



# WOOSTER SAUCE

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

Number 48

December 2008

## A Binge to Stagger Humanity

by Harry Mount

*Editor's note: Some 140 members and guests came from all parts of Britain and around the world, including the United States and Japan, to gather in the historic and beautiful surroundings of Gray's Inn for the Society's biennial dinner on 23 October. The occasion was glamorously formal, but there was a decidedly informal air as we enjoyed a magnificent evening of food (Anatole would have approved of the menu), drink, and fun. We hobnobbed with old friends, made new ones, and revelled in the company of like-minded souls. And to cap it all off, Tony Ring had arranged yet another splendid entertainment. Fortunately, Harry Mount, the author of A Lust for Window Sills: A Lover's Guide to British Buildings from Portcullis to Pebble-dash (published by Little, Brown), was a good egg and did double duty for us, not only participating in the entertainment but also writing this report of what turned out to be an evening that will be long remembered by all those who were there.*

What a missed opportunity not to make Dr Shashi Tharoor Secretary-General of the UN at the 2006 election.



Dr Shashi Tharoor wows his audience

Going on his speech to this year's dinner – brimming with humour, brio, and expert Wodehousiana – he must have browsed heavily at the brain food served so superbly by the Gray's Inn staff; Jeeves would have approved. If Dr Tharoor had been appointed, peace would have broken out in the Middle East, the recession would have been reversed, and the Antarctic ice cap would have spread to the Orkneys.

Come to think of it, the temperature had already dropped a few degrees by the time we left Gray's Inn's Gothic gem of a hall. But that might have just been the chilling realisation that the end had come to a splendid evening, floated on a sea of good cheer mixed with several oceans of Duc de Chapelle, Cotes de Gascogne (2007), Chateau Beauregard Ducasse Claret (2003) and Burmester Ruby Port. Homer, who liked his wines mixed, would have approved. Our thanks for this splendid wining and dining go to the evening's sponsors, Algy Cluff and Random House.



Applause, applause as the entertainment goes over big

Talking of missed opportunities, Wodehouse's grandson, Sir Edward Cazalet, reminded the assembled company of the Queen Mother's heroic offer – that she should go to America to knight the Master on his adopted turf. He also repeated her message to the Society at the 2000 Dinner, also in Gray's Inn, paraphrasing

Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright: “May you all have a binge to stagger humanity.”



The performers for the dinner entertainment included James Naughtie and Lara Cazalet . . .

Wine glasses topped up with the Beaugard Ducasse were drained at Sir Edward’s mention of Sir John Mortimer, no stranger to the Inns of Court, squired by his glittering daughter, Rosie, who also has ink running through her veins. And cheers rang through the hall as the Society’s president, Richard Briers, was encouraged to take a bow.

False modesty forbids me from reviewing my own performance in the after-dinner entertainment. But it did mean that I got the best view of my partners in mime.

James Naughtie, who was just off to cover a small election in the US for the *Today* programme, did a splendid turn as Psmith, the distinguished sub-editor of that far more influential news organ, *Cosy Moments*, in a reading from *Psmith, Journalist*. Psmith and *Cosy Moments* were leading the way in a crusading investigation into slum landlords in New York – another thing Dr Tharoor would have cleared up had he been installed in the UN’s Manhattan HQ.

The American theme continued in the number ‘Tulip Time in Sing-Sing’ – that prison in upstate New York, where the prisoners’ performance of *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* (of which Wodehouse was very proud) once echoed across the Hudson. Hal Cazalet, the Master’s great-grandson, brought a delightful humour and delicate beauty to the song, accompanied with matched skill by Stephen Higgins.

Other readings in which we performers variously took our turns were taken from *Printer’s Error*, *Leave It to Psmith*, *Summer Lightning*, *The Code of the*

*Woosters*, *Jeeves in the Offing*, and *Pigs Have Wings*, as well as two poems that were my privilege to read.

My partners on the dais were faultless. Caroline Gascoigne of Random House clearly knows her aunts. Nature-lovers will know that swans can break a man’s arm; Caroline’s Aunt Dahlia would have sent the bravest young man hot-footing it to the warm embrace of the local swannery in seconds. And it’s time to bottle all that talent swilling through the Cazalet genes, I thought as I watched Hal’s sister, the actress Lara Cazalet, set about thoroughly recreating the parts of the Reverend Upjohn’s secretary and Bobbie Wickham in *Jeeves in the Offing*.

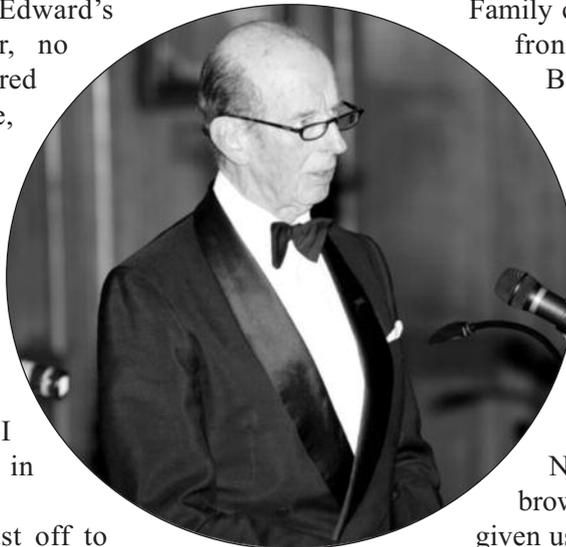
Eliza Lumley imported a haunting touch to her duets with Hal in ‘Before I Met You’, before they closed with a moving version of ‘Till the Clouds Roll By’ that included some newly discovered Wodehouse lyrics.

One of the arrows in PGW’s straining quiver is that his humour is never cruel. I can’t think of another writer whose mocking words about the Royal Family could be said so comfortably in front of a member of said family.

But, in two of the evening’s extracts, mock was made. Early on, James Naughtie as Psmith referred humbly to Comrade Windsor with a gesture in the direction of HRH the Duke of Kent. *Thoughts on a Recent Wooing* (“Oh, wretched is the monarch’s lot: how he must long to end it!”) caused no bother either.

Not a furrow passed over the brow of the Duke of Kent, who had given us a splendid impression of Lord Emsworth and his approach to writers and their ilk in an extract from *Leave It*

*to Psmith*. But then again, as a reader of PGW for over 60 years, it would be extraordinary if HRH did anything other, when reading the Master, than the obvious – that is, laugh.



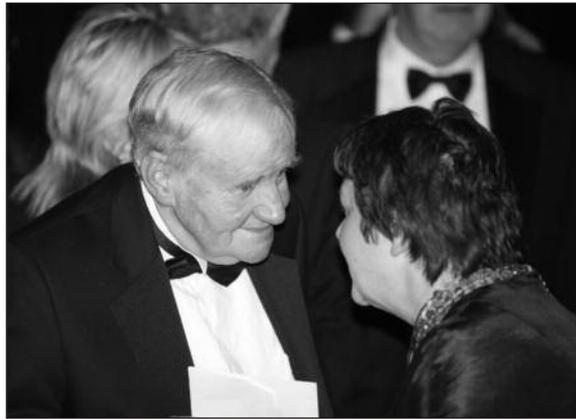
HRH The Duke of Kent . . .



and Eliza Lumley and Hal Cazalet



Our man Mount at the podium



The President and the Chairman, undoubtedly discussing high policy of a Wodehouse nature



Good food, good fun



Above: Some familiar figures enjoy preprandial slicing  
Right: Part of the crowd in magnificent Gray's Inn



Thanks to Ginni Beard for providing all the photos on these pages.

## Society News

### **Notice Anything New?**

Yes, it's here at last! It only took 12 years, but the Society finally has a new logo. After much discussion and many tries, we arrived at the design you see on page 1 – an image of Plum's typewriter and pipe. It was created by artist Jane-Ann Cameron, who also designed the cartouche and tea towel for last year's Week With Wodehouse. Our warmest thanks and appreciation go to Jane-Ann for the Society's splendid new 'brand'. We hope all members approve! Please send us your comments, not only on the new logo but also regarding the new look of the *Wooster Sauce* front page. Like it? Don't like it? Let the Editor know!

### **More on the Website**

In the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, we invited members to take a look at the changes our new website editor, Jamie Jarrett, is making. The website now has all the latest on Society happenings and news in the World of Wodehouse. For example, under Recent Events, members can see more photos from the

dinner at Gray's Inn and read the speech Dr Shashi Tharoor delivered to the masses on the night. Take a look at Latest News, and while you're at it, try your hand at the Quiz – always fun! Also, along with our technical guru Chris Reece, Jamie is redesigning the website. This is still in development, and sometime in 2009 you will see striking changes in both appearance and content.

### **Deepest Gratitude to Our Printer**

Your humble Editor would like to express heartfelt thanks on behalf of the Society – and even more on her own behalf – to Stuart Bennett, Sandie Howard-Smith, and all the employees of Baines Design and Print (Cuffley, Hertfordshire) for the continued excellent support they provide in producing *Wooster Sauce* and other Society publications. Most recently they did a superb job helping to produce the programme for our dinner at Gray's Inn. For 12 years and counting, Baines has been a bedrock of sound advice, reliability, and quality work. We are tremendously grateful.



# Letters to the Editor

## Reactions, Questions, and Thoughts from Our

### From Lyndsay Dedman, Surrey

With regard to the letter about Jeeves showing emotion, my favourite passage is from ‘Comrade Bingo’ when Jeeves, without warning, sees Bingo Little wearing a false beard: “I had forgotten to warn Jeeves about the beard, and it came on him absolutely out of a blue sky. I saw the man’s jaw drop, and he clutched at the table for support. I don’t blame him, mind you. Few people have ever looked fouler than young Bingo in the fungus. Jeeves paled a little; then the weakness passed and he was himself again.” This shows that Jeeves did show emotion when greatly stirred.

*The Editor replies:* Another (albeit weaker) example can be found in *The Code of the Woosters* (chapter 7): “I wouldn’t say that Jeeves was actually smirking, but there was a definite look of quiet satisfaction on his face . . .”

### From Dennis Jenks, Surrey

After reading Margaret Slythe’s delightful ‘The Dulwich Factor’, I found myself engrossed minutes later in a book of verse, songs and anecdotes called *A Muse ’n Washington*, by James W. Symington, a US Senator and scion from a distinguished American political family, Enclosed is a copy of a letter from the book, entitled ‘Latin’, I feel sure Dulwich Master Arthur Gilkes would have approved.

*The Editor replies:* Unfortunately, space does not permit reprinting the entire letter (which PGW would have well appreciated), but a taste of it should suffice. (This is especially in light of recent reports in Britain of a council that is banning all use of Latin-derived terms because they are too elitist.)

Writing to his daughter after learning that Latin was to be dropped from her children’s school curriculum, Symington expressed his belief that Latin should be made “abundantly available to every child throughout primary and secondary school years, and a requirement for at least four of those years.” He then admitted that “I am acting merely as amicus curiae whose opinions are admittedly ad hoc, ex parte, ultra vires, and certainly neither de jure nor ex cathedra, inasmuch as I graduated neither magna, nor summa cum laude, and am certainly not a member of the curia of the literati. . . . I don’t claim the status of deus ex machina; nolo contendere on that point. Nor would I want my views to provide a pedagogical\* casus belli. . . . Mirabile dictu, I have concluded my observations in persona without one drink, in vino veritas notwithstanding, I tender them to you in camera, in situ, and in nomine Domini, trusting into those whose care they are committed will agree, ‘humanum est errare.’”

\* Forgive this Greek derivative.

## More on ‘Providence and the Butler’

In the September issue of *Wooster Sauce* (p.5), we reported on ‘Providence and the Butler’, a recently discovered Wodehouse story previously unknown to modern Wodehouse scholars. The story had been published in the *Washington Herald* newspaper’s *Literary Magazine* of 27 February 1910, and John Dawson found it in the Library of Congress’s digital archive of early American newspapers (<http://www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica/> – search for ‘Wodehouse’). Inspired by Norman Murphy’s *A Wodehouse Handbook*, John has embarked on a project of annotating Wodehouse’s books, and it was while working on *The Globe By The Way Book* earlier this year that he came across ‘Providence and the Butler’. At the time, however, he could only find the first page of the story (pictured). A member of the Yahoo Blandings discussion group found the rest of the story on film in a library in Australia(!). John has now transcribed the full story and made it available to other researchers. Whether it will be published for the general public to read is for the Wodehouse estate to decide.

Currently, John is focusing his research on Wodehouse’s early years, 1900–1910, and he is looking for unpublished newspaper and magazine stories from that period.



## The Clerihew Challenge: Results

In our September issue (p.6), we published two clerihews by Allyn Hertzbach and challenged readers to send in more, based on Wodehouse characters. Two readers answered the challenge, with **Jonathan Bacchus** providing some interesting historical background:

The clerihews in the September *Wooster Sauce* made me wonder how much of a Wodehouse enthusiast the clerihew's inventor, E. C. Bentley (1875–1956) was. The two men seem to have been friends or acquaintances, though Bentley joined in the condemnation of Wodehouse following the wartime broadcasts, . . .

In his introduction to *The Complete Clerihews of E. Clerihew Bentley* (OUP, 1981) Gavin Ewart writes that “at Oxford in the nineties Bentley was fond of P. G. Wodehouse’s novels, . . .” This cannot be right, since Wodehouse’s first novel, *The Pothunters*, was not published until 1902. Perhaps Bentley in fact became fond of Wodehouse’s work in later years?

These facts established, Jonathan then submitted a clerihew, based not on a PGW character but, quite appropriately, on Bentley himself:

The biographical verses of E. C. Bentley  
Are generally admired by the cognoscenti,  
And nobody should grouse  
At the work of any admirer of P. G. Wodehouse

**John Durston** sent what he described as a “modest offering”:

Roderick Spode, that extremist toad  
Led his band along the road,  
Dressed in black, his louts and lags,  
Wearing frightful footer bags!

And here’s a final one from **Allyn Hertzbach**:

Bobbie Wickham, a lovely girl  
For Bertram let her sail unfurl  
He quickly found that she was more  
Than he should ever bargain for.

## Wodehouse in the Media

### In the Newspapers

Two guests at our October 23rd dinner mentioned the night in columns on November 1. In the *Financial Times*, **James Naughtie** compared the experience to being in “the upside-down world of Vegas” and noted: “The sense of being in a scene beyond parody was highlighted by the Loyal Toast not being directed towards the usual recipient but to the late Queen Mother.” He wrote of Wodehouse’s acquaintanceship with Alistair Cooke, reflected on what Cooke would have thought of the US election, and ended with President Bush’s demeanor regarding the current economic crisis: “All too reminiscent of that captain of a transatlantic liner in a Wodehouse story, who was certain that he did know the way to America but, nonetheless, could be heard muttering regularly to himself on the bridge, ‘Turn right at Cherbourg, then keep straight on.’”

**Simon Hoggart**, in his column for the *Guardian*, wrote not only of the dinner but also of his attendance at a reception held by Everyman’s Library to celebrate the publication of its 60th Wodehouse book (see also page 14). Of the dinner, he noted: “It’s strange but comforting to be with hundreds of people who are there only because they share a love of one writer.”

### On Television

On November 7, the last episode of Channel 5’s *Paul Merton in India* saw the comedian go to Mumbai, where he joined a group of Wodehouse fans who have been meeting to discuss Wodehouse every month for the past seven years. “Is Jeeves here?” he asked as he arrived. He and his hosts discussed Wodehouse’s humour as an

escape from reality; they decided Jeeves was their favourite character. At the end they all toasted “the next 100 years of P G Wodehouse”.

### On the Radio

On BBC Radio 4 on September 2, Ben Elton presented ‘Musical Comedy Was My Dish’; **Alexander Dainty** writes of the half-hour programme:

Elton had been introduced to P G Wodehouse at an early age by his parents. He said that Wodehouse had been more well-known for his Jeeves and Wooster stories rather than his mostly forgotten side of lyric writing. He noted that in conjunction with composers such as Jerome Kern and Cole Porter, Wodehouse had written many lyrics for some great musicals, making an invaluable contribution to the development of musical comedy on Broadway and also in the West End. Some of his musical efforts had also been written in collaboration with Guy Bolton, and one of his most notable efforts was ‘Bill’. Elton was joined on the programme by Edward and Hal Cazalet, the latter of whom sang; both added immeasurably to a fascinating and very entertaining show.

Also, from September 19 to October 10, BBC Radio 4 presented a four-part adaptation of *Psmith in the City*, dramatised by Marcy Kahan and narrated by Simon Williams. *The Times* selected it for its ‘Radio Choice’ column, and listener reaction was favourable – no surprise, really, because Wodehouse never fails to please!

# Old Home Week in Moscow

by Jelle Otten

Remembering Wodehouse's Old Home Week in Moscow (*Right Ho, Jeeves*, chapter 11), the Russian Wodehouse Society felt they could do no better than to organise one, held August 10–16. The theme was Wodehouse in Russia – or, if you prefer, Russia in Wodehouse. If you are wondering about the connection, then you have clearly not read Masha Lebedeva's series of articles in *Wooster Sauce* and *By The Way* on the many references Wodehouse made to Russia.

A small group of us came from abroad – France, The Netherlands, and the United States – and the Week began with a hearty welcome in the Yolki-Palki Restaurant. Costumed waiters served typical Russian fare, including *bliny* (Russian pancakes) and red caviar and sour cream. The food was accompanied by traditional Russian soft drinks, *kvas* and *mors*. Organised by Masha Lebedeva and Dima Pritykin, we had a splendid evening, meeting people and making new friends.

On Monday morning we visited the Kremlin. You might think of the Kremlin as a vast walled fortress surrounding government buildings, but it also contains three cathedrals as well as other churches. We visited the Armoury and the Cathedral of the Assumption. The Armoury contains a mind-numbingly opulent collection of treasures accumulated over centuries by tsars and emperors and the Russian Orthodox Church. The collection is overwhelming, with highlights including the famous Fabergé Easter eggs and the 800-diamond throne of the Tsar (and much more regalia). The Cathedral of the Assumption, where Russian emperors were crowned, was equally impressive, with pictures of martyrs on the pillars since martyrs are considered to be pillars of faith.

We then went to the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. The original was erected in gratitude for the defeat of Napoleon in 1812, but Stalin destroyed it, planning to replace it with a modern Palace of Soviets. The latter never came to fruition, and in the 1990s the cathedral was rebuilt. From its roof we were able to admire a magnificent panoramic view of Moscow. The day concluded with a boat trip on the Moscow river around Balchug Island; landmarks were pointed out by

a Russian guide, but we had Dima Pritykin on hand to translate into English.

On Tuesday, we enjoyed a bus tour round Moscow. We admired Red Square and St Basil's Cathedral, the Novodevichy Convent (where tsars would banish their wives when they got tired of them), the new World

Trade Centre (where the tallest (500 m) building in Europe is under construction), and many other places. In the afternoon we visited the Fyodor Chaliapin Museum, home of the singer from 1910 to 1918. The museum has stage costumes and recordings of the singer, and we heard the Volga Boat Song he made so famous. (Wodehouse mentions him in *Bring On the Girls*, chapter 9.)

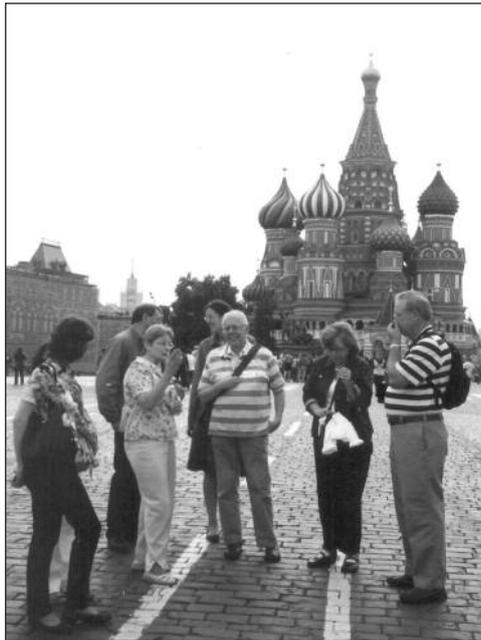
On Wednesday, we visited Khamovniki, Tolstoy's home and now a museum. Wodehouse mentioned Tolstoy often, and we were able to hear the author of *War and Peace* himself on a gramophone recording he had made on equipment presented to him by none other than Thomas Edison! In the afternoon, all Old

Home Week participants played a grand mini-golf championship; the gold medal was won by Susan Brokaw (USA), the silver by Elena Kirillova, and the bronze by Masha Lebedeva. A special award (a Russian 2008 Olympic team medallion) was given to Marie Lasson.

The next day we journeyed to the Serednikovo Country Mansion, an 18th-century equivalent of Blandings Castle. It was the home of the writer Mikhail Lermontov, who wrote a long poem, 'Borodino', on the last battle Napoleon fought before taking Moscow (see *Much Obligated, Jeeves*, chapter 8). In the park around Serednikovo, the Moscow Weekers (our English-speaking guide included!) recited 'The Clicking of Cuthbert', Wodehouse's superb account of golf and Russian literature coming together.

On Friday, we visited Melichovo, the small country house where Anton Chekhov lived from 1892 to 1899 and where he wrote his famous plays.

On the last day of Old Home Week, we went to Tsaritsyno Selo, the palaces and parks built for Catherine the Great, whom Wodehouse mentioned often. Despite having commissioned and spent a



Our reporter, Jelle Otten, in the center, surrounded by fellow Wodehouseans in Moscow. (Photo by Masha Lebedeva)

fortune on the palace complex, Catherine never lived there. When they were finished, she came to inspect the result and rejected it, ordering another to be built in its place. This was never completed and fell into ruins. Between 2004 and 2007, however, Tsaritsyno Selo was completed, so we were visiting a brand new palace designed in the 18th century!

All things come to an end, and on Saturday evening there was a Farewell Dinner in Café Pushkin. We were all delighted not only with the splendid dinner but also with our superb goodbye gift. This was 'The Calendar of a Modern Gentleman and Milady; Twelve Months with

Wodehouse Characters'. This magnificent calendar was designed by Raya Ivanovskaya, a Russian Wodehouse Society member and graphic designer. (To view the calendar sheets online, see <http://tinyurl.com/6quyme>.)

Many thanks to Masha Lebedeva and Dimitri Pritykin for a splendid and unforgettable Home Week for all of us.



Members of the group wait near the entrance to the Kremlin: (l-r) Irina Alexeeva (RU), Elena Kirillova, (RU), Lena Lebedeva (RU), Dirk Wonnell (USA), Susan Brokaw (USA), Hubert Lasson (FR) and Marie Lasson (FR).

(Photo by Jelle Otten)

*Editor's note: More reports of the Old Home Week can be found on the Russian Wodehouse Society's website, where there are links to pages in English as well as to photos of the week's events.*

## My First Wodehouse Experience

by Ken Cowley

Quite a few years ago, shortly after I first subscribed to this fine journal, the editor at the time, Tony Ring, asked me to contribute an article to the series 'My First Wodehouse Experience'. As my writing is somewhat less prolific, not to mention less funny, than our hero, I think I've done pretty well in banging out these few hundred words in the subsequent half-decade or so.

I first got into PGW as a child of about 12 or 13. My grandfather, a witty and articulate man, was a Wodehouse fan, and between him and his son (my uncle) they had quite a few of the books. The first one I read was *The Inimitable Jeeves*, and I really think I had the exact same reaction to it as I have had to every PGW I've read subsequently. Sadly, 25 years or so later, of course, this only applies to re-reads, as I now have all the books. But I still laugh out loud on almost every page, finding PGW as rewarding as I ever did. Like most great comedy, it stands up to repeated reading, in Wodehouse's case by virtue of the cleverness of the sentences. Quite simply, nobody has ever written so many funny lines.

My grandfather was a solicitor in a country town in Ireland. I was raised in Dublin, and I've always been intrigued by the popularity of Wodehouse in former English colonies such as Ireland and India. I think it is probably due to the fact that we recognize the world he is writing about, and despite, or even

because of, a vague disapproval of that world, we find disappearing into it for a few hours to be a great escape. As well as having a strong affection for the Edwardian world of his youth, Wodehouse also sends it up fairly unmercifully. He is certainly not defending the old world of Empire, and indeed the warmth and lack of any hectoring politically arrogant tone is another factor that appeals to me.

Edwardian England was in many ways not dissimilar to Edwardian Ireland, as we did not get our independence until the 1920s, and even subsequently have retained a lot of the structure and culture that we share with

our colleagues across the Irish sea.

From a literary point of view, the Irish have always enjoyed well constructed English writing, indeed contributing to it ourselves with our Anglo-style writers, such as Shaw, Wilde, and Beckett, and our more Hiberno-style purveyors, such as Joyce, Yeats, Friel, Kavanagh, and McGahern.

I've enjoyed anything Wodehousian I've ever experienced outside of the books, such as the West End show *Anything Goes* a few years ago and the Jeeves & Wooster ITV series. Indeed, the only PGW-related item that if not overwhelming me, certainly left me far from whelmed was that mediocre recent film version of *Piccadilly Jim*. All in all, I'm looking forward to many more years of PGW-related fun.



# Best of the Best in Berkshire

*From the trip diary of American member Jean Tillson*

**Sunday, September 21:** Another uncannily gorgeous day, with clear blue skies and mild temperatures. Norman, Elin, and I arrived at the Royal County of Berkshire Show shortly before 10:00 and found other Society members already gathered around the judging ring watching a preliminary round of the competition. Interbreed Champions, I believe it was,



*The winner holds still just long enough for a picture with Judge J Collings, Chairman Hilary Bruce, TWS representative Jean Tillson, and owner Chris Impey of Porth. (Photo by Tony Ring)*

and what a splendid group of porcine entrants they were! Gloucester Old Spots, British Saddlebacks, Tamworths, even adorable little Kune Kunes were all well represented, but we were there to see Berkshires, of course, and soon we were invited into the tent to watch the judging of the Berkshire Champion of Champions from a special vantage point.

Out they came, eight of the most glorious descendants (spiritually, if not literally) of the Empress of Blandings: some big, some small, some female, some male, but all very nearly achieving the ideal “tethered balloon” shape. While they sauntered majestically around the ring, the announcer chappie kept up a highly gratifying patter in praise of Plum and The P G Wodehouse Society, explaining why it was so appropriate for us to sponsor this particular competition.

Finally, a champion was chosen by the bowler-hatted judge, and it was then I learned I would be helping the Chairman present the prize! Having read of past prize

presentations in which Hilary nearly had to take down the winning animal with a flying tackle in order to place the sash around it, I had looked forward to witnessing this thrilling denouement. Imagine my alarm, then, when I was told I would be taking part in it! Clearly this was meant as gesture of courtesy to The Wodehouse Society, whose representative I was for the moment, so I stiffened my upper lip and prepared to smell like greased pig for the rest of the day (entrants are covered in baby oil to give their skin that little extra shine that makes all the difference).

My anxiety quickly melted away, however, as the next time I saw the winning contestant (a magnificent boar named Fair Oaks Peter Lad II), he was already sporting the sash. All we had to do, then, was stand behind him and hold up his silver bowl, rosette, and various other spoils of the contest, while an official photographer took our picture. This would have been the work of a moment had not the pig decided that by donning the sash he had done his bit and now deserved a good root around the show ring. After about 10 minutes, he finally wandered between us and the photographer, and the required shot was taken.

We were making plans to adjourn to the nearest place of refreshment, when Norman happened to hear the announcement of the next event: a competition for people who had never shown pigs before, open to all ages. Before our astonished eyes, he leapt into the ring, threw on a white jacket, and began a dignified circumnavigation of the ring with an enormous Berkshire sow named Truffle (generously loaned by Christina Dunlop); fifteen hilarious minutes later, he was awarded a rosette for third place! Then, upon

being given a congratulatory back-scratch from Norman in *just the right spot*, Truffle toppled to the ground in ecstasy and eventually had to be revived by her owner so the next event could begin.

We spent the rest of the day at the show in Newbury, and I enjoyed every minute of it, but the memory I treasure most is that of Norman’s immediate reaction to being awarded his rosette: “Ladies!” he crowed with delight, “I am now available for breeding!”



*Norman Murphy: author, Wodehouse scholar – and pig handler (Photo by Tony Ring)*

# A Pig in a Pub

by Elin Murphy

It recently came to my attention that there existed, in Copythorne, Hampshire, a pub called The Empress of Blandings. “Ho!” said I, “this bears investigating.” So when Jean Tillson arrived from the US for a visit, and an excursion to Emsworth was planned, adding Copythorne to our itinerary was the work of a moment. It took some time to find it, though, as we knew only that it was somewhere west of Southampton, near the edge of the New Forest.

Aside from the name of the pub itself, there were several indications that the owners – the Hall and Woodhouse brewery (how appropriate is that?) – had done their homework. The inn sign features a painting of a Berkshire taken from *The Pig—Breeding, Rearing and Marketing*, by Sanders Spencer, which Wodehouse probably saw on visits to Hunstanton Hall in Norfolk. On the outside of the pub is a Wodehouse quotation describing the Empress, and surrounding the doors as one walks in are numerous pictures of pigs, the majority of them Berkshires.

Jean and I enjoyed a delicious meal and noted approvingly the nice decorative touches, such as pig plant holders and quotations from famous authors adorning the walls. But we were far from grunted to note that, while quotations inside the pub were properly attributed to their authors, the most important, on the outside of the pub, had no attribution. In fact, there was no sign of the name Wodehouse anywhere, and our waiter, a delightful young man anxious to please, could only tell us that the pub was named after the owner’s “favourite book” by one P. G. Wodehouse.

Subsequently, a stern, Aunt Agatha-style message was dashed off to David Hoare, Hall and Woodhouse’s retail director and the PGW fan responsible for the name. David clearly has the right stuff in him, for he showed proper contrition, promising the waiter would be flogged for his ignorance (waiters are, in fact, briefed on the Wodehouse background at induction) and the lack of attribution for the Wodehouse quote would be corrected. I cannot account for the first promise, but I have since received word that he followed through on the second, so that’s all right.



(Photo by Jean Tillson)

David tells me that The Empress of Blandings was previously a restaurant called the St Jaques. Hall and Woodhouse, a small, family-run Dorset brewery with about 200 pubs, bought it in 2005 and refurbished it into The Empress of Blandings. It was David who came up with the name: “I thought we could make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear. It was the absurdity of the grandiosity of the name combined with the (at that time) appalling décor – I think this was what Wodehouse was getting at

when he called Lord Emsworth’s pig The Empress.” He then discovered Wodehouse’s connection with Hunstanton Hall and the Sanders Spencer book that gave him the illustration for the inn sign.

David has been a PGW fan since the age of 11, when his father gave him a copy of *The Inimitable Jeeves*. These days he enjoys, first, Ukridge, followed by Jeeves and Wooster, the Mulliner stories, Blandings, Psmith, and the early school stories. He is clearly proud of the pub – rightly so – and when I asked him whether he would consider serving Berkshire pork, he reacted approvingly to the idea and said he would investigate it.

A popular place, The Empress of Blandings was packed by the time Jean and I left. It was easy to see that David and his cohorts have done a fine job of spreading sweetness and light to the locals around Copythorne. Another editorial visit will be made, however, to make sure that Wodehouse’s name is on the pub wall where it should be!

*The Empress of Blandings was as nearly circular as a pig can be without bursting. She resembled a captive balloon with ears and a tail.*



*The Empress of Blandings is located at Romsey Road, Copythorne SO40 2PB; telephone 02380 812321.*

# Plum Spills the Beans about His Hollywood Workload

by Eddie Grabham

The writers' strike in Hollywood caused turmoil earlier this year, but was this the first time those beavering away at their typewriters ruffled the odd feather?

Certainly not.

When P G Wodehouse went to Tinseltown for the first time in 1930, he soon discovered that writing a screenplay was not as simple as he thought. He considered that a morning would just about wrap it all up, but the studio gave him six weeks. He soon found out why. A team of writers got into the act once the first draft had been completed. They changed the whole thing, and if he was lucky, the original writer was invited back to tidy it all up a bit and try to insert a few of his original words. Even then, the screenplay was subject to change, and as often as not, the film wasn't made anyway.

Plum's first task for Metro Goldwyn Mayer was to provide dialogue for *Those Three French Girls*. Miraculously, his style remained almost intact, though Brian Taves's account (*P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood*) is both instructive and amusing. He also covers the rest of Plum's sojourn at MGM in considerable detail.

*Those Three French Girls* proved to be the most Wodehousian film to emerge during Plum's first stay on the sunny West Coast. After a period of considerable thumb-twiddling and writing a novel and nine short stories, he was assigned the screenplay for a film version of the Gershwin-Romberg 1928 Broadway hit *Rosalie*, for which he had contributed a clutch of rather fine lyrics. Part of his task involved writing a "novelette" version designed for publicity purposes. MGM even picked up their option for a further six months to complete the picture, but then the popularity of screen musicals took a nosedive after a stream of indifferent movies with hardly any plots – and dancers who clearly spent more time in the dining room than the training bar – bombed at the box office. MGM shelved the whole project, and Plum's efforts, including the novelette, remained unused. *Rosalie* was eventually filmed with an entirely new story and a new score by Cole Porter in 1937.

P G Wodehouse contributed to one or two other screenplays and was given a co-credit for "additional dialogue" for *The Man in Possession* in 1931, but his contract was not renewed. All of this may have faded into the mists of time, but Plum gave an interview to

the *Los Angeles Times* on June 7, 1931, in which he told the reporter that he had earned \$104,000 for what he considered a rather modest contribution on his part. All hell let loose; Reuters picked up the story, and a juicy headline appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune*.

Ever since, there has been some speculation as to how much of a rumpus Plum's comments actually caused. Taves sums it up thus: "Ultimately, the Wodehouse interview was a storm in a teacup, a matter primarily for gossip, and for the most part rather quickly forgotten."

However, an article in the March 31, 1932 issue of *Everyman* has recently come to light which suggests that the impact of the interview was, in fact, quite considerable. 'Jennifer Joy', an alias for a

Hollywood scribe, writes:

When that innocently given interview appeared, which most casually touched upon the vast sums of money that could be made here doing nothing, New York bankers holding cinema stock, business offices in the far-away "East" (the Atlantic sea board), efficiency experts, economy experts, expert accountants and a lot of others, descended upon Hollywood and whirled through the financial affairs of every studio. Salaries were slashed, appropriations curtailed, enquiries made as to whether people worked for what they earned, and what they did. That pre-Wodehouse period must have been, in current phraseology, perfectly swell, and I have yet to go through an evening without hearing it mentioned yearningly.

Which seems to imply that Plum's comments hit home, though he had clearly intended no harm. Nevertheless, Robert McCrum (*Wodehouse: A Life*) comments on the *Los Angeles Times* interview itself and its impact as follows:

In his lightfooted way, Wodehouse launched several lines of attack in this piece. But while he maintained to Townend and others that this interview had 'the effect (in Hollywood) of the late assassination at Sarajevo', prompting an immediate reappraisal of the studios'



spendthrift habits by their East Coast bankers the contemporary American press does not bear out this analysis.

He goes on to note that the New York press covered the story, “but the trade papers hardly noticed it”. On the other hand, David Jasen (*P.G. Wodehouse: A Portrait of a Master*) claimed:

The interview had far-reaching repercussions. For the very first time, names had been named and the situation had been brought right out into the open. No one could ignore it – least of all the bankers, who were immediately stirred into action and were quick to ring the death knell on Hollywood extravagance . . . for a time at any rate.

How does all this weigh with the Jennifer Joy article? It is perhaps important to recall that all this happened during the great American depression. While more robust than many industries because it offered a brief escape from the general misery for just a few cents, moviemaking definitely felt the pinch. Many of the major studios found their profits plummeting, often relying upon the strong box-office appeal of a single star or genre (Mae West at Paramount, *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* at Universal, for example), and the bankers were undoubtedly concerned. Of course, Plum’s interview was the perfect scapegoat, but the truth is more likely to be that the studios’ profligacy was already under scrutiny, and the interview merely made it more public.

For a period, filmdom seemed to treat Wodehouse like a pariah, but notwithstanding the furore, Hollywood either had a short memory or was more forgiving than we might suppose. In any event, the Hollywood bosses had pointed out to the moneymen in New York that films needed writers, and they had to be paid. So it came to pass that P G Wodehouse returned to Hollywood, most notably to write the screenplay (in collaboration with Ernest Pagano and S K Lauren at RKO Radio) for the film version of *A Damsel in Distress*, released at the end of 1937. Even MGM gave him a new contract and set him to work on the revived version of *Rosalie*, but his work was not used in the form in which he wrote it and he received no credit. When MGM made a Jerome Kern biopic in 1945/46, the film’s title borrowed one of Plum’s lyrics, *Till the Clouds Roll By*. However, there is no mention of Plum in the film.

Needless to say, Plum himself has had more than the occasional word on the subject and has painted a wonderfully witty picture of Hollywood in various articles, short stories and novels like *The Luck of the Bodkins* and *Laughing Gas*.

I wonder if he’ll ever be accorded the honour of a Hollywood biopic?

## *The Hidden Side of PGW*

References to Wodehouse can pop up in the oddest places, making one wonder whether he really did depart this earth in 1975. A case in point: **Tony Ring** came across a web page from *Broadway World* which informs us that the executive producer of *The Muny* in St. Louis (USA), Paul Blake, has produced, directed, and written “the world premieres of *Sleeping Beauty* with songs by Jerome Kern and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and P. G. Wodehouse”. Hmm – seems to be missing from my *McIlvaine*!

And on eBay, **Murray Hedgcock** spotted another item missing from *McIlvaine*: a book entitled *Very Easy Patchwork*, by P. G. Wodehouse, presumably published by Reader’s Digest in 2008. Murray found that the same book was also advertised as being by Betty Barnden or Betty Barnden/P. G. Wodehouse. Penelope Gingersnap, perhaps?

## *Late News from Russia*

Earlier this year, **Masha Lebedeva** wrote to tell us that The Russian Wodehouse Society had made a television appearance. On May 14 a youth-oriented talk show called *Bolshie* (‘the big ones’) on the state channel Kultura (‘culture’) aired a programme whose main subject ran along the lines of whether Internet relations or live personal relations were better. Masha writes: “TRWS was presented by our founder Mikhail Kuzmenko and by me. He told about the history of the Society, which started as his personal website, and how Russian Wodehouse amateurs started to unite around his website. Now they meet, not in the Internet but in restaurants and libraries for (sometimes even monthly) meetings. As for me, I tried to tell about the Wodehousean world and my participation in the international events. There were photos and videos from TRWS meetings, as well, as with photos from the Week With Wodehouse and the Providence Convention.” Masha notes that the part of the program with her and Mikhail can be seen on TRWS’s website: <http://Wodehouse.ru/media/c14052008a.avi>.

# If Jeeves Were a Dog . . .

by Anne Cotton

*Editor's note: At the 2007 Divine Providence Convention, Anne Cotton, in private life the putative owner of flat-coated retrievers who have allowed her to live with them (sadly, both her dogs passed away recently), played the game 'If So-and-so were a dog, what sort of dog would he be and why'. Basing her findings on the scholarly *The Right Dog for You* by Dr Daniel Tortora and supporting them with appropriate illustrations, she opened up a new field of Wodehouse research. It is regretted that because of space limitations, we can only print a heavily edited selection of her pairings and illustrations, but we hope you enjoy this taste of a delightful game. For a full version of Anne's paper, see Plum Lines, Spring 2008.*

Our first subject: **Jeeves**. He is definitely a substantial presence; he looms large. The toy, small breeds, and terriers can be discarded at once. When Jeeves speaks, he does not “yap” but has a good honest bark – though he speaks only when he has something to say.

Jeeves shimmers in and out, but he never seems to race about, so we can discard the herding breeds. But on vacation, he heads for the shore, where he shrimps, and he is constantly pulling Bertie out of hot water; so a water-loving, rescue breed is indicated. There is a perfect candidate: a large dog, one that demands respect, moves sedately, and, thanks to its webbed feet, is known for brilliant water-rescue work and is very often black (the valet's favourite colour of clothing).

This is the Newfoundland. Dr Tortora, our expert, says: “Newfs love the water. . . . The breed has been used . . . as guardians for children [such as Bertie]. Descriptions include ‘able and willing to help their masters on command and acting with initiative when necessary. . . . Seems to undertake the duties of nursemaid naturally without training.” I rest my case.

Now to **Bertie Wooster** – a sporting type, so we are looking for a dog who loves life but is not renowned for an ability to concentrate. Actually, most dogs can be trained in obedience, and I found a good candidate among the gun dogs.

This is the Irish setter. Our dog expert says they are “impulsive, highly distractible, rollicking, gay, have moments of sheer giddiness, excitable, good with



energetic older children but a bit too excitable for toddlers. . . . A dog of this breed may develop bad habits if left alone or untrained. Problems may

include roaming, mischievous playful destruction, pulling on lead, jumping on visitors and barking.” Yes, that's Bertie, but as with Jeeves, one cannot expect a total canine twin.

Now we come to a more complex character: **Madeline Bassett**, who is not of this earth. For this ethereal and daisy-obsessed creature, we need a dog who is a fantastical creature – hardly a real dog at all. As it happens, there is one perfect match for Madeline, and I fear it looks to me like nothing more than a semi-bald rat on a bad hair day, but you can decide for yourself.

This is a Chinese Crested, about which a website says: “They are exceptionally loving and like to hug and smile. Children should be taught not to be rough with this breed as it is friendly, but it does not have the protective hair that other breeds have and can get injured easily. If its owners do not baby them, these dogs can grow up to be a very well-adjusted dog. They tend to become very attached to their owners, have difficulty adjusting to a new one [and] crave constant companionship.” Phrases such as “can be well-adjusted” and “crave constant companionship” describe a very neurotic animal suitable for a sappy girl. One wonders whom to pity more, Madeline or the Chinese Crested.



Now to a less congenial lady, **Constance Keeble**. She seems happiest when busting up the love affairs of her junior relatives and running Blandings with an iron fist. She is a guardian of morals and respectability and needs to be a guard dog who, demands instant respect.



I favour the rottweiler. Dr Tortora says: “Specimens were used as the ‘devil dogs’ that attacked Gregory Peck in the film *The Omen*, and . . . some guard-dog

trainers refer to the Rottweiler as ‘the Cadillac of attack dogs’.” He adds, “Behavioural problems may include . . . guarding food, objects and places from family members; overprotectiveness; demanding behaviour; wilful disobedience and excessive aggression.” I bet Clarence would agree.

As for **Clarence, Ninth Earl of Emsworth**, he was easy to match. Clarence is quiet and retiring. He possesses Wodehouse’s gift for disappearing from overcrowded rooms and finding sweet solitude, either in the library or at the Empress’s sty. He never raises his voice except on rare occasions. So where do we find a gentle, unobtrusive dog? A retired greyhound fits the bill to perfection.

Greyhounds have extreme gentleness of temper, are shy almost to a fault, and dislike loud people intensely. They need 10 or 15 minutes of good, hard running, and the rest of the day they become couch potatoes. They are “high-strung, easily upset by sudden movements, starting readily; stubborn, and trainable only while calm”. I can just envision Clarence, draped lazily over the fence of the pigsty admiring the Empress, and happy to spend hours without moving.



While we’re at Blandings, let us consider **Rupert Baxter**. I looked for a match for Baxter and lit at once on the American Staffordshire, otherwise known as the pit bull. They are very antisocial and so is Baxter, but pit bulls are generally far too courageous to be a good match for Baxter. The best I could find was the short-haired fox terrier.



While these dogs do have their lovable side – and we would have to go far to find anyone who would call Baxter “lovable” – they were developed, Dr Tortora says, to get foxes out of their holes “by lunging, snapping and growling with unrelenting tenacity until the fox bolted”. He describes it as “a scrappy, impulsive, extroverted, lovable dynamo” and “disobedient when excited”. This breed scores very high in territoriality, dominant toward strange dogs and more dominant with familiar people.

I cannot omit my own favourite Bassett (and nom de Plum), **Lady Bassett** from ‘Strychnine in the Soup’. She is a big-game hunter, not a terribly social hobby, and has no compunction about occasionally shooting native chiefs. She has a good, loud voice and speaks her mind. I have a dog that fits Lady



Bassett to a tee: the mastiff.

Dr Tortora says: “A 200-pound dog doesn’t really have to obey anyone, but dogs of this breed usually do, given time, consistent patience and warm, rewarding and *nonpunitive* training. Never hit a mastiff for any reason.” Speaking for Lady Bassett, I completely agree. One would take a swing at this woman, as this dog, at one’s peril.



But what about **Plum** himself? If he were a dog, what would he be? His own preference was for the small breeds, and I found my candidate among the toy breeds. Plum’s desire for privacy is legendary. It’s not that he was totally unsociable; he just had a very short attention span when it came to entertaining guests. I finally decided one of the better dogs for Plum would be the pug.



Dr Tortora describes pugs as “companionable, needing minimum care and not requiring coddling; stubborn but easygoing.” He adds that they are easy to live with and to care for. His charts show the pug to be pretty inactive, gentle, constant in behaviour (that is, predictable), only moderately territorial, generally submissive to familiar people, and emotionally stable. I leave it to you to decide if this is a reasonable match; I am far less confident of a pairing here than with any of Plum’s characters. But then, real people are so much more complicated than fictional ones.

And now we have gone to the dogs and back. Are there any questions?

### Editorial Afterword

Here are Anne’s other canine/character pairings:

**Tuppy Glossop** was matched with the clumber spaniel since both are “famous eaters and food thieves”.

**Stiffy Byng** was, naturally, paired with the Aberdeen terrier, described by Dr Tortora as “the most behaviourally variable of all the terriers”.

For **Aunt Agatha**, Anne chose the giant schnauzer, one of the more ill-tempered breeds.

On the other hand, **Aunt Dahlia** seems more like a basset hound, known to have “great endurance” and a breed that “can follow a trail over difficult terrain”.

Finally, both **Galahad Threepwood** and **Bobbie Wickham** drew the honour of being cast as flat-coated retrievers, as their personalities came so close to Anne’s own dogs, Merlin and Emma, respectively.

# Profile of a Committee Member

## Oliver Wise

Oliver Wise was a nine-year-old boy attending Wellesley House, a preparatory school on the south coast of England, when he discovered Wodehouse. A kindly master read 'Jeeves and the Kid Clementina' to the junior forms one evening, causing Oliver to request some more Wodehouse in his next letter home. *Mike and Psmith* was soon despatched, and he was hooked.

After Wellesley House, Oliver continued his study of Wodehouse at Bertie Wooster's old school, and from there went on to Magdalene College, Cambridge (not to be confused with Bertie Wooster's Oxford Magdalen), where he read law and more Wodehouse. At Cambridge Oliver played for the Penguins (the Eton fives second team) and the Giraffes (the real tennis second team), edited *Googly* (the journal of the Cambridge cricket society), and represented the cricket society against Oxford in the first two varsity cricket quizzes.

Oliver was called to the Bar by Lincoln's Inn in 1981 and started pupillage in chambers in Queen Elizabeth Building, where Edward Cazalet was a distinguished member, in the Wodehouse centenary year. He has practised in those chambers ever since.



Edward put him forward as a Committee member when the Society was being re-founded. Oliver drafted the Society's constitution and came up with the name of *Wooster Sauce*. He has written articles for the journal and the website, mostly with a cricketing theme, and has given a lecture to the Society on 'Sex and Violence in Wodehouse'.

Oliver is a member of Sussex C.C.C. and M.C.C. and plays cricket for the Gold Bats, Lincoln's Inn, the Refreshers (the main barristers' team), and the Campaign for Real Gin. His batting is slow, his bowling slower. In winter he plays real tennis for M.C.C., the Old Etonians, the Dedanists, the Bar and Boodle's. He is proud to be a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Grocers.

Oliver is very fortunate to be married to Sarah, and they have three excellent children: Harry, Eleanor and Christabel. So far he has failed to instil in his wife and children the admiration that he feels for Wodehouse. However, as part of his wooing of Sarah, he read 'The Clicking of Cuthbert' aloud to her. Sarah is still with him 21 years later, so one may conclude that one of Wodehouse's funniest and most charming love stories had the desired effect.

## The Word Around the Clubs

### *An Everyman Milestone*

Congratulations to Everyman's Library, publishers of the Everyman Wodehouse collection, hardback books with lovely jacket designs by Andrzej Klimowski. This autumn Everyman published their 59th and 60th Wodehouse titles, *Doctor Sally* and *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, respectively, celebrating this milestone with a champagne reception at John Murray's on the date of the books' publication, 28 October.

### *Truth Versus Fiction Department*

From Canada comes word of *Going for the Green: On the Links with Canada's Business and Political Elite* (published by Key Porter Books, \$29.95). The author, Robert Thompson, decided to set about his task of profiling more than 20 of Canada's top power brokers by playing golf with them, thus gaining insight into what makes them tick. The book's premise brings to mind the Oldest Member's dictum in PGW's 1922 short story 'Ordeal by Golf': "The only way . . . of really finding out a man's true character is to play golf with him. In no other walk of life does the cloven hoof so quick display itself."

### *We're Always Learning*

On September 22 and 23, two letters to the editor in the *Daily Telegraph* discussed the term 'Indian Summer', which did not come into general use in the UK until the 1950s. First, Mark Forster named the 1930 PGW short story 'Indian Summer of an Uncle' and said Wodehouse probably became familiar with the term in America. The next day, Val Jones suggested that Wodehouse actually got the title from John Galsworthy's *Indian Summer of a Forsythe* (1918), "which also deals with the amorous activities of an elderly uncle".

### *Bertie and Bond*

Earlier this year, in a regular competition run by the *Spectator* (this one numbered 2556), readers were challenged to "describe an encounter between Bertie Wooster and James Bond in the style of either P. G. Wodehouse or Ian Fleming." While it is not possible to reprint the winning entries, published on August 9, they are certainly worth reading and can be viewed at <http://tinyurl.com/5ojsbk>. Thanks to **Alan Carter** for sending this item.

# Cow Creamer Deluxe

by Jamie Jarrett

Following up on Tom and Betty Hooker's item about cow creamers in the December 2007 *Wooster Sauce*, I thought readers may be interested in some information I was given by a London rare art and silverware dealer.

In October 2006, just before the Society dinner at Gray's Inn, I went to the London Silver Vaults in Chancery Lane, just down the road from the Inn. There I noticed a cow creamer in one of the shop windows – a George II cow creamer made in London by John Schuppe in 1759! Schuppe was a Dutch journeyman who settled in London and became famous for his silver cow creamers. They had existed before, but Schuppe was responsible for making them especially popular because his craftsmanship was so



fine. They became very collectible and still are.

There were three categories: the lowest, having a smooth body; the middle, having a smooth body with hair/fur detailed down the spine and tail; and the finest, of which we see one here, with hair finely marked across the entire body and legs. You can only appreciate this fully when you hold it in

your own hand. Also, you pull on a fly to use the opening on the back for pouring in the cream.

Wodehouse clearly knew his history of cow creamers when he had Bertie Wooster disparage an original creamer by saying that it was a modern Dutch replica.

And the cost of this John Schuppe example? – £22,000 (at that time over \$40,000)!

## *A Summary of the Society's Accounts*

Once again, the Society has had a successful year, financially. The number of members was 1,033, slightly down on 2007. However, the number of new members remains at around 12 each month

Bank deposit interest increased this year, as a result of establishing the Event Fund last year; but so did the rate of tax. The temporary move of meetings to The George, the very successful and enjoyable 'Week With Wodehouse', and the stall at the Arrow book-launch picnic increased the cost of meetings and events, but the latter event produced eight new members.

The Society continues to be a member of the Alliance of Literary Societies. We donated a copy of *Summer Lightning* in Braille to the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), and we again provided the prize for the Berkshire Champion of Champions at the Royal County of Berkshire Show.

The increase in postage has resulted in total publication costs going up by £250. The increasing use of emails, however, has enabled administration costs to be reduced by £100. The Committee is not intending to alter subscription rates.

### **The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)**

*Income and Expenditure Account*

*Year ended 31st May 2008*

#### **Income**

Subscriptions	£ 14,305
Sales of publications, <i>et al</i>	330
Bank interest	1,138
Donations	94

**Total income** £ 15,867

#### **Expenditure**

Cost of meetings and events	£ 731
Publications	11,250
Administration	1,141
Insurance	892
Donation	364
Income tax	229
Sundry expenses	182

**Total expenditure** £ 14,789

**Surplus for year** £ 1,078

# At Last! Where Bertie Came From

by Norman Murphy

with deepest gratitude to Mike Rush  
(though I wish he had told me earlier)

At The Wodehouse Society's splendid convention in Providence last year, I showed various pictures which I had been unable to include in *A Wodehouse Handbook*. They included the famous 'Skegness Is So Bracing' poster, the interior of Wodehouse's Constitutional Club (the real Senior Conservative Club), and pictures of a Battersea Mothers' Outing of 1954. The Battersea ladies showed that very little had changed since Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps had accompanied those harpies from hell, the Village Mothers of Maiden Eggesford, on their annual outing in 'Tried in the Furnace'. But all those pictures were just a lead-in to something I had been trying to prove for a very, very long time.

Wodehouse used to say that the only character he had taken directly from real life was Rupert D'Oyly Carte, son of the Gilbert & Sullivan impresario. He never met him but heard stories about him from a cousin who had been at school with Carte. Yet we now know from Wodehouse himself that Herbert Westbrook was a major source for Ukridge; that Bertie's Aunt Agatha was based on Wodehouse's aunt, Miss Mary Deane; and that the Drones Club was based on Buck's Club, with the Bath Club and its swimming pool as an ancillary source. I have been fortunate enough to find the source of many Wodehouse characters and locations, but proof of my longest-held theory had always eluded me.

For years, I claimed that George Grossmith, Junior – though not the *source* of Bertie Wooster – was the man who made Bertie come alive. I pointed out that Grossmith, the son of the Gilbert & Sullivan Grossmith, had gone on the stage in the 1890s playing dude parts, and went on to do so for over 30 years. Theatrical dictionaries say he introduced the dude onto the English stage. I noted that Wodehouse said he knew lots of young men like Bertie before the First World War; I also pointed out that he said he always regarded his characters as though they were actors on stage. The thing is – *he meant it*. Colin Dexter, author of the Inspector Morse detective series, agreed with

him. Dexter did not choose the TV cast but felt he was very lucky. He said they were exactly right and said Kevin Whateley, playing Sergeant Lewis, was so good that soon Dexter did not think of Lewis when he wrote the stories, he thought how Whateley would act or react.



George Grossmith, Junior

I argued that Bertie was an insubstantial character until the early 1920s, when he became the fully-rounded individual we know and love. And Wodehouse spent 1921–23 working closely with Grossmith on three shows. I also claimed that Bertie, who originated with young men Wodehouse had known before 1914, became, from 1923 onwards, lifelike and believable through Wodehouse's close contact with Grossmith, who, I have discovered, carried his stage mannerisms over into private life. But nobody really believed me.

Then, last year, during the Gold Bats match at Dulwich College, Mike Rush showed me a book, *Cricket Calling*, by Rowland Ryder. I hadn't seen it before and, since Ryder's father was the man who had persuaded Percival Jeeves to join Warwickshire, I flipped through it with some interest. I am glad I did, because the words on one page leapt out at me.

In the late 1960s, Ryder was working at Hunstanton in Norfolk, where he was told that Bernard le Strange of Hunstanton Hall, where Wodehouse had stayed often, had been the original of Bertie Wooster. Ryder wrote to Wodehouse and asked for confirmation. He quotes Wodehouse's reply (18 April 1970):

No, Bernard was not the original of Bertie Wooster. I started the Jeeves stories in 1916 and did not meet Bernard till 1925. I don't think Bertie was drawn from anyone – *unless it was George Grossmith*. (Italics mine)

I had to wait over 30 years to read those words, but it was well worth it. I just wish Mike Rush had shown me the book earlier. Still, I remain in his debt – so long as he lets me pay it off in beer.

# The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

## *The Little Nugget*

*The Little Nugget* may be described as Wodehouse's only school story for adults. It is set largely in a boys' prep school, yet was published for an adult market, whereas Wodehouse's other school stories were all aimed squarely at the "boys and old boys" who were the readers of *The Captain* magazine. An examination of *The Little Nugget's* publishing history will show how, despite the original version of the story being published in *The Captain*, it came to be published in book form as an adult novel.

There are two distinct strands of plot in *The Little Nugget*. The first is a crime/adventure story featuring a fat American boy, Ogden Ford, with feuding, wealthy parents who each want custody of him, as does a gang of kidnapers. He is sent to a boarding school in England where it is hoped that he will be safe, but of course he is not. His adventures were told in a three-part serial, *The Eighteen-Carat Kid*, which appeared in *The Captain* from January to March 1913 (McIlvaine, D77.66-68). According to Robert Kirkpatrick, the author of the *Encyclopaedia of Boys' School Stories*, this was the first genuine crime novel to use a school setting. It was Wodehouse's last serial in *The Captain*, and it merited the headline on the front cover of the January 1913 issue.

The serial was eventually published in book form in the United States as the title story of a collection edited by David Jasen and published by Continuum in New York in 1980 (A101a), which included three other stories which had not appeared in book form in the US. It has not yet been published in book form in the UK.

In the summer of 1913 Wodehouse was in America, where he met Bob Davis, the editor of *Munsey's* magazine. Wodehouse described Davis as "a fellow who would give you a plot and then buy the story you had written for his magazine" (David A. Jasen, *P.G. Wodehouse: A Portrait of a Master*, p53). Davis seems to have suggested adding a love interest to the original crime/adventure story. This resulted in *The Eighteen-Carat Kid* metamorphosing into *The Little Nugget*, which was duly published in *Munsey's* in August 1913 (D41.1, pp829-930). Despite the claims on *Munsey's* cover, this was actually an abridged version, with the

full text (of 303 pages) being published in book form in the UK by Methuen (A16a) on 28 August 1913. According to Quill & Brush's *Author Price Guides*, 1,500 copies were published, including 150 in Colonial cloth and 150 in wrappers. It has red cloth boards, gold lettering and decorations on the spine, and blind-stamped lettering on the cover. Copies exist bound with both a 32-page advertising supplement dated May 1913 and an eight-page supplement dated Autumn 1913, or just the latter.

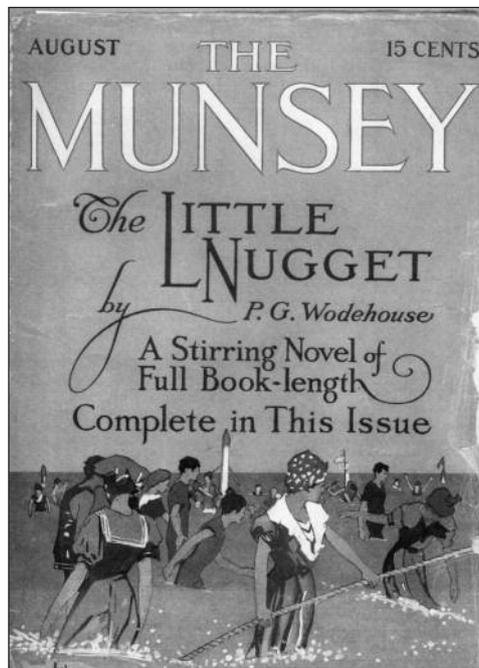
The visually unimpressive dust jacket is exceptionally rare, a copy fetching over £3,000 some five or six years ago. The jacket was in the contemporary style of many Methuen novels, a front panel with 14 lines of text about the story.

The book was reprinted in September 1913 (A16a2) and again in January 1914 (A16a3), in bindings identical to that of the first edition. The second edition is described in *McIlvaine*, incorrectly, as being published in January 1914, and by Ring and Townend ('The School Stories of P. G. Wodehouse', *Book and Magazine Collector*, November 2003, p21), incorrectly and unforgivably, as being published in December 1913. Like the first edition, the second edition has two advertising

supplements. The eight-page supplement is still dated Autumn 1913, but the 32-page supplement is dated 25/10/13 (despite the title page of the book being dated September 1913). The third edition exists with advertising supplements dated September 1913 or October 1913.

Book publication did not occur in the US until 10 January 1914, when it was published by WJ Watt (A16b), in black cloth with gold lettering. The striking front cover has a silhouette of a cigarette-smoking gunman peering around a door, in black against a gold background. The book contained a frontispiece and two further illustrations by Will Grefé, with the one opposite page 44 being reproduced in colour on the front of the dustwrapper, under the words "Humor-Mystery-Love".

The book was subsequently reissued in the US by Grosset & Dunlap (A16b2), probably in 1915, and by the Curtiss Press in 1929 (A16b3).



## Now You See It . . .

In Bengt Malmberg's article on 'The Political P. G. Wodehouse' (September 2008, p.22), reference was made to the PGW story 'Buried Treasure', wherein a discussion at the Angler's Rest centres on whether Hitler should let his moustache grow or cut it off. Bengt now tells us that since he wrote his original article, he has investigated some 2,500 Swedish magazines from the 1930s, searching for

early translations of PGW stories, and he found two different translations (published in 1937 and 1941) of 'Buried Treasure', both without the references to Hitler's moustache. Bengt notes that in Sweden at that time, "They were afraid of disturbing Hitler" and thus "it was too dangerous from a political point of view". Not until a third translation in 1950 was the reference to Hitler finally inserted.

## Plummy Acrostic

by June Arnold

Solve the clues in the top grid, then transfer the letters from there to the bottom grid; this will give you an extract from a PGW novel. Reading down column A in the top grid will give you the name of the novel. Answers to this acrostic and the one for September are on page 21.

Clues:

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Appleby from *Do Butlers Burgle Banks?* (6) / A wax light (6) / Part of a drawer or cup (6)
- 2 Much \_\_\_\_\_, *Jeeves*, novel by PGW (7) / Style (7) / In the past (3)
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_, *Jeeves*, novel by PGW (5.3) / Snigger (6) / A macho male (2.3)
- 4 Heavy \_\_\_\_\_, novel by PGW (7) / Humorous (5) / Menace (6)
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ Peake in *Summer Moonshine* (6) / Sanctuary (7) / Kill the \_\_\_\_\_ calf (6)
- 6 Galahad's dog (6) / Ogre (7) / Act of stealing (5)
- 7 Lord \_\_\_\_\_, who lived in Blandings Castle (8) / Loud noises (5) / Gatehouse on a large estate (5)
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_ *Jeeves*, novel by PGW (4.3) / The Mad \_\_\_\_\_ from *Alice in Wonderland* (6) / Mild and soothing or uninteresting (5)

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

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

# What Was A. B. Filmer?

Asks Murray Hedgcock

P. G. Wodehouse is noted for the felicity and precision of his language, so that the very occasional phrase or choice of words that does not glide leaves the reader distinctly puzzled.

I have always had that feeling about the minimalist identification of A. B. Filmer, whom we meet in ‘Jeeves and the Impending Doom’ – the first chapter of *Very Good, Jeeves*. Having summoned Bertie to Woollam Chertsey, Aunt Agatha explains that she particularly wishes he should make a good impression on fellow-guest Mr Filmer.

“Who?” inquires Our Hero.

“Mr Filmer, the Cabinet Minister. Surely even you must have heard of Mr Filmer?”

As it happens, Bertie has not: “What with one thing and another, I’m not frightfully up in the personnel of the political world” (a comment which might reflect Plum’s own attitude to politics).

But mark that usage – “the Cabinet Minister”. Would you, or I, identify anyone with such a broad description? Why not “the Chancellor” – “the Foreign Secretary” – “the Health Minister” – “the Education Secretary”? Why was A. B. Filmer not given the dignity of his actual Cabinet rank?

*Very Good, Jeeves* was published in 1930, when the Prime Minister was Ramsay MacDonald, Britain’s first Labour premier, who won power at the general election of May 30, 1929. MacDonald’s Cabinet consisted of 19 members. Many are forgotten today except by students of politics, but they included as

Chancellor Philip Snowden, Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson, and the rough-and-ready railwayman Jimmy Thomas as Lord Privy Seal. The Socialist historian and reformer Sidney Webb was Secretary for the Dominions and Colonies; Arthur Greenwood Minister for Health; A. V. Alexander First Lord of the Admiralty. And as well as Captain Wedgwood Benn, father of Tony Benn, as Secretary for India, the Cabinet included the Labour pioneer George Lansbury as First Commissioner of Works – and Britain’s first woman Cabinet Minister, Miss Margaret Bondfield, as Minister of Labour.

So did PGW prefer not to give A. B. Filmer a named Cabinet post, just in case the actual Minister of the day took umbrage at the unflattering depiction of the Wodehouse character? Did he fear a libel suit? Or did he find the idea of Labour in

government too difficult to accept, and preferred not to acknowledge, however obliquely, a Socialist Cabinet Minister?

It seems Plum unknowingly missed a real opportunity for delayed subtle satire. Why should Filmer not have been Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster – the senior ministerial post outside Cabinet? The holder of that post in the first MacDonald Ministry was none other than Sir Oswald Mosley, in time to found the British Union of Fascists – and be lampooned by PGW, eight years after ‘Jeeves and the Impending Doom’, as the unspeakable would-be dictator, Roderick Spode.



*Bertie and Jeeves go to A. B. Filmer's rescue, as shown in this cover illustration by Ironicus.*

## Wodehouse on the Boards

As there are no upcoming Wodehouse plays in the UK in the coming months that we know of, but thanks to **Amy Plofker** for providing the following information on US productions; see *Plum Lines* or The Wodehouse Society website for more details: [www.wodehouse.org](http://www.wodehouse.org).

**8 December 2008:** The Washington (D.C.) Stage Guild is presenting a reading of *Candle-Light*. For information call 240-582-0050; email [info@stageguild.org](mailto:info@stageguild.org); or visit [www.stageguild.org](http://www.stageguild.org).

**28 November 2008–4 January 2009:** Stage West in Fort Worth, Texas, is staging *The Code of the*

*Woosters*, adapted by Mark Richard. Call 817-784-9378, or visit [www.stagewest.org](http://www.stagewest.org).

**3–15 March 2009:** Musicals Tonight! will stage *The Cabaret Girl* at the McGinn/Cazale Theatre in New York. See [www.musicalstonight.org](http://www.musicalstonight.org), or call smarttix at 212-868-4444.

Also coming up in US productions are a reading of *The Play's the Thing* in New York (6 April); a production of *By Jeeves* in Rochester Hills, Michigan (11 April–17 May); and performances of *Oh, Kay!* in Petaluma, California (24 April–10 May). More details in the next issue.

## This Year's Christmas Gift Ideas

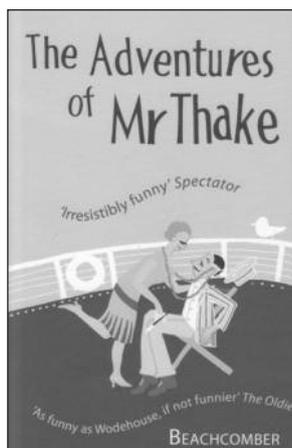
Would you like to hear a recording of P G Wodehouse talking about Jeeves and Wooster? If so, *The Spoken Word: British Writers* is for you. The British Library (BL) has released two CD sets entitled *The Spoken Word*; the other is on American writers. According to the BL, this is “the first time that this recording has been made commercially available”. Other writers featured on the British CD include Arthur Conan Doyle and Noel Coward, while the American CD includes rare recordings of Pearl Buck, Eugene O’Neill, and F Scott Fitzgerald. Each title contains three CDs and a booklet; the cost for each set is £19.95 inc. VAT, plus postage and packing of £1.00 for the UK and £2.00 for overseas, per set. The CDs are available from the BL’s online shop at [www.bl.uk/shop](http://www.bl.uk/shop).



If you like *Anything Goes*, then you’ll love the new CD of selections from the show produced by Stage Door Records. It includes songs sung by Ethel Merman, Judy Garland, Bing Crosby, Mary Martin, and others. Society member **Rexton Bunnett** wrote the liner notes, which

include the background on Wodehouse and Bolton’s original involvement in the show and the information that PGW wrote the now-accepted lyrics to the title song and ‘You’re the Top’.

Finally, we have received word of a reissue of *The Adventures of Mr Thake*, by Beachcomber – that is, J. B. Morton, who edited ‘By The Way’ in the *Daily Express* from 1924 to 1975. After being out of print for 30 years, it has now been published in paperback by Old Street Publishing. The story concerns “the ultimate upper-class twit” who “lurches haplessly from calamity to calamity, describing everything in his letters home to his friend Beachcomber.” Wodehouse himself loved Beachcomber’s work, and a review in *The Oldie* says this book is “as funny as Wodehouse, if not funnier”. Well, it’s hard to think of anybody who is funnier than Wodehouse, but at £7.99, this book sounds worth a try.



**A Correction:** In the June issue of *Wooster Sauce*, page 2, I reported that Tony Ring would be studying for his Ph.D. at Oxford. John Fletcher informs me that in fact the correct term is D.Phil. Blame it on your American Editor!

## Poet's Corner

### An Exhibition Tragedy

If you will be attentive, I'll  
 Explain my sad position.  
 One day I thought it worth my while  
 To view the exhibition.  
 My wife and I, to banish care,  
 (Such entertainments we adore)  
 Went thither with our son and heir,  
 Our little Thomas Theodore.

To hire a conscientious nurse,  
 Her charge to leave our boy in,  
 Right readily did I disgorge  
 The necessary coin.  
 Then to a serviceable pram  
 They took, while still he slumbered, him.  
 They put him in (a precious lamb)  
 Gave me a check and numbered him.

The hours were speeding blithely on,  
 When, with a sudden shock, it  
 Occurred to me that check was gone.  
 I felt in every pocket.  
 I'd documents of every sort,  
 In all my pockets many were.  
 But not the document I sought.  
 I couldn't find it anywhere.

And now, to fill my bitter cup,  
 I cannot claim that sweet form.  
 The nurse declines to give him up  
 Without that lost receipt-form.  
 So still in stranger's hands he stays,  
 And fed with alien food is he.  
 I've brought a suit these many days,  
 At present it's *sub judice*.

From *Daily Chronicle* 13 May 1903

(In response to a report that at the National Industrial Exhibition at Osaka, Japan, perambulators and nurses were provided for babies for a small sum. They were duly numbered, and a receipt was given for them.)

"Last night this Englishman was explaining the rules of cricket to this American girl and answering all her questions on the subject, and, as he didn't at any point in the proceedings punch her on the nose, one is entitled to deduce, I consider, that he must be strongly attracted by her."

(From *Money for Nothing*, 1928)

# Reports of Two Literary Festivals

## A Job Well Done at the Havant Literary Festival

by Christine Hewitt

The inaugural Havant Literary Festival ran from 25 to 28 September in Havant and Emsworth, Hampshire. One of the first decisions made by the Festival Director in setting up the event was to include some Wodehouse material as the area is very proud of its connection.

Wodehouse went to Emsworth in 1903 at the invitation of his friend Herbert Westbrook, who was then a master at Emsworth House School. For several happy years he spent weekends based in this quiet and pleasant little town, where he could write in peace and tap a rich vein of local names to use in his novels. At first he lived in the school; subsequently he rented the house Threepwood, where he remained until the beginning of the First World War.

The literary festival saw the installation of a small exhibition in an Emsworth hotel, and a Wodehouse trail was set out in a leaflet which could be purchased from the exhibition hotel or Emsworth Museum for 25p. Featuring strongly in the exhibition were copies of the letters written to Lillian Barnett, a housemaid at Emsworth House School who became Wodehouse's housekeeper at Threepwood and remained a friend and correspondent until her death. The trail was nicely done and fun to walk.

The main event was a talk on 'The Art of Wodehouse', given by Tony Ring at Havant Arts Centre on the Saturday evening. It covered a vast amount of material, perfectly paced and paying tribute to the influence of Emsworth upon Wodehouse. It included some music from the CD *The Land Where the Good Songs Go* and a number of nifties beautifully delivered by the supporting cast of a local husband-and-wife thespian team. The audience loved it. Overall it was a terrific event.

## A Celebration of P. G. Wodehouse at the Guildford Book Festival

by Joe Selfe

First, an apology. Due to a rather eventful journey on the roads to Guildford, your reporter only witnessed the second half of the proceedings at the Electric Theatre on Friday, 24 October. The auditorium there is a reasonably small venue and was laid out cabaret-style, which added to the intimate atmosphere of the occasion. The silver lining attached to the dark cloud of arriving late as I did was that, whilst having to wait outside the auditorium for a convenient pause in proceedings, I got to peek through the entrance-door porthole and see the expressions on the faces of the audience, a sight usually reserved for the performers. A sea of beaming smiles looked to the stage where the cast of Eliza Lumley, Hal Cazalet, Tony Ring, Lara Cazalet, and Jeff Thomson, with Stephen Higgins on piano, were casting their Wodehouse spell.

Tony, resplendent in both plum-coloured jacket and Society tie, acted as compère and talked on such diverse subjects as Wodehouse and golf, spiritualism, private investigators, and pigs. For some of those in the audience who were local residents rather than existing diehard Wodehouse fans, Tony's recommendations of *Summer Lightning* and 'Pig-Hoo-o-o-ey!' were a great pointer to those wishing to acquaint themselves better with the Empress. There were readings, quotes, verses, and songs from the rest of the cast, who were also joined by Jonathan Cecil reading 'Gally and Tea' and 'Goodbye To All Cats', a personal favourite of mine, which produced ever louder laughter throughout the telling and rapturous applause on completion. As always, the songs sung by Eliza and Hal went down well – first, 'Saturday Night' and 'Cleopatterer', and then, to end the performance, 'Till the Clouds Roll By', which brought a wonderful evening to a close.

### *Answers to Plummy Acrostics*

#### *September issue*

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Fenwick / amazed       | 5. Mabel / offends / said |
| 2. Ukridge / windows      | 6. Oliphant / forts       |
| 3. Lehman / shiver / cats | 7. orphan / Towers        |
| 4. Life / whisper / storm | 8. nephew / dread         |

*Quote:* Lord Emsworth himself had once won a first prize for pumpkins, and his pig, as we know, had twice been awarded the silver medal for fatness.

*Novel:* *Full Moon*

#### *December issue*

- |                                |                              |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Horace / candle / handle    | 5. Adrian / shelter / fatted |
| 2. Obligated / fashion / ago   | 6. Towser / monster / theft  |
| 3. Thank You / titter / he man | 7. Emsworth / bangs / lodge  |
| 4. Weather / witty / threat    | 8. Ring for / Hatter / bland |

*Quote:* It was not, as had already been hinted, a big day for larks and snails. The fact that the former were on the wing and the latter were on the thorn had brought little comfort to Mr Gedge.

*Novel:* *Hot Water*

# Passing References

## From *Big Issue*, June (from Alan Carter)

Matt Ford mentioned that PGW was his favourite writer.

## From *Saga Magazine*, June

The first question in its General Knowledge Quiz asked which of four musicals PGW did not contribute lyrics to: *Have a Heart*; *See You Later*; *The Earl and the Girl*; and *Sitting Pretty*. The answer is *The Earl and the Girl*.

## From *Lynn News*, June 21

The Kings Lynn paper reported that local author Mary Rhodes's third book about Hunstanton (*Hunstanton Miscellany*) included a link with P G Wodehouse.

## From *Sunday Times*, June 29

Its *Bookwise* quiz about characters who wore monocles described one as "Eton-educated and affable, he claimed to be a socialist. The 'P' in his surname was an affectation, as was his monocle. He was asked by Freddie to steal an aunt's necklace at Blandings Castle. Other guests were jewel thieves."

## From *GardenersWorld.com*, August (from Peter Read)

Alan Titchmarsh reminded readers of the television adaptation of *Heavy Weather*, with Peter O'Toole as "my hero" Lord Emsworth. He commented that the Empress's sty in the program had been designed by "a Robert Adam of agricultural buildings".

## From *The New York Times*, August 3

Geoff Nicholson's long article on the affliction of gout mentioned that in PGW's work it popped up "as a nasty and disabling condition, but not something to be taken at all seriously".

## From *The Times*, August 6

A cartoon commentary on the collapse of Wrapit, the on-line wedding present service, noted: "So it's back to the old fish-slice, eh, Jeeves?" "Indubitably, sir."

## From *Los Angeles Times*, August 10

### (from Francine Feldman)

A review of *Psmith, Journalist* noted that even in 1915 it was realised that muck-raking journalism could pay the bills and quotes Psmith, near the end, as saying: "Examine the returns, and you will see that the circulation has gone up every week. *Cosy Moments* was never so prosperous and flourishing."

## From *Sindh Today*, August 20

Reported on a poll of British adults, which placed PGW 38th in a list of favourite authors, three behind Conan Doyle. Enid Blyton topped the poll, followed by Roald Dahl and J K Rowling.

## From *The Times*, August 28

Joan Bakewell was writing about the selection of books taken by her family on a recent summer holiday. After describing her own selection, chosen partly on the recommendation of critics, which all dealt with topics such as slavery, cancer, dementia

and abduction, she concluded, "I began to yearn for P G Wodehouse. He deserves a place on every summer list."

## From *The Star (Malaysia)*, August 31

The staff had compiled a list of 51 favourite books to celebrate Merdeka day [the anniversary of granting of Malaysian independence], and included *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*. Books by member Frank McCourt and Patron Shashi Tharoor were also named.

## From *Sunday Times*, August 31

In an article about *You'll Have Had Your Tea: The Doings of Hamish and Dougal* by Barry Cryer and Graeme Garden, Cryer referred to the famous Wodehouse comment about a Scotsman with a grievance. During a presentation which the pair gave at the Guildford Book Festival in October, it was reported that each had referred to Wodehouse as their favourite author.

## From *Guardian*, September 1

Philip Pullman's autumn reading recommendation of 40 books included *Summer Lightning*: "Wodehouse had the extraordinary ability to evoke innocence without being in the least boring, all in a prose style that lightens the spirits like champagne."

## From *Daily Telegraph*, September 7

Third on the list of *50 Reasons to Love Britain* was "nearly 100 books by P G Wodehouse to read and reread – wallow in the wonderful world where all is sunny (and funny). Plum, as he was affectionately called, is a cure for all known ills."

## From *Daily Telegraph* September 9

### (from Carolyn de la Plain)

A letter from Michael French with regard to the new 'atom smasher' which was about to have its first trial pointed out that earlier generations had also worried about the activities of atomic scientists, and drew attention to Bertie Wooster's comment in *Right Ho, Jeeves* that ". . . pretty silly a chap would feel, no doubt, if having split the atom, he suddenly found the house going up in smoke and himself torn limb from limb."

## From *Vanity Fair*, October

In a long article celebrating an exhibition of images from *Vanity Fair* over the century of its existence, and an associated book, Christopher Hitchens identified an image of Wodehouse scribbling out *Money in the Bank* in a disused lunatic asylum in Poland.

## From *Ask Bearders* blog on BBC Radio website, September 22

A New York listener had asked whether Jeeves was in fact named after a county cricketer, and Bill Frindall responded with a short and accurate summary of Percy Jeeves's career and relevance to Wodehouse.

## From *Best of British*, October (from Stephen Payne)

Carried an article about the history of the Hollywood

# In the Press and in Books

Cricket Club, which concentrated on C Aubrey Smith and failed to mention Wodehouse as a founder member. Stephen submitted a letter to the journal's Postbag in an attempt to have the omission remedied in the next issue.

## From Radio 4, October 4 and 5 (from Larissa Saxby-Bridger)

On *Loose Ends* (October 4), in a discussion of the history of guitars and their music, reference was made to P G Wodehouse banjo players. On *Feedback* (October 5), presenters were rebuked for mispronouncing Wodehouse's name in reference to the broadcasts of *Psmith in the City*.

## From *The New Yorker*, October 6 (from Darrell Kopp)

In his review of a new biography of John Stuart Mill, Adam Gopnik noted: "What natural theology, taken seriously, shows is not the great Watchmaker or the All-Seeing Jove but the absent-minded Landlord, a sort of eternal Lord Emsworth, who, though he helps the young lovers, cares mainly about his pig."

## From *A Fall from Grace* (2007)

(Posted by Alan Follett on PGWnet)

At page 79 of the US hardback edition of this mystery novel by Robert Barnard, we find: "Desmond Pinkhurst was standing by a gravestone, his legs somehow intertwined, looking about as relaxed as Bertie Wooster at a World Congress of Aunts."

## From *The Complete Bartender* (1990)

(Posted by Alan Follett on PGWnet)

Found, as Alan was planning his lunch, in the cocktails section of this book by Robyn M. Feller:

*The Aunt Agatha*

2 oz. light rum

4 oz. orange juice

2-3 drops Angostura bitters \*

1. Fill a rocks glass with ice.
2. Add rum and orange juice.
3. Stir.
4. Float bitters on top.
5. Garnish with an orange slice.

\* Alan added this parenthetical aside: "Come, come, Ms. Feller! Let us not shilly-shally Surely it should be 3 drops, and I'm not sure that 4 would not be in order."

## From *Savannah Breeze* (2006)

(Sent by Ken Clevenger)

In this novel by Mary Kay Andrews, the hero's dog is named Jeeves. Upon introduction, the dog's name causes a raised eyebrow by the heroine, conveying the thought "what an strange name for a dog". But the hero (an odd combination of knight-errant, Renaissance man, and redneck) explains: "I happen to like Wodehouse . . ." And the heroine, an even odder combination, says to herself: "I had no idea who

## From *The Times*, October 8

In an article commenting on leading scientist Professor Steve Jones's view that "evolution is over", Magnus Linklater opened by quoting Gussie Fink-Nottle in *The Code of the Woosters*: "Have you ever seen Spode eat asparagus? Revolting. It alters one's whole concept of Man as Nature's last word."

## From *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, October 14

Carried a report about the activities of member Thomas Schlachter, who produces an annual translation of a Wodehouse book into German. (His ninth, of *Something Fresh*, has just been published.)

## From *The Times*, October 20

In 2007, Michael Gove had told readers of his simple rules for fruitful living. In this article he added a further 10 "that the last year has allowed me to learn about life". Number 8 read: "You can never have enough P G Wodehouse, Dornford Yates or John Buchan in the house. No matter how ill or upset you are, they'll cheer you up."

Wodehouse was . . ." Twenty pages later, however, she is snooping around in his rooms and notes his bookcase: "Harry's taste in reading was definitely different. I found what looked to be a complete set of first-edition P. G. Wodehouse, as well as what was probably the definitive body of John D. MacDonald's life work."

*Ken writes:* How, if she did not know who Wodehouse was, could she know that she was looking at a complete set of first editions? And the hero (who could, in character, be a Wodehouse fan and even a book collector) was living in circumstances belying ownership of a set of 90+ rare, many delicate, hardbound books; moreover, he was in need of funds that just one or two of the early novels could have raised. I suspect Plum would have said almost any publicity is good publicity and would have appreciated the nod of recognition and plug. The plot of *Savannah Breeze* is ever so faintly Wodehousian in a bedroom-farce, multiple-characters, "what-a-coincidence!" kind of way.

## From *White Teeth* (2000)

(Sent by Ian Alexander-Sinclair)

From chapter 8 ('Mitosis'), p.167 of the hardback first edition of Zadie Smith's novel:

When Archie returned to table eight, [in O'Connell's Pool House] Samad was like Jeeves; if not exactly disgruntled, then some way from being grunted.

*Ian notes:* I was surprised and delighted to find this reference in this book, of all places. It's not a particularly startling reference, but it amused me to come across it in a book which one critic said takes you to "the heart of Blair's Britain" and *The Week* recently described as "fashionable, Zadie Smith-style, melting-pot ethnic exoticism". What is Jeeves doing here at all, I wonder?

# Future Events for Your Diary

## February 17, 2009 Society Meeting

Joins us for our winter meeting! We will convene in the Arts Club, 40 Dover Street, London, from 6 p.m. Our speaker will be Murray Hedgcock, journalist, Society patron, and author of *Wodehouse at the Wicket*.

## June 12–14, 2009 TWS Biennial Convention

The Wodehouse Society's next convention will be held in Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA.

## June 19, 2009 Gold Bats vs. Dulwich Dusters

*Tentative* date for our annual match at Dulwich College; check the website and see the March issue of *Wooster Sauce* for confirmation of day and time.

## June 28, 2009 Gold Bats vs. Sherlock Holmes Society

*Tentative* date for our annual match against the Sherlock Holmes Society of London at West Wycombe. Final date and details will be in the March issue.

## July 5, 2009 Cricket at Charterhouse School

Members of the Gold Bats will play the Intellectuals at Charterhouse School; probable start time is 2 p.m.

## July 7, 2009 Society Meeting

We will again meet at the Arts Club, 40 Dover Street, from 6 p.m.; the speaker is not yet decided. Norman Murphy will conduct an abbreviated Wodehouse Walk prior to the meeting.

## July 23, 2008 Cricket in Kent

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

## August 9, 2008 Gold Bats v Kirby Strollers

This charity match will take place in the grounds of Audley End House, near Saffron Walden; probable start time is 1 p.m.

## October 13, 2009 Society Meeting

Venue: the Arts Club, from 6 p.m.; speaker TBA. Another abbreviated Wodehouse Walk will take place prior to the meeting.

Lady Constance spurned the grass with a frenzied foot. She would have preferred to have kicked her brother with it, but one has one's breeding.

(From *Heavy Weather*, 1933)

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