



WOOSTER SAUCE

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

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Celebrating a Special Centenary

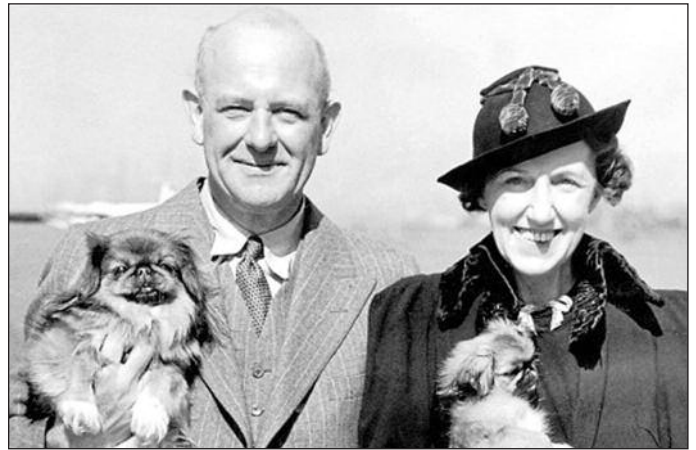
On September 30, 1914, P. G. Wodehouse and Ethel Rowley Wayman were married at the Church of the Transfiguration – better known as The Little Church Around the Corner – on 29th Street in New York City. One hundred years later, the occasion of the Society's ninth biennial dinner at Gray's Inn was clearly the right time to celebrate the event in grand style.



Great-grandchildren Lara and Hal Cazalet were brilliant!

We were delighted to welcome many luminaries, including our new President, Sir Terry Wogan; the distinguished actor Sir Michael Gambon; Wodehouse biographer Robert McCrum; Sebastian Faulks, author of *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*; and Ann Davies, actress and widow of our late President, Richard Briers. Sir Michael and Mr Faulks also took part in the evening's entertainment, a celebration of Plum and Ethel's wedding made memorable by the contributions of their great-grandchildren Lara, Hal, and David Cazalet; Society Patrons Lucy Tregear and HRH The Duke of Kent; and Society Committee members Paul Kent, Jeremy Neville, and Tony Ring.

With such a line-up, and with several Wodehouse songs superbly sung by Hal and Lara added to the mix, the evening was more than a



P. G. and Ethel Wodehouse had been married for more than 60 years by the time of his death in February 1975.

corcker – it was a triumph. A report by Graeme Davidson, along with more pictures, begins on page 12.

Photos of the dinner by Katy Rugeris. If you were at the dinner and wish to obtain photos of the evening, see the information provided on page 14.



Sir Terry Wogan gave the toast.



The entertainment included HRH The Duke of Kent, Lucy Tregear (as Ethel Wodehouse), and Sir Michael Gambon (as Plum).

Bloomsbury Book Bench Best Buy

by Norman Murphy

It was in July that we first read of the bright idea someone had to raise funds for the National Literacy Trust. You form a collaboration with Wild in Art to make 50 benches resembling an open book, then get 50 artists to decorate them with pictures based on books by famous authors. Then you distribute them around London – in Bloomsbury, the City, Greenwich, and along the riverside – for people to admire, to sit on, or, as in one case, to propose to your girlfriend on. And you call this project Books About Town.

Many of us went along to admire the Jeeves and Wooster bench in the Brunswick Centre, just north of Russell Square. The back of the bench shows Bertie's legs upright with what looks like a croquet mallet in his hand, and Jeeves is seen approaching with a tray containing two glasses. The top front has a silhouette of Jeeves carrying a tray up the drive to Blandings Castle, while below it are the pinstripe

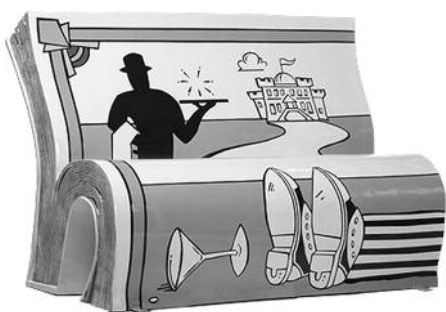
trousers and shoes of a clearly prostrate Bertie Wooster with an empty cocktail glass beside them. Jeeves's cocktail

had in this case been not so much a snifter as a bracer whose strength was as the strength of ten.

On October 7, at the Purcell Room on the South Bank, Sotheby's auctioned off the benches, and the results are fascinating. I must admit I had not vetted the list of 50 benches, but when I did so, I was not sanguine about 'our' bench's chances. *The Canterbury Tales* were in there with Pepys' Diary and Miss Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. There was *Around the World in 80 Days* and Dickens's *Great Expectations*, along with *The Wind in the Willows*, Sherlock Holmes, and *The Railway Children*. Among more modern competitors were *1984*, James Bond, *Dr Seuss*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, and *War Horse*. Formidable competition indeed; for a list of all the benches in the auction, see bit.ly/1tYIJsh.

The National Literacy Trust raised £251,000 that evening, and it was money well spent.

And the results? Equal second were *War Horse* and James Bond at £9,000 each, but the overall winner was the Jeeves and Wooster bench, painted by Gordon Allum, which raised a superb £9,500. We can all feel very smug.



Was Plum a Freemason?

by Donald Davinson

As a long-term Wodehouse reader (74 years) and ditto Freemason (53 years), I am fascinated by the many Masonic references in the Plum canon, beginning with "There is a freemasonry amongst those who live in big cities" (*Something Fresh*, 1915).

Was Plum a Freemason? None of his major biographers mention it – though it is noted in Barry Phelps's *P.G. Wodehouse: Man and Myth* – and yet the Masonic stuff positively leaps out at one if one knows where (and how) to look. In a lecture on literary Masons, while noting Plum's predilection for spreading Masonic references around his work, a former holder of the Masonic Historian's Oscar – the Prestonian Lecturership – stated positively that Plum was never a Mason. For many years that was sufficient to convince me to look no further.

A recent 15-year stint as Chairman of the Trustees of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in Great Queen Street gave me the incentive to dip into the archives to review the situation, however.

PGW was indeed, albeit briefly, a Freemason. He joined Jerusalem Lodge 197 in 1929 and resigned in 1934, having attended only five meetings in all. Jerusalem Lodge is one of the 19 prestigious 'Red Apron' Lodges in London that are accorded the annual privilege of nominating a Grand Steward. To avoid any puzzlement, these lodges are dubbed 'Red Apron' because the members wear red-coloured regalia rather than the normal blue. One wag suggested the different colouration is caused by the amount of port they spill over themselves.

My guess as to how Plum became a Freemason is based on a conjunction of circumstances. Around 1928/9 Plum was holed up in Hunstanton Hall, receiving regular visits from Ian Hay (Beith), who was adapting *Damsel in Distress* for the stage. Beith was to become Master of Jerusalem Lodge in January 1929. It seems feasible to surmise that Hay persuaded Plum to be his first nomination for membership in that year. Even more feasible, given Plum's amiability, is to surmise that, despite his instinct to shy away from any involvements which might interfere with his writing time, he would have gone along with it to please an old chum.

The author of Jerusalem Lodge's bicentenary history (published 1971) was clearly not overwhelmed by evidence of such literary superstardom in the ranks. While including wordy tributes to a number of now largely unread author members, Plum has to make do with a laconic one-liner: 'Wodehouse P.G. initiated 22 March 1929 resigned 10 November 1934.'

Society News

February Meeting

The Editor is pleased to acknowledge a further missive from our Entertainments Impresario, which, with tedious familiarity, was pushed under the door by person or persons unknown just as this edition of *Wooster Sauce* was going to press:

MESSAGE BEGINS:

What ho! Rather hoping that clever stage johnny from *Perfect Nonsense* was going to speak at our February 11th meeting. Turns out the blighter's too busy being successful and is on tour in Rotherham or somewhere, so have had to postpone. However, on to Plan B: have snatched victory from jaws of defeat and commissioned a new adaptation of wonderful Wodehouse story 'Rodney Has a Relapse' as part of an A. A. Milne theme night, performed by brilliant actor A H-S. However, he's a stage Johnny, too, and may be cast as spear chucker at the National or whatever, which might kibosh everything. In which case, stand by your beds and await Plan C. But there will be entertainment and it will be at The Savoy Tup just off the Strand on **Wednesday, 11 February 2015**, preceded as always by the socialising that starts at 18.00 hrs. And it will, of course, be utterly brilliant!
MESSAGE ENDS.

Help Wanted: Treasurer

When Jeremy Neville became the Society's Treasurer in 2011, he thought he had plenty of time. . . . The advent of two small girls whose main aim in life is 24-hour wakefulness, along with increased work commitments, have conspired to change all that, and Jeremy has reluctantly decided he must stand down as Treasurer. Much as we don't want him to do so, in all honesty, we can't entirely blame him.

This means that we are looking for a willing and able member to become our next Treasurer and help keep the Society in good fettle. During Jeremy's tenure we have made some big changes, but there are more to make, and we'll be relying on the new Treasurer for the know-how: we must, for example, consider software that integrates our membership and accounting functions, and streamline our subscription payments further.

Jeremy estimates the job takes an evening every few weeks or so, although practically he does it in half-hour chunks. The job itself involves all the things a numerate person might expect – cash book, paying bills and expenses, bank reconciliation, and preparing the annual accounts, which are independently examined. This is an officer position on the Committee, and we would hope

that the Treasurer would be able to attend three or four afternoon committee meetings a year in London, as well as being in regular email contact with committee colleagues.

Our accounting is currently based on spreadsheets, but, as noted above, we are looking to integrate this with the membership database. The Treasurer would have to be familiar with such things.

So Many to Thank

As 2014 comes to a close, it is time for your Committee to express heartfelt thanks to all those who help to make *Wooster Sauce* such a top-notch journal. We are especially grateful to the great staff of Baines Design and Print (Cuffley, Hertfordshire) for their quality work in printing not only *Wooster Sauce* and *By The Way* but also the programmes for our biennial dinners and other publications when needed. We especially thank Sandie Howard-Smith, Stuart Bennett, and Zoe Brooks for their advice, expertise – and infinite patience.

Thanks also to our proofreaders – Caroline Franklyn, Gwendolin Goldbloom, and Mike Swaddling. Proving that sometimes too many cooks do *not* spoil the broth, these three dedicated volunteers each seem to spot different things in their proofing, thus ensuring that most boo-boos are caught and fixed before publication.

On a personal level, the Editor would like to thank her husband, Norman Murphy, who not only helps with proofing the journal but is always willing to share the editing load, from cutting down long papers to writing up items of interest (usually uncredited) for *Wooster Sauce* readers. Were it not for Norman, your Editor might have ended up in Colney Hatch, and she's jolly glad she married him.

Finally, and most importantly, thanks to all who have contributed to *Wooster Sauce*, from scholarly articles to entertaining stories to snippets from books and the media. We currently have enough material to keep publishing for the next two years – a big part of the reason why some, alas, have to wait quite a while before seeing their submissions in print. But it is always gratifying to see papers coming in from new contributors as well as the familiar names. It is because of our contributors that *Wooster Sauce* is so good – and for that we are very thankful indeed!

Another in our ongoing series of strange-but-true church appointments

The Rev. Philip John Payne, curate North Bury team (St Edmundsbury and Ipswich) to be priest-in-charge Coddham with Gosbeck and Hemingstone, Crowfield with Stonham Aspal and Mickfield and Creting St Mary, Creting St. Peter and Earl Stonham with Stonham Parva (same diocese).

(Thanks to MURRAY HEDGCOCK)



Letters to the Editor

Reactions, Questions, and Thoughts from Our Readers

From Ian Alexander-Sinclair

In response to Roy Morgan (*Wooster Sauce*, September 2014), my statement that Record Road in Emsworth was previously named Beach Road was originally based upon correspondence with Norman Murphy in 2002, as subsequently reflected in Volume 1 of *A Wodehouse Handbook*: “When Threepwood and its neighbours were built, the developer called it Record Road. But local inhabitants (and Wodehouse) continued to call it by its old name, Beach Road” (page 162). This was information, I understand, gleaned during his research for his book *In Search of Blandings*.

Following Roy Morgan’s comment I have consulted the [ordnance survey] maps for 1898 and 1909. The earlier of the two shows what are now Record Road and Beach Road as unnamed tracks, whereas by 1909 they were developed roads, with their present names. As both tracks led towards the beach (it would have been necessary to cross the main Havant road and walk a few yards to the west to get from one to the other), the maps are consistent with the results of Norman Murphy’s research.

Incidentally – and this I found most interesting as I have been familiar with Record Road since the 1950s and had never heard it before – according to the Emsworth Museum, Record Road was so named to commemorate Queen Victoria’s record, achieved in 1896, when she had become Great Britain’s longest-reigning monarch, overtaking her grandfather, George III. I wonder if Wodehouse knew this when he first rented Threepwood in 1904. But if he did, would he still have called it Beach Road?

Norman adds: Mrs Dobbs of Record Road told me that her mother always used the old name of Beach Road for both Beach and Record Roads. So did Wodehouse. In a letter to a fan dated December 14, 1952, he wrote: “I used to stay there a lot and eventually bought myself a villa called Threepwood in Beach Road.” (Letter sold at Christies, 1978.)

From Chris Dueker

Re. the September issue of *Wooster Sauce*: The leader was inspiring; read at a single setting. This David Gunn must have seen a few sunrises himself if his father was born in 1895, yet he writes with youthful vigour. The subtle captioning that revealed the painting’s fate brought an empathetic shudder. I wonder if a Society member has it.

The letters department gave me the rare opportunity to know something. Christopher Bellew wrote of television. *Something Fishy (The Butler Did It)* of 1957 mentioned the machine more than once. I realize that some clever Johnny will tell you of the 1947 story which PGW smuggled out of Paris and which appeared only in the *Providence Provider* because of post-war political intrigue.

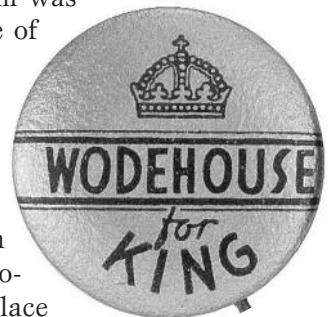
All in all, *Wooster Sauce* never fails to remind us that the world is large and small.

Note: See related articles on opposite page.

From Sonia A. Hughes

Regarding the ‘Wodehouse for King’ button (*Wooster Sauce*, September, p.8), I have three, probably certainly, off-beam long shots:

- (1) E. Phillips Oppenheim was known as ‘The Prince of Storytellers’.
- (2) It could be an irrelevant reference to the abdication of King Edward VIII.
- (3) Nothing to do with PGW, but a hitherto-unknown-to-us-all place in the US campaigning for a politician called King?



Note. Sonia is the only one to come up with some theories about the button (pictured). Any other speculation would be welcome!

What’s in a Name?

SIR SIDNEY KENTRIDGE sent along an extract from the *Times Literary Supplement* of September 12, in which the American writer Barton Swaim discusses the names that are bestowed upon us. Not liking his own name, he considered but discounted “a wholesale name-change on the order of George Orwell or John le Carré”. He went on to discuss name-related dilemmas of other authors, including P. G. Wodehouse. Swaim quotes PGW’s introduction to the 1970 edition of *Something Fresh* (originally published 1915) in which he described his decision to pitch the novel to the *Saturday Evening Post* under his full name of Pelham Grenville Wodehouse:

A writer in America at that time who went about without three names was practically going around naked. Those were the days of Richard Harding Davis, of James Warner Bellah, of Margaret Culkin Banning. . . . And here was I, poor misguided simp, trying to get by with a couple of contemptible initials.

Swaim goes on to note that Wodehouse “quickly went back to P. G., perhaps because the longer version sounds as if it’s trying too hard: there couldn’t possibly be another Pelham Wodehouse from whom Pelham Grenville Wodehouse needed to distinguish himself.”

And More from Our Members

An Appeal for Help

Readers of *Wooster Sauce* may remember the leading article ‘Wodehouse and the Sailor’ in the September 2014 edition. It included this photograph of a painting by the Sailor, Phillip Gunn, of a composite of PGW characters called *PG Wodehouse Looks In*, which was sold by his son, David Gunn, via an auction house in Portsmouth in the mid-1980s. David is keen to buy that painting back if he can find out where it is and if the present owner is willing to sell.

The auctioneers have suggested that a member of The P G Wodehouse Society is the most likely owner of the painting, which is in oil on board and measures approximately 55cm x 40cm. If anyone has knowledge of *PG Wodehouse Looks In*, would they be kind enough to let the *Wooster Sauce* Editor know (contact details on page 24), and she will pass the details on to David.



TV or Not TV?

In the Letters section of the September issue of *Wooster Sauce*, Christopher Bellew wondered if *Cocktail Time* (1958) marked the first time Wodehouse mentioned a television set in his books. In his letter he noted that by then “televisions had become more commonplace since the Coronation had been broadcast”.

NICK MASON has provided what may be the definitive answer. He writes: “The television set owned by the impoverished Bill Rowcester goes on the blink just as the assembled company are gathering to watch the Derby at the climax of *Ring for Jeeves* (1953). They are all obliged to follow the crucial progress of the race on the radio. This may or may not be PGW’s

first reference to television, but it predates *Cocktail Time* by a good five years.”



Giving further credence to the 1953 date, NICK TOWNEND sent an extract from a letter, dated 4 June 1953, written by Wodehouse to Guy Bolton (Sophie Ratcliffe, *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*, 2011, p457). Nick says this “is an earlier reference to television (although I hesitate to claim that it is the earliest) and also demonstrates the truth of Christopher’s comment about the Coronation”:

We saw the Coronation on television. I thought it needed work and should have been fixed up in New Haven. They ought to have cut at least half an hour out of it and brought on the girls in the spot where the Archbishop did the extract from the Gospel.

Land of Hope and Wodehouse



A visit to Sir Edward Elgar’s birthplace museum near Worcester is full of surprises. Behind the mask of the great English composer lurked a man with a sense of fun. On the wall of his well-preserved study, with its period writing implements and workaday desk, is a daily newspaper. On the paper are whimsical doodles by Sir Edward himself, including politicians with top hats and moustaches added and a scene at the Whitehall Cenotaph with additional dogs and cats pencilled in the same hand.

Of more interest to the Wodehouseologist is the composer’s bookcase, complete with a copy of Plum’s *Uneasy Money*. Clearly here was a man with fine literary taste. Following my visit earlier this year, I read the diary of Elgar’s daughter, Carice. On 30 August 1928, she notes: “Father and I to Wodehouse play *Damsel in Distress* – great fun.”

The photo shows the composer’s birthplace museum at Lower Broadheath, near Worcester.

– C. ROGER BOWEN

A Porcine Swan Song at Newbury?

by Elin Woodger Murphy

All good things must come to an end, according to the ever-mysterious ‘they’, and so it seems to be with the Society’s sponsorship of the Berkshire Champion of Champions at the Newbury Show. In the September issue of *Wooster Sauce*, we reported that the championship will be moving to Warwickshire next year, and therefore our committee decided to discontinue sponsoring the competition after 10 years. As this issue was being prepared, we learned that the move is now in doubt, which means there may yet be more Berkshire competitions in Berkshire.

Be that as it may, the idea that this may be our last Newbury Show made the event on September 21 all the more special for those of us who were there. In addition to Tony and Elaine Ring, their son, Philip, and Norman and me, we were joined by Society member Susan Van Dyke and her husband, Edward. (It was when I overheard Susan talking to Edward about the Empress of Blandings that I realised there was a well-informed Wodehousean in our midst.)

We had a bit of a wait to see the usual glorious parade of Berkshire pigs, as first there was the inter-breed championship to be decided. This included such a wide assortment of beautiful pigs that it boggled the mind: how on earth was the judge to decide which was the best?

“That’s a fine-looking Saddleback,” I opined gravely, while Norman admired the long hair on the Kune Kune. Tony and Elaine favoured a Large Black that was significantly smaller than the sole Berkshire in the competition. (This was apt since, as we know, the pig that Wodehouse saw at Hunstanton Hall, which became his inspiration for Empress of Blandings, was a Large Black.) As things turned out, we were all wrong: the coconut was awarded to a magnificent Oxford Sandy & Black. But it was great fun judging the pigs ourselves from ringside, as if we really knew what we were talking about.

Finally came the event we were waiting for, and it was as the competition got under way that I discovered Susan and Edward nearby. We continued to compare and contrast pigs while the judge, Jo Wicksnade, picked her way among the throng in the ring and carefully separated the porcine wheat

from the chaff. Out of the original 15 portly contestants, she whittled the field down to five shapely females and three, er, well-endowed males.

In the end, it was a triumph for the men: the championship cup was awarded to a boar named Buster, owned by Chris Impey of Fair Oaks Berkshire Pigs, Warwickshire. Interestingly, although Edward was not a Wodehousean and it was his very first pig competition, he had managed to pick out the winner – clearly a man of whom Lord Emsworth would have approved for his keen instincts. Sound on pigs, that man.

The reserve champion was Kilcot Mermaid, a female owned by Sue Fildes of Dittisham Farm, South Devon. In Hilary Bruce’s absence, the prizes were presented by Society Remembrancer Norman Murphy, who found that providing apples and scratching the broad black backs were ideal ways of getting the winners to stand still long enough to have their pictures taken by Tony Ring.

There was one sad moment. We had been looking forward to seeing our old friend Truffle, Newbury’s 2006 Champion who had been admired by Society members when she and her piglets graciously received us on the last leg of the 2007 Week With Wodehouse. Truffle had been a fixture at the show every year since her triumph, winning the Veterans Class in 2011, and a larger, sweeter pig we will never know. But we learned from her owner, Christina Dunlop, that this past spring Truffle had gone to that great pigsty in the sky, joining Wodehouse and the Empress. We shall miss her!



A noble contender poses for the paparazzi.



*Judge Jo Wicksnade, owner Chris Impey, and Society Remembrancer Norman Murphy with Buster
(photos by Tony Ring)*

My First Wodehouse Experience

by Katie Chapman

To create the scene somewhat, imagine: a fiercely patriotic (because England is all she has ever known) 18-year-old girl with no knowledge of the outside world and her head in a daydream suddenly finding herself in the middle of Argentina, halfway across the world from everyone else she knows.

This is the situation I found myself in once I had left school and decided, fairly whimsically, to travel around South America for five months. Naturally, these sorts of situations force one to learn about oneself – one’s likes, one’s dislikes, etc. – and what I found is that I have a deep dislike of leaving England and my family for extended periods of time and that I really didn’t want to be there.

I knew that I was not helping myself, and instead of wallowing in my homesickness I should have been reading South American literature and taking an interest in my surroundings. But, alas, I am a bit of a self-waller. So in order to forget where I was and attempt to kindle a substantial connection with good old England, I immersed myself in Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, Henry James, and, to spruce it up a tad, Jilly Cooper. However, although these books are ‘of the essence’ of England, they do lack in the odd rib-cracking laugh here and there, and what is England if not a nation with a superb sense of humour?

I had just struggled my way through a Henry James and was in need of a light, refreshing read. I felt, as I was due to start an English Literature degree in September, that I just could not, however much I wanted to, turn once more to Jilly Cooper (I had read them all several times already). So instead I turned to

Google. ‘Fun light reads’, ‘funny, easy books’ were what I was in search of (only English, naturally).

I doubt you are surprised to hear that P G Wodehouse was prominent among the highest ranking. Of course, I had listened to the audiobooks as a child, but I couldn’t remember a thing about them. All I could vaguely recollect was something or someone called Jeeves. I wasn’t entirely convinced, knowing how 20th-century British humour can be a tad slapstick (and because all I really wanted to do was read Jilly Cooper), but resignedly I downloaded *Thank You, Jeeves* onto my Kindle.

I cannot tell you how magical it was to laugh until I thought I would be sick after encountering the lovable and ludicrous Bertie Wooster, especially as I could draw some rather close parallels with a few

very dear and utterly barmy relatives of mine. An increased sense of homesickness was a price well worth paying in order to be introduced into the world of Wodehouse. Disregarding my surroundings even more, I read and read and read and laughed and laughed and laughed (earning myself some alarmed looks from other travellers). My Facebook status promptly became: “How have I been on this planet for 18 years and only just picked up a P G Wodehouse book?” – and a fine reception it received.

At the time of writing this (May 2014), I am now on *Right Ho, Jeeves*, and I shall continue to devour every book ever written by Mr. Wodehouse: a saviour of a man to whom I shall be eternally grateful to for bringing me a huge supply of what I was severely lacking – English dottiness.



“Weigh the facts. Sift the evidence. The jug was standing on the mantelpiece, for all eyes to behold. Gussie had been complaining of thirst. You found him in here, laughing heartily. I think there can be little doubt, Jeeves, that the entire contents of that jug are at this moment reposing on top of the existing cargo in that already brilliantly lit man’s interior. Disturbing, Jeeves.”

“Most disturbing, sir.”

“Let us face the position, forcing ourselves to be calm. You inserted in that jug – shall we say a tumblerful of the right stuff?”

“Fully a tumblerful, sir.”

“And I added of my plenty about the same amount.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And in two shakes of a duck’s tail Gussie, with all that lapping about inside him, will be distributing the prizes at Market Snodsbury Grammar School before an audience of all that is fairest and most refined in the county.

“Yes, sir.”

“It seems to me, Jeeves, that the ceremony may be one fraught with considerable interest.”

(From *Right Ho, Jeeves*, 1934)

Some Reminiscences of Dick Usborne

by David Baird-Smith

Coming respectively from Charterhouse and Winchester, Richard (Dick) Usborne and my father, John Helenus Baird-Smith, first met as undergraduates at Balliol College, Oxford in the early 1930s. Both gifted with a rather sardonic or quizzical sense of humor, they became close friends. “As good as they make ’em, the best of old pals” would seem to be an appropriate description of the situation.

I like to imagine that their friendship was cemented by a joint participation in the activities of that remarkable institution, the Balliol Players. The object of that happy association was to mount ancient Greek plays in the vernacular and tour them around receptive and distinguished girls’ schools in the south of England. Aristophanes’ comedies were not excluded, and were indeed encouraged.

Excursions into the *grand monde* of London were also, it seems, included in the program, with some particular attention to theatricals encouraged by a contemporary Balliol enthusiast, Felix Felton (later to star in *Charlie’s Aunt* as Mr. Spettigrew). Visits to Scott’s Restaurant in Piccadilly were reportedly regular.

When my father decided to get married in 1934, it was natural that the best man should be Dick Usborne, and so it was. In the photo, Dick Usborne is on his right, and another distinguished man of letters (and former fellow-sufferer of my father’s in K House, Winchester) was Nicholas Montserrat, author of *The Cruel Sea*, standing on Dick’s right. The rest of the party are close relations and friends of my mother.



Thereafter, my father settled in Scotland and Dick Usborne in London, the former as partner in a Glasgow law firm, and the latter, as is known, for a remarkable career in advertising and journalism. Dick was married to Monica, my father to Jean Priestman, and both primogenitures were named David. The couples met occasionally over the ensuing years, mostly in London. Both wives were quite strong personalities.

My father died at the early age of 67 in 1977. Dick Usborne, on retirement and now a widower, took up residence in the London Charterhouse, a most agreeable and appropriate choice. It was there that I had the good fortune to visit him for the last time when our daughter was studying at the nearby Guildhall School of Music and Drama. From his window he was able to observe the aeroplanes coming in on that route to land at Heathrow Airport, a pastime which seemed to afford him some satisfaction. He was evidently the object of much respect and tender care from the admirable Charterhouse staff. He very kindly offered to arrange for our daughter Georgina, a cellist, to give a recital at the Charterhouse, but she was, sadly, rather dilatory, and the project never materialized. He passed on shortly after my visit, which left me with a most happy memory.

I was to find him recently again in *Wodehouse at Work* and *Clubland Heroes*, which, together with a concentrated plunge into PGW, decided me to join The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), to which this little scribble is respectfully offered.

Cosy Moments (1)

A Time of Gifts, by Patrick Leigh Fermor (1977)
(from Christopher Bellew)

While re-reading this book, Christopher came across this (forgotten by him) passage, describing Fermor’s stay at Schloss Bruchsal on his Great Trudge:

After a long bath, I explored his collection of Tauchnitz editions and found exactly what I wanted to read in bed – *Leave It to Psmith* – and soon I wasn’t really in a German schloss at all, but in the corner seat of a first class carriage on the 3.45 from Paddington to Market Blandings, bound for a different castle.

Christopher writes: “One great stylist salutes another like a mastodon bellowing across primeval swamps.

P L-F many years later augmented his homage when he translated ‘The Great Sermon Handicap’ into Greek.”

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary
(from Barry Chapman)

Having installed the disk that came with his two-volume set, Barry has found it convenient to search through the dictionary on his computer. In doing so, he has come across numerous Wodehouse quotations used to illustrate words. For example, the definition for the word ‘leap’ is accompanied by the PGW line: “She sprang onto the pavement with a gay leap.” For ‘echo’, the apt quote is: “Don’t repeat everything I say, as if you were an echo in the Swiss mountains.” (No story attributions are included.)

Theatrical Doings in Sweden

by Bengt Malmberg

In Sweden we take a deep interest in the London theatre. Since many speak and understand English quite well, they often attend performances there. So when *Perfect Nonsense* was a success at the Duke of York's Theatre in London, many from Sweden went to see it. One was the actor and playwright Johan Svangren, who in the summertime organizes plays at a small theatre in Mellan-fjärden, a seaside village about 185 miles north of Stockholm. These have included Sean Foley's comedy *The Ladykillers*. When he heard about *Perfect Nonsense*, he saw a performance in spring 2014, got permission to translate the play, and prepared to produce it for the summer season at his theatre.

After five weeks of intensive work and rehearsals, the premiere took place on August 1, and it ran for 18 performances with nearly full houses (the theatre has 215 seats). Visitors came by bus from other towns in the area, and though many of them had never read any Wodehouse, they thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Johan Svangren has translated many English plays before, but he had never read a Wodehouse novel. He did know that Plum was a great

humorous writer. *Perfect Nonsense* is based on *The Code of the Woosters*, but Johan used only the script by the Goodale Brothers and followed it exactly. I have read the translation, and he has caught the real spirit of Plum's writing. Its success aroused interest from theatres in Stockholm, and Johan will try to give the play there if he can find a suitable theatre.

I should also mention that, last year, the Regina Theatre in Uppsala staged a musical based on four Wodehouse golf stories. The English-born director John Fiske translated and adapted them with typical 1930s music. With the theatre set up like a golf links, *FORE!* ran for two weeks in November–December 2013, then was staged for two more weeks in January 2014. Because of its success, it was shown again for seven performances in November 2014.

While on the topic, I should mention that the pupils of the Cathedral School, Uppsala, staged *Anything Goes* in 2007.

So, after 100 years of being translated into Swedish, Wodehouse is still going strong over here. The last three years have seen the publication of three new translated anthologies, the latest with Wodehouse's seven parodies of Sherlock Holmes. A fourth anthology is now in production.



A Unique Wodehouse Resource – Near Stockholm

by Tony Ring

Around the end of 1998, the Swedish Wodehouse Society achieved the unprecedented feat of arranging for a local public library – the Centrumbibliotek in Märsta, some 25 miles north of Stockholm – to designate a corner of one of its rooms as ‘The Wodehouse Corner’. It initially consisted of an easy chair, a table, and a bookcase, with an embryo collection of some 50 books by and about Wodehouse in Swedish or English on its shelves. Over the years, members of the Society donated hundreds of books which were no longer needed, and it became, de facto, the Central Library for Wodehouseana in Sweden.

Märsta had been chosen because of the influence of the late Åke Skeppare, a local resident with interests and contacts in the community. He and the library's Cultural Management department put the project together, and it has had the strong support of the Swedish Society, especially its Chairman, Sven Sahlin, ever since. At least one meeting a year is held for members at the library.

Earlier this year the library at Märsta moved into a brand new building across the road from its old location. Included in the design was space for a conference room

which has been dedicated to Wodehouse, with four quotations from his books showing clearly in frosted glass on the panels of one wall. It is quite a large room, with a large oriental carpet on which there is a long dining table that doubles as a conference table with room for some 20 people. Three tall bookcases with glass doors house the collection, which has now grown to over 300 books, and visitors can sit in an armchair donated by Louise Skeppare in memory of her late husband, next to a small table with a lamp and two lower bookshelves.

The room is available for hire by the public as a meeting room, for which a full range of modern technical equipment is available. It is an ideal place to encourage the spread of a love for Wodehouse. The recently retired Librarian, Monica Dahlgren, and the present holder of that office, Lena Gustafson Randau, are to be congratulated on their diligent stewardship of the Wodehouse project. It is good to know that, despite her imminent retirement from the Library Service, Monica will continue to be involved in maintaining The Wodehouse Room's lustre.

Wooster's Wanderings: Is Bertie Wooster the British Odysseus? (Part 2)

by Harry Hudson

Harry continues his comparison of the Jeeves and Wooster series and The Odyssey. For the first part of this paper, see Wooster Sauce, September 2014, p.12.

If 'innocence' is the word to characterise Wooster, 'guilt' would suffice for Odysseus. This is one of the defining differences between the two. The literal translation of Odysseus' name is 'he who causes suffering', and he is often frankly unlikeable. Though he is touched by the loyalty of his dog Argus, mourns his fallen comrades – 'we sailed on from Ismarus with heavy hearts, grieving for the loss of our dear companions though rejoicing at our own escape' (IX.62–64) – and rejoices at being reunited with his family, there is an aura of insincerity, compounded by his propensity for cunning and calculation.

With the Cyclops, we see Odysseus' true colours. Though the Cyclops had intended to eat him, Odysseus takes too much pleasure in recounting his own gruesome act in a totally unnecessary way:

'Seizing the olive pole, they drove its sharpened end into the Cyclops' eye, while I used my weight from above to twist it home, like a man boring a ship's timber with a drill which his mates below him twirl with a strap they hold at either end, so that it spins continuously.' (IX.381–386)

This glimpse of a cruel Odysseus is reiterated in his lack of mercy to his erring slave-girls:

... so the women's heads were held fast in a row, with nooses round their necks, to bring them to the most pitiable end. (XXII.465–472)

Odysseus' ordeals suggest heroism, though they have their nastier streaks. The repeated use of epithets starting with 'many' ('poly' in Greek) reflect the multiple facets of Odysseus' character. Not only is he 'much wandering' (*polyplanktos*), he is also 'of many sorrows' (*polypenthos*), as well as 'of many devices' (*polymechanos*).¹⁸ It is striking that he sees himself as being this type of a man. He may be light on morality, but this pales next to his lack of modesty. His self-confidence is unpleasant, as seen in Rieu's translation:

'A word to the wise! You shall go in first while I stay here; for I am quite used to blows and missiles. I have been toughened by what I have suffered on the waves and on the battlefield. After that, a bit more makes no difference.' (XVII.280–284)

Despite their differences, such self-belief is also evident in Wooster. However, where that of Odysseus

is well-founded, Bertie's self-belief rests simply on his unswerving loyalty to the noble name of Wooster, on the laurels he gained for winning the Scripture Knowledge prize at school, and on his contribution to his aunt's magazine, *Milady's Boudoir*, of the article entitled 'What the Well-Dressed Man Is Wearing'.¹⁹ This is an innocent, charming confidence.

However, both protagonists would have failed often were it not for their respective aides. This leads to an important point: the similarities in the relationship of Jeeves and Wooster to that of Athene and Odysseus.

On the most basic level, the physical similarities between Athene and Jeeves are evident, starting with the focus that is placed on their eyes. It is clear that both Homer and Wodehouse deemed eyes as being the clue to a superior intelligence. Wooster here describes his surprise at the dull nature of his valet's normally keen, 'sparkling'²⁰ eyes:

A wooden expression had crept into his features, and his eyes had taken on the look of cautious reserve which you see in those of parrots, when offered half a banana by a stranger of whose bona fides they are not convinced. It meant that he had come over all discreet, as he sometimes does . . . ²¹

Similarly, on numerous occasions, Athene is described as 'the goddess of the flashing eyes' (e.g. I.46), and her status as supernatural being is also repeatedly emphasised:

Athene now appeared . . . with all the delicate beauty that marks the sons of kings. A handsome cloak was folded back across her shoulders, she had sandals on her glistening feet and she carried a javelin in her hand. (XIII.221–226)

The idea of divine help in human affairs was common in ancient literature. In *The Iliad* it is the gods' various affiliations that drive the Trojan War, and in *The Odyssey* Odysseus is combating Poseidon, god of the seas. But neither Athene nor Jeeves are omnipotent, a characteristic crucial in their relationships with Odysseus and Wooster. In both cases, their authority can be influenced by uncles of higher authority than themselves. Athene is constantly wary of opposing Poseidon, her paternal uncle, as when Odysseus arrives on the island of the Phaeacians:

Pallas Athene heard his [Odysseus'] prayer but still refrained from appearing before him, out of deference to her Father's brother,

Poseidon, who still persisted in his rancour against the noble Odysseus until he reached his own land. (VI.328–331)

Jeeves' uncle, Charlie Silversmith, is a butler, but when Wooster meets him, it is clear that he is very impressive.

As a matter of fact, it was all I could do to speak at all, for the sudden impact of Charlie Silversmith had removed the breath almost totally. . . . Jeeves' Uncle Charlie was something special. He looked like one of those steel engravings of nineteenth-century statesmen . . .²²

Jeeves himself is a man of remarkable capabilities, his timely arrivals seeming more than mere coincidence:

'Oh that Jeeves were here!' I said to myself.

I found that he was. For some time past I had been conscious of some substance in the offing that was saying 'Good Morning, sir', and . . . I beheld him at my side, looking bronzed and fit [cf. Homer's description of Athene above], as if his visit to Bramley-on-Sea had done him good.²³

These divine characteristics are not accidental. With no authority of his own, Wooster is a man for whom 'every figure of authority is an aunt, albeit in disguise',²⁴ and on whom his creator takes pity by giving him Jeeves.²⁵ Every story involving the duo results in Jeeves saving his master. While Odysseus' reliance on Athene is not as pronounced, it is questionable how far he could have got without her intervention. At the end of the work, only Athene can stop imminent bloodshed, establishing 'peace between the two sides' (XIV.545–548).

Such assistance does not come without some reciprocity. But where Wooster willingly gives up the mess jacket he bought in Cannes (*Right Ho, Jeeves*) and the banjolele (*Thank You, Jeeves*), Odysseus is reluctant to acknowledge Athene's help in his return. He makes sacrifices to Zeus, Athene's father, but his gratitude to Athene is conspicuous by its absence. This is illustrated when he meets her upon his return to Ithaca:

'Yet when we had sacked Priam's lofty citadel and gone on board our ships, and a god had scattered the Achaean fleet, I did not notice you then, Daughter of Zeus, nor see you set foot on my ship to save me from any of my ordeals. No; I was left to wander through the world with a stricken heart . . .' (XIII.311–321)

Athene sagely replies:

'That shows how your mind always works! . . . And that is why I cannot desert you in your misfortunes: you are so persuasive, so quick-witted, so self-possessed . . .' (XII.330–334)

Athene and Odysseus are – like Jeeves and Wooster, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Robinson Crusoe and Man Friday – a combination that gels. This is the original double act, the first to challenge

the idea of master and servant, re-defining the qualities of one who leads and one who follows. In both Homer and Wodehouse, the reader is uncertain as to which is the subservient half. Though Odysseus is the focus of *The Odyssey*, are events not dictated to a great extent by Athene? And while Wooster employs Jeeves, we realise that Jeeves is the master of events.

Certainly, both Odysseus and Wooster take charge when it comes to recounting their tales. Their success is due to the language employed by Homer and Wodehouse. In one of the few comparisons of the two authors, Richard Usborne aptly summarises the similarities in Homeric and Wodehousian linguistic techniques: 'Each author writes a private language, rich in imagery, allusions, repetitions, formulaic expressions and expressed quotations.'²⁶

Both also specialise in simile. Regarding Wodehouse, Evelyn Waugh proclaimed: 'One has to regard a man as a Master, who can produce on average three uniquely brilliant and entirely original similes to each page.'²⁷ Where Wodehouse employs such imagery for comedic effect, Homer is more reserved in its use, though no less imaginative. When Odysseus strings the great bow with which he kills the suitors, it 'sang as he plucked it with a sound like a swallow's note' (XXI.411–412).

It is tempting to suggest that Wooster is Odysseus, Jeeves is Athene, and domestic service in general is Mount Olympus. While this would extend the idea too far, the similarity between Homer's *The Odyssey* and Wodehouse's Jeeves and Wooster series is remarkable. The concept of family, the development of the protagonists, the Jeeves-Wooster and Athene-Odysseus relationships, and the very language of the texts point to a bond between the authors, separated by millennia, that has been largely unexplored. Nor should the exploration stop here. This study is merely the starting point of an analysis that should be taken further so as to appreciate the impact of Homeric literature on modern writing. There is more work to be done to reconcile the apparently irreconcilable.

Endnotes

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- 19 P.G. Wodehouse, *Carry on, Jeeves*, Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1925
- 20 P.G. Wodehouse, *The Mating Season*, Penguin, 1965, p. 68
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- 22 P.G. Wodehouse, *The Mating Season*, Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1949, p. 44
- 23 *Ibid.* p. 168
- 24 A.P. Ryan, *Wooster's Progress*, New Statesman and Nation, 20th June 1953, quoted in R.B.D. French, 1966, p. 6
- 25 R. Usborne, 1976, p. 192
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The Society's Biennial Dinner 2014

Report by Our Man in the Soup and Fish
(aka Graeme Davidson)

An evening inked into my Diary with a flourish and resolution, alongside the words *Utterly splendid shindig*, is The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)'s Biennial Dinner. If I'm successful in the unseemly scramble that is dignified with the misleadingly sedate phrase 'the Biennial Dinner Ticket Application Process', I know the only thing that could ever then occur to prevent my attendance at the dinner is something cataclysmic.

Such an attendance-preventing occurrence, however, came about the day of the 2012 dinner, which saw me in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary in a surgical gown having a big toe amputated. As you might therefore imagine, the resolve on my part since 2012 to ensure I managed to get to the next dinner in 2014 was stiff as a Byng.

Ever since hearing from the assiduous Tim Andrew that I had been successful in applying for a ticket for this year's dinner, I had been congratulating myself on my good fortune and keeping a keen weather eye out for cataclysmic events as might prevent my attendance, and specifically watching the Davidson tootsies to check that none of them looked like they were about to need amputating.

As I alighted from my cab on the evening of 16 October 2014 at the entrance to the dinner's august venue, Gray's Inn, London, and strode purposefully within, I felt at ease with the world. The appointed hour had arrived with no sighting of cataclysmic



The dinner programme featured a picture of The Little Church Around the Corner on the front cover; and, on the back cover, an image of the plaque installed in the church by The Wodehouse Society (USA) to commemorate the Wodehouses' marriage there.

events, and there was I at the threshold, ready for the revels to commence.

I was full of expectation.

That expectation was not misplaced.

The evening was a palpable smash.

It started with the usual welcoming party and champagne reception upstairs at Gray's Inn, where, amidst chat with beaming Wodehouse enthusiasts, much champagne was proffered and necked. Here one must make early grateful mention of the generous sponsorship of the fund managers Oldfield Partners and Jupiter Asset Management. So capable was the sponsorship that I have yet to discover what the bottom of an empty champagne flute looks like at Gray's Inn.

Following the reception, we were summoned downstairs to dinner, a repast of Anatolian standards that saw several newly straining buttons undone by the time coffee was poured.

After dinner, the Loyal Toast was proposed by Oliver Wise, following whom the main Toast, to PGW and the Society, was given by Society President Sir Terry Wogan, a man who clearly has engaged in lengthy snog-fests with the Blarney Stone. His toast was a cannily engaging bit of meandering froth that took in consideration of similarities between the two men, Sir Terry and Sir Plum, one a wordsmith of the airwaves chiefly and the other a wordsmith of the page chiefly. Both had worked in banks, neither having overly relished their time there, and both had hankered after rugby, cricket, and a life dancing with words one way or another.

The toast was finely crafted and finely judged, and, as is often the case with the well-framed and well-delivered, belied the considerable effort and skill which undoubtedly had gone into it.

After the toast came the entertainment, a celebration of the passing of a century since the marriage ceremony in 1914 between P. G. Wodehouse and Ethel Rowley, with reflections on its first quarter, and touching on the successful wooing of Ethel by Plum. The entertainment was as winning as



Sebastian Faulks with the dinner's primary organisers, Tim Andrew and Sir Edward Cazalet, without whose unceasing hard work the evening's success would not have been possible.

ever, as indeed PGW’s wooing had been, the only downside being its reminder to me of a sorry night in my life.

I was once captivated by a peach of a girl with only two imperfections: little sense of humour and a slight speech defect, she being one of those girls who say “wabbit” rather than “rabbit”, “wock-pool” rather than “rock-pool”, and so on. Insignificant, you might think, until the evening she said plaintively, “Gwaeme, I want to be wooed. I want to be wooed.”

Rather wittily, or so I thought, I responded, “Sheila, but you are – you’re one of the wudest people I know. Absolutely wudest.” And on that note I was abruptly informed that our relationship was no more.

Back to the dinner’s soufflé of entertainment. It was devised, as ever, by Tony Ring and was delivered *con brio* by a vast cast. Those involved and taking part included:

- * Sir Michael Gambon, whose presence, along with Sir Terry’s, made me think I might be at a Royal Hibernian Society do;
- * Lucy Tregear, who was splendid and touching as Ethel Wodehouse opposite a typically magnetic Sir Michael as PGW;
- * HRH The Duke of Kent, a man whose reading voice and delivery makes one realise that the excellent Martin Jarvis hasn’t actually got the Wodehouse audio market completely sewn up;
- * Lara Cazalet, who, as well as playing Leonora, delighted us with her splendid singing and acting alongside her brother Hal;
- * Paul Kent, who took on the roles of Mr Mulliner and Uncle Fred, thereby spreading sweetness and light;



Actress Ann Davies, the widow of Richard Briers, was roundly applauded.

* Jeremy Neville, who did solid narration as Narrator 1;

* Sebastian Faulks, who had been cleverly prevailed upon to write *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*, that glorious Faulks faux Wodehouse novel of his (I remember thinking “Writing that won’t be easy. For Faulks’ sake, I hope he makes a decent job of it”), and who was a stalwart Narrator 2 in the entertainment;



With his siblings behind him. David Cazalet thoroughly entertained us with his reading of the poem ‘Printer’s Error’.

* The above-mentioned Hal Cazalet, who delighted us with his powerful pipes;

* David Cazalet, who did as dramatic and humorous a reading of ‘Printer’s

Error’ as I have ever heard;

* Bruce O’Neil, Head of Music at the Royal Shakespeare Company, who accompanied wonderfully on the piano;

and

* Tony Ring, the evening’s ringmaster, who again outdid himself in delivering a splendid entertainment.



There was no mistaking the signs of sheer enjoyment!

At the end, Society Chairman Hilary Bruce regaled us with a few neat remarks, and well-deserved gifts were presented to our entertainers.

Then it was all over, and I promptly thought, “Roll on 2016’s Dinner!”

Photographs by Katy Rugeris continue on page 14.

Simply Smashing! More Photos from the Dinner



The Hon. Lady Cazalet (née Camilla Gage), Lara Cazalet, and Lady Hornby (née Sheran Cazalet) – respectively, P. G. and Ethel Wodehouse’s granddaughter-in-law, great-granddaughter, and granddaughter.



These happy revellers appear ready to burst into song – and who can blame them?



Elizabeth & Arthur Findlay were two of several fully-kitted-out Scots.



Entertainment organiser Tony Ring with Lara Cazalet and (left) Sophie Ratcliffe, editor of P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters.



Paul Kent, Lesley Tapson, Lady Ramsbotham, David Cazalet, and Sir Sidney Kentridge



Chairman Hilary Bruce rather enjoyed herself.



HRH The Duke of Kent with (left) Karen M. Shotting, president of The Wodehouse Society (USA), and Baroness Reinhold von Bodenhausen, author of P G Wodehouse: The Unknown Years.

All photographs of this year’s dinner were taken by Katy Rugeris (www.katyphotography.co.uk).

Selling Wodehouse on the Internet

by Phil Haigh

As a Wodehouse collection grows, one key question soon arises: what should I do with editions that have been superseded by better copies/editions? There are three options: keep everything (The Stacker), give it to charity (The Saint), or sell it (The Dealer). The latter is the most likely and will help fund future buys. So if, like me, you become a seller (or are thinking of becoming a seller), I thought it might be helpful to share some obvious and basic ground rules.

Descriptions

- Give a title to the listing that clearly identifies what is being offered. ‘First edition, 17th printing’ is better than the somewhat misleading ‘First edition’.
- Be objective. By all means provide what you consider an overall condition, but back it up with facts.
- Have you referred to dust jacket chips, open/closed tears (how big?), creases, fading, cleanliness? Does it match the book edition? Is it price-clipped? Is it in a protective cover?
- Have the boards been described? Are they bumped? Are they faded? What colour are they? (Colour can appear different in a picture than in reality.) Are they plain, pictorial, etc.? Such details are especially important when selling first/first editions.
- Are the preliminary pages present? Are pages foxed? If so, to what extent? Are there any inscriptions, etc? Are there any library markings?
- If you know it, state the McIlvaine reference.
- Provide evidence to support a true first, e.g. number of titles listed.
- Above all, provide sufficient information so that bidders knows what they are buying. Don’t try and hide faults. There’s nothing worse than selling something with a fault that hasn’t been mentioned. The buyer will see it soon enough. They will then probably do one of two things: not mention it but never buy from you again; or complain and provide bad feedback.

Pictures

- If at all possible provide at least one picture that shows what is being offered.
- Where possible provide sufficient pictures to illustrate good and bad points. For example eBay now allows up to 12 pictures without additional cost.

Pricing

Pricing is obviously very personal to the seller, so it is difficult to offer ground rules. Perhaps the key thing is to research prices for what you are selling. Buyers will always do their own research and seek out the best-value book. The fact that you paid over the odds for a book (we all do it from time to time!) is irrelevant to current buyers.

Postage

- Don’t overegg it. It’s annoying to offer a book cheaply only to load the price with exorbitant postal charges. New sellers need to watch out for eBay, who charge a 10% fee based not only on the cost of the book but also the postage!
- Do offer postage discounts for multiple purchases. If it turns out that you have significantly overcharged, then provide a refund. It always goes down well.
- Make sure you send it promptly and securely. Some sellers use purpose-made packaging. My favourite is to use recycled packaging (cereal boxes are excellent!) – it’s Green and it keeps the cost down. Ensure there is enough protection (e.g. bubble wrap), especially if it’s going overseas.

Courtesy

It should be obvious that questions from potential buyers should be answered politely and promptly. Personal communication with the buyer to thank them for their purchase often leads to interesting and informative discussions. Wodehouse collectors are the nicest people!

Happy selling!

At Eton, Stilton had been Captain of the Boats, and he had also rowed assiduously for Oxford. His entire formative years, therefore, as you might say, had been spent in dipping an oar into the water, giving it a shove and hauling it out again. Only a pretty dumb brick would fritter away his golden youth doing that sort of thing – which, in addition to being silly, is also the deuce of a sweat – and Stilton Cheesewright was a pretty dumb brick. A fine figure of a young fellow as far northwards as the neck, but above that solid concrete.

(From *Joy in the Morning*, 1946)

Three Savage Strands

by Richard Burnip

Seeing the entry concerning Wodehouse's membership of the Savage Club in 1922, as reproduced in June 2013's *Wooster Sauce* (and right), I was struck by the names of his proposer and seconders, and the link which binds them, and Wodehouse, together.

Who better to propose him for membership than Herbert Greenhough Smith (1855–1935), the influential editor of *The Strand Magazine*? Smith had been at the helm of *The Strand* since publisher George Newnes, the magazine's founder, had appointed him at the magazine's inception in 1890. Even then Smith was already experienced on various publications such as *Temple Bar*, and would hold the *Strand* post for an astonishing 40 years. When the first copies of *The Strand* hit the railway station bookstalls (dated January 1891, they were available in time for the lucrative Christmas 1890 market), they set out to provide readers with a lavish quantity of fine illustrations alongside the best in modern short stories. In the early years of the magazine, Sherlock Holmes became the main draw for its readers, a young Wodehouse included.

Married to a champion skater, Greenhough Smith was Cambridge-educated, an expert poker player and an authority on French poetry. His melancholy exterior gained him the nickname 'Calamity', although this masked, as Conan Doyle said, 'a very real humanity and a broad literary instinct'. To authors featured in *The Strand* he was in many ways an ideal editor: dedicated, hard-working, careful to arrange speedy payment; also keen that authors should be responsible to the readers and keep a consistency of character and plotting. Small wonder that Wodehouse found a home at *The Strand* which lasted a remarkable 35 years, from 'The Wire-Pullers' in 1905 to 'Bramley Is So Bracing' in 1940. Greenhough Smith's resignation from the editorship in December 1930, aged 75, came at the end of an era: he stayed on long enough to supervise the appearance of the last short story by Conan Doyle, who had died that July.

Frederick Britten Austin (1885–1941) was an ideal 'seconder' for Wodehouse's membership, as he was another of *The Strand's* most prolific and popular contributors. His *Who's Who* entry lists him as contributing 'chiefly to *Strand Magazine*, *Sunday Pictorial*, and *Saturday Evening Post*' which puts him firmly in the same territory as Wodehouse, although their style and subject matter were very different. Certainly Austin's 60-odd stories appearing in *The Strand*, beginning with 'The Air Scout' in 1914, were very popular. Often with a military theme (he served

Candidate	Pelham Grenville Wodehouse,
Qualification	Literature
Address	15, Berkeley Street, W.C.
Proposed by	H. Greenhough Smith
Seconded by	F. Britten Austin
	Reeves Shaw

with the British Expeditionary Force), his stories were a contrast to Wodehouse's light work, and their contributions often appeared happily in the same issues. In February 1920, for example, Wodehouse ('A Kink in His Character') and Austin ('From the Depths') shared an eclectic billing on the magazine's cover with H G Wells, Martin Harvey, 'Sapper', Marshal Foch and T E Lawrence. Austin died, aged only 55, in 1941. If we had lost Wodehouse at the same early age, there would be none of his books after *Lord Emsworth and Others*: a terrible thought.

What of the last name in the list? Reeves Shaw (1886–1952) was a very experienced magazine editor in 1922. Son of a bookseller and fresh out of Brighton Grammar School, he had joined the editorial staff of Arthur Pearson in 1903. In 1910 he switched over to George Newnes Ltd, working on several of their publications, including a stint as editor of *The Captain* (to which Wodehouse still contributed, up to *The Eighteen Carat Kid* in 1913). Shaw also edited *The Humorist* from its foundation in 1922, and from 1931 he combined this work with a decade of editing *The Strand*. He presided over the magazine as it featured contributions from Agatha Christie, Winston Churchill, Dorothy L Sayers, Leslie Charteris, and Rafael Sabatini, and of course still more from Wodehouse: an extraordinary 41 short stories in 1931–40, plus the serializations of *Big Money* and *Thank You, Jeeves*.

Shaw resigned from *The Strand* in autumn 1941 at another watershed moment for the magazine: wartime shortages and a declining readership led to the magazine being reduced to pocket size from October 1941 onwards. Shaw's first name was indeed 'Reeves', although that same Savage Club Book scribe whose number 8s resembled 5s managed to omit the terminal 's'. Shaw's entry in *Who's Who* listed his sole recreation as 'Golf', which undoubtedly provided common ground with Wodehouse, but I wonder if he exerted his influence in another way: a later *Strand* editor, Reginald Pound, recalled that Shaw 'objected to married heroes in short stories', and perhaps this helps explain the continuing proliferation of

bachelors throughout Wodehouse's fiction! Shaw himself contributed short stories to many publications, and at the time of his support for Wodehouse's Savage membership he had just written the two stories which were his only fiction for *The Strand*. Both featured cricket rather than golf (perhaps he felt Wodehouse had cornered that market after a succession of recent golfing stories). In August 1921 (the same month as Wodehouse's 'The Long Hole'), *The Strand* published Shaw's 'The Man Who Got Out', an intriguing tale of a brilliant batsman who feigns illness before a Test Match. Tracked down and cajoled into playing, he contrives to score brilliantly but gets caught out, deliberately, just in time to enable him to save the honour and fortune of a friend. He may start the tale as a bachelor, but he is certainly engaged by the end of it. The plot, if not the style, could easily be early Wodehouse.

Even closer to home was Shaw's July 1922 *Strand* contribution, 'Barbara Gets Busy'. The central plotline, as Barbara goes to great lengths to secure a place for her brother in a vital match at Lord's, harks right back to Wodehouse's Joan Romney stories of 1905–09.

The Strand certainly made the most of Wodehouse at this time: the Christmas 1921 issue not only contained 'Jeeves in Springtime', but also featured an article about Wodehouse himself (which, though anonymous, could be by Reeves Shaw, especially the glowing references to *The Captain* and the reiteration of golf as 'the only game'). And as Wodehouse celebrated his election to membership of the Savage Club, his readers also had much to celebrate. A glorious year ahead would see *The Strand* publish, among other gems, 'Sir Roderick Comes to Lunch', 'Comrade Bingo', and 'The Great Sermon Handicap'. Knighthoods have been bestowed for less.

In the days of his childhood in Much Middlefold, Salop, he had played truant from Sunday School again and again in order to frequent the society of one Eddie Waffles, the official Bad Boy of the locality. It was not so much Eddie's charm of conversation that had attracted him - though that had been great - as the fact that Eddie, among his other accomplishments, could give a life-like imitation of two cats fighting in a back-yard, and Ashe felt that he could never be happy until he had acquired this gift from the master. In the course of time he had done so. It might be that his absences from Sunday School in the cause of Art had left him in later years a trifle shaky on the subject of the Kings of Judah, but his hard-won accomplishment had made him in request at every smoking-concert at Oxford, and it saved the situation now.

(From *Something Fresh*, 1915)

When Bill Came in Disguise – Again!

by Tony Ring

Wodehouse's 1920 novel *The Coming of Bill* is generally reckoned to be one of the least satisfactory of his entire output. The last thing one expects to find is a previously unknown serialised version!

As has been well documented, the book was written 'to order', the order coming from Bob Davis, an American editor of pulp magazines such as *Munsey's*, who helped authors bereft of plots by providing outline stories and letting them get on with it. It appeared as a complete book in a single issue of *Munsey's* in May 1914 with the title *The White Hope*, but it was not considered worthy of publication as a book for another five years, when Boni & Liveright took the plunge with their only Wodehouse publication. They chose a second title – *Their Mutual Child*.



Herbert Jenkins had become the Wodehouse publisher of choice in the UK in 1918, with a strong sale of his book *Piccadilly Jim*, and they followed this up in 1919 with *A Damsel in Distress*. They were distressed to find there was no new title ready for 1920, until they found this story – far from fully demonstrating the developing Wodehouse humour but nevertheless having some nice touches. They renamed it *The Coming of Bill* and published it on 1 July 1920. *McIlvaine* reports that its post-war 18th edition took sales past 100,000 – not bad for a poorly regarded work.

The following year, 1921, was a big year for Jenkins. Plum did them proud, reworking the long series of 'Archie' magazine stories into the episodic novel *Indiscretions of Archie*, providing *Jill the Reckless* as a new novel, and updating the 1906 novel *Love Among the Chickens* as well as making minor changes to the original 1910 edition of *A Gentleman of Leisure* for their appearances in the Jenkins livery.

So what, you might ask. This is interesting but reminiscent of one of Lord Emsworth's old hats. What's new?

What is new is that American Wodehousean Anita Avery was pottering around on the internet on February 14 last year – naturally selecting on that date on the sheer volume of Plum's work – and found a 22-part serialisation of a Wodehouse novel which she had not heard of. *The Price of Prosperity* was published in weekly instalments in *The Queenslander* from 5 June to 30 October 1920. Further investigation showed this to be *The Coming of Bill*, and it is the only serialisation of which we are aware. Publication had actually started before publication of the British edition of the book. Congratulations and many thanks are due to Anita.

Wodehouse on the Boards

Word from across the pond is that the Taproot Theatre in Seattle, Washington – the locale for next year’s convention of The Wodehouse Society (US) – will be putting on a production of *Jeeves Intervenes*, by Margaret Raether. Based on the short story ‘Jeeves and the Hard-Boiled Egg’, the play will run from May 13 to June 13, 2015. Further information can be found on Taproot’s website – taproottheatre.org (click on the ‘Mainstage’ button).



Here in England, *Perfect Nonsense* remains the show to see, and the good news is that the touring company’s schedule has been extended. For the first part of the 2015 tour, Bertie Wooster will be played by Robert Webb (pictured); no further information about casting was known as of early November. Dates and locations for performances in 2015 follow – here’s hoping it’s coming to a theatre near you!

February 4–7: Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury
February 10–14: Oxford Playhouse
February 16–21: Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield
February 23–28: Harrogate Theatre
March 2–7: Chichester Festival Theatre
March 9–14: Birmingham Repertory Theatre
March 17–21: Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury
March 24–28: Grand Opera House, Belfast
March 30–April 4: Malvern Theatre
April 7–11: Milton Keynes Theatre
April 20–25: Theatre Royal, Nottingham
April 28–May 2: New Victoria Theatre, Woking
May 5–9: Hall for Cornwall, Truro
May 11–16: Kings Theatre, Edinburgh
May 18–21: Salisbury Playhouse
June 1–7: Leeds Grand Theatre

Cosy Moments (2)

The Psychoanalytic Adventures of Inspector Canal, by Bruce Fink (2010) (from Cyril Hershon)

The Wodehouse reference in this book is an unusual one in that it doesn’t actually name either Wodehouse or any of his characters. Instead, in the first adventure, the title character converses with a famous conductor, who comments:

“I’ve always recalled the words of an author who, upon being knighted for his writings by the Queen of England and having had a waxwork of him erected in Madame Tussaud’s Wax Museum, famously proclaimed that he had no ambitions left.”

“I think I know whom you are talking about, but perhaps you have forgotten that he was ninety-three years old when he said that,” Canal countered. “And that he was of a far more light-hearted disposition than yourself, if I may be so bold as to compare the two of you.”

“Please do! Didn’t he write something like a hundred books?”

Rumpole at Christmas, by John Mortimer (Penguin, 2010) (from Peter Thompson)

PETER WRITES: I was minding my own business enjoying *Rumpole at Christmas*, with individual stories featuring my hero Horace Rumpole and She Who Must Be Obeyed. Imagine my surprise when, in the second episode (entitled ‘Rumpole and the Christmas Break’), entering stage left was one Professor Honoria Glossop. No tinkling laughter like a platoon of soldiers crossing a tin bridge here, I’m afraid. She unfortunately meets a pretty quick and bloody end with Rumpole’s client accused of the murder. It was like a slap in the face with a wet fish, I can tell you. But I suspect Sir John Mortimer was a fan of PGW and this was his salute to that author.

Mastermind Quiz 12:

Aunts and Uncles

by David Buckle

1. Which Wodehouse novel was published in the USA as *The Catnappers*?
2. Frederick, 5th Earl of Ickenham, is whose Uncle Fred?
3. In *Piccadilly Jim*, who is the aunt of Jimmy Crocker?
4. Major Christopher Selby is which Wodehouse character’s inept uncle?
5. ‘Spennie’, Earl Dreever, and his hectoring aunt, Lady Julia Blunt, are characters in which Wodehouse novel?
6. Mr Mulliner admits to being the uncle to 23 nephews, but there is only one mention of an uncle to Mr Mulliner. What is his name?
7. Who is the mother of Bertie Wooster’s cousins Claude and Eustace, an aunt by marriage?
8. Who are the two surviving Threepwood uncles of Veronica Wedge and Prudence Garland?
9. The owner of six Pekinese, all of whom were once kidnapped by her nephew, who is the long suffering but forgiving aunt of Stanley Featherstonehaugh Utridge?
10. Which character, a regular in the Blandings stories, is the uncle of Drones member Monty Bodkin?

(Answers on page 21)

Poet's Corner

The Literary Life

(From *Vanity Fair* (UK), October 6, 1904)

A Russian journalist, unable to induce an editor to accept his work, adopted recently the ingenious expedient of shooting him.

Air: 'The Sons of the Prophets'

An editor's life's full of danger and strife,
And it isn't all skittles and beer.
To prove what I state, I propose to relate
The tale of the Bulbul Ameer.

An editor bold was this Bulbul, I'm told;
He'd reject an MS with a sneer,
He was bitterly hard on each tentative bard,
Was Abdul the Bulbul Ameer.

There are writers in scores on the Muscovite shores.
In the land that is ruled by the Czar;
But few had such skill in directing the quill
As Ivan Petrusky Skivar.

He could imitate Kipling, write verses and prose,
He could pen you a personal par;
In fact, the success of the Muscovite Press
Was Ivan Petrusky Skivar.

One morning Petrusky a story devised
In the popular magazine vein,
And sent the MS to the Bulbul's address:
The latter returned it again.

But your genuine journalist seldom is damped
If an article fails to appear,
So he sent off, enclosing an envelope (stamped),
A second to Abdul Ameer.

This too was returned. Ever hopeful, though spurned,
He despatched on the instant a third:
To his grief and amaze, after waiting some days,
A similar sequel occurred.

He tried him with articles, essays, and verse,
Some orthodox, others bizarre:
Each week in a stack they would always come back
To Ivan Petrusky Skivar.

The Muscovite frowned; and at last, as he found
The proceedings beginning to pall,
He tapped at his brow: then, "I have it, I trow,
There's only one way – I must call.

We shall never be free of this worry and fuss
Till I've seen him in person, that's clear."
So he took his six-shooter, jumped into a 'bus,
And called on the Bulbul Ameer.

"Young man", said Bulbul, "your effusions are dull,
And your style and construction are queer;
I don't like your verse, and your stories are worse:
It's no good your sending 'em here.

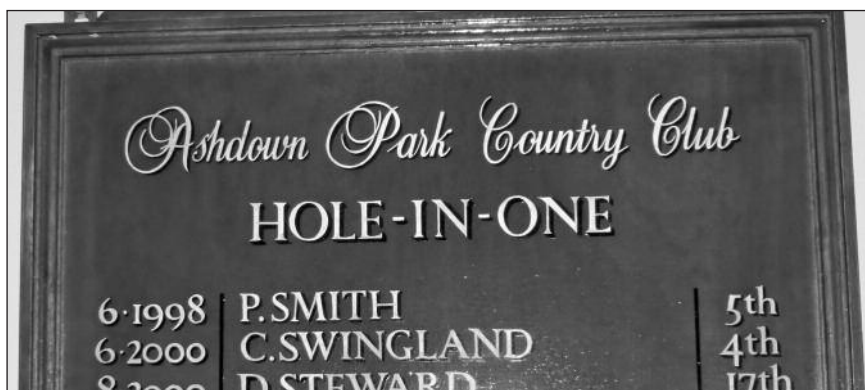
In brief, they are not – Here, hi, help! I am shot!"
"Precisely", said Ivan, "you are."
It was meant as a hint that I wish you to print
The work of Petrusky Skivar."

There's a grave where the Oxus flows silent and slow:
It is covered with creepers and grass;
There's a stone at one end, and – a gift from a friend –
A wreath in a case made of glass.

And the travellers stay, ere they go on their way,
To drop in their pity a tear,
As they see on the stone where the grass has not grown:
"Hic Jacet
A Bulbul Ameer."

There are writers in scores on the Muscovite shores,
In the lands that are ruled by the Czar;
But few have such skill in the use of the quill
As Ivan Petrusky Skivar.

He imitates Kipling, writes verses and prose,
And turns out the personal par;
In fact, the success of the Muscovite Press
Is Ivan Petrusky Skivar.



We always knew Psmith was a golfer

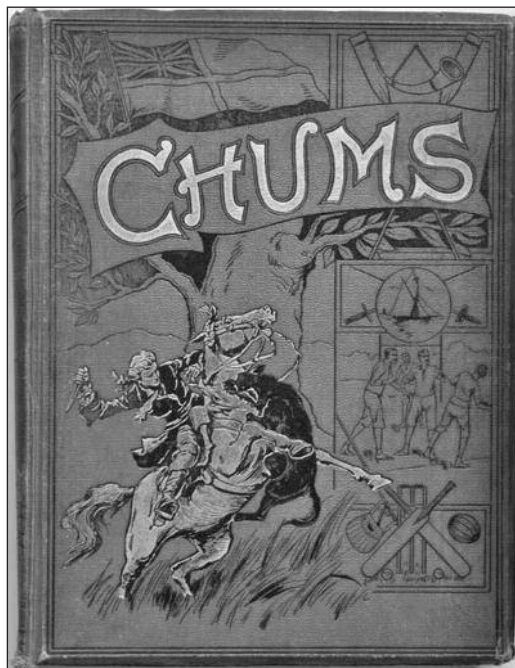
ADRIAN VINCENT writes: In July, for our 15th wedding anniversary, my wife and I stayed at the Ashdown Park Hotel. Inside its country club I saw this board, marking hole-in-one achievers – the first one having been scored by P.Smith.

The Bibliographic Corner *by Nick Townend*

The Luck Stone

The *Luck Stone* was one of Wodehouse's earlier novels: it first appeared in print in September 1908, when Wodehouse was 26, but it was not published in book form until 89 years later, some 22 years after his death.

Richard Osborne accurately described *The Luck Stone* as “a blood-and-thunder school story” (*Wodehouse at Work to the End*, 1976, p55). Wodehouse wrote it with assistance from Bill Townend, under the pseudonym of Basil Windham. It originally appeared in 19 weekly instalments in *Chums*, published by Cassell & Company Limited, from 16 September 1908 to 20 January 1909. Eighteen of the instalments are included in *McIlvaine* (D80), but bizarrely the instalment for 2 December 1908 is omitted, an oversight corrected in the *McIlvaine Addendum* (D80.11a). The bound volume in which the entire story can be found is volume XVII, which runs from 16 September 1908 to 8 September 1909. Confusingly, the date which



A bound copy of Chums, volume XVII

appears on the spine of the bound volume is 1909. Bound volumes of *Chums* for this period are scarce – as Osborne said, “You’re fortunate to have discovered *The Luck Stone*. Read it” – and are typically advertised for sale, depending on condition, at prices ranging from £400 to £800. As Wodehouse wrote under a pseudonym, not all booksellers have appreciated the significance of volume XVII. I vividly recall the ecstasy I experienced when I found a volume in a small second-hand bookshop in 1995 priced at £25. In those pre-internet days and before the title had been published in book form, the text of *The Luck Stone* was one of the holy grails for a collector.

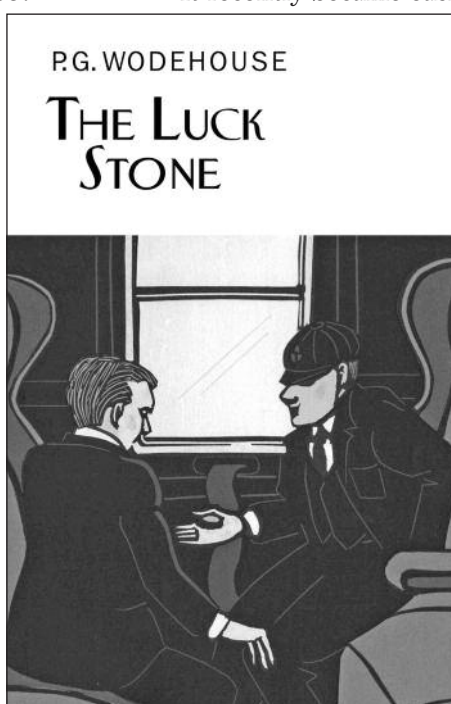
Single issues of the publication are even scarcer than the bound volumes, because *Chums* was really a story paper, rather than a magazine. The poor quality of the physical paper, and the lack of stiff covers, was not conducive to the survival of many copies. Being a paper, it was bound into volumes exactly as it was issued. This is in contrast to

bound volumes of magazines such as *The Captain* and *The Strand*, where the covers and advertising sections are nearly always not bound in. This means that single issues of *Chums* may become more common over time, as it is easy to break up bound volumes to liberate the complete single issues, something that is not possible with *The Captain*.

When single issues do appear, there will usually be tell-tale signs if they have been removed from a bound volume, and scrupulous dealers will note “stitching removed” in their listing.

It became much easier for fans to read *The Luck Stone* in 1997, when it was published in book form by Galahad Books. Two separate issues appeared simultaneously: a hardback version (A109.2), bound in red and issued without a dustwrapper, in a numbered print run of 250; and a leather bound issue (A109.1), with a print run of only 26 (lettered from A to Z). The non-leather issue tends to be advertised for sale, on the occasions when a copy does appear for sale, at prices ranging from £80 to £180, although I have recently seen one ever-optimistic dealer advertise it at £420.

It recently became easier still for fans to read *The*



The Everyman edition of The Luck Stone

Luck Stone, as it was published in book format in Autumn 2014 by Everyman as part of its Everyman Wodehouse series, so copies are now readily available in every good bookshop or online. Published with a cover price of £10.99, this certainly represents the most economical way of being able to put a copy of *The Luck Stone* on one's bookshelves. However, anyone wishing to enjoy the illustrations which originally accompanied the story will need to keep searching for the relevant volume of *Chums*.

The Word in Season *by Dan Kaszeta*

Foozled

Seeing as my previous column, unlike many of my essays in the non-Wodehouse sphere of my life, has resulted in neither threats of violence nor litigation, I feel it is safe to bring another word back to light. This time, I'd like to dig up and air out the word 'foozled'. While on the face of it, it sounds like another synonym for 'scrooched' and 'inebriated', it is actually mined out of the depths of the deep vein of strange words used in golf. 'To foozle' means to botch, bungle or, as the legendary Father Ted Crilly of Craggy Island would say, to really 'feck it up'.

I discovered 'foozled' while rereading *Summer Lightning*. The exact wording was, in phrasing that would probably not be purely politically correct in this modern era:

At a critical moment in the semi-final that ass Hugo **foozled** a shot a one-armed cripple ought to have taken with his eyes shut.

Further examination shows that 'foozled' makes other appearances in the Wodehouse canon, with at least four uses in *The Clicking of Cuthbert* some seven years earlier. But it makes an even earlier appearance in *Love Among the Chickens* (1909) in the chapter on, naturally, 'scientific golf'.

'To foozle', 'foozling', and 'foozled' are primarily golfing terms. Sadly, we cannot give Plum credit for coining this word. The British Library yielded up for my use something called *The Historical Dictionary of Golfing Terms* (ed. P. Davies, 1993), a work of etymological interest in its own right and good for a laugh even for the non-golfer. In examining this

encyclopaedic work, it is clear that 'foozle' exists in noun, verb, and adjective forms. While a few pre-golf uses appear as one-offs (some of questionable definition), there is a clear provenance of 'foozle' as a golf term appearing in the late 1800s. The earlier usages, predominately Scottish, are as nouns. The *Historical Dictionary* does give credit to one P. G. Wodehouse for his use of the term in *The Clicking of Cuthbert*. The dictionary quotes Plum at least two dozen times, making Wodehouse a serious contributor to the literary history of golf.

Researching 'foozled' put me in an awkward spot. I freely confess that the weak spot in my Wodehouse scholarship is that I haven't really read many of the golf stories. On a bad day, I chalk this up to my tormented love-hate relationship with the game of golf, and on a good day I tell myself that it is really just because I am saving the golf stories for later. Or maybe it was because 'foozling' was basically all I was actually good at during a round of golf. But the lesson I learned here is to not be put off by golf. Wodehouse's stories are fun for the golfer and non-golfer alike; we can all enjoy them.

So let us not deprecate golf jargon. I am not a believer in literary apartheid. Numerous golf words and phrases have seeped into modern English usage. Who doesn't understand 'below par' as an idiom? Therefore, I suggest that we all use 'foozle' for when we screw up, blow the big one, botch the job, or just generally make a mess of it. Even the best of us, golfer, non-golfer, ex-golfer alike, will foozle once in a while.

A New Wodehouse Work in the Works

With great pleasure we announce the impending publication of a new book on Wodehouse by Norman Murphy. *The P. G. Wodehouse Miscellany*, which is to be published by the History Press on February 2, 2015, as part of its literary miscellany series, will contain everything you ever wanted to know about Wodehouse in short, concise chapters covering a mere 192 pages. This small, hard-covered, user-friendly book comprises a foreword by Society patron Stephen Fry; a potted biography of Our Hero; an introduction to his works and characters, including a complete list of his books grouped according to Wodehousean genre (Blandings, Jeeves & Wooster, etc.); and other useful information pertaining to his continued popularity today, including a list of recommended Wodehouse-related websites. With a list price of £9.99, the book will be available in all bookstores and can be pre-ordered now through Amazon and other online retailers.

"It is never difficult to distinguish between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine."

The Custody of the Pumpkin

THE
P.G. Wodehouse
MISCELLANY

N.T.P. MURPHY
FOREWORD BY STEPHEN FRY

Answers to Mastermind Quiz

(Page 18)

1. *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*
2. Pongo Twistleton
3. Mrs Nesta Pett (previously Ford)
4. Jill Mariner (*Jill the Reckless*)
5. *A Gentleman of Leisure*
6. William Mulliner
7. Emily Wooster
8. Lord Emsworth and the Hon. Galahad Threepwood
9. Julia Ukridge
10. Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe

Recent Press Comment

Lynton and Barnstaple Railway Magazine, Summer 2014 (from Alexander Dainty)

An article about the early photojournalist Ralph Knight mentioned that following the funeral of a victim of an accident that Knight had photographed, “the Rector of Bratton Fleming, Rev PJ Wodehouse (not to be confused with his writer nephew PG Wodehouse)” wrote to a local newspaper to complain about the photographers who stood on a tomb to take pictures of the heartbroken family. (This was Philip John Wodehouse, one of PGW’s many clerical uncles.)

The Globe and Mail, August 15

Salman Rushdie’s article about Kazuo Ishiguro’s writing reiterated the point that *The Remains of the Day* had been an attempt to write for an international audience, and had taken England and the English butler as a recognisable myth. It confirms that Wodehouse and Jeeves had been a big influence on him.

The Sunday Telegraph, August 17

The Property section noted that Camoys Lodge, one of the wings of Hunstanton Hall, where Wodehouse used to spend time writing and getting to know a black pig, was up for sale at £975,000.

Financial Times, August 19 (from Jo Jacobius)

Sam Leith explained his belief that a description of Hitler’s public speaking techniques as portrayed by a UKIP MEP missed the point that such techniques only worked in the sort of circumstances in which they were delivered – a gigantic flag-waving crowd, rather than a “three-quarters full church hall on a rainy Wednesday afternoon in the English provinces”. He added that this exact problem “was marvellously dispatched by P. G. Wodehouse when he had Bertie Wooster upbraid the Oswald Mosley-esque Roderick Spode” in *The Code of the Woosters*.

Bibliophile, August/September

PGW quotations at the head of its various categories of books for sale were limited to two in this issue – from *Right Ho, Jeeves* to introduce the *Erotica* section(!), and this one from *Mulliner Nights for Literature*:

Evangeline, finding herself filled with a strange ferment which demanded immediate outlet, sat down at a little near-Chippendale table, ate five marshmallows, and began to write a novel.

Getbucks.co.uk (Bucks Examiner), August 22

Reported that Prestwood resident Mrs Wooster had reached her 100th birthday. (What it did not say, but which was true, was that at meetings of the local Women’s Institute, she used to sit next to Mrs Jeeves.)

Wisden India, August 26

A long article on August 26 entitled ‘Wodehouse, from the nineteenth hole,’ revisited the connection between Wodehouse and cricket, starting with the link to Percy Jeeves, and otherwise indulging the writer’s view that “Wodehouse on cricket is an inexhaustible topic”. To read the article, see bit.ly/10FUO8F.

The Times, August 28

After the *Today* programme on Radio 4 had revealed that

the click-clacking of typewriters was being piped through speakers in new *Times* offices to stir up the buzz of an old newsroom, Patrick Kidd noted in his *Diary* column that when PGW was asked about his writing process, he said, “I just sit at my typewriter and curse a bit”.

Do Not Disturb, August (customer magazine of Best Western Hotels; from Christine Hewitt)

Issue number 8 carried an article about ‘Marriage Proposals’, and after discussing various examples in literature and the movies, it selected as its favourite Psmith’s proposal to Eve Halliday in *Leave It to Psmith*. When Psmith admits that his gambit is no more than a sighting shot, he goes on:

“Muse on me from time to time. Reflect that I might be an acquired taste. You probably did not like olives the first time you tasted them. Now you probably do. Give me the same chance you would an olive.”

Saga Magazine, August

An article about the summer’s agricultural shows had a picture of a Berkshire (“Britain’s oldest recorded pedigree pig breed”) and a reference to the pig as a model for Empress of Blandings.

Daily Mail, September 4 (from Terry Taylor)

Max Hastings accused President Obama of dithering, harshly saying: “To borrow P. G. Wodehouse’s phrase, however intelligent Obama may be, he resembles a spineless invertebrate.”

The Republican, September 7 (from Alvin Cohen)

In his regular bridge column, Philip Alder began with PGW’s classic quote about not knowing what he did before he was five – “just loafed, I suppose”.

Sunday Mail, September 7

(from June Arnold & Terry Taylor)

Alan Titchmarsh wrote: “I always have a Wodehouse on the go. At the moment it is *Leave it to Psmith*. He’s wonderful for calming the nerves at the end of the day.”

The Spectator, September 13 (from Christopher Bellew)

Mary Wakefield praised her head builder with the ultimate comparison: “Like Jeeves, he intervenes in a tactful way when I forget some vital house thing: ‘Perhaps a cupboard in the spare room of your guests?’”

Great Lives, Radio 4, September 16 (from Terry Taylor)

Dorothy L Sayers’s detective hero, Lord Peter Wimsey, was described as a cross between Bertie Wooster and Fred Astaire.

The Independent, September 18

In the headline of a question-and-answer interview, Alan Titchmarsh reiterated, “I am a die-hard Wodehouse fan.”

Daily Mail and The Guardian, September 19

(from Terry Taylor)

Reviewing *Magic in the Moonlight*, Woody Allen’s latest film set on the Riviera in the 1920s, the *Daily Mail* said it was like P. G. Wodehouse without the jokes, and *The Guardian* thought it had vague borrowings from PGW and Agatha Christie.

Mail on Sunday, September 21 (from Terry Taylor)

In reviewing David Nicholl's new novel, *Us*, Craig Brown pointed out a contradiction between the first-person narrator and the character himself – that is, that he was quite articulate in describing his inarticulacy – which is quite similar to contradictions in Bertie Wooster.

Asian Age, September 23

P. G. Bhaskar explained why he had dedicated his fifth book, *Mad in Heaven*, to Wodehouse. "I'm an ardent Wodehouse fan and his books have given me so much happiness over the years. Blandings Castle is my second home. So I thought it would be appropriate for me to dedicate one of my books to him."

The Times, September 24

Patrick Kidd's *Diary* column took on a somewhat political tone: "As Ed Miliband droned on yesterday, Alex Massie, a Scottish writer, got to the nub of things. 'Yet again, I am struck by the way in which Miliband looks like Gussie Fink-Nottle but thinks like Madeline Bassett,' he tweeted." To try to balance the books, Patrick added that in considering which other politicians are like Wodehouse characters, "Surely David Cameron must be Boko Fittleworth, of whom Bertram W said 'He almost had a job once.'"

Just a Minute, Radio 4, September 29

Paul Merton was given the subject of 'My Agony Aunt' to talk about, and referred to PGW's characters Aunt Dahlia and Aunt Agatha before confessing he couldn't remember the names of all the others.

Radio Times, October 3

(from Roger Bowen and Alexander Dainty)
Among the *RT* experts talking about favourite books, Ken Bruce spoke of being given a copy of *The Code of the Woosters* when he was a teenager – "the first book that made me laugh out loud".

The Hindu, October 4

V. Sriram wrote touchingly about his trip to PGW's gravesite in Remsenburg. He concluded: "Standing at the grave, my heart was filled with a sense of gratitude for the happiness he had given me. And then my eye fell on the line carved at the bottom of the slab: He gave joy to countless people."

Wall Street Journal, October 4-5 (from Beth Carroll)

Reviewing two books by E. Phillips Oppenheim, Michael Dirda wrote that, like Edgar Wallace and P. G. Wodehouse, Oppenheim "wasn't just a writer; he was a phenomenon, producing more than 100 novels in his career".

The Times, October 6

The two-page literary quiz celebrating this year's Cheltenham Festival was illustrated, *inter alia*, by a picture of Stephen Mangan and Matthew Macfadyen in *Perfect Nonsense*, occupying more than a quarter of one page.

Today Programme, Radio 4, October 7

Reporting on the unveiling of a Blue Plaque to Raymond Chandler, Peter Bazalgette commented that, like Wodehouse, he had been taught Classics at Dulwich by

A. H. Gilkes, and they were arguably the two greatest stylists in the English language.

Telegraph Magazine, October 12 (from David Anderton)
Writing of Boris Johnson, Gaby Wood said that the Mayor of London "has foreseen all coverage, forestalled all criticism, with a familiar sweep of Wodehousian humour and theatrical modesty".

Urban Hounds, October 15 (from Gerard Palmer)

This blog commemorated PGW's birthday with a warm-hearted piece on his devotion to dogs, complete with several photos. (See bit.ly/1xfYWIq.)

The Spectator, October 18 (from Christopher Bellew)

In reviewing a book of collected articles by Nora Ephron, Marcus Berkmann mentioned her only novel, *Heartburn*, which he said was "a brilliantly sustained piece of comic writing, as good as anything you'll find outside Wodehouse".

The Times, October 20

Having attended the Society's dinner the previous Thursday, Patrick Kidd was well placed to use about a quarter of his *Diary* column to laud the contributions of Sir Terry Wogan (like PGW, a former bank clerk) and others.

Daily Telegraph, October 22

An article by Geoffrey Lean, entitled *Free the Factory-Farmed One Million* referred to a campaign launched by Tracy Worcester to persuade people to buy only "high-welfare pork" that originates in "farms, not factories". He mentioned the Empress of Blandings in the

article, but somehow overlooked the relevance of the Society's catchy phrase 'The Emsworth Paradox'!

Only Connect, BBC1, November 3

The presenter of this team quiz show is Victoria Coren-Mitchell, daughter of the Society's former patron, the late Alan Coren. In one round, a team had to identify the fourth group of letters which should appear after the following three, and explain the connection between them:

s her v h and g l to r over u

The answer was 'G s the Q', and the explanation was that the series represented four lines from the National Anthem with the verbs, adjectives and nouns reduced to initial letters 'in a Wodehousian manner'.

Palatinate, November 3

(Student Newspaper from Durham University)
Previewed a forthcoming production of *Come On, Jeeves* at the Assembly Rooms Theatre, Durham, on November 6th to 8th, the director Imo Rolf commenting as follows:

The story is part of Wodehouse's tapestry of English caricature (and in this play, their trans-Atlantic relations), which is lovingly satirised but told through poignant irony. The aristocracy's incompetence endearingly contrasts with the dignity and intelligence of Jeeves and Jill Wyvern; it is striking, and feels remarkably relevant.

Perfect Nonsense

Many websites and provincial newspapers from the UK, Sweden, and South Africa (where the show is presently on a three-city tour) have carried articles during this period either previewing local productions of *Perfect Nonsense*, interviewing its performers, or offering reviews of the actual productions – with universal praise. (See page 9 for news of the Swedish production.)

Future Events for Your Diary

Durham University Exhibition

As reported in the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, the Palace Green Library at Durham University is staging an exhibition on 'Books for Boys' until January 11, 2015. Some Wodehouse titles, from the collections of Nick Townend and Tony Ring, are included in the display.

December 6 & December 20, 2014

Richard Burnip's Wodehouse Walk

Richard Burnip is leading a Wodehouse-themed walk for London Walks on the two dates above. The usual fee is £9, but Society members get a discounted price of £7. No need to book a place; just be at exit 2 (Park Lane east side) of Marble Arch Underground station at 2.30 pm, and identify yourself as a Society member.

2015 Society Meetings

A date has been fixed to convene on **Wednesday, February 11**, at the Savoy Tup, London WC2 0BA, starting at 6 pm and going on into the evening. For more information, see page 3. Meanwhile, we have yet to fix dates in July and October, but will have that information in hand by the next issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

If you can't wait for March, keep monitoring the website, where the information will be posted as soon as it's known.

February 21 & March 29, 2015

Richard Burnip's Wodehouse Walk

Two more opportunities to take a walk with Richard, who laces his tours with wonderful Wodehouse quotes, making the experience all the more enjoyable. See December 6 & 20, above, for details about when and where to meet.

Cricket 2015

As of the time of going to press, no dates had yet been set for the Gold Bats to play their traditional matches in 2015. All will be revealed in the March issue of *Wooster Sauce* as well as on our website.

October 29–November 1, 2015 TWS Convention

The Wodehouse Society will be holding its 18th biennial convention, 'Psmith in Pseattle', at the Fairmount Olympic Hotel in Seattle, Washington.

"I said that smoking was dangerous to the health. And it is."

"It isn't."

"It is. I can prove it from my own personal experience. I was once," said the Lemon Squash, "a smoker myself, and the vile habit reduced me to a physical wreck. My cheeks sagged, my eyes became bleary, my whole face gaunt, yellow and hideously lined. It was giving up smoking that brought about the change."

"What change?" asked the Tankard.

(From 'The Man Who Gave Up Smoking', 1929)

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