



# WOOSTER SAUCE

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

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## Two Wodehouse Letters – via Sri Lanka by Mahendra Gonsalkorale

Oct 31. 1946

Pavillon Henri Quatre  
St Germain-en-Laye  
France (S. et O.)

Dear Mr Cooray.

So glad to hear from you again. I hope you will be able to get the books from Doubleday. Yes, there was a Penguin edition of My Man, Jeeves, but I am always rather ashamed of it, as half the stories in it were published in the other Jeeves books and I always feel I am getting money under false pretences. Still, there are half a dozen stories in it which don't appear elsewhere.

Note the new address. We had to move out of our flat, as the owner wanted it back, and after trying 34 hotels in Paris decided to try the country. The success of the move has been stupendous. This is the spot! Only nine miles out of Paris, so that I can get in in half an hour when I want books, and yet wonderful country. This hotel was where Louis the Fourteenth was born. It is right on the forest. I am getting a lot of work done here without interruptions. I can't imagine how I ever stood Paris for so long. It is great getting back to the peace here after a day in Paris, where the traffic has now hotted up to pre-war form.

I'm so glad that you think the fact that my stories deal with a vanished world will not matter. Certainly, so far everything seems all right. Money In the Bank has done extraordinarily well - 30,000 in the first month - and so has Joy In the Morning in America. It's good news to hear that Money in the Bank has been selling well in Colombo.

I am now about half way through my new Jeeves novel, and after an agonizing hold-up, due to the discovery that the plot was all wrong, it is now going nicely. I fixed the plot trouble, and I think there won't be any more hitches.

Best wishes  
Yours sincerely

*P. G. Wodehouse*

The Editor writes: *With the publication next year of a new book of Wodehouse letters, edited by Sophie Ratcliffe, it seems particularly fitting that we should receive word of two previously unknown letters that PGW wrote to Captain Dennis P. Cooray, a naval officer who is now retired and lives in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Though the letters shed no earth-shattering light on Wodehouse's life and work, they are nonetheless of great interest, particularly given the time they were written. On the next page, Captain Cooray's friend, Mahendra Gonsalkorale, tells the story of how the letters came to his – and the Society's – attention.*

Readers of *Wooster Sauce* are familiar with Plum's worldwide appeal and won't be unduly surprised by the story that I am about to relate. It begins some years ago, when I was fortunate enough to be given a splendid collection of Wodehouse books by Dammi Kottegoda, the widow of my old professor in Sri Lanka. Prof Kotte (as we fondly called him) had wanted them to go to a genuine fan, and Dammi (my brother Raj's mother-in-law), learned that I was an incurable Plum addict. To this day, I regard this gift as the strongest evidence of the existence of someone up there who considers me in a favourable light.

Dear Mr Cooray.

Thank you so much for your letter. I am so glad you liked *Money In The Bank*. I wrote it when I was an internee in Germany - in pencil in a room containing never less than fifty men singing and playing darts and ping-pong. And yet, for some odd reason, it never gave me the slightest trouble but came out easily. I was lucky to hit on a plot that didn't suddenly develop holes, as most plots do. And I also had the luck to have the original of *Lord Offenham* always before me, he being one of my fellow internees.

This page and next: extracts from the first letter of September 21, 1945

have the letters photocopied. They met at the Captain's Colombo residence, where he handed over the letters and his press cuttings for photocopying.

Wodehouse was based in France at the time he wrote to Captain Cooray. In the first letter, dated September 21, 1946, he refers to the fact that he would be back in the USA were it not for the shipping strike there. He also

makes some amusing observations about his books and characters: "A thing that has relieved me greatly is that both *Money In The Bank* and *Joy In The Morning* have sold a good many thousands better than

anything I have ever had published in spite of the fact that the world they deal with has absolutely disappeared." A full 64 years later, they are still selling well, testimony to the timeless appeal of the Wodehouse style of humour.

On Lord Emsworth, he wrote, "As for *Blandings Castle*, Lord Emsworth has probably had to sell it and live in a cottage."

In his next letter, a month later – written on October 31 – Wodehouse makes some revealing statements about the overlap of Jeeves stories in various published books. He also notes that he and his wife have moved from Paris to the countryside, and expresses his need for peace and solitude while writing, describing the move as "a stupendous success." Yet in his earlier letter, he had demonstrated his ability to adapt by describing how he wrote *Money in the Book* while an internee in Germany

of mine. I can't spot anything omitted except the school stories (*The Pothunters*, *St Austin's*, *A Prefect's Uncle*, *The Bold Bat*, *The Head of Kay's*, *The White Feather*, *Mike*). Those were my earliest works and the only one I recommend is *MIKE*, where Psmith makes his first appearance. These were all published by A and C Black, 4 Soho Square, London W., but at the moment, I should imagine, they are out of print. Note: *The Intrusions of Jimmy* is the same book as *A Gentleman of Leisure*.

To add to my good fortune, Dammi revealed that their family friend, Captain Dennis Cooray, was also a PGW fan and that he was the proud possessor of some letters he had received from Plum in the post-war years. Captain Cooray was only too pleased to meet a fellow addict and very proudly showed me the letters and also some related newspaper cuttings he had kept.

Captain Cooray is a retired naval officer who had the good fortune to come across a PGW book in the 1940s and instantly caught the Wodehouse bug. He had the boldness to write to Wodehouse directly and was rewarded with two replies. He treasures these letters so much that anything else pales by comparison. Captain Cooray now leads a quiet life with his beloved wife in Colombo. He is immensely proud of his Charity Work, being a member of the Board of Trustees of the Sir James and Lady Peiris Cheshire Home founded in 1966 (part of the Leonard Cheshire Disability International based in the UK with Her Majesty the Queen as Patron).

I decided to meet Captain Cooray during one of my visits to Sri Lanka so that I could see the letters. However, he couldn't make photocopies in time for me to take them back with me to Manchester. He wrote to The P G Wodehouse Society about them, and Christine Hewitt sought my assistance to get them photocopied. Eventually I arranged for my brother, who lives in Sydney, to meet Captain Cooray during a visit to Sri Lanka and



Captain Cooray (right) hands over his letters and press cuttings to Raj Gonsalkorale in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

"in a room containing never less than fifty men singing and playing darts and ping-pong."

In both letters, Wodehouse talks about his new Jeeves book. At the time he wrote his second letter, he was halfway through it and had yet to find a title for it. No doubt this was *The Mating Season*, published in 1949.

When I shared these letters with Sir Edward Cazalet, he commented thus: "I have enjoyed



reading Plum's two letters. They are written in his normal chatty vogue. I liked his comments on what he thought of his early school stories and of how he was still churning out the work in those difficult years for him in the mid-1940s. Also his comments about Lord Emsworth living in a cottage are amusing."

While there is nothing startling or new in these two letters, I believe they offer a fascinating glimpse into Plum's life and character. His readiness to reply to fan mail from any part of the world, his love of peace and tranquillity, and his amazing ability to absorb himself in his writing are just some of the characteristics that distinguish him from other writers.

A thing that has relieved me greatly is that both Money In The Bank and Joy In The Morning have sold a good many thousands better than anything I have ever had published in spite of the fact that the world they deal with has absolutely disappeared. A house like Shipley Hall would, I imagine, be run by one charwoman nowadays! And, as for Blandings Castle, Lord Emsworth has probably had to sell it and go and live in a cottage. It looks as though people don't mind my stuff being out of date.

Best wishes  
Yours sincerely

*P. G. Wodehouse*

## Dinner 2010!

On October 28, the Society enjoyed its seventh biennial dinner in the glorious surroundings of Gray's Inn. It was joy in the evening as we browsed, sluiced, and laughed the hours away, revelling in delicious food and drink, sparkling conversation, and a superb entertainment. For a full report by Peter Martin and more photos, see pages 12 and 13. For even more pictures and another report, see the Society's website at <http://www.pgwodehousesociety.org.uk>.



(Photo by Ginni Beard)

George, from the shaded seclusion of a gallery, looked down upon the brilliant throng with impatience. It seemed to him that he had been doing this all his life. . . . It was all just like the second act of an old-fashioned musical comedy (Act Two: The Ballroom, Grantchester Towers: One Week Later) . . .

(From *A Damsel in Distress*, 1919)

## Society News

### ***Out with the Old, In with the New***

With this issue of *Wooster Sauce*, eligible members will be receiving the final instalments of *The Swoop*, the serialised Wodehouse novel that has been a Christmas bonus for renewing subscribers since 2006. As noted in the March issue, we decided to cease producing the Christmas bonus and, instead, have a special *By The Way* featuring an original Wodehouse work that *all* members can enjoy. For those expecting the final *Swoops* with the September issue – our apologies, but we were unable to prepare them in time. For those who have no *Swoops* at all – we do have quantities of all seven instalments left, and they can be obtained for £10 per set.

### ***Two More Wodehouse Walks***

Richard Burnip reports that in spite of heavy rain on October 3rd, three hardy souls attended London Walks' Wodehouse Walk that day, taking advantage of the special discount to Society members (£6 instead of the usual £8). The good news is that Richard will lead two more Walks, on December 11 (start time 10.45 a.m.) and on January 2 (start time 2.30 p.m.). See Future Events on page 24 for further details.

### ***Dinner Photos for Sale***

If you were at the Society's dinner in October and like the pictures of the event on pages 3, 12, 13, and below, then you might like to see even more – and perhaps even order prints. Thanks to our photographer, Ginni Beard, this is possible. Just email the Editor, and she will send you a pdf of all the photos available as well as an order



form. Sorry, but the pdf is only available via email.

### ***February Meeting***

Our November AGM having been a huge success – a report will be in the March issue – we will return to The George at 213 Strand for our next gathering, on February 15, 2011, starting from 6 p.m. Our speaker will be – well, it's rather a mystery who our speaker will be, so the best thing to do is just come along and find out!

### ***A Tribute to Our Printer***

Periodically we offer thanks to Baines Design and Print of Cuffley, Hertfordshire – the good folks who print *Wooster Sauce* and *By The Way* for us and have also provided other printing services. This year they have been even more helpful than usual, and so it seems only right to express our heartfelt gratitude for all they have done for the Society since 1997 – and will continue to do for some time to come if we have anything to say about it! Many thanks to Stuart Bennett, Wynter Blathwayt, Sandie Howard-Smith, and all those at Baines who have made your Editor's life a whole lot easier than it would be otherwise.

### ***Where's My Article?***

As I reported at November's AGM, *Wooster Sauce* is in great shape, primarily because I am swamped with material. This is good news for me as I don't have to worry about having enough to print – but bad news for those contributors who have to take their place in the queue and wait for some time before they see their pieces in print. There are, of course, priorities in choosing what to print: recent events and reviews of plays, books, and audiotapes always come first, and then I try to print articles by those who have been waiting longest (shorter articles have a better chance). But sometimes others jump the queue, for reasons known only to me, and given that there are only four issues a year, I can well imagine how difficult delays must be for anxious authors. So please be patient – and please keep those contributions coming, anyway! I'm jolly grateful to all members who send articles and interesting items.

–Ye Editor

## ***A Chance to Join the Drones***

**T**here's a buzz from The Drones about an appealing-sounding event being planned for Spring 2011, at Dulwich College.

The Drones – yes, there really is such a group, a loose formation of individuals who like Wodehouse and food – is a dining society that meets when the spirit so moves it, which tends to be rather sporadically; some PGW Society members are Drones, but not all Drones are Society members.

We have learned that The Drones hope to organise a jolly dinner, probably a buffet, probably with some Wodehousean entertainment, probably in The Old Library at Dulwich College, probably in May 2011. So, they seem to have things stitched up pretty neatly . . . What we're certain about is that Society members will, of course, be very welcome when the time comes to book.

## And the Winning Clerihew Is . . .

Well, what fun our Clerihew Competition turned out to be! Who'd have thought there were so many budding poets in the Society? Our judges, Tim Andrew and Robert Bruce, had their hands full, wading through all the entries – more than 130 have been received since members were first challenged to send in clerihews some two years ago. With the assistance of a vast quantity of liquid refreshment, they winnowed down the long list to a short list and then to a shorter list, and with just days to go until *Wooster Sauce* went to press, they finally arrived at a decision. It did not come easily, given the quality and humour to be found in the clerihews we received. But in the end, the winner was a late entry, received shortly before the deadline of September 30.

Congratulations therefore go to **Jenny and Susan Inglis** of Glasgow, who have won a complete set of *Jeeves and Wooster* episodes on DVD by submitting this delightful, not-previously-published clerihew:

Claude ('Persian Monarchs') Pott  
 Sympathetic to poor swains is not.  
 He wants his daughter Polly  
 To marry lolly.

Our runners-up (no prizes, alas, but plenty of applause) are:

*Jonathan Radgick:*

Constance Keeble  
 Terrified the feeble.  
 Just one look  
 Was all it took.

*Geoff Millward:*

Uncle Fred  
 Would rise from his bed  
 And spend morning 'til night  
 Spreading sweetness and light.

And applause as well to all those who earned an Honourable Mention:

*Lennart Andersson:*

Whenever Bertram Wooster, Esq.  
 Acquired another appalling attire,  
 Jeeves, who in the first place would not have let him choose it,  
 Made him lose it.

*Simon Gordon Clark:*

Mortimer, known as Legs,  
 Needed to be taken down several pegs.  
 But before the fair Miss Bracket he could ravish,  
 Some hornets saw him off, much to the satisfaction of Angus McTavish.

*Charles Gould:*

Veronica Wedge:  
 Over the edge.  
 Her bosoms Veronical  
 Are bigger than her brain. Ironical.

*Allyn Hertzbach:*

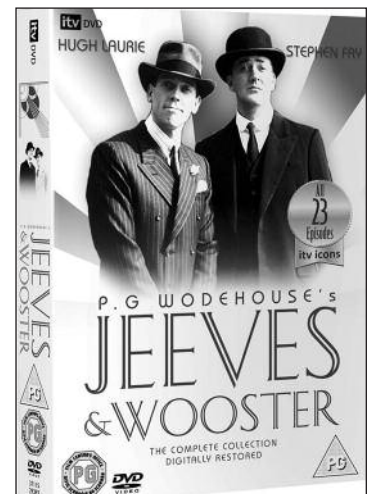
Uncle Fred, a courteous gent  
 Loves to pay a compliment  
 To pretty girls who need a shove  
 Along the rocky path of love.

*James Linwood:*

Jeeves  
 Invariably achieves.  
 Successfully disposing of Alpine hats,  
 Mess jackets, moustaches and Etonian spats.

*Paul Tubb:*

Reginald Jeeves  
 Firmly believes  
 That in matters of attire  
 His knowledge is higher.



*For the competition winners, ITV generously donated a complete set of Jeeves & Wooster episodes - part of their ITV Icons range.*

Thanks to all contributors! We will resume printing new clerihews in the next issue.



# Plum, Pigs, and Prizes

*Lucy Meredith reports on two events at the Royal County of Berkshire Show, September 19, 2010*

As the sun rose on the last warm Sunday of summer, pigs across the length and breadth of the isle rose from their slumbers, energized by the prospect of a good breakfast. These, however, were no ordinary pigs. They were veritable princes and princesses of the porcine race, proud champions of the show ring and honoured descendants of the Empress's lineage.

Today was a special day. Pigs are not generally noted for their dapper appearance; indeed, the very concept of personal hygiene is completely alien to most, but on this fine and balmy morning, these champions found themselves being scrubbed, buffed, and anointed until they shone. White pigs were powdered like ladies' noses for a society ball; black pigs were doused with baby oil until every bristle shone. All in preparation for the Newbury Show and, in the case of one certain breed, for the big event – the 'Champion of Champions' cup, awarded to the purest and most unblemished example of the ancient and time-honoured line of Berkshires in all the land. Better yet, the winner would receive a sash bearing the name of the championship's sponsor – The P G Wodehouse Society (UK).

At about half past nine, the procession waddled into the ring, each porker leading its handler with a determined air, blissfully oblivious to the scrutiny of the crowd. The judge, Viki Mills, resplendent in a chiffon skirt and hat fit to grace Ladies' Day at Ascot, cast a critical eye over the ensemble and got down to the serious business of determining the supreme Berkshire pig-of-the-day. The pigs in turn regarded her most severely as each in turn suffered the

indignity of having their underlines scrutinised and the quality of their hams assessed. The audience was also treated to the first-rate commentating of Nick Hunkin, with frequent allusions to the Empress and even a sterling rendition of Jimmy Belford's "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!" call as the climax of the contest approached.

The stately perambulation around the ring continued for some time until, at last, came the moment of truth – the announcement of the champion. A splendid boar raised by Paul and Sarah Ashcroft of Lincolnshire gained his laurels and was immediately named 'Emperor'. As Hilary Bruce festooned his magnificent rotundity with the Society's glorious sash, the new champion's demeanour suggested that he fell into the category of 'having greatness thrust upon him'. The other competitors, however, bore their defeat with good cheer

and contented themselves with a paradisiacal contemplation of prandial delights to come. Larry, the runner-up and another fine example of the Berkshire line, was also a member of the Ashcroft contingent. Sarah Ashcroft, owner of the chosen pair, was unable to attend the victory revelries due to the demands of her 10-month-old twins, but she was understandably ecstatic when told of the double triumph.

Being a 'fresher' to the porcine world when being asked to report on the Berkshire competition, I was delighted to be given a chance to try my hand at pig handling. After a pleasant trial meander in the company of the mild-mannered Russet and her owner, Christina Dunlop, imagine my surprise when offered the chance for the pair of us to have a crack at the junior pig handlers' class later in the afternoon. It was with some trepidation that I approached the event, following, as it did, a fine display of pigsmanship in the under-12s class. This included a proficient performance by young William Dunlop, who, at the tender age of two, succeeded in bending Truffle, Russet's more unruly mother, to his iron will.

And so the moment arrived as Russet was rudely forced out into the ring, guided by some small human



*The Winner: 'Emperor' with (l-r) his handler; Sarah Clarke Martin, who presented a trophy in honour of her late mother, a breeder of Berkshires; and Hilary Bruce, Society Chairman, who presented the sash and a rosette. (Photo by Tony Ring)*



*Resplendent judge Viki Mills (photo by Tony Ring)*

amateur brandishing a stick and board rather ineffectually. Naturally, Russet took not the slightest notice of my feeble protestations and determined to cross the ring as the crow flies, despite the unfortunate location of the judge in direct conjunction. With a timely swerve and nifty employment of the pig-board however, the crisis was averted and she began a stately circumnavigation of the ring, with anxious handler in tow. From that moment on, Russet's chosen route coincided approximately with that desired so I could contrive to convince onlookers that it was me, not the pig, that was in command of the situation.

Eventually, a decision was made and it turned out that Russet and I had been awarded fourth place, a magnificent result only slightly marred by the fact that there were only four entrants in the "age 13–18 pig handling" competition. Thus, yours truly, in her amateur representation of the Society, received a reward with a somewhat abashed demeanour. Russet, having been indulged with a lengthy back scratch, was returned to her sty with a fond adieu, and I retired, the proud owner of a rosette and the princely reward of two pounds, having made a veritable pig's breakfast of the whole affair.



Lucy (far right) – 16 at the time she wrote this report – with her parents, Julie and Robert Meredith, and her sister, Emily.



## Letters to the Editor

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

#### From Dilip Joshi

I was deeply moved by Simon Bond's 'My First Wodehouse Experience' (*WS* September 2010). Fate deals cruel blows sometimes, and it takes Simon's stoic pragmatism to face it. I doff my hat to him. I also applaud his fiancée, who so thoughtfully gave him *Thank You, Jeeves* to read. In his own words, it is only impeccable jokes, perfect prose, and downright silliness that can see you through a calamity. Simon's prognosis is good, and I wish him a complete recovery.

#### From David Butler

With reference to James Hogg's 'Who Was Emily Wodehouse', I can offer the following snippet. A few years ago I was doing some family history research in Hertfordshire and found the following gravestone, in the churchyard at Northchurch near Berkhamsted:

Jane Street. Died at Northchurch Sep 15th 1855 aged 54. For 23 years the faithful servant in the family of the late Mrs Thos Wodehouse of Sennowe, Norfolk.

Not terribly exciting, I know, but might be of some use to someone probing the Norfolk Wodehouse connection.

#### From Karen Shotting

An item in the September issue of *Wooster Sauce* (Press Comment), regarding Barry Norman's observation that Richard Curtis, writer of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, had clearly been influenced by PGW, has spurred me to share this Wodehousean bit from that movie. At the second wedding, Gareth (Simon Callow) sets out his new

theory about marriage, viz., that "two people are in love; they live together, and then suddenly, one day, they run out of conversation – totally. . . . They can't think of a single thing to say to each other . . . panic! . . . then, suddenly, it occurs to the chap that there is a way out of the deadlock . . . he'll ask her to marry him." Charles (Hugh Grant) thinks this is "Brilliant" and responds, "Basically, you're saying that marriage is just a way to get out of an embarrassing pause in conversation."

Here is PGW's treatment of the same concept from *The Butler Did It*. Lord Uffenham's niece has asked him what on earth made him do such a chuckleheaded thing as getting engaged to an usherette at the Rivoli Cinema at Herne Hill. Wodehouse writes: "Actually what had caused Lord Uffenham to plight his troth had been that lifelong habit of his of proposing marriage to girls whenever the conversation seemed to be flagging a bit and a feller felt he had to say *something*. It had got him into trouble before – notably in the years 1912, 1913, 1920 and 1921 – and he saw now that it was a mistake."

I'm not sure, but I think PGW may have used this line more than once. Perhaps others could comment?

#### From Iain Anderson:

I enjoyed Murray Hedgcock's article 'Plum in the Suburbs', although suburban London is something about which I know absolutely nothing. However, I recall that in 'Jeeves and the Song of Songs', Bertie visits, at Jeeves's instigation, the Oddfellows' Hall in Bermondsey East, a location which sounds pretty suburban to me, to sing 'Sonny Boy' at one of Beefy Bingham's bright,

clean entertainments, unaware that the song had already been sung twice. Bertie did not quite get the bird, but Tuppy Glossop, singing the same song immediately afterwards, received some rough treatment – “a costermonger, roused, is a terrible thing”.

**From Nick Townend**

I was reading Arthur Ransome’s *Missee Lee* (1941) to my daughter Ella recently and came across the following passage (the uncle of Nancy and Peggy Blackett, the Amazons, has just been taken to prison by the Chinese pirates who have captured the shipwrecked Amazons and their uncle):

Nancy suddenly laughed. “He’s been in prison before,” she said. “Don’t you remember? Over grabbing a policeman’s helmet on boat-race night. He won’t mind.”

Sadly, I think this is a nod to Wodehouse, rather than necessarily being evidence that young men about town really did pinch policemen’s helmets on boat-race night. Hugh Brogan’s *The Life of Arthur Ransome* records that Ransome was a fan of Wodehouse, had a boat built in c1950 which he named *Lottie Blossom* (after the character in *The Luck of the Bodkins*), and wrote a fan letter to Wodehouse, in which he referred to his “long shelf of orange Wodehouses”.

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# The Nature and Development of the Impostor in the Works of P. G. Wodehouse

## Part 2

by Elliott Milstein

*Elliott continues his discussion of impostors in Wodehouse – and reveals his own cunning imposture. For Part 1, see the September issue.*

If we look for the Wodehouse locale most densely populated with impostors, it is not Blandings; no, we must leave Shropshire and indeed England. Hollywood, by its very nature, is a fertile ground for impostors. It is where actresses like Minna Nordstrom are really parlourmaids and gorillas are really Balliol men. But here again we are on shaky ground regarding definition. In a place as rife with deceit, deception, guile, and impersonation, what can we say really constitutes imposture? If we employ our most liberal definition, then virtually everyone in Hollywood is an impostor and certainly the novel with the most impostors is *Laughing Gas*, where every domestic servant is an actor and even kidnappers are really would-be scriptwriters. Brinkmeyer’s English butler, Japanese gardener, Filipino footman, and *Gunga Din*–reciting chauffeur make four. But what about those kidnappers George, Eddie, and Fred? Other than the fact that Fred was once an extra, we don’t really know if they were impersonating kidnappers or the real thing. Was Eggy Mannering impersonating a vocal coach or was he really trying to start a new career. And what about our main characters, Reggie Havershot and Joey Cooley? Can we say they were impersonating each other when their souls switched bodies? Like everything in Hollywood, it is all chimera.

But the Wodehouse novel with the greatest number of impostors and the most convoluted impostor plot takes place in that other land where deception reigns supreme, France. I speak, of course, of *Hot Water*. Packy Franklyn poses early on as a barber, but that is just to warm things up. Blair Eggleston, writer of stern, stark novels and

secret fiancé of Jane Opal, finds himself unwittingly coerced into becoming Jane’s father’s valet. But the plot really gets going when Packy insinuates himself into the Chateau Blissac as the Vicomte De Blissac. The Veek had been in a contretemps with his intended host, J Wendell Gedge. Both were sunk rather deeply beneath the Plimsoll line at the time, so Packy convinces each that he had nearly murdered the other and must lie low and then proceeds to the chateau in the Vicomte’s place. Then other impostors come thick and fast. There is Medway, Mrs Gedge’s maid, who pretends to be a detective but is in fact Gum-Shoe Gertie, erstwhile partner of Oily Carlyle, who arrives as the Duc de Pont-Andemer. When Mrs Gedge arrives and exposes Packy, he readily drops one imposture for another, pretending to be a detective from Mrs Gedge’s insurance company. But, although there are now two fake detectives, Wodehouse introduces a real one: it seems that Mrs Gedge’s secretary, Miss Putnam, is actually an employee of the James B. Flaherty Agency. And at the very end of the book, Mrs Gedge accepts the final resolution of affairs after being exposed as Julia, Soup Slattery’s former partner and the sweetest little inside stand a safe cracker could ever have.

So how many impostures is that? I count nine, but I may have missed one.

Of course, the ultimate impostor story, ‘Uncle Fred Flits By’, takes place in the suburbs of London. A short story, and thus not really lending itself to holding the record for the greatest number of impostors, it certainly makes the most concentrated use of them: four conducted by Uncle Fred and three, reluctantly, by Pongo. The initial motive was simply to get out of the rain, but we all know it was purely for fun. Later, the Love and Money side of it come into play, but only after the imposture is in full swing.



Though Uncle Fred goes on to a great career in imposture, this first outing was the feat he was most proud of, as we can tell from his recitation of the event to Bill Oakshott in *Uncle Dynamite*:

“My dear fellow, at the Cedars, Mafeking Road, in the suburb of Mitching Hill last spring I impersonated in a single afternoon and with complete success not only an official from the bird shop, come to clip the claws of the parrot, but Mr Roddis, lessee of The Cedars, and a Mr J. G. Bulstrode, a resident of the same neighborhood. It has been a lasting grief to me that I was given no opportunity of impersonating the parrot, which I am convinced I should have done on broad, artistic lines.”

In *Cocktail Time*, Wodehouse goes even further, asserting,

It was his modest boast that there was nothing in existence, except possibly a circus dwarf, owing to his height, or Gina Lollobrigida, owing to her individual shape, which he could not at any moment and without rehearsal depict with complete success.

Besides Uncle Fred and Pongo, there are many other such pairings. Blair Eggleston’s misery is an excellent foil for Packy Franklyn’s grand time. Of course, in arranging things thus, Wodehouse is deliberately trying to show Packy as the preferred suitor of Jane. But consider *Spring Fever*, where both Mike Cardinal and Stanwood Cobbold are sympathetic characters, yet Mike Cardinal, impersonating Stanwood, is enjoying himself thoroughly while Stanwood shows up later unhappily filling in for the millionaire Rossiter.

I think all of us, in daydreaming how we would act in a similar situation, like to see ourselves as impostors like Uncle Fred or Psmith or Jeff Miller, carrying the whole thing off with detachment and *savoir faire*. I know I did. Then, suddenly, I was called upon to actually do it myself. Let me tell you: it’s a whole different thing when you are living it rather than reading it.

In the summer of 1981 New York Air had a big promotion to highlight their \$49 fare from Detroit to New York. My friend Ken Fink, never one to pass up a bargain, camped out in the Detroit airport and procured two round-trip tickets to New York for under \$100!

Now, Kenny was slaving away as a cub photographer for a not-so-great non-metropolitan newspaper and I was a travelling salesman opening new territories for my father’s tiny company. Somehow we could never get our schedules to agree, and the deadline for using the tickets was fast approaching.

Then he found a talking point. The Wodehouse Centenary exhibition was opening in a week. Unfortunately, a little research showed that it opened the week I was to be out of town on business. Could I cancel my trip? No. Could Ken take a day off work? No. What to do . . .

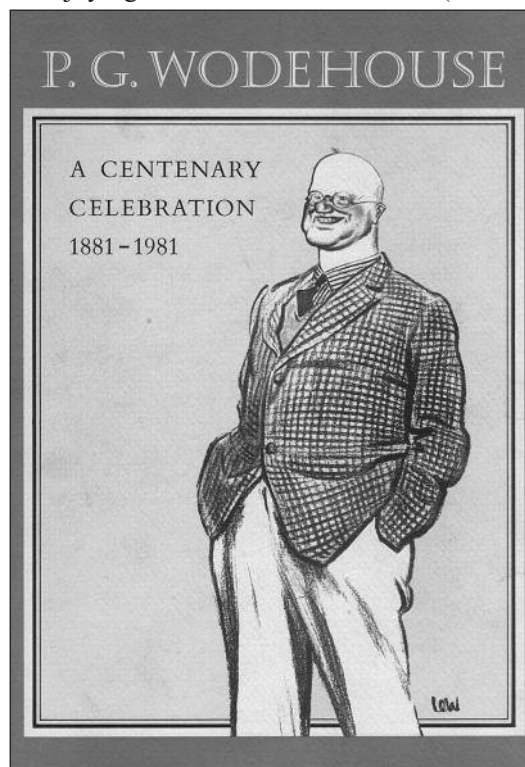
Now, I want you to know that Kenny, may he rest in peace, was a scrupulously honest individual, but when there was something of great import in the balance, he would unbend far enough to pull the old schoolboy trick of, not exactly lying, but not really telling the truth. What Kenny did was to call James Heinemann’s secretary and say that he was with the Oakland Press (the newspaper he worked for was in fact located in Oakland County – not his fault if she thought he was from San Francisco), that he happened to have a photographer and a reporter in New York this Saturday, and could they get admittance to the exhibition even if it wasn’t open yet.? Somehow doors were opened, passes printed, red carpets unfurled, and plane reservations made.

I was feeling more and more like Corky about to interview Ukridge’s Aunt Julia as Kenny gave me a reporter’s notebook and instructed me on a few simple tips: Don’t get involved in lengthy discussions on the development of the Drones Club; instead, I was to ask questions like, how much did it cost and how many people are you expecting?.

As it turned out, Ken need not have worried. Jimmy Heinemann (he asked me to call him Jimmy) met us at the door and except for one sticky moment when he said “So you’re from California” – to which I answered, “Well, Michigan really” – he took control.

The exhibit was not completely set up yet, but it was mostly done. For those of you who went, you will remember that Jeeves greeted you at the door, or actually a life-size cutout of Jeeves. Kenny took a picture of Jimmy and me standing next to it. Jimmy, no doubt, had visions of this picture on every doorstep in the Bay area. Smiling next to him, I knew it was destined for my scrapbook alone.

I got a brief autobiography of Mr Heineman and how he came to be so interested in Wodehouse. He gave me his phone number as well as the name, address, and phone number of Bill Blood (telling me I should get in touch



The bonus for Elliott’s imposture was getting this now-sought-after book from the PGW Centenary.

as he was organizing a society for Wodehouse). Like Pongo, who was instructed to tap his teeth with a pencil and smell of iodoform, we tried as much as possible to look like real newspaper people. Ken, of course, had the advantage over me in that he was one, but I did my best, dropping the occasional journalistic expression and trying to act like something out of *The Front Page*.

Jimmy and I did, in fact, discuss the fine points of various novels and stories. I gave him a copy of my thesis, *The Growth of Sweetness and Light*, and he gave me a copy of the Wodehouse Centenary Book. He invited Kenny and me to the opening gala and the performance of Edward Duke's *Jeeves Takes Charge*, which we politely declined. The thing was, in a word, a love-feast.

I received a very nice note from Jimmy shortly after our visit. I wanted so to write him and explain, but fear held my hand. I wanted to believe that Jimmy would be enough of a Wodehousean to appreciate the fact that we were impostors and why we did it, but I couldn't help thinking that most people are not pleased finding out that they have been had.

We did it out of fun and out of love and, yes, there was a monetary gain (that book is quite valuable now), so it was a truly Wodehousean imposture. But was it wrong? Before you judge us for so deceiving this kind man, mark the sequel.

On June 26, 1998, I was seated in the fifth row at Sotheby's for the auction of the Heinemann collection, prepared to purchase one or two lots of books to fill in my little collection. As the event was nearing the end, and I was quite done purchasing the few items I wanted and could afford, I was gripped with one of those mysterious urges one gets at auctions and, impulsively – nay, uncontrollably, as if moved by some outside force – I raised my paddle. When the mists had cleared, I found myself the proud owner of lot 147, a lot of innumerable items whose description in the catalogue goes on for several pages. I had no idea what possessed me to bid on it. But when, several weeks later, a truck arrived at my office and dropped off five massive crates, each one sufficient to hold a grand piano – I do not exaggerate, ask my poor suffering wife – I knew that Jimmy Heinemann had gotten me back for my deceptive effrontery as an impostor.

They all trickled back to the parlour, Lord Ickenham pointing out objects of interest by the wayside to the chap, Pongo gulping for air a bit and trying to get himself abreast of this new twist in the scenario. His heart was becoming more and more bowed down with the weight of woe. He hadn't liked being Mr Walkingshaw, the anaesthetist. and he didn't like it any better being Roddis Junior. In brief, he feared the worst. It was only too plain to him by now that his uncle had settled down to one of his big afternoons, and he was asking himself, as he had so often asked himself before, what would the harvest be?

(From 'Uncle Fred Flits By', 1935)

## A Wodehouse Mastermind

On April 22 this year, David Buckle, the vice-principal of Moat Community College, Leicester, was a contestant in a semi-final round of *Mastermind*. His specialist subject that night was 'Jeeves and Wooster Novels of P G Wodehouse' and in 90 seconds he answered 14 questions, 12 of them correctly, with no passes. Mr Buckle won the semi-final by one point and so advanced to the final, which he lost, in May.



The question is: what sort of a Jeeves and Wooster Mastermind are you? As a Christmas challenge to our readers, here are the questions put to Mr Buckle (though we won't say which two he got wrong). The answers can be found on page 21 – no cheating!

1. Which of Bertie Wooster's friends is an enthusiastic breeder of newts?
2. What aristocratic title is Roderick Spode found to have inherited in *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*?
3. Bertie was once fined five pounds for theft at Boshers Street Magistrates Court. What item had he stolen on Boat Race Night?
4. What was the nickname of Wilfred Cream, the disreputable younger brother of Wilbert in *Jeeves in the Offing*?
5. For which of the novels did Bertie Wooster suggest the alternative titles of *The Maiden Eggesford Horror* or *The Curious Case of the Cat Which Kept Popping Up When Least Expected*?
6. Who did Bertie refer to as 'the Club millionaire' at the Drones?
7. In which village does Bertie's fearsome Aunt Agatha live with her husband, Lord Worplesdon?
8. What is the official name of the political organisation known as the 'Black Shorts', of which Roderick Spode is the leader?
9. Which character in *Thank You, Jeeves* is described by Bertie as a 'bally old blighter' and by Chuffy as a 'pop-eyed old swindler'?
10. What is the title of the journal owned by Bertie's Aunt Dahlia and referred to by Uncle Tom as 'Madame's Nightshirt'?
11. Sir Watkyn Bassett and his daughter Madeline have a house in Gloucestershire. What's its name?
12. What item of silverware is Bertie ordered to steal in *The Code of the Woosters*?
13. To what garish nightclub does Bertie take Florence Craye in *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*?
14. In *Right Ho, Jeeves*, Gussie is invited to a fancy-dress ball. As whom does he dress up on Jeeves's advice?

# My First Wodehouse Experience

by Paddy Briggs

*“Memories are like mulligatawny soup in a cheap restaurant. It is best not to stir them.”*

Curiously, although I was at Dulwich College for three unhappy years in the late 1950s, it was not until I moved on to The Leys School in Cambridge that I first discovered P G Wodehouse. At Plum’s Alma mater, I knew that he was a distinguished Old Alleynian, but my then preoccupations placed him well down the OA list – comfortably behind Trevor Bailey, Raymond Chandler, and Bob Monkhouse. But I did have a light apprenticeship in literary humour at Dulwich as the splendid library had a complete run of *Punch* magazines to lighten a little my very bleak days of lonely academic underachievement.

The Leys was a more modest school and one where the less than brilliant 12-year-old was actually helped. The Leysian library was on a much less grand scale than that in SE21, but it did have an eclectic fiction section from which I plucked – at random, I think – a copy of *The Code of the Woosters*. It was the edition dating from 1938, and whilst well-thumbed, it was comfortable to the touch and full of promise. And on that grey November evening in 1959, I was hooked – not, just, to the delights of Bertie and Jeeves and the Drones and the Aunts but, as it turned out, to the whole Wodehouse oeuvre.

Within weeks the remaining Wodehouse books in the school library were consumed – in some cases twice or three times over, so I had to look further afield to feed the growing addiction. Cambridge City libraries came to the rescue, and to my delight I found that not only were there nearly 100 Wodehouse books on their shelves (not all at once, of course – they were heavily borrowed) but that every year one or two more were added as the Master produced yet another tour de force. The greatest delight came when I read my first Blandings Castle tale - the brilliant short story ‘Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!’ – and Blandings has always since been my favourite of PGW’s worlds. By the time that I was studying for my English A level, I was convinced beyond doubt that worthy though that syllabus was, with its Shakespeare, Sheridan, Shaw, and the like,

it was sadly neglectful of the man who needed to concede no ground to any of them – nor to Jane Austen for that matter. How much better Mansfield Park would have been had there been a porcine component to it.

I briefly strayed from Wodehouse in 1960 when the Penguin *Lady Chatterley* appeared – my copy was bound inside the cover of the paperback *Right Ho, Jeeves* – but I was not over-impressed. Lawrence seemed such a gloomy cove compared with Plum – and Mellors and Lady C seemed to need far too much energy for their noisy pleasures compared with the more docile delights of patting the Empress gently in her sty.



I have never once questioned whether the world of Wodehouse is real or not. For to ask the question in itself precludes the possibility of an illuminating answer. In that respect it’s a bit like my other great passion, cricket. I flounder and bluff to explain my love of cricket – and the similarly afflicted will understand. Cricket tragics are always comfortable in one another’s company because there is never any need to explain.

I am sure that we would all be astonished if someone suggested that there is an eccentricity to our enthusiasm for Plum and his work – and that probably we would all struggle to explain why we have it. Because, without over-romanticising it, while the genius of Wodehouse may defy explanation even by the most academic of the literati, for each of us the discovery of his work was a seminal moment in our lives. For me the explanation is simple – over the years every story has been a delight and every page has made me laugh, often out loud. And when I think back to that small and occasionally troubled boy who went once a week to the Central Library in Cambridge for his fix, I am sure that it truly was the world of Wodehouse that gave me the confidence to grapple with the puzzling realities of adolescence.

Thank you for allowing me to take the risk of stirring my mulligatawny with you.

## Overdosing on Hamlet

In the lead article of the Review section of the *Daily Telegraph* for September 25, Robert Gore-Langton discusses why an actor would wish to play Hamlet, given that the play is full of over-familiar lines. Commenting on the preponderance of productions today, he says: “If you think we are currently somewhat Hamlet heavy, then back in 1905 three

versions opened in the West End simultaneously, prompting P G Wodehouse to complain:

*It’s ‘Hamlet’ here and ‘Hamlet’ there and ‘Hamlet’ on next week.*

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

(Thanks to JAMIE JARRETT)



# A Delightful Dinner at Gray's Inn

by Peter Martin

Not for the first time, this year's dinner of The P G Wodehouse Society – described by Hilary Bruce, our much loved and respected Chairman, as what would have been the 'welcome to austerity' dinner but for the generosity of Oldfield Partners and Jupiter Asset Management – was again held in Gray's Inn Hall. Since 1556–58, this magnificent building has stood on its present site, which once belonged to the splendidly named, not to say thoroughly Wodehousean, Manor of Purpoole. The Inn was renowned for its 'Shows', or entertainments, and there seems little doubt that William Shakespeare played in the Hall, so a Society dinner and show seems entirely appropriate.

In the presence of the Society's patron HRH The Duke of Kent, some 147 members and guests sat down to a generously planned, well-cooked, and efficiently served dinner accompanied by admirable wines. Those who had the good fortune to be present – the dinner was massively oversubscribed – will remember what delicious dishes they ate and the well chosen wines they drank, so the menu is not recorded here. Those less fortunate would be even sadder if now told what they had missed.

Before dinner, which began promptly at 7.30, the company, as it assembled in the anteroom for a champagne reception, was greeted by Hilary Bruce and Sir Edward Cazalet. Sadly, our president, Richard Briers, was down with the flu. Among those present, apart from an assortment of members of the Wodehouse and Cazalet families and a distinguished group of knowledgeable – not to say encyclopaedically knowledgeable – Wodehouseans, were many loyal supporters of the Society, too many to be named individually. Nevertheless, I must mention friends of the Society and others such as David Campbell of Random House, who provided each diner with a very welcome copy of the charmingly illustrated "Everyman Wodehouse" catalogue; Patrick and Nigel Wodehouse, respectively the nephew and great-nephew of P G Wodehouse; Sophie Ratcliffe, who is working on a new collection of PGW's correspondence; Wodehouse biographer Robert McCrum; and, of course, Tim Andrew, who, with Edward Cazalet and Tony Ring, was responsible for the evening's success.

The dinner began with a beautiful grace (which put



Three of our sparkling entertainers – (l-r): Christine Hewitt, Tim Brooke-Taylor, and HRH The Duke of Kent

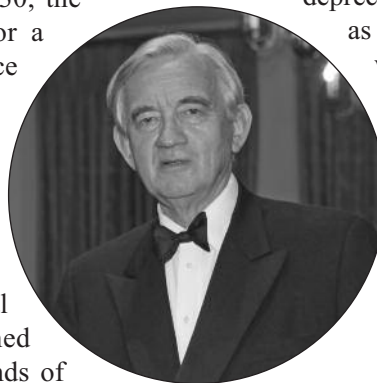
your diarist and, visibly, many others to the test of recalling their schoolboy Latin!) intoned by Oliver Wise. Following the dinner, the Loyal Toast was proposed by David Cazalet. We were then splendidly entertained by Elliott Milstein, a Wodehouse scholar and past president of The Wodehouse Society (US). In a winningly self-

deprecating address – he described himself as speaking in the "monotonous nasal whine of an obscure Midwesterner" living in a "Wodehouse wilderness" – he quoted a few little-known passages, pointing out how the economy and precision of Wodehouse's simple, declaratory language disguised "screamingly funny" ideas.

Thereafter, on with the show!

This was an inventive adaptation by the truly multi-skilled Tony Ring of the Master's wittiest and most mischievous short stories this, with a complex and improbable, not to say wholly outrageous, plot. Everyone will recall one of PGW's most engaging characters, Uncle Fred, 5th Earl of Ickenham, an energetic and mischievous old chap whose talent for causing frightful trouble was the bane of his nephew Pongo Twistleton's life.

The story this evening was performed by Tim Brooke-Taylor as Uncle Fred, Hal Cazalet as Wilbur, Lara Cazalet as Julia, and David Cazalet as the Narrator; minor roles were played by Andrew Chapman and Christine Hewitt, and Stephen Higgins provided piano accompaniment to songs performed by Hal and Lara. HRH The Duke of Kent set the scene with theatrical flair – in an English republic one could see him make a new career as a TV announcer.



Sir Edward Cazalet



Patrick Wodehouse

We were at times reduced to helpless laughter as the drama developed in its rather complicated way.

Of course, and as always, the interwoven songs made the show swing, and Hal and Lara rendered old favourites with their usual charm, style, and enthusiasm; your diarist notices a greater professionalism and maturity each time they perform together. These songs were ‘London, Dear Old London’, ‘An Old-Fashioned Wife’, the little-known ‘A Cottage in Kent’, and the ever-popular ‘The Church Around the Corner’. Finally, and sort of inevitably, Lara was exhorted to sing the wildly sentimental and touchingly rendered ‘Bill’. All this to loud and sincere applause.

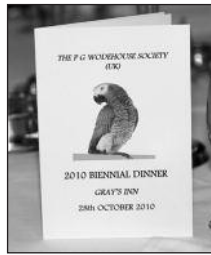
The proceedings were wound up by Hilary Bruce in an elegant and brief address, timed to perfection to conclude just after 11 pm, in which she thanked the many and various members of the committee, but particularly Tim Andrew and Tony Ring, who had given us such a splendid evening’s dinner and entertainment.



David Czalet did a fine job filling in for Richard Briers as the narrator of ‘Uncle Fred Flits By’ (with music).



Hilary Bruce presents Hal Czalet with a well-deserved gift.



Left: The dinner programme and menu



“La, sir!” Lara Czalet seems to say to Andrew Bishop.



Left: Elliott Milstein, who gave a terrific speech and offered the toast to Wodehouse and the Society, accepts his gift sporting a waistcoat purportedly once owned by P G Wodehouse himself.



Ginni Beard has been our official photographer for eons. All the pictures on these two pages (except this one) are by her. We thought it was about time we showed members what Ginni looks like!



A record 14 Americans came to the dinner, despite the recession. Here are a few of them – from left: Linda Adam-Hall, Karen Shotting, Gary Hall (current president of The Wodehouse Society), Kris Fowler (past president of TWS), Karen Latterell, John Moore, Carey Tynan, Susan Brokaw, Dirk Wonnell, and (in front of Dirk) Marilyn MacGregor. Missing here are Dan and Tina Garrison, Bill Franklin, and Elliott Milstein (above left).



# Another Slice of Plum Pie

by Tony Ring

After the outstanding success of the *Plum Pie* exhibition at Heywood Hill last autumn, and the more modest display at Eton College in the new year, half of the exhibit's panels reappeared for a fortnight at HSBC's head office in Canary Wharf. The occasion was the centenary of the publication of *Psmith in the City*, the book reflecting Wodehouse's own experience of working at the bank between 1900 and 1902, and in a nice touch, the bank's employees were invited to a lunchtime talk by the manager of History Projects for HSBC's Archive, Sara Kinsey, and our Patron Simon Brett. Simon's principal role was to read some quotations from the book in support of Sara's researches, and the pair made a thoroughly good imitation of Pat and Mike, so beloved of Wodehouse's Drones Club members.

Sara's research had uncovered many points that demonstrated the accuracy of Wodehouse's description of life at a bank in the earliest days of the 20th century. By an almost inevitable coincidence, while drafting this article I was pointed to one by D J Taylor in *The Times Literary Supplement* of September 17, entitled *Life Before Jeeves*, which provided further anecdotal evidence reaching the same conclusion. He wrote:

To at least one reader (my father, who started working for the Norwich Union Insurance Company in the 1930s), it was the only novel to give an accurate picture of what working in an office was like from the angle of the ground-down clerk: the protocols of arrival and departure, the pettifogging regulations, the routine subservience to tedious officialdom . . .

Sara opened by reminding the audience that Wodehouse had joined the bank as a member of the foreign staff and was expected to stay in London, learning on the job, for between two to three years before going out to his first posting in Hong Kong, Shanghai, or maybe Singapore, and spend the rest of his career in the Far East. He had, of course, resigned before setting a foot outside London – a relatively rare step in those days – but used his two years at HSBC as a source of inspiration for the setting of *Psmith in the City*.

Sara had dug deep into the HSBC vaults, and brought along a number of exhibits to augment her stated case, including some clips from interviews with bank pensioners in their eighties that had been done in the early 1980s; their memories reached back as far as the period just after the First World War, not too long after Wodehouse's employment. She also read some extracts from Wodehouse's own account of his time with the bank, which he wrote for the HSBC journal in the early 1970s.

Sara commented that Wodehouse's managed recruitment into HSBC through contacts of his father's is

supported in concept by the archives, which show that at that time it was who you knew that was most important in getting a job – the 1910 register of candidates, for example, has a column for the name of the person who introduced them. Pensioners' evidence suggests that by around 1920 there would have been an interview (perhaps confined to asking if you played cricket or rugby at school), a simple test, and on occasion a medical examination.

Wodehouse's description of his early days in the postal department seem to have been correct, and the evidence of the Standing Order book confirms the regular transfer of trainees from one department to another to give them a good all-round experience of all the parts of the bank's work and business. It also meant that they didn't get too bored as those juniors were given pretty menial jobs to do. Sara pointed out that graduate recruits today would find this pretty familiar, though perhaps some of the assignments today are a little more testing.

There is insufficient space to touch on more than a few of Sara's researches, but one important matter was the question of losing your bonus if you were late too frequently. The London Standing Order book recorded this information, showing Wodehouse to have been late 20 times. Apart from losing his bonus, his lateness may have contributed to the fact that his pay rise was only £5 at the end of the year, compared to the £10 or £15 of most of the other juniors.

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Late Morning Attendance - not including Paddy Morris  
 Number of times late during the year 1901 -

Adams	18	Evans	1	Neubottom	2
Allen	—	Ferguson	4	Pentycross	1
Aspinall	—	Forster	—	Rice	—
Baker	4	Grave as	—	Ridgway	6
Balcan	—	Grave W.	—	Ridgway	4
Barnes C.J.	6	Green	2	Roe	1
Barnes W.	4	Grayham	2	Russell	9
Burd	2	Witchman	22	Selquick	2
Chadshaw	—	Wyeack	—	Slife	—
Crent	4	Yates	1	Smith, W.A.	6
Crent	4	Kemp	—	Smith, W.G.	5
Crofton	1	Kendall	4	Tilly	—
Brook South	12	Lambert	7	Turnand	4
Dayne	2	Larke	4	Wardgob	—
Cantrell	—	Longman	4	Wardman	—
Cranford	4	Louden	—	Worthine	20
Deer	—	Mayas	—	Wright	36
Deeley	1	Withrich	2		
Edborough	6	Mac Gilliam	1		
Ellis	3	McCallaghan	1		

Naughty, naughty – the London Standing Order Book records Wodehouse's tardiness (second from the end in the third column).



Sara suggested that the depiction of London office life in *Psmith in the City* understated the amount of socialising that went on among the juniors. From interviews with HSBC pensioners, there certainly seemed to be more of an active social life among colleagues in the office than appears in the book. For instance, every time a junior got his orders to go East, there would be a big sending-off party – which from about 1914 onwards was always in the Jamaica pub behind Gracechurch Street.

Sara made many more points I would like to mention, but I fear that this must be the last. She had wondered whether any of the characters in the book were drawn from real HSBC employees. She noted that in the

book there are a couple of messengers who are brothers – William and Harold, one of whom treats Mike to a treatise on the best way to grow roses. The pensioners interviewed in the 1980s said that when they joined in the years straight after the First World War and in the early 1920s, those messengers were still working for HSBC and, frankly, had got a bit sick of being asked about Wodehouse!

Sara closed by speculating about a possible real identity for the villainous Mr Bickersdyke, and chose as a suspect the head of the London Office in 1902, a Mr Cameron – who just happens to be the great-great-grandfather of a certain David Cameron, the Prime Minister. Isn't it fun to speculate!

## The Word Around the Clubs

### *A Milestone for Jonathan*

Actor and Society patron extraordinaire JONATHAN CECIL recently recorded his 40th Wodehouse audiobook, *Big Money*. Although this book is not one of his favourites, Jonathan notes that it provides “a charming description of the suburbs.” He also tells us that at the conclusion of the taping, he was surprised with a cake (bearing the number 40), champagne, and informal remarks during which it was said Jonathan is to Wodehouse as Martin Jarvis is to *Just William* and Alan Bennett is to Winnie-the-Pooh. Quite right, too! *Big Money* will be issued by AudioGo (formerly BBC Audiobooks) early in the New Year, 2011. Congratulations, Jonathan!

### *In PGW's Own Words*

In August the BBC4 TV series *In Their Own Words* included snippets from an interview with Wodehouse at his home in Remsenburg, Long Island. Members can now view it in full as well as 39 other interviews with famous writers on the BBC's new archive website at [www.bbc.co.uk/archive](http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive). (Thanks to JULIE CALLAN)

### *Wodehouse on Justice*

ALVIN COHEN sent along an item from the *Funny Times*, published at Cleveland, Ohio, USA. A collection of quotes under the heading of ‘Curmudgeon’ included this one from P G Wodehouse: “Judges, as a class, display, in the matter of arranging alimony, that reckless generosity which is found only in men who are giving away someone else's cash.”

### *How to Play Bertie and Jeeves*

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of October 4 reported that at Eltham High School, students were preparing to take public examinations in dance, drama, theatre studies, *et alia*. One, Thomas Franklin, had spent a long time practising *The Valet* – featuring “the pompous English gentleman Bertie Wooster and his long-suffering valet Jeeves from the P G Wodehouse novels. . . . A huge fan of the Wodehouse novels, Thomas says it is a challenge to switch between the roles. ‘Bertie is easier to play because he is silly and you can exaggerate the movements and talk with a funny accent, whereas with

Jeeves, you have to be a bit more still, and talk in a deeper, measured tone, which is hard to maintain when you are frantically switching from one character to the next.”

### *Wodehouse to Make One Blush*

Two members, KAREN SHOTTING and PADDY BRIGGS, sent along a clipping from *The Spectator* (7 August 2010) that is, alas, a bit too risqué to print in full. As reported by Lucy Vickery, Competition No. 2568 challenged readers to “submit a bedroom scene written by a novelist who would not normally venture into such territory”. The first winner chose to write in the style of Jane Austen; the second, W J Webster, wrote as – P G Wodehouse, of course. The first two lines are:

“Pluck the budded rose of my maidenhood, Bertie. Take me. I am yours.”

“Right ho,” I said.

Modesty prevents us from printing more than this, but the full text, which is very funny and has just the right Wodehouse touch to it, can be read online at <http://bit.ly/amzoTV>.

### *Technological Wodehouse*

Some time ago, PHILIP JOHNSON wrote to inquire about the availability of Wodehouse books in large print. There are, in fact, very few PGW books printed for visually impaired people, so it was a pleasure to receive cheery news from Philip in July, when he wrote to say that he had just been enjoying *Leave It to Psmith* on his Kindle. A number of Wodehouse titles are now available through Kindle, which is great for those like Philip who can take advantage of the device's ability to enlarge the print. Philip writes: “I still retain my old print copies, of course, and reading printed books is a different and valuable experience, but I am sure that PGW would have thought the Kindle was the Bee's Knees!”

Meanwhile, LIBERTY SAXBY-BRIDGER reported on another way to enjoy Wodehouse: “I was recently given an iPhone 3GS which has iTunes on it and you can download *The Inimitable Jeeves* on audio and listen to it on the phone.” Wouldn't it be great if all young people had such sensible taste in listening material!

# Speaking of Our Favourites

Thus far in the recently resurrected debate over Best Short Story, we have had nominations for ‘Uncle Fred Flits By’, ‘Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend’, and ‘Anselm Gets His Chance’. There are, of course, more.

CHARLES STONE-TOLCHER nominates ‘The Crime Wave at Blandings’ – “a longish story, but too short to be considered a novella, I think.”

Close on Charles’s heels, IAIN ANDERSON has written to suggest that it is “hard to choose, but I’ve always had a soft spot for ‘Honeysuckle Cottage””.

Meanwhile, BARRY LANE tells us that “on page 1119 of the *Oxford Book of Humorous Prose*, Frank Muir quotes Plum as naming his own favourite choice of short story to be ‘From a Detective’s Note Book’. . . . On page 1133, Muir says Rudyard Kipling told the novelist Ian Hay that ‘Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend’ was one of the most perfect short stories he had ever read.”

But perhaps the most striking letter on the subject was written not specifically for this debate, but for a

different, very poignant reason. A couple of months ago, the Society’s membership secretary, Christine Hewitt, received the following from ANNE OGLEY, the widow of a longtime member:

I’m sorry but I need to tell you that I have had to cancel the standing order to the Society on behalf of my husband, Roderick Ogley. My husband died in June from a severe stroke. He had been an ardent Wodehouse enthusiast for many years, always resorting to his favourites at times of stress and being too tired for anything else. In fact, while in hospital I read to him the short story ‘Birth of a Salesman’, which he was able to respond to, saying it was his best! So my thanks to you for the many years of pleasure that Roderick enjoyed, and long may the magic name of P G Wodehouse last.

To which we can only say Amen.

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## A Dubious Claim

by Tony Ring

Watchers of eBay will be aware that while everything may not be as it seems, some items are offered for auction which pose more difficult questions than usual.

During September, a German Mercedes typewriter of wartime vintage was listed, with a detailed though admittedly inconclusive provenance and the claim that “it was used by the author P G Wodehouse while prisoner in a German POW camp during WWII”. It had been given to the seller’s parents (who lived in Scotland) by a Herr Langer, who after serving in the German Army during the war came to live in Scotland. Herr Langer had been friendly with both parents, and he had described the history of the typewriter to them. The seller’s father’s note reads as follows:

Eduard Langer was conscripted into the German Army in 1939 but was classified as only 2nd class due to his age. Accordingly, he was posted as a guard to a POW camp. One of the prisoners was the British writer P G Wodehouse. Because Langer could speak English he was assigned to look after Wodehouse. Wodehouse requested, and got, a German Army portable



The suspect typewriter as shown on eBay

typewriter. Later, when Wodehouse agreed to broadcast material for German propaganda he moved from the camp leaving the typewriter with his guard, Langer.

Langer was later moved to North Africa, where he in turn became a prisoner of war, being sent to work in Scotland.

Langer’s account does not agree with Wodehouse on at least two points. First, Wodehouse had to hire the typewriter – for 18 marks a month – which he did from Lagerführer Oberleutnant Buchelt (see Iain Sproat, *Wodehouse at War*, p132). Secondly, he had to return it to Buchelt during May 1941 because Buchelt was leaving the camp (*ibid*, p133) – and presumably would have to physically account for the machine. Wodehouse, of

course, remained in Tost until June 21, so there is no specific or implicit evidence to support the claimed provenance.

I am not aware of Wodehouse ever referring to the make of machine, so there is no evidence available to me on that point either.

As a matter of interest, after 26 bids from five bidders, the eBay price realised was £336.55, a clear premium over the ongoing prices for other wartime German typewriters.

# Wooster Sauce Number 55: Some Hidden Connections

by Andrew Bishop

The September edition of *Wooster Sauce* resonated with links to Summer Fields, a boys' preparatory school in Oxford, where I have taught since 1990.

In the article entitled *Wodehouse on the BBC*, I was pleased to see the inclusion of a Wodehouse reference in *University Challenge* (the students were asked a question about the Empress of Blandings). I, too, saw that programme – indeed, the series is a favourite of mine – but for me that particular one was memorable for another reason: it was the first time that I had seen one of my former pupils representing his college or university in this quiz competition.

It was a major disappointment to me, though, when the lad representing Christ's College, Cambridge, was unable to name the breed of the Empress, and I'll tell you why. Although I am a teacher of mathematics, I always try to look for opportunities to read Wodehouse to my young charges; the approach of the end of term usually brings a reasonable excuse to take a break from equations and such like, whilst an outbreak of a sickness bug can occasionally lead to my having to cover, at short notice, for an absent colleague. The boy in question – to spare his blushes, let us just call him Alexander – most certainly was exposed to some of the works of PGW during his prep school education; in fact, he was fortunate enough, in his final year at Summer Fields, to attend a most entertaining and informative talk given by a visiting speaker, Tony Ring by name. Yet Alexander, when tried in the furnace of porcine inquisition, was found wanting. I felt that I had failed in my duty.

Lest anyone conclude that our young friend was, in his prep school years, lacking in concentration or application, I should state, for the record, that he progressed to Eton with the 2nd King's Scholarship and a Music Exhibition. I should also note that he redeemed himself on television by correctly answering a mathematical starter for ten (and, indeed, several other eclectic questions).

The second Summerfieldian link appeared in the report of the cricket match between the Gold Bats and The Sherlock Holmes Society of London. I was fascinated to read of the century scored by George Gross, another of my ex-pupils; the feat earned him the Man of the Match Award (his innings, I mean – not his having survived my teaching). George – who was in my Under-9

team in 1998, went on to captain the Summer Fields 1st XI and later played for Eton against Harrow at Lord's – was not known for his batting; rather, he was (and still is) noted as a canny and accurate spin-bowler. In his third year at prep school, I was George's form-master, and he definitely had Wodehouse read to him then. I was also his personal tutor and so I must take some blame for, thus far, not recruiting him for The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), and thence for the Gold Bats. I hope that Bob Miller will accept my apologies.

Another connection with our Oxford prep school came in Nick Townend's Bibliographic

Corner, in which he focused on the distinguished Old Summerfieldian, Richard Osborne. With the greatest respect to Nick and to his wealth of knowledge, I venture to suggest that he inadvertently omitted to mention one of Osborne's more obscurely Wodehouse-related publications. In 1964, as part of the school's centenary celebrations, an anthology of reminiscences was published under the title *A Century of Summer Fields*, edited by Richard Osborne. Among the memories of dozens of old boys are several references to a certain master named Geoffrey Bolton (as far as I know, no relation to Plum's collaborator, Guy), who regularly used to read Wodehouse to the boys. There is also a passing mention of Dornford Yates in Nick Townend's article. Yates, whose real name was Cecil William Mercer, had a son, Richard, who was educated at Summer Fields and Harrow.

The final Summerfieldian connection that I spotted in this issue of *Wooster Sauce* came in Elliott Milstein's article on Impostors in the Works of PGW, which cited Psmith as a prime example. Of course, many members of our society will be aware that this character was based on Rupert D'Oyly Carte, famed for his eponymous opera company and the Savoy Hotel. Probably less well known is the fact that he was at Summer Fields for three years prior to his time at Winchester.

*Andrew Bishop is Deputy Headmaster of Summer Fields, Oxford.*

(Photo by Ginni Beard)



Part of the Summer Fields campus





# The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

## Wodehouse in the *Windsor*

During the course of his long career, Wodehouse contributed a huge number of serials, short stories, articles, and poetry to a wide range of magazines. Much of this material, particularly from the early years of his career, has never been republished and so is not widely known. However, for the devoted Wodehousean this material is of interest. Some of it is now very rare, having been published in ephemeral magazines, but much of it, if published in more mainstream magazines, is relatively easily accessible, particularly via the internet. In this Corner, we will examine Wodehouse's contributions to the *Windsor* magazine. Wodehouse contributed five short stories to the *Windsor*, between April 1903 and October 1908, the first three of which have never been republished.

Although perhaps not so well known as magazines such as the *Strand* and *Pearson's*, the *Windsor* was a high-quality magazine. One of the joys of reading Wodehouse's stories in the original magazine publications is that it enables one to set them in the context of their time more easily, both by studying the adverts in the magazines and by reading contributions from other authors in the magazines.

The adverts are a rich source for contemporary culture, but are typically only available in the single issues of magazines, usually having been removed when the magazines were bound up into hardback volumes containing six months' issues.

As an example of the range and quality of contributors to the *Windsor*, other authors and artists listed in the contents for the six-month bound volume in which Wodehouse's first contribution appeared include E F Benson, Winston Churchill, H Rider Haggard, George Hackenschmidt, Sir Henry Irving, Rudyard Kipling, E Nesbit, E Phillips Oppenheim, Barry Pain, "Q", and Louis Wain.

Wodehouse's first story in the *Windsor* was 'Cupid and the Paint-Brush' (April 1903, *McIlvaine* D142.1), which, at only four pages long, was a very short story. It tells of a man's attempts to become engaged. ("At this point it seemed judicious to remove my hand from hers and slide it round her waist. I did so. She made no protest. After that, several other things seemed judicious, and I did them all. She appeared rather to

like it than otherwise.") According to Wodehouse's Account Book, he was paid three guineas for this story. This seems to have been only the second of his non-school short stories to have been published, the first having been 'When Papa Swore in Hindustani', which had appeared in *Answers* on 24 August 1901 (D73.1).

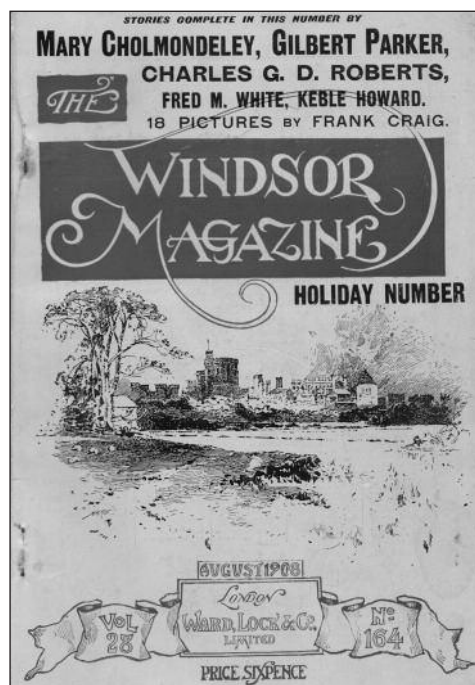
The second story, 'A Benefit Match' (D142.2), was published more than three years later, in August 1906, earning Wodehouse ten guineas. The story revolves around a cricket match and, given the allegations about spot-fixing during England's recent test series against Pakistan, the plot device is very

topical. A candidate in a parliamentary by-election is to play in a cricket match, and his supporters feel that if he does well (or is allowed to do well: "I want you to square the bowlers, and let our man make a few"), it might tip the election in his favour. However, as is often the case in Wodehouse, love triumphs over politics. There are also some Sherlockian nods: "I recall the Adventure of a Ribbon I tried to Match for an Aunt of Mine, the Curious Affair of the Vicar's Garden-Party, and a host of others."

The same year saw 'The Fifteenth Man' (D143.3) published in December 1906, for

another ten guineas. This was a rugby story, featuring the annual game between the villages of Bray Lench, captained by Neville-Smith, and Chalfont St. Peter's. The annual cricket match between the same villages had earlier formed the backdrop for the school story *The Deserter* (*Royal*, August 1905 (D126.5)), featuring Mike Jackson's appearance for Bray Lench.

Nearly two years elapsed before the next story, 'Ladies and Gentlemen v Players' (D143.4), was published in August 1908. We do not know how much Wodehouse was paid for this story, as he stopped maintaining his Account Book in February 1908. As one might deduce from the title, this is a cricket story. It contains a passage where Wodehouse seems to have a private joke at the expense of his Dulwich school-friend, Bill Townend: "Bob arrived from London, bringing with him a friend of his, a Mr Townend, who said he was an artist, but I had never seen any of his



pictures. He explained this at dinner. He said that he spent the winter thinking out schemes for big canvases, and in the summer he was too busy playing cricket to be able to get to work on them.” The story was republished in Murray Hedgcock’s *Wodehouse at the Wicket* (London, 1997).

It was a mere two months later that Wodehouse’s final story, a school story, ‘The Guardian’ (D143.5), was published in the *Windsor*, appearing in October 1908. Interestingly, it had first been published in a US magazine called *Short Stories* in August 1908; as far as I am aware, this is the only one of Wodehouse’s school stories that was first published in the US. The story was set at Eckleton, the setting for the earlier school novel, *The Head of Kay’s*. It has subsequently been republished, appearing first in David Jasen’s *The Swoop and Other Stories* (New York, 1979 (B20)), and then in Tony Ring’s *Tales of Wrykyn and Elsewhere* (Maidenhead, 1997).

## PGW – Radio Presenter

New information about Wodehouse’s professional activities emerges unexpectedly but regularly. In the *Radio Times* for Wednesday, January 23, 1927, we find news of a broadcast entitled *My Programme*:

P G Wodehouse, the popular humorist, has chosen and arranged the special programme to be broadcast from London between 9.30 pm and 11.00 pm tonight.

It was one in a series seeking ‘the ideal programme’, compiled by different celebrities, including George Grossmith, Patsy Hendren, Phil Scott, and J C Squire. Unfortunately, there is no clue whatsoever as to the content of the programme, which was broadcast on band 2LO (361.4m).

# A Wodehouse Crossword

by Mark Smith

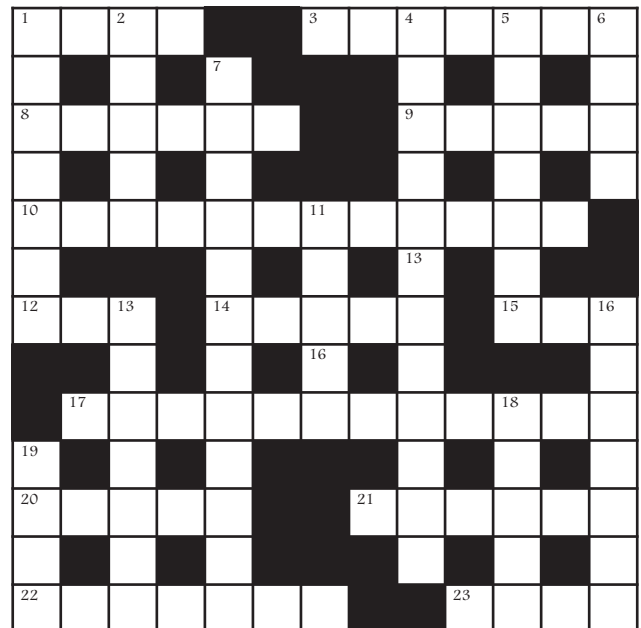
Answers to this puzzle are on page 21.

### Across

- 1 Copper and graduate meet in Caribbean island (4)
- 3 First person to return before fourth estate can produce Blandings beauty (7)
- 8 Bed down, nothing to rent out (6)
- 9 Company held in former name for one such as “Smooth” Sam Fisher (2-3)
- 10 Prepared strong drinks for tennis couples (5,7)
- 12 Strange beverage (3)
- 14 G&T well shaken with him, to give power (5)
- 15 Silly idiot, Corky! At first, that’s how it really was (3)
- 17 Areas of the house where Gwladys Pendlebury might work? (7,5)
- 20 Bury Football Club (5)
- 21 Photographic equipment arrived before artist (6)
- 22 Australian bird after first Christmas provides a Pelican at Blandings (7)
- 23 Vampires, for instance, stab wildly (ours are gold) (4)

### Down

- 1 The Queen is after the very best jug (in the shape of a cow?) (7)
- 2 Cleaner British leader, or American woodcutter (5)
- 4 Barry Epstein, bewildered nonconformist (12)
- 5 Leaves out extra sausages to begin with, then munches (7)



- 6/19 Double gins get sloshed about in the “Tulip Time” prison (4-4)
- 7 50 or 500 Euros/Marks/Shillings getting value for Viscount Bosham (4,8)
- 11 To give tongue, for instance, or nag crazily (5)
- 13 Tim and Lara confused about wedlock (7)
- 16 Greek island sailors, Fry and Laurie, for example (2-5)
- 18 In the home, gave the last letter (5)
- 19 See 6

# Very Good, Jeeves on Audiobook

A Review by Tony Ring

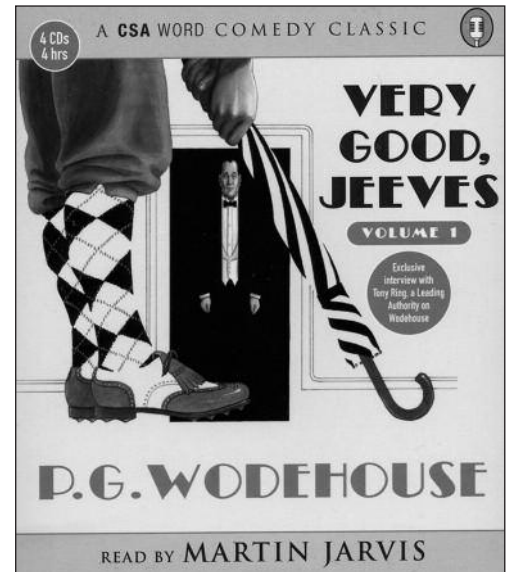
This is the first of two volumes which together will represent an unabridged reading of the whole of *Very Good, Jeeves*. It contains four CDs and has four hours of listening time. The second volume is due for publication on February 14, 2011.

Simply put, the recording is well up to Martin Jarvis's usual standard, and is easy to listen to. Aunts Dahlia and Agatha are each represented in the six stories, and Martin's rendering of Aunt Dahlia's astonishment when hearing that Bertie has become involved with a girl named 'Gwladys' at the beginning of 'The Spot of Art' (Disc 4) is almost worth the money alone. Audio-recordings of this quality really do make a most acceptable alternative method of tapping the Wodehouse oeuvre when reading time is short and car journeys long.

Modesty almost prevents my mentioning that another highly attractive feature on Disc 4 is a short interview with one of the Society's Committee, whose embarrassment at hearing his voice on record has not declined over several decades.

*Very Good, Jeeves* (volume 1), read by Martin Jarvis

CSA Word: [www.csaword.co.uk](http://www.csaword.co.uk)



## Poet's Corner

### *The Hesitating Lover*

On my lady's white doorstep I linger,  
I have news which I'm eager to tell,  
Yet, somehow, my neatly-gloved finger  
Shrinks coyly from pressing the bell.  
I love her amazingly, dearly;  
I have come here to tell her so now.  
But alas! I'm in doubt if I clearly  
Know how!

Shall I whisper my passionate pleadings,  
Or try a stage-villainous hiss?  
At what point in the tender proceedings  
Shall I venture to ask for a kiss?  
When I call her a goddess, or queen, or  
An angel, I might strike my chest;  
Or would a more placid demeanour  
Be best.

Shall I mention my qualifications  
To make her a suitable mate?  
Shall I drag in my titled relations –  
On my personal beauty dilate?  
Shall I say I'm as rich as one need be?  
Shall I slide my right arm round her waist?  
Or would in her eyes such a deed be  
Bad taste?

Shall I find my best plan to flatter,  
Or trust to a business-like speech?  
I am simply a child in the matter –  
A child, whom there's no one to teach.  
For the rather remarkable fact is,  
Though I've read of such scenes by the score,  
I have never essayed one in practice  
Before.

Shall I swear with astonishing fervour  
That I love her far better than life?  
Or own that I do not deserve her,  
Yet gladly would call her my wife?  
Shall I make my voice tremble with feeling?  
Or charm her with flashes of wit?  
Shall I speak to her standing, or kneeling,  
Or sit?

Ah, well! I had best get it over:  
I can't haunt this doorstep all day.  
When a man comes to call as a lover,  
He chafes at the smallest delay.  
Though I charm, or displease, or amaze her,  
I shall end all this worry and doubt  
(*Presses Bell*)  
*The Butler*: "Miss Hester, I'm sorry to say, sir,  
Is out!"

From *Pearson's Xmas Xtra*, November 1903



# The Words of Wodehouse

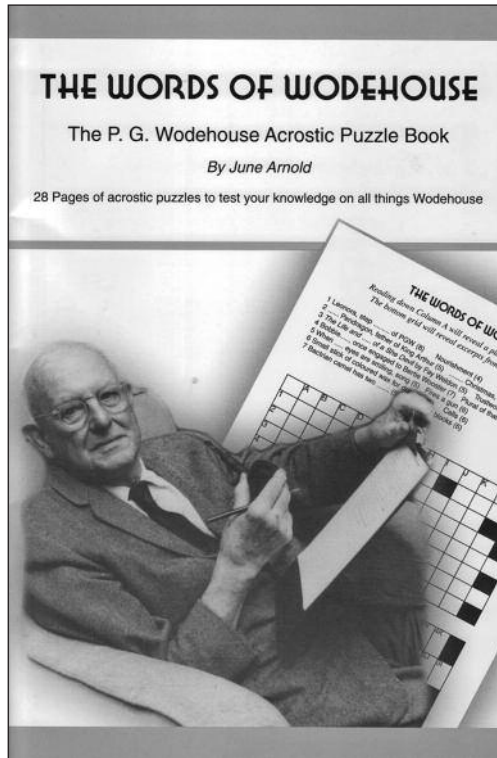
by June Arnold

*A book of 28 acrostics based on the works of P G Wodehouse*

Since retiring from teaching, June Arnold has embarked on a career as a compiler of puzzles for The Puzzler Media group of magazines. Through this work she has discovered acrostic puzzles, a mixture of crosswords and codewords revealing literary quotations - and has realised that they would be an ideal way of combining her twin loves of puzzles and literature.

June joined The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) in 2005 and has produced acrostics regularly for *Wooster Sauce* since 2008. With encouragement and advice from Sir Edward Cazalet, Peter Straus, Tony Ring, and Elin and Norman Murphy, she decided to work on a book of 28 all-new puzzles which was published at the beginning of October 2010.

*The Words of Wodehouse* will make an ideal Christmas present for a family member, fellow Wodehousean – or just for yourself! Here is how you can order this delightful book:



## ***Solution to The Words of Wodehouse (June Acrostic)***

- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Anatole / Tenth        | 7. <i>My Man</i> / tooth |
| 2. <i>Rose of</i> / fifth | 8. opposite              |
| 3. Cornelius              | 9. Finch / wheat         |
| 4. Herring / <i>What</i>  | 10. Fish / detest        |
| 5. India / hedge          | 11. absent / food        |
| 6. Epstein / noted        | 12. Moresby / poet       |

**Quote:** From the days of Pandora down to the present time, one of the chief failings of humanity has been the disposition to open things that were better closed.

**Character:** Archie Moffam

## ***Answers to A Wodehouse Crossword by Mark Smith (page 19)***

- | Across           |            | Down            |
|------------------|------------|-----------------|
| 1 Cuba           | 22 Galahad | 1 creamers      |
| 3 Empress        | 23 bats    | 2 Borax         |
| 8 enroot         |            | 4 Presbyterian  |
| 9 ex-con         |            | 5 eschews       |
| 10 mixed doubles |            | 6 Sing          |
| 12 rum           |            | 7 Lord Emsworth |
| 14 might         |            | 11 organ        |
| 15 sic           |            | 13 marital      |
| 17 drawing rooms |            | 16 co-stars     |
| 20 inter         |            | 18 omega        |
| 21 camera        |            | 19 Sing         |

## ***Answers to A Wodehouse Mastermind (page 10)***

- |                                  |                             |                       |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Gussie Fink-Nottle            | 6. Oofy Prosser             | 11. Totleigh Towers   |
| 2. Lord Sidcup                   | 7. Steeple Bumpleigh        | 12. A cow-cream       |
| 3. A policeman's helmet          | 8. The Saviours of Britain  | 13. The Mottle Oyster |
| 4. Broadway Willie               | 9. J Washburn Stoker        | 14. Mephistopheles    |
| 5. <i>Aunts Aren't Gentlemen</i> | 10. <i>Milady's Boudoir</i> |                       |

# Recent Press Comment

## From *Yorkshire Post Magazine*, August 21

(from Denis Roxburgh)

'Back in Time with Jeeves' reviewed the connection between Wodehouse, Percy Jeeves, and the Stone House Hotel, Hawes, now a hotel in the Yorkshire Dales.

## From *The Independent*, August 21

In a long article about the 'eccentric British country show' being 'alive and kicking', using the Thornton le Dale show in North Yorkshire as his guide, Christopher Hirst described many of the joys to be found at such events (such as a Bonny Baby Competition at the nearby Rosedale Show) but spent most of the article writing about the pig judging, so reminiscent of the annual Berkshire Show. He even mentioned that

A Berkshire sow, already adorned with a rosette supplied by the P G Wodehouse Society for being top of its class, also took best in show.

## From *The Guardian*, August 21

By one of those coincidences, the *Guardian* 'ten-of-the-best' list on the same day featured 'Pigs in Literature' and of course included the Empress of Blandings.

## From *Country Life*, August 25 (from Edward Cazalet)

An article on the entrepreneur Algy Cluff notes that "On travels to Africa, he would carry a P.G. Wodehouse novel, a first-aid kit, a Rey del Mundo cigar and a revolver".

## From *The Times*, August 28

Giles Coren wrote about Chinese broadcasters' appetite for adaptations of *Jane Eyre* and other British novels, and wondered whether in due course "it'll all be drawing room comedy and they will not be able to get enough of P G Wodehouse and Evelyn Waugh: hundreds of millions of young men will flood the streets of Shanghai wearing cricket jumpers and carrying teddy bears."

## From *Carroll Eagle*, August 30

(Carroll County, Maryland, journal)

Reported that the prize winner in the annual short story competition for Middle School pupils was 'The Cook's Catastrophe', written by Samuel Phelps in the style of and as a tribute to PGW.

## From *Daily Telegraph*, September 3 (From Mark Taylor)

An article by Clive Aslet noted that "Edward VIII's Palm Beach golfing trousers would have given Jeeves a fit".

## From *Financial Times*, September 4

Reported on the BBC4 TV programme *British Novelists*, which had drawn on archive film and interviews with many eminent 20th-century novelists, including Wodehouse.

## From *The Independent*, September 5

Reported on the forthcoming publication of correspondence by Bruce Chatwin, explored the future of such works in a technical age, and quoted Christopher Maclehose, Wodehouse's onetime editor, on the subject of PGW's determination to reply to every fan letter.

## From *Sunday Telegraph*, September 5 (from Jo Jacobius)

An article about naming children concludes: "The old master, Wodehouse, has, as ever, the last word. On

hearing the name of a friend's new-born, Bertie Wooster remarks, 'There's some raw work done at the baptismal font, Jeeves.' I always think that a personal note was struck by the great man with that observation."

## From *The Guardian*, September 4

Reviewed the new Norton edition of Robert McCrum's *Wodehouse: A Life*.

## From *Daily Telegraph*, September 8

Interviewed N F Simpson, now 91, about the premiere of *If So, Then Yes*, his first play since 1972. In 1957 Kenneth Tynan had described him as "the most gifted comic writer the English stage has discovered since the war", and Simpson recalled discovering Wodehouse as an adolescent. "I can see myself sitting at the kitchen table and reading the line 'Jeeves shimmered into the room'. I hugged myself with delight. What a wonderful phrase! It had all the ingredients of absurd theatre: taking something from one frame of reference and applying it to another."

## From *Daily Telegraph*, September 10

In a preview of the Booker Prize deliberations, Harry Mount wrote about the shortlist, which Ion Trewin, its organiser, said contained "more humour . . . than I can recall in the history of the prize". He peppered his article with references to Wodehouse, Waugh, and Walpole, and included quotations from Howard Jacobson, the eventual winner with *The Finkler Question* and a past winner of the Everyman Bollinger Wodehouse Prize for Comic Literature.

## From *Healthjockey.com*, September 10

In an article on *Constipation: Myths, misconceptions and methods to overcome it*, the passage 'Introduction to Gastric Problems' started with an extensive quotation from a scene in Wodehouse's *Big Money*, chapter 1, describing the retribution provided by his gastric juices for T Paterson Frisby's reckless decision to eat roast duck.

## From *Croydon Guardian*, September 12

Previewed a Local Studies fair to be held on the 18th, at which there was to be a talk about Malcolm Muggeridge. The article had a spectacular printing error, stating that "[Muggeridge] served in military intelligence during WWII, where he interviewed P G Wodehouse who had been interred (sic) in Berlin". It did correctly mention Wodehouse's own connection with Croydon as a pupil at Elmhurst School.

## From *The Age*, September 14 (Australian daily paper)

Reported an exchange of letters between Francis Wheen and Tony Blair towards the end of the latter's prime ministership. Wheen had recommended that Blair should read *Blandings Castle* as an antidote to any gloom arising from the possible Gordon Brown coup; Blair had replied to him saying that the same book had been placed at his bedside table at Balmoral during a recent weekend visit as a guest of Her Majesty.

## From *Daily Mail*, September 18

(from Murray Hedgcock)

In writing about her experiences upon becoming editor of *The Lady*, Rachel Johnson (sister of Boris), wrote: "I particularly warm to company director Mrs Julia

Budworth, who has the spirit of the Blitz and a definite touch of the Aunt Agathas. She doesn't mince words – a sure sign that, sooner or later (as P. G. Wodehouse would say), out will pop the cloven hoof."

**From *Times Literary Supplement*, September 17**  
(from Barry Chapman)

Carried a long article about Wodehouse by D J Taylor, based around the centenary of *Psmith in the City* and demonstrating the story's connections with PGW's own life history. In a letter to *TLS* the following week, Francis Wheen reminded readers of Benny Green's suggestion of H M Hyndman (1842-1921) as a source for the political stance adopted by Psmith in that book.

**From *Daily Telegraph*, September 30**  
(from Carolyn de la Plain and Carey Tynan)

On September 29, Max Davidson had written disparagingly about Emma Thompson's comments concerning the overuse of slang by modern teenagers of all classes. A letter in part rebuttal on the 30th stated:

Max Davidson's contention that 'unless you see slang as a potential friend . . . you will just end up as a well-spoken automaton – every sentence you utter immaculate, and not a breath of life in any of them', can, I submit, be refuted by a single name: P G Wodehouse.

**From *Oprah*, October** (from Chris Dueker)

In a column entitled 'Books That Made a Difference', Kashuo Ishiguro discussed *Right Ho, Jeeves*: "Wodehouse does make you believe (at least momentarily) in a world where trivial problems have the status of huge ones, and the huge ones have vanished altogether. Pure delight."

**From *The Times*, October 1** (from Julie Callan)

A letter to the editor regarding the conversational style of today's teenagers invoked Sir Roderick Glossop's rebuke of Bertie in *Right Ho, Jeeves*: 'Kindly refrain from inflicting your idiotic slang on me.'

**From *Daily Telegraph*, October 2**

An item on bees noted that the drones, after which PGW's club was named, are both 'amiable' and 'indolent'.

**From *BBC Radio 4*, October 5**

The first programme in the new series of *The Write Stuff* had PGW as the featured writer (for at least the second time).

**From *Daily Telegraph*, October 5** (from Edward Cazalet)  
Harry Mount thought the Head of MI5 was in good company when he admitted to being inspired by classical stories, and in his article quoted from PGW's *The Girl on the Boat*. After using an original Latin phrase, *Rabies armavit Archilocum iambo proprio*, and translating it literally, Wodehouse had then provided his readers with the real meaning:

In other words, when the poet Archilochus was handed his hat by the lady of his affections, he consoled himself by going off and writing satirical verse about her in a new metre, which he had thought up immediately after leaving the house.

**From *The Times*, October 7**  
(from Keith Alsop and John Hodgson)

The food supplement included an article on hangover cures, opening with a references to Jeeves's special pick-me-up and its effects.

**From *BBC Radio 4*, October 8, 15, 22, and 29**

Repeat broadcasts of the dramatisation of *Psmith in the City*, first heard in 2008.

**From *Irish Times*, October 18** (from Karen Shotting)

An article about *The Hungover Cookbook*, by Milton Crawford, notes that it includes Wodehouse's description of six types of hangover (the Broken Compass, the Sewing Machine, the Comet, the Atomic, the Cement Mixer, and the Gremlin Boogie) and describes how to tell them apart.

**From *The Observer*, October 19**

Congratulating Howard Jacobson on winning the Booker Prize with the humorous novel *The Finkler Question*, Victoria Cohen recalled her late father's observation that if literary culture had to lose the complete works of Goethe or of Wodehouse, he reckoned it would be a lot worse off without Wodehouse.

**From *The Times*, October 19** (from June Arnold)

Ben McIntyre's article about the 1912 period setting for the television series *Downton Abbey* referred to the fear of the looming clash with Germany and recalled Wodehouse's *The Swoop*, a parody of those fears written in 1909, and the many spy fever and invasion stories of William Le Queux.

**From *Daily Telegraph*, October 26**

(from Larissa Saxby-Bridger)

Carried a review written by Jeremy Noel-Tod of *Green's Dictionary of Slang*, compiled by Jonathan Green. Noel-Tod had assisted Green at the start of his 11-year project, and his starting point had been "a pile of early P G Wodehouse novels" relating to the adventures of Psmith. "Because Wodehouse is full of such exuberance, I remember my disappointment when I learnt that I was regularly missing useful citations."

**From *Daily Telegraph*, October 30** (from Iain Anderson)

One article included the following: "Good morning, sir," said a dark grey suit by the oyster bar at the front of Wiltons in St James's as I walked in. "And a very good morning to you," I replied with Woosterish bonhomie.

**From *New York Times*, October 31**

(from Liesel Wildhagen)

A review of a Shakespeare's Globe production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, put on at Pace University in New York, noted that in certain ways it is an ancestor of books on British life by P G Wodehouse and E F Benson as it "takes place in a comfortably insular, pastoral world where people know their stations in life and, of course, everyone else's business."

**From *The Independent on Sunday*, October 31**

Matthew Bell's 'Diary' included a paragraph about the Society's dinner at Gray's Inn.

**From *TodayOnline*, November 8**

In an article entitled 'Uncle Fed in the Wintertime', Andy Mukherjee compared Barack Obama to Lord Emsworth and the Federal Reserve Bank to Uncle Fred, with the Fed saving the economy for the president as Uncle Fred saved the Empress for Clarence.

**From *Daily Telegraph*, November 11**

Clive Aslet reported on efforts to find those missing in action during World War I, among whom was Percy Jeeves, whose surname Wodehouse borrowed after watching him play for Warwickshire.



# Future Events for Your Diary

**December 11, 2010 London Walks Wodehouse Walk**  
Richard Burnip will lead his Wodehouse-themed walk. The usual fee is £8, but Society members get a discounted price of £6. There is no need to book a place; just be at exit 2 (Park Lane east side) of Marble Arch Underground station at 10.45 a.m., and identify yourself as a Society member.

**January 2, 2011 London Walks Wodehouse Walk**  
Another opportunity to enjoy a walk through some of Wodehouse's London, conducted by Richard Burnip. Be at exit 2 (Park Lane east side) of Marble Arch Underground station at 2.30 p.m., and identify yourself as a Society member in order to get the special discounted rate of £6.

**February 15, 2011 Society Meeting**  
We will meet from 6 p.m. at The George, 213 Strand. The evening's entertainment had not yet been arranged at the time of going to press – surprises to come!

**May 2011 Drones Club Dinner in Dulwich**  
Rumour hath it that the Drones Club will be putting on something special in Dulwich this month. For the few details we have to hand now, see page 4.

**June 17, 2011 Gold Bats vs. The Dulwich Dusters**  
Provisional date for our annual match at Dulwich College, with tea. Details in the March 2011 issue.

**June 26, 2011 Gold Bats vs. Sherlock Holmes Society**  
Provisional date for our annual match against the Sherlockians at West Wycombe. See the March 2011 issue for details.

**July 12, 2011 Society Meeting**  
We hope to have a permanent home for our meetings by this time. Details of place and speaker to be announced in the March issue.

**October 13–16, 2011 The Wodehouse Society Convention, Dearborn, Michigan**  
The Wodehouse Society (US) will be celebrating the 130th birthday of P G Wodehouse at its 16th convention, hosted by the Pickering Motor Company chapter.

**October 28–30, 2011 Wodehouse Weekend in Emsworth**  
The Brookfield Hotel in Emsworth is planning a very special event to commemorate the 130th anniversary of P G Wodehouse's birth. See the September 2010 issue of *Wooster Sauce* (p.3) and look for an update in March 2011.

**November 1, 2011 Society Meeting and AGM**  
Details of this meeting will be announced in a future issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

How it happened, I couldn't tell you to this day, but I once got engaged to his daughter, Honoria, a ghastly dynamic exhibit who read Nietzsche and had a laugh like waves breaking on a stern and rock-bound coast. The fixture was scratched owing to events occurring which convinced the old boy that I was off my napper; and since then he has always had my name at the top of his list of "Loonies I have Lunched With."

(From 'Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit', 1927)

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