



WOOSTER SAUCE

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

Number 75

September 2015

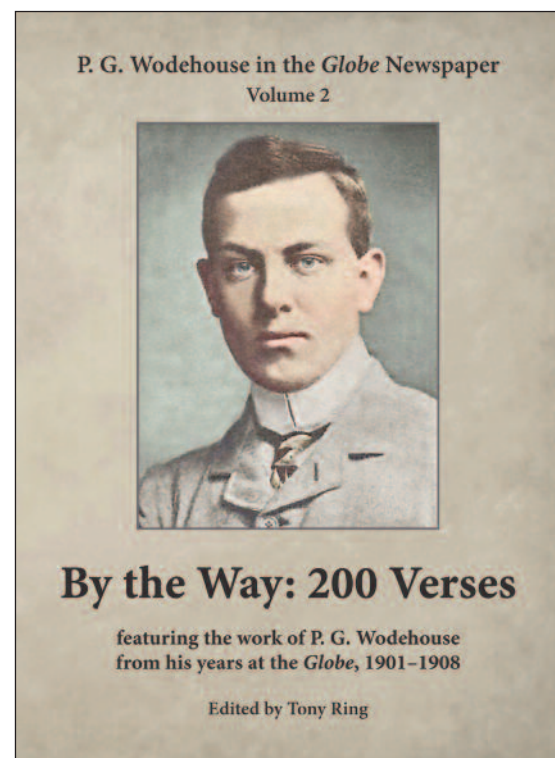
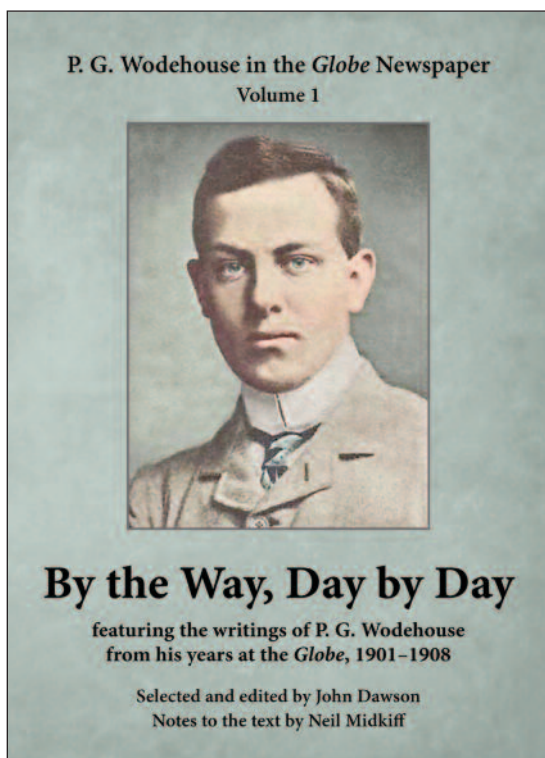
Reaching into the Past

P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper Volumes 1 & 2

Volumes 1 & 2 of *P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper*, published September 1, are the first products of the efforts of an international group of authors, collectors, and scholars who formed the P. G. Wodehouse Globe Reclamation Project in January 2013. The GRP collected the entire print run of Wodehouse's working days on the "By the Way" column, 1901–1908, consisting of 1,400 front pages of the *Globe* – some 21,000 prose paragraphs and 800 poems. In the past two years, GRP volunteers have spent endless hours transcribing, studying, discussing, and evaluating a vast amount of material. Our specific aim has been to attribute, where possible, as much of the newfound material to Wodehouse as can be evidenced. Paragraphs and

poems that have met the group's collective, yet diverse, demanding standards have been selected for the books.

I would like to thank Sir Edward Cazalet for giving me permission in 2011 to obtain a complete copy of P.G.'s journal 'Money Received for Literary Work', which resides at Wodehouse's beloved alma mater, Dulwich College. It was a stroke of luck for the GRP that P.G. listed all of the actual dates he worked in the By the Way room at the *Globe* from 1901 to early 1908, precisely 1,378 working days; this would have untold benefits 110 years later. We scanned each column from library microfilm. Since the column was written in the morning and published in the evening, the dates listed in the



The front covers of both volumes feature a photograph of 21-year-old P. G. Wodehouse that was originally published in the September 1903 issue of *The Captain*. The photo has been restored and colourised by Laiz Kuczynski.

journal enabled the GRP to set forth with a defined goal. We salute Sir Edward for making the dream of finding and publishing new Wodehouse writings come true. P.G.'s best daily "work product" from his early years as a journalist are represented by the selections in *P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper*, Volumes 1 & 2.

In Volume 1 – *By the Way, Day by Day* (344 pages) – I've selected 1,300 humorous paragraphs and poems taken from *By the Way*: a daily dose of jokes, witty retellings of news events, and poems that, in my opinion, represent the best of the most identifiably Wodehousean work in the columns. There are perhaps 4,000 paragraphs and poems in the *By the Way* eight-year run that range from *could have been* written by Wodehouse to *must have been* written by Wodehouse. These are my favourites. In my introduction, I describe the complex process of attributing the unsigned columns, and how I believe I was able to identify Wodehouse's writing in them. I'm very grateful to Norman Murphy for his enlightened preface and to Neil Midkiff for his amazing annotations, which nearly place the reader at ringside to the news events of the time that inspired the columns' content.

Volume 2 – *By the Way: 200 Verses* (271 pages) – features 200 poems that have been confidently attributed to Wodehouse by an international panel of recognized authors and experts in his life and work. (Another 100 poems appear in Volume 1.) Edited by Tony Ring – in my view the world's foremost authority on P.G.'s lyrics and poetry – the hilarious poems showcase Wodehouse's genius with the verse form, evident even in these early years. Tony's elegant chapter introductions provide a thoroughly entertaining Edwardian perspective, and his well-placed notes bring to life once again the personalities, fads, and news events that inspired Wodehouse to compose these (often brilliant) lines. Consider that before these 300 poems were found and authenticated, Wodehouse's known body of poetry consisted of only about 100 poems over his entire career. He wrote that in these early days he had a gift for "light verse," and the evidence has now surfaced in abundance.

Many readers will ask: how can you possibly attribute unsigned work? It's a good, fair question, and one that Norman Murphy, Tony Ring, Neil Midkiff, Karen Shotting, Ian Michaud, and I have laboured to answer for two years. We know that the people who will be judging our work are those who know Wodehouse's work best – you, the members of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) and its sister societies. With a commitment to transparency, we

report, in near-exhaustive detail, the protocols we employed in our endeavours to identify and attribute Wodehouse's writings. Like Adrian Mulliner, we had our methods, so to speak, and employed them. We tell you as much about the process in our introductions as space allows.

In his preface, Norman writes: "When a team of researchers, all of whom know their Wodehouse and know precisely when Wodehouse was working at the *Globe*, undertake a slow, painstaking analysis of the column, then we should pay attention. And when they collectively can agree on when a paragraph has the indefinable unmistakable Wodehouse 'touch,' then I am confident we can accept their findings as conclusive."

The brilliant craftsmanship and wit for which Wodehouse has always been known is on full display in *P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper*, Volumes 1 & 2. The books are the result of hundreds of hours of study and research by the experts and authorities associated with the project. We've done our best to present work that we are confident enhances the cherished legacy of P. G. Wodehouse.

Now we're content to stand back and let the paragraphs and poems in these books speak for themselves.

BY JOHN DAWSON

How to Order the Books

Volumes 1 & 2 of *P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper* are being sold only as a set; the list price of the set is US\$50, plus shipping. The books are available from the distributor, Seattle Book Company – <http://tinyurl.com/pgw-globe-books> – and, at the time of going to press, from Amazon.com (US). Information regarding availability from Amazon.co.uk and other sites will be updated as it becomes available on our web page at Madame Eulalie (<http://tinyurl.com/grp2015>).

Society members may receive a 20% discount by ordering directly (and only) from Seattle Book Company at the link above and entering the coupon code GLOBE in the appropriate box on the Shopping Cart page.

Note. The P. G. Wodehouse Globe Reclamation Project is a fully volunteer, not-for-profit group. All donations and book receipts are 100% dedicated to research, expenses, and charity. We're excited to be planning our first charitable project, which will be the donation of copies of Wodehouse's best novels to selected American high school libraries.

"The column itself was an extraordinary affair in England. You would quote something from the morning paper and then you'd make some little comment on it. It was always the same type of joke. Nobody had altered that formula in all the fifty years of its existence."

P. G. Wodehouse to David Jasen in *P. G. Wodehouse: A Portrait of a Master*, 1975

Society News

Treasurer URGENTLY Needed!

After a few promising (but ultimately unfruitful) leads, the Society is still seeking a new treasurer to replace the present incumbent, Jeremy Neville. The role requires numeracy but no accounting background, as the finances are run on a simple spreadsheet, and entails an evening every few weeks, with attendance at three or four committee meetings in London ideal but not essential.

Definitely One for the Diary

There now follows a message from “essentially the Society’s Redcoat”.

This less than flattering sobriquet, published in the previous edition of *Wooster Sauce*, was probably meant to sting, and by golly it succeeded. Your Entertainments Impresario, as he prefers to be called, was puce with indignation for several seconds before a large gin reunited him with his customary composure and suave, unruffled demeanour. Still rankling, he momentarily considered organizing a knobbly knees competition for **our next meeting on 18 November**, but that would have been unworthy of his generous spirit. Thus, with sweetness and light restored (and the production nous of his resourceful colleague, Miss Lesley Tapson, who set it up), the E.I. is delighted to announce a rare public appearance by the master novel-writer and humorist (and winner of the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize) **Mr**



The novelist Jonathan Coe will be our speaker at the next Society meeting (18 November), along with David Quantick.

Jonathan Coe and his equally esteemed colleague, **Mr David Quantick**. They will present a wonderful disquisition on humour in the English novel, or something not unadjacent to the topic, for our collective delight, and with special reference to the Master Spirit whom we all hold so dear.

It’s not often we have Genuine Celebrities come to visit, so your Entertainments Impresario is sure you won’t want to miss this, er, unmissable event. Please do your best to attend and rally round the flag, as we would like to offer a warm welcome to our honoured guests.

Message ends.

– PAUL KENT

Notes from a Thankful Editor

I wish to express deepest appreciation to Graeme Davidson for his excellent editing of the June issue of *Wooster Sauce*. Though things did not work out for his continuing as Editor, Graeme has graciously agreed to carry on writing articles for the journal (see, for example, page 8), and to become one of our proofreaders (along with the splendid trio of Caroline Franklyn, Gwendolin Goldbloom, and Mike Swaddling – you can never have too many proofreaders). Graeme’s willingness to provide assistance in any way he can speaks volumes of his overall good-egg-ish-ness.

Thanks are also due to Lesley Tapson, who has very kindly taken on the thankless job of compiling and editing our regular column ‘Recent Press Comment’. This is a task that Tony Ring, bless him, continued to do for years after he handed the editorship over to me, and he bravely offered to resume the role. Fortunately, Lesley stepped into the breach, good woman that she is, and I’m ever so indebted to her for doing so. (Any items for this column can go directly to Lesley; see page 22.)

Continued thanks go to Baines Design and Print (Cuffley, Herts.), who not only do an outstanding job of

printing *Wooster Sauce*, *By The Way*, and our biennial dinner menus, but also provide much-needed support and guidance when I am faced with tricky technical issues. (Zoe, this means you!)

My greatest thanks go to all those members who contribute articles and items for *Wooster Sauce*, or who write to say how much they enjoy the journal. Having only 24 pages to work with, my problem is always how much can be printed now and what has to wait for a future issue. I greatly appreciate all those who have been so patient about when they will see their pieces in print. This should not deter anybody from sending in articles, especially contributions to the ‘My First Wodehouse Experience’ series. However, please – no pastiches or parodies! Despite the exception I have made in this issue (page 14), they are the only pieces I refuse to print; otherwise most of what is submitted is eventually printed, subject to space, this being a democratic journal.

Finally – do, please, write to me if you have thoughts about anything you are or are not seeing in *Wooster Sauce*, or if you have ideas for how it might be improved. I am always open to suggestions – and to contributions!

Fathers and Sons: The Wodehouse Cricket Festival Takes a Familial Turn

Robert Bruce reports from Dulwich College and West Wycombe

Life, as we all know, imitates art. And it certainly does so when it comes to the exploits of the Gold Bats, the cricketing representatives of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK). The opening of the first fixture, against the Dulwich Dusters, the team drawn from the staff of Dulwich College, proves the point. The Gold Bats were three players short at the outset. Two proved to be still in a car en route from Essex. And one was being summoned from his desk in the City.

It was easy to imagine Wodehouse himself slamming his bank ledger shut as he answered the call and exited exuberantly in a Dulwich direction. Had he done so he would have found the school's eminent one-time archivist, Jan Piggott, in the pavilion signing copies of his new book about Wodehouse's early school stories (see page 8). And in the field, and with a sizeable number of members looking on from the pavilion benches, the father-and-son team of Julian and Archie Hill were hitting sixes in all directions. Hill senior hit the first two balls off the Dulwich lob bowler for towering sixes and was then stumped. Hill junior was retired on an exuberant 30. Mark Wilcox, perhaps celebrating the fact that a photograph of the Dulwich team which was captained by his father is now hanging on the pavilion stairs, hit some fine cover drives.

The Gold Bats played, as is their wont, with considerable brio. But wickets fell steadily until they were all out for 144. The traditionally sumptuous cricket tea was then, with relish, enjoyed noisily. There were no fewer than three speeches of thanks

to the creators of the tea from spectators, players, and Dulwich staff. Jan Piggott diligently signed more books.

Then it was the turn of the Gold Bats, full of cake and sandwiches, to field. At first all went well. By the time the clock struck seven, the Dulwich Dusters were a mere 27 for 3. But they accelerated, and by the time Mark Wilcox had to negotiate with a passing cyclist in the road beyond the railings for the return of the six-hit ball that had lodged in the gutter, the day was virtually done. Another six into the clump of

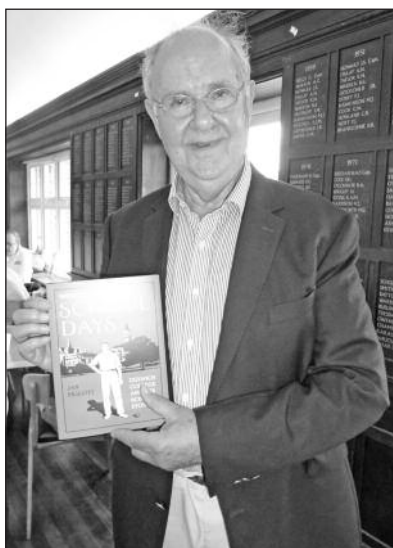
trees beyond the pitch brought up the winning runs in the 14th over. And as the players left the pitch and headed for the bar, the rain, followed swiftly by the thunder and lightning which would have saved the Gold Bats' bacon, started to fall. It was another memorable match, enjoyed by Society spectators and players alike.

Just over a week later, the Gold Bats were in action at West Wycombe, where, traditionally, they do battle with the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. The day was positively Blandings-like in its summery nature. Picnics were set up around the perimeter. And the Gold Bats were blessed with an extraordinary array of cricketing fathers and sons. Julian and Archie Hill were in the team, as were Oliver and Harry Wise, Mark and

Henry Wilcox, and Jon and Jack Corsan, who, to make it more complicated, are Julian Hill's cousin and second cousin. To add to the eccentricity, Andrew Chapman had driven down from far-off Shropshire to make, at the age of a smidgen short of 70, his final appearance, to keep wicket, and, as it turned out, to open the batting, hitting an effortless

six to underline the point.

The familial connections proved rich as the innings progressed. Julian Hill and Jack Corsan put on a hundred partnership, including a well-run three in which young Jack appeared on the verge of lapping his



Jan Piggott displays a copy of his new book, Wodehouse's School Days. A better image of the book can be seen with the review on page 8.



The crease at Dulwich



Umpire Bruce kept an eagle eye on the play at West Wycombe.



Other players and spectators enjoyed the view from the pavilion.

elder. At lunch the score had reached 149 for 4. Lunch was, as it ought to be in such matches, lengthy. On resumption of play, Mark Wilcox hit three fours in the first over, an achievement he ascribed to the quality of the cider that had accompanied his lunch. The innings was eventually declared on 216 before the Sherlocks took to the crease.

The opponents started in their traditional way. The Gold Bats hit with gusto; the Sherlocks relied on the forward prod. This meant that when the first wicket came from a skier off the bowling of the accurate Harry Wise, it came as a bit of a surprise. His father, Oliver, then took up the bowling from the other end. By tea the indefatigable Sherlocks had reached 54 for 1 off 18 overs. Despite the effects of an enjoyable tea, Julian Hill took a sensational one-handed diving catch soon after, and by the time there

was an hour to go, the score had reached 107 for 3. Harry Wise made it 5 with a run-out off his follow-through. Chapman kept tidily. Anna Keeble, the only woman playing, fielded brilliantly.

But the Sherlocks' total continued to grow. In this they were assisted by their insistence that the hours of play should be extended. With one over to go, they were 212 for 5. A keenly fought final over ensued. There was a run-out off the first ball. A single run then tied the score. Your correspondent, umpiring as he was at the time, did wonder whether to simply call "over" a ball early and ensure a neat symmetry to the result. Sadly, the concept of fair play got the better of him.

A leg-bye ensued. The Sherlocks had won. And we all went off to the George & Dragon to drink beer and discuss the ways of the world at a long table in the garden.

The Word Around the Clubs

Spotted in Dulwich

The catalogue for an Eric Ravilious exhibition at Dulwich Picture Gallery cites the three authors that Ravilious would have chosen for a desert island as Gilbert White, P. G. Wodehouse, and Mark Twain, "all of whom offer the reader style, wit and adventure on a domestic scale". (Thanks to TERRY TAYLOR)

Jonathan Ames's Blunt Talk

Author Jonathan Ames pays homage to Wodehouse not only in his fiction (see page 14) but in other aspects of his career as well. As creator and executive producer of a new television comedy series, *Blunt Talk*, which premiered on the US station Starz on August 22, Ames revealed in an interview that the new series "is a cross between *Network* and P. G. Wodehouse – that's why I have a manservant role". The lead character is played by Patrick Stewart, and the series will run for at least two seasons at 10 episodes per season. In summarizing the comedic aim of *Blunt Talk*, Ames quoted Wodehouse – "Try to give pleasure with every sentence" – and noted that the series tries "to give pleasure with every scene". With Wodehouse as an influence, they will surely succeed! (Thanks to TONY RING)

More on Hunstanton Hall

In the June issue of *Wooster Sauce*, Johnny Dalrymple explored Wodehouse's association with Hunstanton

Hall, the Norfolk stately home that had a profound influence on a number of his works. Not long after that informative article reached members' mailboxes, another one on the subject was published in the latest edition of *The Journal of the Alliance of Literary Societies* (Volume 9, 2015). In 'P. G. Wodehouse and Hunstanton Hall', Norman Murphy describes how Wodehouse first went to stay at the hall as a guest of the Le Strange family, how it became a haven for him – "his own personal Blandings Castle" – and the ways he incorporated features of Hunstanton into his stories. Norman also notes how Wodehouse learned much from Charles Le Strange about the problems of a landowner in maintaining his estate, as well as the duties of a Justice of the Peace.

The *JALS* is available only in electronic format. Any Society members who would like to read it may write to the *Wooster Sauce* Editor (contact details on page 24) for a copy of the article to be forwarded electronically.

A Top Pick

As one of its 'Top Crime Picks for Grown-ups', the July newsletter for the independent bookshop Slightly Foxed listed *The Moving Toyshop*, by Edmund Crispin, described as being "as inventive as Agatha Christie and as hilarious as P. G. Wodehouse". (Thanks to LESLEY TAPSON)

Quiz Night at the Savoy Tup

Patricia O’Sullivan reports on our July 22 meeting

I don’t suppose that I’m alone of the membership who is found at a pub or PTA quiz only under the greatest of duress or threat of blackmail. But think again if you haven’t yet been to a Wodehouse quiz: these are a cut or sixteen above. Part of this is that the questions are of just the right level of trickiness, and there’s no round that’s incomprehensible to anyone over 22, or who isn’t an Aston Villa devotee. It’s also what Society impresario Paul Kent does with the questions: he’ll lull you into a false sense of security and then, BANG, down we go again. But mainly it’s the way that the effort unites us as teams: we learn more about our fellow Society members (most of it repeatable!) than at other meetings, and it all keeps us chatting on in Wodehouse mode way after the final bell.

But I’m getting ahead of myself. Our evening had started out quietly: by the appointed hour there were just a handful of people, but the lure of a draw for a lovely copy of the *Saturday Evening Post* with the



Patricia (centre) consults with her team on a devilish question.

first instalment of *Something Fresh* PLUS the quiz meant the upper room of the Savoy Tup filled up with a rush (including four first-time attendees, hurrah!), and Hilary was finally able to start proceedings. The said magazine was won by Ukridge, who turned out to be the lucky Jo Jacobius, who was very chuffed. Hilary then had the very sad duty to report the passing of longstanding member Susan Walker (see next page). After a few other items, we were onto the main event of the evening as Paul explained the rules and Hilary intrigued us with the promise of prizes for the winning team from a Swedish, or was it Danish, shop on the Finchley Road.

The six teams were presented with five rounds of questions, thematically linked, starting with ‘Railways’ – where in real life would you alight for Valley Fields?, etc. My team were off to a Flying Scotsman start. But question 1 of ‘Blandings People’ – name *both* Blandings chauffeurs – had us scratching heads, and we continued scratching for most of that round. ‘Topical Wodehouse’ restored our confidence somewhat: how is our esteemed PM linked to Wodehouse, and what’s the asking price for Plum’s Dunraven Street house at the moment? The ‘Nicknames’ round *should* have been so easy: in reverse, Paul gave us the soubriquet, we supplied the name. The problem was finding the first names . . . surely Oofy Prosser is just Oofy, isn’t he? Does he really need other names? We struggled on, and then at the end Paul said that we didn’t need first names to get the points. Doh! Quizmaster’s prerogative, I suppose! Five brilliant words (*obnoxioused*, *scrooched*, et al.) that might have been used by Wodehouse as synonyms for drunkenness concluded the questions . . . true or false?

The answers, when revealed, produced a predictable ostinato of groans, but at the grand reckoning, one group stood head and shoulders above us lesser mortals. Given the approaching holiday season, the four gentlemen of the Strand Strollers were suitably rewarded by Hilary – with large, brightly coloured shrimping nets! But the man of the match was, of course, Paul Kent, who must have put in hours of (albeit enjoyable) work to provide us with a great evening’s entertainment. No shrimping pail for him: funds ran to an elegant and well-deserved cocktail shaker.



The Strand Strollers celebrate their win, with a toast from quizmeister Paul Kent for good measure.

Sample questions from Paul’s devious quiz

(Answers on page 21)

1. What connects Uncle Fred with the Piccadilly Line?
2. Name two chauffeurs who ferry the family and guests around Blandings and the local environs.
3. Beach excels in the impersonation of which animal?
4. What connects Cary Grant and Lord Emsworth?
5. Which member of the current Government’s great-great-grandfather, it has been proposed in print by a well-known Society member, is the model for John Bickersdyke, the irascible head of the New Asiatic Bank in *Psmith in the City*?

We Remember

Susan Walker

We are very sad to report the passing of loyal Society member Susan Walker, a regular presence at Society events. Susan, who was 77 when she died, was an enthusiastic participant in quizzes, dinners, and cricket events, and also contributed to *Wooster Sauce*.

Susan's love of Wodehouse seems to have permeated her whole family: according to her husband, Graham, she was always talking about

Wodehouse, or quoting him. One of their two daughters became a Society member, and Graham, not such a dedicated fan, often used to accompany her to meetings.

Her friends in the Wodehouse community – and there were many present at the Quiz Night in July – will miss Susan's intelligent and elegant company, and we are very sorry to have lost her.

– HILARY BRUCE

Ed Ratcliffe, 1924–2015

The sad news of Ed Ratcliffe's death in May came as a shock, especially to those privileged to count him as a friend. Although readers who are members of The Wodehouse Society (US) will recall his long editorship of *Plum Lines*, they may not be aware of the important part he played in developing the current close links between our two Societies.

Ed took over the editorship of *Plum Lines* in 1988, and I first met him when he came over on the 1989 Wodehouse Pilgrimage. It was the first time American and British Wodehouseans had met, and friendships made then have continued ever since. I still remember being struck by Ed's enthusiasm; it was clear from the start that here was a man who enjoyed his Wodehouse and thoroughly enjoyed visiting England. He said later he felt like a pilgrim visiting Canterbury, and I believe this was no exaggeration. A confirmed Anglophile, he loved our countryside, our old buildings, and the sense of history that he felt whenever he entered an old village church.

Whenever I think of him, I remember his infectious smile, his superb sense of humour, and his remarkable wit. He seemed to be able to see the funny side of everything: this was reflected in his 16 years editing *Plum Lines*, when his editorial notes often added a sometimes much-needed twist to an otherwise prosaic article. He had the enviable ability to make jokes on just about anything, but never in a way that could offend anybody.

When, at his suggestion, I visited America for the first time in 1990, I stayed with Ed and his wife,

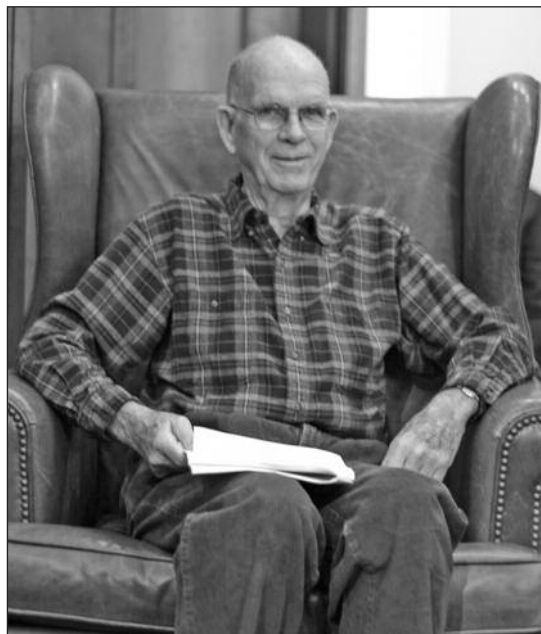
Missy, in California. Their hospitality knew no bounds: nothing was too much trouble, whether it was saving me money by booking the cheapest flights or ensuring their daughter took a day off work to drive me around Hollywood to photograph the houses where Wodehouse had lived. Later, Ed and Missy came to stay with us in England, as did their two daughters, Catherine and Gene, and their visits were always a delight.

Although it is a small, silly thing, I am still proud that I showed another side of Ed to the world. I attended my first American Wodehouse Society convention in New York in 1991 and wrote a short Blandings skit for the occasion. I realised as soon as I wrote it that Ed was just the man to play Lord Emsworth. I was right – he did it superbly, and his Lord Emsworth became a feature of conventions thereafter.

He has left us now, and I and many others will miss him. I will miss his letters on such arcane queries as the cost of a post-chaise (he loved Jane Austen and Dickens); I will miss his delight in informing me America was still running a scheduled stagecoach route (1918) ten years after the last in Britain. I shall miss his

queries on the mysterious letters M and N in the Book of Common Prayer, which were only solved by consultation with the senior liturgical adviser to the Archbishop of Canterbury. I will miss him – but, again, like many others, I will always smile when I think of him. He was that sort of man: he always made you smile.

– NORMAN MURPHY



Ed in rehearsal as Lord Emsworth at the Los Angeles convention in 2005 (photo by Shamim Mohamed)

Wodehouse's School Days

A Review by Graeme W. I. Davidson

This book is the first in a series of books to be published in celebration of the Dulwich College Quatercentenary in 2019. It is a study in two parts, 'Wodehouse and Dulwich College' and 'The Dulwich [College] Novels and Tales'.

In the study the author, Dr Jan Piggott, writes of Plum's times at his beloved school in the last lustrum or so of the 19th century, and aims to show how between 1902 and 1911 alchemist Wodehouse transformed his experiences there, and the values instilled, into the early part of the Wodehouse canon, his rites-of-passage school stories and novels. They basically comprise six novels published between 1902 and 1909 and about 40 stories between 1901 and 1911.

The author's background as a former Head of English and Keeper of the Archives at Dulwich College gives him particular advantage and authority to write on the subject. The latter role is a real boon in producing a book covering Wodehouse's busy, un-slacking school days, where access to primary source material such as school records – academic, sporting, and societal – is a godsend.

Wodehouse's School Days is a wonderful expansion of an earlier work of Piggott's that appeared first in 1997 as two introductory essays in *Wodehouse Goes to School*, Volume 3 of the excellent Millennium Wodehouse Concordance (Porpoise Books) by Tony Ring and Geoffrey Jaggard. The book modestly describes itself as a much-revised work. That scarcely does it credit, for it is a renaissance and no mere rehash. It very substantially expands upon the two 1997 essays, while still using their basic structure, and enhances their original appearance with the addition of a very worthwhile notes and references section, adding further weight to the contents' authority.

A significant part of the appeal of the new iteration of Dr Piggott's work over its earlier incarnation lies in another enhancement, the very evident high standards of production, encompassing paper quality, layout and design, photography (lots of photographs new to me, not seen by me in other Wodehouse books), and illustrations and other graphics. They make for a lovely overall visual effect, creating a pleasing and rather appropriate marriage of scrap-book and old style children's book, all housing the excellent two-part study.

There are two especially nice features visually. One is the splendid image on the front cover, a period-style

drawing of a young Plum in his school cricket days, with the College and its now familiar clock tower in the background, in the style of a cover for a book or magazine from around the era of his youth. The other feature to mention is the endpapers: an evocative period map showing Dulwich College and surrounding areas, which lets you happily and virtually amble in Plum's schoolboy footsteps.

So extensive is the information that space constraints inevitably mean that the author generally doesn't tarry and sails on, even after lobbing us intriguing morsels on which we might mull, speculate, and tarry. One such

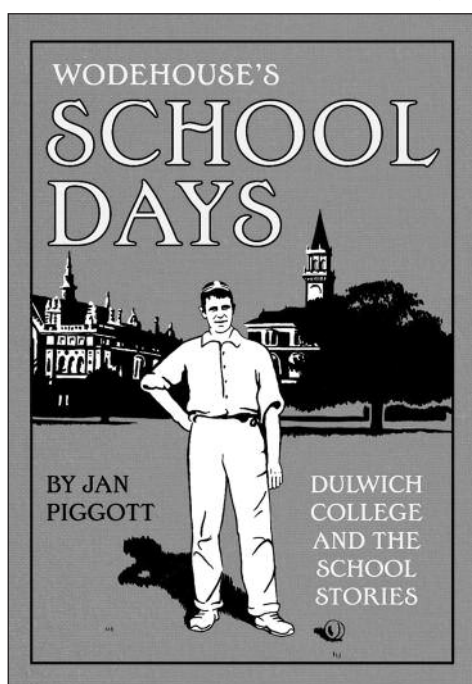
morsel is his mention of the name of the Form Master in the Classical Upper Fourth who supervised Plum's work on the school magazine, before becoming a journalist and distinguished war correspondent, for which he was knighted. When on the staff of *The Globe*, he gave Plum work in 1902 on the 'By the Way' column, allowing Wodehouse to leave his confining bank job. The man was clearly key in encouraging and facilitating Wodehouse to become the writer he became. But what tickled me was the discovery of his name, a name consisting of three names, each of which will resonate loudly with Wodehouseans.

His first name was William, a discovery that made me question whether I've perhaps been hasty in automatically putting Wodehouse's frequent use of the name Bill down to his longstanding friendship with Bill Townend.

His surname, prior to his eliding it with his middle name, was Thomas, a name that also features in Wodehouse's work in the form of Young Thos., Uncle Tom, and, of course, the Blandings footman, Thomas.

One speculates whether it was his possession of the names William and Thomas which prompted Wodehouse's use of those names and their diminutives, but one is uncertain. There surely can be no doubt, though, that it was that man's less pedestrian middle name that Wodehouse had in mind when he christened arguably his most famous butler. And what was that middle name? Beach! How's that for a pleasing discovery? (Some may consider this to be coincidence, and may consider that Beach Road in Emsworth, where Wodehouse rented a house, was the actual inspiration.)

This book is a delight, and one you should purchase instantly. No Wodehouse enthusiast's shelves or coffee



P. G. Wodehouse and the Flora of Degenershausen

by Martin Breit

It may sound too good to be true, but almost 60 years after its first publication, P. G. Wodehouse's novel *Money in the Bank* played a vital part in saving magnificent plantings of rhododendrons from the whims of local authorities.

Just a few days after Plum was released from the internment camp at Tost in June 1941, he found himself in a dream world. Although he wasn't permitted to leave Germany, he found a sanctuary at Degenershausen, the rural estate of Anga von Bodenhausen, the fiancée of an old friend from Wodehouse's Hollywood days. There he saw green hedges instead of barbed wire and a luxuriant English-style landscape garden instead of the narrow and muddy camp courtyard. And instead of being cramped into one cell block with 60 other men, he shared the elegant manor with the Bodenhausen family, his wife Ethel, and Wonder, their beloved Peke. Here at Degenershausen, the war was far away, and Wodehouse could write and walk in peace.



Postcard of the manor house of Degenershausen from 1914.
The house was built in 1835 and demolished in 1986.

Fifty years later, the Cold War was over and the inter-German border was history. The park of Degenershausen, which had become derelict in GDR times, was carefully reconstructed, using historical plans. The landscape architect in charge was a very experienced man who recognised a place in the park that would be perfect for planting rhododendrons. Some time after he successfully planted a number of bushes, the Landesdenkmalamt Halle (the local authority for the protection of monuments) appeared on the scene. They claimed there was no historical proof of rhododendrons at that very spot or in the

entire park for that matter, so they should be removed – despite the fact that the magnificent and beautiful plants had become a major attraction among the visitors to Degenershausen.

For years and years there was a lot of discussion – until the fortunate day that *Money in the Bank* was brought into play! The setting of the novel, first published in 1942, is Shipley Hall and its estate, the park of which hosts, among many other attractions, large plantings of rhododendrons, which are the perfect location for exchanging kisses.

The point was made that the gardens of Shipley Hall were based on the gardens of Degenershausen. It was a convincing point, considering that Plum wrote the book in Germany, while living in that rural Eden. Also, there were some similarities in the description of Shipley and the appearance of Degenershausen, and it is a well-known fact that Wodehouse frequently was inspired by the people and places he knew and integrated them into his work.

In short, after the Landesdenkmalamt acknowledged the novel, they never again expressed the desire to remove the rhododendrons (although supposedly no one read it there). This was a remarkable triumph for literature, although the fictional estate is by no means influenced by Degenershausen. The manuscript was already finished when Plum came here, and it is proven fact that Shipley Hall is based on Fairlawne, the home of Wodehouse's daughter, Leonora. However, after almost 60 years, the novel helped to save the lives of some remarkable plants. A beautiful footnote.

Even today there is a lime tree at Degenershausen that Wodehouse knew very well. He loved to sit under it, relax, enjoy the view, and think about his work. Today the ca. 110-year-old *tilia* doesn't host famous authors anymore, but one or more tawny owls live there. (See photo on the next page.)

There are recent plans at Degenershausen to remember its prominent guest and officially to christen the tree 'Wodehouse-Linde' – most likely accompanied by a suitable celebration, which should be of interest for Wodehouse lovers. Furthermore, there are plans to sell cuttings – so that everyone can take home a young plant or grow his own genuine Wodehouse tree at home.

To the right is a picture of the would-be ‘Wodehouse-Linde’ today. The Degenershausen Landscape Park is situated in central Germany, Saxony-Anhalt, as part of the town Falkenstein/Harz. Those who want to get an impression of the park should visit the park’s website (in German language only):

www.landschaftspark-degenershausen.de

Editor’s note. Those who would like to learn more about the time Wodehouse spent at Degenershausen can do so by reading Baroness Reinhild von Bodenhausen’s book P G Wodehouse: The Unknown Years (2009). It can be ordered online via Amazon or through the Sri Lankan seller lakehousebookshop.com.



Letters to the Editor

Reactions, Questions, and Thoughts from Our Readers

From Gerard Palmer

The June issue of *Wooster Sauce* raises the question of the lack of local groups to which the afflicted might turn for sympathy and support, and suggests that non-London members should write to the letters page. But, dash it all, if as I have previously suggested, there was a Society tie for the chaps and (say) a tasteful brooch for the delicately-nurtured, it would be possible to spot fellow devotees and this would be a powerful aid to get things started.

From Geoff Hales

Ken Bruce’s success in answering questions on *Celebrity Mastermind* (*Wooster Sauce*, June 2015, p.19) reminded me of my audition for the (non-celebrity) version of the programme some years ago. When asked what specialist subjects I would choose if selected, I said, “The life and works of P. G. Wodehouse.” Eyebrows were raised, lips pursed and, if I’m not mistaken, breath sharply drawn in. After a longish silence, the producer said, “Well, I suppose the programme is entertainment.” I didn’t get beyond the audition.

From Graeme Davidson

I am trying to purchase two copies of the Penguin edition of Wodehouse’s *Ukridge* carrying the cover artwork by David Hitch, who is given a credit on the back page. The market seems awash with copies of the Ionicus-covered Penguin of *Ukridge*, but the Hitch-covered Penguin of *Ukridge* is proving strangely elusive. I have for around two years rummaged in bookshops and online, including using several search engines such as Abebooks, but to no avail; hence this letter. If any readers have one or more and are willing to sell, they should please contact me by email (---) or post (---). I do not need suggestions about search engines or identities of possible third-party vendors, simply intimations of books actually available from vendors themselves.

From Tony Ring

In his article about Hunstanton Hall in the June issue, Johnny Dalrymple comments – halfway down the first column of page 13 – that it is unclear precisely when the letter to Bill Townend from which he quotes was actually written.

The answer is that, with the exception of the last sentence (which did not, as far as I know, appear in any actual letter) and some mildly different wording in the previous sentence, the quoted passage was written as part of a long letter of 12 May 1929.

Instead of the last two quoted sentences (which are found in *Performing Flea*), Plum actually wrote:

You know the sort of thing – it’s happening all over the country now – thousands of acres, park, gardens, moat etc and priceless heirlooms, but *not a penny of ready money. It gives the place a sort of air of romantic decay which is very atmospheric.* [My italics]

In the article’s next paragraph, Mr Dalrymple introduces us to a further confusion – the question of when Plum told Townend about the use he made of Hunstanton Hall in writing *Money for Nothing*. The most illuminating information actually comes from the letter of 12 May 1929, referred to above, in which Plum wrote:

I’m here till after Whitsun. Isn’t it a gorgeous place. I spend all my time in a boat on the moat. This is the place where the scene of *Money for Nothing* was laid.

Despite its apparent appearance in *Performing Flea*, there doesn’t appear to have been a letter to Townend dated 27 April 1929. The letter dated 27 July 1927, also referred to in the article, did not – whether or not that letter actually existed – say that he wrote major portions of *Money for Nothing* at Hunstanton Hall. It said he had been sweating blood over the novel and had just finished 53,000 words of it. Previous extant letters show he was at Impney in March and May, and in London in April and later in May, so it is not absolutely clear that all these words were written in Hunstanton.

Something New for the Centenary of *Something Fresh*

by Tony Ring

In 1914 and the following year, P. G. Wodehouse's life changed dramatically. After his return to America in August, he met and quickly married Ethel; set up home in Bellport, Long Island; and appointed a new literary agent, the supremely gifted Paul Reynolds. In December he sat down at his typewriter and typed 'Something Fresh' at the head of a blank piece of paper. The Blandings series had been started.

Until then, Wodehouse had been sufficiently successful as a writer to maintain himself in a reasonable lifestyle, but he had not yet made any real critical or commercial impact. Much of his fiction had been aimed at adolescent boys, while for several years most of his other writing was swallowed up by the machinery of the daily or weekly press. Now, though, he was feeling more confident and, as it turned out, not without reason.

Words flowed from his pen, and he was convinced that the new novel was the 'best long thing I have done'. He finished it early in 1915 and had 'great hopes of landing it somewhere good'. That is exactly what he did, his new agent selling it to the world-renowned editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, America's foremost literary magazine, for \$3,500. In an introduction to a new edition of the book in 1968, Wodehouse recalled that 'I had always known in a vague sort of way that there was money like \$3,500 in the world, but I had never expected to touch it. If I was a hundred bucks ahead of the game in those days, I thought I was doing well.'

One does not immediately think of Wodehouse as a controversial writer (though he was banned at various times in Russia and Hungary), so it is surprising to learn that his chosen title was rejected for the *Saturday Evening Post* serialisation as it was thought 'too racy', the word 'fresh' having sexual connotations in the USA. The title *Something New* was substituted, and caused no comment for more than 50 years, when its existence suddenly acquired a mildly sinister aspect in the vulgar commercial world of publishing.

The serialisation in the *SEP* started on 26 June

1915 and continued for a total of eight weekly instalments, finishing on 14 August. Wodehouse's approval by the paper was confirmed the following week by the appearance of the short story 'At

Geisenheimer's', later to be included in the short story collection *The Man with Two Left Feet*. (Only a month later, in the 18 September edition of the *SEP*, Jeeves made his first appearance in 'Extricating Young Gussie', but see the issue of *By the Way* which accompanies this edition of *Wooster Sauce* for a discussion about whether Bertie Wooster was there as well.)

As a Blandings story, the novel is in some ways more interesting for what it omits than for what it contains, for with hindsight we can appreciate how many delights were still to come. Lady Ann Warblington, the only sister

of Lord Emsworth who was mentioned in the book, divided her time between letter-writing and nursing a sick headache, and played no role in the development of the plot. Beach the butler is present, in control of a significant downstairs staff, about whose activities we learn more than in subsequent books. Freddie Threepwood, Lord E's younger son, is one of the principal characters, though his personality is immature and he, like Beach's port, will improve with age. Baxter is offered as a sacrifice to the reader's distaste. But there are no pigs, no Gally, no Lord Ickenham, no nephews or nieces, and no unpleasant neighbours. In their place is Lord Emsworth's museum with its Gutenberg Bible, the first of a long line of imposters – Joan Valentine masquerading as a lady's maid with the name 'Simpson' – a valuable scarab, and clear evidence of the tendency towards forgetfulness of the Earl.

In naming his characters, both major and minor, Wodehouse drew on matter with which he was familiar. Lord Stockheath, Lord Bosham, and Lady Anne Warblington are all named after towns or hamlets close to the delightful town from which the 9th Earl of Emsworth drew his title, while Freddie



Threepwood derived his surname from the name of the house in which Wodehouse had lived in Emsworth. The house was in Beach Road (though subsequently this name was changed to its present Record Road). Thorne, the Blandings gardener, took the name of the gardener at Cheney Court, the home of his maternal grandmother and four aunts; Colonel Horace Mant, who had married Lord Emsworth's daughter Mildred, honoured the name of a significant Emsworth family.

And the unique aspect of the novel is that for the first of many occasions, Wodehouse plagiarised his own earlier work to a significant degree, introducing a major scene from a previous book into chapter 9. It takes up some 20 out of 340 pages, and is probably the funniest scene in the book – but it only appeared in the *SEP* serialisation and the American edition of the book, because in England it had already appeared, in virtually identical words, in the second half of the popular school story *Mike*.

The American book was published as *Something New* on 3 September 1915 by D. Appleton & Co., and had a number of reprints before A. L. Burt took over in 1931. However, although the title continued to be used for American reprints after the war – for example by the paperback publishers Ballantine Books in 1972 and 1977 – the text was now the English version, with no reference to the scene referred to above.

But the most disgraceful episode came in 2000, when the generally reputable publisher Dover Publications, Inc., took advantage of the novel's public domain status in the USA to produce an unauthorised edition of a book entitled *Something New*. It included the following bibliographical note:

This Dover edition, first published in 2000, is an unabridged republication of the work originally published by Daniel Appleton & Company, Chicago, in 1915, and includes a later preface written by the author.

A very clear statement, but unfortunately disgracefully false. It was not the original Appleton version at all. It was copied from the 1968 Herbert Jenkins reprint of *Something Fresh* in the UK, which not only excludes the major comic scene in chapter 9, but also introduces a further error – the complete omission of the short second paragraph in the final chapter!

I contacted Dover Publications in 2000 to point out this possibly fraudulent statement, and was assured that the correct text would be used for any further printings. Happening to be in New York a few months later, I found a second printing in a regular bookstore – still with the Jenkins text – and still with the same bibliographical note.

In 2009 I was able to test my view that the omitted scene represents an important improvement to the book. Martin Jarvis was arranging a two-hour adaptation of *Something Fresh* for BBC Radio 4, to be

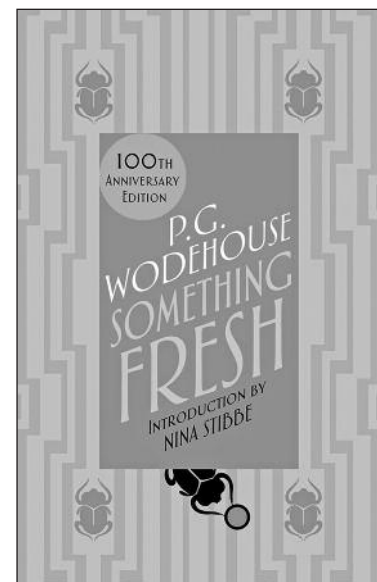
broadcast in two parts, and I suggested to him that, as nobody in the UK would be aware of the history, he should consider incorporating the Chapter 9 scene in his radio play. He later commented

Its use in the structure of the novel is important – it develops the characters of Baxter, Ashe and Lord Emsworth – and it dramatises beautifully. Thank goodness it was pointed out and I was able to use it, as it becomes a very strong sequence in Episode Two.

The English first edition of *Something Fresh* was published by Methuen on 16 September 1915, and was regularly reprinted by that company until the 20th edition appeared in 1951. Since then its publishing history has been more widely drawn, but it is certainly one of the stock titles which always seems to be in print somewhere. It has appeared in hard covers from Herbert Jenkins, Hutchinson and Everyman, while paperback versions have emanated from Mayflower (in 1970), Penguin (with at least three different artists' covers), and Arrow in 2008, with the Swan Park illustration.

To celebrate the centenary of its first publication, a new edition is to be published by Hutchinson, in hard covers, on 22 October this year. It will have an introduction by Nina Stibbe, whose *Love, Nina* won Non-Fiction Book of the Year at the 2014 National Book Awards, and whose first novel, *Man at the Helm*, was shortlisted for this year's Everyman Bollinger Wodehouse Award for Comic Fiction. She describes her own introduction to Blandings through the inadvertent assistance of a former housemate, and emphasises that, in her view, the scene in chapter 5 when Ashe Marson diverts possibly unwanted attention away from Joan Valentine by playing the parts of both cats in a long, lingering imitation of a catfight, is 'one of the funniest in any book ever'.

An apt way to conclude this short celebration of the centenary of its first appearance.



The new edition being published by Hutchinson on 22 October 2015.

Mr Ames Awakens Us

It isn't often that a book published 11 years ago creates a kerfuffle in the Wodehouse world, but the American journalist and author Jonathan Ames has managed it. Your Editor was nearly crushed under the emails and letters that arrived from members (my thanks to all of them) with news of a novel Mr Ames had written called *Wake Up, Sir!* Investigation revealed that this new book was nothing new: it had originally been published in the U.S. in 2004 and was only just issued in Britain (by Pushkin Press) in May this year.

When originally published, *Wake Up, Sir!* – featuring a Bertie Wooster-like narrator, a valet named (of all things) Jeeves, and both a plot and a writing style that clearly draws from the works of You Know Who – merited only a passing mention in the Recent Press Comment column of *Wooster Sauce* (September 2004). Indeed, with the exception of Sebastian Faulks's *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*, your Editor has preferred not to give publicity to books by commoners written in the Wodehouse style. However, given the largely positive reviews *Wake Up, Sir!* has received in the British press, it seems worthwhile giving it a look.

Here are two reviews from Society members. Any other opinions (in short form) will be gladly received.

* * * * *

A Very Funny Book by Terry Taylor

I first heard of *Wake Up, Sir!* when reading a review by Nicholas Lezard in *The Guardian*. His description of it as an extremely funny, clever, and poignant reinvention of Jeeves and Wooster made me rush to get a copy and, on the whole, I was not disappointed.

The narrator of the book is a Jewish author from New Jersey, struggling not only to write a second book, but also to overcome a serious alcohol problem, not to mention a number of sexual hang-ups. He is described as a great Wodehouse fan, though much of the outrageous humour is probably closer to that of Woody Allen.

Yet the plot does somehow resemble a Wodehouse story, not least because he has a valet named Jeeves. When he expresses his surprise at finding an American valet with this name, he is told, "I can appreciate, sir, your reaction. I imagine that you are making reference to the character Jeeves in the stories and books of P. G. Wodehouse."

The two of them embark on a car journey, taking them first to a Hasidic settlement in Sharon Springs, New York, and then to an artistic colony in Saratoga, which the narrator feels would be an ideal place to write his book. Unfortunately, the colony is full of

characters that are as neurotic and alcoholic as he is, and most of them are looking for sexual adventures rather than creative activity.

There are at least two candidates for the Madeline Bassett role, though our author falls heavily and fatally for one of them. It is she who persuades him to steal a valuable object from the Principal's house, which, in true Wooster fashion, lands him in deep trouble.

Throughout all this, Jeeves acts as a solace and a friend, though to my slight disappointment he is not the person who comes up with the clever solution to the problem. This is probably a deliberate twist since the book is both a tribute to and a satire of the Wodehouse books. (Ames plays a similar trick when the young master grows a mustache (his spelling). As we would expect, Jeeves disapproves, but then confesses he had grown quite fond of it when the master shaves it off.)

I do have to add a warning. In places the book is violent and extremely sexually explicit. In its language and tone it is often far from the charming, happy-go-lucky innocence that we so enjoy in a Wodehouse story.

The novel has taken ten years to reach these shores, and Lezard suggests this may have been because British publishers thought Wodehouse fans would be offended (what about American Wodehouse fans?)

Well, I think most of us are made of sterner stuff. Jonathan Ames has written a very funny book, and if you like Jewish-American humour, you will enjoy it. But just remember my caveats before you buy it.

* * * * *

Give It a Miss by Christopher Bellew

As you will see from the following, Christopher does not approve of this book. In a separate email, he wrote: "It would be a waste of £8.99 to buy this paperback in the expectation of a Sebastian Faulks-style homage. It is strong stuff and I can see why it has taken more than ten years to cross the Atlantic."

“I say, Jeeves, have you seen that book by Jonathan Ames? Should be jolly good; I expect he's related to Sir Kingsley and Martin.”

“I fear not, sir. The gentleman is American.”

“Well, we're both in it and we haven't had a book about us for a while. I'm jolly well looking forward to it, better than Nietzsche, what, Jeeves?”

“I have already perused the volume to which you refer, and I do not think you will find it edifying.”

“Eh, slushy stuff, like Rosie M. Banks?”

“No, sir, rather the contrary, stronger than Tabasco. And in point of fact you do not feature.”

“Dash it, Jeeves, you mean I’m not in the book at all?”

“No sir.”

“And I suppose you jolly well are.”

“Not exactly, sir. There is a character who shares my name and is an English valet, but I do not recognise myself in his characterisation. The central character fortunately bears no resemblance to you, sir, and if I may say, you should be most grateful. His escapades do have a certain humour, but much of the content of the book is deeply unseemly.”

“A bit close to the bone, what?”

“Precisely, sir. Even the broader-minded members of the Drones Club will find much of it most unpalatable.”

“So you think I should give it a miss, then?”

“Indubitably, sir, and I would go so far as to say that the readers of *Wooster Sauce* should do likewise if they do not want their idyllic Wodehousian world sullied.”

“Oh well, I’ll just have to wait for Sebastian Faulks to write another one, and next time I jolly well think he should include Bertram W in the title. The last time was 1938, and I’m not getting any younger.”

Perfect Nonsense on Tour

Good news! *Jeeves and Wooster in Perfect Nonsense*, the hit play adapted from *The Code of the Woosters* by David and Robert Goodale, has been touring more of Britain, with future dates as follows: **September 10–12**, Buxton Opera House; **September 14–16**, Crewe Lyceum; **September 17–23**, Mold Theatre, Clwyd; **September 24–26**, Connaught Theatre, Worthing; **September 29–October 3**, Exeter Northcott Theatre; **October 5–10**, Royal & Derngate, Northampton; **October 12–17**, New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich; **October 26–28**, Southend Palace Theatre; **October 30–November 1**, Mercury Theatre, Colchester; **November 6–8**, Eden Court Theatre, Inverness; **November 9–11**, Dundee Rep Theatre; **November 12–14**, Rose Theatre, Kingston; **November 16–21**, Derby Theatre. For more information and tickets, go to <http://bit.ly/1dBQdvq>.

Mastermind Quiz 16:

Gentlemen’s Gentlemen and Other Domestic Staff

by David Buckle

1. In which novel does Brinkley (who in a later book comes back as Bingley) replace Jeeves, because Jeeves can no longer tolerate his employer playing the banjolele?
2. In *A Gentleman of Leisure*, who is the thief who becomes Jimmy Pitt’s valet for a short while?
3. Whose many butlers have included Oakshott, Barker, and Baxter?
4. Mrs Martha Lippett, housekeeper to Willoughby Braddock, and her daughter Claire, maid to Kay Derrick, appear in which Wodehouse novel?
5. What important post on the Blandings staff has been filled by Edwin Pott, James Pirbright, and George Cyril Wellbeloved?
6. Who preceded Jeeves as Bertie Wooster’s gentleman’s gentleman?
7. In ‘A Slice of Life’, which of Mr Mulliner’s nephews enters the house of Sir Jasper Finch-farrowmere as a valet in order to woo Angela Purdue?
8. Albert Peasemarch, employee of Sir Raymond Bastable, is a butler with romantic aspirations in which novel?
9. Herbert Binstead is whose butler?
10. What is the name of the London club for butlers and valets where members are duty-bound to record the exploits of their employers, the section devoted to B. Wooster running to 18 pages?

(Answers on page 21)

The Wooster Source

by Graeme Davidson

*This is the real Tabasco,
It’s the word from Bertie Wooster,
The boulevardier of the avenues
And style icon of the parvenus.*



“Aunt Dahlia,” I said, “you have guessed my secret, I do indeed love.”

“Who is she?”

“A Miss Pendlebury. Christian name, Gwladys. She spells it with a ‘w.’”

“With a ‘g’, you mean.”

“With a ‘w’ and a ‘g.’”

“Not Gwladys?”

“That’s it.”

(‘The Spot of Art’, *Very Good, Jeeves!*, 1930)

“What-ho, Jeeves!” I said, entering the room where he waded knee-deep in suitcases and shirts and winter suitings, like a sea-beast among rocks. “Packing?”

“Yes, sir,” replied the honest fellow, for there are no secrets between us.

(‘The Ordeal of Young Tuppy’, *Very Good, Jeeves!*, 1930)

A Damsel in Distress at Chichester

From May 30 to June 27 this year, those lucky enough to get to the Chichester Festival Theatre in Sussex were able to enjoy a sparkling production of *A Damsel in Distress*. With music and lyrics by the Gershwin brothers and a book based on P. G. Wodehouse's novel and play, a good time was simply inevitable, and the show received glowing reviews in the press. Among the many fortunate Society members attending the production was LESLEY TAPSON, who reviews the musical below, while Society Patron SIMON BRETT shares his experience moderating a Q&A session on June 22, in the process providing some fascinating information about the show's history.

.....

A Funny, Delightful Musical

by Lesley Tapson

You pretty much know you are in for a good old-fashioned treat when the opening scene of any musical involves a rehearsal room and several young things tap-dancing away. *A Damsel in Distress* at the Chichester Festival Theatre lived up to expectations set up by that opening scene. This production had 'feel good' stamped all over it. According to the heroine, Lady Maud, 'high art' is something which 'one cannot enjoy or understand immediately'. That being the case, this production is definitely not high art. There is so much to enjoy in this funny, delightful show, which really does feel very 'Wodehousean'.

The updated book draws on much from *Blandings* and from Bertie and Jeeves, and it was none the worse for it. Lord Marshmoreton was Lord Emsworth by any other name. His sister, Caroline Byng, could have been Constance or Bertie's Aunt Agatha, and Keggs the butler spouted Shakespeare in a very Jeevesian way. There was even a French chef by the name of Anatole – sorry – Pierre!

There were so many scene changes in the first half that I lost count, and the sets were excellent. The two leads, Richard Fleeshman and Summer Strallen, were attractive and charming (and both can really sing!). The other main characters were uniformly excellent, and all kept just the right side of the line when playing eccentricity, which is no mean feat.



Keggs (Desmond Barrit) leads a chorus of servants.

(Photo by Johan Persson)

Nicholas Farrell as Lord Marshmoreton was spot on, as were Isla Blair as the formidable Caroline, Desmond Barrit as Keggs, and Sally Ann Triplett as Billie Dore. There were a couple of great comic turns in the form of Richard Dempsey as Reggie Byng singing the love song 'I'm a Poached Egg' and Pierre the cook, played by David Roberts, performing the 'French Pastry Walk'. The cast all looked as though they were genuinely enjoying themselves, and who could blame them?

The combination of PGW and the brothers Gershwin should be and is a fabulous one. The second half flagged a little in the middle, but not fatally. That said, any musical that has 'A Foggy Day' and 'Nice Work If You Can Get It' in it gets my vote. This production did capture the spirit of Wodehouse, and the vast majority of the audience walked out with a smile on their lips. It was great fun and a rather lovely way to spend a June evening.

Qs & As

by Simon Brett

One thing I hate about any kind of Q&A session is when a Q is replaced by an S. I don't know whether it's a particularly British thing, but audience members do have an annoying tendency, rather than offering a Question to elicit the opinions of whoever happens to be onstage, to make a Statement of their own opinions instead.

I have encountered this a good few times in a new role I have taken on at the Chichester Festival Theatre as moderator of the Post-Show Discussions, and I always make a point of saying that I'm looking for Qs rather than Ss. A Post-Show Discussion is scheduled for each production of the theatre's season. This is an occasion when the poor actors, who have just finished acting their little socks off in the show, are then volunteered to face interrogation by their public. And I must say they always take on the additional burden with very good grace.

This was certainly the case when I conducted the Post-Show Discussion after a performance of the 'New Stage Musical', *A Damsel in Distress*. Aficionados of all things Wodehousian – like, let us



Melle Stewart as Alice and Summer Strallen as Maud
(Photo by Johan Persson)

say, the readers of *Wooster Sauce* – will hardly need reminding that the origin of the show was a 1919 novel of the same name by PGW, which became a silent film, on which he was credited as the writer, in 1920. In collaboration with Ian Hay, Plum then wrote a stage play of *A Damsel in Distress*, which opened at London's New Theatre in 1928. He was also credited as one of the screenwriters on the 1937 Hollywood incarnation, which starred Fred Astaire, George Burns, and Gracie Allen. It was from this version, with songs by George and Ira Gershwin, that the 'New Stage Musical' had been adapted by Jeremy Sams and Robert Hudson.

The Chichester production brought together an interesting mix of performers from musical theatre and the more traditional kind that doesn't have songs in it. And that is where our discussion started. The 'straight' actors – Nicholas Farrell as Lord Marshmoreton and Isla Blair as his sister, Lady Caroline Byng – were very amusing when describing the culture shock they encountered at the beginning of rehearsals. Their training had not brought them that instant rapport which exists between a choreographer and experienced song-and-dance performers. Nicholas said he watched in disbelief as dance routines whose steps took him weeks to master were put together in an afternoon by those with a musical theatre background.

Isla Blair spoke of the relish with which she had approached playing the borzoi-loving killjoy, Lady Caroline. 'I've always wanted to be a battleaxe,' she confessed. And a question from the audience made her agree that her character was really the archetypal Wodehouse aunt.

Discussion then ensued about how many of the other *Damsel in Distress* characters fitted into the roles of Wodehouse's more famous characters. Richard Dempsey's silly ass Reggie Byng, with his wonderful solo number 'I'm a Poached Egg', has a lot in common with Bertie Wooster, and there is a good deal of Jeeves in Keggs the Butler (played with ponderous grace by the wonderful Desmond Barrit). Lord Marshmoreton, with his love of roses and pigs, carries strong overtones of Lord Emsworth, and Pierre the French cook is reminiscent of the multi-talented Anatole.

It also became clear in discussion that *A Damsel in Distress* had undergone a lot of adjustment and rewriting during the rehearsal period. This is true of all new musicals, and, in spite of its distinguished history, the show was new in this stage form. Here again there was a difference between the music theatre performers and the straight actors. The first group were much more used to being summoned for daily meetings about cuts and additions to the script. But it has to be said that everyone involved in the production had buckled down with a will, knowing that their hard work was all directed to the same end, making a better show. And I have rarely met a more bonded company, mutually supportive and learning from each other all the time.

The final Q from the audience went against the diktat with which I had opened the evening. It wasn't a Q, it was an S. But since the gentleman who made the Statement only wanted to say that *A Damsel in Distress* had given him more innocent pleasure than any other show he'd ever seen, his lapse could easily be forgiven. He also provided the perfect out-cue for that particular Post-Show Discussion. And rules, after all, are only there to be broken.

"Mr. Bevan and I was 'aving a chat about 'im being blarzy, miss."

"Are you blarzy, George?"

"So Mac says."

"And *why* is he blarzy, miss?" demanded Mac rhetorically. . . . "It's because, as I was saying, 'e's 'ad too big a 'elping of success, and because 'e ain't a married man. You did say you wasn't a married man, didn't you, sir?"

"I didn't. But I'm not."

"That's 'ow it is, you see. You pretty soon gets sick of pulling off good things, if you ain't got nobody to pat you on the back for doing of it. Why, when I was single, if I got 'old of a sure thing for the three o'clock race and picked up a couple of quid, the thrill of it didn't seem to linger somehow. But now, if some of the gentlemen that come 'ere put me on to something safe and I make a bit, 'arf the fascination of it is taking the stuff 'ome and rolling in on to the kitchen table and 'aving 'er pat me on the back."

"How about when you lose?"

"I don't tell 'er," said Mac simply.

"You seem to understand the art of being happy, Mac."

"It ain't an art, sir. It's just gettin 'old of the right little woman, and 'aving a nice little 'ome of your own to go back to at night."

(From *A Damsel in Distress*, 1919)

Poet's Corner

A Well-Earned Tribute

The announcement that the new Turkish Cabinet has been joined by Mumtaz Tarhan, Samet Agaoglu and Dato Sir Onn bin Jafar, left unsaid much that the public should know regarding the last-named. Now it can be told:

The sons of the Prophet are pretty hot stuff,
Sang the bard who once hymned the career
(A glorious one) of Stamboul's favourite son,
Great Abdul the bulbul ameer.
There are people who say that it's different to-day,
But just tell them they're wrong, for they are.
Though Abdul has died, we can still point with pride
At Dato Sir Onn bin Jafar.

When a Cabinet's formed in the land of the Turk
And they're seeking a really good man,
The premier says "Dammit, I've only got Samet
Agaoglu and Mumtaz Tarhan,
Both triers, but still rather run-of-the-mill.
I need someone versatile . . . Ha!"
And the next thing he does he is giving a buzz
To Dato Sir Onn bin Jafar.

They tell me that Dato reads Homer and Plato
And paints rather better than John,
While composing cantatas and fugues and sonatas
Is simply duck soup to Sir Onn.
If you put him on skates he can cut figure eights,
At golf and at darts he is par,
And more skilful at tennis than most other men is
This Dato Sir Onn bin Jafar.

He can sing songs that few know from Verdi and Gounod
And whistle a waltz by Lehar.
He looks like Clark Gable and no-one's more able
At judging a wine or cigar.
He can write you a ballad or mix you a salad
Or brew you a nice cup of char.
All this, aye and far more. No chink in the armour
Of Dato Sir Onn bin Jafar.

So things look pretty smooth on the Bosphorus now,
And no wonder the populace cheer.
It's the general view that the skies have turned blue.
Happy days, so they phrase it, are here.
For the future of Turkey can never be murky,
Her fortunes disaster can't mar,
While the fate of the land's in the capable hands
Of Dato Sir Onn bin Jafar.

(Published in *Punch*, 25 January 1956)

(Thanks to LAURENCE OGRAM for finding and submitting this poem.)

Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize

In case you missed the news in the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse prize for comic fiction was this year awarded to Alexander McCall Smith for his "superbly irreverent" novel *Fatty O'Leary's Dinner Party*. As judge James Naughtie said, "it's right and proper to couple the names of Alexander McCall Smith and P. G. Wodehouse".

In addition to receiving a set of 52 Everyman Wodehouse books and a jeroboam of champagne, McCall Smith has been awarded the honour of having a Gloucester Old Spot pig named after his book – in this case highly appropriate not only because of the title character's name but because McCall Smith himself was once a part-owner of a pig farm in Scotland. "I'm very pro-pig," says the author – a sentiment, no doubt, of which Wodehouse would heartily approve!

Two Books to Note

In this issue filled with news of wonderful books for Wodehouse readers, two must receive only a passing mention for now.

Good Night, Mr. Wodehouse, by Faith Sullivan, is a novel about a widowed schoolteacher in post-World War I Minnesota who turns to great literature to find solace and escape from her troubles. She is transformed when reading *Love Among the Chickens*, and thereafter Wodehouse becomes the centre of her reading life. This book is due to be published on September 22 in the US and on October 1 in the UK. Your Editor would welcome reviews.

On a completely different note, long-time members may recall the thesis by Colonel Michael H. Cobb many years ago in which he proposed the location of Market Blandings was Buildwas in Shropshire. This conclusion – published in Richard Usborne's edition of *Sunset at Blandings* – was based on his study of train times and geographical descriptions in Wodehouse's books. Colonel Cobb went on to produce an awe-inspiring historical atlas, *The Railways of Great Britain*, which has now been re-published in a new edition by his son, Patrick S. Cobb, who has included the original thesis concerning Market Blandings. An article on the immense work that went into producing the atlas will be published in the December *Wooster Sauce*. Members interested in knowing more about the book now can visit Patrick's website: www.railwaysofgreatbritain.com.

The Word in Season *by Dan Kaszeta*

Dekko

The word I am exploring this season is ‘dekko’. I first encountered this strange word early in my exploration of Wodehouse’s works. Near the beginning of *Uncle Dynamite*, Pongo Twistleton produces a photograph from his pocket and says, “I have a photograph here, if you want to take a dekko.” (Page 26 of the Arrow paperback version if you want have a dekko for yourself.)

Digging further into the canon, we encounter excellent examples of consistent usage. We find one Daphne Dolores Morehead taking not one but two dekkos at Stilton Cheesewright in *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*. Jeeves takes a dekko at the *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre in *Jeeves in the Offing*. A dekko is taken in *Laughing Gas*. There are more. Clearly lots of dekkos are being taken. We can derive its meaning from the context, as we are obviously meant to understand it means to have a look.

We can intuit the meaning from these examples, but not its origin. The double k hints of non-European origins. Is it, perhaps, like ‘khaki’ or ‘pukkah’, another word with a double k, an import from the Indian subcontinent or some other part of the old Empire? Was it a military term, hitherto unknown to me, that has infiltrated into civilian life, like ‘recce’? Yet another trip to the British Library beckoned.

Having squandered a humorous half hour with my nose in the golfing dictionary (anyone for ‘bap-headed?’), more serious research led me down two paths. There is every possibility that both may actually be correct, for reasons that will become clear. The first path was a military one from the Indian subcontinent. ‘Dekko’, as a term for having a quick look, is described in many places as a slang term first used in the British Army, originally of Indian origin. This definition and the word’s usage are described in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Oxford Dictionary of Slang* (1999 edition, J. Ayto, ed.). Both sources lead us to the Hindi word ‘dekho’ – the declarative form of the Hindi verb ‘dekhna’.



The Hindi word ‘dekho’

Foreign loan words often creep into English through military channels. As a young soldier I learned that ‘Kaserne’ and ‘barracks’ were interchangeable in the 1980s US Army. Anecdotally, ‘dekko’ appears to match the OED’s use. A conversation with my friend Tim, born and raised in India in an Army family, confirms dekko’s place in

Army slang, both in India and in the British Army, in the 1960s and 1970s, with gradual waning over time. I could reminisce about strange Korean and Vietnamese loan words I learned in the US Army, and I wonder if Pashtu words now take their place, but I digress.

Never satisfied with one interpretation, I checked a few other sources, including the (very) *New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (T. Dalzell and T. Victor, eds, Routledge 2015) and its very different predecessor, *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (E. Partridge, ed., Routledge 2006). Tom Dalzell is a leading lexicographer of slang in English. The newer edition provides numerous non-Wodehousean quotations using ‘dekko’, all post-dating PG’s earlier uses. Indeed, one from Australia is simply too naughty to reproduce here, and you’ll just have to look it up for yourself. A less saucy example is “She took one dekko at it, knew by instinct it was good” from a collection of short stories called *Underworld Nights* by one Charles Raven.

Although both Partridge editions cite the Hindi origin via military slang route into English, they point out that ‘dekko’ may also be of Romani, i.e. Gypsy, origin. Cataloguing the various languages and dialects of the Roma people appears, at first glance, to be enough labour for a battalion of linguists and lexicographers. But there is something to this Roma theory. Both the *Romani Dictionary: Kalderash-English* (R. Lee, Magoria Books, 2010) and the extremely cerebral *Romani: A Linguistic Introduction* (Y. Matras, Cambridge Univ Press, 2002) tell us the word ‘dikhlo’ essentially means ‘have a look’. Linguistically, it isn’t a long walk from dikhlo to dekko.

Numerous words from Roma/Romani languages have crept into English over the last few centuries. ‘Chav’, ‘pal’, ‘shiv’, and ‘lollipop’ are all credited with origins in Romani. A large number of the examples provided by the Partridge dictionaries are from underworld or criminal contexts. Is ‘dekko’ like ‘shiv’ (improvised knife) – a Romani loan word migrating into English through underworld usages?

I think the Army slang theory is probably the more likely of the two theories. It may be that both routes are accurate to an extent. The various Romani languages are members of the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European language family, making Romani languages the equivalent of first cousins to Hindi and Urdu.

Having had more than a dekko at the books, it’s time for a gin.

The Bibliographic Corner *by Nick Townend*

Omnibus Volumes: Part Three

June's column continued with the review of omnibus volumes, with introductions from Wodehouse, from 1939 to 1952. This column concludes the review by looking at titles published up to 1974.

In 1958 another omnibus volume appeared which was only published in the US, *Selected Stories* (B11) being published by The Modern Library. It contained 15 Jeeves short stories from *Carry On, Jeeves* (A34a) and *Very Good, Jeeves* (A42b); a four-page foreword from Wodehouse; and a 15-page introduction by John W. Aldridge, entitled 'PG Wodehouse: The Lesson of the Young Master'. Wodehouse's foreword begins with a reflection on "the Saga habit": "The question of how long an author is to be allowed to go on recording the adventures of any given character or characters is one that has frequently engaged the attention of thinking men. The publication of these Jeeves stories in the Modern Library brings it once again into the forefront of national affairs. It is now some forty-three years since, an eager lad in my early thirties, I started to write Jeeves stories, and many people think that this nuisance should now cease." Much of the rest of the foreword is closely based on Wodehouse's original introduction to the first *Jeeves Omnibus* (B1a) of 1931.

Another anthology edited by Wodehouse and Meredith was published in the UK in 1968 by Herbert Jenkins, under the title *A Carnival of Modern Humour* (B13b), a year after the anthology had first been published in the US. 'Sonny Boy' was the representative Wodehouse story. Wodehouse's introduction (which Jenkins published with American spellings) took as its theme the decline of humour and its impact on humorists, and recycled elements of his introduction from 1952's *The Week-End Book of Humor*. Wodehouse also extended his scope to cover the theatre:

In these gray modern times you hardly see a funny story in the magazines, and in the theater it is even worse. . . . I am all for incest and tortured souls in moderation, but a good laugh from time to time never hurt anybody. And nobody has laughed in a Broadway theater for years. . . . Over in Europe, the humorous dramatist seems . . . to be given a squarer deal . . . farces which would barely survive a single night on Broadway run for years in London, and it is pretty generally recognized that only by setting your teeth and buckling down to it with iron determination can you write anything unfunny enough to fail in Paris.

The introduction ends with a dig at serious studies of humour, citing a passage which rivals the well-

known passages from *Types of Ethical Theory*, which so perplexed Bertie Wooster:

Here is what Dr. Edmund Bergler says in his book on *The Sense of Humor*:

Laughter is a defense against a defense. Both maneuvers are instituted by the subconscious ego. The cruelty of the superego is counteracted by changing punishment into inner pleasure. The superego reproaches the ego, then institutes two new defenses, the triad of the mechanism of orality and laughter.

What do you mean, you don't know what he means? Clear as crystal. Attaboy, Edmund.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Herbert Jenkins (which became part of Barrie & Jenkins) started publishing a range of omnibus volumes covering the main recurring characters in Wodehouse's work. They started with Jeeves in 1967; proceeded through Mr Mulliner (1972), golf (1973), Psmith (1974), and Ukridge (1975); and finished with Blandings (1976).

The first two titles (*The World of Jeeves* and *The World of Mr Mulliner*) were dealt with in the first part of this article. The last two titles (*The World of Ukridge* (B16) and *The World of Blandings* (B17)) were published after Wodehouse's death and did not contain an introduction by him.

The Golf Omnibus (B14) and *The World of Psmith* (B15) did contain introductions by Wodehouse. Each title contained a two-page preface.



In *The Golf Omnibus*, Wodehouse reflects on what might have been:

The trouble about reaching the age of ninety-two, which I did last October, is that regrets for a misspent life are bound to creep in, and whenever you see me with a furrowed brow you can be sure that what is on my mind is the thought that if only I had taken up golf earlier and devoted my whole time to it instead of fooling about writing stories and things, I might have got my handicap down to under eighteen. It is this reflection that has always made my writing so sombre, its whole aroma like that of muddy shoes in a Russian locker room.

He also laments the loss of the traditional names for golf clubs:

I have made no attempt to bring this book up to date, and many changes have taken place since I wrote 'The Clicking of Cuthbert' in 1916 [*sic*; this short story was first published in *The Strand* in October 1921 (D133.81)]. Time like an ever-rolling stream bears all its sons away, and with them have gone the names of most of the golf clubs so dear to me . . . where is the mashie now, where the cleek, the spoon and the baffy? No stopping Progress, of course, but I do think it a pity to cast away lovely names like mashie and baffy in favour of numbers.

In *The World of Psmith*, Wodehouse reflects on the origins and impact of Psmith and recollects his own experiences as a bank clerk in London:

The character of Psmith is the only thing in my literary career which was handed to me on a plate with watercress round it, thus enabling me to avoid the blood, sweat and tears inseparable from an author's life. Lord Emsworth, Jeeves and the rest of my dramatis personae had to be built up from their foundations, but Psmith came to me ready-made.

Wodehouse explains that the character was based on Rupert D'Oyly Carte, who was at school at Winchester with a cousin of Wodehouse's, and that the first Psmith story appeared in *The Captain* magazine in 1908. "The results, I am glad to say, were excellent. At a dozen public schools throughout the country, boys started wearing monocles and calling one another 'Comrade', and *The Captain* doubled my price, always a pleasant thing to happen in those days of tight money."

The World of Psmith contains the four Psmith novels. Somewhat unusually, the chapters are renumbered sequentially across the four novels, with the result that the final chapter of *Leave It to Psmith* appears as chapter 104.

It is to be hoped that this review of the omnibus volumes which contain introductions by Wodehouse has generated in readers an interest in this often overlooked area. The introductions are often not well-known, but are well worth reading. And most of the volumes are easily available at modest prices via the internet. The only drawback (if one already has the stories contained in the omnibus volume) is that, in order to acquire a two- to five-page introduction by Wodehouse, one has to find shelf-space for a substantial volume (for example, *The World of Psmith* is over 2 inches thick).

But Blizzard was of the fine old school. Before coming to the Fisher home he had been for fifteen years in the service of an earl, and his appearance suggested that throughout those fifteen years he had not let a day pass without its pint of port. He radiated port and pop-eyed dignity. He had splay feet and three chins, and when he walked his curving waistcoat preceded him like the advance guard of some royal procession.

(From 'High Stakes', 1925)

Big Money Is a Horse!

ALAN SYMONS WRITES: The Stradbroke Handicap is the richest horse race in Brisbane. The Group 1 sprint over 1350 metres (about 4/5 of a mile) is worth two million Australian dollars. It was run at the Doomben racecourse for the first time on Saturday, June 6 (Queensland Day), as the regular venue, Eagle Farm racecourse, is at present being renovated. Among the fifteen starters was a five-year-old chestnut gelding called Big Money. Starting from barrier 9 and carrying 53.5 kilos, Big Money was considered to be "not without a chance". Unfortunately, though starting at odds of \$21, Big Money did not provide punters with any money at all, finishing seventh after being no closer than sixth in running. (No, I did not back it!)

Answers to Quizzes

Quiz Night Sample Questions (Page 6)

1. Ickenham
2. Alfred Voules (he of the large red ears) and Slingsby (from the first Blandings novel, *Something Fresh*)
3. A hippopotamus (for the benefit of Angela, Lord Emsworth's orphaned niece; see 'Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!')
4. Cary Grant played Jim Blandings in the 1948 movie *Mr Blandings Builds His Dream House*.
5. David Cameron: his great-great-grandfather was Sir Ewan Cameron, manager of the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank in Lombard Street, where Wodehouse was then toiling. (Proposed by Norman Murphy)

Mastermind Quiz (Page 15)

1. *Thank You, Jeeves*
2. Spike Mullins
3. Julia Ukridge
4. *Sam the Sudden*
5. Pig man
6. Meadowes
7. Wilfred Mulliner
8. *Cocktail Time*
9. Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe
10. The Junior Ganymede Club

Recent Press Comment

The Times, May 9 (from Simon Frazer).

The obituary of Slovenian-born Wanda Newby, widow of the great travel writer Eric Newby, noted that “her impressions of England had been formed by reading P. G. Wodehouse in translation”.

The Times, May 15 (from Christopher Bellew)

Helen Rumbelow, in her notebook column, mused on appropriate authors to represent different stages of the lives of some famous people. “But for some people it doesn’t work. Boris Johnson was born, schooled and lives in P. G. Wodehouse”.

The Daily Telegraph, June 2 (from several contributors)

Following the death on active service of Corporal James Dunsby, his widow described him as “a delightful, eccentric mix between Flashman, a P. G. Wodehouse novel and a Noel Coward play”.

The Daily Telegraph, June 2 (from Carolyn De La Plain)

The clue for 1 Across in the Telegraph Toughie crossword was: “Funny male involved with his pig primarily – a bit of Wodehouse? 6.” (The answer: Pelham)

The Guardian, June 5 (from Terry Taylor)

In a leader discussing the publication of the letters Prince Charles has written to Government ministers, the comment was made that “it may never be greatly significant that the future king holds traditional views of the kind that the amiable Wodehousian character Lord Emsworth might have shared”.

The Spectator, June 6 (from Christopher Bellew)

In the ‘Low Life’ column, Jeremy Clark wrote about his weak head for alcohol and said that after three drinks he’s “Gussie Fink-Nottle giving out the prizes”.

Private Eye, June 12 (from Terry Taylor)

From the Dumb Britain column: “Perfection BBC1. Nick Knowles: Gussie Fink-Nottle was an 18th century Prime Minister. True or false? Contestant: True.”

The Week, June 14 (from Beth Carroll)

Best books as chosen by Alexandra Petri included *Right Ho, Jeeves*, which she summed up as follows: “When newt fancier Gussie Fink-Nottle shows up drunk to present prizes at Market Snodsbury Grammar School, the result is one of the funniest train wrecks you will ever read. ‘What was what’s his name?’ Gussie asks one bewildered student, ‘the chap who begat Thingummy?’”

The Guardian, June 20

In Thomas Eaton’s Quiz, one of the questions was: what links Drones; Pelican; Junior Ganymede; Senior Conservative? The answer, of course, being clubs in the works of P. G. Wodehouse.

Times Literary Supplement, June 19

(from Barry Chapman)

Clue 21 down in the TLS Crossword 1080, set by Tantalus, was: “British geological feature immortalised by Wodehouse (7).” The answer was Ukridge. You, no doubt, can work out why!

Last Week Tonight, HBO, June 22

(from David McGrann)

In episode 40 of *Last Week Tonight* on the American TV channel HBO, John Oliver reported on the plan in Russia to build a military-themed amusement park to be called ‘Patriot Park’. It seems that children will be able to visit the park and play with real tanks and even rocket launchers. Oliver said that British children were lucky if they got to go on the “P G Wodehouse Faux Pas Mansion”, which “didn’t have rides as such but rather a selection of chairs”.

Vanity Fair, July (from Day Macaskill)

The subject of the regular feature ‘Proust Questionnaire’ was one of the Society’s patrons, Stephen Fry. Asked to describe his idea of happiness, Mr Fry provided a list that included a Wodehouse novel “spread-eagled on my chest. I will pick it up in a moment.” He also described his most treasured possession: “A signed photograph. ‘To Stephen Fry, All the best, P. G. Wodehouse’. I wrote to him when I was a schoolboy.”

Business Standard, July 5

In an article headed ‘The Funniest Storyteller’s Funniest Storytellers’, Vikas Datta wrote that P. G. Wodehouse made the English language “an unsurpassed medium for some of the most inspired comic writing ever possibly seen in any tongue”. He went on to mention PGW’s gift for characterisation, noting: “Most authors can count themselves lucky to create one character whose popularity withstands the test of time – but Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse managed it for most of his creations.” Datta’s favourite characters are “the loquacious storytellers of the Anglers’ Rest pub and the ‘19th hole’ of an unnamed golf club, who have a tale for any occasion, much to the distress of their often unwilling audience”. He concluded: “If you’ve read these stories, you will probably be unable to resist a chuckle. And if you haven’t, you’re luckier – a whole universe of fun awaits you!” I think we can safely infer he’s a big fan!

Times Literary Supplement, July 10

(from Barry Chapman)

In a column entitled ‘Plumshoe’ (the pun will become apparent), there was a discussion about P. G. Wodehouse and Raymond Chandler, both alumni of Dulwich College. The piece made the point that both authors saw enormous benefits in receiving a classical education. It posed the question whether Chandler’s famous detective Philip Marlowe is “almost as much a product of the English public school system as the equally decent but somewhat dimmer protagonists of Wodehouse’s ripping yarns”.

The Herald (Glasgow), July 14 (from Tony Ring)

Drew Allan admired a comment made by tennis player turned pundit Andy Roddick that involved a simile, and noted that “the best similes involve a leap of the imagination, an unexpected comparison that might have been snatched from the heavens. And while Roddick shows promise, the master of the craft has to be the inimitable P. G. Wodehouse.” Allen went on to provide a number of classic PGW similes, including: “he uttered a

sound much like a bulldog swallowing a pork chop whose dimensions it has underestimated”; “her face was shining like the seat of a bus driver’s trousers”; and “one of those robust, dynamic girls with the muscles of a welterweight and a laugh like a squadron of cavalry charging over a tin bridge”. Allan concluded: “Of course, Wodehouse is Wodehouse: one of a kind.”

The Guardian, July 17

Among those featured under the header ‘The 10 best bachelors’ was one Bertram Wilberforce Wooster. (Others in the top ten included Beethoven, Sherlock Holmes, and Ted Heath!) It was suggested that “P. G. Wodehouse’s comic hero wouldn’t have got into nearly as many scrapes had he been married. Besides, his valet Jeeves in many ways fulfils the role of long-suffering wife.” The article mentions Bertie’s betrothal to Florence Craye (who tells him “your Aunt Agatha . . . called you a spineless invertebrate and advised me strongly not to marry you”).

The Daily Telegraph, July 18 (from Carolyn De La Plain)

One of the clues in the Saturday General Knowledge quiz was: “Stanley Featherstonehaugh — —: a character in the books by author P. G. Wodehouse (7)”.

The Boston Globe, July 19

In a piece entitled “P G Wodehouse’s language is as American as it is British”, Britt Petersen paid tribute to the centenary of Wodehouse’s 1915 short story ‘Extricating Young Gussie’, which introduced the “patrician bumbler Bertie Wooster and his suave Shakespeare-quoting valet Jeeves”. The article also mentioned the number of references to words of PGW there are in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, quoting Katherine Connor Martin, head of American dictionaries at the OED: “It’s not an uncommon occurrence when you’re working on a really characteristically American term to find one of the earliest examples is from Wodehouse.” Ms Petersen concluded that “Wodehouse’s America was a mongrel of Broadway and Hollywood stock characters and situations, and so was, frequently, his language. Maybe that’s why, even after 100 years, so much of it still rings so familiar and true.”

The Daily Telegraph, July 20 (from Carolyn De La Plain)

Society patron Boris Johnson commented on the ruckus over the film of a very young Princess Elizabeth giving a Nazi salute: “This was a time when people made fun of Nazis and their pompous and preposterous behaviour – think of P. G. Wodehouse’s character Spode, in *The Code of the Woosters*, expecting people to greet him with the words, ‘Heil Spode’. People have made fun of Nazis ever since.”

The Daily Mail, July 21 (from Terry Taylor)

In an article entitled ‘Bury the hatchet with critics? Only in their heads!’, the actor Michael Simkins wrote: “P. G. Wodehouse best summed up the tension between luvvies and those whose job it is to pronounce on our efforts – ‘Have you ever seen a critic during the day? Of course not. They come out at night, up to no good.’”

The Times, July 25 (from Leila Deakin)

Two letters relating to P G Wodehouse on rather different subjects were published on the same page. In the first, Andy Connell wrote that Richmal Crompton was four years ahead of P. G. Wodehouse in mocking the Nazis. In the second, another of the Society’s patrons,

Murray Hedgcock entered into correspondence with Patrick Kidd (another Society member – we are everywhere!) on the return of the white dinner jacket or tuxedo in the new James Bond film. Patrick had made a reference in his *Times* diary to such a jacket being worn by Bertie, much to the disdain of Aunt Dahlia and Jeeves. Murray’s letter reads as follows: “Sir, Patrick Kidd is right to link doings of the day with the thoughts of P. G. Wodehouse, but he is slightly off-line with his suggestion that Aunt Dahlia reproved Bertie for wearing a white dinner jacket (TMS July 23). It was a white mess jacket, adorned with brass buttons, which both Aunt D and Jeeves frowned upon, the latter to the extent of deliberately omitting to pack the garment for a visit to Auntie’s country residence, Brinkley Court. In a rare display of initiative, Bertie spotted the omission, packing and carrying the jacket himself. Yours etc.”

The Beaver Dam Daily Citizen, July 25

In ‘I Can’t Read That Paper’, written in response to a criticism from an erstwhile reader about the reported number of typographical errors in his newspaper, the assistant editor of the *Daily Citizen* began by quoting an excerpt from a Wodehouse poem in which a printer so ruined a story that the author justifiably shot him: “I’d written (which I thought quite good) Ruth, ripening into womanhood, was now a girl who knocked men flat and frequently got whistled at. And some vile, careless, casual gook had spoiled the best thing in the book by printing ‘not’ (yes, not, great Scott!) when I had written ‘now’.”

The Guardian, July 25

In the Review section, A. S. Byatt discussed Margery Allingham’s *Traitor’s Purse*, featuring the detective Albert Campion, and ruminated on the traditional ‘gentleman detective’. Byatt quoted Dorothy Sayers – “Lord Peter Wimsey was a combination of Fred Astaire and Bertie Wooster” – and noted that both Wimsey and Campion “had menservants full of character – these characters derive from Wooster’s Jeeves, the all-knowing, all-efficient manservant working to totally trivial ends”. Allingham “is in one way an English writer like Lewis Carroll or P.G. Wodehouse in that she makes her own kinds of gangs and villains alongside realism”.

The Daily Telegraph, August 2

(from Carolyn De La Plain)

Clue 9a in the *Telegraph’s* General Knowledge Crossword read: “Author of around 100 humorous stories based on characters including Jeeves, Wooster, Lord Emsworth, Ukridge, Mr Mulliner, Psmith and Uncle Fred (9).” Take a guess.

The Daily Mail, August 5 (from Terry Taylor)

When reviewing the play *Dear Lupin*, written by Roger Mortimer, Patrick Marmion noted: “At his best, Mortimer matches P. G. Wodehouse’s turn of phrase and character sketches.”

The Economic Times, August 5

An article entitled ‘Jeeves@100’ examined how Wodehouse influenced Indian copy writing by producing “complex yet comprehensible metaphors and captivating the reader with a tapestry of words”.

Future Events for Your Diary

Perfect Nonsense on Tour

Based on *The Code of the Woosters*, the hit play *Jeeves and Wooster in Perfect Nonsense* has resumed touring Britain this autumn. For dates and cities, see page 15.

October 13–25, 2015 *Oh, Kay!* In New York City

Musicals Tonight! kicks off its 2015–16 season – its last one ever – with *Oh, Kay!*, featuring music by George Gershwin, lyrics by Ira Gershwin, and book by Guy Bolton and Wodehouse.

October 15, 2015 *A Damsel in Distress* at Emsworth

As part of the local WemsFest celebrations, there will be a staged reading of *A Damsel in Distress* at the Brookfield Hotel in Emsworth; start time 8 pm. Adapted by Lucy Flannery from Wodehouse's book and performed by 'Rogues and Vagabonds', the reading will take place, appropriately, on Plum's birthday.

October 29–November 1, 2015

The Wodehouse Society Convention, USA

The Wodehouse Society's 18th biennial convention, 'Psmith in Pseattle', is at the Fairmont Olympic Hotel in Seattle, Washington.

November 18, 2015 Society AGM at the Savoy Tup

A very special treat is in store for all who attend our autumn meeting, as our speaker will be the renowned

humorous novelist Jonathan Coe, accompanied by his colleague David Quantick. See page 3 for more on this. Start time for this gathering is 6 p.m. at the Savoy Tup, with Parish Notices and the AGM commencing at around 6.45, followed by Messrs Coe and Quantick. It promises to be a rollicking good evening!

2016 Society Meetings

At the time of going to press, the dates for the Society's three meetings (usually in February, July, and October) have not yet been settled. These will be announced in the December edition of *Wooster Sauce*, as well as on our website.

March 8–20, 2016 *Oh, Boy!* in New York City

Musicals Tonight! will stage another classic Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern musical at the Lion Theatre in New York City.

October 20, 2016 Dinner at Gray's Inn

Mark your calendars now! The Society's biennial dinner will be held at our customary venue of Gray's Inn, London. More details will be provided in future issues of *Wooster Sauce*, and on our website.

It's the old problem, of course – the one that makes life so tough for murderers – what to do with the body.
(From *The Code of the Woosters*, 1938)

CONTENTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Reaching into the Past: <i>P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper</i> | 14 Mr Ames Awakens Us |
| 3 Society News: Definitely One for the Diary! | 15 The Wooster Source |
| 3 Notes from a Thankful Editor | 15 <i>Perfect Nonsense</i> on Tour |
| 4 Fathers and Sons: The Wodehouse Cricket Festival Takes a Familial Turn | 15 Mastermind Quiz 16: Gentlemen's Gentlemen and Other Domestic Staff |
| 5 The Word Around the Clubs | 16 <i>A Damsel in Distress</i> at Chichester |
| 6 Quiz Night at the Savoy Tup | 18 Poet's Corner: <i>A Well-Earned Tribute</i> |
| 7 We Remember: Susan Walker & Ed Ratcliffe | 18 Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize |
| 8 <i>Wodehouse's School Days</i> (review) | 18 Two Books to Note |
| 9 The Everyman Wodehouse | 19 The Word in Season: <i>Dekko</i> |
| 10 P. G. Wodehouse and the Flora of Degenershausen | 20 The Bibliographic Corner: Omnibus Volumes: Part Three |
| 11 Letters to the Editor | 21 Big Money Is a Horse! |
| 12 Something New for the Centenary of <i>Something Fresh</i> | 21 Answers to Quizzes |
| | 22 Recent Press Comment |