, and as the people who have taken the house leave in January, I think we shall go back.

That the problem had not gone away was demonstrated by further letters, explaining why he couldn't return to the UK for football dinners (February 1938 and January 1939).

Thanks most awfully about the football dinner. I would have loved to come, but I'm afraid I can't, as the Boss has just returned and wants me to go to the South of France for March. Also, my lawyer tells me I must be wary about coming to England before April the fifth, as there is the danger that the Inland Revenue people might claim me as resident. Apparently I have to be careful regarding my visits to England. I shall be over in April . . .

Wodehouse and Henry James

In the June issue of *Wooster Sauce*, comments were invited on the article which proposed that Wodehouse had written the short story *Honeysuckle Cottage* as a tribute to Henry James.

Two replies were received, from Ray Steen and Elliott Milstein. Salient points from each will appear in the December issue of *Wooster Sauce*. The reward of volumes from the Everyman series will augment Elliott's collection in due course.

I'm afraid I shan't be able to manage the footer dinner this year. My lawyer thinks it would be unwise for me to come back before April 6, as the income tax people might turn nasty and claim residence for me – because I spent quite a little time in England this year.

Then in March 1939, he wrote from Low Wood:

That's great news about your wedding. I think you're very sensible to go ahead. I wish I could come and lend moral support. Unfortunately it's five days too early. I simply daren't come over till after April 5. These blighters watch me like hawks, all ready to call me a resident if I come over too often.

Even in 1953, when his exile to the USA had at least simplified his travel arrangements, he was still complaining of the impositions he faced:

I am crawling with money these days. If only the hellhounds of the system would only reduce income tax a bit, I should be on velvet. They nicked me for about thirteen thousand quid last year. At that, though, I'm lucky to be paying American income tax, as it isn't quite so bad as English. Though I'll swear that one thing is unjust. I have – let's say – a hundred quid in some stock in England and the interest comes to ten quid per annum. Well, the English tax people deduct five quid at source and the remaining five quid is added to my American income and taxed over here. So I pay about 75% and I can't get anyone over here to agree with me that this is daylight robbery.

His tax problems were winding down by now. A treaty between the UK and the US removed the worst excesses from the system, and by living in the USA, Plum avoided forthcoming UK tax rates of 96.25%.

New Abridged Recording on CD

CSA Word have produced another title in their series of abridgements of Wodehouse books. Patron Martin Jarvis brings alive *A Pelican at Blandings* in a superb five hour abridgement which is available on 4 CDs, ISBN: 978-1-904605-65-2.

Last year CSA produced an abridged reading by Martin Jarvis of *Piccadilly Jim*, and he had previously read from *Carry On, Jeeves*. Details of all these can be found on www.csaword.co.uk

The Great Hollywood Movie Pitch

By Deborah Bellew

At the TWS Convention last August, there was a competition to see which delegate could come up with the best pitch for a Wodehouse movie. The winning entry is reproduced here.

Longstanding members may spot broad similarities to the disclosure on the front page of *Wooster Sauce*, Issue 5, March 1998, but Deborah is no Dan Brown: she had not read that publication!

The Lord of the Ring: Bertie's Engagement

Hello and good evening. I'm Ms Perfecta Zizzbaum, principal agent of the Perfecta Zizzbaum Notion Pitching Company ('We pitch notions like nobody's business!'). With me is my fantastic assistant, Adriane, who is an accredited film psychic. We are appearing on behalf of Ms Deborah Bellew to pitch her movie idea to your fine studios.

Our company is not very familiar with this P G Woadhouse – sorry, WOOD-house – but I have her notes right here. We pride ourselves on service, so we've added lots of great improvements to Ms Bellew's original ideas. I'm sure you'll agree as to the result!

At Perfecta-Zizzbaum Notion Pitching we do our homework, so as a warm-up I presented this yesterday to an actual Hollywood director. He advised me to simplify for those who don't know Whithouse – sorry, WOOD-house. So, stated plainly, this is a theatrical scripted feature that uses the structure of popular reality TV show *The Bachelor* to showcase popular Wodehouse characters Bertie and Jeeves.

But what's the fun in stating it so baldly? Use your imagination to fill in the picture. . . . We see an extravagant 1920s mansion, presided over by elegant hostess Aunt Agatha, where she has summoned five would-be brides. They are all vying for the rich, handsome British aristocrat Bertie Wooster. They compete for his hand in marriage, but they don't count on dealing with Bertie's best friend, mastermind Jeeves.

Now, Ms Bellew's notes end here, but I feel there is only one possible title for this movie, combining as it does the English gentry with the romance of courtship: *THE LORD OF THE RING: Bertie's Engagement*. It has a nice sound to it, doesn't it?

For casting, we've given it a lot of thought and have come up with the perfect actors:

BERTIE WOOSTER: handsome and eligible bachelor, played by Russell Crowe

REGINA JEEVES: best friend and mastermind, played by America's sweetheart, Julia Roberts

AUNT AGATHA: elegant hostess, played by recent sensation Lindsay Lohan

And as the would-be brides – the Spice Girls!

HONORIA GLOSSOP: brainy and ambitious, played by Posh Spice

STEPHANIE 'STIFFY' BYNG: outdoorsy and energetic, played by Sporty Spice

MADELINE BASSETT: sensitive and dreamy, played by Baby Spice

BOBBIE WICKHAM: red-headed and exuberant, played by Ginger Spice

FLORENCE CRAYE: a little intimidating, played by Scary Spice

This movie can easily be adapted to your studio's tastes – whether by setting it in the antebellum South, by including a horse race among the brides' challenges (think of box office winner *Seabiscuit*!), or by giving Aunt Agatha a musical number to show off Ms Lohan's singing abilities.

In conclusion, your studio will love this film. It appeals to both art-house and reality audiences, and we'll definitely pull in the Wodehouse fans with our attention to detail. (I hear P G Wodehouse has as devoted a following as does Anne Rice with her vampire novels!)

So who says Hollywood spoils books when turning them into movies? Let's prove them wrong and give this one the green light! Thank you!

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges - 39

"I thought you were younger," she said.

"Younger than what?" said Lord Ickenham.

"Younger than you are."

"You can't be younger than you are, worse luck," said Lord Ickenham

From *Uncle Fred Flits By*, in *Young Men in Spats* (1936)

On Not Teaching Wodehouse

by Daniel Pollack-Pelzner

It began like a typical Totleigh Towers imbroglio, with a terse, urgent message: 'HUMANITIES instructors needed ASAP for winter term'.

The e-mail was from a community education center near Cambridge, Massachusetts, where I had begun a Ph.D. in English at Harvard with an interest in Wodehouse's literary context and was, consequently, begging for extra cash. When I saw *P G Wodehouse: Jeeves, Bertie, and More* listed among the course offerings in search of instructors, I knew I'd found the most pleasant meal ticket possible.

To my country's undying shame, there are not many American institutions of higher learning that need teachers ASAP to staff courses on P G Wodehouse. Actually, to judge by the number of my grad school classmates who sup on soup from a shelter, there aren't many American institutions of higher learning that need teachers at all, but when the need does arise, Jeeves is seldom in the offing. In my own department, Wodehouse makes two scant appearances: on the syllabus for an undergraduate lecture called *Wit and Humor*, stepping alphabetically in line after Waugh and Wilde; and in another lecture on *Postwar American and British Fiction*, this time between Waugh and David Foster Wallace. My undergraduate professors at Yale seemed to regard him as the idle wind, which they respected not. He has been the subject of only five dissertations from this side of the Atlantic in the last forty years, and three of those were from Canada. (Waugh and David Foster Wallace have each received that many treatments in the last five years alone.) The sole Wodehouse research volume on the shelves of Harvard's library by an American – a stylistic analysis from 1974 – starts off with a chapter titled *Comparative Morphology of Narratives*, which sounds like the sort of thing Florence Craye would have given Bertie to read before breakfast.

So when I saw the chance to teach *Jeeves, Bertie, and More* at the community education center, I lunged for it like a ravenous wolf who has just spotted a lone Siberian peasant skipping across the steppe. The center, to be sure, was hardly an institution of higher learning; the other listings in its winter catalogue included courses on *Blue and Jewel-Toned Hydrangea Wreathes* (Crafts & Needlecrafts, \$31), *Mail-Merge Basics* (Computers, \$34), and *Heart Linking with the Angels* (Health & Well-Being, \$31). But the adult education director turned out to be a



genial fellow who, like me, was potty about Plum; he'd even memorized a passage from *Leave it to Psmith* to pop on his fiancée if his scripted proposal didn't go as planned. His only concern was that I didn't really want to teach Wodehouse; he seemed to think that I was some kind of mercenary instructor posing as a Wodehouse aficionado to con the weekly envelope. A few laughs about the deaf chaps on the train to Wembley later, his fears were allayed and my position secured.

Until, that is, I learned that the course required a minimum enrollment to go forward. Five poor souls had to sign up by January, or else the course would be canned. This seemed like a small enough catch to guarantee, but the weeks went by, no fish were biting. There were nibbles from as far afield as Hartford, Connecticut – some valiant devotee willing to contemplate a four-hour round-trip drive to get his weekly Wodehouse fix – but no tail-wagging from the NEWTS, the regional Wodehouse society that we'd hoped would furnish our primary subscribers. Although I'd written a snappy blurb for the catalogue and crafted a six-week syllabus with what I thought were enticing topics – 'Week Two: *Like a Pekingese swallowing a pill: Styling Wodehouse*'; 'Week Five: "*You know your Shelley, Bertie*": Plum's *Allusive Play*' – the huddled masses stayed huddled. The center even offered a 'couples discount' on enrollment for lovebirds whose mating season coincided with their reading season, but to no avail.

There does seem to be a Catch-22 in marketing a course on a writer as immediately appealing as Wodehouse: if you like him (*ie*, if your head is screwed on straight), you probably don't think you need a course to appreciate him, and if you don't

Bringing Wodehouse to the Young

A Plea from the Committee

One of the Committee's long-held desires is to promote reading of Wodehouse's work as an activity of younger people, so they can obtain the long-term benefits of exposure to technically superb but highly entertaining writing. An article in this issue by Josh Cole (see page 12), a sixth-form student in the Midlands, is the latest to be contributed by a teenager to *Wooster Sauce*, and makes worthwhile reading.

We invite members who have links of any sort with young people, whether formally as a teacher, care worker or youth club volunteers, or merely because you are a parent of a teenager or under 25 yourself!, to make suggestions as to how we can progress this objective. If you were preparing an anthology of Wodehouse writing for the 10-14 age-group, for instance, what would you include? How should it be presented? How can it be made attractive to today's youth with their expertise with computers?

And similar questions apply to the 14-18 age-group, and maybe even the 18-25.

One national resource which has a broadly similar objective though, alas, without the stress we place on the works of Wodehouse, is the National Literacy Trust (www.literacytrust.org.uk). You might be able to get some ideas from their website which you could pass on to *Wooster Sauce*. The Trust tries amongst other things to use the experience of a wide range of personalities to encourage reading by

printing interviews about their early experiences of reading.

One or two mention Wodehouse. Danny Wallace, an actor and journalist, who was one of the original creative team behind the radio show *Dead Ringers* responded in the following way to the question:

To some, a family member or particular author was inspiring. Who would be your all time Reading Champion and why?:

P G Wodehouse. He wrote about a billion books, and each one of them was hilarious. So either him or my mum, who loved the fact that I loved the *Beano*, and took out a subscription for me. That was very important, as it turns out.

Ben Elton is another who appears on their celebrity list advocating Wodehouse's writing. There are surely many other celebrities whose appreciation of Wodehouse's wit, either on the written page or, conceivably, through such media as the *Jeeves and Wooster* TV series of the early 1990s, might influence the youth of today.

If members personally know celebrities, particularly those popular with the young (and using either the traditional or modern meaning of the term 'celebrity'), who have enjoyed reading their Wodehouse, and would be willing to say so publicly (perhaps initially in *Wooster Sauce*), perhaps they would contact the Editor or Chairman.

On Not Teaching Wodehouse, continued

like him, you're certainly not going to sign up for one. He isn't the kind of author people fake their way through in college and then catch up on later in an adult-ed course like *Dostoevsky for Dummies* or *Beowulf in the Bathtub*. These courses take intellectual Brussels sprouts and dip them in fondue to make them fit for human consumption; Wodehouse, whose works are the closest thing to *Le Consommé aux Pommes d'Amour* yet served up by a literary artist, needs no such treatment.

Nor, perhaps, does he want it. Education, even at the sort of institution that offers *Heart Linking with the Angels*, is always a kind of molding, be it a drawing out or a pouring in, and we know that Bertie Wooster, at least, was stuffed to the gills with molding before he left the Rev Aubrey Upjohn's tutelage, and went to considerable lengths to avoid an alliance with any party who threatened to resume

the enterprise. This is the chap who prefers Rex West, author of *The Mystery of the Pink Crayfish*, to his highbrow alter ego, Percy Gorringer, poet of *Caliban at Sunset*, and who agrees that an engagement must be severed after the female of the species brings Nietzsche into the picture. Even the adult-ed version of Nietzsche, *Types of Ethical Theory*, causes his hair to stand on end like quills upon the fretful porpentine, as the fellow put it.

When the final word arrived, then, that only two saints had signed up for my course, that it would be cancelled, and that the community center's chief had won a bet with the adult-ed director, hitherto concealed, that the course wouldn't make its minimum enrollment, I kept the upper lip stiff. My thoughts were not of Patience on a monument, however, but of Bertie slipping away from the altar, saved from an unfortunate engagement.

Wodehouse for the Young

by Sixth-form member Josh Cole

Recently I have found myself wondering why P G Wodehouse, one of English literature's finest writers, does not enjoy greater popularity. I myself first became entangled in the world of Wodehouse two or three years ago. Since then I have undergone several bouts of withdrawal symptoms and lengthy periods of rehabilitation. Unfortunately, it cannot be claimed that 'Plum's' (if I may be so bold) readership is by any measure extensive among the majority of young people. Of course, popularity is seldom an appropriate barometer for the measurement of literary genius, but this is not a sufficient reason for the apparent apathy among younger readers for this great master of English literature. As P G Wodehouse says of boyhood, so should the love of his books come at an early age:

Boyhood, like measles, is one of those complaints which a man should catch young and have done with, for when it comes in middle life it is apt to be serious.

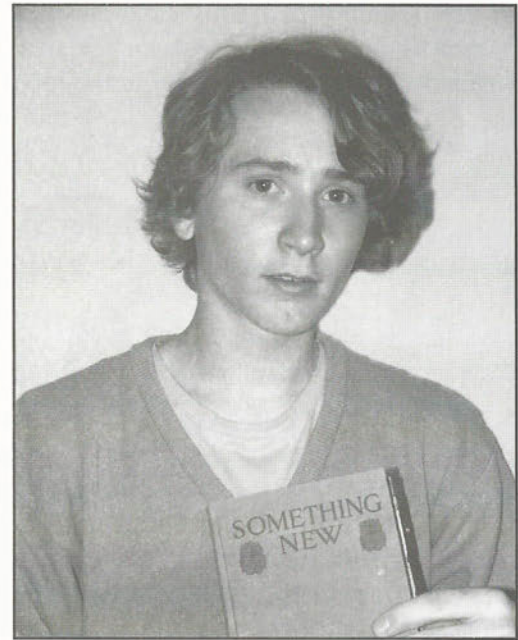
However this disease once caught is untreatable, and likely to be serious at whatever age contracted.

It seems that these days the current vogue does not encourage one to read so much for literary appreciation but in order that some point or other may be forced upon us. Here Wodehouse presents a refreshing change from the polemic propaganda that so often flies in our faces. Wodehouse himself gently satirises this constant need to be broadening one's mind in intellectual directions in *The Inimitable Jeeves*:

I had been engaged to Honoria Glossop nearly two weeks, and during all that time not a day had passed without her putting in some heavy work in the direction of what Aunt Agatha had called moulding me. I had read solid literature till my eyes bubbled.

The sole philosophy to which the disciples of Wodehouse adhere is one of eternal optimism. Although he may not gain as many followers as Confucius, surely the themes that he addresses are just as relevant today as they ever were: those of love; romantic attachments (and detachments); friendship; class issues; fiscal problems, etc. All of these issues are the same that have made great literature through the ages from Hesiod, Homer and Virgil to Wilde and Woolf.

One of the key facets that marks Wodehouse out from the majority of the literary crowd is his faultless and unmatched use of English. It is also



commonly suggested that he is only second in character creation to Charles Dickens. Surely, therefore, it is still important that we read of Mulliner, Psmith, Wooster, Emsworth et al, since it is nearly impossible to find an author with such an unsurpassable sense of literary style anywhere else within the parameters of English literature.

It has been said that a great writer is one who manages to encapsulate and become the quintessence of an era. Nobody does this better than Wodehouse for he invented an era, a golden age set in the 'Edwardian twilight', which never really existed in the first place, and made it his own. In this era he presents an escape from the mundane and instead gives us an Idyll to rival those of Theocritus.

Wodehouse has become the unwitting victim of a society that seeks to distance itself from anything that might be perceived as in any way archaic. A perfect example of one of the modern views of Wodehouse is observed in the case of Sir Patrick Dean, British Ambassador in Washington, who, finding that Wodehouse was recommended for a Companion of Honour, argued against this saying that it 'would also give currency to a Bertie Wooster image of the British character which we are doing our best to eradicate'. However I would argue in turn, it is now that we need to rediscover our British heritage regardless of whether it is entirely accurate.

It is for these reasons that I would strongly encourage all young people to make a dash for their nearest book-shop, purchase as many copies as decency will allow and to devour the lot.

Letters from Members

From Dr J R Piggott

May I trespass on the magnanimity of your columns to correct a popular misconception, repeated in your March issue, that the actor Leslie Howard was a pupil at Dulwich College. Leslie Howard Steiner (1893-43), as he then was, was at school in Dulwich, at Alleyn's School, our brother foundation school in East Dulwich, but not at Dulwich; the false claim has crept into many reference books. From a reference in *Performing Flea* we learn that Wodehouse, on meeting and admiring Howard, says that Howard was at the College a few years after him under a different name. There is no evidence that I know of that Howard put about the claim.

From Charles E Gould Jnr of Maine

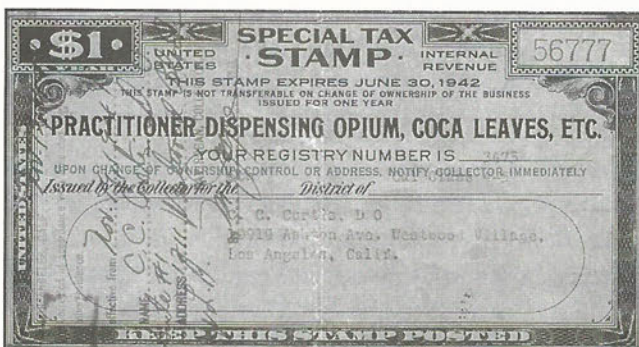
Regarding the question of Wodehousean names used in advertising (March 2006), did you know that about twenty-five years ago a company called Heaveto Limited registered 'Duff & Trotter' as business name, and established Duff & Trotter, Food and Wine Merchants, 1 Ponton Road, Nine Elms Lane, London SW8, with shops at 47 Bow Lane, EC4; 13-15 Leadenhall Market, EC3; and Oxford. I have one of their printed shopping bags and a copy of their elegant September 1981 *Price List for Prompt Delivery in Central London of Fine Groceries and Wine*. I believe they catered a function at the Wodehouse Centenary Exhibition at the National Theatre.

From Marco Ferrugia of Malta

I refer to the article *Anyone for Cocaine?* in June's *Wooster Sauce*, in particular to the question whether cocaine might have been legal in 1926.

It might interest your readers to know that as late as 1942, for a payment of \$1, the United States issued licenses to 'practitioner(s) dispensing opium, coca leaves, etc', which would clearly indicate that in 1926 it was definitely legal to consume such articles.

I am attaching a scanned image of such a license, which I had purchased out of curiosity.



From Gwendolin Goldbloom

Regarding John Looijstijn's enquiry (*Wooster Sauce*, June 2006) as to what Wodehouse had in mind when choosing the name for Jeeves's club, I believe that Ganymede was the cup-bearer to the Gods, which would make him something like a Patron Saint of butlers.

(James Hogg made a similar point.)

From Murray Hedgcock

Musing over the determination of Lady Constance that her brother Clarence must have a secretary of strict method and high organising ability, I find myself puzzling over the thought: why, when she is so concerned about Lord Emsworth's life being properly ordered, does she not insist also that he has a valet?

There is no suggestion anywhere in the canon that such a being exists. But when the chatelaine of Blandings is constantly badgering her hapless brother to change his clothes, borrow a collar-stud, wear a top hat at the school treat, and so on, then would not a valet answer her concern?

There is the further puzzle of the rare occasion when Lord Emsworth is actually a glass of fashion, such as that prompting George Cyril Wellbeloved to comment, "Strike me pink!", because of the appearance of 'his social superior, usually the sloppiest of dressers . . . now pure Savile Row from head to foot' – Connie having insisted he look decent for the Opening of Parliament.

Who then helped him dress? Surely the Ninth Earl is incapable of handling such a demanding chore? Is this one of the many duties shouldered by the faithful Beach?

I think we should be told.

Thoughts, please, to the Editor at the address at the foot of page 28.

From Sushmita Gupta of India

Four women members of Wodehouse India (including me) went off for a week-long holiday to Ladakh. That's high up in the Himalayas, bordering Tibet. We had a fabulous time and talked of matters Plum at 10,000 feet in Leh, 17,800 feet in Changla and on the highest motorable road in the world – Khardungla at 18,380 feet. Bowing to popular demand, I read out *Jeeves and the Yuletide Spirit* in Leh. I really wonder if this was the first time that the rarefied air of Ladakh was infused with Words from Wodehouse!

The World Pork Expo 2006

by Linda Young

The job of the Editor of Wooster Sauce is really terribly simple. When the Chairman tells you in May that the British Pig Association will be represented at the World Pork Expo in Iowa in June, and the Membership secretary tells you that Linda Young, one of our newest members, lives in Iowa, it is the work of a moment to make the connection and arrange for another contribution to the journal. Co-operation, that's what it's all about!

The World Pork Expo was held on June 8 to 10 in Des Moines, Iowa. The 460 acres of state fairgrounds were the perfect venue to showcase this swine tradeshow. Approximately 30,000 hog producers, exhibitors, and visitors were expected, including 2,500 international visitors from 60 different countries. I met Vicki Mills of the British Pig Association, who knows our Chairman, and was complimentary about the Society's recent support for the British Berkshire breed.

Many different activities were available to the visitors: a job fair; clay target shoot; golf; big name musical entertainment; toy show and sale; and a 'cruising with the hogs' event. For some reason, Harley Davidson motorbikes are known as 'hogs', and about 150 got together for a 60 mile ride.

The crowd favourite is always the pig races. The track is of sawdust, and fenced off so the pigs know where to run, usually four at a time. Each wears a cloth number on its back, and has a punning name such as Kevin Bacon or Sarah Jessica Porker. A bugle sounds, the gates open, and they are off! It's amazing how fast they can run to the finish line, where they are rewarded by pig pellets.

There was also a pig parade. The nation's top swine producers brought several breeds of pig to show:

Chester White, Duroc, Hampshire, Landrace, Poland China, spotted Yorkshire and of course 61 examples of our beloved Berkshire, who were judged on the Friday and sold on the Saturday. Some had come from as far as Arizona, 1,400 miles away.

The pigs were shown by men and women of all ages, one star being a youngster of some seven or eight years who did an exceptional job handling his charge. This speaks well of the placid disposition and intelligence of the Berkshire.

I asked several breeders if there was a difference between American and English Berkshires and was always told that the only difference is the feed they are given. "The better the feed; the better the pig." Apparently, the ration mix is a closely guarded trade secret of each producer. I met Wilma, a lovely gilt from Illinois, who was born on January 1, 2006 and already weighs 325 pounds. She eats 8 to 10 pounds of feed a day, but of what? Her owner smilingly refused to provide his recipe. And I thought all great chefs shared their recipes!

Expo attendees enjoyed a vast array of swine dining options, for which no charge was made. The treats on offer included biscuits and gravy; sliced ham sandwiches; Polish sausage sandwiches; hot dogs; and pork chops; together with a number of non-porcine items. Nobody left hungry!

In August, there will be the ten-day annual Iowa State Fair, which has featured a hog-calling contest since 1926. Approximately 5,000 pork chops on sticks are served daily during the fair, and each year there is a biggest pig contest. Last year, the winner weighed 1,080 pounds (77 stone – almost half a ton) and the runner-up 1,016 pounds. That's an awful lot of bacon!

'Our' Berkshires on Television!

Members will recall that Chris Coe spoke at a Savage Club meeting last year following her successful showing of her Berkshire pigs at the Newbury Show. Subsequently, she has become a TV star in the cooking programme *Gordon Ramsay's F Word*, having been selected to offer guidance to the notorious chef as he bought some Berkshire piglets to rear in his back garden. The introductory programme of this series was shown on June 21 on Channel 4.

The Society's *Back the Berkshire* campaign recognised the 'Emsworth Paradox', ie the need to preserve rare breeds such as the Berkshire by choosing the meat in preference to more commercial breeds. Mr Ramsay's series of programmes culminated in his serving the Berkshire meat in his restaurant, where it was in considerable demand and consumed with great appreciation. We hope that before this denouement on August 16, as many members as possible will have been able to see the piglets that he had been rearing.

Society Support for Fordhall Farm

Another way of Backing the Berkshire

It's not only the Berkshire that needs backing! As members will be aware, the Society launched its *Back The Berkshire* campaign in June 2005 with the issue of a special supplement to *Wooster Sauce* and a discussion of the 'Emsworth Paradox', that to save the Berkshire breed we have to eat it. In pursuance of our objectives, we have become the sponsors of the Berkshire Champion of Champions Trophy at the September Newbury Show, and this year have arranged for loin of Berkshire to be the focal point of our biennial dinner at Gray's Inn.

So it is not surprising that our attention was grabbed by the activities of Charlotte and Ben Hollins, tenants of Fordhall Farm, near Market Drayton in Shropshire. Their story became quite prominent in the national press in April and June as they sought to raise £ 800,000 to prevent the farm, on which no synthetic chemicals had been used since 1929, and which had been in their family for 75 years from being sold for development.

They used an innovative method for raising the required cash: establishing a registered industrial

and provident society to issue shares (no dividends payable) and buy the land, which it then leased to the farm. The Great British Public was invited, in effect, to subscribe for shares in a way of life at £ 50 a time, and there was much celebration when by the deadline of July 1 the necessary money had been raised, although as some of it was in the form of loans they are still looking for more shareholders.

The Committee of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) Ltd, noting with much pleasure that amongst its livestock of 75 cattle, 160 sheep and 30 pigs there was a Berkshire sow with nine piglets, approved the idea of buying one share, to enable us to exchange information about Berkshires in fiction and in real life.

The fortunes of the Farm can be followed on www.fordhallfarm.com. The young owners have already arranged a series of events to encourage the continued involvement of the public, and members who live close to Market Drayton, or are visiting the area, may wish to pay it a visit, if only to provide custom at the farm shop!

The American Society announces new admin arrangements

Jean Tillson, President of our sister Society in the USA, The Wodehouse Society (known affectionately as 'TWS'), has asked us to let our members know that the 'administrative complexities' (ie problems in making subscription payments), which may have deterred those resident outside the US from becoming members of TWS, have been eased.

TWS now has a Paypal account, which will enable both members and prospective members to remit their dues online. The Paypal system will debit the payer automatically with their local currency equivalent of the US dollar amount specified.

Jean says that instructions and the appropriate Paypal link can each be found on the TWS website at www.wodehouse.org/tws

Like our Society, TWS publishes a quarterly journal, *Plum Lines*, and it organises a convention every two years, the next being in Providence, Rhode Island, in October 2007. In addition, there are numerous local 'chapters' of TWS throughout the USA which meet at varying intervals, some monthly, to which visitors are always welcome.

Do You have an Interest in a Society Golf Match?

Since the Society was founded, golf days have been arranged on a sporadic basis: first at Tandridge in Surrey, and latterly at the Exeter Golf Club. In neither location was the support given by members considered sufficiently strong to turn the event into an annual one.

Bob Miller, Captain and Manager of the Gold Bats, the Society's cricket team, thinks the time has come to try again. Following the final cricket match of 2006 (see page 16) played at Matfield in Kent, the Society was invited to consider a golf day at Matfield next summer. Matfield is just to the east of Tunbridge Wells, and we would be assured of a very friendly reception.

Bob would like to judge the extent of the support from our members for such an event before agreeing to it. Please register your interest with Bob

If a golf match, competition or other event is arranged, full details will appear in a future edition.

Gold Bat Adventures: Summer 2006

The Dulwich Dusters

The annual match between the teaching staff of Plum's old school, known as the Dulwich Dusters, and the Society's own Gold Bats XI had settled recently into a routine whereby a hugely enjoyable game ends with a comfortable win for the Dusters. Not so in 2006.

Both pitch and weather were perfect for a midsummer's day. What was different was that the Gold Bats, with, who else, Mike Jackson to the fore, put up a record opening stand of 48 and, with some generous help from wides, moved robustly to a very respectable 137 for 5. Then came the traditional tea, which meant the groaning tables of cakes, sandwiches and strawberries taxing the strength of the upper floor of the pavilion. A jolly crowd speculated on what might happen next. And they were surprised. The Dusters stumbled to 10 for 2. Was it the cakes or over-confidence? It continued. 114 for 8. Victory was in sight. But boundaries ensued. And then, on the last ball of the match, the valiant Chris Read scrambled to reach a huge, but failed, swipe. From a prone position he ran the last man out. The match was a tie. An old school tie.

The Sherlock Holmes Society

The annual fixture between the Society's Gold Bats XI and the Sherlock Holmes Society, though played under 1895 rules, has become dominated by youth in recent years. And so it was again this year. West Wycombe looked perfect. A large crowd of around seventy people, some enticed by Henry Blofeld's enthusiastic recommendation of the game during a Test match commentary, enjoyed some fine cricket and a very fine lunch.

The Gold Bats rattled up 192 for 4, with both Oliver Wise and Mike Jackson reaching half centuries. Then the Sherlockians collapsed. They reached 67 for 9 with many overs to go. A Gold Bats victory seemed assured. The high points of the Sherlockian innings so far had been Umpire Hedgcock's complaints about Peter Horrock's knee-length MCC socks and Nick Utechin's Garrick Club tie dangling down his pads. But where the elders of the team had failed, their sons succeeded. Both the twelve-year old Ben Levinson and the young James Utechin pushed their forward defensive shots down the pitch. A sharp catch in the penultimate over was, agonisingly, dropped. They were still there when the clock struck six and Umpire Hedgcock removed the bails. Another nail-biter.

Brook House

The inaugural match between The Gold Bats and Brook House (the 'beaks' of Charterhouse) was packed with more incident than we have space to report, but captain Julian Hill highlighted the following:

- a Brook House scored 76 before losing a wicket
- b Archie Hill, a Charterhouse pupil in his first year though playing for the Gold Bats, dismissed his uncle (Head of Music), who threatened to withhold a Christmas present. He then added the wickets of non-family beaks, resulting in the word 'detention' being placed on the agenda.
- c After collapsing to 114 for 8, Brook House were finally all out for 162.
- d The Gold Bats started slowly but accelerated, requiring 29 with five overs to go and their last pair at the crease.
- e 15-year-old George Wilcox (25 not out) and 11-year-old Sam Cullen (4 not out) saw the Gold Bats home with an over to spare, providing the first actual win of a so-far-unbeaten season.

Where, asked Julian, could you find a cricket team whose opening pair (Michael Savage and Andrew Chapman) had an aggregate age of 133 years, and won the match with a last-wicket pairing of just 26. It could only be the Gold Bats.

Mantfield CC

Siegfried Sassoon's famed Flower Show Match piece (first published in *Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man* in 1928) was re-staged at Matfield in July 2006. A Siegfried Sassoon Fellowship XI was royally entertained by Matfield CC, who have the privilege to play on a delightful English green in Sassoon's boyhood village. The Sassoon XI comprised various members of the Fellowship, plus five members of the PG Wodehouse Society Gold Bats, who personify the historical links between literature and cricket.

The game was played on a beautiful summer's day and resulted in a narrow one wicket win for the home side. The Sassoon XI scored 182 for 9 which Matfield duly surpassed in the final over. During the presentation ceremony, Bob Miller commemorated the occasion by reading a Sassoon poem written at the Somme, *At Carnoy*, and Deborah Fisher from the Sassoon Fellowship presented an engraved tankard to the winning captain.

For more detail, see www.sassoonfellowship.org

Notes on Herbert W Westbrook

by Tony Ring

The name ‘Herbert Westbrook’ is likely to be fairly familiar to Wodehouse aficionados, even if they don’t know a great deal about him. He taught at King-Hall’s School in Emsworth and encouraged Wodehouse to go down and share a flat with him there. The pair collaborated on such momentous works as *Not George Washington* and *Brother Alfred*, a play which, further amended by its star Lawrence Grossmith, managed to survive for 14 performances at the Savoy Theatre in 1914.

Westbrook was something of an eccentric, and Wodehouse claimed that some of Ukridge’s personality was derived from their acquaintance, notably his habit of borrowing Wodehouse’s possessions without asking. Ukridge borrowed a set of dress clothes in *First Aid for Dora*, just as Westbrook had borrowed his; and Wodehouse’s attempts to learn to play the ukelele were irretrievably hampered when Westbrook pawned his instrument. Westbrook married Ella King-Hall, daughter of the school proprietor, and Wodehouse’s first literary agent in the UK.

Not George Washington is a strange book, being narrated by a motley collection of characters in turn. Considered by many critics to have hints of autobiography, it traces the trials and tribulations of an apprentice writer whose extensive output across many different genres risks swamping the market. There is also the underlying story of a romance, which started when the hero and heroine met in the sea off Guernsey, the one believing that she had rescued the other from drowning.

When it was first published, by Cassell & Co in 1907, Wodehouse insisted that it be credited as ‘by H W Westbrook and P G Wodehouse’, rather than the other way round. We do not know how much this reflects Wodehouse’s innate generosity (as demonstrated in his dealings with William Townend, a contemporary of the same decade) and how much it reflects the genuine value of Westbrook’s actual contribution to the work.

We do know from correspondence, though, that Wodehouse regarded Westbrook as very lazy, and not a threat in a competitive situation. For instance, Townend had also told Westbrook the story of his friend Craxton, who had established the chicken farm which became the setting for *Love Among The Chickens*, and although Westbrook said he would write the story first, Wodehouse was confident that was no more than swank.

Westbrook did manage to publish at least one book in his own right. *The Booby Prize* was dedicated to Wodehouse with the inscription:

To P G WODEHOUSE

I dedicate this volume at the risk of
impairing our ancient friendship

The Booby Prize is unlikely to have had an extensive print run. It was published by Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co Ltd, in a year not stated in the book. The British Library received date is 1924, so that is the best estimate we have. Its interest to us, apart from its scarcity and the dedication to Wodehouse, is that it starts by retelling the opening incident from *Not George Washington*. The names of the hero and heroine (Ronald Orlebar Cloyster and Margaret Goodwin) are the same, as is that of Ponto, her dog. He uses precisely the same words to describe the scene as Margaret goes down to the beach for a swim:

That morning I made the descent and everything seemed as usual; the thin plantation of firs and the narrow ledge of soil ending in the sharp, pebbly decline to the foreshore and the beach. My short, tweed skirt, brown stockings, calico blouse, red tam o’shanter. Ponto barking. My blue twill swimming costume. My bath-towel. My alpenstock. Tepid, vigorous, young sunbeams pushing away the summer mists – boyish policemen of the sky moving on the clouds. Flecked clouds framed in gold.

The Booby Prize is narrated by two characters, Cloyster and Goodwin, and brings in two more major members of the NGW cast: Julian Eversleigh and his cousin Eva. It reported (wrongly if subsequent information in *Life with Freddie* from *Plum Pie* is to be believed) that the New Asiatic Bank had collapsed, probably paying its creditors only five shillings in the pound.

Westbrook is not known to have published any more books. The fact that he needed to draw on *Not George Washington* as inspiration for *The Booby Prize*, even if the parts he reused were ever proved to have been his own original contributions, suggests the desperation of a man who realised his limited capabilities. It goes a long way towards explaining the true meaning of the dedication to his old friend Plum.

Where's the Red-Hot Staff – IV

A further helping from Murray Hedgcock's Convention Paper

In this penultimate instalment, we cross the Atlantic once again and move into a less controversial world of more straightforward publications – but again they still seem curiously under-staffed.

Take Oliver Sipperley, at *The Mayfair Gazette* (in *Very Good Jeeves*, 1930). As well as having minimal staff, its premises are miserable, Bertie explaining that on entering a mouldy old building off Covent Garden, you found a small room where an office-boy sat, and another in which Sipperley 'performs his labours' as editor. That's it. No other offices. No more staff. No reporters, no sub-editors, no accountants, no circulation department, no advertising department, and no printing unit. (Granted that small magazines use contract printers, rather than run their own printworks – a valid point for all Wodehouse publications except for those of Mammoth).

Incidentally, that unseen proprietor sounds a bit of a goop. Here is Sippy bullied into slipping into *The Mayfair Gazette* contributions by his old headmaster Waterbury, quite at variance with the stated interests of the magazine. The intimidating Waterbury offers pieces about *The Old School Cloisters* or *Some Little-Known Aspects of Tacitus*, to what is 'supposed to be a paper devoted to the lighter interests of Society'.

As Sippy explains:

"The next thing that will happen is that my proprietor will spot one of those articles, assume with perfect justice that if I can print that sort of thing I must be going off my chump, and fire me."

The proprietor hasn't noticed it already? I can report from personal experience that this is not the way today's media moguls operate – they keep a very sharp eye indeed on content.

In the finish, Sippy stands up splendidly to Waterbury, rejecting:

"... that article on the Elizabethan dramatists you left here yesterday. This paper is supposed to be all light Society interest. What the debutante will wear for Goodwood, you know, and I saw Lady Betty Bootle in the park yesterday – she is of course the sister-in-law of the Duchess of Peebles, 'Cuckoo' to her intimates – all that kind of rot ... Keep your eyes open and see what editors need. Now just a suggestion, why not have a dash at a light, breezy article on pet dogs. You've probably noticed that the pug, once so fashionable, has

been superseded by the Peke, the griffon, and the Sealyham. Work on that ..."

It's good professional commissioning editor stuff – but you still wonder how the *Mayfair Gazette* actually appears every week.

We turn to *Jeeves in the Offing* (1960), in which Reginald 'Kipper' Herring was 'on the staff of the *Thursday Review*' (where he 'has to clock into the office at daybreak'). He wrote six hundred words of 'impassioned prose' reviewing a study of preparatory schools by his and Bertie's old headmaster, Aubrey Upjohn. There was no byline: "Ye Ed is not keen on underlings advertising their names."

(If he was no more than an underling, how come Kipper was allowed 600 prestigious words? Bertie refers to him as 'an editorial assistant' – not a title that would normally allow scope on the review page, such employees being roughly the status of 'Hey-You' gofers.)

Kipper's verbal comment on life with Upjohn is not intended for the printed page:

"We have not forgotten the sausages on Sunday which were made not from contented pigs but from pigs which had expired, regretted by all, of glanders, the botts and tuberculosis."

This shocking libel, helpfully added to the proof by Bobby Wickham, went straight into print – and where, one asks, were the sub-editors? Not to mention the proofreaders? Or the lawyers? Were 'editorial assistants' allowed the final say on what went into the magazine?

So to *Bill the Conqueror* (1924), where we meet media magnate Sir George Pyke. He was the founder and proprietor of the Mammoth Publishing Company, 'that vast concern which supplies half – the more fat-headed half – of England with its reading-matter'. This includes everything from the *Daily Record* to *Pyke's Weekly*, *The Sabbath Hour* to *Tiny Tots*.

His amiable but browbeaten son Roderick edits *Society Spice* – but 'young Pilbeam, a thoroughly able young fellow, really runs the paper. Young Pilbeam tells me that Roderick deliberately vetoes and excludes from the paper all the best items he submits,' grumbles Stinker Pyke. No other staffers are recorded.

More Perils of Translation

by Jay Weiss

In his nifty little book, *On Translation*, Hilaire Belloc, the Anglo-French author, described by AP Herbert as ‘the man who wrote a library,’ commented: ‘The general rule should stand that we should say to ourselves, not “How shall I make this foreigner talk English?” but “What would an Englishman have said to express this same?” That is translation.’ And that is a rule I devoutly follow even though I am a mighty poor excuse for Englishman. Belloc didn’t need to add, because it follows as night the day, that the Englishman will use common sense while making sense of the foreign text. I believe it is also self-evident that this eminently sensible doctrine should work both ways.

The unfortunate Raymond Ory, who translated P G Wodehouse’s classic *The Inimitable Jeeves*, got the title right when he called his book *L’Inimitable Jeeves*, but slipped up badly as he tackled *The Great Sermon Handicap*, a short story the late Jimmy Heineman, the incomparable collector of and expert on Wodehouse, liked so much that he had it translated into well over fifty languages. In Plum’s text, Jeeves brought his employer, Bertie Wooster, the ingredients of a live-saving whisky and soda after Bertie complained about life in stiflingly hot London. “Just as you say, sir. There is a letter on the tray, sir.”

Bertie replied: “By Jove, Jeeves, that was practically poetry. Rhymed, did you notice?”

Ory translates this passage word for word to read: “Juste comme vous dites, Monsieur. Il y a une lettre sur le plateau, Monsieur.”

“Par Jupiter, c’est presque de la poésie. Rimée, ne remarquez-vous pas?”

In so doing, Ory makes poor Bertie seem even more of a chump than he already is because in this French version Jeeves’s words certainly don’t rhyme.

As I’ve confessed, no matter how hard I try I haven’t been able to become an Englishman and I’m still less of a Frenchman. But I can do better than that. Here is how I would have translated the little exchange so as to preserve the meaning *and* preserve the rhyme.

“Il y a une lettre sur le plateau, Monsieur. Vous la trouverez à coté de l’eau, Monsieur”

“Par Jupiter, c’est presque de la poésie. Rimée, ne remarquez-vous pas?”

Translated back into English my version reads, “There is a letter on the tray, sir. You’ll find it next to the water, sir.”

Now *that* rhymes, in French, if not in English.

Where’s the Red-Hot Staff – IV, continued

Sam the Sudden (1925), reported how Sir George Pike, now Lord Tilbury, sought to butter up a business associate by taking on the associate’s nephew, Sam Marlow, as a trainee. Sam protested feebly: “But I don’t know anything about newspaper work” – to which uncle John B Pynsent responded: “You don’t know anything about anything”. Sam attached himself to the editorial staff of *Pyke’s Home Companion*, its editor being Matthew Wrenn, guardian of the girl for whom he had fallen. Wrenn was pleased, saying he had been short-handed. What other hands he had, if any, is not apparent. The newcomer was immediately handed the *Agony Aunt* column – after which he got the boot, discovered a cache of stolen loot, and was set to marry his delightful Kay on the proceeds. It doesn’t happen that way to many journalists.

We move on to *Heavy Weather* (1933), and Lord Tilbury’s efforts to secure Galahad Threepwood’s reminiscences for serialisation. First, Lady Julia Fish

invited the Mammoth boss to employ her son Ronnie:

“Has he shown any aptitude for journalism?”

“No member of my family has ever shown any aptitude for anything except eating and sleeping.”

explains his clear-sighted Mother. And so to ructions when a sophisticated note was injected into *Tiny Tots* by assistant editor Monty Bodkin, in the absence of editor, the Rev Aubrey Sellick. There was no suggestion that anyone else is involved in production of this estimable journal.

What is most intriguing is the way Lord Tilbury himself took charge of the attempt to snatch Gally’s reminiscences, while willing to use intermediaries to do the actual dirty work. But media magnates rarely get involved in chasing serialisations or ‘buy-ups’, as we call them in the trade, and this involvement of the big Boss is another reminder of how thinly staffed the Wodehouse publication always seems to be.

New Book: P G Wodehouse and Hollywood

Review of Brian Taves's *Scholarly Analysis*, by Eddie Grabham

The recent DVD release of *Piccadilly Jim* reminds us that Plum's influence extended beyond his literary and theatrical work into the world of cinema, but how far did it stretch? Luckily, there is a man who knows and his exhaustive research has resulted in a fascinating book entitled *P G Wodehouse and Hollywood* (McFarland, 2006 ISBN 0-7864-2288-2). Order through www.mcfarlandpub.com or by phone in USA at 800-253-2187.

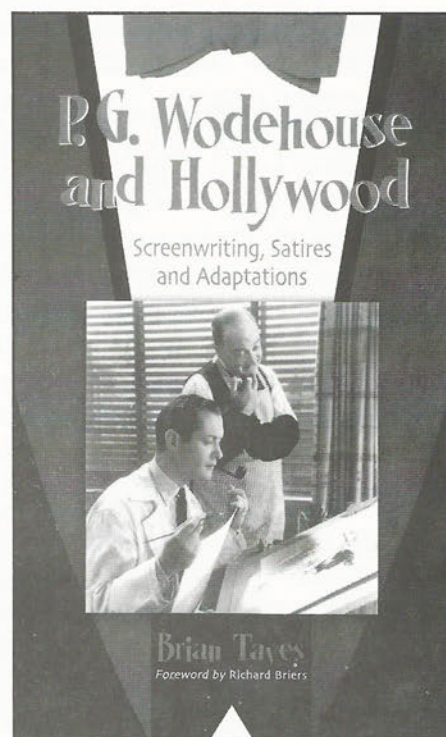
Brian Taves's new book broadly covers four major areas: films based on Wodehouse's own works; his two stints in Hollywood as a screenwriter; the often satirical stories he wrote resulting from his experiences in Dottyville-on-the-Pacific and the myriad television and radio dramatisations based on his books. Consequently, this meticulous 220 page tome goes far deeper into the subject than the rather snappy title suggests.

A score or more silent films based on the master's humorous stories were filmed from 1915 in America, Britain and Europe. In view of the fact that so few of these remain extant, the detail here is remarkable. Not only stories – for some extraordinary reason (see page 23), Hollywood actually produced film versions of the Wodehouse, Bolton and Kern Broadway musical successes *Oh, Boy!* and *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* long before the movies learned to talk (and sing!).

Things began to get really interesting when Plum travelled west to write talkie screenplays in Hollywood. This period is covered in fascinating detail by Taves, whose research reveals profligacy and nepotism in 'tinsel-town'.

The avid Wodehousean will be familiar with stories the master milked from his experiences featuring thinly disguised film companies, harsh moguls, vacuous stars and enslaved writers imprisoned in hutches on the studio lots. Taves gives an intriguing insight into Plum's Hollywood novels and stories, demonstrating how his own experiences and feelings had provided delightful satire for readers to enjoy. His arrows were aimed with deadly effect!

The various film versions of Plum's stories are explored in detail as Brian Taves offers intelligent and sometimes scathing critical appraisals. There are accounts of the films he worked on in Hollywood; not all were based on his own novels, for some were revised and rewritten to the point where Plum didn't even receive a credit, while others never even saw the light of day. A satisfyingly substantial



appendix gives exhaustive details of sources, directors, cast members and dates of released films with a Wodehouse connection.

I was surprised that Taves chose not to include any of the three film versions of *Show Boat*, all of which included Oscar Hammerstein II's revised version of *Bill*. Did he feel that the link was just too tenuous as Plum had no other connection with these films? McIlvaine lists the 1934 MGM film *Have a Heart* but, while hesitating to argue with such a learned source, I'm not convinced that it had anything to do with the 1917 musical. Presumably Brian Taves doesn't think so either.

The section on television is particularly interesting. Taves suggests that the 30 to 50 minute slot on the small screen offers far better opportunities for dramatising Plum's stories than the feature film. It is difficult to argue with that. I'm pleased that he also touches on the excellent BBC Radio series *What Ho, Jeeves* of the late 1970s, which seems to me to come as close as any other medium in dramatising the stories while retaining Plum's humour to the full.

Altogether, a rewarding critical appraisal of the various ways in which Wodehouse influenced and contributed to screens both big and small, while recognising that nothing really substitutes for reading his wonderful prose. I unreservedly recommend Brian Taves's well-considered and thorough book.

New BBC Audio CD Releases

Reviewed by the Editor

As we have mentioned before in *Wooster Sauce*, PGW's works are well served by the audio-book market, in which the principal publisher in the UK is BBC Audiobooks.

Audiobooks come in three principal formats: complete and unabridged readings; dramatisations; and abridged readings. Thankfully, many of the best radio dramatisations – most of the seven series of *What Ho, Jeeves* broadcast in the 1970s and early 1980s – have long been available in cassette format, and BBC Audiobooks have now reissued a further four titles on CD. In summary, these are:

Right Ho, Jeeves (from 1973), adapted by Chris Miller and produced by David Hatch.

The Code of the Woosters (1973), adapted by Chris Miller and produced by David Hatch.

Joy in the Morning (1978), adapted by Chris Miller and produced by Simon Brett.

Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves (1980-81), adapted by Richard Usborne and produced by David Hatch.

Each lasts for about three hours, equivalent to a 60% abridgement. Abridging to any degree for a reading or dramatisation presents difficulties for the adapter, who will be forced to omit sub-plots and much detail from both dialogue and narrative. The problems in dramatisation are intensified by the need to keep the listener informed about the movements of many characters on and off the stage which are described only in the book's narrative. (One can't help but think that abridging the well-padded and unnecessarily long novels of today's authors would be comparatively simple!)

Three of the four new CDs are adaptations by Chris Miller and one is by Richard Usborne, whose affinity to Wodehouse is well-known. In *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*, he sought to overcome the problem of informing listeners of the whereabouts of characters by having one of the cast, usually Bertie, provide explanatory comment in conversation with, for example, Jeeves, or alternatively, direct to the microphone. Much of the time this works

reasonably seamlessly; at other times it is obviously no more than a device.

Taken as a whole, Usborne's dramatisation was first-class, but even he made minor changes for no apparent reason. You may recall that Major Plank was looking for a wing-three-quarter to boost the fortunes of his village rugby club: no longer. This was changed to needing a centre-half for a soccer team. Accordingly 'Stinker' Pinker had played for the Corinthians rather than the Harlequins. Why? The change added absolutely nothing to the listener's understanding of the story and suggests that either Usborne or his producer, David Hatch was, in Beach's words, 'getting above himself'.

The cast varied from series to series, as was inevitable over the timespan of the series but Richard Briers as Bertie and Michael Hordern as Jeeves represent constant elements. Other notable voices included Ray Cooney (Tuppy Glossop, *Right Ho, Jeeves*); Patrick Cargill (Sir Watkyn Bassett, *The*

Code of the Woosters); Miriam Margolyes (Stiffy Byng, *The Code of the Woosters*); Jonathan Cecil (Boko Fittleworth, *Joy in the Morning* and Gussie Fink-Nottle, *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*); and Paul Eddington (Lord Sidcup, *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*).

By comparison to some of the botched dramatisations of recent years (such as the 15-minute Mulliner stories and the 2-hour *Code of the Woosters* of May this year) these older recordings were

clearly the joint effort of cast, adapter and producer who each had a feeling for Wodehouse, and gave the productions the tender care they deserved. The two more recent series seem to have been made by insipid, uninspired journeymen and women who do not even seem to have realised they had been entrusted with the works of the greatest comic writer of the twentieth century.

Undoubtedly BBC Audiobooks are right to provide this timely reminder of how it should be done.

The recordings can be obtained from bookstores, record stores, the internet and Freephone Orderline 0800 136919. Or contact The Audiobook Collection, Freepost, Bath BAI 3QZ.



Savage Club and Wodehouse Theatre

Savage Club

A Society evening at the Savage Club frequently means something unusual, and despite the hot weather, well over 40 members witnessed this phenomenon at the July 11 meeting. It wasn't so much that Jonathan Cecil, accompanied by Stefan Bednarczyk, was providing the entertainment, but his unique selection of material.

One of Jonathan's loves is the music-hall, and he brought us a flavour with songs and monologues which were of Wodehouse but not by Wodehouse. Stefan started the ball rolling with a haunting rendition of *Pale Hands I Loved Beside the Shalimar* (see, eg, *Hot Water* ch1), and then provided intermittent but dramatic accompaniment to Jonathan's brilliant *The Shooting of Dan McGrew* (*Jeeves and the Song of Songs*). Jonathan added one of his own favourites, the cockney *Fireman's Wedding Song* ("If Wodehouse didn't refer to this, he should have done," he said) before joining Stefan in a short extract from *Good Morning Bill*, Act II, which enabled him to sing parts of *I Fear No Foe in Shining Armour* and *Remember the Night*.

Jonathan recalled that he had come across *The Curse of the Aching Heart* while making a recent recording of *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* for Chivers Audio (it appears in *All's Well with Bingo*) and produced a melodramatic rendition which was much appreciated. It led to his finale – the Jack Buchanan song by Irving Berlin *Who Stole My Heart Away*, the catalyst for the climax from *Pig-Hoo-o-o-o-ey*. The audience joined in the encore, loudly singing 'whoop' in every line to remind Lord Emsworth just what came after 'Pig-'. A brilliant evening, in truth.

Note that in November, the short AGM will be leavened by Ken McClymont, who will perform an extract from his well-received dramatic adaptation of *The Coming of Gowf*.

By Jeeves ~ Carmarthen and Weston

Two more productions of *By Jeeves* have come to our notice.

Gerard Dent reports that the amateur 'Just Good Friends' company's production in Carmarthen in April was really splendid. The *Carmarthen Journal's* headline was 'Audience in Raptures' and commented that 'the witty, often extremely funny script, was just right for this small but perfectly formed group of actors'. Sian Morris, the director, was justly proud of her cast, all from the local area and rehearsing after work.

In August, the show was staged by the Weston-Super-Mare Operatic Society. Alexander Dainty said:

This was an excellent production presented in a slightly confined space which certainly added to the atmosphere and ambience. Well-cast with lots of attractive actresses dressed in the period, and so typical of the innocent young ladies depicted in P G Wodehouse's books. The men were also true to character, particularly Bertie and Jeeves who seemed to carry the whole show.

There was also spirited musical support from a superb pianist and clarinettist. The lighting, visual and sound effects were imaginative, as were the good 'country effects' depicted during Bertie's trip to Tottleigh Towers, and other clever props such as Bertie's car. The lively audience enjoyed an excellent show.

Summer Lightning at Pitlochry

Giles Havergal's production of *Summer Lightning*, which was first staged at the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre in 1992, enjoyed a Scottish revival at the Pitlochry festival in June. *The Scotsman* reported:

For those who want pure period escapism, there will be no more attractive show in Scotland this year than Richard Baron's production of Giles Havergal's delicious stage adaptation of the P G Wodehouse classic *Summer Lightning*. Featuring a lively cast of nine, and witty sets by Ken Harrison, *Summer Lightning* portrays a world of affable young twits, lovely girls, omniscient butlers and bumbling elderly folk. "A Garden of Eden, shall I call it, Beach?" says our young hero Hugo Carmody to the butler, surveying the summer scene at Blandings Castle. "Certainly, Sir, if you wish," says Beach and, in five words, he says it all.

And then at Tunbridge Wells

Ben Hilder reports:

Summer Lightning was also staged by the Tunbridge Wells Theatre Company at the Garden of Trinity Theatre, Tunbridge Wells, from 25-30 July. 'Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells' is an overused reaction to any mention of this West Kent town and for this reason I was determined to avoid the expression in my commentary on the latest staged version of Giles Havergal's adaptation of *Summer Lightning*. Upon, however, reading in the show's programme that the original author was named Philip Grenville Wodehouse, I thought I may have to dig out the address of the editor of *The Times*.

Who was Mrs Rorer? wondered the Editor

Arguably the best score of any Wodehouse musical comedy, taking both music and lyrics into account, was *Sitting Pretty*. One of the least credible songs, though, was entitled *Mr and Mrs Rorer*, with what would be thought a highly politically incorrect lyric today proposing that family stability is facilitated if the wife cooks the husband a steady supply of good meals. This is how the lyric starts:

When Mrs Rorer was a bride,
 She kept her husband well supplied
 With ev'ry appetizing dish
 That any hungry man could wish.
 And so when vamps came round his way
 And did their best to make him stray,
 She said that she'd do nothing rash
 She held him with her corned beef hash!

It transpires that the song was written with the American equivalent of Mrs Beeton in mind! Sarah Tyson Rorer (1849-1937) worked as a cookery book author, magazine columnist and editor (14 years on the staff of for *Ladies Home Journal*), and orator. She is considered to have been America's first dietician and became a household name, being honoured at the 1925 Chicago World Fair.

Even if the lyric Plum created does not follow all her recommended dietary practices, it does show that

even in the pressurised environment of the musical comedy theatre, he could draw inspiration from topical matters which the rest of the world would allow merely to pass by.

If you want to know more about Mrs Rorer, search 'Sarah Tyson Rorer' in 'google' or another search engine on the internet. Or try www.abebooks.com if you want to buy one of her cookery books!

Silent Movies from Musical Comedies

In his review of *P G Wodehouse and Hollywood* on page 20, Eddie Grabham mentioned the curious practice of producing silent movies based on musical comedies. Brian Taves found some explanation in an autobiography of Colleen Moore, star of the first film version of *Sally and Oh, Kay!*. She wrote:

It seems strange, now, the idea of adapting a musical comedy into a silent film, but we did it all the time, supplying the theaters with a cued score for the orchestra or organ, or, in some smaller theaters, piano, incorporating into the film the story and all the dance numbers, omitting only the singing.

Wodehouse Theatre and Other Events, continued

My fear was soon allayed when the play's cast clearly demonstrated that they had read the book, even though the amateur group's publicity department hadn't. Their appreciation of those snippets of the book's narrative that Havergal extracted straight into the script was reassuring. And they clearly had responded to the director's request to avoid lurching into stereotypical 1920's, ITV *Jeeves-and-Wooster*-speak when ever they felt their understanding of the writing wane. Further strengthening the performance were the professional, yet cartoon-esque props, including two-seaters, box-office booths and the cut-out Empress (illustrated as a saddleback but I won't let 'disgusted' rear his ugly head), that aided the humour and delivery of the play.

For those who have not seen the adaptation before, it can best be described as a fairground ride journey through PGW's original book. The characters are introduced at speed, scenes are begun before an ever role-changing downstairs staff have brought on a new set, and the plot is diluted back to its bare essentials. This mild criticism apart, the cast put on

a thoroughly enjoyable performance for the audience, which Philip, or even Pelham, would agree must always be the prime objective.

New York Festival of Song

Gus Caywood reports:

In May, Hal Cazalet participated in *Hands Across the Sea*, an exploration of British musicals by American composers and vice-versa, created by Steven Blier from a concept by Michael Feinstein.

More than twenty songs were featured including five with Wodehouse lyrics: *Saturday Night* (from *Miss Springtime*); *I'm So Busy* (*Have a Heart*); *You Never Knew About Me* (*Oh, Boy!*); *There Isn't One Girl* (*Sitting Pretty*); and *You're the Top* (UK version, *Anything Goes*).

There Isn't One Girl replaced the Rodgers and Hart song *The Colour of Her Eyes* from *Evergreen*. Steven Blier explained that the latter had to do with a guy who broke his girl's arms before making love to her, and that despite repeated tries in rehearsal, the company was unable to make that concept palatable for today's audiences!

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

More Love Among the Chickens

My previous column dealt with *Love Among the Chickens* (McIlvaine, A7), marking the centenary of its English publication. I return to the subject once again, to add two pieces of further information.

McIlvaine mentions colonial editions infrequently. John Loder's *P G Wodehouse's Colonial Editions of 2005* sought to remedy the deficiencies of McIlvaine in this respect.

The earliest colonial edition of any Wodehouse title was *Love Among the Chickens*. McIlvaine omits this, and Loder (p10) is only able to confirm the publication date of 1906 through its listing in a publisher's catalogue of September 1906, as no copy had come to light when his bibliography was published. It was published by George Bell and Sons in their Indian and Colonial Library, being number 676 in the series. Arguing from other titles in the series, Loder states that it would have appeared in Bell's uniform red cloth binding, blocked in gold on the spine, and would also have appeared in paper wrappers. Bell would have used the sheets of the first Newnes edition together with his own colonial library preliminaries.

Since the publication of Loder, remarkably, a copy in the original soft cover wrappers has surfaced (and, at the time of writing, was advertised for sale on the internet via abebooks). Given that it used the original Newnes sheets, it is no surprise to learn that it has 312 pages, together with a frontispiece and three illustrations by H M Brock. There are also two preliminary pages mentioning foreign and colonial agents, and 20 pages of advertisements at the rear, dated March 1906, for other Bell's titles. The Bell logo is on the spine, and the book was issued at 2/6. Incredibly, the book is a fine copy, totally square, without any of the foxing, soiling, chips or cracking to the spine which was common in other Bell's titles.

In the course of the last column, I mentioned the third issue, unrecorded by McIlvaine, of the rewritten 1921 edition. In particular, I stated that



The Bell's Colonial Edition: printed in soft red covers

'According to one bookdealer, the price of 2/6 is the same as the first issue; however, the *Addendum to McIlvaine* states that the price of the first issue was 3/6.' I have now located a photograph of the third issue dustwrapper, which clearly shows that the price was 2/6.



Third issue dust-wrapper, showing a price of 2/6d.

The third issue, at 4 13/16" x 7 7/16", is the same size as the blue second issue (A7c2), and therefore considerably smaller than the green first issue (A7c), which was 5 1/8" x 7 5/8".

The Smile That Wins Favourite Nifties - 36

These Welshmen, he was thinking bitterly, you couldn't trust one of them. Take your eyes off them for half a second and the next thing you knew they had sneaked round the corner and found salvation.

From *Do Butlers Burgle Banks*, 1968

Recent Press Comment

Leicester Mercury, May 23

Carried an article by member John Stone about emigré Darren Overy, once a Leicester schoolboy but now a leading New York bookdealer, responsible for the recent sale of the David Jasen collection.

Spectator, May 27

Dot Wordsworth wondered whether readers of *Love Among the Chickens* would be able to place many of Wodehouse's biblical or literary references, derived from the author's 'traditional education'.

New York Times, travel section, May 27

Pointed to new copies of English classic books, such as *Little Dorrit* and *Cocktail Time*, provided in the rooms at the newly refurbished Brown's Hotel.

Hexham Courant, June 2

Peter Lewis, reporting on a production by the London Contemporary Dance School, commented that he could never move like they did. 'I'm the character pinned down by P G Wodehouse, a man who never lets his left hip know what his right hip is doing'.

The Contra Costa Times, June 5

An example of a relatively small American town encouraging appreciation of literature. This one referred to a free meeting at which local actors would read stories by Alan Bennett and PGW. A second, from Fort Wayne, Indiana, concerned a Book Club meeting on June 13 to discuss *Right Ho, Jeeves*; the Public Radio station of a third, Great Falls in Montana, broadcast half-hour readings from *Money in the Bank* for a week from August 7 to 11; and Powell Branch Library in Wyoming included *Carry On Jeeves* as one of two titles for discussion on October 30 in the third of four monthly public meetings.

The Hindu, June 11

Outsourcing Wodehouse was the heading a review of a new book, *Anything For You, Ma'am: An IITian's Love Story*, by Tushar Raheja, which includes a scene where an IIT professor discovers a copy of PGW's *The Gold Bat* at a railway book store, and loses his wallet in the excitement.

Business Standard (New Delhi), June 16

T C A Srinivasa-Raghavan started a complicated article on the ability to mislink cause and effect in

the arena of global economics by referring to Gally Threepwood's reminiscence about a friend who gave up alcohol: "Dead within a week. Run over by a hansom cab."

Townsville Bulletin, June 17

Looked forward to the day when 'we all have implanted the politeness gene . . . probably to be known as the Jeeves gene . . . and everyone will treat each other with courtesy and consideration'.

Daily Times (Lahore), June 29

Reprinted an extract from *Uneasy Money* for its readers.

Daily Telegraph, July 17 (from James Wood)

A leader compared a declaration by Tony Blair on the sale of peerages question to the intellectually challenged, fictional peer the ninth Earl of Emsworth when Wodehouse wrote that 'he was a great believer in stout denial, and he was very good at it'.

Mail on Sunday, July 23 (approx)

Christian O'Connell, a young DJ on Virgin radio, mentioned the works of Wodehouse amongst his favourite things, along with his Blackberry.

New York Times, August 6 (from David Landman)

Ran an acrostic which involved a 39-word PGW quote, the solution also providing Wodehouse's name and the title of one of his Omnibuses.

Oh, My News, August 8

Bahma Sivasubramaniam wrote a long and compelling article which would not be out of place in our *First Wodehouse Experience* feature, entitled *I Love P G Wodehouse*. The article, by a young Malaysian lady, appeared on a Korean website.

The New Republic, August 11

In an article entitled *The Challenge of Muslim Assimilation in Britain*, Alex Massie commented that like Shakespeare and P G Wodehouse, cricket is one of the great English gifts to civilisation.

Daily Telegraph, August 19

In an article on the rise of the conman, Max Davidson recalled Bertie Wooster's experience, when it took the eagle eyes of Jeeves to spot that the mild-mannered parson asking for a small favour, squirming in well rehearsed embarrassment, was a notorious conman known as Soapy Sid.

On *Test Match Special (Radio 4)* on July 14, Henry Blofeld responded to a comment that Angus Fraser had played cricket at Ickenham by mentioning the 5th Earl. As a result, Caroline Kaye sent an e-mail asking him for the source of a quotation concerning schism in the clergy. Having answered that, he then received a stream of e-mails giving listeners' favourite PGW quotes, of which he read out two.

(And this was on a day when the cricket was tense and interesting!)

Poets' Corner: The Rivals

At the epoch which I write of
Quite the smartest men in town
Were Marmaduke de Courcy
And Adolphus Brummel-Brown;
They led the trend of fashion
In the very highest set,
They were recognized authorities
On form and etiquette.

If Marmaduke appeared in mauve,
Or didn't part his hair,
Then parted locks were obsolete
And mauve the only wear.
And did Adolphus don pink shoes
To gratify a whim,
Then everybody did the same.
They always followed him.

Now, before this story opened,
Mr Brummel-Brown had wooed
The lovely daughter of an Earl,
The Lady Ermyntrude.
She'd accepted his proposal
When upon his knees he fell.
But he didn't know de Courcy
Was in love with her as well.

And Marmaduke turned pale with rage;
His silky locks he tore;
Regardless of his trousers' crease,
He writhed upon the floor.
'A murrain on the dastard knave!
He muttered (which was rude).
'By Jove, I'll cut the rotter out,
And win my Ermyntrude!

For many weeks he worked amain,
But worked without success.
He got up several epigrams,
Displayed his taste in dress;
He let her win from him at Bridge,
Though skilful in the art;
But he only lost his money,
And he couldn't win her heart.

Then all at once a bright idea
Across his mind there shone:
'In every fellow's cupboard stands
At least one skeleton.
I'll put detectives on to him –
For I have ample means –
And when they've caught him out, gadzooks!
Won't I just give him beans!

He summoned private sleuth-hounds,
And he put them on the trail.
He bade them watch Adolphus,
And he urged them not to fail,
To spare no pains in finding out
How Brummel-Brown had sinned.
The youngest sleuth-hound tapped his nose,
The eldest sleuth-hound grinned.

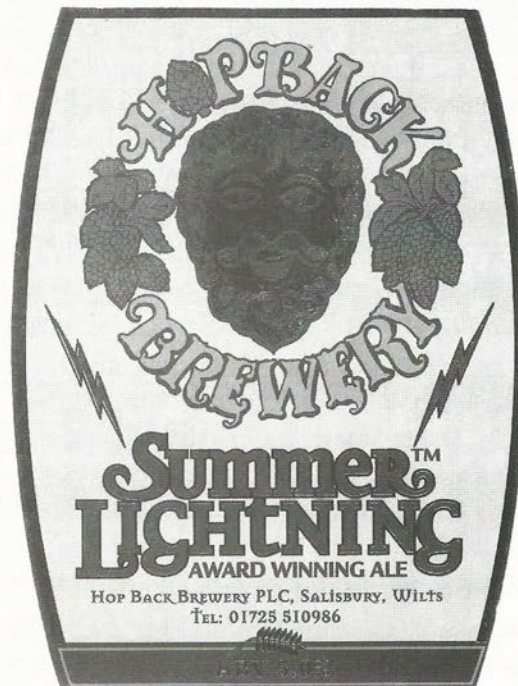
He waited for a week or so.
They came with their report.
'We've got him, sir!' the sleuth-hound said.
'To put the story short,
This very morning, sir,' they said,
'We copped the cove a treat.
He was eating hot potatoes
From a barrow in the street!'

The Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction

Glasgow author Christopher Brookmyre, 37, won the 2006 Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for his novel *All Fun and Games Until Someone Loses an Eye*. As part of his award, he will have a Gloucester Old Spot pig, bred on the hills above Hay-on-Wye, named after the novel.

He said "My favourite Wodehouse quote is 'It is seldom difficult to distinguish between a Scotsman and a ray of sunshine'; today I'd like to think that I resemble the ray of sunshine."

We understand that the reason why there have only been a total of four new Everyman editions during 2006 has to do with the need to get past titles back into print. The former schedule of four new titles every six months should be resumed very soon.



This verse first appeared in The Novel magazine of August 1905.

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(Alas! The charge was but too true.
Though free from other sins,
He had always had a passion
For potatoes in their skins.
He knew the taste was slow and vile –
In short, a social crime,
But he couldn't check the craving,
And he yielded every time.)

The news delighted Marmaduke;
He bounded in his glee.
He pressed into their itching palms
Four times their proper fee;
His eyes lit up with fell resolve;
His heart with triumph stirred.
He called upon Adolphus,
And he told him what he'd heard.

'If this should get about, my lad,
You'd look a little blue;
Society would cut you dead –
That's what they'd do to you.
But still I'll give you just one chance,
And only one. Now, mark!
Give up the Lady Ermyntrude,
And I will keep this dark.'

Adolphus writhed, Adolphus raved
Adolphus had a fit,
But not a way could he discern
Of wriggling out of it.
He wrote a note to Ermyntrude
To say farewell for aye,
And she got it by the early post
Upon the ensuing day.

But mark the sequel. Brummel-Brown,
Distraught, with riven heart,
Grew pale and melancholy,
And preferred to mope apart.
And to dispel that leaden grief,
Which grips the soul and numbs,
He took to feverish midnight walks
About the lower slums.

One night as he was roaming
On his self-appointed beat,
He spied a furtive figure
At a barrow in the street.
And his haggard face next moment
Was divided by a grin:
It was Marmaduke de Courcy –
Eating winkles with a pin!

The rest does not take long to tell.
The reunited pair
Were married three weeks later
At St Peter's, Eaton Square.
The presents were both numerous
And costly, so they say,
And the bride looked very handsome,
So declared the Press next day.

And as for wicked Marmaduke,
He met a fitting fate:
He found it best to pack his boxes
Up and emigrate
And, according to the rumours,
Is at present big-game shooting
In the unexplored and trackless
Wastes of Penge or Upper Tooting.

The Background to 'Summer Lightning' Beer

Many members will be familiar with the iconic *Summer Lightning* brand of beer brewed in Salisbury at the Hop Back Brewery (see the image opposite). Peter Wightman spotted an article in the July 2006 issue of *What's Brewing*, the newsletter of CAMRA, the Campaign for Real Ale which explains how the name was chosen. It reads:

It was 18 years ago that John Gilbert of Hop Back Brewery created Summer Lightning – and little did he know what an impact the beer was going to have on the industry.

It started when John was asked to provide a beer for the Salisbury Beer Festival in 1988. His brewery had been up and running barely a couple of years at the time and was still operating out of

the Wyndham Arms in the city. He was therefore still in experimental mode and decided to take a novel approach.

The beer was to be around 5% ABV; but the last thing John wanted was to produce a brew that was sweet and malty as nearly all beers of that strength seemed to be at the time. So he opted for a lighter touch. He chose to include only pale malt in the mash tun, and he delicately seasoned the resulting wort with Challenger and East Kent Golding hops, for a crisp, fruity edge.

Looking for a name to call his new baby, John turned to the book he was reading at the time, a P G Wodehouse Blandings novel called *Summer Lightning*.

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

October 5, 2006 Formal Dinner

The dinner at Gray's Inn has been oversubscribed. However, if you would be interested should a last minute vacancy occur, contact Tim Andrew

November 14, 2006 Savage Club

The autumn meeting, encompassing the AGM and extracts from the stage play *The Coming of Gowf*, based on PGW's short stories and performed by Ken McClymont and his company.

February 13, 2007 Savage Club

Join members at the Savage Club for the first meeting of the year.

April 7, 2007 Wodehouse Walk

Participate in one of the Society's famous walks round Bertie Wooster's London, starting from Green Park station. Telephone Norman Murphy to register interest and obtain details of where and when to meet.

June 15, 2007 Gold Bats v Dulwich Dusters

The Society's cricket team play their annual match at Dulwich College at 4pm, with the celebrated cricket tea around 5.30.

June 24, 2007 Gold Bats v Sherlock Holmes

The probable date of the cricket match against The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, starting at 11am at the West Wycombe Cricket Club.

July 8 to 15, 2007 Anniversary Tour

Advance notice that planning is almost complete for a two-part, week-long event, starting in London, followed by a coach tour following the Blandings trail. See enclosure for more details.

July 10 OR 11, 2007 Savage Club

Join members and tourists at the Savage Club for the summer meeting, the exact date for which will be confirmed in a later issue.

July 28, 2007 Wodehouse walk

Norman Murphy offers another London walk.

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.

EDITOR'S TAILPIECES

Bob Miller, veteran member of the Society and Manager of The Gold Bats, has asked me to inform members that he has founded the T S Eliot Society (England), based in Cambridgeshire at Little Gidding, with Mrs Valerie Eliot as its Patron. Further information can be obtained by e-mailing

Murray Hedgcock noted that on June 1, the *London Evening Standard* reported that Welsh farmer Geraint Roberts was savaged by his five-year-old Landrace boar, and after his wife drove the pig off with a high pressure hose, he needed seven hours of surgery. The pig was said to have weighed 47 stone (ie 658 pounds), and Murray wondered whether anyone had any idea how heavy the 'deliciously fat Empress of Blandings' might have been. In Linda Young's article on page 15 about the World Pork Expo, she tells us that the heaviest pig (of any breed) shown in 2005 weighed 1,080 pounds, and that she met a five-month old Berkshire of 325 pounds. Any further ideas, please, to me at the address below.

The Jeremy Vine Show (Radio 2) on June 14 debated the relevance of the law requiring maintained schools to hold daily mainly Christian assemblies. Arguing in favour of the status quo, Anne Atkins commented in an aside that you can't even read P G Wodehouse without a grounding in the Prayer Book and the Bible.

Another example of the 'Wodehouse was first' incidents which are so frequent in real life. The *Independent on Sunday* reported on April 23 that the Dutch police had confiscated the saxophone belonging to a busker after complaints by music-lovers. This was reminiscent of the exchange between Bertie and Jeeves in *By Jeeves*, which, if not quite Wodehouse, is not far short:

"Where is my banjo, Jeeves?"

"I fear it has been stolen, sir."

"Who on earth would want to steal it?"

"A music-lover, perhaps."