

WOOSTER SAUCE

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Sir Terry Wogan

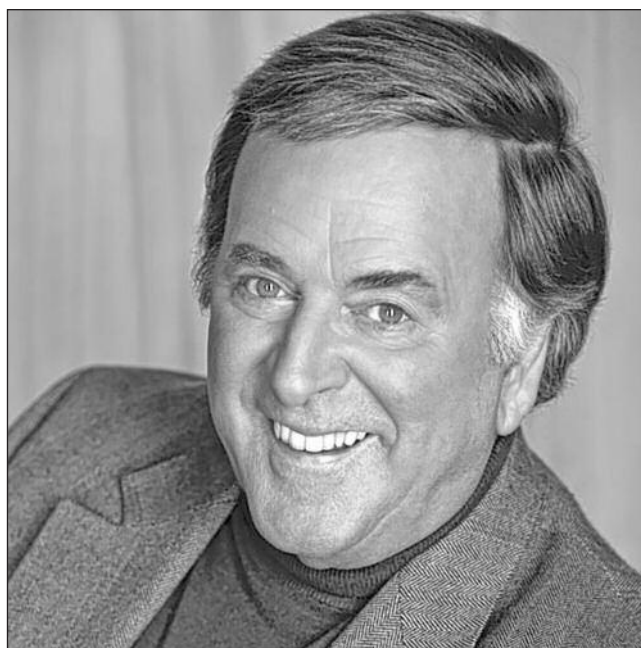
3 August 1938—31 January 2016

The day after our President died, the *Guardian's* venerable radio critic, Nancy Banks-Smith, published a brief obituary titled 'The PG Wodehouse of Radio', noting that, like Wodehouse, Sir Terry Wogan began his professional life working in a bank, had a matchless way with words, was possessed of a gentle wit, and immersed his many devotees in an askew world of silliness that at times bordered on the surreal.

And so he did, making him a shoo-in for the Presidency of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), a role he filled for fewer than two years before his untimely death from cancer, age 77, on 31 January 2016. But whereas Wodehouse's world was the author's singular vision, Wogan's was a collaborative confection with the listeners to his breakfast show on BBC Radio 2 that ran from 1972 to 1984, later returning in 1993 for a further 17-year stint. By his retirement in 2010, *Wake Up To Wogan* was the most popular radio programme in Europe, with over 8 million regular listeners.

Why? Because, as Banks-Smith puts it so beautifully (and cogently), "like the daily sun, he brought disinfecting warmth". Coming out of a 7.30 a.m. news bulletin that featured the usual litany of doom and gloom, the outside world where 'good news is no news' was instantly shown the door, subverted by insights and aperçus from a parade of his regular correspondents, who included Lou Smorrels, Alf Hartigan, Mandy Lifeboats, Edna Cloud, and Hugh Again, among dozens of others. Everyone, including 'The TOGmeister' himself, had a nickname ('TOG' being an acronym for 'Terry's Old Geezers and Gals', which later became the

collective noun for his radio audience): his wife of 50 years, Helen, was always 'the present Mrs Wogan'; chief announcer Alan Dedicoat was re-christened 'Deadly Alancoat'; and newsreader John Marsh ended up as 'Boggy'. Terry was the genial ringmaster of this troupe, keeping a deceptively light touch on proceedings as Britain readied itself for the working day ahead.



Latterly, Terry read out short, unsolicited scripts that were often funnier than the professionals could come up with. By far the most popular were the jaw-dropping innuendos and single entendres of the 'Janet and John' stories, penned by regular listener Mick Sturbs (Kevin Joslin), that regularly made Wogan and his on-air team corpse helplessly. In one episode, John innocently recounts his visit to the local beauty parlour, where his Italian therapist reveals herself to

be a keen cook and also an amateur pugilist: "After I had my treatments, Donatella said, if I fancied a bit of linguine, I could wait for a few minutes, she'd shave her pecorino in the kitchen and then I could see her box." An incensed Janet then shuts his head in the trouser press.

If any other broadcaster (with the possible exception of Humphrey Lyttelton) had come out with anything half as risqué, it would have been the cue for industrial quantities of media humbug questioning the continued existence of the BBC: but because it was Terry, the Corporation's regular knockers parked their agendas and laughed along with him (the recordings have subsequently found their way onto CD, raising money for Terry's beloved

Children in Need charity). In fact, the BBC once commissioned a media studies guru from a respected university to analyse how Wogan’s humour ‘worked’, how they might replicate it on other shows, and enhance his ‘brand’ on the internet. Which was, of course, to miss the point spectacularly. Like all the greatest humour, Terry’s was unique and unrepeatable. Put quite simply, he was the fabled friend behind the microphone who talked to you and not at you, turning the passive act of listening to the radio into an involving, engaging experience. Few, if any, did it better.

Part of his appeal was, of course, that he seldom put a foot wrong, while all the time skirting the boundaries of what was acceptable – although on one occasion, a letter from ‘Tess Tickers’ did manage to slip under his radar. “I just print ’em”, came the response from his long-suffering producer, Paul Walters, who also hadn’t noticed. He also regularly broke another broadcasting taboo – that of eating and speaking at the same time: hardly a day passed without him munching something or another at the mic, and when his final radio boss, Bob Shennan, first eavesdropped on the show, Terry offered him a bite of the meat pie he’d been warming under the studio anglepoise.

Television inevitably beckoned, and Terry soon mastered that, too, although the medium was not quite such a comfortable fit as the radio. Extended stints presenting BBC TV’s *Come Dancing* (1974–79), *Blankety Blank* (1979–83), and his own chat show (1982–92) came and went, but it was as the UK’s host of the Eurovision Song Contest (1971–2008) that Terry really left his mark, further honing his broadcasting skills and his sense of the ridiculous. Quick to realize the show was beyond parody, his often acerbic commentary rendered the “music” utterly incidental, and when hauled before the European Broadcasting Union grandees to explain his less-than-reverent attitude to their cherished competition, he simply replied that the British always mock the things they love the most.

Sometimes his subversion was not so gentle: in his early days at the Irish state broadcaster RTÉ, who gave him his first professional job, he was renowned for setting the chief newsreader’s script on fire mid-broadcast; years later, he whacked Radio 1’s Simon Bates around the head with a rolled-up *Radio Times* as he read out his syrupy ‘Our Tune’ feature live on air – something we all wanted to do but never dared.

But Terry knew full well when and how to behave when the situation demanded: soon after the announcement of Princess Diana’s death, he confined his remarks to three words: “Those poor boys.” As fellow DJ Simon Mayo noted, “He always had the right phrase, the right tone” – an uncanny knack that lasted until his death. It has been widely reported that the longstanding atheist’s final words to his close friend Father Brian D’Arcy were: “Everything’s going to be all right, old boy.” D’Arcy’s subsequent radio tribute described Wogan as “one of the most thorough, educated, friendly, charitable gentlemen I’ve ever met”. Those of us who met and chatted with him – however fleetingly – at the two Wodehouse dinners he attended (and at which he spoke to great acclaim) were also left with that impression.

He was a tireless promoter of Wodehouse, perhaps because of the unshakeable air of optimism they seemed to share. On two of the three occasions he was chosen as the castaway on *Desert Island Discs*, Terry singled out Wodehouse titles as his favourite read, and his 2014 appearance on *With Great Pleasure* (in which he name-checked the Society) featured Sir David Jason performing Gussie Fink-Nottle’s prize-giving speech from *Right Ho, Jeeves*. In 2011, he presented a TV documentary that looked at the life and work of his hero, from which the following is an extract of the script: “His use of language is unequalled, his characters are delightful and no matter what mood you are in, a dip into a Wodehouse will always pick you up. I always keep a copy of one of his works on my bedside table. My own humble attempts at humour just bear no comparison to his work. . . . Every sentence he wrote seems bathed in sunshine.”

And there’s that sun metaphor making a welcome reappearance.

One Wogan statement we at the Society might now take issue with was featured in an interview he gave soon after surrendering his Eurovision duties: as well as noting that in future, he would be watching the show “with the benefit of alcohol – much as I used to do when I did the commentary”, he added: “I have always tried to get off the beach before the tide goes out. We all have our entrances and exits, but you have to try to get your timing right.”

Unfortunately, Sir Terry, you didn’t manage it on this occasion. We had such plans for you . . .

– PAUL KENT

Patrick Kidd on Terry Wogan

Journalist and Society member Patrick Kidd related this amusing anecdote in his Times Diary of February 1.

Terry Wogan was well read but wore his learning lightly. . . . One of his roles was as president of the P G Wodehouse Society. For his first address at the society’s dinner, he spoke magically and at length about Wodehouse, Sir Michael Gambon (a guest that night) and their shared background in Ireland, ending with praise for the food served that night. At the end, the editor of the society’s journal asked for Wogan’s script and was handed three lines scribbled on the back of the menu, almost all of which was his verdict on the beef.

Society News

Note the New Date – and Sharpen Your Brain!

Members planning to attend our summer meeting should note that it won't be in July, as originally announced. Due to a concatenation of circumstances, we have had to move the date to **Wednesday, June 29**, starting as usual from 6 p.m. at the Savoy Tup (2 Savoy Street, Strand).

A quiz is on offer this time, and our Entertainment Impresario (renowned for the fiendishness of his quizzes) informs us that this time we will also have some Scrabble and Countdown. Are you curious? So are we! Come and join us on the night for what promises to be a most interesting and jolly good time.

Further down the road, we will hold our AGM on November 23, with the entertainment for that evening to be announced at a later date.

Cricket Season Summer 2016

We hear from Team Captain Julian Hill that the Gold Bats' season is shaping up nicely, and we have dates for the games against the Dulwich Dusters and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. They are:

- Gold Bats v. Dulwich Dusters: Friday, May 20, 6 p.m., at Dulwich College, London SE21 7LD
- Gold Bats v. Sherlock Holmes Society of London: Saturday July 2, 2016, 11.30 a.m., at West Wycombe Cricket Club, Toweridge Lane, West Wycombe.

Followers of the Gold Bats' fortunes will have spotted that the Dulwich match is earlier in the season than usual, and begins later in the day. Dulwich College seems to have rather a busy season this year, and that date and time was our favourite of those offered, but unfortunately it means that this year we cannot offer the Society's famous cricket tea. A shame and we're sorry, but there's nothing to be done about it; maybe we can reinstate the tea another year. Of course, dyed-in-the-wool followers can still watch the match in the usual way simply by turning up – there's bound to be some familiar faces in front of the Pavilion.

And don't forget, the match against the Sherlock Holmes Society is played at West Wycombe, a village cricket ground in the most lovely of settings, in the most charming of villages. The game features a long lunch interval, so spectators can do full justice to their picnics and do their bit to disarm and vanquish the opposition by pressing cake upon them. And after the match, there's a selection of fine village pubs to visit . . .

A Tree for Jeeves

On the next page, members will read of a very special event taking place during the Cheltenham Cricket Festival: the Society will be commemorating the 100th

anniversary of the death of Percy Jeeves by planting a tree in his memory. Members are invited to attend, though if you also wish to attend the luncheon following the ceremony, you must purchase tickets. See page 4.

Our Formal London Dinner in October

The Society's tenth formal London dinner will take place on Thursday, October 20, 2016, and will once again be held at The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, London WC1. Dinner will be 7.00 p.m. for 7.30; dress code is black tie.

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

Further details of how to apply and application forms will be included with the June edition of *Wooster Sauce*. Members who have attended previous dinners will be aware how quickly the places are booked, and, as usual, places will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. It is therefore strongly recommended that members look out for the application form in the next edition of *Wooster Sauce* and apply for tickets by return.

– TIM ANDREW

Fresh Blood!

We're delighted to announce that the Society has both a new Treasurer and a new Members Database Manager.

Ian Walton has become the Society's new Treasurer. Ian is a chemist, recently retired from industry and even more recently moved to Evesham. In this spirit of 'all change', he has bravely accepted the Treasurer's baton from Jeremy Neville and, as far as we know, isn't yet regretting it.

Sue Williams is our new Members Database Manager. Sue still works in advertising and marketing, although three days a week now, and is just recovering from writing and producing the pantomime recently performed in the village hall near her Sussex home. Sue is very familiar with the use of databases, and fortunately for us her husband, Bryan, has a great deal of technical expertise in the field, so we may for once be in the lucky position of getting a twofer!

We're very happy to welcome our new officers, whilst we offer our grateful thanks and wave a rather sad goodbye to Jeremy and Day, both now delighted to have time to reintroduce themselves to their wives and daughters.

– HILARY BRUCE

He tottered blindly towards the bar like a camel making for an oasis after a hard day at the office.

(from 'Life with Freddie', 1966)

The Death of Percy Jeeves on the Somme

The Society Marks the Centenary

In the summer of 1913, P G Wodehouse visited his parents, then staying in Cheltenham. He spent a day at the annual Cricket Festival watching the match between Gloucestershire and Warwickshire and was particularly taken with the bowling of an all-rounder playing for the visitors, Percy Jeeves. In the following two years, Jeeves established himself as one of the most exciting new talents in county cricket; he was seen as having the potential to play for England.

But as it was for so many young men of his generation, that potential was cruelly never to be realised. Jeeves died on the Somme on 22 July 1916, during a night-time attack on High Wood. His body was never found, and his name is one of more than 72,000 with no known grave inscribed on the Thiepval Memorial.

Meanwhile, in 1915, Wodehouse, who had been disqualified from service because of his poor eyesight, was writing in New York. He had dreamed up a pair of characters for a humorous short story and was casting about for a name for the valet to a rather silly young-man-about-town. Fifty years later, Wodehouse wrote that he remembered seeing Jeeves on the Cheltenham College Ground, and that “it was just the name I wanted.” Although Percy Jeeves was never to know it, he had given his name to one of the best-known and most-loved characters in English humorous writing, a name that, 100 years after his death, is instantly recognised all over the English-speaking world – a name that has become so associated with competence, intellect, and general omniscience that it has been purloined by enterprises as disparate as dry-cleaning services and internet search engines.

The committee has decided it would be fitting for the Society to commemorate the centenary of Percy Jeeves’s death. Cheltenham College and

Gloucestershire County Cricket Club have enthusiastically supported the idea that we should do so by planting a tree in his memory at this year’s Cheltenham Cricket Festival. Details of the day are still being planned, but the main arrangements are all in place.

The planting ceremony will take place on **Thursday, July 14**, during the lunch interval of the second day of the championship game between Gloucestershire and Essex. The ceremony will be followed by lunch in one of the marquees that surround the ground, where the occasion will be marked by some short speeches. The Society hopes representatives of Jeeves’s family, the school, and Gloucestershire and Warwickshire County Cricket Clubs, as well as the Lord Lieutenant of the county and other appropriate guests, will be able to join us for the planting and the luncheon.

Members of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) and of Gloucestershire County Cricket Club are invited to be part of the commemoration by attending the tree planting and the lunch afterwards. Society members who wish simply to witness the planting will be able to do so by being a spectator at that day’s cricket.

Members who would like to attend the tree planting *and* luncheon will need to apply for a ticket in advance. The application form enclosed with this issue of *Wooster Sauce* has the price details and information on how to apply for your tickets. Gloucestershire County Cricket Club is kindly handling ticketing and has generously donated the cost of admission to the ground to members booking for lunch.

The committee would like to encourage as many members as possible to attend. It promises to be a lovely and memorable day.

– TIM ANDREW



The cricket ground at Cheltenham College, where a tree will be planted in memory of Percy Jeeves on July 14.

A Percy Jeeves Chronology

Those interested in the life of Percy Jeeves will find more in the excellent book *The Real Jeeves*, by Brian Halford, from which much of the following chronology has been compiled.

1888 March 5: Percy Jeeves is born at Earlsheaton in the West Riding of Yorkshire. The family subsequently move to Goole in the East Riding.

1905 Jeeves makes his debut for the Goole 1st XI, age 17.

1910 Jeeves begins his first season as a professional at Hawes Cricket Club.

1910 October 27: Warwickshire committee decide to offer Jeeves “an engagement for 20 weeks at 20 shillings, Yorkshire having consented”.

For the next two years, Jeeves plays in the Birmingham league while he ‘qualifies’ for Warwickshire, although he plays for the county against the mighty Australians in 1912 and is part of a bowling partnership that skittles the tourists from 135/1 to 208/8 on the morning of the second day.



1913 August 14: Jeeves plays for Warwickshire against Gloucestershire on the Cheltenham College Cricket Ground. P. G. Wodehouse, already an established writer in Britain and the USA, is home from New York and visiting his parents in Cheltenham. A great cricket fan, he goes to watch the game. Having posted career-best figures in his previous two games, Jeeves is brought down to earth: 17-4-43-0. But he makes an impression on Wodehouse.

1914 July 9: Jeeves is selected for the Players in the annual fixture against the Gentlemen, at the Oval. He makes a good impression; there is speculation about him as a future England player.

July 28: Austro-Hungary declares war on Serbia; county cricket fixtures continue as normal. As the crisis was building up, Jeeves took four wickets in four balls at Lancaster against Lancashire.

August 4: Britain declares war on Germany.

August 29: After playing for Warwickshire for just two years, Jeeves leaves the field to a huge ovation from the Edgbaston crowd. They never see him play again.

October 10: Jeeves is among thousands of volunteers assembled in the quadrangle at Birmingham General Hospital, ready to depart for army training.

1915 September 18: The American weekly *Saturday Evening Post* publishes a short story, ‘Extricating Young Gussie’, by P. G. Wodehouse, in which the fictional valet Jeeves makes his first appearance. Disqualified from service by his poor eyesight, PGW has been writing in New York. Seeking names for two new characters in a short story, he remembers seeing Jeeves bowl at Cheltenham when visiting his parents (“I remember admiring his action very much”). He subsequently relates that “it was just the name I wanted”.

1916 July 22: Percy Jeeves is killed during a night raid at High Wood on the Somme. His body has never been recovered, and his name is one of more than 72,000 inscribed on the Thiepval Memorial in France.

A Not-So-Scientific Test

Jeeves’s hangover cure continues to fascinate – and it has now been the subject of an exacting enquiry by responsible and enterprising journalists.

In the *Evening Standard* of December 18, an article in the ‘Londoner’s Diary’ column – headed ‘Jeeves relieves festive headaches’ – reported that staff at *The Times* had been asked to turn guinea pig in an experiment testing the potency of the hangover cure inspired by Jeeves and Wooster:

Participants are required to take one of three remedies, one of which is Jeeves’ special concoction, a magical mix of Worcestershire Sauce, raw egg and red pepper. The results are not yet in but if Bertie can be trusted, the office will be a far more tolerable place today. In the Wodehouse short story ‘Jeeves Takes Charge’ Bertie says, ‘For a moment I felt as if somebody had touched off a bomb inside the

old bean and was strolling down my throat with a lighted torch, and then . . . the sun shone in through the window; birds twittered in the tree-tops; and generally speaking, hope dawned once more.’ Any takers?

A follow-up in *The Times* itself appeared on December 18 under the headline ‘All hungover? Perhaps you need a shot of Wooster sauce’; it was backed up by a leader headed ‘Joy in the Morning – Jeeves’s cure for a hangover falls sadly behind the marvels of modern chemistry’. The conclusion of ‘non-scientific’ research (following the paper’s staff party the night before) was that paracetamol generates a speedier feeling of normality.

How terribly disappointing! But we shall still trust in Jeeves’s remedy.

(Thanks to LAURENCE OGRAM and several others)

P. G. Wodehouse and E. R. Punshon

The Code of the Woosters and Mystery of Mr. Jessop

by Curt Evans

P. G. Wodehouse is known to have been a great fan of detective fiction, and one can certainly see evidence of his criminal whimsy in *The Code of the Woosters*, the author's 1938 novel telling of further antics of the amiable ass Bertie Wooster and his profound valet Jeeves. Sprinkled throughout the Wodehouse novel are general references to detective and thriller fiction as well as a very specific reference to a 1937 novel by E. R. Punshon. (The credit for the latter discovery belongs to the late William A. S. Sarjeant, an admirer of both authors.)

The Code of the Woosters, as Bertie informs readers at the outset, tells the tale of "the sinister affair of Gussie Fink-Nottle, Madeline Bassett, old Pop Bassett, Stiffy Byng, the Rev. H. P. ("Stinker") Pinker, the eighteenth-century cow creamer, and the small, brown, leather-covered notebook". There is, as this suggests, a lot going on in this novel! (Bertie actually left out the part about the policeman's helmet.) Mystery readers who like a twisting plot: *The Code of the Woosters* is a book for you!

Although, of course, the book is farcical, there actually is quite a bit of country house criminality going on in it. And throughout, the novel references are made to detective stories and thrillers.

Blackmailed by his Aunt Dahlia into snitching from a rival silver collector, Sir Watkyn Bassett, an eighteenth-century cow creamer to which she feels her husband is morally entitled, Bertie makes his way to Bassett's country estate, Totleigh Towers, to commit the criminal deed. There he encounters not only Bassett – who, before he retired as a magistrate, fined Bertie for snatching a policeman's helmet while on a drunken lark – but Bassett's friend Roderick Spode, leader of a fascist organization known as the Black Shorts. Both men dislike, and are suspicious of, Bertie, causing him to reflect:

I mean, imagine how some unfortunate Master Criminal would feel, on coming down to do a murder at the old Grange, if he found that not only was Sherlock Holmes putting in the weekend there, but Hercule Poirot, as well.

Soon he finds another party, Stephanie "Stiffy" Byng, Sir Watkyn's niece, blackmailing him to steal the cow creamer for her. Bertie finds the whole situation dashed confusing, leading to this exchange with Jeeves:

"I think it would help if we did what they do in thrillers. Do you ever read thrillers?"

"Not very frequently, sir."

"Well, there's always a bit where the detective, in order to clarify his thoughts,

writes down a list of suspects, motives, times when, alibis, clues and what not. Let us try this plan. Take pencil and paper, Jeeves, and we will assemble the facts."

This is, in fact, something that is done in several E. R. Punshon detective novels from the period, and it's clear from a further reference made by Bertie that Wodehouse had read Punshon's *Mystery of Mr. Jessop*, published the year before in 1937.

At one point in the novel, Bertie curls up with a good mystery:

A cheerful fire was burning in the grate, and to while away the time I pulled the armchair up and got out the mystery story I had brought home with me from London. As my researches in it had already shown me, it was a particularly good one, full of crisp clues and meaty murders, and I was soon absorbed.

This story is Punshon's *Mystery of Mr. Jessop*. Later in the novel, when Bertie is trying to retrieve the small, brown, leather-covered notebook that Stiffy has swiped from Gussie Fink-Nottle, he finds inspiration in its pages:

To give the brain a rest before having another go at the problem, I took up my goose-flesher again. And, by Jove, I hadn't read more than half a page when I uttered a cry. I had come upon a significant passage.

"Jeeves," I said, addressing him as he entered a moment later, "I have come upon a significant passage."

Bertie then goes on to quote this significant passage:

"Listen attentively, Jeeves. 'They seem to have looked everywhere, my dear Postlethwaite, except in the one place where they might have expected to find something. Amateurs, Postlethwaite, rank amateurs. They never thought of the top of the cupboard, the thing any experienced crook thinks of at once, because' – note carefully what follows – 'because he knows it is every woman's favourite hiding-place.'"

This passage comes directly from *Mystery of Mr. Jessop*. The speaker in that book is Superintendent Ulyett, and the detective being addressed (whom Wodehouse calls Postlethwaite) is Punshon's series sleuth, Detective-Sergeant Bobby Owen.

To Bertie it all suggests an immediate course of action:

"You see the profound significance of that, Jeeves?"

"If I interpret your meaning aright, sir, you are suggesting that Mr. Fink-Nottle's notebook

may be concealed at the top of the cupboard in Miss Byng's apartment?"

"Not 'may', Jeeves, 'must'. I don't see how it can be concealed anywhere else but. That detective is no fool. If he says a thing is so, it is so. I have the utmost confidence in the fellow, and am prepared to follow his lead without question."

Of course, not all goes as smoothly as Bertie expects, as he learns detective novels are not always quite the same as real life.

Another interesting similarity between the two novels has to do with the references to British politician Oswald Mosley's fascist Blackshirts, who in the mid-Thirties were involved during demonstrations in street brawls with communists. Wodehouse's Roderick Spode and his Black Shorts clearly are a spoof of Mosley and his group. "The trouble with you, Spode," Bertie lectures (once he has been supplied by Jeeves with a dirty secret on Spode that he can use to keep the obnoxious man in check), "is that just because you have succeeded in inducing a handful of half-wits to disfigure the

London scene by going about in black shorts, you think you're someone. You hear them shouting, 'Heil, Spode!' and you imagine that it is the Voice of the People. That is where you make your bloomer. What the Voice of the People is saying is: 'Look at that frightful ass Spode swanking about in footer bags! Did you ever in your puff see such a perfect perisher?'"

In *Mystery of Mr. Jessop*, Punshon satirically references the London brawls between fascists and communists, indicating that he holds totalitarian ideology in disdain. He would have more to say on this subject the next year in his detective novel *Dictator's Way*, which appeared the same year as *The Code of the Woosters*.

Note: Both the Punshon novels mentioned above, as well as three other titles, have recently been reissued by Dean Street Press. They include introductions by Curt in which he further ruminates on the mystery writing of E. R. Punshon. This article was originally published on thepassingtramp.blogspot.co.uk in July 2015.

Corpus Delightful: Wodehouse and Crime Writing

by Jonathan Hopson

While recently enjoying *The Golden Age of Murder* (Martin Edwards's history of the Detection Club between the wars) I was struck by the number of references to Wodehouse. It is no secret that he was an aficionado of the genre. Towards the end of his life he admitted to reading about 150 mystery novels a year, an enthusiasm he shared with several characters, notably Cyril Mulliner, who reflected that "His life . . . might be wrecked, but he still had two-thirds of 'Strychnine in the Soup' to read".

Crimes provides a narrative thread throughout Wodehouse's work. His early efforts included a blood-and-thunder serial, *The Luck Stone* (1908), while *The Little Nugget* (1913) was admired by Richard Osborne as "an excellent thriller". That same year E. C. Bentley published *Trent's Last Case*, the first detective novel of the Golden Age, which introduced a new type of investigator – the languid gentleman amateur with a penchant for frivolous persiflage. Lord Peter Wimsey and Albert Campion became the best-known examples and are often compared to Bertie Wooster, not least for their dependence on resourceful manservants (Erik Routley's *The Puritan Pleasures of the Detective Story* describes Wimsey's valet Bunter as "70 per cent Jeeves"). However, their use of provocative banter to stave off boredom resembles Psmith and his fellow 'buzzers' (as Osborne termed them) rather than 'burbler' Bertie.

Television adaptations remind us that Wodehouse and Golden Age detection share a perennial attraction – the *genius loci* of the English country house. This serves as pastoral playground and puzzle-box where mischief holds temporary sway against a backdrop of timeless comfort and elegance. In reality, the landed class faced the constant menaces of death duties, dereliction, and burglary. Rereading *Something Fresh*, it comes as a shock that amiable Lord Emsworth sleeps with a loaded revolver in his bedside drawer and has no qualms about firing it indiscriminately into a darkened hall at the sound of suspected ruffians. This novel actually contains all the elements of a thriller, shaken up into a fizzy cocktail of parodic delights. The hero, Ashe Marson, is not a detective but a crime writer whose spirit groans under the burden of entertaining "the baser elements of the British reading public".

Wodehouse's standards were higher, and he criticised (in *Louder and Funnier*) "the present flood of Mystery Thrillers [that] had engulfed the British Isles . . . And ninety-nine out of every hundred a dud . . . It does not seem to occur to the ordinary man how hard it is to do this sort of thing well . . . unless it is done well the result is ghastly". Hence the mutual admiration between himself and Agatha Christie, fellow Old Reliables who maintained readability and ingenuity throughout long and prolific careers.

A Personal Footnote to the Search for Blandings

by David Salter

A number of people have set out in search of Blandings Castle, P G Wodehouse's fictional Shropshire seat of the Earls of Emsworth and their Threepwood clan. They have used data gleaned from the 12 Blandings books, maps, Bradshaw's *Railway Guide*, railway timetables of the 1930s, architectural guides, and sheer gut instinct. Some have been looking for the perfect house, or the perfect grounds, known to have been familiar to PGW. Others have tried to locate the precise location in Shropshire using the sometimes confusing information supplied to us in the books.

The principal protagonists in this task have been our revered Remembrancer, Norman Murphy; Ian Greatbatch and Daryl Lloyd, when they were both PhD students at University College, London, in 2003; and Richard Osborne with the help of Colonel Cobb, an expert on railway timetables, in an appendix to *Sunset at Blandings* in 1977. Each of these has based the search on different criteria: Norman Murphy looked for houses and grounds known to PGW that closely resembled his descriptions. Greatbatch and Lloyd used a computer programme usually employed in locating suitable sites for supermarkets in order to pinpoint the location, in south Shropshire, of Blandings Castle, Market Blandings, and Blandings Parva. Colonel Cobb used extensive data gleaned from railway timetables to find market towns that could be reached in the 1930s, directly and by changing trains in 3 hours, 41 minutes, as Market Blandings could be. Each came up with interesting and, to be expected, different, findings.

Norman Murphy's research, exhaustive and thorough, established Weston Park, in Shropshire, as the most similar landscape to the park of Blandings, and Sudeley Castle, in Gloucestershire, as the most likely inspiration for the building. I doubt that anyone would disagree with these suggestions, based as they are on considerable knowledge. However, based on the alternative criteria of geographical location, they fail. Neither is bounded by the river Severn. Neither is near a suitable railway station, and only one could conceivably be reached, with difficulty, in 45 minutes, by road from Shrewsbury in the 1930s.

Greatbatch and Lloyd fed the various locational data from the books into their computer and came up with Apley Park, located between Bridgnorth and Telford, on the A442. It is bounded by the Severn, can be reached from Shrewsbury in 45 minutes, has

the small village of Norton (Blandings Parva) at its gates, and the market town of Madeley Market (Market Blandings) three miles to the north. Apley Park falls roughly within a triangle formed by Bridgnorth, Shifnall, and Albrighton (remember that the local newspaper at Blandings was the *Bridgnorth, Shifnall and Albrighton Argus*). The Wrekin is nearby, perhaps five miles away.

Colonel Cobb, after exhaustively studying railway timetables of the period, concluded that Buildwas was the most likely railway station and was, therefore, Market Blandings. Leighton and Market Madeley were also possible. Buildwas is five or six miles from Apley and Madeley about three.

My own interest was to stand at the point where the various coordinates teasingly provided by PGW met and to breathe the air of the landscape described by Evelyn Waugh as "that original garden (of Eden) from which we are all exiled". While accepting, absolutely, Norman Murphy's conclusions as to architecture and parkland, I chose to follow Greatbatch and Lloyd to Apley as I sensed that their computer had found the closest possible site for this mythical spot. I believe, absolutely, that Blandings Castle, its grounds, Blandings Parva, and Market Blandings were pure figments of PGW's wonderful imagination, but he had provided clues to their location, and it was possible to go there. So, after a



Apley Hall in Shropshire is David's choice for the location of Blandings Castle.

recent weekend in Shrewsbury, celebrating my sister's golden wedding anniversary, my wife and I headed for Norton and Apley Park.

Well, I wasn't disappointed: it's all there. The landscape is perfect, Norton sits at the entrance to the park, and Madeley Market is in the right place. All the coordinates match. There was a wonderful

bright red sunset (at Blandings). You cannot enter the grounds of Apley Park without invitation or prior appointment, as it has been converted into private apartments (Waugh's garden from which we are all exiled?) – but photographs of the house look pretty good for Blandings and not unlike the illustration on the front of Norman's book *In Search of Blandings* (Secker & Warburg).

We had a late lunch at the very friendly Apley Park Farm Shop, where I bought a lovely book, *Apley Hall: The Golden Years of a Sporting Estate*, by Norman Sharpe, gamekeeper from 1928 to 1980 and son of a previous gamekeeper. His story certainly bears shades of the Blandings saga.

Well I certainly found what I was looking for. Standing there, with the rolling landscape all around, the Severn nearby and the Wrekin in the distance, certainly visible from the upper floors of the house, it all felt surreal and other-worldly. It would be interesting to hear from others who have been there and to hear what they found – and how they felt.

An interesting footnote to this footnote: The building in the illustration used to represent Blandings on the cover of the 2008 Arrow paperback edition of *Something Fresh* is clearly Apley Hall, accurate in every detail.

Why I Love P. G. Wodehouse

by Elisabeth Hoffman

Note. For our Society meeting at the Savoy Tup in February (a report of which will be published in the June issue), members were invited to speak briefly on why they loved The Master. Elisabeth, a member living in Germany, was not able to attend, but she sent this heart-warming message, with whose sentiments we must surely all agree.

One reason why I love P. G. Wodehouse is Bertie Wooster. He is the urgently needed antidote for mainstream souls in Europe and elsewhere. Mainstream souls have been brought up to believe that a human being's worth is to be measured by three powers: the power of brains, of work, and of possessing material goods (regarded as a natural consequence of the first two powers).

Though it is rarely understood, human 'battleships' – loaded with cleverness and an iron dedication to work and making money – tend to 'capsize' astonishingly often, and more often than not they sail under a flag of exclusion. It is here that Bertie comes in, with his powers of gentleness, friendship, empathy (excluding some aunts and the Glossops of this world), and an obvious denial of cleverness.

I would like to see Bertie as a necessary role model for the future, embodying a European and cosmopolitan spirit throughout the world. This is characterized by gentleness, friendship, and innocence – powerful tools aboard the global ship, which should perhaps become the colors of the flag – turning battleships into friendly boats.

Little Nuggets

A New Portrait of Plum in Emsworth

Last September the Emsworth Museum announced a delightful addition to its dedicated Wodehouse section: a portrait of P. G. Wodehouse by local artist Carol Millard. Readers wanting to see a picture of the painting (albeit in reduced size) can do so at <http://bit.ly/1TRVose>.

Wodehouse on Broadway

Thanks to JONATHAN BACCHUS for sending a link to a video on a show called *Wodehouse on Broadway*, recorded in 1989 at the Theatre Royal, Plymouth. An affectionate look at PGW's career as a songwriter, this show was written by Tony Staveacre and starred Peter Woodward as P. G. Wodehouse and Tony Slattery as Guy Bolton, with musical contributions from numerous other talented performers. While the quality of the video is not the greatest, the show can be seen in its entirety on YouTube at: <http://bit.ly/1K7JGro>.

News of a New Book

BARRY CHAPMAN has alerted us to a new two-volume book, *The Penguin Book of the British Short Story*, published in the autumn. Of interest to Wodehouseans is Volume 2: *From P. G. Wodehouse to Zadie Smith*. The Wodehouse contribution is 'Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court', though there is nothing to indicate why the editors chose that particular story. Each volume is £25.

Good News for Fish Eaters

As all dedicated Wodehouse readers know, Bertie Wooster always attributed Jeeves's brain power to the fish he consumed. Now there is scientific evidence that Bertie might just have something there. According to findings published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, fish is not only good for the brain but may even reduce the risk of Alzheimer's. This was duly reported in the February 8th issue of *Forbes* by Steven Salzborg, who sensibly led off his article with a quote from *Thank You, Jeeves*:

I stared at the man.

"How many tins of sardines did you eat, Jeeves?"

"None, sir. I am not fond of sardines."

"You mean, you thought of this great, this ripe, this amazing scheme entirely without the impetus to the brain given by fish?"

"Yes, sir."

What magic there is in a girl's smile. It is the raisin which, dropped in the yeast of male complacency, induces fermentation.

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

Gertrude Lawrence and Wodehouse

by Tony Ring

In the *By The Way* for March 2006, we launched a series of notes about the stars who played in Wodehouse's theatre. The first was about one of the most well-known of them all, Gertrude Lawrence, who appeared in the musical comedy *Oh, Kay!* and the straight play *Candle-Light*. Several years ago I came across her autobiography, *A Star Danced* (Garden City Publishing Co, 1945), which included two paragraphs of passing interest:

[In 1926] I made my decision to . . . accept a New York contract. That was to be *Oh, Kay!* produced by Alex Aarons and Vinton Freedley. George Gershwin was writing the music especially for me, and his brother, Ira, the lyrics. The book was by P. G. Wodehouse and Guy Bolton. Rehearsals were to begin in New York early in October, so I had time for only a brief holiday in England.

Oh, Kay! opened in November and was a tremendous success. Gershwin's score was Gershwin at his sprightliest. The piece had lots of humour and that indefinable something which can only be described as spirit. Oscar Shaw played the lead, and Victor Moore provided most of the uproarious comedy.

During the run of *Oh, Kay!*, in winter 1926, Gertrude met Bert Taylor, a banker whose father was president of the New York Stock Exchange. "Immediately," she wrote, "my life changed." She had been seeing Philip Astley in England and would have arranged a divorce from her husband, Frank, if Philip had asked her to marry him a couple of years earlier. Now, when he visited New York to see her and did ask her to marry him, she turned him down, realising that their marriage could not work with their differing social and professional aspirations.

When she returned to London to appear in the British production of *Oh, Kay!*, Bert Taylor came to see her, proposed, and was accepted. A combination of financial problems arising from the stock market crash and Gertrude's prolonged absence in England in *Private Lives* (whose London opening was in



September 1930) was to put their relationship in doubt, and when Bert asked her to give up either him or the theatre, she chose to give him up.

Meanwhile, in the summer of 1927, she was in London:

I played *Oh, Kay!* in London and continued the fantastic existence I had entered upon in New York. Several Indian princes from Hyderabad with their entourages were at the Savoy and came to see our play. They adored it. The Gershwin score and the English company were excellent. The princes proceeded to show their enthusiasm by taking a box for the season.

And after appearing in one or two other shows,

Gilbert Miller signed me to co-star in *Candle-Light* with Leslie Howard and Reginald Owen. We were to open at the Empire Theatre in New York in the autumn of 1929. The play was a Viennese comedy by Siegfried Geyer, and had been adapted by P. G. Wodehouse, who had done so much toward the success of *Oh, Kay!* *Candle-Light* had been produced in London with Yvonne Arnaud in the leading role. It was one of the first of many plays – tragic and comic – written round the romantic figure of the Austrian Archduke Rudolf. Everyone predicted it would be a huge success on Broadway.

Candle-Light marked my first appearance in America in a legitimate play, and I was both excited and terrified. . . . My pride knew no bounds when Gilbert Miller hung my portrait in the Empire Theatre with those of Doris Keane, Helen Hayes and Ina Claire.

Candle-Light enjoyed reasonable success in New York with a run of 128 performances, but . . .

Inevitably *Candle-Light* felt the impact of the crash that shattered the bubble of prosperity which Americans – and New Yorkers especially – had been playing with. But the play continued to run with more than fair success. Perhaps people wanted amusement that offered them an escape from their financial worries. They still did not want to face grim reality.

When *Candle-Light* finally closed, Gertrude Lawrence's path did not cross Wodehouse's again.

He perceived that he was up against French red tape, compared to which that of Great Britain and America is only pinkish. Where in the matter of rules and regulations London and New York merely scratch the surface, these Gauls plumb the depths. It is estimated that a French minor official, with his heart really in his work, can turn more hairs grey and have more clients tearing those hairs than any six of his opposite numbers on the payrolls of other nations.

(from *Galahad at Blandings*, 1964)

‘Staggering Civilization’: A Notorious Neighbour

by Richard Burnip

From 1923 to 1931, the American actress Tallulah Bankhead lived in London, where she may have become one of the ingredients from which Wodehouse created Bobbie Wickham.

Bobbie first appeared in ‘Something Squishy’, written in 1924 when Tallulah was already an established West End star, and in this and subsequent outings we see they had much in common.

Both possessed stunning hair: Bobbie a distinctive redhead; Tallulah usually ash-blond, though her tresses are also recorded on occasion as “tawny” and “coppery”. Both girls were enthusiastic motorists: Bobbie “a menace to public safety”; Tallulah’s erratic driving, often accompanied by her dog Napoleon, well-documented. Bobbie “made rather a hit” with a theatrical manager, while Tallulah charmed Gerald du Maurier into giving her a part already promised to another.

Bobbie had “a keen sense of humour” tending towards the callous with potential suitors, was prone to practical joking (who can forget Bertie, Tuppy, and the hot water bottles?), and displayed “the disposition and general outlook on life of a ticking bomb”. Tallulah was an inveterate practical joker, wildly unpredictable, and she delighted in causing chaos. Seeing Bobbie “draped in a sea-green negligee”, Roland Attwater’s heart “leaped convulsively and he clutched at the wall for support”, while Tallulah appeared so often on stage in her night attire and undergarments that one critic called her plays “festivals of lingerie”. Jeeves stated that Bobbie’s potential husband would require “a commanding personality and considerable strength of character”, and Tallulah’s actual husband compared their own short-lived marriage to “the rise, decline and fall of the Roman Empire”.

The earliest reference to Tallulah in Wodehouse seems to be the 1928 Wodehouse/Hay play *A Damsel in Distress*, suitably topical as Tallulah was just about to star in the Wodehouse stage adaptation of *Her Cardboard Lover*. In later years Wodehouse referred to Tallulah in passing in a few books, usually regarding her distinctive voice or her forceful personality. Indeed, in *Jeeves in the Offing* Bobbie’s mother Lady Wickham speaks “with a hoarse throaty

voice like Tallulah Bankhead after swallowing a fishbone the wrong way”, which suggests at least some link was present in Wodehouse’s mind.

Tallulah lived at a variety of Mayfair addresses, including, for her final two years in London, a small converted stable house at 1 Farm Street. This is an



interesting location: just across the road from Hays Mews when Ian Hay was at the other end in Charles Street. The 1925 edition of *Who’s Who in the Theatre*, however, gives an address for Tallulah that I have not seen elsewhere: one of the apartments comprising 78 Brook Street. How long she stayed there is unclear. The same entry does not include her celebrated performance in *Fallen Angels*, which opened in April 1925, but we can assume she was there sometime during late 1924 or early 1925. Significantly, the main entrance to 78 Brook Street is around the

corner in Gilbert Street, and thus just across the road from number 23, where the Wodehouses lived for nine months in 1924–25.

Whether or not Wodehouse encountered Tallulah at this time, Leonora certainly did at one of Beverly Nichols’ parties: other guests on the same occasion included Somerset Maugham and Noel Coward, as well as, according to one report, “a flood of talented youths who did imitations of each other and played the piano without ceasing”.

Bobbie Wickham is “too erratic for endurance” and “doesn’t give a hoot”, which again sounds very like Tallulah, who thrived on shock and outrage. Noting that *A Wodehouse Handbook* says (putting it mildly) that Tallulah “drank, took drugs, and her lovers could not be counted”, I would not, of course, suggest the comparison with Bobbie extends that far. Tallulah was once banned from *Ciro’s* for something she denied doing: splashing a glass of champagne in the face of the greatly-adored Gladys Cooper. Fictional activities involving burst hot-water bottles, broken flowerpots, and snakes in beds are obviously mild compared to assaulting a national treasure. But there is, perhaps, an echo of Wodehouse’s one-time notorious neighbour in Bertie’s heartfelt description of Roberta Wickham, managing “with each new day to discover some new way of staggering civilization”.

What's in a Wodehouse Name?

by Murray Hedgcock

Murray presented this talk at the Society's AGM in October 2013. It follows on a similar talk he delivered at the summer festivities in Cheltenham that year to mark the 100th anniversary of the day Wodehouse witnessed the cricketer Percy Jeeves and mentally filed away his name for future use.

I was in distinguished company at the Cheltenham Festival on July 17, 2013, with the Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire (Dame Janet Trotter) alongside me at the brunch table. How good it is to advance even further in the celebrity stakes, and stand tonight in the presence of an infinitely more distinguished company – Wodehouseans all.

I have been asked to share with those of you unfortunate enough to miss the July 17 observance my thoughts on that memorable day 100 years ago, at the Cheltenham Festival of 1913, when Wodehouse met the original Jeeves.

I began by recording a personal puzzle: just where did P. G. Wodehouse sit, or stand, to watch play on this lovely ground, to be captivated by the quality and the style of Percy Jeeves?

In adult life (he was 31 at this time), Plum, as we think of him, had developed what was known as 'the Wodehouse glide'. This was not an elegant leg-glance adapted from the original displayed by Ranjitsinhji, nor a forerunner of the Compton sweep – and certainly not a precursor to the Kevin Pietersen or Eoin Morgan reverse sweep, switch-hit, or scoop. Heaven forfend. Plum surely would have swooned at such heresy.

No, the Wodehouse glide was a smoothly executed escape from the crowd, a quick, quiet exit from everyone around him, when he wished to be alone and, preferably, able to get on with his writing.

In fact – just how much big cricket did Plum actually see, required to sit with the hundreds or thousands of others? He did write of watching Surrey, where he was a member in the early Twenties. But the most notable example is Jessop's match at The Oval in 1902, when Plum is said to have snatched time in a rushed bank lunch-hour visit. He watched three England wickets fall before rain interrupted play – when he returned to work. And he was quoted later as saying how impressed he was by the bowling of the canny medium-pacer Hugh Trumble. (How about "My man Trumble"?)

But let us move on to Cheltenham and that match of 1913.

Who were the other bowlers alongside Jeeves in the Warwickshire attack, who might just have caught the Wodehouse eye? They included F. R. Foster

(whose legside attack may have given rise to Bodyline), Langley, Hands, Santall, and Quaife. None really stands out – although little Willy Quaife, said to be all of five foot two inches tall, might have made a limited valet. You know – not so much a gentleman's personal gentleman, as a man's personal man. You can muse over the idea – "My man Quaife . . ."

Names do matter, not least in cricket. Neville Cardus, who transformed cricket writing from a record of basic happenings, scores and statistics into an art form, if often rather fanciful, once wrote a pleasant essay under the title "What's in a Name?" He mused over the significance of names within cricket, recalling how as a schoolboy he had been indignant to find his beloved Lancashire held up against Worcestershire by an unknown who scored an unbeaten 82 – named Gaukrodger:

I decided on the spot that a/ this was outrageous and absurd; that b/ Gaukrodger was an impossible name for a cricketer; and that c/ with such a name, he ought never in this world score 28 let alone 82.

George Warrington Gaukrodger went on to make 91 in that innings – his best first-class score. I feel much sympathy for George: not only was Neville Cardus beastly about him, but 91 was the best score I ever made in club cricket.

Cardus mused on names for cricketers, recalling how when Hobbs appeared, "I would have none of him. 'No man ever has or ever will do good with a name like that', I said." Cardus added that when Hobbs became the finest batsman of his age, "I consoled myself with the reflection that there must be exceptions to every rule". He further insisted that "Hobbs conquered in spite of his name. It would have crippled many a smaller man."

He picked a "Pleasing Names" World Eleven in which "every man carries a name which, if not actually poetic, has suggestions which are far from those of unlovely prose". To play this team, he selected an eleven of bleak names – his first choice being, of course, Gaukrodger.

His "beautiful names" eleven would be captained by W. G. Grace – and Gloucestershire was an appropriate setting to consider Cardus on WG. He summed up: "Could Grace conceivably have been Grace, known as W. G. Blenkinsop?"

I once wrote an article on John Wisden, to the theme: how appropriate, how splendid, that Wisden, the man who left us the cricketer's almanac, should have such a distinctive name, hinting faintly at "wisdom". And I speculated on how it would feel if

the founder of the almanac had been named Smith, Brown, or Robertson. How silly it would sound to say – “I need to look that up in Smith. . . . Have you got a hardback of the 1951 Jones. . . . I still need the 1942 Robertson to complete my wartime run.”

Back to Percy Jeeves. He was born in Yorkshire on March 5, 1888 – but exactly where? Wodehouse enthusiast the Rev. Simon Parkinson, who lives in Dewsbury, has researched the family to pronounce that the birthplace was Commonsidge, Soothill Nether, a mile north of Dewsbury. Biographer Brian Halford puts it as Earlsheaton, a small town on the southeastern edge of Dewsbury.

After a string of successes in club and league cricket, Percy Jeeves took part in Yorkshire trial matches in 1910, but his promise was not recognised. He moved to Warwickshire, and in 1913 – his first county championship season – he did what Wisden termed “brilliant work both as bowler and batsman”. He took 100 first-class wickets and scored 765 runs.

I recently bought the 1913 volume of the journal *Cricket* – and found to my pleasure that the first article in the November issue was ‘A Chat with Percy Jeeves’. The reporter knew Jeeves well, as he was a Warwickshire teammate, Sydney Santall, who recorded: “Good judges consider that, given good health, Jeeves may well gain the highest honours on the cricket field.”

Jeeves explained that he was very keen on football, and played with Stitchley Co-Operatives in the Birmingham Wednesday League. Aston Villa had invited him for trials, but “I have no wish to take to the game professionally, as I think the strain of playing the two games would be too much for me”.

Santall revealed an intriguing fact about Percy Jeeves: “He stands about five feet eight inches, and only weighs just over ten and a half stone.” That comes as a startler; surely Plum’s Jeeves was markedly taller and generally bigger and more impressive than that.

In 1914 Percy Jeeves’s batting fell away, but he played for the Players against the Gentlemen at The Oval, helping the professionals win by taking four cheap second innings wickets. The old England captain and future selector Plum Warner was much impressed, saying Jeeves would be an England bowler in the near future. But within a month, war was declared, and Jeeves joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was killed on the Somme on July 22, 1916.

What if he had survived? Might he have been a member of Johnny Douglas’s 1920–21 team in Australia, the first postwar Ashes series, perhaps helping to trim Australian success from that unprecedented 5-0 result. I’m sure you will understand if I repeat that scoreline – *Australia five, England nil* . . .

Wisden recorded Percy Jeeves as “a right-handed bowler on the quick side of medium-pace, who with an easy action came off the ground with plenty of

spin”. His death meant England “lost a cricketer of whom very high hopes had been entertained”. His obituary in the almanac concludes with the comment: “He was very popular among his brother players.” It’s a charming tribute.

And now we benefit from Brian Halford’s excellent book, *The Real Jeeves*. I commend Brian for his research, making me well aware of how little I really knew about Jeeves and of his brief cricketing career.

The one problem his book poses is: where do I file this? In my Wodehouse collection? Or in my cricket collection? I’m sure Brian’s simple answer would be – buy two copies. I leave you that thought.

And I am a little worried about Brian’s title, *The Real Jeeves*. Is he by any chance implying that *our* Jeeves, Reginald Jeeves, the gentleman’s personal gentleman to Bertram Wilberforce Wooster, of 3A Berkeley Mansions, W1, is *not* real? That sounds suspiciously like heresy – akin to those cynical characters who declare that Sherlock Holmes was not real.

The splendid history of the Cheltenham Festival, *Lillywhite’s Legacy*, written by Grenville Simons, explains that in 1913, C. O. H. Sewell had succeeded the mighty hitter Gilbert Jessop as county captain:

The Festival proved an unqualified success, the county winning all three of their matches.

Simons writes: “Preparations took place in glorious sunshine” – a welcome change from the last match of the 1912 season. This had been abandoned without a ball being bowled, a handful of optimistic spectators paying over the three washed-out days a total of seven pounds, fifteen shillings and sixpence at the gate. He explains:

This was a special Festival year. . . . Special privileges given to county members for the first time, including providing them with their own stand, and an enclosure with attractively decorated tea tables. There were more private tents than usual, where local clubs could entertain members and their guests.

Simons records the Wodehouse involvement in his account of the last game of the Festival, against Warwickshire:

Among the spectators was P.G. Wodehouse, who at 32 [*sic*], and sharing his time between London and New York, was visiting his parents who had moved from Shropshire to Cheltenham ten years earlier.

Later he was to write: “I suppose Jeeves’s bowling must have impressed me, for I remembered him in 1916, when I was in New York and starting the Jeeves and Bertie saga – and it was just the name I wanted.”

Incidentally, Plum played at least one game in Gloucestershire, in 1907, when he appeared for Bourton Vale against MCC, at Bourton-on-the-Water, only 20 miles East of Cheltenham. Batting no. 9 in a

12-a-side match, Plum took one wicket and made 3 and 24. MCC won by nine wickets.

The Wodehouse link came because his favourite aunt, Louisa Deane (the model for Aunt Dahlia in his books), lived at Bourton. The club was strongly supported by local landowners and the upper classes, and played a regular fixture against MCC from 1891, as well as entertaining the Eton Ramblers from 1893.

I unearthed a picture of the 25-year-old Wodehouse as a member of the Bourton team, which included one of the last of the great lob-bowlers, G. H. Simpson-Hayward. I'm sure an informed audience such as this does not need reminding that 'lobs' are not just balls tossed high in the air: they are underarm deliveries – still common in the early 20th century, and by tradition featured in some Wodehouse Society matches today. Simpson-Hayward played five Tests in South Africa in 1910, taking 23 wickets at an average of 18. Not a bad man to have in a village team.

Back to Plum and his cricket. He played his last recorded match in August 1912, at Lord's, for Authors v. Publishers. He made 27, and claimed to have batted just seven minutes before being stumped – off the Middlesex fast bowler S. S. Pawling. Rain washed out play after seven overs of the Publishers' innings.

The Authors of 1912 were led by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who opened the batting with J. C. Snaith, author of the charming light novel *Willow the King*. The team included Hugh de Selincourt, who wrote the best cricket fiction work of all time, *The Cricket Match*.

Plum's next cricket involvement on the record was at Tost internment camp in Upper Silesia, where he was playing an impromptu game with other inmates when told he was to be released, on June 21, 1941.

Nine years earlier, in 1932, Plum attended the inaugural meeting of the Hollywood Cricket Club, established by an old Lord's Authors v. Actors opponent in Sir Charles Aubrey Smith. Plum took the minutes and offered to help buy equipment, becoming a vice president but never actually taking the field.

If PGW had been at Cheltenham in this season of 2013 – who might he pick as his gentleman's personal gentleman?

I do like the appeal of the Gloucestershire captain. "My man Klinger" sounds just right. However, Michael Klinger had the good sense to be born not merely in my home city of Melbourne, but specifically in its rather genteel and upmarket suburb of Kew, so genteel that he would probably have his own gentleman's personal gentleman, rather than being one.

I explained to the mixed gathering at Cheltenham that Wodehouseans by tradition say "Jeeves" rather than "Cheese" when a smiling photograph is required. So I now invite you all to stand and toast Plum and his Cheltenham Festival discovery, proclaiming "Jeeves" as we pay proper tribute to the man who died on the Somme in 1916, but who remains immortal in the magical world of Wodehouse.

Middlebrow Wodehouse

Recently, I received word of a new book of essays entitled *Middlebrow Wodehouse: P.G. Wodehouse's Work in Context*. A list of contents reveals that the book comprises some 13 sections on various aspects of Wodehouse's writing. Most of the contributors are academic specialists in their field, and there is no doubt they treat his work from an aspect very different from that of the casual reader.

Some sections will be familiar. 'Innovations in Writing', by Basil Conside, looks at Wodehouse's place in American musical comedy and deals with the sophistication he brought to it and its appeal to middlebrow culture.

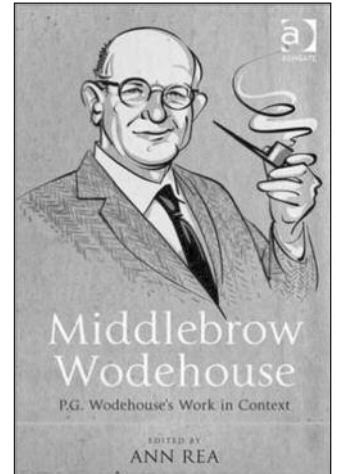
Another topic that Wodehouseans will recognise is 'Problematic Menswear in P.G. Wodehouse and Dornford Yates', by Kate Macdonald. (An abbreviated version of this was published in *Wooster Sauce* (March 2014) as 'Bertie Wooster's Spats'.) The editor, Ann Rea, says she enjoyed the comparison of Wodehouse and Yates as "writers who use clothes as a subject for humour". I thought I knew my Yates fairly well, but her remark surprised me, as did her comment that "Yates is prescriptive . . . whereas Wodehouse is dialectic". But she does add that "this essay goes a long way towards explaining why Wodehouse's humour has survived, while Yates's has not".

'Know Your Audience: Middlebrow Aesthetic and Literary Positioning', by Ann-Marie Einhaus, is not a title designed to attract the casual reader. The same might be said of 'A Fairly Unclouded Life: Upper-Class Masculinity in Crisis in the Early Jeeves and Wooster', by Roz Tuplin.

Against this, however, I was intrigued by 'The Prison Camp as Public School: Wodehouse, School Stories and the Second World War', by Caleb Richardson, and I would like to know more about 'Wooster the Musician', by Kenneth Kreitner. I would also like to read 'The Place of the Pig: Blandings, Barsetshire and Britain', by Debra Rae Cohen.

From the titles, it seems this is very much an academic assessment of Wodehouse writing in the context of the social history of his time. But the cost is a problem. Published by Ashgate, which has just been acquired by Routledge, *Middlebrow Wodehouse* can be purchased on Amazon for £95 plus shipping. At that price, I have not yet managed to acquire a copy.

– NORMAN MURPHY



The Word Around the Clubs

Pakistan Joins the Club

Maheen Pracha has sent us splendid news about the official launch of The PG Wodehouse Society (Pakistan). The initial intimation includes the sardonic comment from *The Small Bachelor* – “Marriage is not a process for prolonging the life of love, sir. It merely mummifies the corpse” – but we are sure this was included just to demonstrate they know their Wodehouse. The inaugural meeting was held on January 23 at The Last Word, Kasuri Road, Lahore, and we trust that it proved a popular occasion and will be the precursor of many more. We herewith pass on our welcome and good wishes to the new Society, especially as Maheen specifically mentioned happy memories of a UK Society evening in the Savage Club almost 20 years ago.

An Orchestral Empress

On January 26, as the first item on its *Afternoon at Three* programme, BBC Radio 3 broadcast a musical treat that had been recorded at the Maida Vale Studios by their Symphony Orchestra in December. Its title? *Empress of Blandings – A Musical Soufflé*.

In 2013, the composer, Simon Wills, was commissioned by the North German Radio Symphony Orchestra to write something for an English concert they were planning. As he tells the story, his brief was to make it “cheerful and lively and very English, preferably on a literary theme”. Wills immediately thought of P. G. Wodehouse and decided that if Wodehouse’s books were musical comedies without the music, he would write “a musical comedy without the words”. Prior to the composition’s premiere, he had to go out in front of a German audience and explain why he had written a piece about a pig by an author they had never heard of. “I’ve had easier gigs than that,” he commented, then went on to explain that *Empress of Blandings* was, like a soufflé, “a piece of absolutely no seriousness or substance. But if it raises a smile, then it’s done its job”.

The programme is no longer available to listen to on BBC’s Radio iPlayer, but you can take it from your Editor that the soufflé is a delightful musical confection and raised many smiles from those who heard it on the radio. (Thanks to ROBERT BRUCE.)

India’s Devotion to Wodehouse

It has been surmised that the highest percentage of Wodehouse fans can be found in India than in any other country. This seems to be borne up by the following passage spotted in the February edition of *The Oldie*:

India, apparently, is a hotbed of Wodehouse-worship – with more Wodehouse appreciation societies than anywhere except Russia. (In Russia, ‘Pyelem G Vudhaus’ was outlawed by Stalin in 1929, but was reinstated in 1990.) . . . [Indians] may not care for Kipling and the Raj, but they can still revere Wodehouse for his slightly worn erudition, his subversive mockery of classical and literary allusions, his period slang. Fans throughout the world are those who get the joke, when he says someone looks ‘like a tomato struggling for self-expression’ or that Honoria Glossop’s laugh sounds ‘like a squadron of cavalry charging over a tin bridge’. (And anyone who fails to get it must be, to use Plum’s expression, a perfect perisher.)

A Touching Telegram

Western Union				Telegram			
MSG. NO.	CL. OF SVCE.	PR.-COLL.	CASH NO.	ACCOUNTING INFORMATION	DATE	FILING TIME	SENT TIME
HCC 090					2.15.75	A.M. P.M.	4 P.M. A.M. P.M.
Send the following message, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to							<input type="checkbox"/> OVER NIGHT TELEGRAM UNLESS BOX ABOVE IS CHECKED THIS MESSAGE WILL BE SENT AS A TELEGRAM
TO Mrs. P.G. WODEHOUSE							
ADDRESS & TELEPHONE NO. REMENBERG 325 - 0374							
CITY - STATE & ZIP CODE							
<p>Mrs. Ford and I were deeply saddened to learn of the death of your husband & we join in sending our heartfelt sympathy to you. P.G. Wodehouse was a remarkable man. His warm sense of humor & insights into the human situation delighted readers throughout the world. The characters he created will always stay in our memory. Beyond this they will help us to recall the unique & gracious charm of a man who could look at life with all of its uncertainties & adversities & still keep a twinkle in his eye. Our hearts go out to you & our prayers are with you, now & in the days ahead.</p>							
SIGNED							
GERALD R. FORD							
SENDER'S TEL. NO.		NAME & ADDRESS		PRESIDENT G.R. FORD		WHITE HOUSE	
(Area Code)		WASHINGTON D.C.		(Zip Code)			
W.U. 5210 (3/73)							

It is 41 years since P G Wodehouse left this earth for Blandings in the sky. Following his death, then U.S. President Gerald Ford sent this telegram to Lady Wodehouse. The text reads:

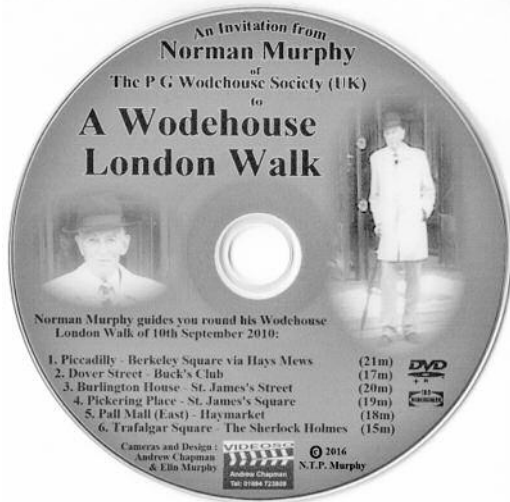
Mrs. Ford and I were deeply saddened to learn of the death of your husband & we join in sending our heartfelt sympathy to you. P.G. Wodehouse was a remarkable man. His warm sense of humor & insights into the human situation delighted readers throughout the world. The characters he created will always stay in our memory. Beyond this they will help us to recall the unique and gracious charm of a man who could look at life with all of its uncertainties & adversities & still keep a twinkle in his eye. Our hearts go out to you & our prayers are with you, now & in the days ahead.

Signed
Gerald R. Ford

(Very belated thanks to the late Patrick Wodehouse for this item.)

Murphy's Wodehouse Walk – on DVD!

It has been more than two years since Norman Murphy last conducted a Wodehouse Walk for Society members. In 2009, in anticipation of having to give up doing the Walks, he put them in print in his book *Three Wodehouse Walks*. But in 2010, Andrew Chapman, then the Society's Treasurer, had another idea: to film a classic Wodehouse Walk and make it available to Wodehouseans. The filming duly took place but, due to some wheels within wheels, only recently has he been able to produce a very spiffing DVD.



A Wodehouse London Walk shows Norman leading a group of Wodehouseans through Wodehouse's Mayfair and on to Piccadilly, Pall Mall, and Trafalgar Square, before ending at the Sherlock Holmes pub. The DVD includes maps showing the route taken and many close-ups of the sites visited. Viewers can enjoy Norman's descriptions of the addresses Wodehouse knew and wrote about, as well as many additional stories from London's past, all told in his inimitable (some would say machine-gun) speaking style. This is as close as you can get to a Wodehouse Walk experience without actually being there.

[Ordering info deleted - no longer available.]

Little Nuggets

We Kidd You Not

ROBERT BRUCE spotted two great snippets from Society member PATRICK KIDD in the *Times* Diary of January 8, as follows.

.....
A French Raspberry. One of PG Wodehouse's most fabulous lines, from the opening of *The Luck of the Bodkins*, refers to the 'shifty, hangdog look which announces that an Englishman is about to talk French'. Seems the French aren't too hot the other way. Sir Edward Cazalet recalls that when *The Inimitable Jeeves* was translated into French, the idiom 'he was given the respectful raspberry by Jeeves' appeared as 'Jeeves lui donna respectueusement un jus de framboise'. Makes it sound like he'd ordered an aperitif! Bien je jamais!!!

.....
What does Wodehouse have in common with our prime minister, apart from some entertaining but far-fetched stories involving pigs? According to Norman Murphy, the author was helped on the path to fame by our PM's great-great-grandfather. Sir Ewen Cameron was manager of the bank where Wodehouse worked as a clerk. It made him so miserable that he turned to writing as an escape.

Another Clerical Appointment

Always thinking of his responsibility to the Society, MURRAY HEDGCOCK has spotted yet another clerical appointment in the *Daily Telegraph* that once again proves Wodehouse knew whereof he spake:

The Rev. Janet Turville, to be priest-in-charge of Walton-on-Trent with Croxall, Rosliston with Linton and Castle Gresley (with special responsibility for Walton-on-Trent with Croxall and Rosliston), priest-in-charge Immanuel Stapenhill, and assistant curate Seale and Lullington with Coton-in-the-Elms (with special responsibility for Coton-in-the-Elms), Diocese of Derby.

And Another Lady Acrostic

Thanks to CAROLINE FRANKLYN for sending another Wodehousean acrostic from *The Lady*, this one in the issue of August 2015. When solved, the puzzle's quotation proved to be from *Right Ho, Jeeves*, though it was missing a couple of words (indicated in brackets): "On July the twenty-fifth, looking bronzed and fit, I accompanied aunt and child back to London. At seven p.m. on July the twenty-sixth [we] alighted at Victoria. And at seven-twenty or thereabouts [we] parted with expressions of esteem."

Cosy Moments

The Churchill Factor, by Boris Johnson (2014)

(from Ian Alexander-Sinclair)

Ian spotted the following on page 122: “In habits he [Churchill] superficially resembled a Bertie Wooster figure – rising late, living on his own in a flat, smoking cigars with cronies in clubs, surrounded by lissom and intelligent girls who never quite count as girlfriends, and with his devoted secretary Eddie Marsh hovering around like Jeeves. But in industry and output he is the polar opposite. (You will recall Bertie Wooster’s credentials as a journalist rested entirely on a single article on ‘What the Well-Dressed Man is Wearing’ that once appeared in the periodical edited by his aunt Dahlia called *Milady’s Boudoir*.)”

Ian adds: “It occurred to me that only Boris Johnson could have conjured up such a comparison between Winston Churchill and Bertie Wooster.”

Darling Monster: The Letters of Lady Diana Cooper to Her Son John Julius Norwich 1939–1952 (2013) (from Christopher Bellew)

CHRISTOPHER WRITES: The title of this book speaks for itself. In September 1944 Duff Cooper was appointed British ambassador in Paris. Whilst living in the Bristol Hotel with his wife whilst the embassy was being made ready for them, she records that on their first evening they shared the hotel lift with P G Wodehouse and his wife, recently released from internment in Berlin. In the Epilogue, John Julius Norwich describes the evening entertainment at his parents’ house in Chantilly: “We read aloud, usually Dickens or Trollope but sometimes short stories – by Kipling, perhaps or Somerset Maugham, or – for me best of all – PG Wodehouse.”

Ten Cocktails: The Art of Convivial Drinking, by Alice Lascelles (2015) (from Jo Jacobius)

On pages 69–70 of this splendid new book, a Savoy bartender named Craddock “was soon mixing drinks for a crowd that featured just about every starlet, politician, press man and Bright Young Thing in town. Evelyn Waugh, P. G. Wodehouse, the Sitwells, Charlie Chaplin . . . were just some of the names that passed through the Savoy’s doors during his tenure.” And on page 85, a “sherbet champagne cocktail” called the French 75 is described as having been “created at Buck’s Club in London, a favourite hangout of *bon viveurs* including P.G. Wodehouse, who is said to have used the club as inspiration for the fictional *Drones*”.

“Sisters are a mistake, Clarence. You should have set your face against them from the outset.”

(from *Pigs Have Wings*, 1952)

Letters to the Editor

From Noel Bushnell

I was saddened to read of the death of Sir Terry Wogan. I first heard his voice on BBC radio in 1971 when my wife and I did the classic (and no longer permitted) Australian working holiday in London and elsewhere. He was best known in Oz for his tongue-in-cheek commentary on the Eurovision Song Contest, which is to say that in the intervening 45 years I rarely heard him at all but, for some reason, never forgot him either. I’ve no doubt he will be missed by many.

From Mark Smith

An even stronger indication that Julian Fellowes is a Wodehouse enthusiast (Little Nuggets, December 2015) is that he wrote the screenplay for a 2005 movie of *Piccadilly Jim*. In my humble o., it’s good, but not great.

Mastermind Quiz 18: America and Americans

1. Americans Vanessa Polk and Wilbur Trout attempt to steal what from Blandings Castle in *A Pelican at Blandings*?
2. In *Uneasy Money*, who sets off for America to seek his fortune?
3. Bream Mortimer, Eustace Hignett, Sam Marlowe, and Jane Hubbard all meet on an ocean liner en route from New York to England in which book?
4. Lord ‘Chuffy’ Chuffnell is attempting to sell his country pile to which wealthy American in *Thank You, Jeeves*?
5. Which American publication does Psmith work for in *Psmith, Journalist*?
6. With whom does Reggie Swithin fall in love on the train from Chicago to Los Angeles in *Laughing Gas*?
7. Which American millionaire is engaged to Lady Beatrice Bracken in *Hot Water*?
8. George Bevan, American golfer and writer of stage musicals, falls in love with Lady Maud Marsh in which Wodehouse novel?
9. Freddie Threepwood attempts to sell which American pet product to the English?
10. What is the name of Bertie Wooster’s poet friend who lives on Long Island and hates New York City?

(Answers on page 18)

The Wooster Source

by Graeme Davidson

*This is the real Tabasco,
It's the word from Bertie Wooster,
Intrusive house-guest at the
county set's stately Xanadus
And confider in us of his
strictly entre-nous*



I sank into a chair, thoroughly pipped.

"What's to be done, Jeeves?"

"We must think, sir."

"You think. I haven't the machinery."

"I will most certainly devote my very best attention to the matter, sir, and will endeavour to give satisfaction."

Well, that was something. But I was ill at ease. Yes, there is no getting away from it, Bertram was ill at ease.

'Without the Option', *Carry On, Jeeves* (1925)

He was a man who was musing on the coming Social Revolution. He said nothing, merely looking at me as if he were measuring me up for my lamp-post.

Thank You, Jeeves (1934)

Whether anyone was ever at his ease in the society of this old Gawd-help-us, I cannot say, but I definitely was not. The spine, and I do not attempt to conceal the fact, had become soluble in the last degree.

Joy in the Morning (1947)

Answers to Mastermind Quiz

(Page 17)

1. A painting of a reclining nude
2. William FitzWilliam Delamere Chalmers, Lord Dawlish
3. *The Girl on the Boat*
4. J. Washburn Stoker
5. *Cosy Moments*
6. April June
7. Packy Franklyn
8. *A Damsel in Distress*
9. Donaldson's Dog Joy
10. Rockmetteller 'Rocky' Todd

Wilfred Allsop was sitting up, his face pale, his eyes glassy, his hair disordered. He looked like the poet Shelley after a big night out with Lord Byron.

(from *Galahad at Blandings*, 1964)

Terry Wogan and Wodehouse in the Press

Following Sir Terry Wogan's death, several news reports mentioned his affinity for P. G. Wodehouse. Here are some; see also Patrick Kidd's comments on page 2.

In its gentle, teasing way, for the best part of half a century, Wogan's world was an antidote to everything that was barbarous, dismaying and shouty about modern Britain. Like his favourite author, P G Wodehouse, Terry created an affable, innocent fictional world that you could step into and, no matter how lousy or nasty life seemed, it always made you feel better.

– Alison Pearson, *The Daily Telegraph*, February 1
(from CAROLYN DE LA PLAIN)

[Wogan] was a master of the shared joke . . . in charge of a slightly strange and very, very British sect. How to explain that to someone who didn't listen or get the jokes. . . . I sat there nodding, equally struggling to think past the clichés people write about Wogan. Then it came to me, P G Wodehouse. He was president of the P G Wodehouse Society: Jeeves, Bertie Wooster, Gussie Fink-Nottle – all the characters sort of echo the mood of a morning with Wogan.

– David Sillito, BBC News website, February 1
(from NICK TOWNEND)

Like Wodehouse, he created a world of his own, in which traffic cones bred like rabbits, hens wore miner's lamps in winter, oil barons had budgie feathers in their Stetsons and in the corner of some unspecified Irish hooley, a woman in a bed called insistently for more porter. And got it.

– Nancy Banks-Smith, *The Guardian*, February 1

A Cosy Moment

The Street of Wonderful Possibilities: Whistler, Wilde & Sargent in Tite Street, by Devon Cox (2015)
(from Terry Taylor)

This book describes how Tite Street, in Chelsea, was built up to become an artistic centre from the latter part of the 19th century, lasting as such well into the 20th century. Each chapter is headed with an apt quotation, including this one:

He laughed bitterly. The mordant witticisms of Lancelot Mulliner at the expense of the Royal Academy were quoted from Tite Street in the south to Holland Park in the north and eastward as far as Bloomsbury.

– P G Wodehouse, *Mulliner Nights*, 1933

Clearly PGW knew his artistic London!

Crossword Conundrums

The Times, December 11 (from June Arnold)
A somewhat convoluted crossword clue producing the answer ‘Bertie Wooster’ read as follows: “Literary idler requiring a fillip when about to marry wife with hesitation (6.7).”

The Daily Telegraph, December 19
(from Carolyn De La Plain)
In the £500 Giant Christmas General Knowledge Crossword clues included:
68 across: _____ Aren’t Gentlemen; one of Jeeves and Bertie comic novels by P.G. Wodehouse (5)
90 across: Relationship of Valerie to Frederick Altamont Cornwallis Twistleton in novels by P.G. Wodehouse (5)

The Daily Telegraph, December 26
(from Carolyn De La Plain)
Number 42 down in the GK Crossword was: Stanley Featherstonehaugh _____; character in *Love Among the Chickens* and *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*.

The Times, December 29 (from Keith Alsop)
The clue for 12 across in the Times crossword was: “Older person like Lord Emsworth preceding current Queen.” The answer: Earlier (geddit?!)

The Daily Telegraph, January 23
(from Carolyn De La Plain)
The clue for 26 across in the GK Crossword was: “Nickname of Reginald Twistleton in P.G. Wodehouse’s Uncle Fred stories; or a dog character in Dodie Smith’s *The Hundred and One Dalmatians*. (5)”

Poet’s Corner

A Protest

(Kleptomania is largely on the increase amongst women.
– *Daily Paper*)

Phyllis, your eyes are remarkably bright,
And their colour an absolute dream.
But they shine with a strangely unscrupulous light,
With a weird, kleptomaniac gleam.
I scorn to expostulate, carp, or repine,
I don’t for a moment complain;
But they ought to be gazing, I feel, into mine,
And they’re fixed on my watch and my chain.

Your hands are a theme for a laureate’s song,
Their beauty no blemishes mar;
But your fingers, I note, are uncommonly long
Shall I live to regret that they are?
When I grasp that right hand, which I’ve striven to win,
To take you for better or worse,
Shall I feel that the left is abstracting my pin,
Or groping about for my purse?

Forego, I implore, your nefarious skill;
Turn over, I beg, a new leaf.
It’s pleasant to feel that you’re clever, but still,
One shuns e’en the cleverest thief.
Many, indeed, are the treasures I own,
With which I’m not anxious to part;
Pray leave all my property strictly alone,
Content to have stolen my heart.

From *Vanity Fair*, 10 November 1904

The Bibliographic Corner *by Nick Townend*

The Ten Scarcest Wodehouse UK First Editions

In the course of some 20 years spent (albeit not exclusively) searching for Wodehouse first editions, I have often come across books described by the vendor in terms such as “one of the scarcest Wodehouse titles to find as a first edition”. Was this just typical dealers’ sales patter, designed to encourage one to pay handsomely for a first edition against one’s better judgement, or was it actually true? I decided it was time to find out.

My mission to find out was a two-stage process, first performing some market analysis on my own account, and then combining my outputs with the views of various collectors and a dealer in a systematic manner, to arrive at a consolidated view of the ten scarcest Wodehouse UK first editions.

In the old days (pre-internet), one’s knowledge of the market was built up from visits to bookshops and book fairs, from reading articles and adverts in the (sadly now defunct) *Book and Magazine Collector*, and from obtaining book dealers’ catalogues, together with occasional auction catalogues when major Wodehouse collections came to the market. Nowadays, the great majority of the market is online (e.g. eBay, Abebooks, the various auction houses’ own websites), with the result that it is much easier to see a greater proportion of the market.

I analysed various sources of both pre and post internet information when compiling my own list of the ten scarcest titles. These sources were as follows:

- The contents of six major Wodehouse collections which came to market over the course of the last 20 years or so
- A history of online auction results available from a major auction website, which aggregates results since 2003 from many separate auction houses
- Titles listed for sale on Abebooks on 24 September 2015
- Other transactions of which I am aware (from a combination of my own purchases, information in various dealers’ catalogues, and conversations with dealers)
- A detailed analysis of dealers’ catalogues for the period from 1988 to 2000, performed by John Graham (to whom I am deeply indebted for sharing the analysis with me)

Extensive as these sources are, they are, inevitably, incomplete. For example, they only partially cover on-market transactions (e.g. it is not possible to obtain details of all

titles sold on Abebooks or Ebay), and they, of necessity, ignore off-market transactions (e.g. a dealer or a collector selling a book directly to a collector without advertising it first).

Starting with the contents of the six major Wodehouse collections which have come to market, arguably the most interesting thing about them, for present purposes at least, is what was not present in each collection, rather than what was. The table below shows the collections examined, and highlights the items which were not present. Only the Heineman collection was complete, with the other collections missing between five and eight titles. In several instances, the collectors had contented themselves with a later issue of the first edition (e.g. with a later advertising supplement, in Colonial cloth, in a library binding); these titles have been identified with an asterisk in the table but have been treated as being not present for the purposes of this article, as the focus is on first issues of first editions.

UK First Editions Missing from Major Collections on Sale		Robert G Plunkett	Henry Blofeld	James Heineman	Michael Carter	John Graham	Michael Collins	Net Appearances
Title	Date	1994	1994	1998	2000	2014	2014	
The Globe By The Way Book	1908	o/s	o/s	1	o/s	o/s	o/s	1
Uneasy Money	1916	o/s	o/s	1	o/s	1	o/s	2
The White Feather	1907	1	o/s*	1	o/s	o/s*	1	3
Not George Washington	1907	1	o/s*	1	1(H)	o/s*	1	3
The Man with Two Left Feet	1917	o/s	o/s*	1	1	1	o/s	3
The Head of Kay's	1905	1	1	1	o/s	1(H)	1	4
Love Among the Chickens	1906	o/s	1	1	1(B)	1	1	4
The Prince and Betty	1912	1	o/s	1	o/s	1	1	4
The Man Upstairs	1914	1	o/s*	1	1	o/s*	1	4
Something Fresh	1915	o/s	o/s*	1	1	1	1	4
The Gold Bat	1904	1	1	1	1	o/s*	1	5
The Swoop	1909	1	1	1	1	1	o/s	5
Psmith Journalist	1912	1	1	1	o/s	1	1	5
A Damsel in Distress	1919	1	1	1	1	1	o/s	5
Jill the Reckless	1920	o/s	1	1	1	1	1	5
Money for Nothing	1928	1	1	1	1	1	o/s	5
Number outstanding		6	8	0	6	5	6	

* = first edition present, but not in first issue format B = copy acquired from the Blofeld collection
H = copy acquired from the Heineman collection

When combined with the information from the other sources I examined, the initial list of titles shown above changes somewhat, as the table below demonstrates. Readers will note that the final rankings I have assigned to the titles differs in three instances from the rankings generated by the data analysed: having performed a “sniff test” on the data rankings, I promoted both *The Globe By The Way Book* and *Indiscretions of Archie* by one place, and demoted *Something Fresh* by two places.

Appearances of UK First Editions	Date	Sale of Major Collections				Online Auction Results		JG Analysis 1998-2000	Total Appearances per Data	Rank per Data*	Rank per NT
		24/09/15	Others	Results	24/09/15						
Uneasy Money	1916	2	0	0	1	0	3	1	2		
The Globe By The Way Book	1908	1	1	0	1	1	4	2	1		
Love Among the Chickens	1906	4	0	0	0	3	7	3	3		
Not George Washington	1907	3	1	0	2	1	7	4	4		
Something Fresh	1915	4	2	0	1	0	7	5	7		
The Man with Two Left Feet	1917	3	1	1	1	2	8	6	5		
The Prince and Betty	1912	4	0	1	1	4	10	7	6		
A Damsel in Distress	1919	5	0	1	2	2	10	8	8		
The Man Upstairs	1914	4	1	1	1	5	12	9	9		
The White Feather	1907	3	3	2	1	4	13	10	11		
Indiscretions of Archie	1921	6	0	2	1	6	15	11	10		

* = where total appearances are equal, ranking is based on date of publication

As previously mentioned, the second stage of the process was to combine my outputs with the views of various collectors and dealers. I asked three eminent collectors (John Graham, Tony Ring, and Gus Caywood) and one leading dealer (Jonathan Frost of J&M Books) to each send me their own list of what they regarded (with no conferring) as the ten scarcest titles. Very graciously, they all did so. Armed with five lists, I then followed the process outlined below to arrive at a consolidated list.

- Added together the “points” given to the books in each list (most scarce = 1 point).
- Divided the total points by the number of times the title appeared in the five lists, to calculate an average points score for each title.
- Disregarded any title which only appeared in just one of the five lists, in order to prevent a “rogue” item from being propelled up the consolidated list merely because one person considered it scarce (e.g. Tony Ring ranked *The Pothunters* fifth, but no one else included it in their list).
- Ranked those titles appearing two or more times on the basis of their average points score.

The output from the exercise is shown in the table below.

The Scarcest Wodehouse UK First Editions	NT	JG	TR	GC	JF	Total Points	Number of Appearances	Average Score	Weighted Ranking
The Globe By The Way Book	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	1.0	1
Uneasy Money	2	3		2	3	10	4	2.5	2
Not George Washington	4	2	2	4	6	18	5	3.6	3
Love Among the Chickens	3	7	3	5	4	22	5	4.4	4
The Man with Two Left Feet	5	4	10	3	2	24	5	4.8	5
The Prince and Betty	6	5	8	7	5	31	5	6.2	6
Something Fresh	7	6	9	6	8	36	5	7.2	7
The Swoop			4	8	10	22	3	7.3	8
A Damsel in Distress	8	8				16	2	8.0	9
Piccadilly Jim		10			7	17	2	8.5	10
The Man Upstairs	9			9		18	2	9.0	11
Indiscretions of Archie	10	9				19	2	9.5	12
The Head of Kay's					9	9	N/A (<2)	N/A	N/A
Tales of St Austin's			7			7	N/A (<2)	N/A	N/A
A Gentleman of Leisure				10		10	N/A (<2)	N/A	N/A
William Tell Told Again			6			6	N/A (<2)	N/A	N/A
The Pothunters			5			5	N/A (<2)	N/A	N/A

Points emerging from the analysis include :

- Everyone ranked *The Globe By The Way Book* as the scarcest title.
- The weighted top seven titles appeared in everyone’s list (apart from *Uneasy Money* being omitted from Tony Ring’s).
- John Graham, Gus Caywood, and I all put the weighted top seven titles in our top seven titles (albeit in somewhat different orders), and Jonathan Frost put six of them in his top seven, placing the other title eighth.
- There was less consensus over titles 8 to 10, with ten titles being proposed across the five lists for the final three places on the consolidated list. The titles which ended up at 8 to 10 only appeared on two or three people’s lists, indicating the diversity of opinion over the minor places.

What conclusions can be drawn from all of the analysis?

- *The Globe By The Way Book* and *Uneasy Money* are by some distance the two scarcest titles.
- There is general agreement over the seven scarcest titles, albeit the relative scarcity of the different titles remains a subject of debate.
- Three of the seven scarcest titles were the only Wodehouse first editions published by the relevant publisher (*The Globe By The Way Book* by The Globe, *Not George Washington* by Cassell, and *The Prince and Betty* by Mills and Boon), and another was one of only two Wodehouse first editions from that publisher (*Love Among the Chickens* by George Newnes, who also published *My Man Jeeves*).
- The other three of the scarcest seven were the titles published by Methuen during the First World War (*Something Fresh* (1915), *Uneasy Money* (1916), and *The Man with Two Left Feet* (1917)).
- None of the school stories is among the ten scarcest titles: one may not be able to judge a book by its cover, but it seems that pictorial covers certainly help a book to survive.
- The scarcity (and price) of the scarcest titles has a

knock-on effect on the price of other early editions of the same titles, particularly where they exist in the same format to the first edition, first issue. Later issues of the first editions of the school stories (which are often identical to the first issue other than the presence of a later advertising supplement) have for some time typically commanded the same price as the first issues. For those of the scarcest titles where the second edition was the same as the first edition, other than a statement on one of the preliminary pages that it is a second edition, the prices of second

editions have been steadily rising, as for many collectors the second editions are realistically the most attainable early editions. Titles which fall into this category include *Uneasy Money*, *Love Among the Chickens*, and *Something Fresh*.

Until the impossible task is achieved of taking an inventory of all surviving copies of Wodehouse first editions, one cannot be definitive on the scarcity of various titles. However, it is hoped that the above analysis gives collectors a better basis for judging a dealer’s comment that such-and-such a book is “one of the scarcest Wodehouse titles to find as a first edition”.

Of course, I would be delighted to be proved wrong about the scarcity of some titles; if any collector has half a dozen surplus copies of *The Globe By The Way Book* that he is wondering what to do with (or even just one surplus copy), please would he contact me first.

Recent Press Comment

Times Literary Supplement, November 24

(from Barry Chapman)

In his review of new selected poems by Hans Magnus Enzenberger, Michael Hofman began: “With a nod to Jeeves’s ‘stately procession of one’ I once described Hans Magnus Enzenberger as ‘a renaissance of one’.” (Ahem. It’s actually Sebastian Beach, butler to Lord Emsworth, whose elegance is being described.)

The Wall Street Journal, November 21

(from June Arnold)

‘The Only Present You’ll Ever Need/ The Best Possible Present’ is the Collector’s Wodehouse (Overlook Press, the U.S. version of Everyman), which has printed “99 volumes of the best comic writer of the 20th century”.

Country Life, November 25

(from Oliver Wise, Beth Carroll, & June Arnold)

In an article entitled ‘Eden and the Fall’, featuring drawings by Matthew Rice, Jeremy Musson discussed fictional country houses “created by P.G. Wodehouse as a backdrop to his delightful stories and novels”. He made reference to a certain N. Murphy as well as *In Search of Blandings* and *A Wodehouse Handbook*.

The Danny Baker Show, BBC Radio 5, November 28

(from David Anderton)

In Baker’s feature ‘Unusual Thank-yous’, one caller said he had received a ‘thank you’ from Princess Anne for looking after her cattle grazing on common land when they were being rounded up. Baker’s response: “There you go, that is it about Princess Anne; she could be one of P.G. Wodehouse’s Aunts.”

The Times, December 2 (from several contributors)

Anna Murphy wrote that when kidneys are “accompanied with chunks of steak and topped with pastry . . . they can be enough to endanger a future marriage. (When Gussie Fink- Nottle is ordered by his fiancée, Madeline, to abandon his beloved steak and kidney pie in P.G. Wodehouse’s *Stiff Upper Lip*, *Jeeves*, the horrified Bertie Wooster almost finds himself the proxy bridegroom.)”

The Daily Telegraph, December 3

(from several contributors).

One of its leaders, headed ‘Without A Stitch’, expressed sympathy for tailors who have not been paid. A poetic warning from PGW was quoted: “I write these lines with a borrowed quill / On the back of an unpaid tailor’s bill / As clever readers will no doubt guess / The local workhouse is my address.”

The Metro, December 7 (from Carolyn De La Plain)

At number 3 on the list of “the top ten ideas for literary dads this Christmas” was PGW’s *Something Fresh*. In her introduction to the tome, Nina Stibbe suggested that “Blandings isn’t so much a fictional

place as a state of mind”. (I’m not sure why literary mums don’t get a look in!)

The Daily Telegraph, December 12

(from several contributors)

The obituary of Rank Studios starlet Beth Rogan noted that she had drawn “the attention of Tony Samuel, a member of the Shell oil dynasty and later publisher of P.G. Wodehouse”.

Mastermind, BBC One, December 16

(from June Arnold)

Question in the general knowledge round: “Which writer was described by Sean O’Casey as English literature’s performing flea?”

The Spectator, December 16

(from Christopher Bellew & Bruce Montgomery)

The Christmas edition contained a less-than-flattering piece on Hillary Clinton by Christopher Buckley, who concluded with the following: “I’ll let Bertie Wooster have the last word: ‘It is no use telling me there are good aunts and bad aunts. At the core, they are all alike. Sooner or later, out pops the cloven hoof.’”

The Spectator, December 16

(from Christopher Bellew)

Charles Moore wrote about his Irish hunter, Tommy: “When I study the photographs of Tommy jumping . . . he is Jeeves to my Wooster: no matter how fatuous his master, he will get him out of trouble.”

Times Literary Supplement, December 18 and 25

(from Barry Chapman)

The *Washington Post* columnist Michael Dirda discussed what to give people for Christmas, saying that, among others, “the most versatile book gifts remain . . . just about anything by P.G. Wodehouse”.

The Times, December 21 (from Tony Ring)

The obituary of Alan Lee, the paper’s racing correspondent, made reference to one of his favourite authors being P.G. Wodehouse.

The Hindu, December 29

Vikram Phukan, in advising that *Jeeves and Wooster in Perfect Nonsense* was touring India, suggested that “India can easily be called the incongruous outpost of Wodehouseana and Indians are, quite possibly, the largest Wodehouse readership in the world”.

Numerous newspapers, December 29

(from, it seems, about half of the Society!)

Following his death on December 28, many newspapers made reference to Lemmy (aka Ian Kilmister), the bassist and frontman of the heavy metal band Motorhead, being ‘addicted’ to P. G. Wodehouse. That little bombshell also made the front page of *The Week*.

The Cricketer, January (from Murray Hedgcock)

In ‘Wodehouse’s lifelong love’, Andrew Green wrote: “From his earliest productions, cricket looms large in

Wodehouse's work." Recommended reading included *A Prefect's Uncle*, *Wodehouse at the Wicket* (by MH), and 'How's That, Jeeves?' in *A la Recherche du Cricket Perdu* by Simon Barnes.

The Lady, January 1 (from Carolyn Franklyn)

Quentin Letts said the authors who have influenced him most include P. G. Wodehouse, who was "the master of comic simile and bathos".

The Financial Times, January 5 (from Hilary Bruce)

A letter referred to Mark Zuckerberg currently working on a 'robot butler'. The writer hoped it would be "closer to a robotic version of Jeeves, the super-valet described by P.G. Wodehouse" and pointed out that "Jeeves famously edited the Young Master's wardrobe as a quid pro quo for extracting him from a 'scrape'. In Mr Zuckerberg's case, this is more likely to take the form of slowing active user growth than an angry aunt."

The Daily Telegraph, January 8

(from Carolyn De La Plain)

In the course of an interview with Miles Jupp (now presenting Radio 4's *News Quiz*), Harry Wallop wrote that Mr Jupp was a good friend of the acerbic comedian Frankie Boyle. Jupp said Boyle introduced him to the delights of Wodehouse's Psmith books.

Mumbai Mirror, January 10

In another article relating to the play *Perfect Nonsense*, currently touring India, an avid PGW fan, Sadhona Siddiqui, said: "People from my generation, in their sixties and seventies, are the real Wodehouse fans. I have read 30 or 40 Wodehouse books, if not more. My brother and I would read the books and laugh our heads off. Our parents would wonder if everything was ok."

The Week, January 16

(from Roger Bowen and Alexander Dainty)

When asked for his list of best books, Quentin Letts included *Psmith, Journalist*, of which he said: "Some think Wodehouse is just chinless Berties in spats. They should read Psmith (the P is silent as in pshrimp), who is an imperturbable chancer of such blithe egalitarianism that he addresses everyone as 'comrade'."

Mail on Sunday, January 17

(from Robert Best and Stephen Payne)

In the Black Dog column, its author "refrains from naming the Eurosceptic Tory Minister cruelly branded Spode by pro-EU wags – after P.G. Wodehouse's fictional character based on Oswald Mosley".

Pointless, BBC One, January 21

(from Murray Hedgcock)

A question on this popular TV quiz programme was: "Who wrote the verses on which the musical *Cats* was based?" A giggly female contestant replied: "P. G. Wodehouse."

The Museum of Curiosity, BBC Radio 4, January 25

(from several contributors)

Society Patron Henry Blofeld was a guest on this edition of the Radio 4 programme. His donation to the imaginary museum was "the funniest writer that I've ever read [and] I never fail to have one of his books open beside me in my bedroom – P. G. Wodehouse". He extolled the greatness of Wodehouse and delivered several quotes, including the wonderful 'grunted' line.

Daily Mail, February 1 (from Dave Anderton)

The writer Daisy Goodwin wrote that "Bertie Wooster got me through my year of hell". Following a grim time, including a diagnosis of breast cancer, she "walked out of the hospital and into a bookshop", where she purchased *The Code of the Woosters* by P.G. Wodehouse. "It's a world removed from real life – no one in a Wodehouse novel gets sick . . . but it is gloriously entertaining."

The Guardian, February 2 (from Terry Taylor)

In her review of *Bloody Queens*, a drama documentary about Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots, Lucy Mangan said Mary accepted Elizabeth's offer of friendship as it rapidly became clear to her "that it is not going to be difficult to distinguish between a Protestant Scottish laird and a ray of sunshine". Sounds familiar!

Evening Standard, February 3

David Sexton's review of the Coen Brothers' new film, *Hail Caesar!*, concluded that it was "the Coen Brothers in their most P.G. Wodehouse mode". (Any chance of getting George Clooney as a patron? Just a thought!)

City A.M., February 5 (from Christopher Bellew)

In discussing the current negotiations with the EU, Jacob Rees-Mogg said that "in any negotiation, you don't get more than you first asked for – unless you are negotiating with Bertie Wooster, who always seemed to get the wrong end of any negotiation he is in".

Sunday Mail Event, February 7 (from June Arnold)

Asked where where she would go if she could go back in time, Carolie Quentin responded: "I'd love to be around the literary crowd in London between the wars and hang out with the likes of . . . P.G. Wodehouse".

An Index for *Wooster Sauce* and *By The Way*

Since The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) was founded in 1997, 77 issues of *Wooster Sauce* and 63 editions of *By The Way* have been published, including the current issues. As the numbers of these two publications accumulate, it has been deemed sensible to compile an index of their contents – and, by Jove, the deed is now done!

The *Index to Wooster Sauce and By The Way* is actually two indexes: one for subjects, the other for authors. It currently covers all issues published through the end of 2015, will be updated on an annual basis, and is available in PDF form via the Society's website.

Future Events for Your Diary

May 6–8, 2016 *Sally* in New York City

Although *Musicals Tonight!* is *not* staging *Oh, Boy!*, as advertised in our last issue, we've learned that the Light Opera of New York is putting on *Sally* at Theatre 80 in New York. For further details, visit the LOONY website: www.lightoperaofnewyork.org.

May 20, 2016 Gold Bats vs. The Dulwich Dusters

This year the Gold Bats' annual match against the Dulwich Dusters will be held in May, rather than June, and the start time has also changed. Play at Dulwich College will commence from 6 pm, and all members are invited to come and watch, but note there will be no tea served by the Society this year. For details, see Society News on page 3.

June 29, 2016 Society Meeting at the Savoy Tupp

PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATE! Originally scheduled for the 20th July, our meeting will now be held on the 29th June. See page 3 for details of the evening's entertainment. We meet at the Savoy Tupp from 6 p.m.

July 2, 2016 Gold Bats vs. Sherlock Holmes Society

Our annual match against the Sherlockians will be played this year on a Saturday rather than a Sunday, as ever on the West Wycombe Cricket Club's pitch. We gather around 11 a.m. and all members are invited; bring a picnic lunch! See page 3,

July 14, 2016 Tree Planting at Cheltenham

To mark the centenary of Percy Jeeves's death on the Somme during World War I, the Society will be planting a tree in his memory during the Cheltenham Cricket Festival. See page 4 for details.

September 25, 2016

Richard Burnip's Wodehouse Walk

Richard Burnip will lead a Wodehouse-themed walk for London Walks (note: this is not a Society-sponsored event). The usual fee is £10, but our members get a discounted price of £8. No need to book a place; just be at exit 2 (Park Lane east side) of Marble Arch Underground station at 2.30 p.m., and identify yourself as a Society member.

October 20, 2016 Dinner at Gray's Inn

The Society's biennial dinner will be held at our customary venue of Gray's Inn, London. See page 3 for current information, and watch out for application forms in the June issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

November 23, 2016 Society AGM at the Savoy Tupp

Our last meeting of the year – the AGM – is later than usual, but there you are. Following the business meeting, we will have an entertainment, still being decided. As ever, we will convene from 6 p.m. onwards at the Savoy Tupp.

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