



WOOSTER SAUCE

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

Number 62

June 2012

Much Obligated, Remsenburg

Tony Ring reports on the dedication of a new marker honouring Wodehouse

Wodehousean camaraderie – based on the concept of spreading sweetness and light – can be relied upon to overcome adversity. In the words which might have been used by Uncle Fred, the Fifth Earl of Ickenham: “When you get a group of Wodehouseans together, you’ve got something.”

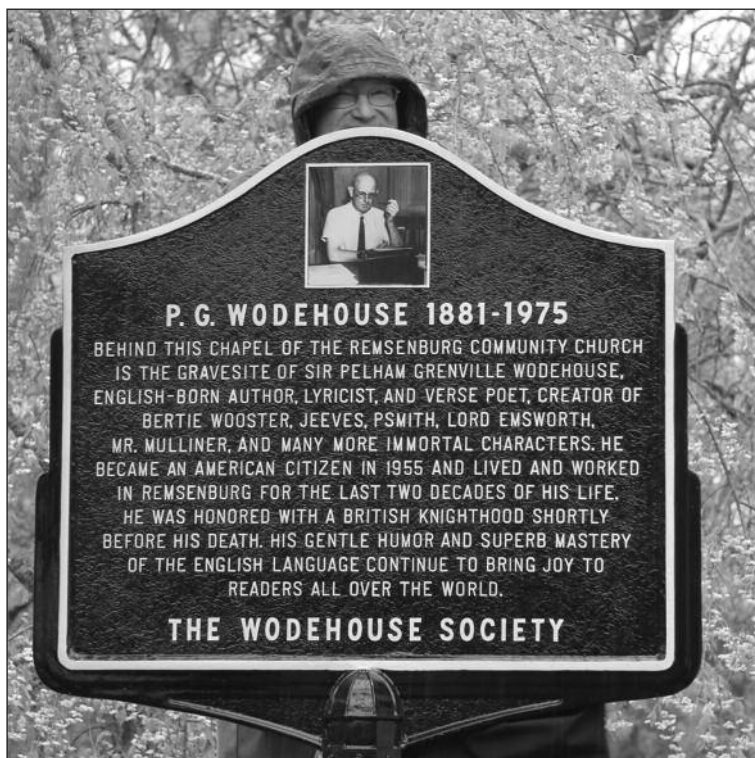
This philosophy was tested once again on Sunday, 22 April, when the ceremony at Remsenburg Community Church, Long Island, to unveil a marker proclaiming the site of P G Wodehouse’s grave was in danger of suffering the indignity of the announcement “Rain stopped play”. Although this was not the only attempt by a malevolent Fate to interrupt the proceedings, the problems created proved to be irritating rather than critical, for the

development and implementation of the project to mark this important site for the benefit of future pilgrims was a triumph of planning and hard work.

It seems that something of the sort had originally been mooted in 1984 but long forgotten. The idea was revived in 2011, and a team headed by Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen, supported by successive Presidents of The Wodehouse Society (Gary Hall and Ken Clevenger), raised the necessary money, organised the design of the marker, negotiated for consent to erect the marker on the church’s land, and wisely arranged for the unveiling ceremony to take place on the day after a visit by some 30 members of the New York Chapter of TWS (‘The Broadway Special’) to the Musicals Tonight! revival of the 1924 Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern musical *Sitting Pretty* (for review, see page 18).

As a result, a charabanc-load of 29 people travelled by coach from Manhattan to Remsenburg, where they met another 50 or more local residents and Wodehouseans who had found their own way to the town. There were visitors from Japan, Switzerland, Canada, The Netherlands, and England, as well as Americans from as far away as Anchorage, Alaska; Alcoa, Tennessee; Laramie, Wyoming; and Seattle, Washington.

During the journey from Manhattan – the start of which was delayed for a reason familiar to British readers (delays caused by Sunday working on the railway system) – 15 travellers were prevailed upon to read verses written by Wodehouse more than 100 years ago, all of which carried the resonance of relevance to the world today. This communal contribution – which somehow overcame the lack of the promised PA system on the coach – took our minds off the other flaw evident in the coach’s facilities. To be fair, a restroom was provided. The only problem was that it could not be used.



Kevin Crean peeks out from behind the marker after its unveiling.
(photo by Tony Ring)

During the journey, the threatened heavy rain not only started but announced its intention to beat the targets of precipitation suggested by the weather forecasters. Accordingly, most of the ceremony, planned to be an outdoor event, was held in a room within the church. Andrea, Bob, and Ken described the genesis of the project and thanked the numerous contributors to its success. Messages of appreciation were read on behalf of Sir Edward Cazalet and the Cazalet family, and The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), both of which can be found on the Society's website.

We were treated to a short recital of some of Wodehouse's songs, including 'The Enchanted Train', 'Oh Gee! Oh Joy!', and 'The Land Where the Good Songs Go'. Virginia Mesiano – Choral Director of the church for the last 35 years (she remembered Plum's memorial service in 1975) – played the organ while her daughter Caitlin sang the songs in duet with Christopher Duffy; then the whole congregated audience joined in an emotional rendition of the original – 1918 *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* – version of 'Bill'.

The marker was unveiled in pouring rain by Kevin Crean on behalf of the church. Several of us sought refuge under neighbours' umbrellas as we sought to protect our cameras while we recorded the event for our members. A number of residents of Remsenburg and surrounding towns attended the unveiling, and it was particularly gratifying to meet three ladies who played a significant role in the later lives of Plum and Ethel. Lynne Kiegel, Ann Smith, and Margaret Zbrozek clearly remembered the couple with affection, and had nothing but appreciation for the time they worked for them.



*l-r: Margaret Zbrozek, Ann Smith, and Lynne Kiegel
(photo by Tony Ring)*

After light refreshments – including the cutting of a cake and a champagne toast to Wodehouse's memory, organised through the caterer, Bob Nidzyn (who had also acted as tour guide for the coach driver over the last few miles) – there was a little time for making new acquaintances and renewing old ones. The intrepid charabanc travellers then braved the worsening conditions to reach the comparative comfort of their vehicle for the return journey to Manhattan.



The day's activities included a visit to the Wodehouses' home on Basket Neck Lane, where the present owners allowed the wet but very happy group of Wodehouseans to wander the grounds and have a group portrait taken. (A visit was, of course, also paid to the Wodehouse grave.)

(photo by Barbara Combs)

I opened this report with a reference to irritations which were not allowed to spoil the day, and the alert reader will have spotted one or two during their travels so far. Water was the principal link, and hopes for the travellers' comfort and relief in the restroom at the church had been dashed when it was found to have been flooded. An unscheduled stop at a fast-food restaurant therefore had to be made shortly after the start of the return journey, and the Senior Broadway Special neatly diverted attention away from the 28 visitors to its restroom by ordering one soda and one portion of french fries.

And so the happy band returned Manhattanwards. After a period of rest of some 45 minutes, the second half of the journey passed quickly as half a dozen volunteers read out or sang prepared (in most cases) letters of application from fictional characters for the vacant position of wife to the now 40-year-old bachelor, Bertram Wooster. The reason Jeeves had had to cease his attendance on Bertie was entirely honourable but complex, and explanations will have to await another opportunity.

Elliott Milstein gallantly took on the role of Bertie, considering the merits of the various applicants, and deciding that on balance he would be best-suited to the proven homely and worldly-wise skills of Mrs Hudson, the former housekeeper to Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, whose prospectus had been prepared by Evelyn Herzog.

There only just remained time for yet another unplanned appearance of the water motif – in the form of a steady dripping on to the heads of some passengers through the personal air vents above their seats. But so ended a day packed with meaning – as well as camaraderie – with new friendships created under the influence of that remarkable wordsmith, P G Wodehouse, and a snook convincingly cocked at the puny efforts of adversity to spoil the day.

Society News

Subscription Increases

You will doubtless be aware that a subscription increase has been on the cards for some time now, and the moment has finally come. At its March meeting, your Committee voted to increase the sub to £22 with effect from 1 June 2012. Cheque or cash payers renewing this year will be asked to pay the new rate, and the reminder forms they find enclosed with this *Wooster Sauce* reflect the rate change. Members who renew by standing order benefit from a one-year deferral of any increase, so the rise will not apply to them until 1 June 2013. We will send new standing order forms to these members in the next issue of *Wooster Sauce*, once we are through this renewal round. We hope that by starting early, the transition will be comparatively smooth.

I would like you to know the background to this increase. Through parsimony worthy of Oofy Prosser, the Society has managed to keep subs at the 1997 level for 15 years, and in fact this is the first increase since the Society was founded. We have no choice but to put subs up now as our costs are greater than our income. Our main expenses, printing and postage, have increased dramatically over the life of the Society – for example, in 1997 a basic second-class stamp was 20p; now it is 50p. Of course, the Society has always saved money wherever it could and that will continue, but to continue providing good services, some costs and cost increases just can't be avoided.

We thought long and hard about this rise. We voted against it last year, but, having discussed it at every meeting since and with the loss continuing, your Committee has concluded that to secure the Society's future, an increase was inevitable. In deciding the new rate, we bore in mind the difficulties and consequences of the change, and fixed a rate that ought to endure for some time.

I know this increase is the right thing for the Society. I also believe that your membership continues to give tremendous value, and I very much hope you agree.

– Hilary Bruce, Chairman

Support the Gold Bats

Members are reminded that the Society's cricket team, the Gold Bats, plays its two traditional matches this month. The first is on Friday, June 15, against the Dusters of Dulwich College. If you plan to come and want to partake of the Society's celebrated tea, tickets are required.

The second match takes place on Sunday, June 24, when the Gold Bats will play the Sherlock Holmes Society at the West Wycombe Cricket Club's ground, just off the A40 (Oxford Road) in West Wycombe. Start time is around 11 a.m., and between innings

(continued on page 4)

The Eighth Formal London Dinner

The Society's eighth formal London dinner is to be held on Thursday, 25 October 2012. It will once again be held at The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, London WC1. Dinner will be 7.00 pm for 7.30; dress code is black tie.

We have once again been lucky to be offered very generous sponsorship, which means we shall be able to restrict the cost to £95 per head. For this, those who attend will enjoy a champagne reception, a splendid four-course dinner, including wine, and the customary brilliant after-dinner entertainment. And all this in the stunning surroundings of the Gray's Inn Hall in the company of many of our patrons.

Further details of how to apply and application forms are included with this edition of *Wooster Sauce*. Members who attended previous dinners will be aware how quickly the places were all booked. Gray's Inn Hall has a capacity of about 120 diners. Places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. It is therefore strongly recommended that members apply for tickets by return. Applications will be acknowledged in late July, *but only if you enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope*. Letters of confirmation will be sent out at the end of September. As usual, some places will be kept in reserve until mid-August for overseas members who will not be able to return the form as quickly as UK residents.



A view of the seventh dinner at Gray's Inn, October 2010

(photo by Ginni Beard)

– Tim Andrew

Society News

(continued from page 3)

players and spectators enjoy a picnic lunch of the bring-your-own variety. Play will end somewhere around 6 p.m., whereupon we will probably head off to the Swan Inn. Some, especially the Sherlockians, come in period costume, but whether or not you dress up, do come for a truly enjoyable day of cricket!

Of Society Meetings and Balloons

Picture yourself and six passengers in the basket of a hot-air balloon that is rapidly losing altitude. All the disposable ballast has been lobbed overboard to no avail – calling for further weighty sacrifices . . . And then, just as the last vestige of hope stands quivering on the brink of oblivion, a lone voice breaks the desperate silence. “I have it! Let’s hold a debate to determine who most deserves to live!”

And the “balloon debate” was invented.

On July 10, this scene will be re-enacted in the upper room of The George, aptly situated within spitting distance of the Royal Courts of Justice. In the metaphorical plummeting basket will be seven Wodehouse characters, each doing his or her damndest not to end up as crow bait. The only weapons at their disposal will be wit and eloquence. They will praise themselves to the heavens and trash their opponents *sans* mercy.

And this is where you, dear reader, come in: if you happen to be in the vicinity of the Metropolis on the date above, *we need you!* In our never-ending quest to make Society meetings even more fun and (dread word) ‘interactive’, we require as large an audience as possible to judge who will be tossed out of the balloon and plummet to a painful death, and who will walk away from that basket alive to claim the winning trophy.

In the frame are: Eddie Grabham (The Duke of Dunstable), Oliver Wise (Ukridge), Paddy Briggs (the Empress of Blandings), Ian Khan-Gilchrist (Roderick Spode), Mark Taylor (Psmith), Lesley Tapson (Aunt Dahlia), and Norman Murphy (Lord Tilbury). There may even be a special guest or two . . .

The evening will commence from 6 p.m. and continue even after the entertainment is over. We can promise drama: the tension will be electric, tempers will be lost, nerves will be frayed. So ask yourself this: Can I afford not to attend? The question is academic. Of course you will, for at some future date, like a veteran of Agincourt, you will bare your scars and proudly declare, “Yes, I was present at the dawning of a new era in Society meetings.”

Pigs and Things in Newbury

Since 2005, the Society has proudly sponsored the Berkshire Pig Champion of Champions competition at the Royal County of Berkshire Show, and that tradition continues this year on Sunday, September 16, when Chairman Hilary Bruce will once again face the challenge of draping the Society’s sash across the greased back of the winning pig. The judging takes place first thing Sunday morning, so do come and join us, then stay to enjoy the rest of the show. For more information, see www.newburyshow.co.uk/.

Some Words About Our Website

by Mike Swaddling

Having just taken over the role of Website Editor, I thought it would be appropriate to just say a few words on the subject.

First, I’d like to acknowledge the tremendous amount of work done by my predecessor, Jamie Jarrett. He (and Chris Reece, the website manager) created a website that faithfully and affectionately reflects the relationship between Plum, his public, and the Society. Jamie has made it very easy to don the mantle.

From this you may gather that the new broom has no intentions of sweeping clean. Changes are in hand, on the Home Page, and in the order of, and connections between, the other pages on the site, but it won’t look that different. To paraphrase the well-known saying – it ain’t broke, so I ain’t gonna fix it.

However, we shouldn’t lose sight of the fact that in this technological age, having a website is becoming more and more important in spreading the word about an organisation, whether it’s one like ours or a business looking to maximise sales and profits. One wonders what Plum would have made of it, and what marvellous web copy he would have given us, which is why it’s such a nice touch to have the picture of him using yesterday’s technology – the trusty Royal Electric typewriter – on the home page.

As I’m sure most of you know, websites are an organisation’s shop window. These days, if you want to find out something about a company, you go to the web – you ‘Google’ it. And if it doesn’t have its own website, we have now reached the point where we tend to see that as a negative, something that will dissuade us from pursuing our enquiry.

Our website is the quickest and most efficient way for us to communicate with our target audiences (forgive the lapse into marketing jargon, but it was almost 30 years of my life), and that’s how we will continue to use it. The worst sin is to fail to keep it up-to-date or offer something different from the last visit (because then people won’t come back). We want visitors to the site to leave it richer in information, maybe poorer in purse (having joined and paid their subs!), but above all we want it to be an enjoyable experience.

How My First Wodehouse Experience Led to Enjoying a Great Formal Dinner in London

by Dr. Julian Dilling

I must have been 13 when I read my first Wodehouse novel, which had an appropriate title for me – *Bachelors Anonymous*. I had been a bachelor for 13 years and liked it so far; additionally, I was terribly fond of a good laugh. This passion I shared with my mother’s best friend, Dagny Næs Marschall, who is loved for her great sense of humour.

Dagny was a frequent visitor to our home, and it struck me that she was in the habit of giggling while reading. Of course, the well-informed reader will be able to guess what Dagny was reading. Indeed, it was P G Wodehouse, and my curiosity led me to ask for enlightenment. But there was a slight problem: my poor knowledge of the English language. I had started learning English only three years before, and was familiar with Peter Clarke from Epping and his daily routines (a textbook every German schoolboy of my generation had to read), but P G Wodehouse was somehow different. It might have been possible to start with a German translation of Wodehouse, but in our family it is understood to be a serious deficiency not to read a book in its original language (which has often been a great excuse and one of the reasons why my knowledge of international literature is rather limited, apart from English, Italian, and some French and German literature).

So there was no alternative to reading Wodehouse in anything but English, and the project began. Dagny was a great help at first, but she had to leave, so I was thrown into the deep end. There were two reasons why I didn’t stop reading Wodehouse:

(1) I always finished books I had started (though this principle was broken later by Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*); and (2) because there were so many funny words that I wondered what they might mean. For example, I was puzzled by words like ‘hobnob’, not to mention ‘Toodle-oo’ or ‘Pip-pip’, which I hadn’t seen in textbooks. I am not a man who looks up every word he reads, so I wonder what kind of mish-mash I had in my head reading *Bachelors Anonymous*. It was only little by little that I started to understand the words because of their context.

As I think back, I am still thrilled that Wodehouse managed to hook me, and it is only now that I see the literal quality and humour in his oeuvre. First, there is his way of expression and

wording that I particularly like; second, there is his way of describing a world of Woosters and Fink-Nottles, which seems to be lost today with all these people bustling along to become richer and more important by the hour, without ever reflecting on our world and forgetting how great it is to laugh at oneself. And then, third, there is his virtuosity in composing a perfect plot (in which every reader is tempted to support the protagonist).

My passion for Wodehouse was seldom understood by fellow students, who thought that my favourite author was rather exotic – this was their understanding of highbrow literature – and should be dull and depressing. The consequence of this disparity between Dagny’s and my surroundings and our view of literature was that we made many enemies, as we liked to sit together at parties and laugh or giggle for hours about situations which had never taken place in real life. We knew those incidents even better than if we had been there (some of them might even have taken place, as I know now from the Wodehouse Walks with the Society’s Remembrancer, Norman Murphy).

In consequence, I was delighted when friends of mine, who were studying at Oxford, found out about The P G Wodehouse Society and bestowed upon me my first annual membership of the Society as a birthday present. I was and still am very proud to be a member of the Society.

Eventually Dagny and I decided that we had to go to London for the Formal Dinner at Gray’s Inn. We



Julian and Dagny at the dinner in October 2010

had a splendid time, and it was great to be with people who shared the same interests and who were able to laugh with us about the funniest entanglements. But alas – time passes by too quickly when you are enjoying yourself, and so we had to return to our natural habitat: Dagny going to Oslo and I to Berlin. We found ourselves back in a cold world, no one to hobnob with or who knew how to

respond properly when an elderly lady shows her knee (“Terrific!”). But we returned grateful, too, for the perfect organization of a Formal Dinner with great style, brilliant speeches, and funny sketches. Thank you very much, dear PG Wodehousians – it’s great to be one of you!

First Night Nerves

An account of the most recent Society evening

by Mike Swaddling

As I sat on the train on February 28th last, en route to my first PGW Society meeting, I contemplated the task ahead of me. In a moment of madness I had accepted the Editor's invitation to write a report of the meeting for *Wooster Sauce*. It was only after the initial elation had ebbed that I realised the burden facing anyone writing for a publication associated with someone famed for comedy writing. I had to be funny. Or at least it had to look as if I had tried to be funny. But in this Society the bar is set eponymously high. I thought about getting off at the next stop and going home.

But then the doughty spirit of the Swaddlings kicked in, and I decided to accept the challenge. After all, it wasn't stand-up, where the audience's response (or lack of) was immediate – I wouldn't know how many people had read it and not laughed.

I was helped by the fact that there was a lot of humour in the air in the upstairs room at The George. Not just in Tony Ring's news announcements, or the entertainment (more of which later), but all around. Not a constant succession of witty wisecracks, or people outdoing each other with PGW quotes, just good humour and bonhomie in abundance.

After half an hour of this general conviviality, Tony called the meeting to order. Sadly, our Chairman, Hilary Bruce, was unwell and could not attend – the first meeting she had ever had to miss – so TR had stepped into the breach. Details of the Wodehouse Weekend in Norfolk, the upcoming cricket matches, Maria Jette's CD, the October annual dinner, inter alia, followed. Perhaps wisely left till last, Tony also broached the subject of the

proposed subscription increase. Heartened by the lack of flying objects in his direction which he might have expected from a potentially contentious subject, he proceeded to outline the arguments for raising it. We will hear more of this in other communications (see page 3).

Then came the entertainment. Paul Kent, after graciously plugging Tony's new book on Plum's theatre, introduced John Voce and Peter Wear of the British Comedy Club. Said gentlemen gave us a highly original, and very funny, reading from the beginning of Plum's autobiography *Over Seventy*,

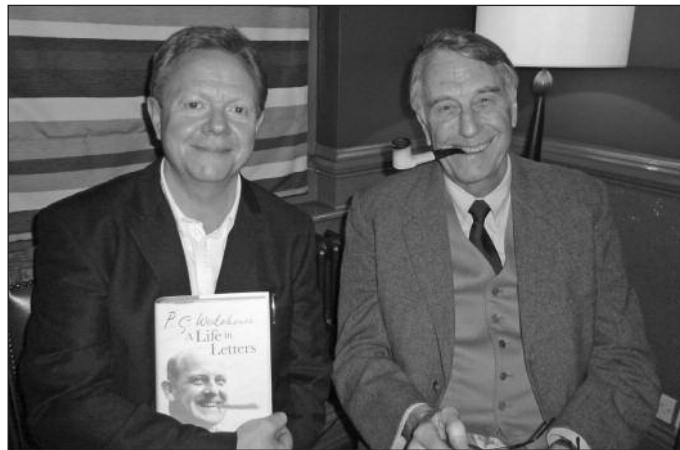
with Peter doing the Master's voice and John interjecting as the footnotes. The script had been adapted from the original by Paul himself.

In the book, Plum complains that he had none of the "advantages" that autobiography writers should have, including, in his own words, "no sparkling anecdotes". I felt this was particularly ironic considering how

many people have quoted from his own works over the years. But in the end he confessed that he had to get on with it because he had already "trousered the advance".

And that was the end of the organised part of the evening. The rest of it was a delightfully disorganised return to the earlier conviviality, and I felt it incumbent upon me as a first-timer to remain to the end, simply, you will surely understand, in order to present as full a report as possible.

I was asked not to finish the article with a cliché like "a good time was had by all", so I won't. But I definitely did have a good time and will be going again. If you haven't been to a Society meeting yet, I strongly recommend it.



Funny men John Voce and Peter Wear

"In these days of unrest, Jeeves," I said, "with wives yearning to fulfil themselves and husbands slipping round the corner to do what they shouldn't, and the home, generally speaking, in the melting-pot, as it were, it is nice to find a thoroughly united couple."

"Decidedly, sir." . . .

"What was it the poet said of couples like the Bingeese?"

"Two minds with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one, sir."

"A dashed good description, Jeeves."

"It has, I believe, given uniform satisfaction, sir."

And yet, if I had only known, what I had been listening to that a.m. was the first rumble of the coming storm. Unseen, in the background, Fate was quietly slipping the lead into the boxing-glove.

(From 'Jeeves and Old School Chum', 1930)

Another Triple Whammy

by Tony Ring

In March's *Wooster Sauce* (page 7), we reported that for a few days in April three musicals in which Wodehouse played a direct or indirect part would be playing on or just off Broadway simultaneously, recalling to mind the five simultaneous musicals of 1917.

What we didn't know at the time of going to press was that in the single week starting February 27, Wodehouse's work would be the subject of serious discussion for two or three minutes in three separate programmes on BBC TV.

On Monday, February 27, and Thursday, March 1, Wodehouse books were chosen by guests in the *My Life in Books* series of programmes on BBC1, during which guests each select four books which they both enjoy and regard as having had an influence on their lives. Pamela Stephenson included *Carry On, Jeeves*, explaining how she and Billy Connolly used to read Wodehouse to each other and have tears rolling down their cheeks; while Sir Tim Rice chose *The Code of the Woosters*, and talked about his visit to Wodehouse in Remsenburg with Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Then, on Friday March 2, on BBC2's *Mastermind*, David Buckle, Society member and creator of the regular quiz in *Wooster Sauce* (see page 17), answered questions on 'The Golf Stories of P G Wodehouse', during which he scored 14 points out of a possible 15. Unfortunately, he did not automatically qualify for the semi-final by one point.

As a coda to all this excitement, on March 30, in a *Mastermind* semi-final, contestant Nick Reed answered questions on 'The Blandings Stories of P G Wodehouse', and after the first round led with 13 points. He failed with only one question, the last, when he was given the detailed description of a dessert offered to Maudie by Sir Gregory and failed to recognise it as 'ambrosia chiffon pie'. Nick went on to win the round but, unfortunately, lost in the final.

Letters to the Editor

From Paul Mayhook

I was interested to read the article 'Where is Twing Hall?' in the March edition of *Wooster Sauce*. There are, however, a couple of areas where I would take issue.

The GWR main line to Worcester via Oxford has a station at Kingham, which is only five miles from Wyck Hill House. Bertie would therefore have caught a Worcester-bound train at Paddington. The July 1922 edition of Bradshaw does not have a 5.10 pm train from Paddington. The nearest are the 4.45 ('Oxford, Worcester, Hereford Express') which, after a change at Oxford, would have deposited Bertie at Kingham at 6.32; and the 6.05 ('Oxford, Worcester, Malvern Express'), which arrived at Kingham at 7.55. Bertie would then have got a taxi to Twing Hall (or Lord Wickhammersley would have sent a car). If Bertie had left London at 5.10, then (allowing for late trains) he would have arrived at Twing Hall around 7.45-8.

Incidentally, 'Stapleton' is probably Salperton (between Cheltenham and Bourton on the Water) or Staverton (4 1/2 miles west of Cheltenham).

From Robert Watson

I wonder if you have seen the excellent book *The Invention of Murder* (2011) by Judith Flanders? In it she discusses boys' adventure stories and the fictional detectives of the 1890s. On page 463, she writes of 'Martin Hewitt, Investigator' and mentions how he "investigates a case where a runner is prevented from entering a race to benefit some gamblers. One of the characters is called Steggles, and if the schoolboy P. G. Wodehouse did not read the story aged thirteen, before going on to write 'The Great Sermon Handicap' (1922), in which a crooked bookie named Steggles rigs a bet, then I will eat my deerstalker".

Editor's note: Another possible (if not probable) source for the Steggles name is *The Human Boy*, by Eden Philpotts, though this does not preclude Wodehouse being familiar with the Martin Hewitt story.

Favourite One-Liners

Men capable of governing empires fail to control a small, white ball, which presents no difficulties whatever to others with one ounce more brain than a cuckoo-clock.

(*'The Heart of a Goof'*, 1923; submitted by Sharon Mitchell)

A woman is only a woman, but a frothing pint is a drink.

(*Pigs Have Wings*, 1952)

"When it comes to love, there's a lot to be said for the *à la carte* as opposed to the *table d'hôte*."

(*Ring for Jeeves*, 1953)

They train bank clerks to stifle emotion, so they will be able to refuse overdrafts when they become managers.

(*'Ukridge's Accident Syndicate'*, 1923)

He continued to fold her in his arms, but it was with a growing feeling that he wished she had been a steak smothered in onions.

(*Summer Moonshine*, 1937)

A fruity voice, like old tawny port made audible, said, "Come in."

(*Something Fresh*, 1915)

It was my Uncle George who discovered that alcohol was a food well in advance of modern medical thought.

(*'The Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace'*, 1922)

It was one of those hairy, nondescript dogs, and its gaze was cold, wary and suspicious, like that of a stockbroker who thinks someone is going to play the confidence trick on him.

(*'Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend'*, 1928)

Send in your favourite one-liners!

The Davidson Wodehouse Bookplate

by W. E. Butler

A longer version of this article appeared in The Bookplate Journal (September 2011). The author would be delighted to hear about bookplates used by other Wodehouse collectors, whether they have a Wodehouse theme or not. I am indebted to Robert E. Rains (Oily Carlisle in Wodehouse circles) for introducing me to the lore of Plum. Contacts with artists can be provided for anyone who may wish to commission a bookplate: webakademik@aol.com.

Among the Wodehouse enthusiasts to have commissioned bookplates to embellish their holdings devoted to the Master is the London solicitor Graeme W. I. Davidson (b. 1959). He chose a British designer whose name is new to the bookplate world but should be recognized by the Wodehouse community.

The Davidson Bookplate

The bookplate, commissioned in 2008 and received in 2009, portrays Bertram Wilberforce Wooster (“Bertie”) and his valet, Jeeves, astride the Ninth Earl of Emsworth’s prize sow, the Empress of Blandings. Jeeves is the forward figure holding a book and Bertie sits behind carrying a putter. The original idea was different. Davidson had in view a bookplate depicting a charabanc (an omnibus) filled with characters one might anticipate being in a Wodehouse omnibus – a species of visual book-related pun. It was thought that the omnibus might bear the license or number plate PGW 38, which appears on Bertie Wooster’s vehicle in the dust jacket design by illustrator Ian Fenwick for the first British edition of *The Code of the Woosters* (1938).

Given the dimensions of a bookplate, the designer felt that a charabanc could not be effectively deployed in the style used to illustrate the dust

jackets for the Wodehouse novels. Alternative ideas were proposed by the designer in the form of sketches. That which appealed was a design incorporating the sow, who is an important character and frequent plot component in Wodehouse’s Blandings saga. The design thus portrayed elements of two important Wodehouse series: the Blandings novels and the Jeeves/Bertie stories.

The book which Jeeves is reading is doubtless by Spinoza, an author believed by Bertie to be much appreciated by Jeeves, and reinforces the bookish purpose to be served by the bookplate. Bertie, clothed in plus twos and sporting a putter, is indeed a golfer, but the motif itself also recalls Wodehouse’s Oldest Member golf tales.

Once the final design was agreed, the artist delivered the artwork in the form of a signed and numbered linocut (three copies). Davidson took one of the linocuts to Smythson, stationers in Bond Street, London, and purveyors to the Royal Family of stationery, being the holders of several Royal warrants. An inspired choice, for they are just the sort of stationers which Wodehouse himself or, indeed, Bertie might have been expected to use. Smythson sub-contracted Ron Hughes to undertake the work, an engraver well-known throughout the United Kingdom, if not by name then by examples of his work: Hughes engraved the five-pound note currently in circulation for the Bank of England. Although initially charged with creating a copper-engraved plate incorporating the linocut design, the Smythson production team chose to engrave the image onto ½” steel rather than copper in the interests of a larger printing. The engraving proved to be a challenging undertaking. Although Davidson found preliminary samples to be disappointingly crude, requiring considerable reworking and refining, he considers the final product to be excellent.

Mr. Hughes was unaware that the Empress of Blandings is a Black Berkshire sow and not merely a pink pig. The original engraving portrayed the Empress as light-coloured, rectified in the final version by hatching (and finely done indeed) to ensure that the Empress appeared in a more appropriate dusky hue. Jeeves’s socks were another issue. They may be interpreted to be light-coloured socks, which, given his dark trousers, Jeeves himself, something of an authority and stickler in the matter of socks, would never have worn in combination. Making the socks



darker would, however, have complicated the printing process and affected the sharpness of the image. The original artwork showed a certain curvature in the sock at Bertie's ankle, whereas the engraving shows no ankle curvature as such. The "dimples" on the hooves of the Empress are more pronounced in the engraving than in the original artwork. Finally, there is light in the original artwork reflecting from Jeeves's and Bertie's shoes that does not appear in the engraving.

The engraved plate was originally in landscape format, but at Davidson's instruction Smythson produced it in portrait format so that the bookplate might fit more readily into various Wodehouse volumes in his collection. Five hundred prints were taken from the plate.

The bookplate is printed in a light purple ("Plum") on a cream background. While the bookplate was editioned in a light purple, the linocut originally supplied by the designer, in an edition of three, was black and white. There are, therefore, technically three numbered and signed linocut "proofs", two of which are owned by Davidson and one by another Wodehouse enthusiast and her husband, the couple having received it as a wedding present from Davidson.

The Designer

Davidson chose Andrzej Klimowski (b. 1949) to design his bookplate. It is difficult to imagine a more fortunate choice. Born in London, the son of a Polish officer who fought in the resistance during the Second World War, he studied at the St. Martins School of Art in London and later poster design (Professor Henryk Tomaszewski) and film animation (Professor Kazimierz Urbanski) at the Academy of Fine Art in Warsaw. At present he is the Senior Tutor in Illustration at the Royal College of Art in London.

Klimowski was selected by Random House to be the principal designer of the distinctive and stylish dust jackets for their Wodehouse series. Deep admiration and affection for Klimowski's dust jacket art led Davidson to add the original artwork to his collection commencing in 2006, and it was a short step from those acquisitions to commissioning a bookplate. The bookplate commission from Davidson was Klimowski's first. The bookplate design is very much in the tradition of the dust jackets.

W. E. Butler is Emeritus Professor of Comparative Law in the University of London (University College London).

My Most Unexpected Experience to Come About Through Reading Wodehouse

by Karen Shotting

If I may borrow from Jerome K. Jerome (if it's good enough for Mr. Bickersdyke, it's good enough for me), I would like to state at the outset that the chief beauty of this little story lies not so much in its literary style, or in the extent or usefulness of the information it conveys, as in its simple truthfulness. I give you my honest word that the event described below really happened.

One of my favorite places in all of Southern California is the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, with its lovely grounds (including an extensive rose garden), famous masterpieces, and Schuppe cow creamer. I take most of my out-of-town visitors there, and, as a member, I am a frequent guest on my own. And as a creature of habit, I always stop at the Huntington's book store to browse, and to check to see if they have any of P. G. Wodehouse's books. I have been doing this for at least a decade and have been left disappointed for an equal number of years. I had pretty much given up hope that this otherwise sterling institution would ever see the light in this matter, until one fine day in the autumn of 2011.

On this occasion I spied three – count them, *three* – Wodehouse novels on the shelves – brightly colored Arrow paperbacks, with their distinctive lettering on the binding. After years of fruitless search, I had conditioned myself to expect disappointment. I looked – no Wodehouse – I left. It had simply become a ritual without which no trip to the Huntington was complete. So unexpected was the sight of three Wodehouses where formerly, and invariably, there had been none, that my surprise was audible – I gasped out loud.

The young man standing next to me, mistaking my gasp of joy for a sound of distress, looked upon me with concern and asked if I was okay. I explained the situation. As it turned out, he was interested in hearing about the Master. (I had fully expected a shaking of the head, a polite cough followed by a remembered appointment elsewhere, a call for the minions of Colney Hatch.) This young man (I would guess that he is in his mid-twenties) had heard of Wodehouse, but did not know where to start and asked for further and better particulars.

He also asked that I recommend which of the three books he should read. At this point, Tamaki Morimura joined us (Tamaki, that eminent translator of Wodehouse – see the March issue of *Wooster Sauce* – happened to be my guest on this particular day). Tamaki endorsed my suggestions, pointing out that she had recently translated one of the books, *Right Ho, Jeeves*, and this delightful chappie bought that book and *The Mating Season* on the spot. He also joined the L.A. Chapter of The Wodehouse Society (I found this out later).

So, an unexpected find, an unexpected encounter, and the unusual presence of an acclaimed Japanese Wodehouse translator in San Marino, California – would it be overreaching to call this serendipitous, if serendipitous is the word I want?

Whose Library Is It?

by Ken Clevenger

In June 2011, an item in *Wooster Sauce* reported a captivating inscription written in 1942 in a copy of *Week-End Wodehouse*. The book was a “Present to myself” by a Mr. Couchman, who was about to embark upon no doubt perilous service in the Merchant Navy. This stimulated an idea that had long been simmering in my mind: I have a Wodehouse collection made up of mostly used books, which contain notations, stamps, and inscriptions that imply some interesting tales.

As we learn in the Mulliner story ‘A Slice of Life’, one also gets “the thumbprints you find on the pages of books in the Free Library”. One of my favorites is a UK first edition of *Summer Lightning*, sold (according to its small gummed label) by Brentano’s, Booksellers & Stationers, 37 Avenue de l’Opera, Paris. The owner did not write his name in the book, but a small inked stamp identifies it as having belonged to Chateau de Suisnes, which is the ancestral home, southeast of Paris, of Admiral Comte de Bougainville, the French James Cook.

In my collection there are a baker’s dozen from various UK and US public libraries. The most curious is a UK first edition of *Something Fishy*. It has a red-inked stamp with ‘S.A. School / Royal Marines / 29 April 1956 / Browndown, Gosport’. I do not know what the S.A. School is, but given the book’s dust wrapper and near-mint quality, it keeps those Royal Marines too busy for much light reading. Other UK libraries represented in my collection include Croydon and Southwark Public Libraries; the County Libraries in Gloucestershire, Bedfordshire, and Glamorgan; Burwood Park School, Ltd.; and W.H. Smith & Son Library, Strand House W.C. 2.

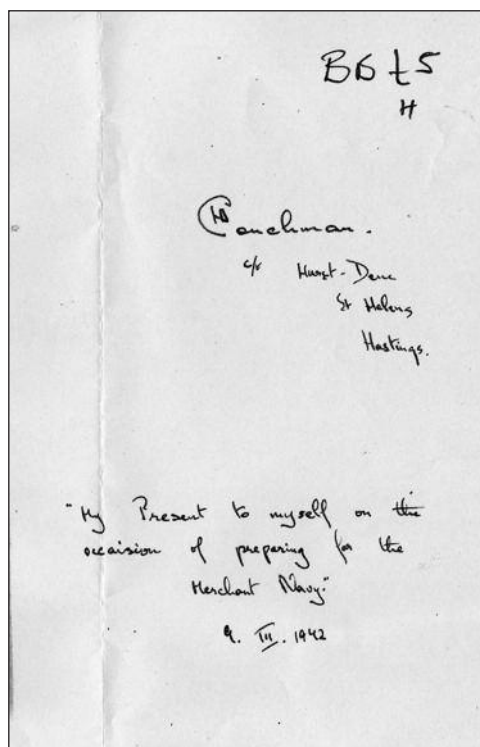
A copy of *Carry On, Jeeves*, bought in Louisville, Kentucky, originally belonged to the Circulating Library of the Junior League Shop. The Ruskin Branch Library’s former copy of *Leave It to Psmith* came to me via a David W. Blair, who apparently found it in August 1970. My McIlvaine *Bibliography* says it is the second US printing of *Leave It to Psmith*, so in 1994 John Graham sold me a US first edition formerly owned by the M.C.M. Association Library.

Finally, there is a 1953 *Mike and Psmith* from the Hillstone School Library. *Sapere Aude* (Dare to be wise) was the school motto, and Hillstone is now incorporated into Malvern College.

A library or school is easy to find, but few private owners left their addresses in my books. Somebody named Brett, of 10 Ruthin Gardens, Cathays, Cardiff CF24A6, Wales, used to own my copy of *The Theater of P. G. Wodehouse*. Mary Gayle Robertson of 1526 Senate Street, Columbia 1, South Carolina, provided my US first edition of *Love Among the Chickens*. A woman named Alice, who lived at 181 East 75 Street, New York City, formerly had my reprint of *Very Good, Jeeves*. And a UK first edition of *Big Money* that now graces my collection was once the property of J. Parker, 9 Gopsull Street, Leicester. But the best set of private addresses comes in a 1922 reprint of *The White Feather*. Edna Rowbotham of 26 Sunny Bank, on a road starting with *Sl* and ending in *comb*, in Marple, originally owned the book. Her name and address are carefully crossed out in favor of P. Jenkins of 5 Alan Dr., Marple, Cheshire.

My collection is indebted eight times over to C. M. Mann of Ruxton, Maryland, who must have been a collector in the 1940s and 1950s. The eight titles I possess apparently came to Mr. Mann from sources as diverse as New York City and Richmond, Virginia. The most common source, however, was Pippen’s Bookstore at 605 N. Eutaw St., in Baltimore. One was a birthday gift to ‘Chas.’ in 1951 from ‘Fannie and George’, and one has a bookplate listing both C. M. Mann and Norah Lenore(?) Dunning (or perhaps Dinning) as the owners on July 24, 1940. It is a US first edition of *Summer Moonshine*, and they paid 75 cents for it at Pippen’s.

Five more of my books contain such gift inscriptions. A woman named Lorna gave somebody a UK first edition of *Spring Fever* “with love & best wishes”. ‘E. M. G.’ gave a 1920s reprint of *Love Among the Chickens* “To Edith with best wishes”. And then there is the 1923 UK first edition of *The Inimitable Jeeves* given “To dear Auntie Flossie wishing her a happy birthday from Fred”. And, recalling Mr. Couchman’s 1942 gift to himself, I have a copy of *How Right You Are, Jeeves* inscribed: “To



The inscription that inspired Ken’s search through his collection (see WS, June 2011)

Peter Youngblood from his good friend & companion – Peter Youngblood (Ha, Ha) April 20, 1964.” The occasion was not specified, but if you are going to present yourself with a gift, I say it is in good taste, so long as it is a Wodehouse book!

Of course, Christmas is an expected gift-giving occasion, and seven of my books reflect this. In 1935 some lucky man named A. W. Heard received a UK first edition of the *Mulliner Omnibus* from a marvelous woman named Mary for Christmas. The most precious, though, is what I hope is a 1903 UK first edition of *Tales of St. Austin's*. It was given “To Stanley Thomas with love & best wishes from Uncle Willie Christmas 1904”.

The C. M. Mann bookplate noted above represents another common form of inscription. At least six other books in my collection have bookplates from former owners. Some are curiously complex: the bookplate in *Money in the Bank*, a UK first edition, reads “*Ex Libris Z. Deshaw / Aquila non captat muscas*” (An eagle does not catch flies). Some are simple – *Ex Libris* and the name. A *Carry On, Jeeves* reprint has ‘*Ex Libris William L. Jarrell*’ on the bookplate, but a Reed Ellsworth also owned the book before or after William. A 1923 reprint of *The Gold Bat* doesn’t say who bought it over the years, but it was sold by Harold Cleaver, Bookseller, 9 New Bond Street Place, Bath, according to a gummed label.

And then there are the Palmers and their personal mottos. On a bookplate in *The Old Reliable*, a UK first edition, William Spencer Palmer proudly proclaims “*Palma virtuti*” (The Palm to virtue), and Elizabeth Sherwood Palmer trumpets “*Teneo et Teneor Amore*” (I Hold and Am Held by Love). But the bookplate in George Edgar Milner’s former copy of *The Mating Season*, a UK first edition, wins the prize. It contains a poem by Emilie Poulsson (children’s book author, 1853–1939): “Books are keys to wisdom’s treasure; / Books are gates to lands of pleasure. / Books are paths that upward lead, / Books are friends – come let us read.”

For their years of loving care for so many Wodehouse books, I am indebted to all of the above, and I could add a list of over 30 more names, from as early as 1919. Some signed boldly, there are many with initials, and one is peremptory: ‘Sturgis’. Douglas Scott-Kerr of ‘Cambridge House 1957’ is certainly in a UK edition of Wodehouse, as is D.C.F. Wood. But who are Mae Waldman, Ruth A. Forsberg, Georgia M. Skinner, and Betty Meader, or Mrs. Harold Heller? I esteem them all, but I most admire, for his generosity and optimism, H. Harrison Proctor, who, below his name in a US first edition of *Brinkley Manor*, added: “Please Return”.

The Word Around the Clubs

Plum Would Approve

MURRAY HEDGCOCK writes: On May 2, Marylebone Cricket Club, based at Lord’s, the home of cricket, announced that its new President will be Mike Griffith, godson of PGW. Plum was great friends with Mike’s father, S.C. ‘Billy’ Griffith, who played for Dulwich College, as did PGW. Billy Griffith played three times for England, becoming MCC Secretary in the Sixties, and President in 1979–80.

Mike Griffith was indeed christened ‘Mike’, named after Plum’s great cricketing character, Mike Jackson. He told me he was proud of the name, but met problems when, for legal documents, etc., others expected him to record his name as ‘Michael’ – which of course was not so.

Mike is a member of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) and has captained the Society cricket team, The Gold Bats. We send him our congratulations.

Perhaps The Gold Bats could anticipate a fixture with MCC?

Editor’s note: For more on Mike Griffith’s connections to PGW, see <http://ind.pn/IRkHTb>.

The Latest on Blandings Castle

As this edition of *Wooster Sauce* was being prepared, word arrived that filming had completed on ‘Blandings Castle’, the six-part BBC television series based on PGW’s stories, to be broadcast sometime in the autumn. Timothy Spall will star as Lord Emsworth, with Jennifer Saunders as Lady Constance. Other cast members include David Walliams of *Little Britain* fame. Filming of the half-hour episodes took place at Crom Castle in Northern Ireland, and newspaper reports indicated that the writers had taken some liberties with PGW’s plots and characters, causing considerable alarm to Wodehouse purists. The verdict won’t be known until the series is aired; keep your eye on television listings.

Wodehouse on Video

If you’re interested in seeing and hearing Wodehouse talk about his life as a writer, then you may enjoy a short (seven minutes) video clip from an interview he did for the BBC programme *Monitor* in 1958. The clip can be viewed at <http://bbc.in/cyw5WP>.



Mike Griffith

The Proof of the Plum Pudding

by Thomas Schlachter

Three months ago, my Japanese colleague Tamaki Morimura enthused about her work as a Wodehouse translator, using the word “fortunate” more than once. At the risk of boring you to tears now by playing the same happy tune, I must state right away that it *is* an immense privilege to fit out such an eminent stylist with the garment of one’s own language. If there is one thing better than reading Wodehouse, it is translating him!

Make no mistake: our profession entails a fair amount of toil and sweat, with the odd drop of blood and tears mixed in for good seasoning. Why is it, then, that so many Wodehouse translators hush up all the drudgery involved and go into raptures about the undiluted pleasure of serving the Master? Are we just delusional slaves who bear their yoke with a demented grin?

Possibly, possibly . . . and yet I can’t deny that I regularly burst out laughing while translating Wodehouse – and hardly less so towards the end of my work as at the beginning. His gags and similes and verbal somersaults seem to become even more hilarious when you encounter them a second or a third time.

“Fortune” is indeed a term that springs to mind when I think of Wodehouse. It certainly started with a stroke of luck in 1999, when I bought my very first Wodehouse book – lamentably late, I admit. I chanced upon *The Jeeves Omnibus*, Vol. 2. Can you think of a more inviting portal to the holy shrine than *Right Ho, Jeeves* and *Joy in the Morning*? Well, I can’t, and it dawned on me from the word *go* what fun it must be to translate such glorious prose. I also had the good fortune of knowing the publishers of the small but distinguished Edition Epoca in Zurich. After having their arms twisted for a week or two, they decided to do justice to a writer who had never found the appreciation he deserved. While half of Wodehouse’s output had been translated into German in the preceding decades – most of them in appallingly abridged paperbacks – only a couple

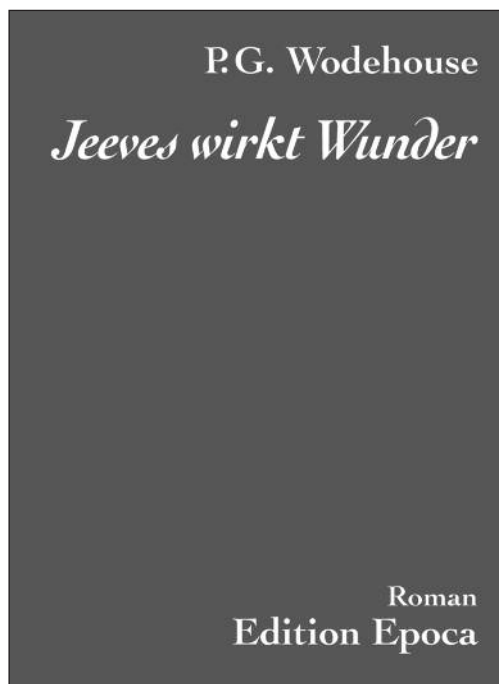
of them were still in print in the late 1990s. My publishers decided to start a series of handsomely produced hardcovers with a whimsical British twist: the endpapers were to be made of flowery wallpaper reminiscent of the bygone era Wodehouse had immortalized.

The concept proved to be a success: our first effort, *Quick Service*, met with considerable critical resonance and sold very well. Since then, I have translated one Wodehouse title per year, completing the first dozen in 2011 with my version of *The Mating Season*.

At this point, even the broadest-minded among *Wooster Sauce* readers can no longer hold back their reservations, probably repeating the question an American Wodehousian put to me a few years ago: “How can you translate the funniest writer of the world into the unfunniest language of the

universe?” Well, I am as tolerant as the next man, but I can’t deny that I was a tad miffed back then and felt I must come to the rescue of the great comic heritage in German literature. True to Teutonic form, I did so by pedantically enumerating some gods in my personal pantheon, starting with Heinrich Heine, Wilhelm Busch, Christian Morgenstern, Karl Valentin, Kurt Tucholsky, Karl Kraus . . . and not nearly ending with Bertolt Brecht, who had introduced one of his masterpieces, *Flüchtlingsgespräche (Dialogues Between Exiles)*, with a fabulous quote from *Something Fresh*.

Just as Wodehouse mixed all sorts of ingredients of the English literary tradition to make up his unique style, the translator has to do something very similar, tapping into the fount of his own reading in order to give the translation a voice that is, or so one hopes, as rich and sonorous as the original. German readers of my translations may therefore detect echoes of the names mentioned above as well as those of dozens of other writers. Not that I could point out most of those influences. The process, on the whole, is a subconscious one.



The Mating Season
German translation by Thomas Schlachter

The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer not only features as the epitome of the gloomy German in Wodehouse, he also coined a wonderful rule for good writing: “Authors should use common words to say uncommon things. But they do just the opposite.” Next to Wodehouse’s innumerable verbal inventions, one of his greatest triumphs is his use of common words in the most uncommon, unexpected (and therefore sidesplittingly funny) combinations and juxtapositions, and this effortless change between the most diverse linguistic registers creates a sound which is as natural as it is utterly his own. No wonder people like Tamaki or Simon Callow compare him with Mozart: his sense for melody, harmony, and rhythm is incomparable. He simply can’t put a foot wrong. Every phrase is exactly as it should be, each *mot* is *juste*. One might say that his prose possesses *absolute* accuracy.

Now, every translator knows that in language all things are *relative* rather than *absolute*. Thoughts can be expressed in a wide variety of ways, and so translators juggle endlessly with words and sentences until everything seems perfect. Developing an instinct for what is the right “Wodehouse sound” in German has probably been my biggest challenge. After twelve books, I am quite confident to judge which German words and phrases sound like Wodehouse and which don’t. The greatest compliment I have ever received from a reader was this: “I wouldn’t want *one* word changed.”

A good translation should strive to evoke in its readers the same sensations the original did with those able to read it, regardless of the vast grammatical and cultural differences between the two languages. In translation theory, that uppermost goal is called “equivalence of effect”. With Wodehouse, the desired effect is not difficult to determine: the proof of the Plum pudding is in the laughing! In other words, if a German reader chuckles, chortles, laughs, or roars at the same passages, for the same reasons, and at the same volume as you do when reading the real thing, I make so bold as to think I have given satisfaction!

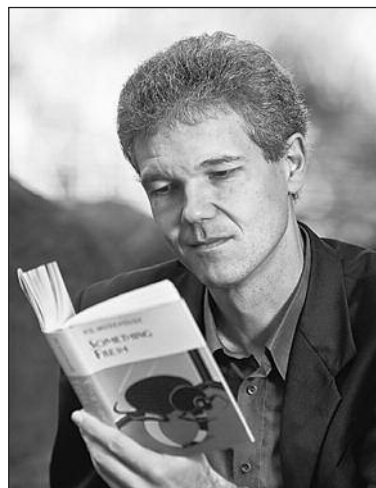
There are limits, of course. We all agree, for instance, that the first sentence of *The Luck of the Bodkins* is one of the funniest in English literature. Could I make the same claim for my translation? Well, as a proud father I am very fond of the little thing and find it quite droll. And yet I can’t help feeling that it doesn’t have the same fizz as the original: a hint of spice is missing, and this deficiency has to do with the adjective *hangdog*. There is a visual quality in it that its German equivalent *zerknirscht* can’t muster. These are the losses one has to accept when translating Wodehouse.

But I would be a bad ambassador of my trade if I finished this piece on such a pessimistic note, so let me boldly state (while ignoring your gasps of disbelief) that the first sentence of another novel, *The Mating Season*, is a tad funnier in German. Or isn’t it?

Auch wenn ich nicht direkt behaupten will, mir sei »bang ums Herz« gewesen, muß ich doch gestehen, daß ich am Vorabend meines Zwangsaufenthalts in Deverill Hall an einem markanten Frohsinnsmanko litt.

It may be sacrilegious to say so, but I do think the compound “Frohsinnsmanko” (my own invention) tickles the ribs just the tiniest bit more than the original “short on chirpiness” does. Not that I can prove it, of course. Call it hubris, but I simply feel Wodehouse might have come up with that word, had his native tongue been German. Compensating the inevitable losses with such windfalls strikes me as a sheer must. Taking thousands of tiny or more substantial liberties, while remaining as faithful as possible to the original, is what the whole process of translation is all about. Should you have misgivings, however, let me assure you that I only take such liberties when I feel the Master’s tap on my shoulder and hear his voice whisper in my ear: “Go right ahead, and the best of luck to you!”

About the Author



Thomas Schlachter lives in Zurich, Switzerland, and has worked as a literary translator for the past 17 years. In 2000, he brought his first Wodehouse novel, *Quick Service*, into German. The hardcover series started back then by the publishing house Edition Epoca has now grown to a dozen volumes. Right now, Thomas is translating and editing a book about Wodehouse’s Berlin broadcasts and their repercussions. Last winter he was also the curator of ‘The Mysteries of Charles Dickens’, the only exhibition on that great author’s bicentenary in German-speaking countries.

Betting on Bertie

or

Wodehouse and Horse Racing (Part 1)

by Norman Murphy

Editor's note: Norman presented this talk at the June 2009 convention of The Wodehouse Society. It is only now that we have found the space to print his paper in Wooster Sauce, albeit in two parts. The remainder of this talk will be published in the September issue.

I am grateful to Kris Fowler for suggesting this topic since I had to omit it from *A Wodehouse Handbook*, which was quite long enough already. And, if you have been clever enough – or kind enough – to read it, you will remember that my aim, as always, was to demonstrate that Wodehouse was writing of a real world. He just made it funnier. The problem is that the world has become so grey, so dull, people find it hard to accept that there were really were men like Bertie Wooster or Lord Emsworth.

Now, though Wodehouse constantly mentioned betting on horses, I suggest that his closer-than-normal connection with racing is often overlooked. And, on one occasion he also proved to be a successful racing tipster.

It is often forgotten that he once owned a racehorse himself. Ethel was the nominal owner, but Wodehouse paid the bills. I think he only owned it for a year, but Front Line, a five-year-old, won the Hurst Park Handicap on the 21st December 1921 at the very nice odds of 9-2. And, in case you are interested, I can tell you that Ethel's racing colours were scarlet cross bands, white sleeves, and black cap.

Some eleven years later, in 1932, Leonora, Wodehouse's beloved step-daughter, married Peter Cazalet, who was a leading steeplechase trainer. I do not know what happens in America, but over in Britain, gentleman riders and gentleman trainers, as they used to be called, play a major part in steeplechasing. Peter Cazalet was, to put it bluntly, very high up the social scale, and his partner, old school friend, and leading rider was Lord Mildmay, another wealthy young man who enjoyed nothing better than risking his neck as a steeplechase jockey.

I should point out that amateur riders still compete in the Grand National, the longest, toughest steeplechase in the world, I am told,

and they have won it quite often. Some of you may have met Lord Oaksey at Wodehouse Society functions in England. He was a steeplechase jockey and won over 200 open races, including the Whitbread Gold Cup and the Hennessy Gold Cup; he rode in the Grand National eleven times and came second in 1963. Peter Cazalet was champion trainer in 1950, 1960, and 1965, so he was clearly good at it. And many of you know Wodehouse's grandson, Sir Edward Cazalet, the only High Court judge to have ridden an Open steeplechase winner under Jockey Club rules.

Now, knowing you would want to know, I did some research into the names of the many racehorses Wodehouse mentioned – 74 by my count. I telephoned Weatherby's, who have run the official stud book since the first Mr Weatherby was secretary to the Jockey Club in 1770, and I regret to inform you that Wodehouse seems to have invented most of his racehorse names – and Weatherby's have no note of Bluebottle ever winning the Cambridgeshire. I tried a dozen names in vain, but I did get one. At the end of *Summer Lightning*, Gally Threepwood tells Sue Brown the story of Tubby Parsloe and the prawns. He begins: "It was at Ascot, the year Martingale won the Gold Cup."

The woman at Weatherby's picked that up at once. Martingale did not win the Gold Cup at Ascot, but Martingale the Second won the Gold Vase at Ascot in 1911 – though that is the only one I could find.

And I never found Wilberforce, the Grand National Winner after whom Bertie Wooster was named (*Jeeves and the Tie That Binds*), though there is a horse running by that name in America today.

You should all know by now that recently in England, we have seen several racehorses named after Wodehouse's characters. Bertie Wooster (trained, oddly enough, by a Mr P. G. Murphy), P. Smith, Aunt Agatha, and Gussie Fink-Nottle all did fairly well, and British newspapers gave them the collective name of 'the Wodehorses'. The list grew with Plum First and Winsome Wooster, and you will be delighted to hear that in 2002, that most unlikely of racehorses, Madeline Bassett (!), stormed home at Lingfield Park at a splendid 7-1.



Norman at the Canterbury Downs Racetrack, following The Wodehouse Society's convention in St Paul, Minn.

When Kris asked me to do this talk, she mentioned *The Catnappers* (*Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*) and asked if racehorses really have cats as stable companions? And the answer is – yes, they do. In the *Sunday Telegraph*, July 2008, the columnist Sandy Toskvig wrote that she was puzzled by the expression “he gets my goat” and discovered to her surprise that goats used to be used as companions for racehorses to keep them company and calm them down. And, I quote: “Unscrupulous rivals were known occasionally to spirit away the farmyard friend, thus causing distress all round.” Just like *The Catnappers*.

Experts now agree that since horses were originally herd animals, they like company – and goats, chickens, dogs, and cats are all common companions. It goes back a long way, to Eclipse, the 18th-century racehorse from whom just about every champion today is descended. He was never beaten in his 18 races, hence the expression that you still hear after 200 years, and which Wodehouse used in his books: “Eclipse first; the rest nowhere.” Well, his stable companion was a parrot who kept Eclipse amused by squawking versions of the Biblical psalms at him as well as popular songs of the day.

Seabiscuit had a stable companion, too, a goat, but because she was always eating his hay, he got fed up with her, picked her up in his teeth and dropped her outside the stall. His trainer, Tom Smith, then found a little palomino pony called Pumpkin, and Seabiscuit and Pumpkin remained inseparable till Seabiscuit died.

In an Internet discussion among racehorse owners, one said he had a horse whose beloved companion was a pot-bellied pig. Another said his horses didn't like goats but loved sheep. A third chap supported the goat theory and said one of his horses would take his goat pal for rides on its back. Another owner said that when he was down to only one horse, a cat gave the horse the companionship needed and, at night, would snuggle up to him in the stable. Isn't that sweet? Aahh!

I conclude this section with Sandy Toskvig's splendid bitchy remark when she noted that you can stop a horse swaying about in its box by installing a large mirror. I quote her again: “Apparently they are the Victoria Beckhams of the barnyard and like nothing better than to stand perfectly still and pout at themselves.”

Now, why did Wodehouse make betting on horses such a constant feature in his novels? The answer is simply that it played a major role in English social life – at every level. Ronnie Fish persuaded Beach to help him steal the Empress by promising him something really hot for the Goodwood Cup, and this went all the way up and down the social scale. Why? Simply because there was then nothing else to bet on. We stopped having national lotteries back in 1826, we didn't have any casinos, boxing matches were illegal till about 1910, and football pools didn't make any real impact till the mid-1930s. If you wanted to have a little flutter, horseracing was the only way of doing it.

Of course, you could always play a friendly game of Persian Monarchs with Mustard Pott, but that would need much more money than the shilling or half-crown a bookmaker would take off you.

In those days, everybody had their eye on the big prize – the Calcutta Sweep. In Wodehouse's *A Man of Means*, Roland Bleke buys a ten shilling ticket for the Calcutta Sweep and wins £40,000. It was the big dream of every small gambler from its inception in 1871 till the 1930s. Here is how it worked.

Some Britishers out in India missed being able to bet on the Derby, so they started the Calcutta Sweepstake. They sold tickets at two dollars a go and, a week or so before the race, all the tickets were put in a big drum there, and the names of runners in the race were put in another drum here. Someone drew the name of a runner, someone else drew a sweepstake ticket, and the ticket holder then had that horse put down to him. The holder of the ticket for the winning horse then got a lot of money.

In 1930 the Irish Hospitals Sweepstakes began, and it soon became bigger than the Calcutta Sweep. The majority of Irish Sweepstake tickets were sold in the UK and the USA, and the fact that such sweeps were illegal in the UK and in most American states did not stop people buying them. The British Government declared the sale of tickets illegal, but somehow, very few people were prosecuted – and in Britain, you did not pay tax on your winnings since officially the Sweep didn't exist. In America, on the other hand, the authorities not only seized letters addressed to the Sweepstake people in Ireland, they confiscated the money inside as well – and if you were lucky enough to win, they taxed you on it. But in the 1960s, casinos and gambling became legal in the UK and many parts of America – and the Irish Sweep faded quietly away.

Now, think of Bingo Little, who, you will all remember, used to have dreams which he believed were Divine guidance on which horse to back. Well, that wasn't unknown in real life, either.

One example was Lord Kilbracken, who died in 2006 having enjoyed an eventful life. He began by running a successful bookmaking business as a schoolboy at Eton; went on to Balliol, Oxford, which I shall come back to in a moment; fought gallantly in the war, winning the Distinguished Service Cross; joined a newspaper as a racing correspondent; escorted Jayne Mansfield on her tour of the UK; tangled with the Mafia in a search for Nazi loot in 1963; and then unmasked a fraudulent art dealer who had swindled clients out of millions. But he is remembered in the racing world for his dreams of winners while he was at Oxford. One night, he dreamt of two horses winning, both at 7-1. The dream was so vivid, he looked in the newspaper and found their names, and he and a few friends backed them. They both won. This happened again, and again and again, nine times in all, and on the last two occasions, he even registered the names at a post office before the race with a time stamp to show he was genuine.

A Plum-Coloured Puzzle

by Dean Miller

In the encyclopaedic and much-welcomed Overlook Press collection of PGW's collected works (three cheers and a tiger!) appears *Psmith in the City*, in which the irrepressible and unflappable hero (on page 144) delivers these lines, anent, of all things, the game of dominoes: "A cousin of mine, who secured his chess blue at Oxford, would, they tell me, have represented his University in the dominoes match also, had he not unfortunately dislocated the radius bone of his bazooka while training for it."

We note the very odd noun 'bazooka', committed to print (in this tale) in 1910. Now, according to popular wartime mythology here in the States, the American army was equipped, about 1942 – that is, 30 years later – with a rocket-propelled anti-tank weapon, fired from the shoulder, which greatly discommoded and discouraged the tankmen of the German Wehrmacht. This device was christened a 'bazooka' (a) because it resembled, more or less, a very strange musical instrument of the same name, a sort of *omnium gatherum* of bits and pieces, invented

by a minor tunesmith and rustic radio comedian named Bob Burns, or (b) one supposes, to conceal its real, fell military purpose, after the model of the 'tank' of the Great War. The former is the accepted solution or explanation.

To go on, the future of the bazooka as a weapon was not fruitful; it was deployed early on during the Korean conflict (1950–53) and proved ineffective against the Russian-made T-34 tanks deployed by the North Korean army, and it was replaced as soon as possible by something more potent called the '3.5 inch rocket launcher' – much more military a term and not half so poetic, but it did the job.

The question, of course, is: Where did Psmith's 1910 'bazooka' come from?

Is this Edwardian slang, the sort of thing that Plum uses so freely in other contexts? And how did an American comic 'musician' come across or reinvent the term? Or what, if I may be so bold as to ask, is going on here? Responses, however bizarre, are cordially invited.

Cosy Moments

***The Secret Life of Bletchley Park*, by Sinclair McKay (2010)** (from Peter O'Neil)

While reading this book, Peter came across the following passage:

In the 1930s P. G. Wodehouse's aristocratic dilettante Bertie Wooster was hugely popular among a wide readership, not because his readers wanted to doff their caps to him but because he fitted precisely the popular perception of the upper class idiot.

***Life Itself*, by Roger Ebert (2011)** (from Neil Midkiff)

In this memoir, the American film critic describes his first real job, writing for the Urbana, Illinois *News-Gazette* while still in high school, and tells of the employees who worked in the city room:

Right in the middle of the room, between the reporters and the sports, was the desk of Fran Myers, the university editor, a formidable matron who embodied a Wodehousian aunt.

Neil writes: I really like this confident sort of passing reference that shows that an author just assumes that his readers are the kind who will know what he means.

***A Good American*, by Alex George (2012)**

According to a recent post on PGWnet, the narrator of this book makes several references to Wodehouse, and to Jeeves and Bertie. It is reported to be very funny and enjoyable, and is "highly recommended" by Society member Neil Midkiff. An excerpt from the

book, in which the pronunciation of Wodehouse's name is discussed, can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/wKYbWG>.

***William Shakespeare: The Complete Plays* (Folio Society, 1988)** (from Barry Chapman)

In a discussion of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, the unidentified author lists a number of deceptions and impostures that take place in the play, and then makes the following point:

We are, of course, accustomed to the spectacle of imposters at Blandings Castle (and other stately homes). The old place would not seem the same without them. However, in regard to that kind of problem, even though in modern times P. G. Wodehouse may arguably have said it better, William Shakespeare . . ., of these two geniuses separated by the centuries, on account of when he lived, of course actually said it first!

***Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, by T. S. Eliot (1939)** (from Norman Murphy)

Norman writes: The next time you are trying to name members of the Drones Club (helpfully listed for us by Geoffrey Jaggard and Dan Garrison), there is a new one to add. Among T. S. Eliot's practical cats is Bustopher Jones, The Cat About Town, who frequents various Clubs in the West End and, around noon, drops "in for a drink at the Drones". One more compliment for PGW from a fellow writer.

Mastermind Quiz 5: The School Stories

by David Buckle

This time around we are really challenging the little grey cells! Only two AudioGO Wodehouse audiobooks are up for grabs, with winners to be chosen at random from correct entries.

1. What is the title of P. G. Wodehouse's first published novel, set at Saint Austin's School?
2. In 'The Tabby Terror', what is the name of Prater's cat, the eponymous terror of the title?
3. In *The Gold Bat*, set at Wrykin School, what is the name of the local mayor whose statue is interfered with by O'Hara and Moriarty?
4. In which school is 1903's *A Prefect's Uncle* set?
5. In *The Head of Kay's*, who is Second Prefect of Blackburn's House, who is drafted in to become Head Prefect of Kay's House?
6. In the second part of *Mike*, Mike Jackson is moved from Wrykin to Sedleigh, where he meets up with which well-known Wodehouse character?
7. In *The White Feather*, which champion boxer trains R. D. Sheen to pugilistic success?
8. Florence Beezley, a friend of 'Babe' MacArthur's sister at Girton College, Cambridge, is also known as what in *Tales of Saint Austin's*?
9. Dimsdale, Scott, Simpson, Morrison, and Reginald Robinson all have what status in *The Pothunters*?
10. Which Drones member and friend of Bertie Wooster attended Saint Austin's?

Results of the March Quiz

With four prizes at stake in March's quiz, it was rather surprising – if not a little disappointing – to receive only five sets of answers, all correct. So Wodehouse audiobooks, generously provided by AudioGO, will be sent to Steve Griffiths, Alan Hall, John Looijestijn, and Brian Porter. Congratulations to them, as well as to Hans Schrijvers, who also sent correct answers.

Answers to the March Quiz

1. Ukridge wears a bright yellow mackintosh.
2. Ukridge's farm is in Dorset (Dorsetshire).
3. The old stepper suggests that Ukridge get Myrtle a sundial.

Poet's Corner *The Phalanx*

We are a happy Cabinet,
Secure against attacks
All bosom friends with self-same ends,
We stick like so much wax.
Our peaceful life no kind of strife
Has e'er been known to mar:
We are a happy Cabinet,
We are! We are!! We are!!!

Of course it's true that some of us
Hold views that scarce agree
With those expressed by all the rest:
Still, hang it. Thought is free.
Besides it's not exactly what
You'd call a hitch or jar.
We are a happy Cabinet.
We are! We are!! We are!!!

If Winston Churchill thought the same
As Asquith, Burns or Grey:
If Asquith, too, affairs could view
In Herbert Gladstone's way:
And if Lloyd-George could be suppressed
We'd then do better far.
We are a happy Cabinet.
We are! We are!! We are!!!

'Twere well if we united minds
To Ireland could apply.
On Rand Chinese, and points like these,
Could see things eye to eye.
But as to details such as this
We're not particular
We are a happy Cabinet.
We are! We are!! We are!!!

From *Books of Today and Books of Tomorrow*,
January 1906

4. Lt.-Col. Bagnew fires his service revolver.
5. Oakshott turns The Cedars into a gambling den.
6. To raise £50 to buy a dog that was due to run in the Waterloo Cup.
7. Ukridge has the vagrant throw a rotten tomato at Weeks.
8. His proposed next venture is a duck farm.
9. He pawns a clock.
10. Looney Coote bets on a horse named Stolen Goods.

Sitting Pretty

Reviewed by David McDonough

And the birdies every Spring sing
Aren't you coming back to Sing-Sing
Where you used to be so happy long ago?

My favourite lines from my favourite song in the M P G Wodehouse–Guy Bolton–Jerome Kern show *Sitting Pretty*, ‘When It’s Tulip Time in Sing-Sing’, were delivered with great gusto and comic timing by Paul Romero and Graham Bailey in the Musicals Tonight! staged concert production of *Sitting Pretty* that ran April 17–20 at the Lion Theatre, New York City.

For the uninitiated, Musicals Tonight! is the brainchild of Mel Miller, who in 1997 decided to revive ‘neglected’ musicals. He has staged over 65, including *The Beauty Prize*, *The Cabaret Girl*, *Have a Heart*, and *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* Next year, the company will add another star to its crown with the Wodehouse-Bolton-Kern hit *Leave It to Jane*.

Sitting Pretty, first produced in 1924, was the last show by the great triumvirate. It was originally planned to star the vaudeville twins the Duncan Sisters, with Irving Berlin as composer and lyricist, while Plum and Bolton would do the book. But while they were doing so, the Duncan Sisters created a very popular act called Topsy and Eva, based on Uncle Tom’s Cabin, and opted to continue in it. Without them, Irving Berlin dropped out, too, so Jerome Kern, Plum and Bolton’s collaborator on eight previous shows, took over, and *Sitting Pretty* went ahead.

The plot? Mr. Pennington is a millionaire who dislikes his relatives, even his good-egg nephew Bill. Pennington determines to foster-parent a boy and a girl, who will then marry and inherit his fortune. Enter his new foster son, Horace, really a thief whose uncle plants him in rich people’s houses to make off with the swag. Enter, also, two orphan girls and other schoolgirls. Dixie likes Horace, and he hopes she will be his bride. But she insults Pennington, and he adopts her sister, May, who is attracted to Bill. Meanwhile, Horace’s Uncle Jo poses as his tutor . . .

And that’s just Act 1. In Act 2, complications ensue and misunderstandings abound, but Bill ends up with May, Horace ends up with Dixie, the stolen loot is returned, and people sing a lot. If a lot of this sounds familiar, it’s because Plum used the basic plot for his 1924 novel *Bill the Conqueror*.

Despite its pedigree, endearingly silly plot, and catchy tunes, the original show ran only 95 performances. This may have been due to Kern’s refusal to allow the music to be played on radio, on

records, or in cabarets, making it difficult to generate interest. Kern also felt that the fact that the two actresses playing the twins looked nothing alike was to blame. Or perhaps the public’s taste had changed.

The Musicals Tonight! production was a breezy treat, considering that the concert style required the actors to have the book in their hands. The minimal sets and costumes were appropriately vintage-looking, and the actors were uniformly excellent. Some numbers had to be cut, and dialogue was truncated so that sometimes even the trivial plot became confusing. But the singing was first-rate and

the clowning excellent. Stand-outs included Graham Bailey as Horace, Chelsea Barker as Dixie, Diane Phelan as May, Paul Romero as Uncle Jo, and the highly comic Sara Jayne Blackmore as Babe, a gold-digging chorine.

Plum’s lyrics are fine, albeit at times reminiscent of earlier influences. ‘Is This Not a Lovely Spot’ is reminiscent of W. S. Gilbert (‘Three Little Maids from School Are We’). ‘The Magic Train’ is one of Plum’s cozy-in-the-suburbs songs,

a la ‘A Little Bungalow in Quogue’ from *The Riviera Girl*, and ‘When It’s Tulip Time in Sing-Sing’ resembles ‘Put Me in My Little Cell’, Plum’s first published lyric in *Sergeant Brue* in 1904.

It was a top-rate production, and the only jarring note was probably only evident to the Wodehouseans present: in ‘Bongo On the Congo’, the last verse was cut. Unfortunately, it was one of the best:

There no one collars
Your hard-earned dollars
They’ve a system that’s a bear:
When Government assessors call
To try and sneak your little all
You simply hit them with an axe,
That’s how you pay your income tax
In Bongo!
It’s on the Congo,
And I wish that I was there.

Wodehouseans will recognize the title of Tony Ring’s book on Plum and his tax battles. Mr. Ring was at the performance and I dared not turn around, as I was convinced that he was at that moment of exclusion some six feet off the ground in pure dudgeon. I believe strong men had to rally round with brandy.

Aside from that, the evening was a complete success, and we look forward to next season’s production.



Very Nice Work

A Review of *Nice Work If You Can Get It*

by Tony Ring

In the last *Wooster Sauce*, reference was made to three musicals with Wodehouse connections being presented simultaneously on – or just off – Broadway for a week or so in April. A review of *Sitting Pretty* can be found on the opposite page, while the long-running *Anything Goes* (which opened in January 2011) is still playing to capacity audiences, offering outstanding spectacle and receiving a standing ovation at the end of the performance from the entire audience (which, it was refreshing to note, included a high proportion of under-30s).

The third of the shows is *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. Before the end of its previews, it had received nine nominations for the Outer Circle Critics Award 2011/2012, more than any other show. It could be described as the *Mamma Mia* of an earlier musical generation – around 20 of the best songs by George and Ira Gershwin being shoehorned into a cleverly conceived plot, created by Jo DiPietro but based on (‘inspired by’, as the publicity puts it) the 1926 Wodehouse-Bolton-Gershwin musical about bootleggers, *Oh, Kay!*

That source was acknowledged in the opening few minutes of the show when a prolonged exchange between two protagonists results in the expression “OK” being repeated about ten times in rapid succession – an in-joke regrettably understood by few in the audience.

The show itself – which has received generally favourable but slightly mixed reviews from the critics – is utterly spectacular. The set is possibly the most complex I have ever seen, and the imaginative and humorous use made of its facilities outstanding. The costumes and lighting gloriously enhance the set’s physical appearance – and the choreography created by show director Kathleen Marshall (who had also taken both roles in *Anything Goes*) is innovative and impeccably performed.

There is a scene involving a lifelong teetotaler becoming drunk and swinging from a chandelier which brought tears streaming down the audience’s cheeks – and not just because the drunk in question was the venerable Judy Kaye, who has more than 40 years’ experience on the stage.

Kelli O’Hara, currently the darling of Broadway, and Matthew Broderick are impressive, and supported by many other extremely good performances. There is every prospect that this Wodehouse-influenced show will also be a long-running hit.



Breaking News: On 14 May the winners of the Outer Circle Awards were announced. Michael McGrath and Judy Kaye won as Outstanding Featured Actor and Actress in a Musical (the equivalent of best supporting actor and actress). *Nice Work if You Can Get It* has also been nominated for ten Tony Awards.

Some Catchy Clerihews

Mr Mulliner at the Angler’s Rest
Always urged each doubtful guest
To come and hear him fable
About his extensive genealogical table.
- Lennart Andersson

Murmured Jeeves, “I am staidier than some, yet
I tolerate every Egg, Bean and Crumpet,
Nor do I consider it my place
To criticize any Pieface.”
- Jonathan Bacchus

Percy Frobisher Pilbeam
Is on to a lucrative scheme,
If before it goes to press
He can find Gally’s m.s.
- Jenny and Susan Inglis

Reginald Jeeves
Will roll up his sleeves
And when put to the test
Can buttle with the best
- Geoff Millward

Gally often seeks Beach’s advice
To put matters right in a trice.
Their consultations and thought
Work better with the ‘42 port.
- Norman Murphy

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

Early Wodehouse Letters

The previous Corner discussed the serialisation of *The Swoop* in the magazine *Story Paper Collectors' Digest*. Further browsing in the magazine's back issues has alerted me to more Wodehouse material of interest.

Sophie Ratcliffe's recent *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters* (pp40–41) provides a letter from '[Summer 1899]' as the earliest known letter from Wodehouse. An article entitled 'How to Become a Journalist' by S Gordon Swan in *Story Paper Collectors' Digest* (Vol. 29, No. 339, March 1975) provides evidence of an even earlier letter. The article begins: "Browsing through the old periodicals can be very rewarding as one often finds material of interest to present-day readers. In a volume of *Chums* [issue No. 297, dated 18 May 1898], the famous boys' paper, I found several paragraphs of this nature . . . included in a page entitled 'The Editor to his Chums', in which the editor answered various correspondents."

The article then quotes directly from *Chums*: ". . . an answer to Mr Wodehouse, of Dulwich, who asks me: 'How can one become a journalist?'" The key points of the Editor's answer include the following:

The first requisite is, not only that a man shall be able to write about the things he sees and hears, but that he shall be able to write about them in such a way that other people will be interested in his work. If he has this gift, the rest is easy. . . . Let us assume that Mr Wodehouse has some of the gifts which go to make a pleasing writer. In that case he should begin by studying the columns of some journal which buys the kind of thing he thinks he can write best. When he begins to understand what kind of contribution the editor is in the habit of accepting, let him sit down to his article. His first efforts should be brief; they should be bright; and they should deal with some subject a little out of the common. In this way they are likely to catch the editor's eye, and the author of them to begin a career in which every subsequent step will be in the right direction to recognition and to profitable employment.

It seems highly likely that "Mr Wodehouse of Dulwich" was indeed P G Wodehouse, who was 16 at the time and approaching the end of his antepenultimate year at Dulwich College (he left in July 1900). We know that he was an avid reader of

Chums as a boy (Ratcliffe, p37 and p481); that he began his paid writing career by winning a prize for an article on 'Some Aspects of Game Captaincy', published in *The Public School Magazine* in February 1900 (McIlvaine, D123.1); and that the bulk of his early articles and stories dealt with public schools, an environment with which he was obviously very familiar. It seems that he took the advice of the *Chums* Editor very much to heart.

Assuming that the attribution of the letter to Wodehouse is accepted, one other point of interest arising from it is that it indicates that Wodehouse was considering a writing career even before he became aware, in 1899 (Ratcliffe, p49), that he would be unable to follow his brother Armine to Oxford.

Coincidentally, shortly after discovering the above item, I stumbled across the existence of another, even earlier letter by a Mr Wodehouse to the Editor of *Chums* (my thanks go to the late Terry Mordue for identifying this item originally, and to Arthur Robinson for making a copy of it available to me). In 'The Editor to His Chums' page in an earlier edition of *Chums* (issue No. 236, 17 March 1897), the following extract is of interest:

We have never printed a tale which has won more admiration than Mr [Samuel] Walkey's "Rogues of the *Fiery Cross*". Take, for example, a letter which reaches me from Mr Wodehouse. He says, "I think that 'Rogues of the *Fiery Cross*' is the best story I have ever read. It knocks spots off 'In Quest of Sheba's Treasure,' [Walkey's first serial in *Chums* in 1895-96] which I didn't think was quite up to *Chums*' usual standard." Here, you see, we have both praise and criticism. . . . Harking back to the letter from Mr Wodehouse, he puts a couple of questions to me which seem of some interest. His first question deals with that popular subject – "bed-time". He is at present employed upon some work which keeps him out of bed every night until half-past eleven, and he desires to know if such a practice is harmful. If I knew Mr Wodehouse's age, I could answer him more readily. . . . Mr Wodehouse's second question is also one of health. . . . Mr Wodehouse [wishes] to know how . . . to get rid of superfluous fat.

After advising his correspondent to “avoid fat-producing food”, the Editor provides a suitably Victorian response: “[T]he main thing is exercise. People often get fat because of lazy and indolent habits. . . . There are exceptions, of course, but your fat man is nearly always a lazy man, and is, therefore, deserving of little sympathy.”

Once again, it seems likely that the letter writer is P G Wodehouse. Although the letter could be from Armine, burning the midnight oil preparing for his Oxford entrance exams, it seems more likely to be from Pelham. We have already seen that he was a keen reader and critic of *Chums*, and that he would write to *Chums* again in 1898. In addition, his nickname at Dulwich was Podge (Robert McCrum, *Wodehouse: A Life*, p27), and, at the time the letter was published, he may also have been studying late each night, as he was awarded a senior classical scholarship “in the summer of 1897” (McCrums, p33).

Wodehouse On the Boards

Thanks to ADRIAN READING for sending word of a production of *Come On, Jeeves* in Woking, 25–28 April. Unfortunately, his letter arrived too late to publish news of the production in the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, but we understand it was a splendid play (as Wodehouse always is!).

There is no news of any other Wodehouse plays in the UK, but in the US, the Artists’ Ensemble Theatre of Rockford, Illinois, have announced their 2012–13 season. It includes *Jeeves Takes a Bow*, by Margaret Raether. The plot is described as follows: “Bertie Wooster and Jeeves visit the Big Apple and in less than a New York minute, Bertie is tangled with chorus girls, gangsters, finances, and a musical called *Naughty Natalie!*” Though this doesn’t sound like any Wodehouse plot that we know, the Editor is reliably informed that it is based on three PGW short stories.

This is Raether’s third Wodehouse play, and it is being staged September 7–23.

“Is one to have no privacy, Glossop?” I said coldly. “I instructed Jeeves to lock the door because I was about to disrobe.”

“A likely story!” said Tuppy, and I’m not sure he didn’t add “Forsooth!”

(From *Right Ho, Jeeves*, 1934)

In Our Little Paradise: Songs of P. G. Wodehouse

Reviewed by Peter Thompson

This CD features 18 brilliant songs sung beautifully by Marie Jette (and, where appropriate, likewise by her musical accompanist, Dan Chouinard). I purchased it after reading about it in the December 2011 issue of *Wooster Sauce*, and had a delightful email response from the singer herself when seeking to purchase the same. The CD has rarely left my audio centre (okay, record player) since its arrival.



Whilst I was familiar with ‘Cleopatterer’ and ‘Boat Song’, I had not previously heard the much heralded ‘Two to Tooting’, so that was a pleasant surprise. If I wanted to fix three on a continuous tape, to play constantly, I would choose ‘Be a Little Sunbeam’, ‘That Ticking Taxi’s Waiting at the Door’, and ‘The Train That Leaves for Town’. Oh, all right, I do constantly play them just as if on such a loop. ‘I Never Knew’ is a close fourth.

As with all things Wodehouse, what makes the songs special is his brilliant use of the English language. Of course, credit must be given to the various composers as few songs survive if the melody misfires, but the fact that they are various and not just Jerome Kern (as I originally suspected would be the case) shows the glue is the Wodehouse dexterity with and the choice of language. The lyrics are slick and so right.

I was glad that ‘Sitting Pretty’ was included and surprised that ‘Bill’ was excluded. Another time, maybe. After all, having given us this beautiful introduction, Maria Jette must be persuaded to give us an encore CD with more songs with lyrics by P. G. Wodehouse. I for one eagerly await such an announcement. But I should like to thank her for filling this gaping chasm in my collection of work by PGW. She has provided many wonderful hours of pleasure and continues to do so. I must stop now – the ticking taxi’s waiting at the door.

For information on how to order this CD, visit Maria Jette’s website at www.mariajette.com.

Recent Press Comment

History Today, January (from Andrew Hall)

Christopher Winn referred to Wodehouse's use of the phrase "Elementary, my dear Watson" in *Psmith, Journalist*, 1915, as its source, as it did not appear in any of Doyle's stories, and not until 1929 in a Sherlock Holmes film.

The Times, February 18 (from Nick Townend)

In 'Literary Quiz', Philip Howard asked "Who was Edwin Craye?" and provided the answer "Boy Scout and terrorist, on the look out for good deeds to inflict on someone".

Hansard, February 21 (from Andrew Parker)

The verbatim report of Jacob Rees-Mogg's speech in Parliament during the Report Stage of the London Local Authorities Bill showed, at column 821, the MP using Bertie Wooster and his Widgeon Seven as props in a discussion about the implications of a council officer being permitted to impose an on-the-spot fine before demonstrating that he or she had the requisite authority.

Daily Telegraph, February 24 (from Carolyn de la Plain)

In commenting on 'bird song in cities', the leader column started:

After the initial explosion beneath the cranium, the effect of Jeeves's secret hangover cure on Bertie Wooster was that 'the sun shone in through the window; birds twittered in the tree-tops; and generally speaking, hope dawned once more'. With or without a hangover, sensitive ears had long detected that birds seem to sing louder in town than in the country . . .

Daily Telegraph Blog, February 24

Alan Massie wrote about J K Rowling's decision to write her next novel for adults, and pointed to Wodehouse as a distinguished example of an earlier writer who made the transition successfully. He quoted Evelyn Waugh: "Mike is one of the most important of Mr Wodehouse's books; it is there, halfway through, that the author of *The Tales of St Austin's* suddenly reveals the genius of his later work."

The Age (Also the *Sydney Morning Herald*), **February 26**

Carried belated but positive reviews of Sophie Ratcliffe's *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*.

Publishers' Weekly, February 28

The Audio Fiction Review Spotlight featured the radio dramas and works of Wodehouse, concentrating on *Jeeves and Wooster: The Collected Radio Dramas*, from AudioGO. This was the mid-1970s series featuring, *inter alia*, Richard Briers and Michael Hordern as Bertie and Jeeves, respectively.

The Times, March 3

In 'Nicholas Clee's Book Diary' there was a reference to a reincarnation of the Authors XI cricket team, which plans to play ten matches this season, following the trail established a century earlier by the team which included Conan Doyle, Wodehouse, Milne, and Hornung.

The Times, March 3 (from Nick Townend)

In his column 'The Pedant', Oliver Kamm wrote: "I write this, as Bertie Wooster said of Sir Watkyn Bassett,

goggling with horror and indignation behind the pince-nez, for the article I've criticised was written by me."

The Times, March 3

Christina Hardyment noted that her current night-time listening was Martin Jarvis's abridged reading of *Galahad at Blandings*, on four CDs, available from Canongate.

Daily Telegraph, March 5

(from Edward Cazalet, Alan Hall, and P E Turner)

Charles Moore wrote an article about Mr N M Gwynne, a septuagenarian offering grammar lessons to the public at Selfridge's, and concluded by repeating a PGW quotation which Mr Gwynne considers the most perfectly accomplished sentence of the 20th century – in which a single comma in the wrong place would have caused the sentence to collapse:

With the feeling, which was his constant companion nowadays, for the wedding was fixed for the fifth of July and it was already the 10th of June, that if anyone cared to describe him as some wild thing taken in a trap, which sees the trapper coming through the woods, it would be all right with him, he threw a moody banana skin at the loudest of the sparrows, and went back into the room.

New York Review, March 8 (from Barbara Jacobitti)

In an article referring to the spirit of Wodehouse which haunts the corridors of *Downton Abbey*, James Fenton concluded that "The clever servant had been a stock figure in comedy way back in antiquity, but the master had never been so completely the servant's creation as Bertie Wooster was".

The Times, March 10 (from Nick Townend)

In 'Literary Quiz', Philip Howard asked, "Who is Sir Roderick Glossop, pray?" and provided the answer: "The eminent loony-doctor, who has much influence (benign or malign) on Bertie Wooster's life."

The Chicago Tribune, March 12 (from Karen Shotting)

Barbara Brotman noted that Chicago will host the next Wodehouse Society Convention, in October 1913, and recommended Wodehouse as a replacement for *Downton Abbey*, especially during the latter's off-season.

Channel 4, March 21 (from June Arnold)

On the programme *Countdown*, Dictionary Corner's Suzy Dent identified the word 'gruntled' and said it had been reintroduced to the dictionary after PGW had used it in his books.

The Times, March 24 and other papers

Significant publicity was given to the revelations in the new book *Double Cross* by Ben McIntyre, which included, *inter alia*, that Johnny Jebsen, one of the heroic double agents who kept essential secrets from the Germans under extreme torture, was a friend of Wodehouse when he was stuck in Occupied France, and that there had been a proposal that MI6 should recruit Ethel Wodehouse as a source of information.

The National (an Arab Emirates publication), **March 27**

A N Wilson provided a list of six books he would take on

a desert island, including *Joy in the Morning*. Since the other authors were Dante, Tolstoy, Plato, Goethe, and Carlyle, having a place in that company is high praise – especially when Wilson added that he would have been happy with any Wodehouse story as he is “the patron saint of writers”.

The Independent, March 29

Philip Hensher’s article about binge drinking and how to cope with it lamented the disappearance of the ‘drunk scene’ from English-language comedy and referred explicitly to Gussie Fink-Nottle’s speech to the boys of Market Snodsbury Grammar School.

Newsletter.co.uk, March 29

Disclosed that Crom Castle on Lough Erne in Co Fermanagh had been chosen as the setting for Blandings Castle in the forthcoming BBC1 TV series, expected to be transmitted in the autumn. It will star Timothy Spall and Jennifer Saunders. (See item on p.11.)

World Wide Words, March 31 (from Mike Swaddling)

An article about the word ‘sooth’ included a quote from *Right Ho, Jeeves* (see the boxed quote on p.21).

Bibliophile, March

Introduced two of the categories of Books for Sale with Wodehouse quotations: ‘Literature’ and ‘Sport’.

The Times, April 7

In his ‘Literary Quiz’, Philip Howard asked “Who is Roberta Wickham?” and provided the answer “A friend of Bertie Wooster, unsuitable as a wife”.

The Times, April 7 (from Leila Deakin and Keith Alsop)

In his column ‘The Pedant’, Oliver Kamm compared Wodehouse’s use of the word ‘literally’ in *Right Ho, Jeeves*, to the common but inexcusable misuse of the term in day-to-day English:

“You feel that Miss Angela’s strictures should not be taken too much *au pied de la lettre*, sir?”

“Eh?”

“In English, we should say ‘literally’.”

“Literally. That’s exactly what I mean.”

New York Times Sunday Review, April 7

Paul Clement, former Solicitor-General of the United States, referred to Wodehouse books as his “favored humor writing”.

The Observer, April 8

Philip Hensher included *The Code of the Woosters* in a list of favourite novels which he reckons to have read more than 30 times.

Daily Telegraph, April 14

(from Carolyn de la Plain and Ann Close)

Provided a cast photograph and a little more information about the forthcoming *Blandings* TV series, naming series cast members Jack Farthing (as Freddie) and Mark Williams (as Beach) and noting there are cameo roles for David Walliams (as Baxter) and singer Paloma Faith.

The Spectator, April 21

(from Leila Deakin)

Competition No. 2743 invited readers to submit a recipe as if it had been written by an author of their choice. Carolyn Thomas-Coxhead submitted ‘Bertram’s anchovy toast, as dictated by P.G. Wodehouse’, which essentially involved giving a slice of bread “a jolly good grilling”,

adding butter and anchovies, and presenting it to “fond aunt; await applause and cheque”.

Various American Papers and Internet Sources, April 24 onwards

Provided reviews of the new musical *Nice Work If You Can Get It* (see review on page 19), which opened on Broadway on April 24, and noted that the show had been nominated for nine Outer Critics Circle Awards and had eight Drama Desk nominations.

Sunday Telegraph, May 6

An article on the Mini’s new Roadster suggested that “Bertie Wooster might have been a perfect customer” for the car’s makers.

The Independent, May 7 (from Karen Shotting)

In an article on the appointment of Mike Griffith as the new MCC president, Stephen Brentley expounded on Griffith being PGW’s godson and said that the MCC got it “Plum right”. (See the full article at <http://ind.pn/IRkHTb>.)

The Guardian, May 8 (from Nirav Shah)

Frank Keating’s online sports blog spoke of George Orwell and PGW’s shared fondness for cricket and said that Wodehouse’s Mike would have made a “first-class opening bat” for Keating’s XI.

Daily Mail, May 10 (from Karen Shotting)

In an interview, cricket commentator Henry Blofeld named *Galahad at Blandings* as a book that has “everlasting resonance” for him and said that Wodehouse “is the funniest writer England has ever produced”.

(See also ‘Another Triple Whammy’ on page 7.)

**The World of
P. G. Wodehouse
by Ian Blake**

[Say what you will, there is something fine about our old aristocracy. I bet Trotsky couldn’t hit a moving secretary with an egg on a dark night.

–Uncle Fred in the Springtime]

Gracious living, butlers, pigs and pekes;
rolling acres graced by potty peers,
their sons and nephews slightly dotty too,
dominant, older, spinster sisters who
put the kibosh on ‘unsuitable’ young love.
Pig-nap, purloin a silver cow-creamer, or steal
scandalous manuscript memoirs which reveal
who threw that curried prawn in ‘ninety-four
(direct hit on a judge just coming through the door
to ‘prong a moody forkful’ with his heir who owns
nothing but his membership of The Drones
and half an onion-soup-bar.) Up above,
gazing down with disapproving glance,
a Pantheon of lorgnette-tapping Aunts.

This poem originally appeared in *The Spectator* in June 2004, as well as in the author’s 2007 collection *Waiting for Ginger Rogers* at Loch Oich.

Future Events for Your Diary

June 10, 2012 Gold Bats vs. Kirby Strollers

This annual charity match takes place in the grounds of Audley End House, near Saffron Walden; start time is 1 p.m. To get to Audley End, see <http://bit.ly/bVgH1>.

June 15, 2012 Gold Bats vs. The Dulwich Dusters

Our annual match at Dulwich College will commence around 4.30 p.m. and will include the celebrated tea. *Please note that spectators must have tickets for the tea*; write to tonyring@pgwodehousesociety.org.uk.

June 24, 2012 Gold Bats vs. Sherlock Holmes Society

As usual, we will be playing at the cricket ground located just off the A40 (Oxford Road) in West Wycombe, starting around 11 a.m.

July 1, 2011 Cricket in Thorpe Bay

The Gold Bats will play the Mount Cricket Club Alwyn Court School, Thorpe Bay (start time 2 p.m.).

July 10, 2012 Society Meeting

We will meet in the upstairs room of The George, 213 Strand, from 6 p.m. This particular evening promises to be especially fun as we will be engaging in a balloon debate; see page 4 for details.

July 28, 2012 and September 8, 2012

Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Explore Wodehouse's London with Norman Murphy! The walk is free and lasts about 2½ hours (10–12.30).

September 15–16, 2012 Royal County of Berkshire Show

The Society sponsors the Berkshire Champion of Champions competition, for which judging takes place on Sunday morning at the show grounds in Newbury; see p.4.

October 25, 2012 Dinner at Gray's Inn

Application forms and full details regarding the Society's biennial dinner at Gray's Inn are enclosed with this issue of *Wooster Sauce*; see also p.3.

November 13, 2012 Society Meeting and AGM

We will meet in the upstairs room of The George, 213 Strand, from 6 p.m.; the AGM will be followed by a speaker (to be announced).

October 18–20, 2013 TWS Convention in Chicago

Preliminary notice of The Wodehouse Society's 17th biennial convention, to be held at the Union League Club in Chicago, Illinois.

He looked much more like a parrot than most parrots do. It gave strangers a momentary shock of surprise when they saw Bream Mortimer in restaurants, eating roast beef. They had the feeling that he would have preferred eating sunflower seeds.

(From *The Girl on the Boat*, 1922)

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