

## P.G. Wodehouse: The Dulwich Factor (Part 1)

by Margaret Slythe

*Margaret, the former Head of Library and Archives at Dulwich College, delivered this talk at The Wodehouse Society (U.S.) convention in Providence, Rhode Island, on October 13, 2008. Part 2 will be published in the June issue.*

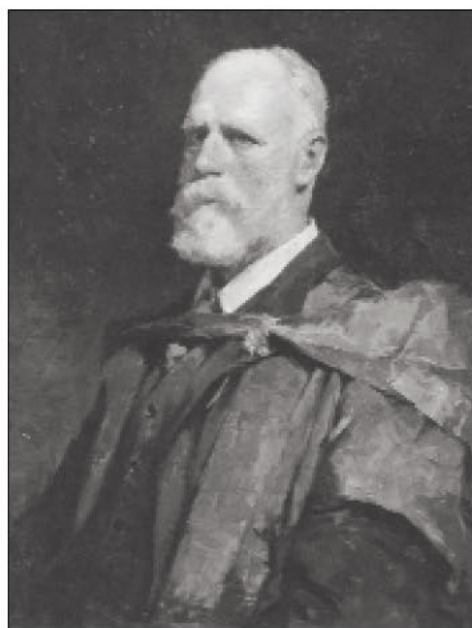
It was George Orwell who claimed that Wodehouse was fixated with Dulwich College – a fair comment, but we know enough of Plum to realise that any institution which could provide him with a real sense of belonging would have fitted his need. It was Dulwich's good fortune that Ernest Wodehouse, Plum's father, liked what he saw when he glimpsed the Charles Barry buildings through the trees from the train and decided to send his second son, Armine, to the College.

Many Wodehouseans know that the school was founded by Elizabethan actor Edward Alleyn in 1619, which is why Dulwich boys are called Alleynians. (Alumni are called Old Alleynians, or OAs.) The buildings seen by Ernest Wodehouse were the outcome of the restructuring of the Dulwich College Foundation to be known as Alleyn's College of God's Gift, and which opened to just 68 boys in 1858. There were 600 boys by the time Plum arrived in 1894; the impressive red brick and terracotta school buildings were little more than 30 years old. Seventy-seven miles of railway track and roads had been laid across the Dulwich estate property. With the resulting revenues, the College and Estate Governors built and endowed three new Foundation Schools, two primary schools, and a new church. If Plum were to return to Dulwich village today, he would find much of it recognisable.

We heard at earlier conventions from Anne Cotton and James Chatwin, an Upper School Dulwich Boy, and learned from Jan Piggott's splendid essay in the school volume of the Ring and Jaggard millennium concordance, what Plum achieved at school. Now I want to tell you about the Dulwich of Plum's day so that you can understand a little of what it meant to him. I thought we should start with the extraordinary man who was Master at Dulwich College from 1885 to 1914, Arthur Herman Gilkes. (The Head at Dulwich College is always known as The Master because when the school was founded in 1619 there was only one.)

Arthur Gilkes was a boy, assistant master, and eventually senior master at Shrewsbury School, and many who knew him well considered that it broke his heart to leave. But when he came to Dulwich, he was more than ready for a school of his own. By the time Plum arrived nine years later, Gilkes had turned a small local school into one of the most admired public

schools in England. His high ideal of his position as headmaster, and fear of anything which would lower its dignity or his own, enabled him to steer Dulwich and his charges into images of his own exceptional values. "Boys are entrusted to us that we may make them fit to do their duty in life"; "Education is to supply a boy with other and better things to think of than himself – and to fit his mind properly to appreciate them"; "a teacher's real success is gained by overcoming not ignorance so much as selfishness"; and even more worryingly – "Low aim is a crime because it is the act of a coward." Well, you get the picture. The memories of those taught by Gilkes are peppered with moral discipline.



*Portrait of Arthur Herman Gilkes,  
Master, Dulwich College, 1885-1914  
Painted by S. Melton Fisher RA, OA  
(From the Archives, Dulwich College)*

And teach he did; he always took one form each year, and in addition he taught the Upper Classics side both as a form and individually. His most lasting legacy was considered to be the individual tutoring seminars he held on the great works of world literature, during the evening in the Gilkes's home study, setting the boys essays, which they read aloud to him the next week. "Akin to suicide," Plum called it at first, but he came to value it highly, as he did the chance to see the kindness of the Master as a parent and husband.

Gilkes was a great and good man, also described as a sweet man with saintly qualities. He had a horror of conceit in all forms – "side" he called it, as did Plum, all his life. Gilkes would not tolerate swearing; he hated slang (even abbreviating words like exam) and smoking, which he controlled in his staff by giving them additional tasks. Known as the Old Man, he was always described as "6 feet 6 inches in his stockinged feet" – he discarded his heavy-soled boots whenever he needed to concentrate, and the boys would be mesmerised by his toes keeping time to Latin dictation.

There were boarding rituals, too, such as the fortnightly letters home, the writing of the weekly essay and the translating of it into other languages, and the monthly Latin examination – all timetabled with the Master's excessive concern for punctuality. If Gilkes arrived at a classroom that wasn't in order, he would apologise for being early and remove himself while it was tidied up, returning a few minutes later to begin the lesson. There were no rules in Gilkes's school, other than how you should be dressed. On his arrival at Dulwich, he set to work to train 30 prefects to serve him and the school, and with his guidance, he expected them to mete out just punishment. His most remembered advice to prefects was: "Order them about, they like it, they like it!" If parents of a boy were asked to remove him, it was only because of bad behaviour over a long period of time, and only when Gilkes had tried every remedy.

The boys saw more of him than any Master before or since. He did all he could to lessen the gap between the dull boy and the most brilliant, encouraging everyone. At prize-givings, so generous was his praise for those who did not succeed that it was often difficult to know who had won the prizes. "How did you do?" he would ask, and if the reply was "I won, sir" then Gilkes's likely response was: "It may have been better for you if you had not."

And then there were games. By 1897, numbers in the school had reached 700, of which almost half were boarders. Almost all took part in an incredible range of physical activities, but it was the boarders who spent half of their lives on the pitches and filled most of the teams. No games were compulsory, another example of Gilkes proving that the voluntary principle

triumphed, and they were run by captains of teams, of which there were literally dozens. Staff intervened only by invitation. The day began before breakfast with 'keep fit' in white vests on the South Gravel in all weathers. Plum continued with the same routine all his life, even if in the comfort of his study.

A photograph of the Dulwich College playing fields with the Crystal Palace in the background was taken on Founder's Day in 1895, when 14 games of cricket were in progress. On each Founder's Day – 21 June – Gilkes would stride out from his home in the Centre Block, in top hat and tails, hand his umbrella to a bystander, and spend a few minutes umpiring each and every game. He was a fine cricketer and, with his height, 18 stone, and trimmed grey beard, an awesome presence. Gilkes made Founder's Day a unity of brotherliness, never to be forgotten. No one forgot his Great Hall assemblies either.

So – Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, in grey flannel bags, black blazer, and blue-and-black striped cap, to be known from that day as Wodehouse minor, was delivered to the corner gate on Dulwich Common at 9.30 a.m. on an April morning in 1894, age 12½. The School Sgt Major, in uniform trimmed with gold lace, met him and three other new boys of varying ages and escorted them to a classroom in the Junior Block, where they were seated by a friendly master, who then asked them to see what sense they could make from a piece of Latin prose. As the new boys nervously looked at their Latin texts, the door opened and in came Gilkes, in cap and gown, tall, serene, and beautifully quiet; he spoke softly to the master in charge – "and we knew that we very much wanted to pass the examination." So wrote another of the new boys that morning, years later when he discovered that PGW was among them.

The main examination papers for entry to the College Plum would have sat and passed at his prep school; this Latin text was to place him in a suitable set for what was the last term of that academic year. And we know precisely how well he did that morning by the form he joined: they were all older than he was by some months.

Plum's older brother Armine, who was a truly outstanding classics scholar and a good all-rounder, had been at the College for two years and a term, exactly the difference in their ages. Armine could not have been too pleased to discover Plum in a form just one year below. It was not the only irksome thing for Armine. Not unusually, the boarding houses were all full when Plum arrived, and he was given lodgings in East Dulwich with one of the senior masters, H. V. Doulton, known to the boys as 'Spud' – apparently because of the shape of his head. Doulton was Principal of Music, Armine's piano teacher, and opening bat in the staff cricket XI, a regular opponent of the boys' teams. Although Plum must have longed

to join a school house, lodging with Doulton gave him a privileged insight into how the College worked from a staff perspective, as did the months spent as a day boy, reunited twice during the next three years with his parents and brothers in nearby rented houses.

There is no evidence that Armine welcomed his younger brother. Armine was always elderly, even as a boy, and modelled himself on his father, whom he much admired. After a few weeks lodging with Doulton in East Dulwich, Plum moved into Ivyholme, one of two Middle School boarding houses where Armine was a boarder, and joined in every activity offered. When Armine moved to an Upper School boarding house, Plum blossomed as never before, both in the classroom and on the sports field.

There is ample evidence that Wodehouse minor was an irritant, maybe often an embarrassment, to Wodehouse major. Plum's selection to the first cricket XI was delayed for two years; one Wodehouse was enough in any team he was told. When Plum moved into Elm Lawn, one of the two Upper School houses and now the Master's home, he was two months short of his 16th birthday. He had become as contented as any schoolboy can be.

There is now a major road, known as the South Circular, in front of Elm Lawn. In Plum's day you could walk straight from the front door of the house onto the first XV pitch. Beyond that is the 'Clump', then a dense ring of vast trees, now struggling after so many of them died from Dutch Elm disease. Elm Lawn was flexibly arranged year by year by the boarders themselves. Each shared a bedroom with one or no more than three boys, with open fires in winter, a kettle for tea or cocoa, a toasting fork, a twice daily delivery of bread, milk and what the boys called freshly made 'spreads' such as dripping, meat extracts or honey. In the morning there was porridge and bacon, with eggs on Sundays. There was the Buttery in the Centre Block for milk, jam or chocolate 'splits' during morning break, and 'warm' cake for afternoon tea; and there was a meat meal and often sponge or suet puddings with jam or syrup, served at long trestle tables in the Great Hall at 6 p.m., commenced with Grace delivered, of course, always in Latin. There is still something really special about several hundred



*Plum's beloved Dulwich College (photo by Tamaki Morimura)*

boys standing silent before the indescribable din of them all sitting down to eat.

As we all know, Plum – who by now had the nickname of Podge to his friends – shared a dormitory bedroom with Bill Townend in the attic of Elm Lawn for four terms. They used the basement study room to do their prep., with Plum working with his back to the window, as he told us, "to eliminate distractions". It is more likely that his eyesight was already causing him problems. Dulwich College has always had an efficient sanatorium; in Plum's day, boys with more serious illnesses such as diphtheria or scarlet fever, and awaiting transfer to hospital, were taken to the sanatorium, while the more common mumps and measles were treated in the boarding houses' sick bay. It should not be surprising to learn that Plum visited the house sick bay inmates with treats and constant updates on games results, read to the bedridden, and helped them write their reassuring letters home.

Plum certainly had both mumps and measles very badly in his mid-teens, and claimed to have mumps again equally seriously while he was working at the Bank. He never mentioned the obvious connection between these illnesses and impotence, but he did acknowledge his relief that he still had his sight and was not profoundly deaf. When you read the reports of his sporting achievements in the *Alleynian*, the school magazine, one can only wonder – how did he see the cricket ball he was facing or fielding? How did he box so competently? No wonder his great pleasure was seeing how far he could hit a golf ball on the school's nine-hole course rather than sink a putt. Thank heavens he didn't attempt to shoot.

It is the custom nowadays to disparage the educational methods of the English public school and to maintain that they are not practical and of a kind to fit the growing boy for the problems of after-life. But you do learn one thing at a public-school, and that is how to act when somebody starts snoring. You jolly well grab a cake of soap and pop in and stuff it down the blighter's throat.

(From 'The Reverent Wooing of Archibald', *Mr Mulliner Speaking*, 1929)

# The Unsolved Conundrum

In the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, we printed a letter from P. G. Wodehouse to Godfrey Smith at the *Sunday Times*, concerning the contents of Jeeves's pick-me-up. There was no date, and we have no idea when or why PGW wrote it, but it was hoped that Godfrey might be able to clear up the mystery. Unfortunately we are as much in the dark as ever! Here is what Godfrey wrote after a valiant search:

So far it remains an enigma. I had hoped that there would be something in my files to give us the source of Plum's letter: no such luck. Or – I'd suspected – he was responding to something in my *Sunday Times* column, but alas! It ran from 1979 to 2005, and Plum died in 1975.

Or perhaps he'd read the 'Jeeves' entry in my book *The English Companion*. That entry relates how the great man does not enter Bertie's room; he shimmers in: "His morning cuppa is perfect and his pick-me-up,

though it momentarily lifts Bertie's skull off, quickly restores him to his customary zing." But the dates don't fit here either. *The English Companion* was first published in 1984.

So it must be something I wrote between starting with the paper in 1951 and the end of Plum's heroic innings a quarter of a century later. That's a daunting mountain of words to trawl through, but I'll pursue it. In the meantime, word from any member of the Society who can throw light on the conundrum will be most gratefully received. Whatever the outcome of the search, the letter from Plum has been framed. It will hang from now on in my study and will cheer me each time I look at it.

We wish Godfrey well in his endeavors, and if any other member does have an idea on what might have

prompted Wodehouse to write the letter, please let the Editor know.

Godfrey Smith  
 Sunday Times  
 London  
 Group's Inn Road

Jeeves's breakfast does not contain dynamite as is generally supposed. It consists of lime juice, a lump of sugar and one teaspoonful of Mulliner's Buck-U-Up. This, it will be remembered, is the amount of the Buck-U-Up given to elephants in India to enable them to face tigers on tiger hunts with the necessary nonchalance.

P.G. WODEHOUSE



## Letters to the Editor

### Reactions, Questions, and Thoughts from Our Readers

#### From Alex Connolly, London

In regard to the discussion on which of Bertie's fiancées he should have married, I disagree that Bobbie Wickham would have been the brightest of the prospects. I think Pauline Stoker would have suited Mr Wooster better. Bertie and Pauline get on like 'brother and sister' and have a great rapport throughout the Wodehouse novels they are in. Knowing that it was Pauline's father who broke off their engagement after words about Bertie's sanity by one Roderick Glossop, I propose that Pauline Stoker would have been a proud and caring wife at the Wooster side.

#### From Alan Hall, Harpende

I must take issue with Tom and Betty Hooker's shopping report in the December 2007 *Wooster Sauce* (page 20). Beau Brummel might well have appreciated a black silk tie covered in rows of grey bees. However, if, as I suspect, coming with a cummerbund it is a bowtie, I feel sure Jeeves would definitely not approve. As he once replied to Bertie's comment "Do ties really matter at a time like this?" – "There is never a time, Sir, when ties do not matter." In this case, the tie does not bind!

#### From Allyn Hertzbach, Paris

The letter from Gary Hall in the December *Wooster Sauce* brought to mind another Gary Hall, who had been a great Olympic swimmer at Indiana University, when I was a student there. This coincidence raised memories of an IU English professor, Charles Donald Peet (Don to his friends), who became a friend and opened the door to the world of P. G. Wodehouse.

Since Don's death on February 12, 1998, I have been walking around with a sense of incompleteness – needing to say out loud "thank you" to this remarkable man. He was rare in many ways, but I think what I remember most was his humility. He never offered advice and was a patient listener. When asked for advice, he would find the most benevolent way of providing excellent and honest perceptions, which never included words like *ought*, *must*, or *should*. In short, he was in many ways like a Wodehouse story – clear, concise, wise, generous, and entertaining.

On one of my frequent visits chez Don, during which we would often watch a sports game and listen to classical music, I responded to nature's call, pulled a worn Penguin paperback off the shelf, and disappeared. In about 10 minutes, I had been entirely

# Old Home Week in Moscow: August 2008

In the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, we announced a special event being planned by The Russian Wodehouse Society. The dates of the Old Home Week in Moscow have now been settled for **August 10–16, 2008**.

Few people (with the exception of those who have been reading Masha Lebedeva's series in *Wooster Sauce*) may appreciate the part Russia played in Wodehouse's writing. In August you can see it yourself. The program includes visits to the Kremlin and the palatial Tsaritsyno (the would-be Moscow residence of Catherine the Great); a sightseeing bus tour; and walks around Moscow, with visits to Leo Tolstoy's Khamovniki and Feodor Chaliapin's House Museum. You will have a unique opportunity to compare Blandings Castle with Anton Chekhov's Literary and Memorial Museum (Melikhovo) and the country mansion of the famous Russian poet Lermontov (Serednikovo). Should you feel apprehensive of the Russian literary heritage being a bit dull, it may cheer you up to learn that other social and enjoyable activities will augment the intellectual uplift you will experience during these excursions.

There have been numerous expressions of interest from members of several Wodehouse societies, enough to show that the dream of this international Wodehousean gathering in Russia will come true. Meanwhile, we are still open to receiving more guests. To get information on the Moscow Week online in English, visit our website at: <http://wodehouse.ru/moscow2008.htm>. If you would like to take part in the Week, please email

## Draft Schedule of the Old Home Week in Moscow

### Sunday, August 10

Afternoon: Arrival and registration  
Evening: Welcome dinner

### Monday, August 11

Morning: Visit to Moscow Kremlin and Armory  
Afternoon: Visit to the Cathedral of Christ the Savior;  
Moskva River boat trip

### Tuesday, August 12

Morning: Moscow sightseeing bus tour  
Afternoon: Walking tour of Moscow, Chaliapin House  
Museum

### Wednesday, August 13

Morning: Tolstoy Museum-Estate "Khamovniki"  
Afternoon: Mini-golf tournament

### Thursday, August 14

Day trip to Serednikovo (Lermontov's country mansion)

### Friday, August 15

Day trip to Melikhovo Literary and Memorial Museum-  
Reserve

### Saturday, August 16

Morning: Visit to the park at Tsaritsyno  
Evening: Farewell dinner

This is an approximate itinerary, and we reserve the right to change or omit some elements of the week.

seduced by P. G. Wodehouse. I stumbled into his world, and most happily, have never left, as I reexperience Bertie's trials, Jeeves's ingenuity, Lord Emsworth's latest complication with the Empress, or one of the many other charming or annoying characters that both amuse and illuminate our species with inspired phrases.

I write to acknowledge Don and PGW, and to thank the Society for brightening the days, especially these dark wintry ones, with *Wooster Sauce*.

### From Bengt Malmberg, Sweden

I would like to make contact with any UK Society members who, like me, reside in Sweden. Please get in touch with me

### A Note from the Editor

Thanks to all who have sent contributions for *Wooster Sauce*! If you do not see your article or item in this issue, please be patient – it will appear in the future.

## Two Quick Ones

**Alan Carter** has sent word of the *Edgar Wallace Journal*, which he edits and in which Wodehouse is mentioned two or three times a year. This is appropriate since PGW was a great fan of Wallace, whom he admired for thrillers that were well-written and filled to the brim with Faceless Fiends and Master Criminals. If you'd like to learn more about the *Edgar Wallace Journal*, write to Alan

The March 2007 *By The Way* featured 'The Girls on Wodehouse's Stage', one of whom, Justine Johnstone, had appeared in *Oh, Boy!* **Gus Caywood** has since conveyed information about Justine's remarkable later career. After retiring as an actress in 1926, she became a noted medical innovator, making vital contributions to the treatment of syphilis, the development of the modern IV drip, and cryogenic cancer therapy.

# My First Year in The P G Wodehouse Society

by Alison Pitman

Books are one of the greatest passions of my life. Over the years they have taken me on adventures, introduced me to a whole host of situations and people, educated and informed, made me laugh and cry. I have been transported to other eras, places, even worlds – seldom have I ever been disappointed.

Through this passion I was introduced to the work of P. G. Wodehouse and subsequently to two men who stole my heart – Bertram Wilberforce Wooster and the marvellous Jeeves. From the moment I read *The Mating Season*, I was totally hooked. Over the years I also discovered a host of new friends – Psmith, Mr Mulliner, Ukridge, Gally, and Lord Emsworth, not to mention a marvellous variety of four-legged companions. I grew to adore them all.

It was thanks to this wonderfully eccentric mix of characters that I came across the P G Wodehouse Society website one day. It appeared to be a very sociable society with a varied and interesting diary of events. Tiptop, in fact. Should I join? Was it really for me? There was a chance everyone might be frightfully highbrow and somewhat forbidding, or I might feel I had regressed 20 years and was gathering material for a dissertation. On the other hand, they could be like-minded people with a love of all things Wodehousean, and they just might be people who liked to have fun.

While certainly not ‘quivering like an aspen’, it was with some apprehension that I made my way to the Savage Club for the AGM. ‘Savage’ – mmm, well, I hoped it wouldn’t be, but I reassured myself that I didn’t have to go back if I didn’t like it and I could always quietly sneak out!

I was greeted by a wall of chatter and a roomful of people clearly enjoying themselves. A distinguished gentleman at the bar came over and introduced himself to me, evidently recognising a new face – impressive, I thought. That gentleman was Norman Murphy. I had met a Wodehousean legend without even trying! Minutes later, I was greeted by a delightful lady who, it transpired, was our Chairman, Hilary Bruce. She spoke so warmly and amiably that I began to wonder why I’d not joined sooner! Throughout that first evening, many people extended the hand of friendship, and I felt immediately at home – I’d made the right decision.

By February, I had persuaded myself to sign up for ‘A Week With Wodehouse’. What fun it could be, I thought, a view reinforced by people who told me

quite emphatically, “You’ll have a marvellous time.” However, before the balmy days of July, I decided to participate in one of Norman Murphy’s legendary walks, which coincided with the University Boat Race! The walk, along with the irrepressible Norman, was a total joy. Bertie Wooster’s London and so much more provided a fascinating insight not just into things Wodehousean but also London itself – little-known facts with which I have succeeded in impressing others. Cambridge won the Boat Race – yes, I know this would have upset both Bertie and Norman, and no, I didn’t steal a policeman’s helmet and end up at Boshier Street!

A warm Sunday evening in July heralded the start of A Week With Wodehouse, and the welcome reception offered the chance to meet fellow Wodehouseans from all over the globe. I can categorically say that the week never faltered – rain or shine, it was a success, thanks to the unstinting and tireless efforts of the Committee and the

willing participation of the ‘Weekers’. We travelled near and far, on foot and by train and coach, from Lord’s Cricket Ground to Blandings in a mood of joviality, friendship, and fun. By the end of the week, I think we were all sorry to say goodbye, but we took away some fond memories. We even managed to escape the horrendous flooding which occurred a week later – might I suggest that Mr Wodehouse appeals to an even higher authority?

The 2007 AGM had a new venue – The George, sounding far less intimidating than The Savage, don’t you think? Trepidation has been replaced by the enjoyment of finding oneself among friends. I love to pick out the now-familiar and friendly faces who have become more than passing acquaintances. I suppose you could say these people are a little like stars – you don’t always see them, but you know they are there.

So, a shared love of an author and his (or her) work can unite all sorts of people, of all ages, from all walks of life, from all over the world. But no society, in my opinion, has the ability to evoke such a warm and friendly feel as the P G Wodehouse Society. There is something for everyone, and you will, I guarantee, feel welcome and among friends.

My first year as a member has been hugely rewarding. I’ve learned much, I’ve been entertained, and I’ve met some splendid people with whom I have many shared common interests and who like to have fun. What more can I say than “Thank you, Jeeves”!



Alison at the latest meeting at The George in February

# Sage Humour

## A Review of *The Wit and Wisdom of P. G. Wodehouse* by Cyril Patrick Hershon

It was once common for people to carry a small edition of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyam so as to have ready access to the Persian's philosophy. In roughly the same way Tony Ring has offered us in small format a choice of P. G. Wodehouse extracts in his own particular witty and wise manner. It will certainly slip into the pocket of your waxed jacket and, ladies, will be nicely accommodated in your handbags.

The 120 pages are divided into Plum's wit on the verso pages and his wisdom on the recto. The examples of wit are divided by a jester's cap and wisdom by a mortar board and diplomas. Tony's selection is necessarily subjective, given the wide choice available. The examples are clearly sourced and the reader should easily find the original. In any case, it would be an excuse to reread many a joyful story.

However, it is often difficult to decide into which category a quotation fits. After all, Plum's wit is wise and his wisdom witty. As the introduction states: "Though not renowned for deep philosophical insights, his writing does contain many hidden truths, and our selection has been divided into quotations which are essentially funny and those which are more epigrammatic in nature."

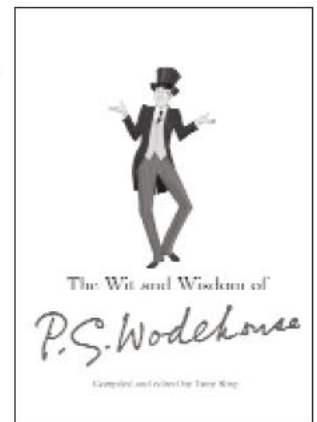
The very first example shows how 'wisdom' can also be amusing: ". . . the primary thing a singer expects from his accompanist is that he shall play the accompaniment to the song he is singing." Another such aphorism comes from *Bill the Conqueror*: "One of the advantages of being sparing in one's acts of heroism is that it makes them easy to remember." Perhaps it was useful that this book came out before Christmas since it offers valuable advice on present-giving – to choose something shiny, of leather, well-greased, or if of silver, gleaming: "This is because the wariest person will often mistake shininess for expensiveness." Bearing in mind Bertie's constant

betrothals, one reads that being engaged fills "you to the gills with a sort of knightly chivalry", and is Bertie not the very *preux chevalier* himself? While not wishing to be politically incorrect, I really must refer you to a short speech from the play *Candlelight*: "A woman's smile is like a bath-tap. Turn it on and you find yourself in hot water."

Turning to the verso pages, we read of a visit to the Flaming Youth Group Centre to see "one of those avant-garde plays which bring the scent of boiling cabbage across the footlights and in which the little man in the bowler hat turns out to be God." Still theatrical, Monty Bodkin "never acted in his life and couldn't play the pin in *Pinafore*". If I quote any more, the reader will not wish to have his own copy, but I cannot resist the humour of Plum's view of marriage as a battlefield, not a bed of roses: "The only way of ensuring a happy married life is to get it thoroughly clear at the outset who is going to skipper the team. My own dear wife settled the point during the honeymoon, and ours has been an ideal union."

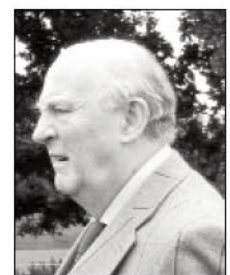
Dip where you will, Tony's little book is full of felicities, and I can but hope that the publishers have printed enough copies: "We always tell them we're expecting to sell a hundred thousand copies, said Russell Clutterbuck, letting him in on one of the secrets of the publishing trade."

*The Wit and Wisdom of P. G. Wodehouse*, compiled and edited by Tony Ring, is published by Hutchinson (2007) and retails for £9.99 (ISBN 9780091921255).



### We Remember: Anton Rodgers

A star of stage and screen as well as a director, **Anton Rodgers** was probably best known to Wodehouseans as the man who played a superb Ukridge in the 1968 BBC television series (now, unfortunately, long lost). A few years ago he enacted Wodehouse to great effect in the stage play *Beyond a Joke*. Anton was a strong supporter of the Society, and in 2004 he took part in the entertainment for our biennial dinner, again playing Wodehouse; many commented on how he looked and sounded eerily like the Master. Last summer he taped a segment about Wodehouse for the BBC2 series *Comedy Map of Britain*, as we reported in the September 2007 issue of *Wooster Sauce* (page 9). Anton Rodgers passed away on December 1, 2007, age 74. We will miss him.



(Photo by Tony Ring)

# Wodehouse's Interpretation of the Russian Spirit

by Masha Lebedeva

*This is the eighth and final instalment in Masha's series of articles on Russian references in Wodehouse. The final set of quotations that Masha has referred to will be in the June By The Way. (See also the June 2006 and June 2007 issues of By The Way.)*

The final section of my researches involves quotations relating to what I would essentially call the 'Russian Spirit' – with the meaning of this expression adopted by Alexander Pushkin in *Ruslan and Ludmila*, when he wrote: "The Russian spirit . . . Russia's scent". Moreover, the words 'Russian spirit' appear twice in Wodehouse's text, as I mentioned in the earlier articles on Russian culture. I now move on to the manifestations of the Russian spirit that were described by Wodehouse himself.

Before doing so, however, I must make some reference not to the Russian Spirit itself, but to the basis of this spirit. I mean the land of Russia: its territory, its climate, its rivers, its cities, and everything else that Wodehouse tells us as a geographer. We certainly can't call his information exhaustive, but it is quite sufficient for a country which neither Plum nor his characters ever visited.

From Wodehouse we learn that there are at least three cities in Russia: Moscow, the main city with the political centre in the Kremlin, with an Artbashieff ('Chester Forgets Himself' from *The Heart of a Goof*) that might turn out to be a Moscow suburb; Leningrad, formerly Petrograd; and Nijni Novgorod. There are at least two rivers, the Volga and the Don; the famous Russian steppes seem to be situated near the River Don (*The Swoop*, part 2, ch7). And somewhere in Russia you will find Siberia.

The climate in Russia is inclement, at least in winter (*Frozen Assets*, ch9) and in Moscow, where it enables Winter Sports to take place (*Summer Lighting*, ch2). However, if you are not a sportsman but one of Napoleon's generals, you would say something worse about the Moscow weather (*Jill the Reckless*, ch2). In Siberia, despite what we might hear from other sources, some claim the climate is not so terrible compared, say, to the weather in the late English summer (*The Swoop*, part 2, ch5). On the whole, the atmosphere there doesn't evoke such a crushed gloom, as do the park and gardens of Blandings Castle on occasion (*Something Fresh*, ch2).

Having briefly depicted the geographical and climatic peculiarities of Russia, Wodehouse passes to

ethnographical research.

To his credit, he avoided that trite set of images: *matrioshka*, balalaika, and bears in Moscow streets. He wrote instead about samovars, not only that of Vladimir Brusiloff but also in the drawing-rooms, where the English intelligentsia had parties ('Jane Gets off the Fairway' from *The Heart of a Goof*). And icons help to provide the atmosphere in some of these drawing-rooms ('The Purification of Rodney Spelvin' from *The Heart of a Goof*). Once Wodehouse mentioned Russian boots and drew his readers' attention to the habit of Russian men of concealing almost their entire faces behind a dense zareba of hair. But he did realise that under that disguise there was a picturesque swarthiness, which could be enhanced by a touch of the Raven Gipsy No. 3 grease paint (*The Swoop*, Part 2 ch6).

There is another stereotypical image which Wodehouse was not able to avoid: vodka. But before I concentrate on the role that vodka plays in forming the Russian national character, I'd like to make a short digression into the general area of Russian cuisine. Wodehouse devoted a lot of his pages to matters culinary. We probably shouldn't consider an egg for Vladimir Brusiloff's breakfast as a national Russian dish, even when mixed with a brace of bombs. But Wodehouse does tell us about two real pearls of the Russian cuisine: Russian Salad and Charlotte Russe ('Best Seller' from *Mulliner Nights*), and as for beverages, it must be said that – in addition to vodka – the only specific spirit or liquor Plum mentioned that he thought might be Russian is Artbashieff, which I mentioned above. In fact, it is no more a drink than a Moscow suburb, but those readers who – like Felicia Blakeney's good husband-to-be – don't know what it really is, will find the secret disclosed in Norman Murphy's recent *Wodehouse Handbook*. Norman suggests this is PGW's version of Artzybashev, who was not so much a Great Russian as a Rude Russian; his 1907 novel *Satin* caused a sensation with its frank discussion of sex.

Now let us turn to vodka. As we have already learned, its absence causes that abysmal soul-sadness which so frequently afflicts a Russian peasant after a heavy day's work (*Jill the Reckless*, ch8), while by contrast a decanter and a half of the neat spirit would



*Moscow in clement weather*



encourage a Russian general (in the days of his youth) to sing at a bump-supper at Moscow University (*The Swoop*, Part 2 ch2).

Nobody knows what song was presented by the future general. We may imagine, however, that it was like hearing the Siberian wolfhound in full cry after a Siberian wolf (*Cocktail Time*, ch9). If an English butler (a former steward on a transatlantic liner) could sing in such a way in the company of an English aristocrat, so much easier would the future Russian general find it. It is also quite possible that the general's song was similar to the 'Volga Boat Song', because, as Wodehouse showed us with his examples of Russian literary *chefs d'oeuvre*, no Russian, even from the higher social layers, would lose a chance to get filled with the sad and gloomy Russian spirit.

It is notable how frequently I have referred to Grand Duke Vodkakoff, the general in charge of one of the two main invading armies in *The Swoop*. He is a typical representative of the Russian aristocracy who won't sing without drinking vodka (rather like a proponent of modern karaoke) and refuses to eat fried fish with his fingers. Nevertheless, as a general of the Russian army, he prefers to speak to his opponents in a smooth, cynical, Russian way, and when he acts, it is a typical Muscovite act, with behaviour which is at the same time swift, secret, and deadly, wholly unlike the manners of the effervescent Russian writer who, when in rapture, kisses people on both cheeks.

Russian aristocrats, Russian generals, and Russian writers make up just a small proportion of the Russian people. The good investigator should come down to the simple folk, who are the real source of the national spirit. While Russian writers may describe the Russian peasant as being in a hopeless misery when he can't find pleasure in the shining sun and singing birds and decides to commit suicide at the page 380, a Wodehouse moujik – whether a peasant of the steppes or a Volga boatman – is an active person who can find his way out of any difficult and dangerous situation. Of course, Volga boatmen have to do heavy work, which is why they walk with a slow and dragging step (*The Code of the Woosters*, ch8) and with something of a weary moodiness ('Excelsior' from *Nothing Serious*), but they knew, unlike Bertie, that they should not stick their stomachs out.

As for the peasants, one of Plum's favourite anecdotes, which with minor variations and diverse details was told in no fewer than 11 novels and short stories (see, for example, 'The Man Who Gave Up Smoking' from *Mr Mulliner Speaking*) is the story of a peasant on the steppes of Russia who is compelled, in order to ensure his own safety, to throw his children out of the back of the sleigh to the pursuing wolf pack.

A detailed study of this story shows that the complete version, reaching the peak of tragedy when the loving father has to sacrifice his infant son, appeared in three Wodehouse stories. In the remainder, thankfully, there is no such sacrifice, although in a further three (such as *The Mating Season*, ch6) the peasant stays sufficiently *tête-à-tête* with a wolf that in the absence of a child the peasant's fate still evokes strong apprehensions. In the final four sources we realise that the happy ending is possible, especially if a suitably high tree had suddenly grown in the middle of the steppes (*Right Ho, Jeeves*, ch11).

Undoubtedly, the story of the relationship between the peasant and the wolves is quite entertaining by itself, and it becomes more interesting when we recall that sometimes Plum retold it, turning the landscape of the Russian steppes into the Indian jungles, the wolf into a tiger, and the Russian peasant into a coolie (see, for example, *Uncle Dynamite*, ch10). However, Wodehouse was not the only writer who used this wolf-peasant story. It also features in the pages of Rex Stout's 1946 detective novel *The Silent Speaker*, in which Archie Goodwin, giving himself up to his childhood reminiscences, refers to "an old picture, there was one in our dining-room out in Ohio, of the people in the sleigh throwing the baby out to the wolves that were chasing them". This coincidence makes one think about the actual existence of such a picture. Perhaps both Wodehouse and Stout had seen this painting in an American gallery? And while Stout put the picture on his pages, so to speak, in its entirety, Wodehouse preferred to use only the image. It is possible, however, that Stout, having read one of



Volga boatmen doing what boatmen do

Wodehouse's five versions of the story published before *The Silent Speaker*, was so inspired by its drama that he couldn't help reproducing it in his own novel.

Wodehouse himself teases us about the story's origin in chapter 9 of *Bring On the Girls*, in which he describes Guy Bolton's fiancée, Marguerite Namara, as wearing around her neck "a collar decorated with silver bells similar in design to those seen in paintings of troikas pursued through the Siberian woods by wolves". But although Wodehouse met Namara in 1918, he did not write about it until the 1950s.

Wouldn't it be fun to find an example of one of those paintings. I would be very grateful to any reader who could provide a link to a copy of that elusive picture, which the Editor would surely publish in June!

*The Editor would certainly love to publish the picture, if a savvy reader can find it. In the meantime, congratulations and thanks to Masha for what has been a fascinating and informative series!*

# A Letter from Aunt Agatha: Part 2

by Ranjitha Ashok

*In Part 1, Aunt Agatha responded (rather indignantly) to Bertie's charges against her and began an examination of his character. That was just a starter. The main course is now served.*

Have you considered what it must be like for a proud family like ours to be saddled with Bertie?

Imagine having a relative who gets his face splashed on huge posters all over town, looking like a dog regarding a distant bone with particularly bestial greed, endorsing something called Slingsby's Superb Soups. Every living person in *Debrett's Peerage* called me, howling like wolves.

Or take the time I ordered him to Deverill Hall, to offer his services at the village concert. Now I thought he would be an asset to my dear friend, Dame Daphne Winkworth, and her sisters. And what does Bertie do? Goes there impersonating that fish-faced, newt-loving, orange-juice-drinking friend, Fink-Nottle, accompanied by a great big brute of a dog named, for some reason, Sam Goldwyn (who, I understand, is some ghastly outsider of an American movie producer). This dog attacks Daphne's sister, Charlotte, causing her to have about 57 conniption fits in a row. The dog then bites the butler, Silversmith. My nephew, refusing to be outdone by a mere canine, proceeds to get disgustingly inebriated and stands on the dining table chair, waving a decanter like a baton, singing hunting songs.

Now do you see why I believe in the influence of a good (and formidable) woman?

A good and formidable woman would also take care of that dreadful Man of his, Jeeves. I have always disapproved of Jeeves and his unhealthy influence over Bertie. I have gone so far as to call him Bertie's 'keeper'. Jeeves has been known to say that while his master is an amiable young man, he is also 'mentally negligible', an opinion no gentleman's personal gentleman should have about the gentleman.

And, unlike Dahlia, I do not have a very high opinion of his so-called intelligence. But I can give praise where it is due, and I do admit Jeeves has his uses. Like the time he stopped Bertie from venturing out in a cummerbund in Roville.

Of course, Roville is not something I like to dwell on, what with all that fuss over Aline Hemmingway and her brother, the curate, turning out to be a con man called Soapy Sid. Being rudely addressed by a whiskered hotel manager in broken English was not a

pleasant experience. Bertie's usual inferiority complex in my presence took quite a knock. It's a good thing it grew back almost at once.

Be that as it may, while I am aware that rank is but the guinea stamp, I cannot approve of Bertie allowing menials to get above themselves. A good woman would speedily send Jeeves packing.

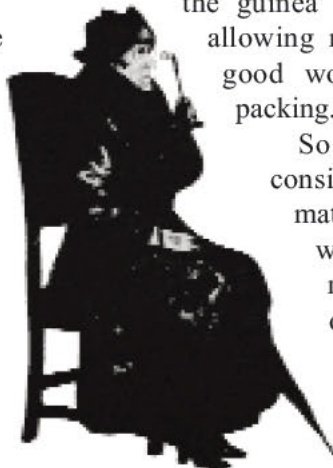
So I told Bertie he should seriously consider Honoria Glossop. I have to say matters then proceeded quicker than I would have thought possible. Imagine my delight when the very first thing dear Honoria said to me was that she felt Jeeves was a bad influence and that she would prevail on Bertram to get rid of him. Sir Roderick Glossop, eminent nerve specialist and Honoria's father, quite naturally, wanted to ensure that Bertie, his future son-in-law, was perfectly normal, and a lunch meeting was duly arranged. I warned Bertie to refrain from giggling nervously; not to talk of horse racing as Sir Roderick is President of the West London Branch of the Anti-Gambling League; to offer no alcohol, no tobacco, no coffee, as Sir Roderick has impaired digestion; and to avoid at all costs any misguided flippancy during this meeting.

And what happens?

A hat that was rudely snatched off Sir Roderick's head when his open landaulette was arrested in traffic congestion turns up in Bertie's flat, where Sir Roderick also finds three cats and a huge dead fish in Bertie's bedroom. What with this incident and the time Bertie apparently pierced Sir Roderick's hot-water bottle, twice at that, the second time around rendering him for a while the dampest nerve specialist in all England, I have had the most difficult time convincing him that there is no insanity in my family.

Just as I did with the Right Hon A. B. Filmer after his dreadful experience at Woollam Chersey, where Bertie involved Filmer, a serious-minded man of high character and purpose, with an angry swan, after having first deliberately marooned him on an island in the middle of a lake on my estate. All I wanted was for Filmer to meet him, hoping he might be induced to employ Bertie as his private secretary.

You'd think all this was a deliberate plot on someone's part to ensure Bertie does not do as I want him to – a pattern I have noticed before. Something I do not hesitate to lay at That Man, Jeeves's, door.



Do you blame me now for viewing this relative with a jaundiced eye, so jaundiced that I even contracted the disease for a while? Sometimes Bertie makes England just a little too small for both of us. That's when he goes running off to America, the coward. And then his fell influence is felt in the colonies, too. I ask him to extricate his cousin Gussie from an entanglement involving the music hall stage, and he manages things so well that not only does my nephew marry the girl, he joins the stage, along with his mother Julia, formerly of the stage, undoing all my efforts toward making a peeress out of her.

My dear friend Lady Malvern's precious son, Wilmot, ends up in prison, wearing striped pyjamas, breaking stones with a hammer. Cyril Bassington-Bassington gets his face compared to a particularly ugly fish, causing him to lost interest in all things theatrical – which was a good thing, true . . . but still . . .

And why?

Because they got involved with Bertie.

Do I regard Bertie as 'a worm and an outcast', preferring my dog McIntosh to this particular blood relative? Well, of course, who wouldn't?

So there you have it. Did you know that papers released by the Public Record Office disclosed that when this certain author we spoke of earlier was recommended for a Companion of Honour Award in 1967, Sir Patrick Dean, British Ambassador in Washington, argued that it "would also give currency to a Bertie Wooster image of the British character,

which we are doing our best to eradicate"? If I had met Sir Patrick, I'd have given him a significant glance, registering complete understanding.

Did you know that the term 'Aunt Agatha' is sometimes used in the City of London's financial markets to describe a 'risk-averse, low-volume, non-corporate investor'?

And let me tell you, having a whole bunch of people laughing their heads off in all our former colonies over my nephew's excesses makes me want to turn my face to any conveniently placed wall.

I know that there is a lot more that is being kept secret. But I am unable to get myself to read the chronicles in order to find out. My constitution, worn down by Bertie over the years, will not stand it. I am not alone in feeling this way. I am joined by fellow sufferers such as Lady Constance Keeble and all her sisters, Julia Ukridge, and others. Perhaps we should start an Abused Aunts Club.

May I request you all to pause and dwell on my words, such as you are able, given your distinctly unhealthy literary tastes?

And please, do consider this – should you even be paying any attention to the babbling of one of whom even his closest friends speak of as a "pretty consummate old ass"?

Yours truly,  
The Much Maligned  
Aunt Agatha

## Mr Mulliner's Pub Was *Not* The Plough!

Last year, when the Week With Wodehouse group stopped in Upton-on-Severn (the most likely residence of Mr Mulliner), Doug Jeffords had a conversation with a local man who assured him the source of the Angler's Rest had to be The Plough Inn (see *Wooster Sauce*, September 2007, p11). Based on this seemingly authoritative information, the Wodehouse Weekers all went along to have their photographs taken in front of The Plough.

Unfortunately, we were misled. **Simon Wilkinson**, another Upton-on-Severn resident, points out that, firstly, the Plough had only a beer licence until 1936 – i.e., it could only sell beer. Mr Mulliner would therefore be unable to obtain his hot Scotch and water there. Secondly, it is far too small and possesses no room big enough to hold smoking concerts at which the curate could recite ('The Knightly Quest of Mervyn'). Thirdly, The Plough stands next to what was an

extension of the graveyard. It wasn't on the way to anywhere, so it would not have heard people passing

by on their way to church, the cinema, or the Choral Society's performance of 'The Sorcerer'

Lastly (and Norman Murphy is kicking himself for not picking this up because he knew it), the present bridge was not built until 1940. Until then, the old bridge had stood beside The King's Head, 30 yards further downstream. The High Street still runs straight down to The King's Head,

where the old bridge used to be. It had a full licence that enabled it to serve spirits to Mr Mulliner, had rooms big enough for functions, and would have been passed by everybody coming into the town to go to church, the cinema, or Choral Society performances.

The Society owes Mr Wilkinson a vote of thanks for scotching another Wodehouse heresy and setting us back on the paths of truth and righteousness.



*The old bridge in Upton is now gone, but The King's Head, marked with an arrow, is still there. (Photo courtesy of Simon Wilkinson)*

# A Sauce of Misquotations

## Reflections after reading *A Wodehouse Handbook*

by Nigel Rees

And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew, that one small head could carry all he knew, as Goldsmith put it, and after reading Volume 2 of Norman Murphy's magnum opus, we can but say the same. 'Quotations & References' is the work some of us have been waiting for all these years and I doubt if it will ever be bettered or superseded. So much so, I wondered if I could be out of a job.

Not quite. Even the indefatigable Norman throws up his hands at some of PGW's more obscure references – I counted about 20 occasions when he does this – so perhaps I may be able to help with one or two. I rather think that **'my regiment leaves at dawn'**, possibly as spoken to a female to encourage compliance, is a good deal older than the 1947 film *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* that Norman gives. It was already an operetta cliché when Groucho Marx uttered it in *Monkey Business* (US 1931) and the writer of the film, S. J. Perelman, explained subsequently that it alluded to *The Merry Widow*.

Norman could not find an origin for the trope **'where men are men'**, which PGW used in a 1924 *Psmith*. Indeed, I had always thought of it as a quote and recalled seeing it as a 1982 graffiti in Australia – 'New Zealand, where men are men and sheep are nervous'. But there was a silent film Western, apparently set in Death Valley, with the title *Where Men Are Men* (US 1921), and even earlier Browning had used it in his poem 'Red Cotton Night-Cap Country' (1873):

From London, Paris, Rome, where men are men,  
Not mice, and mice not Mayors presumably . . .

Norman seems very put out not to be able to find Sherlock Holmes saying **'no human being has done this horrid thing'**, what with PGW being such an ardent admirer of Conan Doyle. But Holmes didn't say it. It was Watson – in *The Sign of Four*, Chap. 6 (1889). The pair are examining some footmarks: "The floor was covered thickly with the prints of a naked foot – clear, well-defined, perfectly formed, but scarce half the size of those of an ordinary man. "Holmes,' I said in a whisper, 'a child has done this horrid thing.'"

PGW frequently quoted a slogan **'Service and Cooperation'** and Norman thinks it may be from a department store. I am not 100% certain about this but suggest it is probably derived from 'Honor, Confidence, Service and Cooperation' which was selected as the motto of the J. C. Penney Company in

1913. What were originally called the Golden Rule Stores were founded by J. C. Penney in Wyoming in 1902. By the beginning of the 1920s, they operated coast to coast under the slogan 'A Nationwide Institution' and would undoubtedly have been known to PGW. They still exist today under the corporate slogan 'Every Day Matters'.



Nigel Rees

Norman notes that PGW is rather enamoured with the phrase **'rich but honest parents'** – clearly a Wildean inversion of the more common 'poor but honest'. I do not think, however, that he is alluding to any one source in particular when he does this. It was a quite widely-used phrase in the 19th century. For example, from the opening words of *Ben Thirlwall's Schooldays* by the American novelist Fitz Hugh Ludlow (1836–70): "My name is Ben Thirlwall, and I am the son of rich but honest parents . . ."

I don't think that **'struck me divers blows in sundry places'** is a quotation, though I would bet that the last three words allude to the Book of Common Prayer: "The Scripture moveth us in sundry places." Also not a quotation, I would say, is **'staggered and would have fallen had he not . . .'** Norman is right in saying it is a cliché of 19th-century novels – I found citations in R. M. Ballantyne, Trollope, and Tolstoy, among others.

Hardly surprising that Kipling's use of **'persecute their vocations'** proved so elusive. It comes not from *Stalky & Co.* but from a series of articles he wrote that were published together as *A Fleet in Being: Notes of Two Trips with the Channel Squadron*, Chap. 3 (1898): "The Naval Officer chance met, rather meek and self-effacing, in tweeds, at a tennis party, is a priest of the mysteries. [But] you have seen him by his altars. With the Navigating Lieutenant 'on the 'igh an' lofty bridge persecuting his vocation' you have studied stars, mast-head angles, range-finders, and such all." I am not sure why Kipling puts the words in quotation marks – when they seem just the sort of thing he might have written himself. Perhaps he was quoting himself?

*Nigel Rees pursues 'lost quotations' on BBC Radio 4's QuoteUnquote and its associated website*

# Arrow Is Delighted to Announce Wodehouse Publishing Plans in 2008

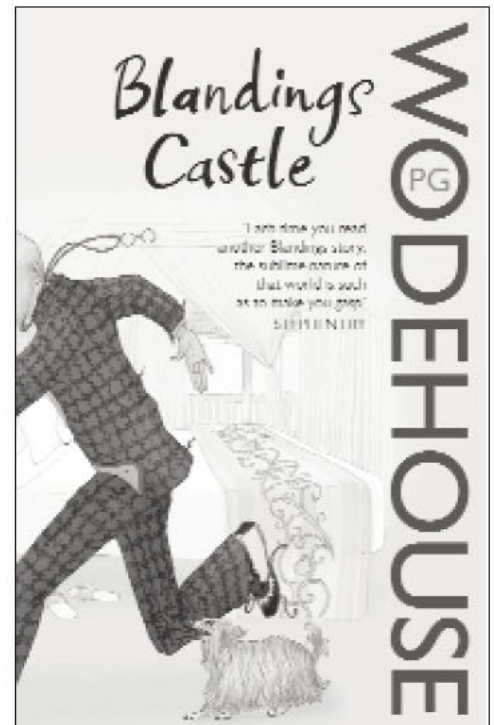
by Louisa Gibbs, Senior Marketing Executive

Following Tony Whittome's article in the last issue, it is my pleasure to be able to update you on Arrow's marketing plans for 2008. We aim to bring the magic of P. G. Wodehouse to a new generation, as well as providing committed fans with the classic works in beautiful up-to-date jackets.

With this in mind, the internet is the perfect tool to spread the wit and wisdom of Wodehouse. Our dedicated Wodehouse website at [www.wodehouse.co.uk](http://www.wodehouse.co.uk) will be full of lively, interesting, and highly interactive content that we hope both existing fans, such as members of the Society, and a new generation of P. G. Wodehouse readers will enjoy. Visitors to the website will be able to enjoy extracts and read about all titles. There will also be fun features such as etiquette tips and Jeeves's cocktail recipes, as well as competitions and offers. The website will be live from 1 May 2008.

Arrow will also be holding a family picnic in a central London square to celebrate Wodehouse. This will take place on 10 May from 12 to 3 p.m. (venue is to be announced – please check the website [www.wodehouse.co.uk](http://www.wodehouse.co.uk) for details). There will be Wodehouse-themed games and races, competitions for the children, and Wodehouse music as well as appearances by some of his best-loved characters. Please join us with your families and friends if you can!

(Note: See related story on page 21.)



## Arrow's 2008 Publishing Schedule

Currently Arrow has plans to release 44 titles, as below. Each paperback will retail for £7.99.

### To be released on 1 May 2008:

<i>The Inimitable Jeeves</i>	<i>Joy in the Morning</i>	<i>Uncle Fred in the Springtime</i>
<i>Carry On, Jeeves</i>	<i>The Mating Season</i>	<i>Full Moon</i>
<i>Very Good, Jeeves</i>	<i>Something Fresh</i>	<i>The Clicking of Cuthbert</i>
<i>Thank You, Jeeves</i>	<i>Leave It to Psmith</i>	<i>The Heart of a Goof</i>
<i>Right Ho, Jeeves</i>	<i>Summer Lightning</i>	<i>Piccadilly Jim</i>
<i>The Code of the Woosters</i>	<i>Blandings Castle &amp; Elsewhere</i>	<i>Ukridge</i>

### To be released on 7 August 2008:

<i>Ring for Jeeves</i>	<i>Aunts Aren't Gentlemen</i>	<i>Mulliner Nights</i>
<i>Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit</i>	<i>Service with a Smile</i>	<i>Mr Mulliner Speaking</i>
<i>Jeeves in the Offing</i>	<i>Pigs Have Wings</i>	<i>Cocktail Time</i>
<i>Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves</i>	<i>A Pelican at Blandings</i>	<i>Uncle Dynamite</i>
<i>Much Obligated, Jeeves</i>	<i>Meet Mr Mulliner</i>	<i>The Luck of the Bodkins</i>

### To be released on 2 October 2008:

<i>Laughing Gas</i>	<i>Summer Moonshine</i>	<i>Big Money</i>
<i>A Damsel in Distress</i>	<i>The Adventures of Sally</i>	<i>Life with Jeeves (omnibus)</i>
<i>The Small Bachelor</i>	<i>Money for Nothing</i>	<i>Life at Blandings (omnibus)</i>
<i>Hot Water</i>	<i>The Girl in Blue</i>	

## Profile of a Committee Member

### Hilary Bruce

Despite having been introduced to the world of Wodehouse whilst still in single figures, Hilary Bruce has never claimed to be a Wodehouse scholar – an opinion she says is enthusiastically seconded by the Society’s experts. But she has been a Committee member since the Society began and Chairman since 2003, so at least the spirit must have stuck.

It began, as so many Society things do, with Tony Ring. After the Society was formed, Tony mentioned to a journalist acquaintance that the group was very small and needed someone with marketing and PR skills to help it grow. That journalist – who now styles himself ‘Chairman’s Consort and Accompanying Person’ – came home to announce that he had the perfect new interest for his wife who had, a month before, ceased what had certainly felt like a lifetime’s toil in marketing and PR consultancy. Little did the CC&AP know.

Somehow Hilary contrived to join the Committee even before joining the Society, and she found her first few meetings “completely surreal. We’d meet in the Palm Court of the Waldorf Hotel, to harp accompaniment, and I hadn’t a clue what was going on.” But comprehension dawned, and membership increased steadily. Then, in 2003, to her utter astonishment, came the call asking her to become Chairman. It wasn’t an easy decision (“How



do you follow an act like Norman?”), but she eventually accepted the Chairman’s gavel – a retired Murphy pipe, with his initials and hers done in pokerwork – and has plied it with pride ever since.

Life isn’t all Wodehouse. To the distress of her friends (so she says), she sings with gusto in an extremely amateur choir and, having sewed since the days of shift dresses, studies pattern-cutting and tailoring at college.

The Society demands a lot of time. “We have become one of the largest literary societies, so it takes a lot more running than in the Palm Court days,” but the challenges are the same: keeping the committee up to strength and in good heart so it can provide members with the active, entertaining Society they want. She has done even more besides, as Norman Murphy points out: “The success of two landmark Society events – the Millennium Tour in 2000 and last year’s A Week

With Wodehouse – were the result of Hilary’s painstaking and tedious groundwork on such mundane but essential matters as hotel and coach bookings and negotiating over costings. It was true seamless administration – we couldn’t see the join.”

Hilary says that when she eventually hands over the gavel, she’s hoping to have enough time to actually read some Wodehouse.

## A Letter of Protest

by Alan Hall

There’s something rather rummy going on – to wit, the lack of first names in the December list of new members (issue no. 44, page 17). Some of our new members have Christian names, but others don’t; some have just initials – and some poor rejected souls don’t even have those. What’s wrong here? Surely when these people completed their application forms to join the Society, they were asked to give their first names. Are they so embarrassed by the names their parents gave them that they just wrote their initials?

Unfortunately, being unable to call on Jeeves for assistance, I have had to put on the old thinking cap and draw my own conclusions. I now realise that I may have been unjust in casting aspersions on the new members. Being a Hampshire man myself, I have no doubt that one of the ‘Hampshire Carters’ would do

the decent thing and include all the information required, however embarrassing, when completing his application form. And I’m sure the same thing would apply to a ‘Worcestershire Coleridge’ and all the other December new members. But, having delved deeper into my December copy of *Wooster Sauce*, I see that the Society’s website editor is retiring. Why is this, I ask myself. Aha, the reason now becomes apparent. In trying to emulate some of our rather more careless Government ministers, he has lost the disc containing details of new members and has had to rely on his inadequate memory!

*The Editor replies:* Alas, the simple fact is, some members don’t want their details published. In any event, we have decided to stop listing new members in *Wooster Sauce* for data-protection reasons. See page 15 for more on this.

# Society News

## July Meeting and Wodehouse Walk

The search for the right new venue for the Society's meetings goes on. After trying The George for our last two meetings, we will move to smarter surroundings for the meeting on 8 July. This time the place will be the Arts Club, 40 Dover Street, London W1S 4NP; the nearest Underground station is Green Park. As usual at our meetings, members arrive from 6 p.m., with a talk from our guest speaker, David Jasen, at around 6.45 p.m. Society members will be able to dine at the Arts Club *if they book a table in advance* (call 020 7499 8581). Tables in the dining room may be booked for any number of people, or you can join the Club Table and enjoy a set menu. Bar snacks (sandwiches, fish pie, burgers, etc.) will also be available, served in the bar/conservatory.

As with The George, we are trying out the Arts Club – and they are trying us out – so it will not necessarily be a permanent venue. Do come along in July, and let's all see what we think!

For interested members, a shortened version of Bertie Wooster's Mayfair Walk will be offered by Norman Murphy prior to the meeting. We start at 5 p.m. and will finish up at the Arts Club. Call Norman to register interest and obtain exact details of where to meet. We emphasize that this will not be a full walk; the Society is still looking into ways to make Norman's classic walk available to members.

## New Patrons

We are very pleased to announce that Dr Shashi Tharoor – author, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, and much more besides – has agreed to become a Patron of the P G Wodehouse Society (UK). A profile of Dr Tharoor will be published in the June issue of *Wooster Sauce*, but to learn something about him before then, see <http://www.shashitharoor.com/about.html>.

In addition, we are extremely happy that Lara Cazalet has become a Patron. Lara is the daughter of Sir Edward Cazalet, great-granddaughter of P G Wodehouse, and a talented actress most recently seen on the BBC's *New Street Law*. She also elicits cheers

and tears whenever she sings 'Bill'. Look for a profile of Lara in the September *Wooster Sauce*.

## A Special Cricket Match

Our cricket team, the Gold Bats, have a busy summer ahead of them (see Future Events on page 24), which includes a special match against the Hollywood Cricket Club (HCC). Founded by actor C. Aubrey Smith, the HCC is legendary among Wodehouseans because Our Hero was not only one of its members but had taken minutes at an inaugural meeting and was vice president in 1937. This summer the HCC will be coming to the UK to participate in the Vintage Cricket Festival at Stratford, and they have requested a match with the Gold Bats; this will be played on Sunday, August 3, starting at 2 p.m., at a location still to be determined. Society members are invited to attend; check the website as well as Future Events in the June issue of *Wooster Sauce* for full details on where the match will be played.



## Data Protection Statement

The Society has recently taken advice on our position in relation to the Data Protection Act. In short, although we do not need to register under the Act, we are obliged to honour its principles. We ask members to provide personal information to the society for the purpose of maintaining society records, reminding members of when subscriptions become due, and informing them of society events and activities. Provision of contact details is optional, although if you do not provide a postal address, we are unable to send you *Wooster Sauce*, or other publications. We have also found it very convenient to have members' telephone numbers and email addresses.

We will not sell our database as a mailing list, nor pass your details on to anyone without your permission. If any of your contact details have changed since you provided them, or you wish to know which of your details are on our database, please contact our Membership Secretary, Christine Hewitt (details on the back page of *Wooster Sauce*).

## The School Tie That Binds

**Murray Hedcock writes:** Plum, if still with us, would no doubt have followed England's dramatic progress in the rugby World Cup last October with special enthusiasm. Always captivated by the code, he won his Dulwich colours in the season of 1899–1900, and returned several times in later life to watch his old school in ruggar action, contributing match reports to *The Alleynian*. And he would have delighted in the fact that two members of the England team that went down bravely to South Africa in the cup final were Old Alleynians. Nick Easter and Andrew Sheridan were pictured in *The Sunday Times* of October 21 in their 1st XV shirts – Dulwich being the only school to contribute two members to the team.

# Lord Emsworth and *The Best People*

by Tony Ring

**T***he Best People* was one of the earliest plays written by Frederick Lonsdale, and enjoyed a limited run at the Wyndham Theatre in London from August 5, 1909. There was also a touring performance in the United States in the same year. The relevance of this production is that one principal character has the name Lord Emsworth, and on the American tour Lord Emsworth was played by C. Aubrey Smith, against whom Wodehouse had first played cricket as early as 1905.



C. Aubrey Smith

The text of the play is very difficult to trace, although there were a number of contemporary reviews. There is no evidence that it was ever published, either as a single play or in a collected edition, while Lonsdale's present literary agency failed to respond to an enquiry. The only source of the text thus seems to be a copy in the British Library, in file LCP 1909/17 no 74, which offers no clue to the author's name!

There are five principal characters: Lord and Lady Emsworth; Gerald and Violet Bayle; and Lord Wynlea, Gerald Bayle's father. As the play opens, Violet has left Gerald for a three-month spell abroad as, in today's parlance, she needs some space. Gerald has used the return of bachelor freedoms to try to start an affair with Elsie, Lady Emsworth, who appears to be bullied (mentally, if not physically) by her husband Charles. There seems little doubt that Lord Emsworth married her for her money, as he is penniless. Lord Wynlea is concerned about Gerald's reputation as the affair is being spoken of all round London, and he produces this epigram:

Never raise your voice, my dear Gerald; that is the only thing left that distinguishes us from the lower classes.

His father then asks Gerald:

"Am I right in assuming that you are prepared to give up everything for Lady Emsworth?"

"Everything."

"Well, Gerald, there will only be one person who will be really pleased about it."

"And who will that be?"

"Lady Emsworth's husband! I have no hesitation in saying that in taking his wife from him you are making a life-long friend."

"Emsworth! A man who married her merely because she had money, and from the

day he married her has never ceased to treat her in the most brutal manner possible."

Lady Emsworth arrives at Gerald's house in Berkeley Mansions, Hill Street, as arranged, and tells Gerald she has planned to forget him and be as nice as she can to Charles in future. She adds that when she returned from a party at quarter to two, she woke Charles up by pinching his nose, and he said all sorts of horrible things, including that "the only interesting thing about me was that he never knew what silly trick I was going to do next". Next morning Charles said that she should have married a silly ass like Gerald. But she then tells Gerald she will not chuck everything and live the remainder of her life with him, although they do arrange to have a midnight supper at the house after leaving a party early.

Some rather artificial entrances and exits follow, at the end of which not only have arrangements been made for Gerald and Elsie to have supper at midnight, laid on by a local restaurateur, but Lord Emsworth and Violet, who has returned from the Continent during the afternoon, will also be there. They had evidently been close friends before she went away, and we are left wondering to what extent he has been relevant to her decision to leave.

The second act features the supper party, with Elsie first quarrelling with Gerald and then hiding as Violet walks in, saying she has missed her train. She discovers Elsie's presence, following which Lord Emsworth arrives. Violet pretends to him that Elsie has told her of the proposed supper, which is why she has invited him. After Emsworth says, "Gerald, I'm going to spend a little time with the nuts – I can understand them better", Violet claims she has made the pretence to avoid Elsie being ruined.

Elsie and Violet take refuge the following day at Lord Wynlea's house in the country; Violet is followed by Gerald after she has been there for over a fortnight. They are all surprised that Emsworth has not also followed them, as he is financially dependent on Elsie, and her plan is to lure him down to enable her to lay down terms for their future relationship.

When Emsworth does arrive, he is flush with cash, having achieved an enormous amount in just three weeks, the reasons being:

- a he met a shady company promoter and agreed to join the board of his companies;
- b he demanded two years fees in advance, and got them;
- c he used half to pay the gambling debts at his club;





# A Plummy Acrostic

It has been two years since we last printed a puzzle from **June Arnold** – but don't blame June for that, blame your Editor, who took a ridiculously long time to figure out how to set up this acrostic in the layout program. The puzzle itself is easy to do: just solve the clues in the top grid, then transfer the letters from there to the bottom grid, where you'll find a description of a PGW character. Reading down column A in the top grid will give you the name of the character. Answers will be provided in the June issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

*Clues:*

- 1 Lord Shortland's dog in *Spring Fever* (8) / A European language (7) / Bowler, for example (3)
- 2 *Un Money*, novel by PGW (4) / Detested person or thing (8) / Pursue (4)
- 3 Surname of actress who appeared in *Oh, Kay!* (8) / Greet stones? (4) / Exotic fruit (4)
- 4 Ikey \_\_\_\_\_, who appeared in *The Luck of the Bodkins* (9) / Childhood (5) / Lure (4)
- 5 He wrote musicals with PGW (6) / Penalise (6) / Span (5)
- 6 A word used to describe Rupert Baxter (9) / Spa town (4) / Princess who died in Paris (5)
- 7 Joe \_\_\_\_\_, a producer in *Barmy in Wonderland* (6) / Narrow track (4) / President of the USA (4)
- 8 Author who wrote a defence of PGW (6) / Beneath (5) / Remunerated (4) / Exclamation of triumph (3)
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ *Good, Jeeves*, novel by PGW (4) / Ditto (5) / Noise of a duck (5) / Point (3)
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_, *Beans and Crumpets*, novel by PGW (4) / Educated (6) / Dog's name (4) / The two of them (4)
- 11 *A \_\_\_\_\_ in Distress*, novel by PGW (6) / Yell (5) / \_\_\_\_\_ Little, member of the Drones Club (5)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
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4Q	2P	1T		3P	5D		10U	3B	1D		6K	8D	6G	11P		1A	10A	4A	11F		
1J	9F	10N	11A		9S	6B		1K	5K	9G		11C	8K	7F		2B	7O		2F		
3G	7A	2M	11H	1O		4T	1B	10G	4N		11L	7K	4L	8H	11Q	7C					
6E	8B	10H	1H	2J	2A	8J		2R	5E		1F	3K	9C	2I	5S		6M	1P	3H	4H	
3C	9I	4B	8E		1G	3L	10D	7B		1L	10I	9N	4S	5J		4K	11J	9M			
8N	4F	11R	7J		1S	4I	6P		5H	4G	2H	6H		11B	6S	9R					
5R	11I	1C	5F	9P		2D	9S	7N		4O	8S	9A	3E		5A	6T	10M	6C	3A	4E	8Q
4R		7H	3R	10B		2L	6L	1M		11N	4M	10K		7E	5C	3M		6I	3J	9B	
4D	10J	5P	8F	2K		1R	6F	11D		9L	11K	11O	9O	3O		7M	3D	7I	6D	9J	
2O	8O	10O		10R	11E	6A	2G		3Q	5B	8L	1E	1N	3F	10C		6R	2Q	5Q		
8P	10T		5M	8U	5L		2C	6N	10P	8C	8I		7P	6Q	7D		10F	8T	4C		
5O	9H	9D		8A	5I	9T															

# The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

## A Wodehouse Introduction, Preface, or Foreword

### Part 2

In the previous Corner we reviewed Wodehouse's introductions to other authors' books in the period before the Second World War. In this Corner we will continue the survey through to 1963.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given his wartime experiences, Wodehouse provided no further introductions until the 1950s when, in 1955, he wrote a preface to Leila MacKinlay's *Musical Productions* (McIlvaine, E146), a guide to staging amateur dramatics. The reason for Wodehouse's involvement may have been his wish to re-establish his connection with the stage again, or it may simply have been a favour to his publishers, as the book was published by Herbert Jenkins. Either way, he was as acerbic as ever on the modern theatre:

If amateur dramatic societies would take my advice – I have yet to meet the amateur dramatic society that has even asked for it – I would say, “Avoid comedies and dramas and go in for musical productions. You will have lots more fun, and audiences will appreciate it.” . . . In selecting your musical, go for the old ones . . . For one thing, they were invariably cheerful . . . I don't know what has come over the boys nowadays, but they seem unable to write a musical play that has not from one to three lingering deaths in it. . . . It was not like that in the old days. You started off with a cast of fifteen principals and a chorus of forty, and there they were at the final curtain, all fifty-five of them, as fit as fiddles. Not a suggestion of any fatal disease in the whole bunch.

By this time Wodehouse was again contributing regularly to *Punch*, and in 1957 he provided the introduction to that year's *The Pick of Punch: An Annual Selection* (E100 and E147), a volume which also contained one of his 'America Day by Day' columns. Wodehouse's introduction dwelt with levity on his own longevity:

[N]obody, I think, will deny that the swiftness with which I have become a force in English letters is rather remarkable. It is a bare fifty-two years since I broke into the game, yet already I am the author of an Omnibus book, and now Nicolas Bentley has asked me to write the Introduction to *The Pick of Punch*, a job which entitles me to . . . speak as an authority on . . . the differences between wit and humour. . . . Part of the pleasure it is giving me to dish out this

Introduction is due to the fact that I feel it is dramatically right that I should be the People's Choice. For while I may have my defects as an author, I *am* the oldest contributor to *Punch* still living. . . . My first *morceau* appeared in its columns in 1903.

In fact, Wodehouse was understating his case here, for he had had no less than eight pieces published in *Punch* in 1902.

In 1963, 33 years after he had provided the introduction to Charles Graves's *And the Greeks* (E141), Wodehouse introduced another of Graves's books, this time providing a foreword to *Leather Armchairs* (E142), a book dealing with the London clubs. His introduction mentions just one of his many fictional clubs: “I shall never forget lunching with Adrian Mulliner, the private eye, at the Senior Bloodstain on the occasion when by pure deductive methods he tracked down and exposed a piece of kidney in the steak and kidney pie.”

All three of the clubs which, according to Norman Murphy (*A Wodehouse Handbook*, Vol. 1, pp219–24), had a hand in the birth of the Drones Club are mentioned by Graves. The Bath Club is one of the 60 clubs to merit its own chapter. In his introduction, Graves mentions the “Bachelors’ (immortalised by PG Wodehouse as the Drones) . . . the Constitutional (the Earl of Emsworth's club)”, and Buck's: “Buck's was very much a young man's club, [whose members] enthusiastically took part in regular Buck's [golfing] Weekends year after year at Le Touquet, thus putting this delightful resort fairly and squarely on the map. Another distinction was Buck's Fizz – champagne and fresh orange juice drunk out of goblets or tankards; and very delicious too, after a round of golf.” According to several internet sources, Buck's Fizz was invented by the barman at Buck's, the same McGarry who is mentioned in ‘The Pride of the Woosters is Wounded’ in *The Inimitable Jeeves* when Bertie visits Buck's.



*Buck's Club, the major source for the Drones Club*

In the next column we will look at Wodehouse's final four introductions.

# Oh, Lady! Lady!!

## Chris Dueker reviews a San Francisco production

It did not start well. After waiting ever so long for my complimentary review tickets, I called the Eureka Theatre box office. A recording greeted me with a mispronunciation of the Wodehouse name. You may be assured that I eventually reached a person and gave her what-for for this foul recording.



*Oh, Lady! Lady!!* was presented by the 42nd Street Moon Players of San Francisco in late autumn 2007 [November 23–December 16]. This group seems to specialise in revivals of past musicals. The performers were mostly professionals, though they proudly carried around script books. I recall that learning lines was expected even in elementary school plays. In *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* costumes were worn, but many props were imaginary. The orchestra consisted of an enthusiastic piano player.

I took my wife to obtain a musical evaluation. She reported that the singing was fine but the dancing was not inspired. Most of the participants knew most of their lines as we saw the play after two weeks of the three-week run. However, the use of the imaginary props was distracting.

*Oh Lady! Lady!!* was created by Guy Bolton, P. G. Wodehouse, and Jerome Kern. It was one of the plays performed at New York's Princess Theatre. The Princess run was from January 31 to August 10, 1918 (219 performances) – an impressive record, especially considering the state of the world then. The Princess

era has been said to be a turning point toward more substantial musicals. Persons believing that consider Harry Potter movie soundtracks to be classical music. [A personal viewpoint, and others may disagree. –Ed.]

In accordance with my general philosophy, I attended *Oh Lady! Lady!!* with an open mind. The story quickly became familiar though backwards; *The Small Bachelor* (1927) was derived from *Oh Lady! Lady!!* The plot is Wodehousean and the lyrics are appropriate. The pleasant combination supports Wodehouse's avowed view of fiction as a musical. However, musicals remain entertainment; the Wodehouse stories and books stand as literature.

42nd Street Moon did the world a great favour by putting 'Bill' back into *Oh, Lady! Lady!!*, for which it had been written originally. Kern removed it before the show's opening but cleverly used a modified 'Bill' in *Showboat*. Reportedly Wodehouse did not know why 'Bill' was removed from *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* It is clearly one of the most popular of Wodehouse's songs. Previously I have found it wanting. The character of Willoughby Finch is a stretch: college-educated, with a valet, and penniless. He is not an underdog! Within the musical, the song reveals its wonder: Molly sees character within the shell. Lara Cazalet remains The Singer for 'Bill', but context does matter.

Despite the distractions of this production, the overall experience was true to P. G. Wodehouse.

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## Wodehouse on the Boards

Thanks to Peter Borchers, Steve Griffiths, and Bob Miller for sending information about a touring production of *Come On, Jeeves*, a play written by Wodehouse and Guy Bolton that later resulted in PGW's novel *Ring for Jeeves*. The play is being staged by Ian Dickens Productions, and performances will be put on at the following locations:



- Theatre Royal Lincoln : March 17–22
- Civic Theatre, Chelmsford : March 31–April 5
- Lichfield Garrick Theatre : April 15–19
- Wyvern Theatre, Swindon : April 23–26
- Harrogate Theatre : May 6–10
- Rose Theatre, Kingston-upon-Thames : May 12–17
- Lyceum Theatre, Crewe : May 19–24
- Grand Theatre, Blackpool : June 2–7
- Lowry Theatre, Salford Quays : June 9–14

Gordon Craig Theatre, Stevenage June 17–21

Another production at the Erith Theatre, Kent, is also scheduled for June 2–7, and more performances were yet to be announced at time of going to press. For up-to-date listings, visit the Future Events page on the Society's website.

In New York City, Musicals Tonight! are doing theatricalized readings of six Wodehouse short stories: 'Fate', 'Buttercup Day', 'Pig-Hoo-o-o-ey!', 'Monkey Business', 'The Ordeal of Osbert Mulliner', and 'The Passing of Ambrose'. Two stories were performed on March 10, and the remaining four will be presented on April 7 and 21 at the McGinn/Cazale Theatre, 2162 Broadway, 3rd floor, from 6.00 to 7.00 p.m. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased online at [www.smarttix.com](http://www.smarttix.com) or by calling 212-868-4444.

# Books, Glorious Books

A Report of the Latest Society Meeting  
by Robert Bruce

Fundamentally what we Wodehouseans like is books. So the prospect of plans for a tranche more of Plum's stuff had enticed many members to the meeting at The George in the Strand on 19 February. And they were not disappointed. Kate Elton, publishing director at Arrow, delivered the goods, and a few free samples as well. This year, in May, in August, and in October, Arrow will republish 42 Wodehouse titles previously published by Hutchinson, along with two Wodehouse omnibuses (see the complete list on page 13). And they are all to appear in snappy new covers and using the Everyman texts. Kate proved herself to be the right cover for the job. "My dad gave me my first Wodehouse at the age of 10," she told us.



Kate Elton

The new covers are designed by Korean artist Swan Park, which sounds more like an outlying part of the Blandings Estate. Instant art critics around the bar thought her Ukridge could have looked a bit more shambolic. But all agreed that the Empress scrubbing up in the bath was a masterpiece. And those of us at the bar nodded sagely on hearing that the Mulliner books were to have "a foaming pint of beer" on the spine. Kate also told us that there would be a big launch picnic party in a London square on May 10th, to which all Society members were invited. We were promised family fun, egg-and-spoon races, and a lot of 'old-fashioned Englishness'. This is all part of the plan to "expand the Wodehouse readership and establish his canon for the next century". At this cheers were heard and hats flung in the air. "Get them early," she said, "and, like me, you are a fan for life."

In the meantime, Society Chairman Hilary Bruce had let us know that she had been refreshing the list of Society patrons, three of whom (Tony Blair, Sir Nicholas Henderson, and Jan Piggott) had graciously agreed to step down. Our two newest patrons are Shashi Tharoor, "a very good egg" and past Under-Secretary at the UN, and Lara Cazalet, Plum's great-granddaughter (for more, see page 15). Amidst the noisy acclaim, Lara's father could be heard telling all and sundry that she was "really chuffed". Our next exhilarating meeting is at the Arts Club on 8 July.

# Poets' Corner

## *Shattered Dreams*

I thought, dear Doris, we should be  
Extremely happy if we married;  
I deemed that you were made for me,  
But oh! I'm thankful now we tarried.  
Had we been wedded last July  
(I caught the measles so we waited)  
We'd now be wretched, you and I;  
A genius always is ill-fated.

We might have lived without a hitch  
Till one or both of us were 'taken',  
And even won the Dunmow flicht  
Of appetising breakfast bacon;  
We might have passed our married life  
In quite a Joan and Darby fashion,  
Free from the slightest taint of strife,  
Had I not written *Songs of Passion*. \*

Ah me, that book! The truth will out;  
Genius is rampant in each sonnet;  
Consult, if you're inclined to doubt,  
The verdict of the Press upon it.  
The *Pigbury Patriot* calls them "staves  
Which we feel justified in praising";  
The *Mudford Daily Argus* raves;  
The *Sloshly Clarion* says "Amazing!"

So, Doris, it can never be:  
I trust the tidings won't upset you;  
Reluctantly I set you free,  
Though ne'er, I vow, will I forget you.  
Some other man your hand may win;  
I'll strive to bear it with composure;  
Your letters you will find within;  
Yours truly

Edwin Jones (Enclosure)

From *Punch*, 29 July 1903

(The *British Medical Journal* had reported that men of genius were never happy in their married lives.)

\* Ella Wheeler Wilcox's *Poems of Passion* had been a surprise bestseller since its publication in 1883.

"At the old Gardenia," said Galahad, "the bouncers used to fight for the privilege of throwing me out, and there seldom failed to be a couple of the gendarmerie waiting in the street as I shot through the door, on me like wolves and intensely sceptical of my sobriety."

(From *Galahad at Blandings*, 1964)

# Recent Press Comment

**The Economic Times (India)**, November 1

The Union Minister of State for Commerce commented at a conference that the country's coffee growers were manic-depressive, as they insisted on showing photographs to demonstrate their plight. On one occasion, said the report, "they insisted on showing him photographs of the pestilential white stem-borer ravishing their arabica crops, which may have reminded him of how Gussie Fink-Nottle would keep holding forth on the sex life of newts until Bertie Wooster would beg him to 'Keep it clean!'"

**Telegraph (Seven)**, November 4

Published an article by Joseph Connolly celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Folio Society, in which he recalled how its owner, Lord Gavron, used to visit Connolly's antiquarian bookshop regularly to buy PGW first editions, and stressed how much the production and design director Joe Whitlock Blundell appreciated Wodehouse.

**Deccan Herald**, November 5

Published a feature describing a tour of Sudeley Castle, including a discussion of its merits as a source for Blandings.

**Arizona Central**, November 9

Reviewed a book entitled *The Book That Changed My Life*, a compilation of comments by prominent writers, including short-story writer Amy Bloom, who "almost chose *Pride and Prejudice* or *A Tale of Two Cities* but finally opted for *The Most of P G Wodehouse* because she and her father had laughed over it together".

**Guardian Blogs (Books)**, November 9

Nicholas Lezard noted when times are hard, "a favourite book is a comfort that nothing else can match – not even booze or drugs. . . . At the moment I have a big pot of Valium a friend has given me to get through a rather nasty time. It remains untouched. What I'm doing is rereading P G Wodehouse. Much better for one. More laughs. More endorphins."

**Daily Telegraph**, November 13

(from Carolyn de la Plain)

An editorial referred to research claiming that eating fish at least once a week reduced the risk of dementia by up to a third, and suggested that Bertie Wooster should have followed Jeeves's dietary lead.

**Daily Telegraph**, November 18 (and **Independent**, November 26)

Each reviewed the book *Why Not Catch-21? The Stories Behind the Titles* by Gary Dexter (Frances Lincoln), and included an extract from the piece on *My Man Jeeves*.

**Brain of Britain (Radio 4)**, November 19

The questions posed by a listener, Martin Jenkins of

Morden, during the short break between rounds were: "What was Jeeves's Christian name?" and "What was Bertie Wooster's middle name?" The panel answered the first correctly, but failed with the second.

**News Quiz (Radio 4)**, November 23

(from Gwendolin Goldbloom)

Carrie Quinlan ended her comments on David Cameron's attempt to smarten children up by saying, "I'm off to the Drones now, because Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps is having a hell of a time."

**Guardian (Review)**, November 24

Carried a favourable review of *The Wit and Wisdom of P. G. Wodehouse*.

**The Times** and **Telegraph**, November 27

Reported the Service of Thanksgiving for the late Lord Deedes, at which his daughter, the Hon Lucy Deedes, read from 'A Crime Wave at Blandings'.

**Arizona Daily Wildcat**, November 27

Even a newspaper in a relatively remote American state felt its readers should know that PGW named his "famous fictional butler" Jeeves after Percy Jeeves, a British cricketer who died during World War I.

**The Times**, November 28 (from John Hodgson)

Reported on the availability of a searchable archive of 104 years' worth of London telephone directories, including entries for PGW.

**The Source** (Great Missenden), December

Carried a short article about the publication of *The Wit and Wisdom of P. G. Wodehouse* by local resident Tony Ring.

**The Week**, December 1 (from Alexander Dainty)

In the column 'The List', Sir Patrick Moore listed a selection of Best Books, the last of which was *Thank You, Jeeves*. Moore described Jeeves as "one of the greatest characters in British literature" and noted that "Wodehouse has had many imitators but no equals".

**University Challenge**, December 10

St Edmund Hall, Oxford, were asked the question (on the topic of 'Sport and Fiction'): "*The Clicking of Cuthbert* and *The Heart of a Goof* are collections of stories written by P G Wodehouse narrated by the Oldest Member. What sport were they about?" Their answer: "Cricket."

**The Australian**, December 16

Greg Sheridan posed the thought that the absence of gardens in Australian literature (and much high culture) is a bit of a mystery, adding that gardens are central to European literature and in PGW the garden at Blandings is almost as much a character as Lord Emsworth himself.

**Telegraph Magazine**, December 22

Carried a profile of Ben Schott, whose comments

included: "I do a lot of re-reading for pleasure. I'm often engrossed in statistical reports all day so reading certain authors is incredibly relaxing. P G Wodehouse has become just like eating."

**The Mail on Sunday**, December 23

(from John Hodgson)

A review by Craig Brown of *Les Dawson's Secret Notebooks*, compiled by Tracy Dawson, compared PGW's sentence about Lady Malvern fitting into "my biggest armchair as if it had been built around her by somebody who knew they were wearing armchairs tight about the hips that season" with Dawson's "She once collapsed in the middle of the road, and until the crane arrived to lift her, the police advised motorists to treat her as a roundabout".

**Daily Telegraph**, December 26

Anam Blomfield reported on the 'remarkable revival' which Wodehouse is making in Russia since the ban imposed by Stalin in 1929 was lifted in 1990.

**Los Angeles Times**, December 30 (from Karen Shottling)

In an article on Hearst Castle in California, Christopher Reynolds commented on some of the many famous guests who stayed there during its heyday, including "author P. G. Wodehouse cracking wise about the yaks in the private zoo".

**Accountancy Magazine**, January

Robert Bruce wrote an article extolling the impressive management techniques of Wodehouse's headmaster at Dulwich, A. H. Gilkes.

**Independent**, January 3 (and many others)

Many papers included Wodehouse's quotation about the first Flashman book ("If there was a time when I felt that watcher-of-the-skies-when-a-new-planet stuff, it was when I read the first Flashman") in their obituary of the series' author, George MacDonald Fraser.

**Open Book (Radio 4)**, January 3

A programme on *The Art of Comic Writing* opened with PGW's voice explaining how important it was to get the love interest settled first. This was followed by a studio-read extract about the love life of a newt.

**Times**, January 4

Reviewing the Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve broadcasts of *Jeeves Live* by Martin Jarvis, Chris Campling described them as "essential listening" and said that they "showed once again that Jarvis understands Wodehouse in a way granted to few".

**Sunday Telegraph**, January 6

Reviewed Norman Murphy's *A Wodehouse Handbook* in its section *Seven*, and carried a related article in the news pages.

**Times**, January (from Simon Frazer)

In the 'Word Watching' puzzle, readers were asked to define *Scrag* as 'a rough tackle', 'mincemeat', or 'a

precipice'. The answer confirmed it was a rough rugby tackle by a quote from one of PGW's school stories from 1903.

**Quote, Unquote (Radio 4)**, January 16

The first programme of a new series had a Wodehouse round concentrating on identifying his modifications of well-known quotations such as "The face that stopped a thousand clocks" and "Will no one rid me of this turbulent butler?"

**Washington Post**, January 17

Provided a very useful list of books featuring 'Literary Pigs', using *Summer Lightning* as the Blandings representative.

**The Hindu**, January 20

Our newest Patron, Shashi Tharoor, remembered the contribution made to broadcast cricket by the late Brian Johnston and pointed out that, like Wodehouse, he revealed to the world a perpetually sunny disposition, was generous to a fault, and delighted in telling wry jokes against himself.

**The Scotsman**, February 8

Writing of the death of the Maharishi, the Beatles' onetime guru, Robert McNeil said he was not the man for gurus. In middle age you still search for an author or thinker who will explain all. But the tragedy of growing up is the discovery that nobody knows what they are doing, and in the end you fall back on the fictional trinity – Shakespeare, Wodehouse and Tolkien – "each of whom, for all their fine words, ultimately believed in just muddling through, which is fine as far as it goes."

**University of Toronto News**, February 12

In an article by Caz Zyvatkauskas of the Strategic Communications Department, she lamented the tendencies of universities to concentrate on the serious. She proposed a whole course on Jeeves and Wooster for the English Department and suggested creating a fund to be opened in support of such an idea.

**The Mail on Sunday**, February 17

(from John Hodgson)

David Mellor pointed out that as the revival of Jonathan Miller's production of *The Mikado* at the Coliseum was based on the idea that as the show was a satire on English manners, why not dispense with the Japanese element, set it in a 1920s grand hotel, and populate it with silly asses straight out of the pages of PGW?

**Daily Telegraph**, February 18

(from Murray Hedgcock)

A thoughtful article by A N Wilson explores the paradox of Bertie Wooster the narrator maintaining he is a silly ass, yet recalling the existence (if not the correct detail) of an encyclopaedic range of literary and other references.

# Future Events for Your Diary

## May 10, 2008 Arrow Wodehouse Picnic

Arrow will celebrate its new line of paperback Wodehouse titles with a family picnic, 12–3 p.m., at a London location to be announced. See page 13.

## June 14, 2008 Havant Literary Festival Readathon

A special event featuring Plum – see page 17.

## June 20, 2008 Gold Bats v Dulwich Dusters

Our annual match at Dulwich College will commence at 4.30 p.m., with the popular tea served around 5.30.

## June 22, 2008 Gold Bats v Sherlock Holmes Society

Our annual match against the Sherlock Holmes Society of London at the West Wycombe Cricket Club, 11.30 a.m.–6 p.m. Be sure to bring a picnic lunch.

## July 6, 2008 Gold Bats v The Intellectuals

This match (date still to be confirmed) will be played at Charterhouse School. See June issue for details.

## July 8, 2008 Society Meeting

Our July meeting will be at the Arts Club, 40 Dover Street, London; start time 6 p.m. An abbreviated Wodehouse Walk is offered prior to the meeting. For more details on the walk and the meeting, see page 15.

## July 23, 2008 Gold Bats in Kent

The Gold Bats will play together with the Siegfried Sassoon Society at Matfield, Kent, starting at 2 p.m.

## August 3, 2008 Gold Bats v Hollywood Cricket Club

This special match with the Hollywood Cricket Club will commence at 2 p.m., at a location still to be determined. See page 15.

## August 10, 2008 Gold Bats v Kirby Strollers

This charity match will take place in the grounds of Audley End House, near Saffron Walden, starting at 1 p.m.

## September 20–21, 2008 Newbury Show

The Royal County of Berkshire Show is held in Newbury, and as in previous years, the Society is sponsoring the prize for the Berkshire Pig Breeders Club Champion of Champions; judging takes place on Sunday the 21st at 10 a.m. For further information on the show, see <http://www.newburyshow.co.uk/>.

## September 26–28, 2008 Havant Literary Festival

This new festival in Havant, Hampshire, will feature Wodehouse among other authors, and Tony Ring will be giving a talk on September 27..

## November 18, 2008 Society Meeting

The venue and speaker for this meeting will be announced in the next issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

## October 23, 2008 Society Formal Dinner

For our 2008 black-tie dinner, the Society will return to the glorious surroundings of Gray's Inn. Application forms will be mailed with the June issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

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