

WOOSTER SAUCE



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

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Ten Years of the Society ~ and Wooster Sauce *The Editor reflects on a decade of co-operation*

To celebrate ten years of the journal, we have produced both our longest issue and the first in colour. In addition to the usual range of articles it contains a report of the biennial dinner and an affectionate retrospective look at some of the material published in earlier editions. We hope that this may encourage newer members, especially, to consider investing in some back issues, and to this end we are offering most of them for sale very much more cheaply than usual (see page 7).

As the Society itself will also soon reach its tenth anniversary, we felt it would be appropriate to acknowledge the contributions which so many members have made to our successful growth. Pages 20 and 21 carry tributes to former officers and to current members who play behind-the-scenes roles which often go unremarked. Needless to say, the present committee are also very hard-working and should be part of the general back-slapping. You will also find articles about our printers, and the relationship we have maintained with BBC Audiobooks (formerly Chivers), on page 19.

Some members may be aware already that after forty issues, this will be the last edition for which I am responsible. I have always felt that ten years is as long as any editor should produce a journal such as *Wooster Sauce*, as there is an increasing risk that staleness and predictability will creep in. I have been trying to find a replacement for some three years, since a health scare which fortunately proved to be momentary reminded us all of the need to prepare for contingencies.

I am most grateful to Elin Murphy, wife of our Remembrancer Norman Murphy, for imitating the US Cavalry and agreeing to become Editor from the March issue, though I will continue to produce *By the Way* and the Christmas supplements. Elin has been President of our sister Society in the USA, and is well-known in the Wodehouse world. A letter from her has been included with this distribution, and I am sure she can rely on continued assistance from members. It is perhaps appropriate here to remind

any members who would like to make a contribution to the work of the Society, whether in relation to publications or any other activities, to contact the Chairman, Hilary Bruce, for discussions.

I would like to add some personal thank yous to those who have facilitated my role as editor. It is an extraordinary fact that more than 300 members have contributed to *Wooster Sauce* by way of articles or letters, and almost 100 have submitted examples of press references. It is this type of support which endorses the journal's position as the mouthpiece of its members.

I do not have space (where have I heard that before?) to list all those to whom I am referring, but I must mention our most regular contributors, such as Murray Hedgcock, Nick Townend and Nigel Rees, who has taken time out of his busy public schedule to write for us on a dozen occasions. A further five UK members (Messrs Andrew, Bruce, Grabham, Hogg and Murphy) have appeared eight times or more, along with four Americans (Messrs Cannon, Milstein, Smith and Taves) and Harshawardhan Nimkhedkhar from India. I am also indebted to Gwendolin Goldbloom, who has quietly been bearing part of the proof-reading burden, correcting my errors on approximately two-thirds of the pages of each issue for several years now.

Finally, I should pay effusive tribute to those who maintain the Wodehouse heritage. Peter Lobbenberg and Francis Nation-Dixon, the Trustees of the Wodehouse Estate, together with their literary and media agents (until recently Linda Shaughnessy of A P Watt, and now Peter Straus of Rogers, Coleridge and White, and Norman North of The Agency) and Committee member Sir Edward Cazalet (P G Wodehouse's grandson), have been most supportive, and have granted the necessary copyright consents for our extracts from Wodehouse's fiction, verse and letters. The journal would be considerably less authoritative without their understanding. In turn, we must respect their position and not abuse the complex international copyright laws.

The Future of Wodehouse Publishing

by Tony Whittome

Publishing Plum – what fun and what an honour! But also what a responsibility. At a time when the bestseller lists are crammed with celebrity memoirs whose shelf-life, starting in October, may well be over by Christmas, and when the book trade itself is changing faster than in any decade since Gutenberg, there are new challenges in doing the best possible for our favourite author.

Wodehouse himself was immensely kind to his publishers. There is an unmistakable warmth in his letters to Derek Grimsdick, managing director of Herbert Jenkins Ltd, and he was particularly generous to Grimsdick's son, Mike. But he was rightly keen that his books should be well sold and made properly available. Ever the consummate professional in his writing, Plum loved being read; and this has been the opportunity given to all his publishers since.

The traditional path for a new book is to have a year's outing in hardback followed by paperback publication. Some may go directly into paperback and others, usually 'big' books with a marketing spend attached, may be published first in trade paperback (hardback size but paper covers) for airports and international sales. Most much-published authors remain only in paperback – if they're lucky. But Wodehouse, as in so many ways, breaks the mould. He is published in all three formats at the same time – hardcased in a uniform edition, in trade paperback omnibuses (or should I say *omnibi?*) and in mass-market paperback, where the main sales opportunities lie. These forms reach slightly different markets, although of course there's an overlap between them. It's a happy situation that will continue.

Members of our Society can't be taken for granted by anyone, but we're certainly what publishers call a niche market – perhaps veering towards, dare I say it, a captive audience. I bet our shelves bulge with Autograph Editions old and new, the lovely new Everyman uniform hardbacks, some Hutchinson omnibus volumes in trade paperback and a plethora of Penguins. We may also have tapes and CDs, both readings and dramatizations. If not, the publishers certainly haven't been doing their job! But in the wider world outside the Society, the challenge is to appeal to new readers and a new generation.

Wodehouse the writer needs no reinvention and certainly no makeover, but the way his work is



Jeeves was showing the saint-like child how to make a rabbit: so she became a fan of Madeline Bassett

marketed and sold changes with changing times. Think of those superb Penguin editions of the post-war years, which managed to be both fun and a little austere. These reached the new world of paperback readers and made books part of everyday life for everyone. Then remember the tremendous fillip provided by Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie in *Jeeves and Wooster*, which widened the audience immensely; and the way a whole slew of new comic writers, streetwise, anarchic and contemporary (such as Ben Elton and Douglas Adams), paid homage to Plum and captured new readers for his work.

Now it's time to do so again – and in a very different world, because not only are there new generations of readers (and, sadly, non-readers) but the nature of the book trade is changing radically. Publishers see this as an opportunity, but they have to be light on their feet.

So what has changed? Well, pretty much everything, but a lot of it could be summed up by one adjective: digital. New digital techniques have revolutionized the way books are printed, distributed and sold, and the forms in which content (words and images) can be experienced. Let's relate all this to Plum. In the past we impulse-bought or set out to find our favourite Wodehouse title in our local shop – and a good stockholding bookshop would either have it or could get it reasonably



Tony Whittome, photographed by Ginni Beard at the recent Society dinner, has been a stalwart of Wodehouse publishing for over a quarter of a century and is a Patron of the Society.

Tony embraced new technology in relation to Wodehouse at an early age when reading Pigs Have Wings by torchlight under his bedclothes at prep school. Somewhat later, after Hutchinson acquired Barrie and Jenkins, he became responsible for their Wodehouse publishing and as a Hutchinson editorial director he continues the same within Random House. He has overseen new hardcover editions, paperbacks, omnibuses and anthologies (such as the excellent What Ho!, for which the Society was balloted on contents). He has also published three noted Wodehouseans: the great Richard Usborne; that fount of all Wisden Murray Hedgcock; – and, not least, the distinguished retiring editor of Wooster Sauce . . .

quickly. That is still the case (in fact new technology should make it easier). But these days you can get hold of Wodehouse online if you choose, via Amazon and other e-tailers, or from the publisher's website. For audio, in addition to tapes and CDs, you can download *Joy in the Morning* onto your MP3 player, using iTunes or the website Audible. The internet is a fantastically democratic way of getting information across and the range is vast – Google has 1,900,000 entries for Wodehouse as I write, and the number is growing. Books in the future won't

the same. To spread the Wodehouse message to the young, publishers will need to talk their language as regards digital media, even though the language we're encouraging them to read is pure Wodehouse.

Some of this is in the future. There are many ways of getting through to younger readers more immediately, some an expansion of traditional marketing. Dedicated mini-sites on the web could include creatively arranged pictures and text, with 'viral' games. Texting nuggets of pure Plum on mobile phones is another way. Wodehousean events could be aimed at young people – look at *Chap Magazine* (slogan: 'Give three-piece a chance'), a cult publication and website online at www.thechap.net, which organizes the Chap Olympics.

Then there is a new generation of potential celebrity fans – actors, comedians and writers – such as David Walliams, Matt Lucas, Jimmy Carr, Keira Knightley, Jodie Kidd: if they admire Wodehouse – could they or others do for younger people what Fry and Laurie are still doing for us all? And then there's the look of the books: the covers need to be lively and fun, while conveying the essential Wodehouse message. We don't need to go as far as one publisher which put chick-lit covers onto Jane Austen, but presentation is hugely important for reaching new readers and refreshing old ones.

At the end of the day Wodehouse will appeal to the young just as he has always done to us all – through his unique humour, his language, his kindly truth to human nature, his ingenious plots, his wonderful characters, his whole gently eccentric but utterly beguiling world. Young people will want to enter that world when they know about it. And of course they will always drink too much on occasion, get into love-tangles and agonizing infatuations, and perhaps even suffer from overbearing aunts. We have to take the books to them and they'll be hooked like every generation before them.

Lord Emsworth on an iPod? Wicked!



'We'll either give him an ASBO or introduce him to the Little Nugget'

even need to be books any more – they can be e-books, downloaded onto a dedicated player. Sony's first version, just issued in America, sold out immediately and others will follow.

OK, so you prefer books to be books? So do many of us – but the next generation won't necessarily feel

How Plum Upstaged the Bar

by Murray Hedgcock

PGW wrote lovingly, charmingly and funnily about golf, the game to which he turned his attention once the cricket of his youth was no longer appropriate – or profitable – for a writer concentrating on the American market.

Of his own golfing prowess, we learn little. He played a great deal in the Twenties, both in England and America, and in his introduction to *The Heart of a Goof* (1926), said he had spent ‘much time recently playing on the National Links at Southampton, Long Island’.

He wrote sadly of its ‘really foul holes’, adding that before going there, he won his first and only trophy – ‘an umbrella in a hotel tournament at Aiken, South Carolina, where, playing to a handicap of sixteen, I went through a field consisting of some of the fattest retired businessmen in America like a devouring flame’.

Plum must have continued to play regularly enough to stay in fair form: Barry Phelps (in *P G Wodehouse – Man and Myth*) notes that in 1938, he had a handicap of thirteen – ‘rather good for an amateur aged 57’. And E Phillips Oppenheim’s report of the curious Wodehouse obsession with long drives, rather than actually holing out, is also in Phelps.

Now the record has been unearthed of one other instance in which Plum, at 42, played competitive golf – and came out on the winning side, as reported in *The Times* of July 15, 1924.

The first name (after Plum’s) to strike the eye is of course that of A A Milne. If he made his name with Christopher Robin and Winnie-the-Pooh, he wrote many more serious works for the stage, and always wished to be known as a playwright. Milne, like Wodehouse, began sporting life as a cricketer (he was in the P G Wodehouse XI which played Dulwich College on May 4, 1907). He took up golf just before World War One, and in the early Twenties recorded that he was ‘playing a great deal’, off a handicap of nine.

A less familiar name is that of Plum’s foursomes partner, Major J H Beith – more recognisable under his pen-name Ian Hay. A Scottish novelist and dramatist who wrote light novels in Edwardian years, he scored his prime success with a light-hearted record of British troops in the early days of

World War I – *The First Hundred Thousand*. It was in his 1936 book *The Housemaster* that he coined the pleasing phrase ‘funny peculiar or funny ha-ha?’. Hay – or, more correctly, Beith – won the MC in WWI and was Director of Public Relations at the War Office in 1938-41. Hay and Wodehouse were good friends, and collaborated on three plays (*A Damsel in Distress*, *Leave It To Psmith* and *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*). The pair toured Scotland on a golfing holiday, and there is a familiar shot of Plum, in golf rig, seated in Ian Hay’s car.

The best all-round sportsman in the Stage team is B S Foster – widely accepted as Plum’s model for the cricketing Thespian of the Drones, Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright. Basil Samuel Foster was one of seven Foster brothers who played first-class cricket, all educated at Malvern. The greatest was R E, who hit 287 for England against Australia at Sydney in 1903-4 – an Ashes record until Don Bradman made 304 thirty years later. Youngest of the Fosters was N J A ‘Johnnie’ Foster, who like his several brothers played for Worcestershire. His grandson, Jon Fisher, plays for The Gold Bats.

PGW’s knowledge of Basil Foster the cricketer was reinforced by personal experience. Foster opened the innings for Actors against Authors at Lord’s in 1907, and made 100 before being dismissed – caught Milne, bowled Wodehouse. Basil Foster first appeared on the professional stage at the Marlborough Theatre, Holloway, on April 5, 1906, aged 24. Reaching the West End in 1907, he carved out a satisfying career especially in light roles, declaring his favourite to be that of Prince Danilo in *The Merry Widow*. He appeared in *Sally* (which included PGW lyrics) at London’s Winter Garden Theatre in 1921.

Basil first played for Worcestershire in 1902, but acting commitments meant he managed only another half-dozen matches before joining Middlesex in 1912 – a metropolitan link which he hoped would fit better with his West End appearances. He played 12 first-class matches that season, but his figures did not do him justice, acting

GOLF.			
BAR G.S. BEATEN AT KNEBWORTH.			
The Stage Golfing Society beat the Bar Golfing Society in a match by Singles and Foursomes at Knebworth by 11 matches to 5 on the day's play.			
The results were:—			
STAGE G.S.		BAR G.S.	
B. S. Foster ..	0	C. W. Meador ..	0
J. Perry ..	0	J. H. A. Stroyan (3 and 1) ..	1
E. Stanley ..	0	L. I. Cohen ..	0
I. Stuart (3 and 1) ..	1	N. Brewis ..	0
E. Owen (2 up) ..	1	R. Vick ..	0
K. Lark (1 up) ..	1	D. Stephens ..	0
E. Graham ..	0	E. A. Hawke ..	0
Major J. Hay Beith (5 and 4) ..	1	V. M. Ruston ..	0
A. W. Baskomb (4 and 2) ..	1	G. A. Bonner ..	0
A. A. Milne ..	0	R. E. Otter (4 and 2) ..	1
S. Trevor ..	0	W. A. Jowitt (3 and 2) ..	1
F. G. Wodehouse ..	0	J. A. Hawke ..	0
F. Henson ..	0	J. Hunter Gray (7 and 5) ..	1
J. Melford ..	0	Lord Justice Scrutton (2 and 1) ..	1
Total ..	5	Total ..	5
FOURSOMES.			
Foster and Stanley (1 up) ..	1	Meador and Cohen ..	0
Lark and Stuart (4 and 3) ..	1	Brewis and Stephens ..	0
Perry and Trevor ..	0	Stroyan and Jowitt ..	0
Owen and Graham (7 and 5) ..	1	Vick and Hawke ..	0
Baskomb and Milne (4 and 3) ..	1	Bonner and Otter ..	0
Beith and Wodehouse (2 and 1) ..	1	Hawke and Ruston ..	0
Henson and Melford (1 up) ..	1	Gray and Lord Justice Scrutton ..	0
Total ..	6	Total ..	0

How Plum Upstaged the Bar, continued



The Aiken umbrella, showing evidence of its use (Photo: Ginni Beard)

was active on stage (where he appeared in *The Play's the Thing* and *The Three Musketeers*) and in Hollywood.

L Stuart is probably the composer Leslie Stuart, whose songs include *The Bandolero*, *Soldiers of the Queen*, *Little Dolly Daydream*, and *Lily of Laguna*.

A W Baskcomb was a 'character comedian', whose recreation in *Who's Who in the Theatre* was recorded simply as 'golf'. He had appeared in *The Gay Gordons*, a Seymour Hicks production at the Aldwych in 1907, for which Plum and C H Bovill (co-author with PGW of the short story sequence *A Man of Means*) were lyric-writers.

being distracting, and he retired from big cricket at the end of the year, aged 30.

A scratch golfer, he was also a valued member of the top-class amateur football team, the Corinthians, and a fine racquets player, winning the British amateur championship twice, and sharing the doubles title five times.

So what of others in the Stage team?

L Henson could only be Leslie Henson, the comedian and actor-manager who was making his name when World War One broke out. He enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps in WW1, but was instructed to form a concert party, *The Gaieties*, to entertain British troops, and went on to peacetime fame, appearing in three of the four Wodehouse shows at the Winter Garden Theatre: *Kissing Time*, *Sally* and *The Beauty Prize*.

J Melford is Jack Melford, brother of the better-known Austin Melford, who was prominent with the Co-Optimists concert party, and later a theatrical entrepreneur. (Austin's son was the sports writer Michael Melford).

R Owen is presumably Reginald Owen, who after a successful British stage career went to the US and

Another player to list 'golf', along with tennis, was Spencer Trevor, an actor who played Lord Fancourt Babberley in *Charley's Aunt* on more than 1,200 occasions.

The Bar-Stage event gained gravitas with the involvement of Lord Justice Scrutton, a specialist in English commercial law, then only a year short of his 70th birthday. He was captain of the Bar Golfing Society. Another competitor was L L Cohen – later Lord (Lionel Leonard) Cohen, a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, whose golfing enthusiasm took him to the top as Captain of the R and A.

But the most interesting golfing lawyer was W A Jowitt. Originally a Liberal MP, William Allen Jowitt switched to Labour, then joining Ramsay MacDonald's 1931 National Government. Expelled by Labour, he rejoined that party in 1936. He served in the wartime Coalition Government, was Lord Chancellor in the post-war Attlee administration, and was made a viscount in 1947.

The lawyers were all-square after the singles – but seem to have been able to cooperate with each other no better than they might do in court, failing to win a single foursome. In the finish, the irreverent Plum, you feel, must have greatly enjoyed taking down these luminaries of the Establishment a tee-peg or two.

Letters to Billy Griffith

The final instalment of PGW's letters to his Dulwich friend

In this last extract of letters written by Plum to the late Billy Griffith, (Old Alwynian, England wicket-keeper and father of Mike) we jump from topic to topic to show that sport, the theatre and tax were not the only matters about which he wrote.

For example, in March 1939 he complained about the weather:

It's an awful nuisance, that big frost at Christmas absolutely smashed up Low Wood. Twenty-five radiators burst and all the pipes, which drenched the ceilings and ruined curtains, with the result that the house won't be habitable till the end of April. We are now camping out in a bungalow called Northwood, which isn't uncomfortable but is a bit cramped. I shall be glad to get back into the old home again.

A year later, in February, he made some wry remarks about the early days of the war:

This is an odd sort of backwater in these times. We have seen a lot of RAF men, as they come over here on short leave. Low Wood is a sort of rallying centre for them, and we have given quite a lot of parties – dinner either here or in Paris Plage and dancing to the gramophone. We also see our ex-gardener and postman when they come back for a few days. I don't know what they do on the Maginot Line, but it seems to make them terrifically fit. The gardener was quite a weedy sort of chap, and now he is bursting with health. I wish I could understand French better. Yesterday our cook came in, bursting with the news, as I thought, that the postman was dead. What it turned out to be was that the Pekinese had bitten the postman.

His correspondence returned to Low Wood, even though he was unable to, in July 1945:

The latest news from Le Touquet is that the walls of the house are all right, but the roof is damaged and will cost 30,000 francs to get right. Apparently bombs fell all round the house, but no direct hit. Unfortunately the local yokels surged in while the place was empty and removed all the doors, staircases, baths, etc, leaving us just the walls. They tell me that if we repair the house and pay the bills the French Govt will repay us ninety per cent of what we spend, but it seems a remote chance. My experience of Govts is that they are all zeal when extracting money out of you but inclined to be lethargic when it is a question of paying out.

This was followed six weeks later by a pessimistic assessment of the position:

The paper this morning said that all English accounts for residents of France were now unfrozen, which I suppose means we can start rebuilding Low Wood, if we decide to. It is rather a difficult problem, as everything has gone up in price so much. Low Wood now consists entirely of walls, plus a bit of a roof, and it seems a horrible task starting on getting it into shape. Still, the Mayor of Le Touquet writes that Le Touquet will be going strong again next year, so I suppose we ought to do something. I wish the local thieves had left us at least the baths and the heating system.

Another letter, in March 1952, offers scope for researchers:

I remember years ago – it must have been just about the time when you were born – the *Daily Mail* got the idea of having football reports done by distinguished (in my case only moderately distinguished) authors, and I used to enjoy writing about the Harlequins and Blackheath matches. But when they sent me up to Derby to report a soccer game and paid me ten bob, I struck.

What would Plum have thought about the proposal to ban smoking in public places. As a daily pipe-smoker almost throughout his life, he held trenchant views on the subject;

I was shocked and horrified by what you said in your letter about knocking off smoking. This must be remedied at once, so I enclose a cheque to be spent solely on tobacco. . . . You must have gone through agonies, not getting your pipe. My doctor told me to stop smoking, but I found that it interfered with my work too much. And anyway I don't believe that smoking does one any harm at all. I have had a series of giddy attacks this last year, all quite slight but a nuisance, and after spending a fortune on doctors (who started off in their cheery way by saying I had a tumour on the brain) I decided it was indigestion. Ethel then had the brilliant idea that I got indigestion because I ate so much bread. It was quite true that I did eat too much bread – I love the stuff – so I tried knocking it off entirely, and the results have been magical. I feel terrific and my tummy has gone down to nothing. I believe it's the only thing to do

Back Copies: Wooster Sauce, By The Way and Other Publications

The Society's tenth anniversary represents a good opportunity to remind members that back copies of most editions of *Wooster Sauce* and *By The Way* can be obtained from our Membership Secretary, Christine Hewitt, at the address on the rear cover. The following issues are NOT available:

Wooster Sauce: 5, 6, 8-13, 16, 19, 21

By The Way: 8, 14, 15, 23

She also has available copies of three additional publications: the report of the *Millennium Tour*; the tribute to the late Queen Mother; and the *Back the Berkshire* supplement of last year.

To encourage members to cast a nostalgic look at the work of the Society before they joined, we are making a special offer in respect of orders received by Christine by **January 6, 2007**.



Normally, we charge £ 2.50 per issue of *Wooster Sauce* and £ 1.00 per *By The Way*. For the duration of the offer, these prices will be reduced to £ 1.00 for *Wooster Sauce* and £ 0.50 for *By The Way*, although to help with postage there will have to be a minimum charge of £ 5.00. The three additional supplements mentioned above can also be purchased for £ 0.50 each during this period and will, of course, count towards the £ 5.00 minimum.

Letters to Billy Griffith, continued

if you are inclined to put on weight. Still, the great thing is to feel fit – and, incidentally, not to have to give up smoking. I had the bad luck to run into doctors who were non-smokers, and the first thing they said was that I must cut it out. Of course, I didn't.

He could offer sympathy with a smile, as in 1956:

I'm so sorry about your burglary. I know just what you mean about having your home smeared up by some loathsome brute. We had a burglary years ago when we were living in Norfolk Street, but it turned out to be the cook's brother, so we sort of felt it was all in the family.

In *Performing Flea*, Plum was frequently asking Bill Townend for details of topics about which he wanted to write, about which he thought Townend had more experience. Here he adopts the same tactic with Billy Griffith:

Do you know anything about the jargon of Rucker? And has anyone ever started any controversy about changing the rules, as happens with cricket? In my new Jeeves novel I have to have, for purposes of the plot, a man who is a crank on the subject of Rucker, and I want him to have written to *The Times* a letter embodying his views on what changes should be made, and he thinks Bertie (who, also for the purposes of the

plot, calls on him) is a reporter come to interview him about his views, so he pours out on him a flood of technical Rucker stuff of which, of course, Bertie doesn't understand a word. Can you supply anything by consulting your footer friends?

Of course, I suppose I could get by by making my man want to abolish the 'forward' rule and substitute the forward pass as done in America. But that wouldn't make a funny scene. I want Bertie to be bewildered by stuff about loose heads and prop forwards and so on. I'm afraid it may turn out to be something that can't be done.

Finally, a 1962 extract which may put to rest the occasional debates about which is the oldest Wodehouse Society, a claim that we have never been in a position to make. Although there is no proof that it has been *extant* ever since, this shows that at least one Society was born at least 44 years ago:

The president of the P G Wodehouse Society at Oxford got me on the phone the other day. He is at Magdalen, and I got him all excited by telling him what a wonder Mike [Mike Griffith, Billy's son and excellent cricketer] was and that he would be coming to Magdalen in September. It was only after he had rung off that I realized that I had got the wrong University. Rather a jar for the lads at Magdalen, Oxford, if they are laying down the red carpet for Mike.

Under the Influence of Laughing Gas – 2

by Curtis Armstrong

This is the second and concluding extract from an talk by Curtis at the 2005 TWS Convention.

These days, you hear a lot of talk in Hollywood about ‘the fly-over’. Some of you may not be familiar with this term. The ‘fly-over’ is a Hollywood expression that refers to the whole of the continental United States excluding New York and Los Angeles. In Wodehouse’s day, it was called the sticks, the boonies or God’s Country. Joey Cooley hails from the heart of the fly-over, Chillicothe, Ohio, where hearts are pure and men are men, at least according to him. People in Hollywood have highly conflicted reactions to the fly-over. Joey’s comment (“I don’t care if Pittsburgh chokes. And that goes for Cincinnati, too.”) certainly reflects the opinion of many in Hollywood today – particularly those who were born and raised in places like Pittsburgh or Cincinnati and don’t like to be reminded of it.

At the same time, the importance of the fly-over to the bottom line in the industry is undeniable, hence Beulah Brinkwater’s hiring of Eggy Mannering as an elocution coach to rid their star of his Ohio accent, which she claimed “you could do handsprings on”. In other words, in Hollywood it’s okay to come from Ohio as long as you don’t sound like you come from Ohio. This rule of thumb remains true today: there are signs posted here and there on the streets round town which read ‘Accent Elimination: Speak American like a Native’, which I don’t think is technically what they mean to say but it does show the degree to which people here tend to forget just how much country lies outside the cultural capitals of New York and Hollywood, if ‘cultural’ is the word I’m looking for.

Even Wodehouse has Ann Bannister arrange to take Joey back to his Ohio home ‘in a car’, as if Chillicothe were down by the beach or something. Hollywood types are often accused of this kind of sunny geographical ignorance. In Christopher Guest’s Hollywood satire, *The Big Picture*, the studio executive, played by the late J T Walsh, asked the young would-be screenwriter where he came from. “Chicago,” the writer replied. “Oh” said the executive, “I have family in Ohio.”

Wodehouse’s geographical chops are a little suspect even as regards Hollywood and its environs. In *Laughing Gas*, he refers to ‘going down’ to Malibu, when he means up. Likewise, in *Performing Flea*, he talks about going ‘down’ to Santa Barbara, which is even further ‘up’ than Malibu. But this sense of

disorientation is common to people in my business. That’s why chauffeured limousines were invented.

As for unwanted sexual contact, *Laughing Gas* delivers. Imagine the shame and humiliation a healthy young man would feel when he is told by an attractive young woman to take off his clothes at once, because she wanted to give him a bath. Okay, bad example. Imagine the shame and humiliation a healthy young man would feel when he is told that 600 women from Michigan are lining up to kiss him, and he has to pretend to enjoy it. I understand that this sort of thing occurs even today in Hollywood, though God knows it’s never happened to me and I come from Michigan.

It was the sinister machinations of the press which gave *Laughing Gas* one critical plot point, and gives us an interesting glimpse into Wodehouse autobiography. Everyone is familiar with his ill-considered interview with Alma Whitaker of the *Los Angeles Times*, an interview that, according to Plum, resulted in his premature departure from Hollywood in 1931. *Laughing Gas*, written some five years later, replays this curious misstep in Wodehouse’s life by introducing reporter Pomona Wycherly of the *Los Angeles Chronicle*. You may recall that this Wycherly is at April June’s house when Reggie Havershot, still in the body of Joey Cooley, narrowly escapes his tormentors, former child star thugs Murphy and Flower. Wycherly takes advantage of his breathless, rattled condition to get an interview, an interview made even more newsworthy by Joey’s thoughtlessly smoking a much-needed cigarette and downing a purely medicinal snort or two. Reggie/Joey, pictured glass in hand, cigarette in mouth, is quoted as saying he’s actually 27 and prefers a pipe. All of which winds up on the front page of the Sunday edition, just as Wodehouse’s interview did. The article effectively destroys the young actor’s career in Hollywood, which is just fine by him, as it seems it was just fine for Wodehouse when it had happened to him.

But clear-eyed and razor sharp as Wodehouse’s satire is throughout *Laughing Gas*, the sequence that tops them all is that which features April June’s gang-for-hire, George, Eddie and Fred. In a town clogged to the back teeth with hyphenates, these three stand alone: kidnapper-screenwriters. But as bad as kidnapping is, it’s what they do to their victim once they have him under wraps that’s truly monstrous: they pitch him a movie they’re writing.

Wodehouse Songs on Stage in Wartime

Tony Ring came across a 1942 revival of Sally

Jessie Matthews is not a name which naturally springs to mind when considering the galaxy of stars who have performed Wodehouse material on stage or in the cinema. However, a recent acquisition of the programme for *Wild Rose*, the wartime London revival of *Sally*, identified her as one of the stars. The show enabled her to recover some confidence on stage after a disastrous flop with *The Lady Comes Across* in Boston.

Wild Rose was staged at the Princes Theatre (now the Shaftesbury) in August 1942, and ran for about six months. Little seems to be known about the show: I haven't been able to find a reference to it in any work on Wodehouse, and the programme makes no mention of his contribution. Book and lyrics are stated to be by Guy Bolton and Clifford Grey; revised by Frank Eyton and Richard Hearne, with Jessie Matthews as Sally, the leading lady. A copy of the libretto in the British Library (LCP 1942/14) shows two Wodehouse songs in the show: *The Church Round the Corner* (including a verse which does not seem to be in Barry Day's *The Complete Lyrics of P G Wodehouse*) and *You Can't Keep a Good Girl Down*.

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May we present an old story, perhaps one of the oldest in the World. The heroine is Cinderella, but she might be called Mary, Irene or Sally. No matter what her name is, in the end you will leave glad for in the arms of Prince Charming, and that's where you'll find her to-morrow evening, just it can't be in any 18th century ballroom, nor even on the steps of St. Margaret's, Westminster, beside some modern Gaiety, for the vireo of strings shall carry us back through time and distance to New York in the early 1900's—the New York of *Diagon Alley*, the *Booby*, of *Dean Gilson's* American beauties, of *parade phones* and *easy money*, when the stockmarkets made millionaires overnight and when the dazzling new electric lights over the Casino Theatre lit out the magic name of *Lillian Russell*—such then is the setting of this Cinderella story and so for a while let's have the grey reality of today in the *glimmer, glimmer and gaiter* that was New York at the turn of the century.

Under the Influence of Laughing Gas, continued

I know what most people think when reading this part of the book – “Funny, yes, but that’s a little much, isn’t it?” Well, some ten years or so ago, a disc jockey here in Los Angeles sent one of his people to a corner in Beverley Hills at lunch time and had him stop people – completely at random – and ask them “How is the screenplay coming?”. Eight out of ten people had an answer.

Back in the thirties, when the Golden Age of Hollywood was cresting and countless actors and playwrights from New York were surging west like some great race movement of the Middle Ages, a friend of playwright George S Kaufman sent him a cable. This friend had already transplanted himself from New York to Hollywood and was writing to encourage his friend to do the same. “There are piles of gold in the streets, just waiting for you.” Kaufman cabled back: “You mean I have to bend over and pick them up?”

Bending over and picking it up was pretty much how Wodehouse described his time in Hollywood. Of his work on *Rosalie*, Wodehouse remarked,

... No one wanted me to hurry. When it was finished, they thanked me politely and remarked that as musicals didn't seem to be going so well, they guessed they would not use it. That about sums up what I was called upon to do for my \$104,000. Isn't it amazing?

And to Bill Townend, he wrote:

I am sort of an Ogre to movie studios now...I don't care personally, as I don't think I could do

picture writing. It needs a definitely unoriginal mind.

Plum took considerable pride in claiming he did so little work that he had time:

... to write a novel, and nine short stories, besides brushing up my golf, getting an attractive sun-tan and perfecting my Australian crawl.

Robert McCrum, in his *Wodehouse, A Life*, claims Wodehouse mythologised his year in Hollywood, particularly his exit from it. Plum's self-mythologising looms large in McCrum's book, but, in this case, I think he's mistaken. What strikes me as so interesting about Wodehouse's account of his exile from Tinsel Town is how similar it is to his account of his exile from the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank so many years before.

You all remember that one: The Pirandelloesque short story written on the blank page of the new ledger about the opening of the new ledger; the page then torn out; the subsequent discovery by the office manager, who had it in for the stationer; the office uproar; the beleaguered stationer claiming only an idiot would tear a page out of a new ledger; the question as to whether there was an idiot working for him; the manager saying, “Well, we do have P G Wodehouse.”; poor Plum called into the room, grilled and finally coming clean; the nibs forming a hollow square and drumming him out of finance forever. Now *that's* mythologising. What's really amazing about life in Hollywood is how hard it is to mythologise something that is so unreal to begin with.

PGW: An Early Appreciation

An Unusual Tribute from May 1911

When Wodehouse was making a name for himself in the early 1900s, this four page tribute and photograph appeared at the back of a book, *The Lighted Match*, by Charles Neville Buck. This, like the two PGW Wodehouse novels mentioned, was published by WJ Watt & Company and appeared in May 1911.

The particular point of interest is that Buck was another author who employed the agent A E Baermann and had been defrauded out of some of his earnings in the same way as Wodehouse had been when *Love Among the Chickens* was published in 1909. See *Wooster Sauce*, December 2003, page 5, for more details.

During the past year a phrase has been frequently heard among magazine and book men in New York when the name Pelham Granville Wodehouse has been mentioned. This phrase is 'the logical successor to O Henry' – and it is misleading. Any humorist who tried to follow in the tracks of O Henry would be merely an imitator and the task would be as unwise as though O Henry had cramped his own freedom in an effort to walk in the footprints of Mark Twain or any other predecessor in the field of humor.

Wodehouse suggests O Henry only in that he has suddenly come into universal recognition as a remarkable humorist. He wields a pen which commands an uncommon power of satire, without the suggestion of vitriol or bitterness. His humor has a sparkle, effervescence and spontaneity which has put him in an incredibly short time in the front rank of writers, and since the materialistic barometer at least records the opinion of the editors and since the editors are supposed to know, has brought him into that envied coterie whose rate per word in the magazines has soared skyward.

P G Wodehouse was born in Guildford, England, in 1881, and while still an infant he accompanied his parents to Hong Kong, where the elder Wodehouse was a judge. He is a cousin of the Earl of Kimberley. In his school days he went in for cricket, football and boxing, and made for himself a reputation in athletics.

For two years Mr Wodehouse went into a London bank and observed the passing parade from a high stool, but this was not quite in keeping with his tastes, and we find him next publishing a column of humorous paragraphs in the *London Globe*, under



the head of *By The Way*. Later he assumed the editorship of this department, and many of his paragraphs lived longer than the few hours' existence of most newspaper humor. Also since all writers experimentally venture into the dramatic, he wrote several vaudeville sketches which have had popular English productions.

Three years ago P G Wodehouse came to New York. He liked the American field and wanted to see whether his humor would strike the American fancy. It struck. Mr Wodehouse had tried his wings here only a few months when magazine editors were bidding for his manuscripts. His short stories have appeared generally in the magazines, and while one often finds the delightful touch of pathos, there is always an abundance of laughter. In *Cosmopolitan*, *Collier's Weekly*, *Ainslee's*, and many other publications these stories appear as often as Mr Wodehouse will contribute.

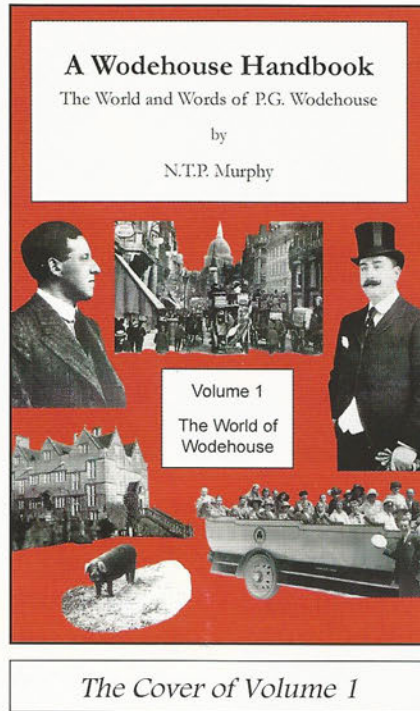
His novel *The Intrusion of Jimmy* last year was a decided success. In it Mr Wodehouse demonstrated his ability to hold his sprinting speed over a Marathon distance. The book, after giving the flattering returns of a large sale, found its second production on the stage. In its dramatized version with the title *A Gentleman of Leisure*, it has had its

The Birth of a Handbook

... after a gestation period of 25 years, says Elin Woodger Murphy

You will remember *In Search of Blandings*, that seminal work of Wodehousean scholarship written by N T P Murphy, now our Society's Remembrancer and light of my life. Well, 25 years on, said Murphy has made good on his promise to expand on *ISOB* by publishing *A Wodehouse Handbook: The World and Words of P G Wodehouse*. I would suggest, however, that a more accurate title might be *Everything You Didn't Know About P G Wodehouse And His Books And Now You Don't Have to Ask Because Norman Explains All*.

Naturally I'm prejudiced, but I can assure you this book is as much fun to read as it is informative. And I can attest to its thoroughness, knowing how much Norman put into it. He spent years rereading Wodehouse as well as the authors Wodehouse read to find quotations (with plenty of help from other resources as well). He scoured through social histories, biographies, memoirs, and obituaries to uncover the real-life people, places, and events that Wodehouse used. He spent hours in the British Library, poring through newspapers, magazines, and song catalogues to retrieve the advertisements, poems, and lyrics that Wodehouse so cunningly employed.



He examined Wodehouse's letters and notes to unearth valuable clues and made many a field trip to bang on doors and find people who could give him the answers he sought. Yet every time he thought he had finished, somebody would ask a question that sent him looking for more.

When Norman was finally, truly finished, he faced the technical problems presented by self-publication. These were overcome with the help of his extraordinarily patient and long-suffering wife; advice from knowledgeable friends such as Neil Midkiff; and, especially, the assistance of Jean Tillson, who formatted the photos and designed the book covers, and Gary Hall, who put the book into print format.

The support and encouragement of friends such as Murray Hedgcock, Hilary Bruce, Edward Cazalet, Tony Ring, and Ed Ratcliffe also made all the difference to the book's birth.

The order flyer enclosed with this *Wooster Sauce* provides further details of *A Wodehouse Handbook*, which I predict will become an invaluable resource for all Wodehouse admirers. So buy it – both volumes for the price of one – you'll like it!

PGW: An Early Appreciation, continued

tryout on the road and has proven a success. With Douglas Fairbanks in the reading [sic] rôle, it will be one of next Fall's elaborate productions on Broadway.

In personality Mr Wodehouse is quite as interesting as one might gather from his writings. Physically a man of splendid proportions and mentally a fountain of spirited humor, he is, nevertheless, modest to the point usually termed 'retiring', and is well known only after a long acquaintanceship. He is fond of all sports, and on reaching America became truly the native in his enthusiasm for baseball. Mr Wodehouse says that one epoch of his literary career dates from his purchase of an automobile in 1907. The purchase was an investment of considerable gravity to a young writer

just commencing to command an entrée. The automobile lasted some two weeks and came to a violent end against a telephone pole. Mr Wodehouse thought out the major problems of life sitting on the turf near the pole from a more or less lacerated point of view. He decided, amongst other things, that his forte was rather writing about motors than riding about in motors.

Mr Wodehouse's second novel will be an even greater success than *The Intrusion of Jimmy*. Mr Wodehouse spent last winter on the Riviera writing this book, and his friends who have read the advance pages agree with the publishers that it will deserve and receive even greater cordiality than the first. The title will be *The Prince and Betty* and it will be something for novel readers to look forward to.

A Bright Night at Gray's Inn

Patrick Kidd contemplates his first Society dinner

It may be the centenary of the publication of *Love Among the Chickens*, P G Wodehouse's first book for grown-ups, but the members of the Wodehouse Society chose to express love for another animal at their dinner on October 5. For the first time at these biennial gatherings, members strapped on the nosebag and scoffed on Berkshire pork.



Lucy Tregear and Andrew Rees, singing with Gusto

The 9th Earl of Emsworth would have taken to his bed in shock, perhaps recovering himself by thumbing through a chapter or two of Whiffle on *The Care of the Pig*, but the society were extremely grateful that the descendants of the Earl's esteemed Empress of Blandings had selflessly laid down their lives so that we could have something to go with our savoy cabbage.



Sir John Mortimer proposed the toast to Wodehouse

The pigs received their gilt-edged invitations to an At Home in the abattoir back in January. Cruel? Nonsense, it is the Emsworth Paradox in action: to preserve the Berkshire we need to eat it, and delicious it was, too. Our chairman, Hilary Bruce, said that the society had embraced the paradox "with gusto", Gusto presumably being the name of one of the Italian sous chefs working with Anatole in the kitchens.

The society members at the dinner at Gray's Inn – all 148 of them, looking dashing in their black ties and

astoundingly flamboyant evening gowns – embraced another Wodehouse creation: that of the formidable aunt.

By coincidence, Faber & Faber had (unwittingly?) chosen the day of the Society dinner to publish Rupert Christiansen's *The Complete Book of Aunts*. Naturally, Plum's novels are held up in the book as a paradigm of how to write great aunts.

'Dahlia and Agatha,' we were reminded, 'operate on the good aunt, bad aunt principle.'

The finest and fiercest of these aged relatives were then paraded before us in an extravaganza of readings and music, crafted together by Tony Ring as *The Surging Sea of Aunts*. Edward Fox, Gabrielle Drake, the Duke of Kent and Lara and David Cazalet (the latter two being Plum's step-great-grandchildren) brought Wodehouse's menagerie of characters to life, while Andrew Rees and Lucy Tregear, accompanied by Stephen Higgins, sang his songs heartily.

There was even an entertaining piece of Wodehousean patter by two partners from PricewaterhouseCoopers, who had kindly sponsored the dinner. For their pains, they were given a silver cow creamer, of the sort that Bertie Wooster tried to steal from Sir Watkyn Bassett in *The Code of the Woosters*, to display in their office. Whether it was Old English or modern Dutch was not absolutely clear.

All of this was topped, however, by a thoroughly witty address and toast to Wodehouse and the Society from Sir John Mortimer, who said he was delighted after 40 years as a barrister at last to find Gray's Inn. He then explained why Wodehouse is an ideal companion for the law, what with all the scrapes that his characters keep getting into, before revealing some tales from the courtroom that sounded just as outlandish as anything that Plum dreamt up.

As a token of our gratitude, Mortimer was given sponsorship of Patience, a Berkshire sow from just outside Ipswich. We trust that he will treat her with the affection of Lord Emsworth and not let her near the carving knives of that fellow Gusto.

And Further Reflections from Three of Our Overseas Members Attending



Some of the tables at Gray's Inn

From Mike Iwanaga of Chiba, Japan

Much water has flowed since my first Wodehouse Dinner held at the Inner Temple. In the meantime, I have published two Japanese translations of Plum, to public acclaim, to be followed by many more. Their success owes very much to members of the Society, notably Tony Ring and Norman Murphy, both of whom I met for the first time at the last Dinner. They were kind enough to contribute prefaces to the books and patiently answered many of my idiotic questions.

This year on the day before the Dinner, I was given a chance to visit and admire the Ring Wodehouse Collection and the day after I walked the famed Murphy's Wodehouse Walk, when I met many Wodehouse enthusiasts from many parts of the world and expanded my Wodehouse circle. The Society has also functioned as a medium through which I got to know other Wodehouse freaks such as Phil Ayers of the USA and Hiro Kotani of Japan.

It is bliss for me at the prime of life to be surrounded by and to communicate with – even through the Internet – many who share the same values. With them I certainly will Flit By.



Edward Fox sharing a lectern with Lara Cazalet

From Susan Brokaw, of Cincinnati, Ohio

Had I not known better I think I would have assumed, like most other Midwestern Americans, that Gray's Inn, with its stained glass windows and vaulted ceiling, was a sort of historic church and not a lawyers' dining hall. And although I would have been wrong, given the reverence in which P G Wodehouse is held by those attending the formal dinner, an ecclesiastical setting would be fitting.

And I don't care how far removed I am from my American childhood, there is something about hearing a steward announcing dinner with "Your Royal Highness, Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen . . ." that makes one feel like a part of a very lovely fairytale.

So I thank the committee for their hard work and attention to detail in organizing such a wonderfully memorable evening.



Gabrielle Drake was an aunt personified

From Ola Winfridsson of Sweden (and Cambridge)

Attending my third society dinner since my move to the UK in 1999, it was easy to see that the Great Man's spirit hovers over this veritable Wodehousean *smorgasbord* of entertainment and revelry. Had we ventured into the kitchen I am sure we would have found Anatole stirring a pot here and preparing an *Emsworth Paradox* there.

In his moving toast to Plum, Sir John Mortimer QC regaled us with anecdotes that would have made PGW proud, and once the last pieces of plaster had rained down from the ceiling the by now traditional (and traditionally brilliant) society dinner entertainment, this time entitled *A Surging Sea of Aunts*, brought the house down and the dinner to a fitting close.

The photographs on these pages are all courtesy of Ginni Beard
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My First Wodehouse Experience

by Mahendra Gonsalkorale

My memory is not infallible but to the best of my recollection, my first introduction to Plum was years ago when I was a schoolboy aged 12 or thereabouts at Royal College, Colombo.

A bit of background may help as it is unfair to expect even the highly knowledgeable readers of an important journal such as *Wooster Sauce* to have intimate knowledge on such topics as Royal College, Colombo. Ceylon, as Sri Lanka was then called, is perhaps still best known for arguably the best tea in the world, Ceylon Tea.

Royal has changed over the years but still remains one of the foremost schools in Sri Lanka. In my days in the 1950s, it was much closer to the Public school model in England. We frowned on degrading sports such as Soccer and played only Rugby. Cricket was a 'must' and schoolwork was always interrupted during the Australia-England test matches by listening to commentaries on pocket radios smuggled into class rooms.

Royal had a lot of extra-curricular activities such as the Radio Club, Debating societies, Drama societies, Rambling Clubs, Music societies and a host of others. The Royal motto was *disce aut discede* and the school firmly subscribed to the principle that education had to be broad and not just confined to passing exams and academic achievement.

One central point of importance was a well-stocked library. The most read item in the reference section was a weekly magazine called *Titbits* which sported within its flimsy pages pictures of nubile females in bikinis. One had to reach it fairly quickly after it was placed on the shelf as some of the most interesting pages 'disappeared' without trace very quickly! I would still like to salute the person responsible for the great act of humanity in placing a subscription for it and berate the narrow-minded ignoramus who stopped it a few years after I left school.

I did not come from a well-to-do family, and the Library was my biggest source of reading material. Although my mother tongue was Sinhalese, we all spoke English. My long-suffering mother, who discovered that a happy marriage meant a string of offspring (she had one daughter and six sons, bless her!), was very keen that we should speak good English and had a rule that on certain days of the week, all speech at home had to be in English.

Thanks to her efforts, we became quite adept at using the language. She also introduced to us the joy of reading. I recall with nostalgia Richmal Crompton's William books, Biggles, Enid Blyton, The Hardy Boys and many books based on midnight escapades in English boarding schools.

Although I enjoyed reading these, the author that gave me the greatest satisfaction was undoubtedly P G Wodehouse. I think my first book was *Summer Lightning*. I could not believe that anybody could use words to describe events in such a humorous way. Who else could write about a parrot as he did in *Jill the Reckless*:

He closed his eyes and pondered on his favourite problem – Why was he a parrot? – This was always good for an hour or so and he came to his customary decision that he didn't know.

The situations he could conjure were so ridiculous but intensely funny. My mother would often spot me reading a PGW and chuckling to myself. I began to unconsciously copy his style when I wrote letters or essays. In those young days, I could transport myself to the 'scene of action' and forget that I was reading a novel. I visited Blandings Castle, met Lord Emsworth, wandered around on the spacious grounds, found romance in the Rose gardens, became close friends with Bertie Wooster and Jeeves, and exchanged many a pleasantry with numerous butlers.

When I came to England for the first time in 1973, I felt that I already knew it well. Visits to places such as Chatsworth House and Tatton Park were like entering familiar territory. I have no doubt that my early introduction to the Master played a large part in my love for England and all that is English. I still have this wish to be transported back in time to the days of Earls and Butlers and large country manors and feasts and festivals. What a life these people must have had! Of course the real world may have been slightly less romantic, but what's the harm in dreaming?

I am eternally grateful to PGW for the hours and hours of sheer enjoyment he has given me and to my mother, a teacher of English herself, who so appreciated the English language that she wanted her children not to miss out on the intense pleasure and knowledge gained by entering a World which otherwise would have been denied to them.

From Previous Issues of Wooster Sauce

In this and the three following pages, we are reproducing some choice items from past issues of Wooster Sauce. For those members who have joined recently, we hope they might elevate, amuse or inform, and for those of longer standing, we trust that some at least will strike a chord.

From WS13, March 2000

An exposure: by Mark Goodfellow

Recently added to the strength of the Society is Mark Goodfellow, who kindly sent in a copy of a letter dated September 16, 1956, which he has in his collection. In it, Wodehouse explains how a scene from *Sam the Sudden* turned up in a condensed serialisation of *Something Fishy* in *Colliers*.

Note the date of the letter, for the exchange referred to had appeared in the second (September 14) instalment of the *Colliers* condensation. The equivalent serial in the British *John Bull* had not yet started, and the book would not be published until 1957 either in England or the USA.

The short scene referred to can be found in chapter 29 (on pages 240-241 in the Penguin edition) of *Sam the Sudden*. It appeared between what became the last two paragraphs of chapter 22 in *Something Fishy* (US book title *The Butler Did It*), using these words:

“Besides, money isn’t everything. As a matter of fact, I despise the stuff. When I said I would have liked to have a million, I was wrong. It’s much more fun being married when you’re hard up.”

“Of course it is.”

“Do you know, I knew a wretched devil in America who came into about forty million when his father died, and he went and married a girl with double that in her own right.”

“What became of them?” asked Jane, shocked.

“I don’t know. We lost touch. But just imagine that marriage.”

“Awful!”

“What fun could they have had?”

“None. What was his name?”

“Blenkiron,” said Bill in a hushed voice. “And hers was Poskitt.”

They stood silent for a moment, deeply affected by the tragedy of these two poor bits of human wreckage. Then, for they were young and resilient, they threw off the passing sadness.

EASTPORT 5-037A

MRS. P. G. WODEHOUSE
REMSENBURG, LONG ISLAND

Sept 16.1956

Dear Mr Williams.

Fancy you spotting that bit of plagiarism! Here is how it came about.

These damned magazines nowadays won't buy full-length serials, so I wrote a short version of *Something Fishy* for serial purposes and was so eager to get the thing finished so that I could start the real story, the full length one, that - needing a hero and heroine scene - I said to myself "Oh, dammit, will remember 'Sam' and bunged in the *Sam* scene.

nobody

If you come across the story in book form - it is to be called *THE BUTLER DID IT* and will be published by Simon and Schuster in January or February - you will see that I have written a completely new scene for that spot. The whole story is a hundred per cent better in its longer form, as I had to cut out a whole sub-plot in the serial version. I do hate these condensed versions.

OVER:-

From WS4, December 1997

Recent Press Comment: From *The Oldie*, October 1997

Sylvia A Matheson recalled the day in 1933 when, as a teenager, she had been brash enough to ignore Wodehouse’s vow never to give another interview to a woman journalist, and was granted an interview. She recalled her surprise that he spent so much time

on a ‘teenage nobody’, particularly as he had a terrific backlog of work, and recounted an anecdote about the time when, trying to practise his French, he had danced with the wife of a friend and told her: “Vous dansez comme une plume, Madame.” He should have said: “Vous dansez légère comme une plume” had he wanted to compliment her on her dancing as being like a feather, whereas he had actually said she danced as stiffly as a pen or a stick!

Why Isn't Bertie Fat?

James Clayton asks the question

From WS23, September 2002

But before examining that question, perhaps it is necessary to examine how we know he isn't. All his relatives appear to be fat. His uncles are so fat that from time to time they need to go to Harrogate for the cure. Indeed, fat uncles are commonplace among the relatives of members of the Drones. But Bertie is normally depicted – in drawings, on television, in film – as slim, dapper, and well dressed, if perhaps sometimes a little on the short side.

About his being well-dressed there is, of course, no question. Jeeves sees to that. Even when he wears something of which Jeeves disapproves, such as the white mess jacket, he attracts the admiration of acquaintances. And while there are plenty of references to his general appearance, details about his size and shape are few.

It may not be conclusive that a bearded Hyde Park orator describes him as tall and thin with a face like a motor mascot, because the occasion on which this description is offered demands an insult. But Bertie does not deny this, and elsewhere describes himself as slender and willowy, a description which Boko Fittleworth supports.

According to Bobbie Wickham and Jeeves, who should know, he has a face like a fish, and again, Bertie appears to accept this as a reasonable description. Fishes and motor mascots are not normally fat, so we can assume he is thin-faced, and no one anywhere makes disparaging remarks about his size – although Bertie occasionally comments on the fatness of others – so it would appear that he is precisely as depicted, slim.

So, why isn't he fat?

His daily routine consists largely of eating and drinking, and when one looks for them, there are a surprising number of references to his daily intake.

He gets up late after having been brought tea and, occasionally, bread and butter, in bed. His breakfast is usually eggs and bacon, with marmalade and toast, followed by coffee, presumably containing milk, but there is some variety in that occasionally he will have kippers or sausages, or kidneys on toast and mushrooms. Undoubtedly, he breakfasts well, wherever he is.

He then goes off to the Drones for lunch unless he has invited guests to the flat or is out of town, and

while details are rarely given of his lunches, when circumstances take him to the Senior Liberal Club he has six courses without any indication that he might be overdoing it.

The famous picnic lunch at the races would have consisted of the following: ham sandwiches, tongue sandwiches, potted meat sandwiches, game sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, lobster, cold chicken, sardines, cake – 'and if we want a bite to eat after that, of course, we can go to the pub'. Would have, I say, only because the hamper has been left behind as part of Jeeves's manipulations.

There are many references to afternoon teas, at the flat, or in country houses, and these usually consist of something oozing with butter, such as toast, or muffins, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the tea is with milk.

Every night, wherever he is, he has dinner, sometimes alone, sometimes at Aunt Dahlia's table enjoying Anatole's cooking. And when he selects the dinner of his choice as a reward for accepting a term of imprisonment, the menu contains 19 items. It is likely that however many courses he has at any dinner, they may not be large, but they are always plentiful. So he eats a lot.

What about drinking? He describes himself as an abstemious cove, but it is now accepted as a truism that most people, when asked to indicate their idea of excessive drinking, say it is a little more than they drink themselves. Sometimes, such independent comments as we have on the extent of Bertie's drinking come from others whose ideas of excessive drinking could be considered to match that truism.

But among his relatives and associates, Aunt Dahlia, Gussie Fink-Nottle, and Stilton Cheesewright all think he drinks too much, and say so. Apart from those special occasions such as Boat Race night and bump suppers at which he admits to having drunk too much, the independent observer might conclude that at other times he also drinks rather a lot. Cocktails before a lunch taken with a half-bottle of wine or champagne and followed by brandy, cocktails before dinner, wine during dinner, a whisky and soda to help him sleep. In addition there are the occasional drinks he takes when he feels the need to restore the tissues.

So here we have a youngish man who eats and drinks in large quantities and yet remains slim. Perhaps he works it all off in exercise.

Saved from the Impending Doom

by Alekh Bhurke

From WS14, June 2000

I had a very spiritual experience in February this year from which I was saved only because I read my Wodehouse religiously.

I was in South Carolina for a convention. One of those swanky rural retreats with ponds and cottages and ducks and swans. And when I say swans I mean big, black swans looking like they'd just returned from a visit to their hair stylist and were rather haughty about it.

To get from point A in this place to another point, say B, one needs to cross little wooden foot bridges. And as one day I went for a stroll there stood a swan in my way, guarding the bridge. I thought nothing of it as I quietly edged past and all was well. The next day I found myself in the vicinity of the same bridge with a Wodehouse in my pocket and the sun shining brightly. Not being of a particularly nimble mind, I took off the jacket, plopped down on the lawns and started on the book *Louder and Funnier*. An enjoyable hour passed, the ducks waddled, the swans floated, all was right with the world. And then suddenly, through the corner of my eye, I spied what looked like a big black hissing garden hose on a collision course with me at 60 miles an hour. Further observation proved it to be one swan: wings spread, about sixteen feet of neck unrolled, hissing like a leaky gas-pipe and its temper shortening by the stride. In another two seconds the menace would be upon me!

The first thought was to look for strategically located little octagonal summer houses to climb upon. A quick survey of the landscape revealed the futility of such an endeavour. And then, quick as a flash, it came to me. I popped up, picked my jacket off the ground and opening it up wide, thrust it upon the



head of the swan who was now conveniently located a couple of feet away from me.

The poor dumb chum was so startled he staggered back. I took the opp to leg it to a nearby balcony, leaving behind everything but my shoes. After fifteen minutes of what looked like a war-dance, the swan wandered off in search of other prey and I was able to pick up the remains of my attire and my much-humbled ego. I shudder to think what would have happened if I hadn't read my Wodehouse and put theory into practice.

There is a lesson in this for all of us.

Why Isn't Bertie Fat?, continued

In younger days he was fairly active. At Oxford he rowed, but not with distinction, he rode a bicycle, and swam in the college fountain. He did, however, represent the university at racquets. Nowadays he rides, swims, shoots, plays golf and squash, tennis and darts, and throws bread rolls. But not a lot, and surely not enough to burn up all the energy from the daily intake of food and drink.

Sometimes, when staying at a country house, dinner is followed by a stroll in the grounds, hardly enough

exercise to counter the earlier excesses, certainly not when at Brinkley Court where, he acknowledges, Anatole's skills one summer added an inch to his waist. In town he will often go to the theatre after dinner, usually a musical comedy – not a very strenuous excursion – or to a night club, where the dancing is accompanied by more drinking.

No. He may be slender and willowy, but it cannot last. One day he will be as fat as Uncle George, and then who will go with him to Harrogate?

A Wodehouse Salmagundi or, A Few Quick Ones

From WS10, June 1999

Letter from Erica Kilby

The Times of 19 March carried this brief letter from Mr H Sutherland Pilch:

I was walking down King William Street in the City yesterday and I saw a bare navel for the first time this year. Surely these days this is a better harbinger of spring than a cuckoo?

In *Over Seventy*, PGW refers in the chapter *Raw Eggs, Cuckoos and Patrons*, to the competition amongst Letters Page correspondents to be the first to report a sighting of a cuckoo, and the importance of being certain that it is indeed a cuckoo and not some poor substitute reed-warbler. One wonders what he would have made of a bare navel on display in the City.

Elsewhere in *Over Seventy* he wrote about the practice of studio executives of allowing an author to overhear a conversation about a tall, blonde girl with large, blue eyes who wears a pink bathing-suit and has a freckle or mole in the small of her back. With great ease the prey could be induced to sign a Hollywood contract on the strength of the promised introduction to this girl. PG maintained that it was by this method that ‘they got me’. Clearly he was not immune to youthful feminine beauty, so I suspect the bare navel might have delighted rather than shocked him.

From WS 1, March 1997

A Plea For Help From the British Film Institute

Sadly, many important Wodehouse items are missing from official television archives. There is only one surviving episode from *The World of Wooster* and nothing from *Blandings Castle* (BBC, 1967) and *Ukridge* (BBC, 1968). However there is a possibility that copies of these ‘lost’ programmes may be in the hands of private collectors and fans. The British Film Institute would be pleased to hear from anyone who has such copies or knows the whereabouts of any. If located, we would borrow the material to make a copy for our own archive, and screen the item or items at the National Film Theatre at a later date.

Any member who can help is invited to contact the Editor at the address on the back page.

From WS14, June 2000

Recent Press Comment: Daily Mail, May 18 2000

In an article entitled *Why I’m So Proud to Be a Spinster*, Clarissa Dickson Wright pointed out that while marrying and settling down to raise a family is a worthy objective, it is not one which has ever appealed to her. She adds:

By choice – and in distinguished company down the centuries – I fully intend to enter my dotage as I have lived, my own woman.

I know that old maids are often figures of fun and objects of pity. But anyone who has studied the works of that sublime social commentator P G Wodehouse will know the authority wielded by these formidable creatures.

Of course, some of them were built like Stalin’s tanks and clearly had little but contempt for the male of the species, but others were dangerous seductresses given to long cigarette holders. Wicked!

From WS26, June 2003

Editor’s Tailpieces

On Friday May 16, the Financial Times reported that M. Giscard d’Estaing had reacted with typically patrician disdain to the Daily Mail’s warning that his draft European Union Treaty on the constitution would be ‘a blueprint for tyranny’.

“I’m not astonished because I know the British talent for fiction,” he said. “It brings to mind the style of PG Wodehouse. They say it’s a secret convention made up of foreigners – it’s secret because it sits in Brussels.”

From WS5, March 1998

Recent Press Comment: Standard November 24, 1997

In reviewing *Broadway Babies Say Goodnight* by Mark Steyn, the reviewer picked out the perceptive comment: ‘Had PGW died in 1918 he would have been remembered not as a British novelist but as the first great lyricist of the American musical.’

From WS 21, March 2002

Editor’s Tailpieces

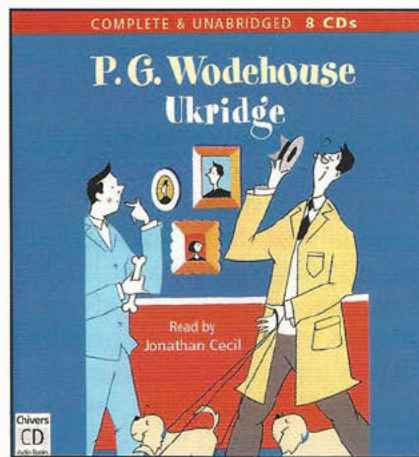
True story: Two folk in their twenties chatting away. Sanjay mentions to Meeta (the friend who reported the conversation) that he was reading Wodehouse. She confessed she hadn’t read any. “And you call yourself an Indian!” he said.

A Thought from BBC Audiobooks . . .

Congratulations from BBC Audiobooks to all at *Wooster Sauce* on your 10th anniversary, ten years in which you've been promoting one of the funniest and most quintessentially British of twentieth-century writers, P G Wodehouse.

Celebrating 'Plum' and bringing his work to a wider audience is what we've both been engaged in for some years now. As Chivers Audio Books we started publishing the wonderful Jeeves on cassette, mostly for libraries, as far back as 1989, with the late Dinsdale Landen reading. Readers have included Ian Carmichael, Peter Barker, Nigel Lambert, James Saxon and of course, the inimitable Jonathan Cecil, bringing his own special brand of tomfoolery and gravitas to the key characters of Jeeves and Bertie Wooster. And audiobooks are no longer just for libraries, they're for commuters, anyone going on long journeys, or people who just like listening and laughing as they go about their daily tasks.

In 2001 BBC Worldwide acquired Chivers Audio Books, and that meant that the new company, BBC Audiobooks, could offer both unabridged readings and radio dramatisations of Wodehouse, something for everyone, a rich diet of Wooster, Jeeves, Psmith, Blandings and Ukridge for all.



Back in 1989, cassette was the only format for audiobooks, and our list of titles, all complete and unabridged grew and grew. Then along came the CD, and since then we've been busy republishing on CD as fast as we can.

Of course that's not the only technological revolution: if you have a computer you can find lots of our unabridged readings available to download directly onto your PC or your MP3 player. So, although our modern technology might be unrecognisable to Wodehouse, the humour and humanity of his prose remains completely recognisable to the modern ear – the mark of a classic and well worth celebrating.

To mark your anniversary, we are happy to provide a special offer to members: see the enclosed flyer.

. . . and from our Printers, Baines Design and Print

Stuart Bennett contemplates our first 40 issues.

Tony Ring first approached me in 1997 and asked if I would be able to give him some prices on printing a new newsletter which he was editing. My company, Baines Design and Print, duly quoted and were awarded the job to print the first edition of *Wooster Sauce*.

It's been great working with the Society over the years, seeing the newsletter develop and grow. We print hundreds of newsletters but sadly most don't last the passage of time. Bi-monthlies become quarterlies and then annual editions, and then vanish all together. But *Wooster Sauce* has gone from strength to strength and we have enjoyed watching it grow from its humble beginnings to this commemorative issue.



I rarely get a chance to read much of any of the newsletters which we print but there is always an article or two in *Wooster Sauce* that catches my eye when I am checking the proofs.

I know that Tony is handing over the reigns of the Editorship of the newsletter after this edition and we would like to thank the Society for their custom over the past ten years. We wish you all the very best for the next ten, and look forward to continuing the relationship.

The Society Owes Debts of Gratitude

A reminder of the roles played by former officers,

Hilary Bruce on Norman Murphy

Perhaps best described simply as one of nature's phenomena, Lt Col N T P Murphy was the Society's founding Chairman and, largely through sheer force of personality, decisively established the infant Society. Participants in his famous Wodehouse Walks know Norman as a consummate showman; he has always attracted attention, and goes to great lengths to gain publicity for the Society – even, on one occasion, marrying the President of the U S Wodehouse Society. After seven years' Chairmanship, Norman laid down his gavel – one of his trademark pipes – to become the Society's Remembrancer, a title he chose himself.

One of the world's leading authorities on Plum, Norman has published several books, each intensively researched, sometimes speculative, always entertaining: his idiosyncratic *One Man's London*; his famous investigation *In Search of Blandings*; *The Reminiscences of the Hon Galahad Threepwood* and soon – hurrah – his latest oeuvre, the two-volume *A Wodehouse Handbook: The World and Words of P G Wodehouse*.

Norman is a lovely man. The words *preux* and *chevalier* could have been written for him; he is fair, transparently honest, enormously entertaining, extremely kind – and I know I am not alone in being quite devoted to him.

Paul Rush on Bob Miller

The matches of the Society's cricket team ('The Gold Bats') have established themselves as an integral and much enjoyed part of the calendar. Traditionally the team has played two games a year: a match against the masters of Dulwich College, and one against the Sherlock Holmes Society. That the team was formed, has lasted as long as it has and, this year, has seen an extended fixture list, is down to Bob Miller, our chairman of selectors, fixture secretary and on-field captain. All those who have played in all or any of the games owe him a great vote of thanks for his hard work on and off the field.

Alan Wood on John Wilson

John Wilson has been the Society's auditor or as now, book-examiner, since the very early days of its existence. During this time, he has had to put up with the whims and peccadilloes of three treasurers and their book-keeping practices while ensuring that the figures they produced for the AGM, related to reality. Not only has he done this without any complaint of being kept away from the golf course but has given wise advice on accounting matters. A few years ago he organised an enjoyable golfing day for the Cow Creamer Trophy.

Hilary Bruce on John Fletcher

Scholarly, erudite and a true gentleman of great charm, John Fletcher is one of the Society's most enjoyable individuals. A lifelong Wodehouse scholar, John became a founder member of the Society's Committee. In the early '90s, John began publishing Wodehousean books under his Porpoise imprint – around a dozen over 15 years including *The Reminiscences of the Hon Galahad Threepwood* edited by Norman Murphy, Tony Ring's *You Simply Hit Them With an Axe*, and his epic eight-volume *Wodehouse Concordance*, and two collection of unrepublished short stories, *Tales of Wrykyn and Elsewhere*, and *A Man of Means*.

John originated the Society's website in 1999, taking it from an idea to a highly successful, frequently visited site. His attractive writing and editing style – an example to us all – has made the website a cherished ambassador for the Society, and its most effective recruitment tool.

Hilary Bruce on Nick Townend

Nick was the Society's first fully-qualified Treasurer, the person that propelled our groaning systems into the computer age. But long before he was reeled in to that vital, though often under-appreciated role, Nick had been a quietly noted Wodehouse scholar and collector, especially strong on the school stories. He has contributed *Wooster Sauce's* Bibliographic Corner, and organised our first Society meeting in Bolton. Nick handed in his calculator when the combination of a new house, a new job and a new child made his resignation unarguable, but a further regret remains that, despite the spelling, he is no relation whatsoever to Wodehouse's own Bill Townend.

Hilary Bruce on the late Helen Murphy

Helen Murphy was the Society's Membership Secretary from its first days and Treasurer, too, until our roster grew so large that the jobs had to be split. The daughter of Norman and Charlotte Murphy and a Wodehouse scholar of some substance in her own right, she also informally fulfilled the function of correspondence secretary, painstakingly answering the arcane points raised by members. Helen presented papers at US Conventions and our own Savage Club meetings, the audiences revelling in her cut-glass delivery.

Helen was fearsomely intelligent, punctilious, scrupulously polite, possessed of a dry wit, a rather private person. She died, in her early thirties, in April 2004. We still miss her.

to So Many: We Can Only Mention a Few committee members, and others involved behind the scenes

Norman Murphy on Jan Figgott

Jan Figgott recently retired from his position as Keeper of the Archives at Dulwich College. He had taught at Dulwich for many years and was Head of English before taking over the archive. Jan's research through College records produced numerous gems of fascinating information which he was happy to share with Wodehouseans. His talks and presentations on Wodehouse will never be forgotten by those lucky enough to hear them.

For years Jan provided scholarly advice to Wodehouseans around the world, and visitors to the Wodehouse Library were always greeted with courtesy and warmth. Jan's immense kindness was amply demonstrated during the 2000 Wodehouse Millennium Tour when our large group descended on the archive to drool over legendary items from the Wodehouse collection in his care. It was one of the highlights of the tour. I treasure his beautifully handwritten letters answering a query, confirming a theory – or telling me that Wodehouse and I had got someone's name wrong. May he have a long and happy retirement.

Norman Murphy on Elaine Ring

Every organisation has someone on whom they depend – more than they realise. Elaine Ring is one such person. Since the Society was founded in 1997, she has been our unsung heroine who has taken care of the details all too often overlooked. Like making sure the Society's book is signed by attendees at various events. Like stuffing thousands of *Wooster Sauces* and accompanying leaflets into envelopes. Like organising the popular, always-lauded teas for the Dulwich cricket match, year in and year out. (If this sounds unimportant, just remember it means planning for an unknown and unpredictable number of consumers whose appetite alters with the weather, also unpredictable, making allowances for innumerable variables – and looking as if you are enjoying it!)

At Savage evenings, I rely on Elaine to tell me people's names and help me look after new attendees. She and Tony are constantly entertaining visiting Wodehouseans from around the world and making sure each one feels special. I can remember occasion after occasion when Elaine's kindness and hospitality have benefited the Society.

Elaine Ring is neither an officer nor a Committee member, but the Society has relied on her since its foundation. We owe her a great deal.

Tony Ring on David Herboldt

As the Society's membership approached 400 (it is now over 1,000) it became clear that the handwritten membership records originally set up by the late Helen Murphy would not be tenable in the long run. An appeal in *Wooster Sauce* for a member to help establish and maintain a database drew a response from David Herboldt, and we have been in his debt ever since.

David is responsible for recording and updating membership details, and for providing labels for the quarterly distributions and any special mailings, for example those which are sent out occasionally to notify members about a theatrical event local to their geographical area. He shares with the Treasurer and Membership Secretary information about the length of time which individuals have been members, which is crucial in making sure, for instance, that you receive the correct Christmas publication. The virtual absence of queries on this score demonstrates how accurately he keeps his records! Overall, David's is a role which is critical to the well-being of the Society and, even when his ground floor was flooded to the depth of a foot a couple of summers ago, he carried on with his usual and invaluable cheeriness.

Tony Ring on Chris Reece

The Society has been very fortunate in finding 'backroom' support and expertise for its essential administrative services. When the Committee decided in 1999 that it was time to establish a website, Chris Reece kindly volunteered to create and maintain it, and he has continued to do so skilfully, conscientiously, and uncomplainingly ever since. Nobody should underestimate the sheer workload involved in responding to the requests of our Committee to add this report of a recent event, to show a series of photographs, or to add a notice of a Wodehouse play or musical starting in a few days time of which we have only just become aware.

We believe – and our opinion is supported by many complimentary messages to this effect – that the website is both informative and attractively presented. It has certainly been instrumental in generating a significant number of enquiries about aspects of Wodehouse and his work from non-members, around 95% of which have been fully answered with only a handful beyond the ability of our Committee to respond. In turn, this has helped to draw in a considerable number of new members, so it is vital to the Society's continuing health.

Modest, unflappable and responsive. Thank you.

Where's the Red-Hot Staff– V

The final helping from Murray Hedgcock's Convention Paper

With this extract from Murray Hedgcock's paper, presented to the TWS convention in August 2004 by Hilary and Robert Bruce, we bring the series of articles to an end. Any member wishing to have a reprint of the entire series in normal, A4, printed format should send a request to

I start this extract by offering a pointer to what might be termed Plum's unfamiliarity with the methods of ordinary journalism, recorded in *First Aid for Dora*, in Ukridge (1924). Or was it merely presented that way for reasons of the plot? The narrator, Ukridge's friend James Corcoran, is a writer of sorts, commissioned for the occasional interview or feature, while penning short stories about everyone from dukes in their castles to the submerged tenth in their slums.

But he had no idea of journalistic method, to judge by his agreement to help 'poor little Dora' regain her post as secretary-companion to Ukridge's formidable aunt Julia, the novelist. Posing as an interviewer for *Women's Sphere*, Corky visited Miss Ukridge, seeking to make such a hit with his unabashed admiration for her work, that when he inquired about his 'cousin' Dora's role in the household, and learned she has just been sacked, he would be able to sweet-talk her former employer into recalling her.

But Corky, while claiming to be 'a member of the outside staff' (a curious classification) had not checked the name of his editor, had not read any recent issues (in which case he would have discovered that an interview with Miss Ukridge had appeared only a fortnight earlier) and, feeblest of all, he had not bothered to identify by name, let alone actually read, any of Miss Ukridge's novels. Any real reporter operating on this basis would soon be looking for more appropriate employment. It is distinctly odd that Plum should allow his sensible semi-hero to behave in such fatheaded fashion.

In the several instalments of this review, we have described the minimal staffing in Plum's fictional press despite their apparent substantial output. So we must now ask whether all those instances of weeklies run on an absolute shoestring staff simply reflect Plum's origins in journalism? Did this give him the feeling that newspapers revolved around contributors, rather than staff reporters?

Certainly he became a staffer – but as a columnist, never a news reporter. You cannot imagine Plum covering a murder hunt, door-stepping a celebrity, scrabbling with the throng to hurl intense questions at political Press conferences. It was not for him.

He did have brief experience of working in a newspaper office when, in 1903, he took over the *By the Way* column in the London evening, *The Globe* – a six-days-a-week job, hectic for two hours from 10am when he was required to pen humorous comments and create topical verses on the news of the day. He would have had to be newspaperman enough to know what was happening around him, and react accordingly. But again – he was not gathering the news: he was not a reporter. He was a desk-bound interpreter.

Be that as it may, Plum presented us with a swag of weeklies produced with minimal staff. He might be seen to make a case suggesting there was no need for Rupert Murdoch to move his Fleet Street newspapers to Wapping back in 1986, sacking 5,500 striking employees with the goal of breaking the power of the newspaper unions, and slashing staff levels.

PGW, as we have so often discovered in life, Got There First.

Somehow, he resolved the problem of how to produce a newspaper or magazine with virtually no staff at all. Think of the economies, and the impact on the publishing industry, if only modern media magnates had taken time to read their Wodehouse.

The Perils of Translation...yet again

reported by Jay Weiss

In *Incidents fâcheux à Bludleigh Court*, Claude Alengry's gallic version of Wodehouse's short story *Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court*, the unlucky M. Alengry thinks he knows more about Anglo-Saxon slang than he actually does. Wodehouse described the first encounter of the artistic lovers, the poetess Charlotte Mulliner and Aubrey Trefusis, the author of *Pastels in Prose*, at the Restaurant with a Soul, the Crushed Pansy, a name Wodehouse certainly intended to bear only its floral connotation. But Claude, putting more into the phrase than was actually there, traduced that meeting place into something called Le Travesti Froissé, The Rumped Transvestite, about as un-Wodehousean as a title could possibly be.

P G Wodehouse and W S Gilbert – 2

by Jeff Coates

In the first part of this article, in September, Jeff outlined the numerous links and coincidences between the lives and work of W S Gilbert and P G Wodehouse. In this issue he draws together the clues which demonstrate how Gilbert's work influenced the young Plum.

The Savoy Operas were all basically love stories. The lead male and female characters were invariably fine, honest, forthright, decent people who fall in love and want to be together. Something then happens to separate them, but in the end they are reunited and a happy ending is enjoyed by all. There are always obstacles to their happiness and about three-quarters of the way through you can't possibly see a solution to the problem, but it's all sorted out in the end. Bertie Wooster often experiences similar difficulties and it is left to the genius of Jeeves to extract him from whatever quagmire he happens to find himself in. In the Blandings books it may be Gally Threepwood who sorts everything out, but in PGW books you can almost guarantee that there will be a mess for someone to deal with.

The Savoy Operas, although basically love stories, also contained plots and sub-plots, beautifully complex in their construction and all resolved in ways that feel just about credible to the audience. This is mirrored in many of Wodehouse's best farces. He too produced many works where there are numerous strands of storyline, all seemingly unlinked, that come together at the end in a way that leaves the reader completely satisfied and in my case awestruck at the beauty of the conclusion.

Both PGW and Gilbert are quintessentially English, and they delighted in parodying elements of the English way of life. PGW took particular pleasure in ridiculing the foppish 'Drones Club' type of wealthy and work shy. Gilbert made fun of elements of the English establishment – such as the Royal Navy in *HMS Pinafore*; the Police in *The Pirates of Penzance*; the judicial system in *Trial By Jury*; and The House of Lords in *Iolanthe*.

Another element common to both writers which I feel may be significant is the inclusion of an 'aunt type' character in many of the works. As PGW fans, we all know of the great man's fondness for putting an 'aunt type' into his books. Much has been made of this by biographers who suggest that for 'aunt' we should read 'mother' and link it in some way to PGW's relationship with his own mother, or draw on

the way that the young Wodehouse and his brothers were looked after by a variety of Aunts throughout their childhood. However, to anyone familiar with the work of Gilbert and Sullivan, the 'aunt type' is very well known – Dame Carruthers in *Yeomen of the Guard*; The Duchess of Plaza Toro in *The Gondoliers*; Lady Jane in *Patience*; and, probably the most famous of all, Katisha in *The Mikado*. In the same way that Gilbert wrote comic parts for George Grossmith Snr, he also wrote parts specifically designed for the actress Rosina Brandram, and it was she who played the 'aunt type' roles. So did PGW base his 'aunts' on *real* real life or was it borrowed consciously or otherwise from Gilbert?

I also believe there is a similarity in the style of the writing itself, although whether PGW was influenced in this way is doubtful, as I do not believe that genius can be taught or learned. Both men had a delightful use of the English language. There is a deftness of touch, a lightness and a beautiful way in which both describe the most mundane activities or actions. There is a whimsical use of words, particularly present in examples of their respective poetry. Gilbert was a writer of excellent comic poetry, published as *The Bab Ballads* and *More Bab Ballads*. I believe there to be a similarity in the rhythm and style of the poetry produced by both.

In conclusion, it is my belief that PGW was influenced by Gilbert. What is beyond dispute is the legacy that both have left. Wodehouse's books are the best of their type and the fact that they are still in print is testimony to that. Gilbert and Sullivan operettas are still played every week all over the country, albeit in the main by amateur Gilbert and Sullivan Societies or operatic groups. If you are not convinced by what I think, or wish to draw your own conclusions, then I would recommend that you attend as many Gilbert and Sullivan performances as you can, and read as much Wodehouse as you can and then see what you think. Whether you agree with me or not you will certainly be royally entertained.

The Smile That Wins Favourite Nifties - 37

He remained silent, pensively rubbing the scorched patch on his cheek where her eye had rested.

From *Hot Water*, 1932

Remembrance of Fish Past – 2

by Chris Dueker

I closed the first part of this article by asking whether, even though it would have been good for Jeeves, fish was important to him. I went to the standard texts to answer this simple question. Very quickly, the question became more complex. These books about the world of Wodehouse were not designed for serious research. Topics such as fish, diet, and nutrition are not specifically discussed. References to Jeeves and fish are incomplete and sometimes inaccurate. I was left with no choice. I had to study every Wooster and Jeeves book and story. The scientist's burden, as it were.

There are eleven Jeeves and Wooster novels and in all but two (*Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* and *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*), at least one assertion is made associating fish with the brain of Jeeves. In the unusual *Ring for Jeeves* Bertie does not appear, but there are six assertions about Jeeves and fish.

Jeeves never initiated a discussion of the benefits of fish. Quite likely he did not feel it was his place to boast. However, he also never denied in the novels that fish strengthened his brain. In eight of the remaining nine Jeeves did not specifically confirm the importance of fish; although in *Joy in the Morning* and *Ring for Jeeves* he confirmed some assertions and did not comment on others. In chapter 21 of the ninth, *Right Ho, Jeeves*, we can find the exchange of dialogue: "Still eating plenty of fish?" "Yes, sir."

The instances where Jeeves does not comment must not be interpreted as denials of the value of fish. Wodehouse quoted Tennyson on the power of absence. When Jeeves was offstage he could not comment. He did not hear the assertion. He does not initiate claims. Only in *Much Obligated, Jeeves*, and *Joy in the Morning*, does Jeeves hear an assertion and fail to comment. These are the sole 'no comments' of importance. They neither verify or deny the importance of fish.

Jeeves concurred that fish improves his intelligence in the three novels referred to above. The strongest indication occurs in *Joy in the Morning*. Bertie was sure that Jeeves's angling and fish-eating could be of value. At the conclusion of the book, Bertie sent Jeeves to the kitchen to brood and eat fish. Jeeves responded that there was "only a tin of anchovy paste, sir". Bertie recognized the weakness of anchovy paste (the tea bag of the fish world) and the problems were solved without the assistance of

Jeeves. Jeeves apologized for his failure by noting: "It appears, sir, I regret to say, that there is no anchovy paste." A reference book cites this episode as 'indirect proof' of Jeeves's reliance on fish, but to my interpretation, it provides strong support to the theory that he believed in it.

The Wooster novels are well organized. The stories challenge even the most conscientious investigator. How many stories are there? This most basic question does not have a satisfactory answer. The multiple titles are the first hurdle. Is *The Artistic Career of Corky* in *Carry On, Jeeves* different from *Leave it to Jeeves* (*Strand* and *My Man Jeeves*)? Don't expect agreement from the reference books.

Wodehouse reworked many of his stories. Late stories may be revisions of earlier stories. *The Inimitable Jeeves* contains stories that are divided from their original magazine appearance. Each 'new' story was given a new title. This led to the very unfortunate title *Jeeves Exerts the Old Cerebellum* (part of *Jeeves in the Springtime*). The cerebellum controls balance, not thinking. Someone was not exerting his cerebrum in the editing. The split stories assumed their original form in the later *Jeeves Omnibus* and *World of Jeeves*.

A literary scholar likes to be able to order stories by their dates of publication. This makes it easier to detect thematic progression. We know, for example, that the Drones Club was not in the earliest Wooster stories. The first fish reference was in *The Aunt and the Sluggard* published in 1916 in *Strand*. This story was in *My Man Jeeves* in England (1919) and *Carry On, Jeeves* (UK 1925; US 1927), but not in *The Inimitable Jeeves* (UK 1923; *Jeeves* US 1923). Therefore, American readers might not have recognized its primacy. The anthologies generally do not list story publication dates. More seriously, they print the stories out of order.

There are only four short stories which mention fish. In *The Aunt and the Sluggard* Bertie questions Jeeves about fish as a booster of intelligence. Jeeves says that fish does not power his brain. They agree that Jeeves's intelligence is a gift. In this early story, Bertie is still getting to know Jeeves, and the question is very reasonable. However, in later days, Bertie will ignore Jeeves's denial. This is the only time, in story or novel, that Jeeves flatly denies his underlying reliance on fish.

A Fine Day for the Newbury Show

Elin Murphy met the Berkshire Champion of Champions



Round and round these portly porcine monsters moved, accompanied and directed by handlers wielding canes and boards. Given the pigs' impressive girths and, in a few cases, appealing personalities, it was clear to see that Judge Penrice had a very difficult task on his hands. Finally he picked the winner: a huge boar well into his prime (thus striking a blow against ageism), owned by Vicki Mills, Chairman of the Berkshire Breeders Society. When, however, our own Chairman tried to bestow the PG Wodehouse Society's championship sash, the winner went all bashful. In a scene reminiscent of last year's presentation, Hilary had to chase him down

and throw the sash across his broad back with a nonchalant flick of the wrist.

This particular Champion had won his place in the Newbury Show by virtue of a prior win



at the Harrogate Show. Now, there's irony for you: winning the fattest pig competition despite stopping off to take the waters at Harrogate. Wouldn't Uncle George have been proud!

It was a day when all Nature shouted "Pig-hoo-o-o-ey!"

On September 17 at the Royal Berkshire Show at Newbury, several members of the PG Wodehouse Society gathered under an azure sky to admire a large number of Berkshire pigs, a seeming undulating sea of black, being paraded about under the watchful eye of the bowler-hatted judge, Chris Penrice. Nearby hovered our Gallant Leader, Hilary Bruce, representing the Society as sponsor of the prize for the Berkshire Pig Breeders Club Champion of Champions.

Remembrance of Fish Past, continued

In *Jeeves and the Dog MacIntosh* Bertie advised Jeeves to eat sardines, and Jeeves agreed to do so. Later, after solving the problem, Jeeves said he did not eat the fish, since he dislikes sardines. In *The Love that Purifies* Bertie asks Jeeves if any food would help him (fish is not specifically mentioned). Jeeves demurs as he has already solved the problem.

Throughout the stories and novels there are references to fish that may indirectly apply to the question of fish and intelligence. Jeeves shudders at Bertie's request for sardines at tea (*Comrade Bingo*). Jeeves prefers a slice of ham to the breakfast kipper (*The Mating Season*, Ch 8).

The stories and novels refer several times to Jeeves's fondness for shrimping. Shrimp are crustaceans, not fish, but they are included in the world of seafood. People shrimp to obtain food. There is no catch-and-release policy for shrimping. And we

know from *Joy in the Morning* that Jeeves enjoys fishing and eats the fish he catches.

The final Wooster story to mention fish (*Jeeves and the Greasy Bird* in *Plum Pie*, 1966) revealed Jeeves's desire to catch a tarpon in Florida. The noble tarpon is a trophy fish; few would consider eating one.

What do we conclude from this investigation? Bertie believed in the power of fish though he did not understand how it worked. In most cases, Jeeves did not comment on the value of fish. However, most of these 'no comment' instances do not prove a lack of interest in fish. Jeeves often agreed that fish was important. He only once stated that fish did not strengthen his brain.

Life cannot always be lived as a musical comedy. Sometimes the pursuit of truth requires a vigorous splashing in the literature of life.

Wodehouse and other Russian Literature

by Masha Lebedeva

In June's and September'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. She identified more than 150 relevant references, many of which appeared in *By The Way for June* (including several alluded to in this article). There will be many more in the issues of *By The Way for June* 2007 and 2008. The September issue considered the plays of Chekhov in the role of a Wodehouse source, and in this article Masha surveys the remainder of the Russian literary scene.

As we turn to the Russian novel, you may recall my earlier comment that the 1922 story *The Clicking Of Cuthbert* might be considered the real text-book on the subject of Russian literature. Members are encouraged to reread this story, as there will be nothing like enough space in this article (or the June 2006 *By The Way*) to reproduce all the specific references. But from this story we learn that by 1922 it was insufficient to be an 'English' writer to have real success in the literary walk of life in England. You needed to be Russian or Spanish or similar, and have the mantle of the great Russians descend upon you. Undoubtedly, even a top-class golfer such as Cuthbert Banks would have hated to have such misfortune with the mantle happen to him, but in another other golf-story, *Rodney Fails to Qualify* from *The Heart of a Goof*, the rumour of the period (1924) about the great Russian writers had reached the drawing-rooms of the English intelligentsia, where a discussion on the subject of Russian thought intruded on the peace of the night.

Now, as we accompany Cuthbert to the Wood Hills Literary and Debating Society meeting dedicated to the famous Russian novelist Vladimir Brusiloff, we learn many interesting things about Russian novelists. Brusiloff, as well as two other Russian writers, Sovietski and Nastikoff, who were mentioned by Raymond Parsloe Devine in his conversation with the famous visitor, did not belong to the generation of the bearded Russian classics. His mastership, however, unlike the false glamour of the two precedents and much more than Mr Devine's work, might be approved of by competent critics, because Vladimir specialised in grey studies of hopeless misery, where nothing happened till page three hundred and eighty, when the moujik

decided to commit suicide. And, as we know, the Russian novelists love to write about grim, ironical, hopeless, grey, despairful situations (*Ukridge's Accident Syndicate*, from *Ukridge*).

Undoubtedly, not all authors or raconteurs are competent to describe these situations. Mr Mulliner, for example, disliked to dwell on the spectacle of human being groaning under the iron heel of Fate (*Monkey Business*, from *Blandings Castle*). Wodehouse confessed his own limitations as a writer when he tried to convey a vision of Freddie Rooke trying to obtain a cocktail in a strange club (*Jill the Reckless*, ch8). Conceding that French or Russian authors would have been more successful, he perhaps spoke modestly, for did not Vladimir Brusiloff assert that only two novelists, Tolstoy and P G Wodehouse, might be considered not too bad by comparison with him. Surely the author who had to describe – from novel to novel – the sufferings of Lord Emsworth (see, for example *Pigs Have Wings*, ch1) merits a place on the same pedestal as such a Great Master of the Russian novel as Leo Tolstoy.

Nevertheless, some things are beyond even the power of great Russian masters with all their atmosphere and depths of psychology, at least in Mr Mulliner's (or, rather, his nephew Archibald's) opinion (*The Code of the Mulliners*, from *Young Men in Spats*). And this is a valid opinion which has the right to exist, because the task of the Russian novel is not to describe unhappy love, but the sort of abysmal soul-sadness which afflicts a Russian peasant when, after putting in a heavy day's work strangling his father, beating his wife, and dropping the baby into the city reservoir, he turns to the cupboard, only to find the vodka-bottle empty (*Jill the Reckless*, ch8).

It is no secret that amongst the numerous girls to whom Bertie Wooster was more or less engaged, those who intended to jack up his soul definitely sought assistance from Russian literature. I mentioned Bertie's enforced visits to watch Chekhov in the previous article. Bertie may have been lucky that Vanessa Cook didn't make him start his reading with Turgenev and Dostoevsky (*Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, ch15), but she, as Florence Craye before her (*Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, ch3) insisted on Tolstoy. Bertie doesn't mention what particular reason Florence Craye had to select a 'perfectly frightful thing by Tolstoy' when she dashed the mystery thriller from his hand, but Vanessa Cook,

A Summary of the Society's Accounts

When this issue of Wooster Sauce went to press, the AGM was still to take place. To the right there is a summary Income and Expenditure account. Copies of the audited accounts, which will be presented for approval at the AGM, will be available at the meeting, or can be obtained from our Treasurer

Our membership numbered 1,103 at the year end. We welcome on average 14 new members each month. Members with UK bank accounts are encouraged to renew their subscriptions by standing order, which reduces costs and time spent on administration. Should you still pay by cheque but be prepared to switch to standing order, please contact the Treasurer for a form. As an incentive, our policy has always been that, should our annual fee ever need to be increased, standing order members will receive a year's grace before the change affects them.

The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

Income and Expenditure
Year ended 31 May, 2006

Subscriptions	£ 14,635
Sales of publications, <i>et al</i>	389
Bank interest	723
Donations and sundry income	26

Total income	£ 15,773

Publications	£ 9,328
Printing, copying and stationery	1,110
Insurance	510
Functions and donations	862
Sundry expenses	264

Total expenditure	£ 12,074

SURPLUS FOR YEAR	£ 3,699

Wodehouse and other Russian Literature, continued

inspired by his statement that twiddling the fingers was a good alternative to smoking (*Aunts Aren't Gentlemen, ch10*), and having been trying to get Bertie to lose this bad habit, undoubtedly saw a way to kill two birds with one stone.

However, we must say that the endeavours of Vanessa Cook weren't entirely useless. While reading Tolstoy in the days of his engagement to Florence Craye had not furthered Bertie's intellectual level (nor, it seemed, improved his memory), Bertie did learn during the course of an instructive conversation with Jeeves that Count Tolstoy – by then already the late Count Tolstoy – was a famous Russian novelist, not a bosom pal of Vanessa's. And we can only regret that nobody told Bertie that Turgenev and Dostoevsky, who may have been a couple of Russian exiles who did a bit of writing on the side, had definitely never met Vanessa in London.

To summarise, then, we may affirm that if Wodehouse had to organise a gathering of Russian novelists (perhaps as envisaged in *The Girl on the Boat, ch2*), the first writers he would invite would be Chekhov and Tolstoy, followed, probably, by Dostoevsky and Turgenev. It is very interesting, that the first reference to Maxim Gorky (in *Love Among the Chickens, ch10* (1906)) which envisaged his being invited to dinner with the Czar, was updated in the revised edition in 1920 so that now he was

dining with Trotsky! But the suggestion that if he had been invited to lunch by Trotsky to meet Lenin, Gorky might sit down and dash off a trifle in the vein of Stephen Leacock seems unreasonable, when the presence even of Trotsky's photograph can turn a drawing-room into the *mise en scène* of a Russian novel (*The Purification of Rodney Spelvin, from The Heart of a Goof*).

As I finish the part of my researches devoted to Russian culture, I would like to invite real connoisseurs of Russian literature, to suggest which of Tolstoy's novels Wodehouse was parodying in *Jill the Reckless, ch8*, with the sad story about the Russian peasant who found the vodka bottle empty after his hard, but tragic, day's work. Or to identify the author and title of the Russian novel (or drama) where Grandpapa (or Ivan) hanged himself in the barn, assuming that it is not in fact Maxim Gorky's play *The Lower Depths*, which seems to be the only Russian classical play in which a character did actually hang himself.

Finally, I can only add that the novel *By Order Of The Czar*, which Bertie Wooster selected as his preferred reading in *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen* (ch14) was undoubtedly not written by Leo Tolstoy, even under another name. Jeeves said so, and that's good enough for me, so I do not consider this reference (even with the Czar in its title) to be a valid Russian one.

Is Honeysuckle Cottage a Tribute to James?

Two members argue that the case is unproven

In June's *Wooster Sauce* Peter Nieuwenhuizen summarised the arguments presented by Prof. Marijanne Wernsman that PGW's *Honeysuckle Cottage* was written as a tribute to Henry James. Two members have responded with essentially different arguments to reach the conclusion that it wasn't a tribute, although they agree that PGW may have been familiar with James's work when he wrote it.

Ray Steen admitted that he does not enjoy Henry James's work, and claims support from a number of distinguished authors including H L Mencken: 'Henry James would have been improved as a novelist by a few whiffs of the Chicago stockyards'; H G Wells: '... his vast sentences sweat and struggle ...'; T S Eliot: 'Henry James has a mind so fine, no idea could violate it'; and Oscar Wilde: 'Mr Henry James writes fiction as though it were a painful duty.' Steen added that her argument was not only thin, but in the absence of direct evidence, opprobrious. He conceded that PGW might have been influenced by James, though he points out that Wodehouse's claim to Bill Townend that *Honeysuckle Cottage* was (up to 1924) the finest idea he had ever had should be interpreted carefully, as a funny idea does not automatically produce a funny story. Steen concluded that *Honeysuckle Cottage* was one of Wodehouse's worst stories.

Elliott Milstein's analysis followed a more scholarly approach. 'If,' he asserts, 'the dawn of the Gothic genre occurred in 1765 with *The Castle of Otranto* and the sunset came with Sherlock Holmes's scientific explanation at the conclusion of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in 1902, then *The Turn of the Screw*, written in 1898, falls firmly in its evening shade.' Elliott therefore believes that James's intention was not merely to write another Gothic romance. The ghosts are to be considered imaginary, the hallucinatory manifestations of the governess's repressed sexuality.

He suggests that 'in saying Wodehouse and James both avoided scenes of overt sexuality Prof. Wernsman may be speaking a literal truth, but it is a truth that is nonetheless misleading. Wodehouse avoided sexuality because he had no place for it in his stories; James avoided mentioning sex because his style was antithetical to the overt. Sex was, however, central to most of his work. The violent kiss Caspar Goodwood foisted upon Isabel Archer in *Portrait of a Lady*, the hypnotic effect Basil Ransome had on Verena Tarrant at the end of *The Bostonians*, the entire relationship between Merton Densher and Kate Croy in *The Wings of A Dove* – to name but three examples – are all filled with a sexuality unsurpassed by all the overt verbiage of D H Lawrence or Henry

Miller. One could hardly say the same of anything between Ronnie Fish and Sue Brown, let alone James Rodman and Rose Maynard.'

From this, he concludes that Prof. Wernsman's thesis was based on an incorrect premise – neither story was a Gothic romance *per se*. Rather, they are stories whose platform is the Gothic heritage, which each author then used for his own particular purpose. True, Wodehouse mentions James's story at the beginning of his own, but only because, in 1924, it would have been the most famous story of a haunting known to his readers. True, also, Wodehouse has Mulliner introduce an ambiguity at the end (though *Honeysuckle Cottage* would not be the only Mulliner story in which the veracity of the tale is called into question). But other than these two rather tangential aspects, the two stories have nothing in common: James's story is about sex; Wodehouse's is about anything but. (*Editor – And do not overlook the point that Honeysuckle Cottage was not a Mulliner story on its first appearance.*)

As far as the other so-called evidence is concerned, Elliott says that correlation is not causation:

I mean to say, counting Henrys and Jameses in any English story is a bit much. Now if it were Percivals and Hildebrands, you might have something. There is a paragraph in *Luck of the Bodkins* that begins with the word 'Monty' and ends with the word 'python'. Shall we take this as proof that the comedy group got their name from Wodehouse, or can we rely on the power of coincidence?

Finally, Milstein argues that while Wodehouse may have admired James's work, there is no evidence anywhere that Wodehouse was particularly keen on him, and never mentioned him in any of his letters. From James Heineman's list of books in Wodehouse's library in Remsenburg it seems that he did not own even one book by James. And while as early as 1991 Milstein referred to the four opening paragraphs of *Sam the Sudden* as being particularly Jamesian, he points out that it is inappropriate, and certainly unprovable, to assert that these passages were written in deliberate imitation of, or tribute to, Henry James.

Elliott Milstein thus considers Prof. Wernsman to be unjustified in asserting that *Honeysuckle Cottage* is a 'tribute to Henry James'. He believes it to be more accurate to say that it is a spoof of the Gothic genre in general, using James's story by way of introduction as it is a familiar reference. Any other Jamesian nuances merely show that Wodehouse was conscious of, and writing in, the general tradition of English literature.

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

The Coming of Bill

The Coming of Bill was first published in book form in the UK by Herbert Jenkins on July 1, 1920 (McIlvaine, A23b). However, *Bill* had taken a long time coming to the UK. The story had previously been published in book form in the US on August 5, 1919 under the title *Their Mutual Child*; A23a, and had appeared there in magazine form much earlier, being published in *Munsey's Magazine* as *The White Hope* in May 1914 (D41.2). And according to Wodehouse 'It was written in 1910' (letter to David Magee, July 14, 1964, quoted in McIlvaine, p34).

In the US the title was never reprinted, making it one of the scarcest titles for collectors. However, the UK title went through 18 printings from 1920 into the 1950s. Unusually for a Herbert Jenkins title, the UK printings featured three different dustwrappers.

The front cover of the first edition dustwrapper showed an illustration of parental hands tugging Bill in opposite directions. The rear, under a summary headed *The White Hope*, featured a black and white drawing of Bill holding hands with his parents.

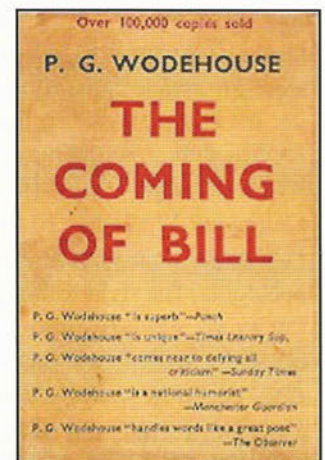
The 17th and 18th printings also featured the revised artwork. McIlvaine dates the 18th printing to about 1950 on the grounds that the latest Wodehouse title advertised on the dustwrapper was *Nothing Serious*, first published on July 21, 1950. This dating method is not infallible though: McIlvaine dates the 16th printing (A23b7) to 1949, as *The Mating Season* (September 9, 1949) is the latest title listed; but she then dates the 17th printing (A23b8) to 1940, as *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* (April 26, 1940) is the latest title listed!

In this instance I believe that McIlvaine has simply reversed the dustwrapper information for the 16th and 17th printings, as the dustwrapper on my copy of the 17th printing shows *The Mating Season* as the latest Wodehouse title.

Intriguingly, some copies of the 18th printing had a variant dustwrapper. The rear of this dustwrapper advertised the first 22 titles in the Autograph Edition. The title most recently written was *Barmy in Wonderland*, first published on April 21, 1952. However, the 22nd title issued in the Autograph Edition series was *Ukridge*, which was not published in the Autograph Edition until February 1960 (Ka22).

What explains the change of dustwrapper part way through the print run of the 18th printing? I think the answer can be found in the statement in the very top line of the variant dustwrapper:

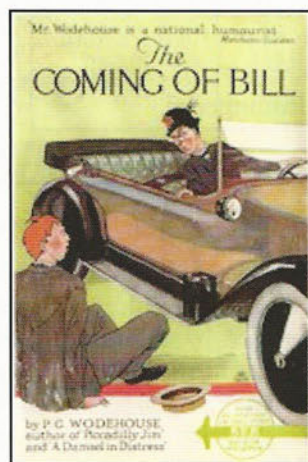
Over 100,000 copies sold



The variant eighteenth



The first edition jacket



The twelfth printing

McIlvaine states that 'by the twelfth printing, 1926, the artwork on the dustwrapper is completely different', as illustrated. The artwork on the rear had also changed: it now showed a man's face looking out from shower curtains in a worried manner as a stern female pressed the 'Hot' button.

I suspect that the change in dustwrapper occurred much earlier than the 12th printing, judging by the extreme scarcity of dustwrappers featuring the original artwork. I would be interested to hear from readers what is the earliest example of the revised dustwrapper known to them.

The copyright page of the 17th printing states 'completing 98,511 copies' and the copyright page of the 18th printing states 'completing 103,511 copies'. I conjecture that at least the first 1,489 copies issued of the 18th printing (from 1950 to 1960) had the same dustwrapper as the previous printings, but after that an unknown number of the later copies were issued in the variant dustwrapper as a marketing move. Given that it had seemingly taken 10 years to sell 1,489 copies, one can understand why the publishers were keen to try to sell their remaining 3,511 copies rather more quickly!

Recent Press Comment

Daily Mail, July 6 (from Anne Boardman)

Keith Waterhouse devoted a column to reminding readers of the virtues of PGW as a summer read.

British, Czech and Slovak Review, June/July (from Alexander Dainty)

Contained an essay by Mark Corner describing the book *Saturnin* by Zdenek Jirotka, which remains the sixth most popular book written in Czech despite having been available since 1943. Corner has undertaken an English translation and in his essay describes the inspiration the author received from Jerome and Wodehouse. The book gave its name to a café in Prague, *Saturnin's Bowl*, where you can find a bowl of day-old doughnuts to be thrown at other customers, for a fee payable in advance. (This has been referred to in an earlier edition of *Wooster Sauce*.)

Sunday Times, Culture Section, September 10

The cover section concerned the actress Eve Best, who, 'in theatreland, has already earned head-girl status'.

Encouragingly, when asked by a paper to name her favourite things, she cited big-band music, P G Wodehouse and *The Sound of Music*.

The Star (Malaysia), September 14

Ralph Berry used the classic dialogue "You know your Shelley, Bertie." "Oh, am I?" to start an article lamenting the decline in understanding that in English similar-sounding words which are spelled differently have different meanings.

Daily Mail, September 19 (from Iain Sproat)

Des Kelly quoted PGW's 'It's a good rule in life never to apologise. The right sort of people don't want apologies, and the wrong sort take a mean advantage of them.' in an article about the football manager Glenn Roeder.

CNN World News, September 20

Mentioned that the Indian business school professor Srikumar S Rao includes a 1923 Wodehouse novel as one of only six books of compulsory pre-course reading, although he provides a reading list spanning 33 pages..

The Times, September 20

In an article about autumn, Giles Coren wrote that autumn provided the inspiration for the only known improvement by an author on a line of Keats, referring to Jeeves's clarification to Bertie about the arrival of autumn: "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, as the Poet wrote." "Eh? What?" "Mists, sir, and mellow fruitfulness."

Trinidad Express, September 26

In an article *Names from Home*, Ric Hernandez referred to 'the resoundingly named Walter St Clair Ashby, an un-self-conscious fashion plate in his homburg, bow tie, and walking stick', and commented that Wodehouse's description 'A stately procession of one' would have been appropriate to describe him.

The Examiner, October 1

Interviewed author Robert Olen Butler about his new book, *Severance: Stories*, in which 64 severed heads were each allowed exactly 240 words to tell their stories, and found that he was presently reading *The Luck of the Bodkins*, because 'Wodehouse is an unmitigated delight. My delights lately have been mitigated.'

Canada Free Press, October 2

In an article about the number of gardening chores to undertake in the fall, Wes Porter quoted Wodehouse's 'Sons of toil, covered with tons of soil'.

The Independent, October 2

Interviewed Shereen El Feki, of Oxford birth, Canadian upbringing, Cambridge PhD and Egyptian family, who has a new twice-weekly current affairs show on al-Jazeera International. She said that while growing up in Canada, her weekly treat was *Masterpiece Theatre*, through which she got hooked on Jane Austen and P G Wodehouse, 'which

shaped my writing style and kept me off the mean streets of small-town Canada'.

The Independent, October 14

A thorough and extensive interview with Salman Rushdie by novelist Johann Hari draws out how, when Rushdie was a small boy, his grandfather would take him to the university library in Aligar, Kashmir, and sign out Salman's choice of Wodehouse and Agatha Christie

alongside his own medical textbooks.

Business-Standard, New Delhi, October 17

Aalok Wadhwa, MD of Lexisnexis Butterworths said that the book which was his inspiration was by Wodehouse, but no one book by 'this beautiful human being' is definitive. He suggested that 'all the developments, in the field of modern HR practices point in the Wodehousean direction', and that 'the Wodehousean thought process comes in rather handy while managing new age companies'.

He concluded that a Chief Executive Officer need not punish himself and those around him by enveloping himself in pomposity. 'It is absolutely all right to be an easy-going person and a hard-headed entrepreneur, both at the same time. The two styles, more often than not, do complement each other rather effectively.'

Paragraph of the year

From David Brown at the Times, October 18

When PC Derek Darling saw a piglet while on patrol in the New Forest he thought it would be a good chance to familiarise his police alsatian with the animal. But the pair were ambushed by nine angry pigs and their piglets, and pursued for half a mile until they reached their car. PC Darling said: "We were hopelessly outnumbered."

This Year's Christmas Publication

The special Christmas supplement being sent this year to our longest-standing members is the first of what will be five parts of *The Swoop*, published in 1909 and virtually unobtainable since. This is the ninth Christmas supplement: members are entitled to receive their first (one of seven *Kid Brady* stories) during their *second* full year of membership.

A Lake or a Young Pond?

Ever since reading Bertie Wooster's declaration in *Jeeves in the Offing* that 'the lake at Brinkley calls itself a lake, but when all the returns are in, it's really more a sort of young pond', Murray Hedgcock has wondered at the distinction.

He has now found some help from *The Guardian Notes and Queries* (October 4), one query being: 'What is a pond?'

The response, from the Rev. Alec S Mitchell, sea cadet chaplain to *TS Quantock*, Ashton-under-Lyne, reads:

You can sail a ship on a lake, but not on a pond; you can take a boat, though not a ship, out on a pond. This is because a ship is big enough to carry a boat, or boats, whereas a boat cannot carry a ship.

But as the Brinkley lake, or young pond, has a punt, Murray is still not quite sure about its proper definition.

Max Enke of Galiano Island

Back in July Ian Michaud, a Canadian member, noted a report that there was a forest fire burning on Galiano Island in the Strait of Georgia, halfway between Vancouver and Vancouver Island. The fire forced at least ten percent of the island's permanent population of about 1,000 people to temporarily abandon their homes.

The reason this item caught Ian's eye is that one of the better-known citizens of Galiano Island was Max Enke, in whose honour Enke Point (the southeast entrance to Sturdies Bay, the island's principal harbour) was named. In addition, Enke had been one of Wodehouse's fellow-internees at Tost in World War II, and served as the inspiration for the character 'Lord Uffenham', the hero of *Money in the Bank* and *Something Fishy*. He gave a tract of land, Bluff Park, overlooking Active Pass to the west of Sturdies Bay, to the island for use as a park.

Neither Enke Point nor Bluff Park were threatened by the fire.

Poets' Corner Too Much Hamlet

I went to book a ticket for to see a modern play
The man behind the counter said "There's no such thing today.
Every actor who has any self-respect is being starred
In the brightly-written masterpiece of England's Only Bard."

It's *Hamlet* here and *Hamlet* there
And *Hamlet* on next week.

An actor not in *Hamlet* is regarded as a freak.

A pleasant farce with music would, I thought, be to my mind,
But not a single pleasant farce with music could I find.
At every theatre which I sought men answered with a bow,
"We've given up our farces. We are playing *Hamlet* now."

It's *Hamlet* this and *Hamlet* that
And "*Hamlet* – Mr Jones".

Our starving British dramatists are mainly skin and bones.

I went into a music-hall, but soon came out of it
On seeing some comedians in a painful *Hamlet* skit,
And a gentleman who gave some imitations, all alone,
Of other people's *Hamlets*, plus a *Hamlet* of his own.

It's *Hamlet* this and *Hamlet* that
And *Hamlet*, day by day.

Shakespeare and Bacon must regret they ever wrote the play.

I don't deny that *Hamlet* has its merits as a play:
In many ways it's finer that the drama of today.
But with all respect to Bacon (and his colleague) I protest
That I think the British Public is entitled to a rest.

It's *Hamlet* this and *Hamlet* that
And '*Hamlet* – Record Run'.

It seems to me the masterpiece is being overdone.

From *Books of Today and Books of Tomorrow*, May 1905

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I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges - 40

"I mistrust these elaborate schemes," [said Jeeves].
"One cannot depend on them As the poet Burns says, the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley."

"Scotch, isn't it, that word? The 'gang' told the story. Why do Scotsmen say gang?"

"I have no information, sir. They have not confided in me."

From *Jeeves in the Offing* (1960)

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

February 13, 2007 Savage Club

Join members at the Savage Club for the first meeting of the year. The Society's Remembrancer, Norman Murphy, will talk about the evolution of his new book on Wodehouse Sources (see page 11), answer your questions and, provided the printers don't let him down, will be happy to sign as many copies as you care to buy.

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. If you would like to play for The Gold Bats, contact Bob Miller

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

An application form to join the tour, together with a brief summary of the tour itinerary has been circulated with this issue.

July 10, 2007 Savage Club

Join members and Anniversary tourists at the Savage Club for the summer meeting, which promises to be an event to savour.

July 28, 2007 Wodehouse walk

Norman Murphy offers another London walk.

September 8, 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.

October 30, 2007 Savage Club

Join members at the Savage Club for the final meeting of the year

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

Following the Society's dinner, *The Times* quoted Richard Briers as saying that he was thrilled for the Society at the number of diners, but . . . "I'm appearing on TV in Ricky Gervais's *Extras* tonight. I'm not sure I wouldn't prefer everyone to be at home watching that instead."

Patrick Kidd, who wrote about the dinner on page 12, also made some relevant comments in *The Times* when the American golfers arrived for the Ryder Cup. They were dressed in autumnal tweed jackets and light brown trousers, and Patrick added 'If they had been followed by Jeeves carrying Gussie Fink-Nottle's newts, the Wodehouse impression would have been complete.'

Coincidences abound in life, and Wodehouse is not exempt. A New York theatre company *Wordplay* presented a version of *Hamlet* with shortened scenes but acted footnotes representing comments from other authors such as T S Eliot, Wilde and, said *The New York Times*, 'light verse in music-hall style by P G Wodehouse'. The light verse on page 31 had been set on our pages already, but telepathy took over.

The *Guardian's* short review of John le Carré's new offering *The Mission Song* offers an interesting slant on the character of the principal character, Bruno Salvador. A love-child of a Catholic priest and the daughter of a Congolese chief, he is a linguistic prodigy who has mastered all the least-known tongues in the eastern Congo. Recruited for his language skills by the British Secret Service, he is described in the review as '... a true blue Britisher who dreams of serving our great nation. In his endearing, slightly ponderous innocence he is a kind of Jeeves figure in a world of homicidal Bertie Woosters.'

Everyman have told us that the titles to be published in their Collectors' Series in the spring will be *The Inimitable Jeeves* and *Money For Nothing*.

*And now, you know, it's really time
To pass the buck in simple rhyme.
No more the worry about Jeeves
And if he butted with the best;
I'll get a book, roll up my sleeves
And smile at yet another jest.*