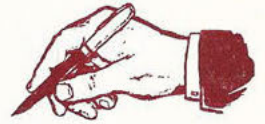


# WOOSTER SAUCE



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

Number 7

September 1998

## SOCIETY COLLAPSES!

*Dusters clean up as we lose by 66 runs*



The inaugural cricket match between The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) XI, led by Bob Miller, and the Dulwich College Common Room (known affectionately as "The Dusters"), took place at the College on July 2, 1998.

The schoolmasters (of both sexes) made 188 in their 25 overs. The Society's team (left, photo Stephen Fullom) and supporters maintained stiff upper lips during an unavailing chase for runs which could only reach 122. The lips were loosened (and moistened) later for a most convivial *post mortem* in the pavilion.

It is hoped that the match will be replayed next year, followed by a dinner in hall at the College. Provisional dates of July 1 or July 8 have been set for the event, and members are invited to put them in their diaries now.

## *The Spirit of Tuppy Glossop at the Savage Club*

A meeting of the Society at the Savage Club on July 14 attracted over 40 members despite the lack of any advertised formal entertainment. In the event, the theme turned out to be Tuppy Glossop's practical joke on Bertie Wooster, to which Bertie referred time and again, originally in *Jeeves and the Yuletide Spirit*.

Helen Murphy set the scene by reading the relevant extract from the story, after which the Chairman introduced a short video clip of an elderly Scottish gentleman demonstrating how to swing across a swimming pool by the rings in formal dress without getting wet! As he (the elderly Scottish gentleman, not the chairman) looked extremely competent and in no discomfort whatsoever while doing so, it was proved to our satisfaction that Bertie would have been quite capable of the same feat. Lara Cazalet rounded the proceedings off nicely by being cajoled, within five minutes of her arrival, into reading a poem on the subject by Matt Keiler Simon entitled *The Betrayal of Bertram*, which had, at the 1997 Convention of the US Wodehouse Society, won the competition for best poem.



## How Chandler Might Have Written Wodehouse

*During the summer, Radio 4 ran a literary panel game entitled 'The Write Stuff'. Each edition featured an author of the week, and the final game required the panellists to present brief pastiches of how that author might have tackled a fellow-scribe's setting. On August 7, the featured author was Raymond Chandler; the setting that of P G Wodehouse. Good pastiche is very difficult to write: the pieces that emerged seemed uniformly good, but you must imagine them being read with an appropriate American accent.*

### From John Walsh:

Noon was breaking on Hollywood as I drove east to Florian's drugstore. I felt like a length of chewed string. My gut was playing jolly jump-up with the eighteen bourbon stingers from the night before and I needed a bromo. I'd heard there was some butler guy at Florian's who mixed a mean Prairie Oyster.

The traffic honked like migrating geese who would never think of coming back. I parked by a hydrant and hit the street. Outside a blousy diner called *Drones* a guy was coming out.

"Pip-pip, old horse," he said, "How's tricks?"

It was Gussie Fink-Nottle. We used to run around together in the old days at the DA's office along with Oofy Prosser before he got five to ten in the slammer for dishonestly handling debutantes.

"Gussie," I said, "Still living off Aunt Dahlia?" His aunt was a dragon from Ensenado with a smile like a broken window.

"Actually, I'm engaged to a rather smashing girl," he said. "She's some sort of hoofer around this part of the world. Name of Velma. Haven't seen her lately, have you?"

### From Sebastian Faulks

I had a short let at that time on an apartment in Berkeley Mansions. The rent was low because the owner was away in Pentonville and the elevator screeched like a Palm Springs widow at a black-jack table. The caretaker was called Jeeves, the kind of guy who reads Spinoza for the gags. He showed in a blonde with eyes like fog-lamps on an Oldsmobile.

"Miss Madeleine Bassett to see you, sir."

"I don't do matrimonial" I said.

"Oh, Bertie, you naughty boy," said the blonde. "I know you've always held a torch for me and now I've got good news for you."

I sat down heavily behind the desk. Suddenly the day held as much charm for me as a stevedore's undershirt.

### From Victoria Coren

Two-forty-four Mount Street was one of those tall, brown Mayfair buildings that tells you the builder over-ordered on bricks and thought "What the hell". I looked at the brass plate. It said: The Drones Club. There was a doorman outside, sweeping a path through the broken bottles, so I slipped him a ten and asked him where I could find Mr Bertram Wooster, and he said to try the chandelier in the library. It was the big room with a book in it.

So I found the library and I looked up at that chandelier and sure enough, there was something with around two hundred teeth looking down from it. He had a bread roll in his hand. So I flashed the tin and I asked if he was Mister Bertram Wooster of Half Moon Street and he said he was and I said "I have some bad news for you, Mr Wooster. Your Aunt Agatha's dog has been murdered." And I saw his arm go back and I saw the bread roll leave his hand. And then a dark pit opened, and I fell in.

### From Louise Doughty

[Bertie Wooster is being served his Sunday lunch by Jeeves.]

I asked Jeeves to pour me a slug of sherry, but he just looked at me and said "Hey, man, let me finish carving up this cow."

It was that kind of joint.

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## THE SMILE THAT WINS

### Favourite Nifties – 4

Lady Constance was smiling brightly, as women so often do when they are in the process of slipping something raw over their nearest and dearest.

*The Crime Wave at Blandings, from Lord Emsworth and Others, 1937*

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## I SAY!

### Favourite Exchanges – 7

"Didn't Frankenstein get married?"

"Did he?" said Eggy. "I don't know. I never met him. Harrow man, I expect."

*Laughing Gas, 1936*



## McAllister, McHoots and now McBean!

*Nero Wolfe, the best-known fictional expert on orchid propagation, never named one after P G Wodehouse despite the high opinion author Rex Stout, had of his works. Jim Durrant, of McBean's Orchids, explains why a number of orchids now have names with Wodehousean connections.*

The whole thing really dates back to 1991. I made a hybrid cross of two cymbidium orchids using a super new parent plant called *Red Beauty*. The first cross that flowered had been with *Christmas Angel* and the resulting plants displayed their light pink to orange blooms in December 1996. I named the hybrid *Christmas Cheer*.

Shortly afterwards emerged the results of the second cross, with *Loch Moor*, the flowers being of a much more solid colour in deep shades of brown, bronze and copper, which I named *Loch Levin*. In order to differentiate between all the different plants of a cross, an individual varietal name is required, ie Family name *Glossop*, varietal name *Tuppy*.

Since most of my reading has been of the *Jeeves and Wooster* books, I came to the logical conclusion of naming all the varieties after characters in the series. All the pink, gushing colours were named after the ladies and the darker varieties after the men. Thus the biggest, boldest pink became *Christmas Cheer 'Aunt Dahlia'*, the best light copper *Loch Levin 'Bertie Wooster'*, the more sombre bronze *Loch Levin 'Jeeves'* and a slightly smaller bronze plant with brown stripes became *Loch Levin 'Gussie Fink-Nottle'*.

In total I named about 25 plants in this way, and it was surprisingly easy to find the correct flower to match each character! I exhibited the best twenty at the London Orchid Show in March this year at the Royal Horticultural Society halls in Vincent Square. Before the show opened, I was approached by Lady Hornby, who revealed her relationship to P G Wodehouse, a piece of news which made my day. The next thing I knew I received a letter from her saying that she had sponsored my membership of your Society, so here I am!

The two plants named *Loch Levin 'Bertie Wooster'* and *Christmas Cheer 'Madeline Bassett'* have recently been cloned so I expect the plants to be in flower at the orchid show in approximately 2003. I have been cross-breeding some of the other plants as well, and have to admit to causing a sordid and unlikely incident between *'Jeeves'* and *'Dahlia Travers'*!

*Editors' note:* Lady Hornby and her husband Sir Simon are both Patrons of the Society. Sir Simon is President of the Royal Horticultural Society.

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## Sotheby's Party and Auction

In June's *Wooster Sauce* we previewed the sale by auction on June 26 by Sotheby's New York of the Jimmy Heineman Wodehouse collection.

All European members of the Society were invited to attend a London Bookfair party hosted by Sotheby's in Bond Street on June 4, at which a number of the items to be auctioned were on display. More than forty members attended and were rewarded in addition by the generous gift of a free catalogue (as were a few members who notified us in advance that they would not be able to attend). We are most grateful to Sotheby's for their generosity in opening this event to the Society.

The auction itself must be judged to have only had limited success. One-third in number of the lots did not reach their reserve price, although a number found buyers in private sales after the auction. The average price of the remainder was about 33% above the lower estimates, although as might be expected there was a wide variation.

Some of the book lots (which generally consisted of both the English and the American first editions plus up to a dozen reprints) appear to have sold rather cheaply, barely reflecting the perceived value of the better first edition, while in a number of cases, the presence of more than one determined bidder took the hammer price much higher than forecast.

Easily the highest price, \$24,000, was achieved by the autograph manuscript of *Psmith Journalist*, but, extraordinarily, only one of another six manuscripts, *Quick Service*, found a buyer. More than half the items with lower estimates of \$5,000 or more were left with the auctioneer. Researchers, especially those interested in Wodehouse's theatrical career may be pleased to hear the report that the several collections of letters written to Guy Bolton have been acquired by the Library of Congress.

Collector members may assume that material from the auction will appear over the coming year. Watch out for the ubiquitous Heineman *Ex Libris* label!



## Shopping in West One

*Knowler Edmonds contemplates ways in which day-to-day provisions might arrive at Berkeley Mansions*

There must be many Plumophiles who have been troubled by one particular omission from descriptions of the domestic scene in the Wooster domain. Food shopping.

We are all aware that the manservant is a miracle worker in the kitchen. Rarely do we learn of Jeeves visiting the local Lipton's, Home & Colonial or Fortnum's. The mental vision of him collecting the necessary goodies every week and bagging them to bring home disturbs me. Neither the ordering, delivery nor payment is spelt out in the books, and it came as a shock to realise that these simple tasks of life are not mentioned.

Picture the scene one day when nothing in particular is happening in the household at Berkeley Mansions.

"Ah, Jeeves."

"Sir."

"You're off, then, to the old F and M? I'll tell you what, I feel like an outing this morning. I'll trot along with you and see what this provision-hunting is all about."

"Very good, sir. Will you drive?"

"I'll take the wheel, Jeeves. You just show me the way."

"As you wish, sir."

"By the way, Jeeves."

"Sir?"

"Does one pen a list, or anything on those lines? Should one make an inventory of stock, and so on?"

"You will observe, sir," and he proffered a detailed itemised document, "the range of groceries, victuals and provender that it is felt necessary we should purchase."

"That seems somewhat lengthy, doesn't it?"

"No more than usual. This represents, sir, the range and quality of goods we normally order, and Sidney on the counter is well used to our requirements on each occasion. I need hardly point out, sir, that he and I together are very cognisant of your particular likes and dislikes."

Bertie had a thought.

"Any fish on the list, Jeeves?"

"Sir?"

"It occurred to me that your daily ration should continue in order to sustain the power of that brain of yours."

"I appreciate the thought, sir. As you will see, fish is listed."

"Good-o, Jeeves."

Negotiating the traffic was fraught with increasing problems the nearer they got to their destination. Wooster mentioned to Jeeves that he hadn't expected that plunging into the trading area of the metropolis was such a hazardous business. The world and his wife seemed hell-bent on reaching the very same premises as themselves – a congestion experience one rarely finds in the environs of the Drones, one may say. Jeeves soothed the nerves with calming instructions, and they found a parking spot not too far from the main entrance.

I don't know whether you've ever been in one of these emporiums, perhaps you haven't, but the old F and M quite takes your breath away. There were enticing displays of this and that everywhere. At this hour in the morning there were people milling about, hither and thither, and so forth. Quite what they were doing was beyond Bertie, but Jeeves explained that people liked to visit all the various counters to find a thing here, a thing there, and so on. He was guided towards Sidney who awaited them wearing a beaming smile and a straw boater which Bertram thought a bit odd, he being indoors all the time. Jeeves made the introductions.

"How do you do, Mr. Wooster. We don't ever see you in here, sir," he said.

"Jeeves needed a driver," he said, lightly.

"Well, it's very nice that you came, sir."

Very civil of the chap, he thought. Jeeves then enumerated all the comestibles from his list, and the energy which young Sidney immediately brought to the task was commendable. In no time at all he was dashing about the place for this and that until there was a growing pile of the stuff on the counter in front of them that seemed to be assuming alarming proportions. While he was away slapping a couple of pounds of butter or something, Bertie referred Jeeves to the mountain of things confronting them.

"Is all this ours, Jeeves?"

"It is, sir. There are only a few items outstanding now, and then we can return home."

"What's in those blue bags?"

"These, sir?"

"Yes, those six on the end there."

"Sugar, sir, of various kinds."



## Familiar Territory

*Ann Higgins (née Wodehouse) is the daughter of Plum's youngest brother, Richard, and explains how she became a member of the Society*

It's all really due to an advert in the *Oldie*.

My husband was thumbing through a copy some time before last Christmas when the name Wodehouse caught his eye – as it does. “That would be something for the dogs to give to the old girl for a Christmas present” he thought, and being the man he is, he put thought into action. Soon I found myself a member of the Wodehouse Society, and a reader of *Wooster Sauce*.

History has it that I, his niece, was dandled on Uncle Plum's knee, and received a big blue teddy bear with a musical stomach; but with my father Richard, his youngest brother, working in China until shortly before the war, our paths never crossed again. However, his generous wedding present cheque was much appreciated.

The name – as everybody who has owned an unusual name will know – can cause the odd problem. If you say it, people ‘know’ how to spell it. If you spell it, it is mispronounced, and *no one* can find you in the telephone book. But I am proud to have been born a Wodehouse, and to have had an Uncle who has added to the general pleasure of life and has given gentlemen's gentlemen a good name.

**Editor's note:** Ann Higgins owns the typewriter (pictured below). It is believed to have been given to her father by Plum before one of his very early visits to the USA. Provided his fee is not too high, the Society is hoping to use the expertise of Sherlock Holmes to verify this by comparing the typeface with that on letters typed by Plum in those early years.



## *Bertie Goes Shopping, continued*

“Various kinds, Jeeves? How many kinds of sugar are there?”

“Food experts tell us, sir, that the sucrose content varies with white and brown types, each containing essential percentages of carbohydrates, largely from the cane grown in old world tropical countries, and refined after shipping to England. Eleven million tons of beet sugar is processed in the same way from other countries. Both contribute to the different varieties we are now purchasing. You are probably unaware, sir, there is a duty paid on sugars imported into Great Britain.”

“Well, I'm blessed. Is that so, Jeeves?”

“Yes, sir.”

Wooster fell silent, in trepidation that by enquiring too closely about flour, butter, or malt in hogsheads, he might be treated to dissertations on the origins of those foods as well. And he hadn't long finished his eggs and b.

Upon Sidney's return with the last of the order, Jeeves concluded the civilities with him, and he and Bertie left the premises safe in the knowledge that all their purchases would be packed immediately for despatch to the old homestead. Quite nice of them, Bertie thought. A simple enough way of doing things.

Back on his own hearthrug, Wooster suggested to Jeeves that the outing of about an hour had been an interesting experience, and didn't seem to cause one any bother whatsoever. In fact it was simplicity itself.

“That is so, sir. The firm are courteous and most helpful, and we can expect delivery in about half an hour.”

“Well it seems to me that stocking up the larder is a simple enough process, so I'll leave it with you from now on.”

“Thank you sir. I would point out, however, that it is not always necessary for me to visit the premises personally, for a telephone call giving our requirements is often sufficient. Alternatively, a salesman will call here, sir, to make a note of our long-term needs, which will be delivered in the normal way.”

“Bless my soul, Jeeves.”

So there you are then. It will be seen that Jeeves has it under control with his usual unruffled proficiency.

I know of some ladies who can get all hot round the collar over their food shopping expeditions.

I can't think why.



# Appearances in the Fiction of Other Writers

*In every issue, Wooster Sauce features pages of references in the press to Wodehouse and his world. This article looks at the fiction of other writers.*

One of our members based in France, Kit Evans, set this article in motion by writing to enquire whether members were likely to be familiar with the fairly explicit tribute given to P G Wodehouse by Kyril Bonfiglioli in the three volumes making up *The Mortdecai Trilogy* (Black Spring Press, 1991). The stories concern the somewhat bizarre adventures of Charlie Mortdecai, a less than honest art dealer, and his unlikely manservant, Jock. There the similarities with the Bertie and Jeeves books end but allusions in various forms (directly, with references to Wodehouse or his characters, or indirectly, by use of typical Wodehouse language) pop regularly out of the pages. They are particularly numerous in the first volume, *Don't Point That Thing At Me*.

Thus Jock is described as “a sort of anti-Jeeves: silent, resourceful, respectful even, when the mood takes him, but sort of drunk all the time, really, and fond of smashing people’s faces in.”

When he brings in Charlie’s tea, we read the following exchange:

“Ah . . . the good old soothing Oolong or Lapsang.”

“Eh?”

“Bring me my whangee, my yellowest shoes, and the old green Homburg,” I quoted on. “I am going into the Park to do pastoral dances.”

“Eh?”

“Oh, never mind, Jock. Bertram Wooster speaking, not I.”

When on one occasion an enemy of Charlie was waving a huge black automatic pistol, Charlie was moved to say, as Bertie did to Spode:

“Are you aware . . . that you are occupying space which I have other uses for? Or rather, for which I have other uses”, and received the unexpected reply:

“I like P G Wodehouse too, sir, . . . but I would hesitate to use any kind of flippancy in the situation you find yourself in. Or rather, in which you find yourself.”

In *After You With The Pistol*, Charlie and a friend named Humphrey spoke in code because the office was bugged:

We Woostered away for a while, giggling silently at the thought of grim-faced FBI men and beetle-browed CIA men frantically sending out trace orders on such ornaments of the Drones Club as Oofy Prosser or Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps. (Indeed, one hopes that they took ‘Drones Club’ to be the code name for The Firm’s new London ‘safe-house’). . . . We parted with many a friendly message to Freddie

Widgeon and Honoria Glossop. As [Humphrey] courteously ushered me to the door he paused beside what he no doubt knew to be a well-bugged standard lamp and whicpered hoarsely “Charlie, don’t believe a word old Mulliner says.”

Other references are too numerous to mention, and that is part of the fun, spotting for example the irreproachable Mechelin lace, the gents’ natty suitings, and the discovery of “old Wooster’s manservant who . . . used to shimmer for England”.

If Bonfiglioli had a bit of the James Bond about his plots, Ian Fleming had also paid tribute to Plum. On the very first page of *From Russia With Love*, there is a description of a pile of objects lying by a sunbathing man, containing “the typical membership badges of the rich man’s club – a money clip . . . holding a substantial wad of notes, a well-used gold Dunhill lighter, an oval gold [Fabergé] cigarette case, and the sort of novel a rich man pulls out of the bookcase to take into the garden – *The Little Nugget* – an old P G Wodehouse.”

The sunbather proved to be Donovan Grant, alias Krassno Granitski, Chief Executioner of SMERSH.

Leslie Charteris, author of the Saint books, liked his characters to refer to others in conversation as ‘Jeeves’. Examples appear in *The Invisible Millionaire* (in *Follow the Saint*), *The Masked Angel* (in *Call for the Saint*), and in *X, Esquire*, one of his few books in which the Saint did not appear.

More recently in *A Suitable Boy*, set in India in the early 1950s, Vikram Seth arranged for one of his distraught heroines, Lata, to be advised by a friend on the telephone to read some P G Wodehouse. Having received comfort from *Pigs Have Wings*, she turned for a second helping to *Galahad at Blandings* without realising that it would be another ten years or more before it was written!

And even the doyen of modern mystery writers, Ruth Rendell, regarded by many as the most inventive of the genre, joined this particular club in *The Keys to the Street* (1956):

Holding up the bunch of flowers and looking constricted in his dark suit, with his black hair slick and short, he seemed like an illustration to P G Wodehouse. And in a Wooster-ish way he said:

“Aren’t you going to let us in?”

As with many of the press comments, authors assume that their readers will understand the allusions. While this continues, Wodehouse will remain to the forefront of the reading public’s consciousness.



## Dinner Arrangements Progress Smoothly

Places for the Society's first formal dinner, to be held at the Inner Temple on 15 October, have been substantially oversubscribed, and even at the time of writing in mid-August there are more than twenty members on the waiting list. It promises to be an excellent occasion with a toast to the Master and the Society being proposed by Sir John Mortimer QC, a response from Richard Briers OBE and songs from Maria Friedman, Hal and Lara Cazalet. A full report will appear in December's *Wooster Sauce*.

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## Help Needed for New Anthology

Members will, we hope, be interested in plans for a wholly new Anthology of Wodehouse material to be published early in the year 2000, the 25th anniversary of his death. What will be unusual about this volume is that some of the stories chosen will have been selected by members of Wodehouse Societies around the world, as representing their favourite tales of the various character groups.

Accordingly, the UK Society needs your help if it is to play its full part. Enclosed with this edition of *Wooster Sauce* you will find a polling form, which asks you to vote for your favourite Wodehouse short story in a number of categories. Similar votes by societies in Australia, Belgium, Italy, India, The Netherlands, Russia, Sweden and the USA will be compared, and recommendations made to the publishers as to which stories should be included.

You are also asked to specify your overall favourite story, so that as many as possible of the most popular overall in each country may be included.

The anthology, whose title has yet to be considered, will be aimed not just at the established Wodehouse reader, but will help to introduce his work to the next generation of readers. Apart from short stories, it will contain a range of his other writings, chosen from extracts from novels, verse, essays, journalism, letters, and possible even scenes from plays. It is expected that some material to be included will not have previously been made available to the world at large.

If you have any other ideas on what should appear, or if you have unusual material that you think should be considered, please provide details with your entry.

But in any event, please complete the ballot form and send it to The Editor at the address on page 20. We have to set a deadline of **November 30** for its receipt, so replies can be collated and a report made to the small group representing Societies in their dealings with the publishers. Thank you.

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## The Wodehouse Society and IT

We have been unable to resist the forces of progress any longer. Or, in other words, we have found members who are prepared to help the Society with a Website and an E-mail address.

With immediate effect, E-mail messages can be sent to our Committee member John Fletcher at:

[johnafle@aol.com](mailto:johnafle@aol.com)

He will arrange for messages to be faxed, telephoned or photocopied and mailed if they are addressed to other members of the Committee. So while in general, this route may not offer instant communication, it may prove more convenient for some members.

On Thursday 15th October, the 117th anniversary of Plum's birth, the Society website will go onstream.

It will contain, initially, contact addresses for overseas Wodehouse Societies, recent publications, cumulative indexes to *Wooster Sauce* and *By The Way*, local and national Society events, forthcoming Wodehouse productions and so on.

Members are invited to help update the site, with data such as performances of his plays and musicals, the names and addresses of good Wodehouse dealers (who needn't be specialists) and so on. Access the site at:

<http://www.eclipse.co.uk/wodehouse>





## PLUM and ROSIE – A Match Made in Heaven

*The final part of Helen Murphy's Chicago talk*



In an earlier article, you may have read about how Englishwomen seemed particularly susceptible to the desert atmosphere. So the desert romance was a novel waiting to happen. There may have been others before Ruby M Hull's *The Sheikh*, but there were none so famous. This type of tale was immensely popular, and a fashionable girl like Angela in *Came the Dawn* would refer to her young man, as 'my desert king'.

In *Rodney Fails to Qualify*, Jane took a desert romance out of the library and loved the

“wonderful Arab chief with stern, yet tender, eyes, and a girl called Angela, and oases and deserts and mirages, and all like that. There is a chapter where the Arab chief seizes the girl and clasps her in his arms and she feels his hot breath searing her face and he flings her on his horse and they ride off and all around was sand and night, and the mysterious stars. . . . I wish mother would take me to Algiers next winter. . . . It would do her rheumatism so much good.”

The Oldest Member accordingly advised William Bates to make his proposal in a large bunker as

“I have reason to believe that Jane would respond more readily to your wooing were it conducted in some vast sandy waste”.

All those atmospheric touches are in *The Sheikh*. Interestingly, none of the Sheikhs that I have come across was ever a proper Arab; they were always at least half French, English or American, sometimes the missing heir to a title and estates. In *The Sheikh*, itself, for example, the lead character was illustrated with the famous Caryll scowl.

Even earlier than the Sheikh as raptor appeared, the desert had been the province of the cliché Richard Osborne refers to as the “crashed Balliol man”, that is the gentleman ranker. The pathos, of course, results from the fact that they knew what they had lost, so in Kipling's hymn to the banjo (and exile), we can read “I am memory, I am torment, I am town; I am all that ever went with evening dress!” In *Barmy in Wonderland* Mervyn Potter is content with

“I'm going to have another drink or two and then go off and join the Foreign Legion, that cohort of the damned [Kipling again] where broken men toil and die, and, dying, forget.”

The whole Empire provided glorious scope for disappearing, a bit like the West, and for fictional adventure as well produced some of the most popular heroes – “Men Who Did Things”, according to the heroine of *The Sheikh* and several of PGW's stories. In *Clubland Heroes* Richard Usborne quoted from a critic who said that “He is everywhere that is a long way off. It is that, indeed, that makes him bearable.”

PGW's best known example of “the crashed Balliol man” was the most famous of Rosie M Banks' heroes, ie Mervyn Keene, Clubman.

As a preliminary matter, it is necessary to provide some detail of Ouida's *Under Two Flags* and its hero. Published in 1867, it was her best known work, inspiring P C Wren and many others to imitations that often stopped just the right side of plagiarism. Surprisingly (to me) lots of military officers used to attend on her and thought her works were marvellous. In *Under Two Flags* she made clever use of the “dead but not dead” fictional device. The hero (rich, in the Guards, the idol of all who know him), with what one critic called an almost suicidal sense of *noblesse oblige*, admitted to forging a bond when the villain was really his weak younger brother. He did this to save his brother and, more importantly, his current mistress's honour – it was a matter of alibis. Having faked his death in a handy train crash (just like *East Lynne*) he joined the Chasseurs d'Afrique and endured awful hardships in the Algerian desert. He was the man of mystery, renowned for his superb horsemanship and so on. He was accompanied by his faithful servant, who enlisted with him and later died faithfully in the sands, having concealed the fact that he had been transpierced by an Arab lance. His dying wish was that should the Master by some happy chance be restored to his birthright, the faithful servant should be remembered to the faithful horse, waiting in England.

By chance, the hero later came across his brother, his best friend and the woman he knew when she was a little girl and had always loved, when they are on a tour of the desert. At first she didn't recognise him – he had grown a beard – but later all was revealed and his secret became known. The younger brother confessed and all should have ended happily. And so it did, but only after *noblesse* has *obliged* him to offer up his life for the lady's honour and face death by firing squad.



## An Idea for Spring Meetings, 1999

During May and June, 1999, the one-day cricket World Cup will be held in Britain, Ireland and Holland, with matches between international teams taking place at many unusual locations. The Committee has identified this event as providing a potential focus for a members in several areas to meet each other, talk Wodehouse and enjoy the cricket at the same time. The Editor suggests that any member who would like to try to organise a group visit should contact him at the number on page 20, to receive a list of members in their vicinity who could then be approached.

Apart from usual test match locations, international one-day games will be played at:

Amsterdam	May 26	Chester le-Street	May 20,27	Leicester	May 19,27
Bristol	May 16,23	Derby	May 28	Northampton	May 19,31
Canterbury	May 18	Dublin	May 21	Southampton	May 24,30
Cardiff	May 20	Edinburgh	May 24,31	Taunton	May 15,26
Chelmsford	May 17,29	Hove	May 15	Worcester	May 16,22

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### A Match Made in Heaven (continued)

Fortunately, at the last minute, he was saved by Cigarette, the gamine young girl who was almost the mascot of the regiment and was proudest of all of serving France and the Army. She had galloped all night with his reprieve and in a ballistically dubious showdown she hurled herself in front of the bullets and copped the lot, leaving the hero unscathed. Even when he had returned with his lady love to the estates and the faithful horse, he remembered the desert where, carved in a white stone, was “one name on which the Arab sun streamed as with a martyr’s glory: *CIGARETTE, ENFANT DE L’ARMÉE, SOLDAT DE LA FRANCE*” They planted the tricolore by her grave, so the soldiers could salute her as they passed.

In real life the Foreign Legion seems to have been strangely susceptible to gamine little urchins. When Edith Piaf died the Legion sent a wreath in the colours, with the words “A leur môme Piaf – La Legion”.

Now, with the exception of the fact that he survived, do certain features of this story remind you of anyone? See chapter 17 of *The Mating Season*, where Madeline Bassett summarised the story of Mervyn Keene for Bertie.

There’s nothing wrong with sentiment. PGW used it himself as a way of making us engage with the characters, instead of just laughing. Thus Gally, musing on Dolly Henderson, could feel that “something that was not of this world went whispering through the garden”. But from all we know of him, I suspect that PGW had a strong psychological bond with the bachelor. Gally was single, and even Uncle Fred could only do his best work when unencumbered by Aunt Jane. James Rodman, trapped in Honeysuckle Cottage with a dainty child of faerie, was, we were told:

“one of Nature’s bachelors. And no ordinary man. . . can realise the intensity of the instinct for self-preservation which animates Nature’s bachelors in times of peril. . . James liked to breakfast in bed; and, having breakfasted, to smoke in bed and knock the ashes out on the carpet. What wife would tolerate this practice? James liked to pass his days in a tennis shirt, grey flannel trousers and slippers. What wife ever rests until she has inclosed her husband in a stiff collar, tight boots and a morning suit and taken him with her to thès musicales?”

“Don’t do it,” said Mr McKinnon, a stout bachelor, concerning marriage. “You’re too young to marry.” “So was Methuselah,” said James, a stouter.

When Lord Emsworth and Gally finally found peace, perfect peace, at the end of *A Pelican at Blandings*, it was because sisters, who could be as bad as wives, had finally vamoosed. As always, Kipling summed it up nicely in one of his lines which provides the title for a story in *The Clicking of Cuthbert*, and is adapted for its last line. As Kipling originally wrote it:

Open the old cigar box, let me consider anew;  
 Old friends, and who is Maggie, that I should  
 abandon you?  
 A million surplus Maggies are willing to bear the  
 yoke,  
 And a woman is only a woman, but a good cigar  
 is a smoke!

*This concludes Helen’s series of articles. Any reader wishing to obtain back copies of issues containing earlier parts can do so by sending a cheque for £2.50 per copy to the Membership Secretary or Editor at the addresses shown on Page 20.*



## The Melody Lingers On

Murray Hedgcock meets a British Oscar winner

Anne Dudley, composer and arranger of the charming and singularly appropriate music for the TV series, *The World of Jeeves and Wooster*, has a confession revealed exclusively for *Wooster Sauce*.

“When I was invited to do the music, I hadn’t actually read any Wodehouse books – and I still haven’t done so”, she explained. “I was aware that he had been involved in musicals with Jerome Kern but that was about it. Wodehouse deals with words, and my commission was simply to provide a musical background. I believe it was a help that I came to the job without any preconceptions. I was able to get on with the music without having to worry about producing something to fit in with enthusiasts’ ideas of what Wodehouse should be about.”

Miss Dudley made headlines this year when she won an Academy Award (Oscar) for the British film *The Full Monty*, in which she wrote some of the score and arranged other segments to win the best original musical or comedy score category. A 41-year-old Londoner, she studied at the Royal College of Music, having been forbidden by her classically-minded father from listening to pop music as a child. After piano and clarinet studies, she worked as a musician, composer, arranger and producer, making her name as a founder member of the avant garde group *Art of Noise*, which topped the popular music charts in America.

She worked on many innovative pop recordings of the eighties and nineties, and has also scored some TV commercials. She declares firmly “I have never seen a divide between classical, jazz and pop music” and released a solo album in 1994.

Her film credits include *The Crying Game*, *The Pope Must Die* and *Buster*, while she wrote the theme music for the TV series *Kavanagh, QC*. Her Oscar was especially welcome because she believes composition for TV or film is rarely given the credit it deserves. “It’s the Cinderella of TV production”.

Miss Dudley explained that in *The World of Jeeves and Wooster* she had not tried to reproduce the music of 1929, the date used for the setting of the series. “I was writing for a new audience and a TV series of the nineties, so it was not meant just as a pastiche of another age.” But she agrees that it can be difficult to say where a pastiche ends and a new approach takes over – suggesting it was fair to describe as a pastiche the lively scenes and music from the imaginary show *Ask Dad* which featured briefly but effectively in one of the US-based episodes.



Photo: Air-Edel

To enable her to get to work, she was presented with the episodes in visual form, and she then composed new melodies or arranged established tunes as required. She paid particular tribute to Hugh Laurie, who not only helped with some of the arranging but as Bertie was required to sing and play the piano, saying his ability as a pianist was a great help.

The mood for the series is splendidly and evocatively set by the opening titles, in which figures from a dance orchestra change and evolve as the theme develops, and the melody switches from instrument to instrument. Anne Dudley explained that Brian Eastman, the producer, had been insistent that the theme should immediately set the scene for the show and make a real impact so the viewer was aware of just what was coming, and the style of what would be seen and heard. “There is a feeling that people don’t pay enough attention to an opening sequence, so we wanted to make it stand out instantly.”

And did Miss Dudley’s delayed but intensive exposure to the wit and wisdom of the Master spark a new understanding of what she had missed, and a fresh desire to know more? Sadly, no. Each series involved four months’ solid work for the musical director, so even the Wodehouse buff might excuse her comment: “I probably had enough Wodehouse by the time I finished.”

However, at the prospect of being invited to a meeting of the P G Wodehouse Society, Anne Dudley agreed she might have to bone up on her PGW, so that she could engage fully in the esoteric debates when she at last comes face to face with the world of the total Wodehouse enthusiast.



## The Girl on the Boat: Video Review

Tim Andrew gives his views on the worth of the 1962 film, recently released by Polygram Video as part of their Norman Wisdom series

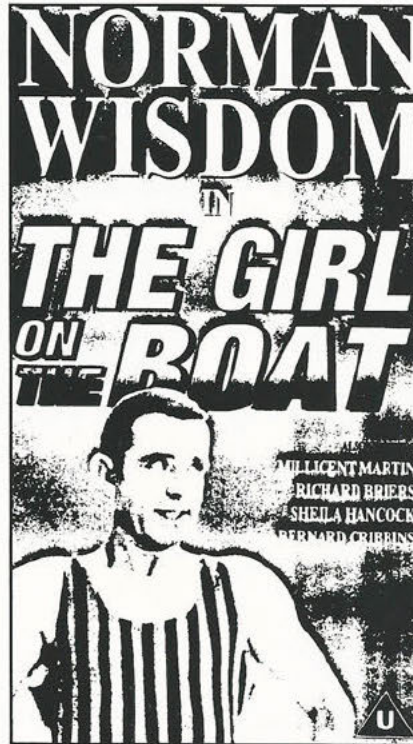
The 1962 film of *The Girl on the Boat*, directed by Henry Kaplan, has been released on video in the United Kingdom by Polygram. It was included in the National Film Theatre Wodehouse programme two Christmases ago. Norman Wisdom is billed as the star, but a number of familiar faces appear on the screen, including Millicent Martin, Sheila Hancock, Bernard Cribbins and our own esteemed President, Richard Briers, as Eustace Hignett. There is also much sport to be had spotting in minor roles actors who later became much better known.

The physical quality of the video is good, the original print having been restored by the National Film Archive. As usual, there is irritating fiddling about with the plot which to me seems quite unnecessary. Wodehouse's plots always work like clockwork, and he wrote his stories almost in Acts and Scenes. The changes to the plot are not major and the film is very recognisably based on the book, but they do need the viewer to make strenuous efforts in the suspension of disbelief at times. For example: the relationship between Sam

and Eustace is compromised by the film's getting them to collude in trying to get Eustace to his wedding; the letting of Windles by means of a spoof transatlantic call to Southampton docks is frankly unbelievable; the involvement of Webster in Sam's conspiracies is incredible; and Adeline Hignett's return to Windles is unexplained. In the book all fits as it should.

Although I have never been a great fan of his, Norman Wisdom as Sam Marlowe really does try to play the character rather than himself, and at times succeeds. The rest of the cast give good value for money, as you would expect from actors of their talent. In particular, and without wishing to be sycophantic, Richard Briers' splendid Eustace manages the difficult task of conveying a weak Wodehouse male character without turning him into a stereotypical upper-class silly ass.

My personal view is that Wodehouse books don't convert to film well as a rule, but as they go this is a decent stab. Certainly, at only £6.99 *The Girl on the Boat* merits its place in any collection.



### WIN a copy of the video

Polygram Film Entertainment have kindly supplied two copies of their recently released video of *The Girl on the Boat* for use as prizes in a simple competition open to all members.

To take part, simply send your answers to the following questions, the second of which will only be used if necessary for a 'tie-break', to the Editor at the address on page 20. Please ensure your answers are postmarked before the end of October.

- 1 Give the names of as many transatlantic steamers (real or fictional) mentioned in Wodehouse's fiction as possible. Any edition of the books, in English, can be used, but to facilitate our verifying answers, please give the book, chapter and edition if possible.
- 2 As a tie-break, give the names of transatlantic steamers on which Wodehouse himself travelled according to his letters, autobiographical works or biographies.

The two best answers will receive copies of the video. The answers will be given in December's *Wooster Sauce*.

### HELP!!

The Society is looking for an enthusiastic volunteer to assist with reorganising and maintaining our database. We now have over 380 members and need to find someone with sufficient time, energy and experience to prepare and update the appropriate files to simplify our membership, mailing and subscription records, and to produce label runs as required.

If any member feels he or she has something to offer, please contact Helen Murphy or Tony Ring at the addresses on page 20.



## BENNY GREEN

The death of Benny Green in June at the age of 70 cost the world one of its true characters, a self-educated man whose interests encompassed jazz, literature generally (and Shaw and Wodehouse in particular), cricket, musicals and London. He was a skilful writer, musician and broadcaster with talents so diverse that his fans in one sphere might well not be aware of his activity in another.

He wrote *PG Wodehouse – A Literary Biography* in 1981, a book which gave a fair hearing to all aspects of Wodehouse's work but concentrated especially on his lyrics. During the many years of Benny's weekly broadcast on Radio 2, he frequently referred to Plum with admiration in connection with the songs he wrote for musical comedies, and there were few people, if any, more knowledgeable on the subject. Just weeks before his death he gave of his time to discuss a possible approach to producing a new recording of Wodehouse lyrics, and it would be difficult to think of a more fitting tribute to Benny Green than to bring this project to fruition.



## MAUREEN O'SULLIVAN

One of Plum's oldest friends from Hollywood days, actress Maureen O'Sullivan died during June at the age of 87. Her most famous film role was that of Jane in the *Tarzan* series of six films made between 1932 and 1942, and the best-known of her seven children was Mia Farrow.

She was a great Peke-lover and featured in a number of Plum's letters, usually on account of the latest adventures of their menageries. It was reported that the Wodehouses gave her great support during a fraught period shortly before her first marriage, to John Farrow. The book *Hot Water* was dedicated to her from the author, Ethel, Leonora, their Peke Miss Winks and Maureen O'Sullivan's own Peke John-John, a regular visitor to the Wodehouse home while his master was on location.

## Meeting in Edinburgh

On 10 June, Helen Murphy, the Membership Secretary, broke into a short holiday to host the first meeting of the Society in Scotland. "From East and West they came, from North and South, flocking to the capital city with a song on their lips and their hair in a braid," she reports. Among those assembling in the Greyfriars Bobby and later in a Grassmarket flat were a publisher, a retired US Navy Captain, an archivist and an osteopath, the latter receiving a prize for his superior answers to a Scottish-related PGW quiz which Helen had fiendishly prepared.

One of the questions was "Of whom is it said, "It is never difficult to distinguish between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine?" Helen was most reticent when I asked her if she would have given marks for the answer "Kenny Dalglish" as well as "McAllister".

## Obtain a Copy of 'Yours, Plum' at a Bargain Price

The Society was recently given the opportunity of acquiring some copies of *Yours, Plum* at a very low cost. The book, edited by the late Frances Donaldson, was published in 1990 by Hutchinson at £16.99 and consisted of a selection of letters written by Plum, and contained a number of interesting photographs. Among the recipients were Leonora Wodehouse, Bill Townend, Guy Bolton, Ira Gershwin and Denis Mackail.

While stocks remain, as the saying goes, members in the UK may obtain copies for just £5, including postage and packing. For overseas members the cost is £6.50 in Europe, £9.50 elsewhere by air or £6.50 surface mail. Simply send your request to The Editor at the address on page 20 with a cheque made payable to 'The PG Wodehouse Society (UK)', but please note that regrettably we can only accept pounds sterling.





Photo: Patrick Jackson

## PROFILE OF A PATRON

Ned Sherrin is a farmer's son born midway between the Somerset villages of High and Low Ham, names which he thinks peculiarly appropriate in view of his subsequent career. After Oxford, he was called to the Bar but within a week had joined ATV in time for the launch of commercial television in 1955. He soon changed channels to direct the celebrated *That Was The Week That Was* for the BBC, before moving on to produce films and direct and appear in live theatre, including *Side by Side by Sondheim*. He has worked extensively with fellow Patron Keith Waterhouse, directing several of his plays including *Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell* and the current *Good Grief*. His main interest in Wodehouse is his lyrics for musical comedy, and the influence which he, Bolton and Kern had on the genre's development in the United States.

## New Publications

Among the new items to report in this issue is the latest unabridged audiotape from Chivers. *Service with a Smile*, read by Nigel Lambert, will become available in October: for details contact Chivers Audio Book Collection, Customer Service, on 01225 443400

An interesting concept in the publication of reading material for commuters in a practical format is the Travelman series of short stories, priced at £1 each and folded in such a way as to make them readable while strap-hanging on a busy underground or rush-hour train. The idea was the brainchild of Alexander Waugh, and every month eight new titles are scheduled to appear, each a short story by a well-known author. Among the first group was *Goodbye to All Cats* from *Young Men in Spats* and Sherlockians amongst our members may care to note that *The Speckled Band* was another. Copies should be obtainable through most bookshops.

Porpoise Books announce that Volume 5 of Tony Ring's *Millennium Wodehouse Concordance*, entitled *Wodehouse at Blandings Castle*, will be available by early October, price £ 20. Its 323 pages include 29 illustrations and disclose such important matters as Lord Emsworth's full set of christian names and the identity of his second daughter. Contact Tony Ring or Porpoise Books from whom you can also obtain details of the first four volumes.

## Did You Know?

### Publishing Errors – 7

The *Head of Kays* was first published in 1905, and reprinted in 1910. A new edition appeared in 1922 which contained only one plate, the frontispiece, and had plain, ie non-pictorial covers. The 1922 edition was reprinted later in the same year, and this may not have been necessary simply because it was popular.

Part, though not all, of the print run for the first 1922 edition was faulty. Pages 18/19, 22/23, 26/27 and 30/31 were not included. Instead, poor offsets appeared of pages 162/163, 166/167, 170/171 and 174/175 from *The White Feather*, which had also appeared in a new edition the same year.

Whether this error occurred as a result of dirty deeds in the fourth dimension, or through carelessness at the printers, the result was presumably that a fair number of the books had to be recalled for destruction, necessitating the reprint later in the year.

Any member who has seen a copy of the 1922 edition of *The White Feather*, with offset pages from *The Head of Kays* is asked to contact the Editor. There are no strong grounds for believing one exists, but it would round off the story rather nicely!



18 June - 4 July 1998  
**SUMMER  
LIGHTNING**

SALISBURY  
PLAYHOUSE



## *Chris Reece reviews a production at the Salisbury Playhouse*

A visit to the last-but-one performance in this summer run saw the cast in polished form. This was a sparse, modern production of an essentially straightforward adaptation, using asides from the cast, delivered out of character if the actor can effect the necessary transformations, to bring in many of PGW's best lines from the book while trying to cram in as much story as possible into a shade less than two hours.

I hope the many tourists in the theatre from the other side of the Atlantic enjoyed themselves. Some of the delivery was at such breakneck speed that even natives may have found it difficult to follow what was going on. A good knowledge of the book helped but in many ways it is easier for those who come in ignorance to enjoy an adaptation of this sort.

The first problem is that each reader comes with his or her own impression of each character – such assumptions will always be thwarted by the reality of the actor's personal characteristics. Here, Gally was contemplative and sympathetic, very much reformed from his warmer days. Many of the younger characters were obviously too old, and Beach was thin; Lord Emsworth on the other hand was distinctly rounded. Sue Brown is surely not a cross between Terry Scott's Curlywurly boy and Jimmie Crankie. Although Ronnie had, by happy coincidence, the essential smallness and pinkness, it was unfortunate that reference to these had been excised from the text. So when Millicent pointed out that Miss Schoonmaker was supposed to be taller, Sue was unable to retort that anyone appears tall next to Ronnie.

The dedicated reader will spend too much time wondering why this or that has been changed, or omitted, giving insufficient attention to what remains. It was a shame, for example, that Baxter had to be omitted entirely. But if one reminds oneself that this is not a book, but a live performance which hangs together successfully, it has all the ingredients of a hugely enjoyable entertainment.

Congratulations to the cast, who gave their all.

*The adaptation, by Giles Havergal, was first performed in Glasgow in 1992. Following its run at Salisbury, it moved to the Theatre Royal, Bath, for a week.*

So proclaimed the badges worn at a Wodehousean afternoon at the Uplands, West Bromwich, on July 18 by some twenty-five members and prospective members of the Society, several of those attending having been attracted by the substantial coverage given to the event by the *Birmingham Post*. Those present were treated to talks by Norman Murphy, Helen Murphy and Nick Townend, the latter launching an ambitious project to place the various school stories set at St Austin's in their correct chronological order. There was also a display of books, videos and audiotapes which had emerged during the last five years or so, with which even enthusiasts might not have been familiar.

Honorary life membership was conferred by the Chairman on Mrs Phyllis Eastgate of Sutton Coldfield, who thereby became our first centenarian member.

Anyone interested in attending further meetings in the Birmingham area should contact Vic Bolwell, who kindly organised this first West Midlands meeting,

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## *Anything Goes at Crewe*

Fired by enthusiasm after his successful foray down to Birmingham, Nick Townend is hoping to arrange a Society visit to the Lyceum Theatre, Crewe on October 17, for the 7.30 performance of *Anything Goes* by Acton Amateur Operatic Society. This production still retains elements of the original 'book' by Bolton and Wodehouse, and some of the lyrics of the two songs *Anything Goes* and *You're the Top* were interpolated by Wodehouse into the original UK production, and have remained there, unrecognised, ever since.

Nick hopes that members in the area may wish to meet each other beforehand to discuss possible activities as a local group, and to this end he suggests meeting at the theatre restaurant around 6pm. Ticket prices range from £5 to £8, and anyone interested either in being part of a group to attend or in meeting beforehand should contact Nick



## Eddie Grabham reviews *SHOW BOAT* at the Prince Edward Theatre

As the stevedores, the gals and the townspeople gathered on the stage of the Prince Edward Theatre, I could easily make believe I was sitting in Broadway's Ziegfeld Theatre back in 1927.

Director Hal Prince gives us a fascinating glimpse of how *Show Boat* may have been presented all those years ago. Of course, this is no slavish re-creation. Mr Prince has called upon such sources as the original production, the 1928 London script, the celebrated 1946 Broadway revival and the faithful 1936 film version, while taking advantage of modern staging techniques.

There were several occasions when I thought I was seeing a lavish stage version of James Whale's 1936 film – especially the joyous scene in which Julie, Queenie, Joe and Magnolia join forces in the *Cotton Blossom* kitchen to sing *Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man*. By then, we had already cheered Michel Bell as Joe, his rich, deep voice doing full justice to *Ol' Man River*. This is not the only cinematic touch in the production. The main concession to modern theatre is the presentation which, with a dazzling combination of flown sets, black-and-white gauze and a thrilling lighting plot, keeps the action flowing just as surely as the Mississippi it so successfully evokes.

This sense of cinema is even greater in the second half as thirty-eight years whizz by in just over an hour. The stunning choreography of Susan Stroman gives us montage sequences which make the years pass in a flurry of contemporary dance steps to match the changing dress styles. She was clearly as committed to capturing a sense of period as Mr Prince himself. It helps to ease through the problems inherent in the latter stages of the play – so many ends have to be tied up, especially when we have

seen and heard so much in the long first half. Of course, the second act has the compensation of hearing *Bill* plaintively sung by Terry Burrell, as the ill-fated Julie seeks support from the rehearsal piano in the Trocadero Night Club.

The chorus of Wodehouse's original lyric for the song, originally written for *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* in 1917 was adapted for *Show Boat* by Oscar Hammerstein II. Nevertheless the lyric still reminds us that PGW was a major influence in the development of the modern lyric. How appropriate that one of his songs should be included in this ground-breaking musical.

Modern audiences may baulk at a show which seems to merge musical comedy and grand opera, though the original emphasis on romantic drama has been altered to bring out the strong social issues raised in *Show Boat*. Today's theatre-goers are used to musical theatre with a serious theme. It was therefore even more commendable that this production should hark back to the musical's roots, if only to remind us how much musical theatre has changed, and how important this particular show was in contributing to that change. It did, after all, lead the way to *Porgy and Bess* and *Oklahoma*.

In 1927, *Show Boat* was just one of many new musicals which opened on Broadway. Among the best of these, we may dimly recall *Rio Rita*, though it flopped in London, *Hif the Deck*, *Good News*, *A Connecticut Yankee* and *Funny Face*, the latter made immortal by the Astaires. On the other hand, *Show Boat* continues to live. It must be considered a part of musical theatre's permanent repertoire, and Hal Prince's highly successful revival sets a standard which must be matched or bettered in future productions.

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### *Chivers' Latest Unabridged Recording*

The June offering from Chivers Unabridged Audio Books was *Leave It To Psmith*, read by Jonathan Cecil.

Critics throughout the years have marvelled at how a Wodehouse plot, redrafted several times before it was first written, and then amended and polished, can appear so seamless when read from start to finish. In the case of this novel, of course, the last chapter was rewritten after it had appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* to accommodate the tastes of a forthright readership, who did not appreciate the crooks getting away with the spoils.

Much the same can be said of Jonathan Cecil and his readings. Highly experienced (this is his fourteenth Wodehouse offering for Chivers), it is evident that one of his secrets is enormous care and attention to detail, the sort of preparation of which the author would have approved. This reading, of the Editor's favourite book, has an admirable range of voices and is well up to his usual standard. It would make an excellent introduction to the Blandings series for any newcomer to Wodehouse.



## Letters to the Editor

Jimmy Moxon divides his time between Shropshire and Ghana, where he is an authentic tribal chief. He is a great supporter of the view that Wodehouse creations inevitably have a factual basis, and has both a highly personal view as to the origin of the name Blandings and interesting information which supports the claims of Weston Park as one of the major influences on the domaine's design.

The next three issues of *Wooster Sauce* will feature articles from Jimmy concerning Plum's links with the Bridgman family at Weston Park, by the end of which readers will be ready for the revelation – in September next year – of why, in Jimmy's opinion, Blandings was called Blandings.

In the meantime, he has this to say about the article in June's *Wooster Sauce* about tontines:

I am not surprised that Plum Wodehouse nurtured a lasting interest in tontines, because he was brought up in a traditionally tontine vicinity.

Only a little over two miles east of his boyhood home in Stableford flows the River Severn which, until the coming of the railways, was an extremely busy waterway, running south-south-east from the rich wool-producing strongholds of Wales through the heart of the industrial zone around the Ironbridge Gorge and into the sea.

To this day, two Tontine Inns stand on the banks of the Severn and its tributary the Vyrnwy. On the Vyrnwy is the intriguingly named village of Meverley Godelp; the other is at Ironbridge, some distance downstream beyond Shrewsbury. From at least the 17th century, and probably from a good bit earlier, the masters of the heavy river craft used the riverside hostelries as their banking and insurance centres, some of which acquired the name Tontine to represent the comprehensive banking system of Italian origin. Wodehouse, himself a reluctant trainee banker, would have been fascinated by the living traditions of this busy waterway mode of merchant banking, and never one to pass up experiences virtually on his doorstep, he would have tucked it all away for future reference.

Simon Frazer from Herefordshire wrote with a query and a comment. He has found inscribed on the 'gaudy front' of a 1988 *Fontana* paperback edition of *Flashman* the words:

"If ever there was a time when I felt that watcher-of-the-skies-when-a-new-planet stuff, it was when I read the first *Flashman*." P G Wodehouse

Can any reader point to the original source of that quotation?

Simon's comment concerns the discussion in the last two *Wooster Sauces* over whether Bertie wore a monocle. He (and others) have drawn attention to the sentence in *The Spot of Art* from *Very Good, Jeeves*:

There I sat absolutely slavering through a monocle about six inches in circumference at a plate of soup . . .

The Editor queries whether this can be decisive. Bertie as narrator says the thing was "a bally libel on the Wooster face". All good things must come to an end, so it is time for correspondence on this to cease.

John Pinhorn of Canterbury wrote recalling that he had seen a film *The Forty-Ninth Parallel* in 1941, which he thinks was an early propaganda film with German villains. He says the only bit he can recall was a nasty German making disparaging remarks about 'Die dümme Engländer' in general and the works of PGW in particular, quoting as an example a sentence concerning Vladimir Brusiloff. John is enquiring whether his recollection is correct. Brian Taves, a member from Washington has noted that the American release of the film, which he has seen, was only 90 minutes, not the full 123 minutes, and as the USA was not in the war at that time, it is the propaganda scenes which would have been cut. The film had a spectacular cast, including Laurence Olivier, Leslie Howard, Eric Portman, Raymond Massey and Glynis Johns. If any member can suggest how to obtain access to the uncut British version, please let the Editor know.

Jim Aslett of Chard researched a quotation from *Laughing Gas*.

She gave a sort of despairing gesture, like a vicar's daughter who has discovered Erastianism in the village.

He discovered that Erastianism is a doctrine of giving state authority over Church matters, but that this theme was neither supported nor denied by Thomas Erastus (1524-83) and the political party, the Erastians, which he formed in Basel, Switzerland.

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### Answers to Golf Quiz (see page 17)

1 Horace Bewstridge. 2 Slesh 3 Old Father Time, Consul the Almost Human, The Grave-Digger and The Man with the Hoe. The Grave-Digger was the subject of the quotation. 4 Peter Willard and James Todd. 5 Rodney Speivin and Anastasia Packard. 6 Raymond Parsloe Devine. 7 "Gabby George" Mackintosh; he talked incessantly on the links and elsewhere. 8 A putter, dog collar, studs, fireman's helmet 9 Vincent Jupp; Sandy McHoots 10 Blizzard.



## Test Yourself on the Golf Stories

In the reports of the AGM and Golf Day (Wooster Sauce, June, page 15) we referred to the quiz, set by John Wilson, which was attempted over lunch by those attending. It is reproduced below for all members to try, but alas, only for fun.

John's suggested answers can be found at the foot of page 16.

1 "The fourth hole found him four down and one had the feeling he was lucky not to be five."

Who was he?

2 "A woman is only a woman but a hefty drive is a —?"

3 What were the names of the four members of the Wrecking Crew?

And about which was it said that "The lunches of fifty-seven years had caused his chest to slip down into the mezzanine floor"?

4 "It must not be thought, however, that they devoted too much of their time and their thoughts to golf – assuming indeed that such a thing is possible. Each was connected with a business in the metropolis; and often, before he left for the links, P\_\_ would go to the trouble and expense of ringing up the office to say he would not be coming in that day; whilst I myself have heard J\_\_ – and this not once but frequently – say while lunching in the clubhouse, that he had half a mind to get Gracechurch Street on the phone and ask how things were going."

What were the full names of P and J?

5 "You truly love R\_\_?" quavered Jane.

"If he beckoned to me in the middle of a medal round, I would come to him," said A\_\_.

Who were R and A?

## POETS' CORNER

### Casey at the Bat

There was ease in Casey's manner  
As he stepped into his place,  
There was pride in Casey's bearing,  
And a smile on Casey's face.  
And when, responding to the cheers,  
He lightly doffed his hat,  
No stranger in the crowd could doubt  
'Twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him  
As he rubbed his hands with dirt –  
Five thousand tongues applauded  
When he wiped them on his shirt;  
Then while the writhing pitcher  
Ground the ball into his hip,  
Defiance gleamed in Casey's eye,  
A smile curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere  
Came hustling through the air,  
And Casey stood a-watching it  
In haughty grandeur there;  
Close by the sturdy batsman  
The ball unheeded sped –  
"That ain't my style," said Casey.  
"Strike One," the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people,  
There went up a muffled roar,  
Like the beating of the storm-waves  
On a stern and distant shore;  
"Kill him! kill the umpire!"  
Shouted someone on the stand;  
And it's likely they'd have killed him  
Had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity  
Great Casey's vision shone  
He stilled the rising tumult,  
He bade the game go on;  
He signalled to the pitcher,  
And once more the spheroid flew,  
But Casey still ignored it,  
And the umpire said "Strike Two."

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands,  
And Echo answered "Fraud!"  
But one scornful look from Casey  
And the multitude was awed;  
They saw his face grow stern and cold,  
They saw his muscle strain,  
And they knew that Casey wouldn't  
Let the ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lip,  
His teeth are clenched in hate,  
He pounds with cruel violence  
His bat upon the plate;  
And now the pitcher holds the ball,  
And now he lets it go,  
And now the air is shattered  
By the force of Casey's blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favoured land  
The sun is shining bright,  
The band is playing somewhere,  
And somewhere hearts are light,  
And somewhere men are laughing,  
And somewhere children shout,  
But there is no joy in Boston –  
Mighty Casey has struck out.

*This item first appeared in the United Kingdom edition of Vanity Fair on 25 August, 1904.*

6 What was the name of the rising young poet asked to address the members of the Woods Hill Literary Society?

7 Who was nearly killed by Celia Tennant by what was "unquestionably a niblick shot", and why?

8 When Wallace Chesney bought his magic plus-fours, what else did the Cohen Brothers sell him?

9 Who took up golf and became eligible within a year to play in the American Amateur championship?

And who taught him?

10 What was the name of the butler for whom Bradbury Fisher played Gladstone Bott in exchange for three railroads?



## Recent Press Comment

*Daily Telegraph*, 4th December, 1997 (from George and Margaret Colbran in Australia)

The obituary of the noted expert in mediaeval architecture John Harvey (1911-1997) ended: "His vast learning never prevented him from taking a gleeful delight in the passing scene, and he died with a copy of PGW's *Summer Lightning* in his hands."

*San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 December, 1997 (from Marilyn MacGregor)

The solution to the Acrostic puzzle was:

P G Wodehouse argued that Shakespeare was a golfer and cited "Four rogues in buckram let drive at me". You must agree, who but a duffer could have written "O Pardon me thou bleeding piece of earth".

*Daily Telegraph*, 10th January (from George and Margaret Colbran)

W F Deedes reported on an invention by an Australian engineer of a 'stability hat' with copper wire stitched into the brim which, when worn by a golfer, would help to ensure he kept his head still.

The Colbrans compared this to the experience of Frederick Pilcher, in *Those in Peril on the Tee*, when he found that wearing a top-hat had a similar effect! Just another example of Wodehouse being seventy years ahead of the field.

*Spectator*, 21st February (from Iain Sproat)

Ran a competition to supply an extract from the memoirs of (!) Freddie Threepwood. The winning entries, published on 14th March, were notably undistinguished.

*The Times*, 2nd May (from Robin Simpson)

Carried an article by Anthony Quinton based on his book *From Wodehouse to Wittgenstein*.

Robin Simpson's letter commenting on it was published on 9th May.

*New Yorker*, 18th May (from Marilyn MacGregor)

In an article by Adam Gopnik, *The Invention of Oscar Wilde*, he states that the ordinary world of late-Victorian bourgeois life has no more eloquent celebrator. He goes on: "That's why in *The Importance of Being Earnest* suburban humbug is made into the permanent daydream of an idle Eden. (Eventually it became Blandings Castle.)"

*Observer*, 24 May (from Helen Murphy)

William Keegan wrote about the Group of Eight summit at Weston Park and how the Prime Minister sported himself in its gardens, "rather like a young blade from a PG Wodehouse novel. But then I increasingly wonder whether Tony Blair has stepped

out of the pages of PG Wodehouse. Weston Park appears to have been the main model for Blandings Castle, in which Lord Emsworth fought for the cause of the porcine Empress of Blandings, and kept well away from Birmingham. The way Blair played the Clinton connection for all it was worth could also have come straight out of a Wodehouse merry-go-round. Indeed the author anticipated Clinton's visit some years ago when he wrote *Bill The Conqueror – His Invasion of England in the Springtime*. One can't quite see Alastair Campbell as Jeeves to Tony Blair's Bertie Wooster – or perhaps one can. As for the golfing connection, well Wodehouse knew all about that, too."

*Evening Standard*, 27 May (from Helen Murphy)

Reported that Dame Murial Spark had responded to journalist Christopher Hitchens, who had named *The Code of the Woosters* as his favourite book, by declaring that Wodehouse's oeuvre contained "nobody at all that you couldn't take out with insect spray."

Helen Murphy's letter putting an alternative view in no uncertain terms was published on 1st June.

*Daily Telegraph*, 1st June (from Murray Hedgcock)

PGW was reported as being the literary hero of successful American novelist Jay McInerney. "I think he is one of the greatest prose stylists in the language," McInerney says. "I began my first novel in metropolitan satire when I was twelve. The first line was: 'Bring me another Martini, Jeeves.' I had not read Wodehouse by then, but I understood somehow that butlers were supposed to be called Jeeves."

*Daily Mail*, 6th June (from Murray Hedgcock)

Lynda Lee-Potter reported that "Nicholas Soames adores PGW novels and it's easy to imagine him as a Wodehouse character. He talks about good eggs and spiffing girls and thinks it's one's duty to be amusing."

*Sunday Times*, 7th June:

AA Gill said that not even PGW could have invented the Rev Roly Brown from Bath. He conducts all his services dressed as a clown, with bowler hat and a plastic flower that squirts holy water, and rather than giving lectures to vicars' wives on flower arranging and tombola rolling, he will select as his subject 'Sex in the modern church'.

*Independent*, 13th June (from Murray Hedgcock)

Profiled the Foreign Office minister Baroness Symons, saying she was an accomplished cook and keen gardener with catholic reading tastes ranging from historical biography to PG Wodehouse.



## Recent Press Comment, continued

*New York Times*, 14th June (from both Marilyn MacGregor and W P Brooks)

In an enthusiastic travel report on Shropshire's 'Rolling Green Carpet', the reporter said that the weather had surprised her. "P G Wodehouse once said that living in the English countryside was like living inside a wet lettuce. As we planned to do a great deal of walking, we were prepared with ponchos and stoicism. Neither was needed."

*Editor's note:* if any reader can identify the source of PGW's quotation, please let us know.

*Sunday Times*, 14th June (from Iain Sproat)

Stephen Fry nominated *Psmith in the City* as the 'comfort' book he most likes to reread, *Right Ho, Jeeves* as the funniest book he has read and Psmith as his favourite character.

Ferdinand Mount wondered whether those who put their trust in Mr Blair's good faith on constitutional reform may turn out to be as deluded as Madeleine Bassett in her belief that "the stars are God's daisy chain".

*Radio Times*, 20th June

Referring to the serialised television adaptation of *In the Red* by Mark Taverner, it pointed out that the book had won the PG Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction.

*Various Papers*, 23rd, 24th and 25th June

Carried obituaries of Benny Green and Maureen O'Sullivan.

*Evening Standard*, 25 June (from Helen Murphy)

David Sexton, introduced an article about Earl Spencer with a quotation from *A Gentleman of Leisure*: "Inherited wealth, of course, does not make a young man nobler or more admirable, but the young man does not always know this."

*The Times*, 25th June

Dr Thomas Stuttaford, writing about snoring, reported that: "The chinless wonder so beloved of PG Wodehouse is likely to be a heavy snorer, since a receding lower jaw is associated with upper airway narrowing at the base of the tongue."

*The Times*, 25th June

Carried an article about the Sotheby's auction of the Heineman collection in New York, concentrating on such items as the letters written while in Germany. Helen Murphy's letter correcting a number of misconceptions in the article was published on 1st July.

*Sunday Times*, 5th July

Ann Widdecombe, MP, selected *The Code of the Woosters* as her choice of the funniest book she had ever read.

*Independent on Sunday*, 5th July (from Kit Evans)

Cole Moreton wrote an article commenting on the lack of discretion showed by modern-day butlers and manservants, as evidenced by disclosures from Rupert Murdoch's former valet. He pointed out that the butler had become a quintessential English character thanks to PGW, had appeared to have almost died out early in the century, but was now staging a revival.

*The Times*, 6th July

Commented that the existence of the Russian PGW Society was a sure sign that communism was dead, and remarked that Lenin had banned his books because the main character in *The Clicking of Cuthbert* claimed to be his friend. It also quoted Iain Sproat: "But other Russians are appreciative. I visited Tolstoy's old house, and discovered that his deathbed reading had been *The Public School Magazine*, containing a Wodehouse story."

*Birmingham Post*, 11th July (from Vic Bolwell)

The Leisure section devoted almost a page and a half to the forthcoming meeting of the Society at the Uplands in Birmingham on the 18th. Ross Reyburn in a comprehensive article, described the many links Wodehouse had with Birmingham, and it clearly encouraged many prospective members to come along.

*The Times Higher*, 17th July (from James Wood)

Reviewing Anthony Quinton's book *From Wodehouse to Wittgenstein* Mary Warnock commented that: "Perhaps because what makes Quinton funny is so closely akin to what makes PGW funny . . . he seems to have missed the essence of Wodehouse."

*Evening Standard*, 29th July (from Helen Murphy)

In a preview of a television programme about critics, David Sexton quoted PGW: "Has anyone ever seen a dramatic critic in the daytime? Of course not. They come out after dark, up to no good."

*The Times*, August

Godfrey Smith, reviewing *Letters Home*, edited by Brian Johnston's son Barry, commented that the resonance between Brian and Bertie Wooster grew insistent when we read how Targett, his cousin Alex's butler, used to whisper betting tips as he served Johnners the vegetables at dinner.

*The Times*, 25th August

Nominated *A Foggy Day* at the Royal George Theatre, Toronto, as one of two 'finds' of the year in Canada. An adaptation of *A Damsel in Distress*, with Gershwin music and lyrics, it is described as 'fizzing show' and London producers are advised to take note.



## FUTURE EVENTS – FOR YOUR DIARY

### October 3 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Join the Chairman on one of his famous walks round Wodehouse's London. There are no formalities; simply be at the top of the escalators at Green Park Underground Station at 2pm. You are, however, advised to inform Norman in advance that you are going by telephoning

### October 15 – Dinner at the Inner Temple

Places for the dinner have been fully allocated and there is a waiting list of over twenty. Sir John Mortimer will propose a toast, Richard Briers will respond, and Maria Friedman will sing.

### October 17 – *Anything Goes*, Crewe

A visit is planned to see a performance of *Anything Goes* at the Lyceum Theatre, Crewe. See page 14 for details and contact

### October 17 – Second International Wodehouse Memorial Dinner

This dinner, open to all our members, is organised by the Dutch Wodehouse Society and will be held in Oud-Zuilen, close to Utrecht and some 40km from Amsterdam. They expect members from Societies in Belgium, the UK, the US and Sweden to be present, and most of the proceedings will, we are assured, be conducted in English.

### November 17– Savage Club

An informal gathering of members and guests from 6pm. Tentative plans have been made for a pianist to be with us and it is hoped that there may be some community singing of some of PGW's songs. The Savage Club is in the premises of the National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Court, close to Charing Cross station.

### December 3 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Join the Chairman on one of his famous walks round Wodehouse's London (see above). As the winter approaches, the walk will only go ahead if there are a minimum number interested, so do call Norman to register your interest.

### February 16, 1999 – Savage Club

Advance warning of the date of another informal gathering.

### October 22-24, 1999 – US Society Convention

This biennial convention will take place at the Warwick Park Plaza Hotel, Houston, Texas, and will include several talks, some songs, a banquet, a cricket match and many other events expected to stimulate and amuse. Room bookings are now being taken by the hotel at the special convention rate. Full details can be obtained from the organiser,

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## EDITOR'S TAILPIECES

Le Touquet has been continuing to advertise its attractions in various journals and magazines this summer, and refers to the Wodehouse connection.

We understand that tentative steps have been taken towards the formation of an Italian Society. More details will be provided when they become available, but in the meantime, we wish good luck to all those involved in its birth. There are more Wodehouse's books available in Italian than in any other language; even the elusive *Not George Washington* was published in 1992!

Many of our theatrical Patrons and Members have had a busy summer. **Richard Briers** has recently finished a most successful run in *The Chairs* in both London and New York. **Lord Lloyd-Webber** has opened *Whistle Down The*

*Wind* in which **Nicolas Colicos** is appearing. **Jonathan Cecil** has had excellent reviews for his Sir Bounteous Progress in *A Mad World, My Masters* at the Globe. **Lucy Tregear** starts a ten month season with the Orange Tree Theatre in Richmond in the autumn. **Geoffrey Harris** has been performing his one man show about Charles Dickens, *The Sparkler of Albion*, on Wednesday evenings at The Dickens House for the seventh successive summer, and **Ned Sherrin** has been directing **Keith Waterhouse's** play *Good Grief* on a provincial tour prior to the West End.

The BBC programme *Bookworm*, presented by **Griff Rhys Jones**, returns to the screen in the autumn, and one edition is expected to include a feature on P G Wodehouse.