

WOOSTER SAUCE

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Commemorating Percy Jeeves

by Christopher Bellew

It was a solemn and thoughtful group of Society members who converged on the cricket ground at Cheltenham College on July 14 to watch Gloucester play Essex. It is an idyllic location, the pitch fringed with tents, reminiscent of matches a century and more ago. One tent, dispensing ale, had straw bales for their customers to sit on while slaking their thirst. W G Grace played here in the 19th century, scoring the first ever triple hundred, among other feats. In the 20th century, Wally Hammond set a world record that still stands, taking ten catches in a match by a fielder. This historic ground is kept in tip-top condition and has won more than one award in recognition of that fact. It was a privilege to be here.

We had come for more than a cricket match, though. In the lunch interval a crowd of more than 100 gathered around a newly planted poplar sapling to commemorate the death of Percy Jeeves at the Battle of the Somme in July 1916.

Keith Mellard, Percy's great-nephew, and Sir Edward Cazalet, Wodehouse's grandson, placed ceremonial top-dressing around the tree. Our chairman, Hilary Bruce, spoke movingly about Percy Jeeves and the loss of life in the Great War: "We are planting this tree," she said, "to honour Percy Jeeves and, with him, all the others who died alongside him in that battle, lost in the mud at High Wood, and to honour all the other young men who died on foreign fields in the First World War." We were all unusually

silent, reflecting on Percy Jeeves's death and on members of our own families who had lost their lives.

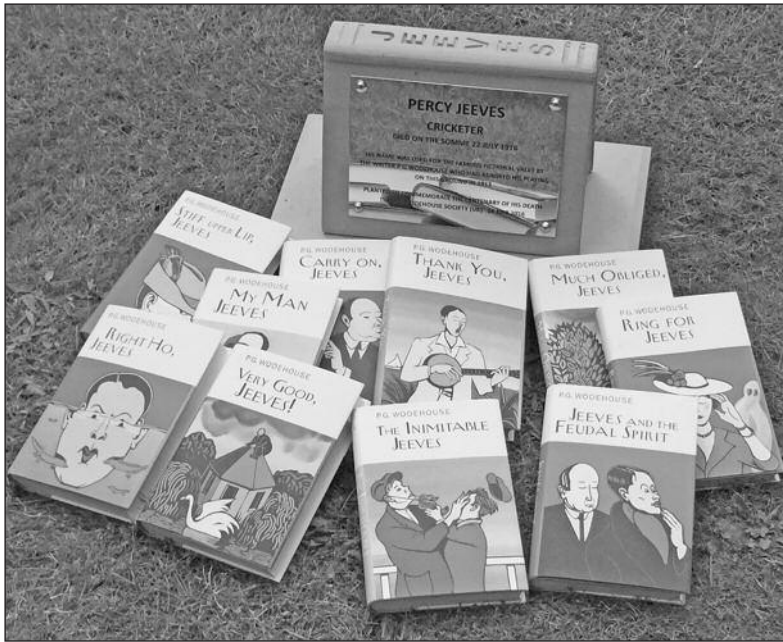
Edward Cazalet's uncle, also an Edward Cazalet, was killed at the Somme while serving in the Welsh Guards. He was 22 and one of 148 Old Etonians killed at the Somme. (My grandfather was wounded at the Somme; his half-brother was killed in 1917 serving in the Irish Guards.) The Great War touched so many families, and many of us were wearing regimental ties.



Sir Edward Cazalet assists with the tree planting, with the Society's Hilary Bruce and Tim Andrew on the far left and Keith Mellard, Percy Jeeves's great-nephew, on the right. (Photo by Robert Bruce)

Beside the sapling there is a double-sided plaque, which was unveiled by Hilary. (*For the wording on the plaque, see page 3.*)

Following the ceremony, we repaired to a marquee for lunch, after which there were speeches. Hilary opened the batting (her second innings), welcoming a clutch of distinguished guests. Among them were Earl Bathurst, Patron of Gloucester CCC, and his wife, the Rt Hon. the Countess Bathurst, who



In addition to providing the plaque, set on a stone designed in the shape of a book, the Society contributed a number of PGW books to the Cheltenham College Library; all feature 'Jeeves' in the title. (Photo by Robert Bruce)

this year is High Sheriff of Gloucestershire; Dame Janet Trotter DBE, Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire; Lt Col John Rice, representing Percy Jeeves's regiment (the 15th Warwicks), now part of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers; Chris Tickle, Deputy Chairman of Warwickshire CCC; Brian Halford, author of a biography of Percy Jeeves; and members of the Jeeves and Wodehouse families. Hilary thanked the people at Gloucestershire CCC and Cheltenham College for their help in making this commemoration possible; Sir Robert Morland from the former and Kirk Steel, Estates Bursar at the latter, were singled out for especial thanks. She spoke of her sadness at so many lives being cut short and how Jeeves symbolizes this lost generation.

Dame Janet also spoke about the Great War. She pointed out that as the plaque is double-sided, it can be read from the road by passers-by as well as by people on the cricket ground, making it accessible to Town and Gown.

Keith Mellard spoke about his memories of Percy Jeeves, gleaned from Percy's brother Alick, who was also a useful cricketer. Edward Cazalet spoke about 'Plum' and echoed Dame Janet's sentiment that the memorial would be a reminder to the people of Cheltenham as well as pupils at the college of the Great War and those who died.

After lunch, members and guests mingled, and Brian Halford signed copies of his biography, *The Real Jeeves*.

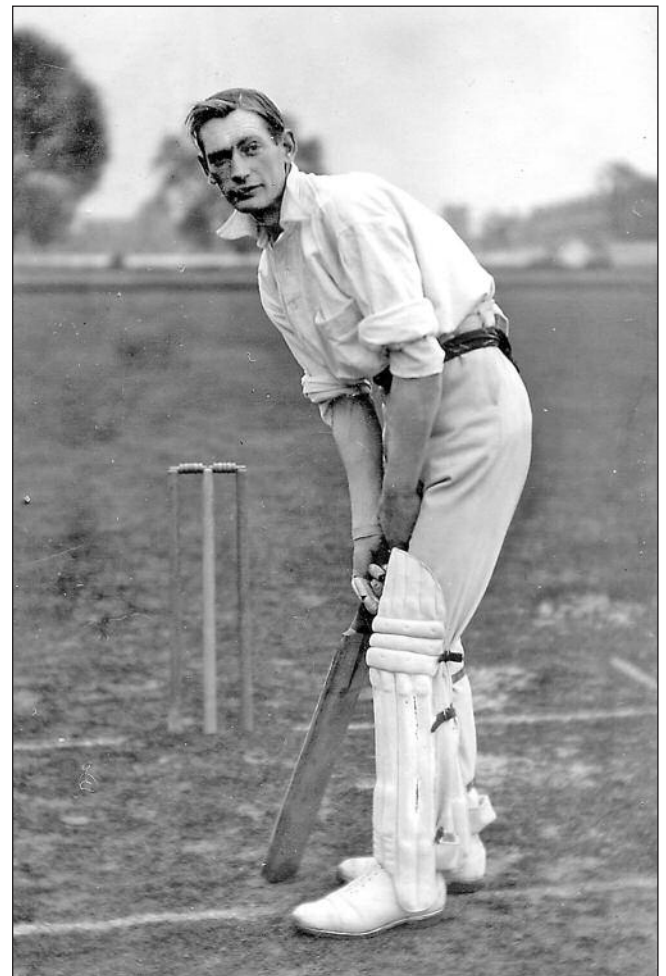
Percy Jeeves played in 50 first-class matches, scored 1,204 runs, and took 199 wickets. He was 28 when he was killed. During the war, 275 Test and first-class cricketers died, and from many other walks of life there are similar memories of unfulfilled potential cut short.

P G Wodehouse has ensured that Percy Jeeves is not an Unknown Warrior. His memory will live eternally, however long that may be – at any rate much longer than the poplar tree. However, while the poplar is there and, with any luck, flourishes, pupils at Cheltenham College may glance at the plaque beside the tree and think about the sacrifices made in the First World War and the history of this country. It may even lead them to read Wodehouse. Members of the Society may have to return to the Cheltenham Cricket Festival in summers to come to remind them on both counts.

Two verses from 'For the Fallen', by Robert Binyon, evoke something of the solemnity of this very moving day, a most fitting tribute to Percy Jeeves and those killed at the Battle of the Somme.

*With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.*

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*



Percy Jeeves, 1888–1916

(Photo courtesy of Phil Britt, Warwickshire CCC)

The Wording on the Society's Plaque by Percy Jeeves's Tree

PERCY JEEVES

CRICKETER

DIED ON THE SOMME 22 JULY 1916

His name was used for the famous fictional valet by the writer P G Wodehouse who had admired his playing on this ground in 1913

Planted to commemorate the centenary of his death
The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) 14 July 2016



A Delightfully Devilish Quiz

It was a warm and somewhat humid evening as about 25 Society members, including a couple of new faces, gathered in the upstairs room of the Savoy Tup on the 29th June. Two familiar faces were missing, however: our Chairman, Hilary Bruce, and her consort, Robert, had deserted us for pleasurable pastures elsewhere, so filling in for Hilary was our estimable Membership Secretary, Christine Hewitt.

After an initial round of sluicing and conversing, Christine called the meeting to order and delivered the Parish Notices. Given recent political events, she issued one guideline: the room where we had convened was to be a Brexit-free zone. There was no argument on this point from those present! Christine brought us up to date on the status of the then-upcoming event in Cheltenham (see page 1), and subsequently shared a picture of the plaque for Percy Jeeves that had been put on his house in Goole. She also let us know that places for the October dinner were filled and there was now a waiting list. She announced that the Gold Bats match against the Sherlock Holmes Society in July had to be cancelled due to lack of players (see Society News, page 4) and shared the sad news that they had lost their game against the Dulwich Dusters in May (see report on page 5) – not a great year for the Gold Bats, alas.

After summarising what your Committee has been up to – including ruminating on a new president, searching for a new meeting venue (please send in your suggestions), and the possible creation of a new tie and pin – Christine informed us that the Society will be 20 years old next year. Needless to say, we will be celebrating in some way; stay tuned for those details.

After a brief recess to top up our glasses and do a bit more mingling, it was time for the main event: another particularly tricky quiz devised by our

Entertainment Impresario, Paul Kent. We divided into teams comprising anywhere from two to six members, and the fun began with a round of six questions requiring us to name not only the appropriate book or story title but also its year of publication. Can you name the first story ever told by Mr Mulliner, and do you know when it was first published? (Answers to this and other questions at the end of this article.)

Round 2's four questions centred on family connections – for instance, what is the Wodehouse connection with the Battle of Waterloo? Round 3 listed five names that Wodehouse may or may not have used as pseudonyms – was J. Walker Williams one of them? In Round 4 we had to identify four writers in the Wodehouse canon – who, for example, specialises in “grey studies of hopeless misery, where nothing happened till page 380, when the moujik decided to commit suicide”? Finally, in Round 5 Paul asked us to name all four novels in the Everyman Collected Edition that contains a woman's name, and all 12 (actually 13) that contain a man's name. We were also challenged to name both of Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe's pigs.

The quiz was won by a team styling themselves as The Wrykyn Crew, who were rewarded with prizes. Paul himself (pictured left) was also given a prize for once again creating a special and hugely entertaining evening for all who came. Bravo, Paul!



The first Mulliner story was ‘The Truth About George’, published in the UK and the USA in July 1926. PGW's paternal grandfather, Colonel Philip Wodehouse, fought at Waterloo. J. Walker Williams was indeed a PGW pseudonym. Vladimir Brusiloff was the miserable writer. For the Round 5 challenge, you are on your own.

Society News

Have You Renewed Yet?

As the fluttering golden leaves herald the arrival of autumn, so too do the fluttering golden reminders accompanying this issue of *Wooster Sauce* make their presences felt on the desks and tables of those members who haven't yet paid their subscriptions to renew their membership. 'Final Reminder' they announce in a loud voice at the top of the page – and that's exactly what they are. Reminders, and Final.

Subscription payments were due on 31 May, so if it is your intention to remain a member, this really is the last chance to renew, and our Membership Manager would, we know, be very much obliged if you were to do so with all the dispatch you can muster.

But for members with UK bank accounts, there is a better way! By paying via Direct Debit, we'll do the remembering for you.

This method really saves time and effort all around because it's much quicker for our volunteer Database Manager to deal with, as well as quicker for you, too.

As always, we really hope that you will renew, and so continue to enjoy the benefits of membership, including, of course, regular issues of this excellent journal, perfect for whiling away a few dark evenings.

Cricket Cancellation

It was a great shame that the cricket match between the Gold Bats and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, planned for 2 July at West Wycombe, did not take place, and for once we all hoped very hard that none of our members turned up on the day. We put a cancellation notice up on the website, which was the best we could do, but it was a salutary reminder that we should all keep a weather eye on the Society's website for news of or changes to upcoming events.

The reason the match had to be cancelled was not the usual one (a soggy pitch) but that we didn't manage to raise a team for the event. Though it's sometimes difficult to find a completely full set of people free to play, it's never before proved to be impossible. As to the reason, we may never know, but the fact that the match was scheduled for a Saturday must have played a part. As we all know, for a working person, Saturday is not usually a day of rest and leisure, more a day of chores and catching up.

Anyway, it was a pity, and we very much hope that none of our members was inconvenienced by a wasted trip to West Wycombe – even though the village is a beguiling enough destination in its own right.

Fortunately, our annual fixture with the Dulwich Dusters took place in May; see the report on the next page.

– HILARY BRUCE

Riunione de Novembre 23

"Che cosa ho, Jeeves!"

"I beg your pardon, sir?"

"Che cosa ho, Jeeves. It's Italian for 'What ho', don't you know?"

"Indeed not, sir."

"Ah! So you don't have Italian, Jeeves. Caught you out at last. I have finally discovered something that is not resident in that capacious cranium of yours."

"Indeed not, sir."

"Eh? You mean it *is* resident up there in the old cerebellum?"

"Indeed not, sir."

"Then what the blazes do you mean by repeating 'Indeed not, sir' like some cracked gramophone record?"

"I was simply pointing out that the words you employed do not in fact mean 'What ho', sir."

"Oh, really, Jeeves? Then pray what *is* the Italian for 'What ho'?"

"There is no direct Italian translation of the greeting,

sir. It is entirely an English idiom, like ‘Tinkerty tonk’ or ‘Pip, pip’. So one might substitute some other colloquialism like ‘Ciao’, ‘Pronto’, or perhaps ‘Salve’.”

“Might one, Jeeves?”

“Indeed, sir.”

“Well, that’s sorted the title of my Italian translation of old Plum’s latest corker – ‘Pronto, Jeeves’ it is. Only another 215 pages to go.”

“Might I suggest, sir, that you attend the next meeting of the P G Wodehouse Society on November 23rd? It might well prove useful, as someone who really knows what they’re talking about is discussing that very subject.”

“The challenges of translating the master’s prose into Italian.”

“Precisely, sir.”

“Must be a terribly brainy cove, Jeeves. I mean, I’m pretty fagged already and I haven’t got past the title.”

“The lady’s name is Gabriella Valentino, sir.”

“The very dab, Jeeves. I shall grab the old whangee and tool over there on the date indicated. Oh, and by the way, do you happen to know what’s the Italian for ‘whangee’?”

“Alas no, sir. But ‘bastone da passeggio’ is a literal and rather inelegant rendering.”

“Thank you, Jeeves.”

“Niente, sir.”

– PAUL KENT

The Gold Bats at Dulwich, May 20

by Robert Bruce

It is, as we have said before, a bit of a family affair, the cricket match between the Gold Bats, the valiant cricket team of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), and the Dulwich Dusters, the team drawn from the teaching staff of PGW’s beloved alma mater, Dulwich College. The weekend before, two members of the Gold Bats team, George and Henry Lewis, had been at the Oval for the opening of the new stand commemorating their grandfather, the legendary and stylish Surrey and England captain of the 1950s and 1960s, Peter May. Their grandmother had cut the tape to open the stand. And here they were at the Dulwich school ground where, up in the Pavilion, quite apart from the gold-lettered P G Wodehouse on the cricket team boards, you could also see, somewhat later, the name of their great-grandfather, Harold Gilligan, along with his brother Arthur, the only two brothers to have captained England.

The Gold Bats carry a long tradition with them into the field. This year the match started somewhat later in the day than usual. Matters of admin, perhaps overseen by an Ukridge somewhere, had got in the way. So for the first time in years there was no gargantuan tea mid-match. Instead, the game started in early evening and finished with a barbecue.

It was not the most sparkling of summer evenings. A wind whistled in from the coast. But the Gold Bats were undaunted and set off at a fierce lick. Fifty-three runs were on the board off five overs. But then Gervase Gordon, a languages beak, took two wickets in an over. From there on it was an innings

of heavy hitting interspersed with the steady spread-eagling of stumps. We had a classic ‘come one, no, go back, oh well, never mind’ run out and a stumping which operated in slow motion with the batsman stranded and the wicketkeeper unsure of how to retrieve the ball from up his sleeve. When captain Julian Hill retired, the Gold Bats had reached 129 for 5. A sudden outbreak of wides helped things and finally the innings closed on 145, a reasonable total.

But the Dusters also started with some heavy hitting, with 35 runs off three overs. A brilliant catch in the deep taken by Henry Lewis slowed the rate down. But the ever-active Gervase Gordon then hit a ball for six onto the top of the nets. There was a pause as elaborate efforts to dislodge it took place. Dusk was drawing in. It was decidedly chilly, if not downright dark. Patrick Kidd, parliamentary sketch writer with *The Times*, came on to bowl. His first five balls went for 4, 1, 4, 4, (one bounce into the barbecue), and then 1. An umpire could be seen pretending that his phone was a light meter and that an appeal for bad light might be in order. But with the last ball of Patrick’s over he took a wicket, caught on the boundary.

It was all to no avail. Jake Tasker, in fine Wodehousean tradition a theology master and the school’s deputy chaplain, and who had earlier taken two wickets, hit a towering six for the winning runs. The brightest light left was a glowing barbecue as the teams gathered round for hot dogs, beer, and tall tales.

Nothing so braces a young man in love as the consciousness of having successfully resisted a Tempter who has tried to lure him into a course of action of which the adored object would not approve: and as he recalled the splendid firmness with which he had tied the can to his Uncle Fred’s suggestion of a pleasant and instructive afternoon in London, Pongo felt spiritually uplifted

Pleasant and instructive afternoon forsooth! Few people have ever come nearer to saying “Faugh!” than did Pongo as Lord Ickenham’s phrase shot through his wincing mind like some loathsome serpent.

(From *Uncle Dynamite*, 1948)

My First Wodehouse Experience or Why I Love P. G. Wodehouse

by Bud Craig

Picture the scene. Two teenage lads from Salford in a boarding house in Scarborough in 1960. My younger brother, Mike, and I, ages 13 and 15, were on a family holiday with our parents. Big sister Mary stayed at home. When not in front of the mirror combing our Everly Brothers-style quiffs, we mooched around looking bored.

On a wet afternoon halfway through the week, our lives changed forever. Looking idly in the bookshelf in the lounge, I picked out a Penguin paperback: *Jeeves in the Offing*. Moments later I was helpless with laughter. (Little did I know the line about jerking the cucumber sandwich being an Olympic sport would still have me in stitches 56 years later.)

“Mike, you’ve got to read this,” I told him.

When my mam came in a few minutes later, she accused me of showing her up – a capital offence. She also told me off for taking the book without asking. The landlady, Mrs MacDonald, arrived in time to rescue me, saying she was happy to see me enjoying Wodehouse.

“Do you not find his humour rather dry?” she asked.

“I don’t know, really,” I mumbled.

Even at that age I realised the pointlessness of trying to dissect the work of a comic genius. Such wisdom in one so young. Eventually the grown-ups left us to it, providing the privacy I needed to enjoy my first Wodehouse experience.

In no time I had got to the end of *Jeeves in the Offing* and passed it on to my brother. For both of us this was the start of a lifelong passion. Is this the

only recorded occasion when two brothers discovered P. G. Wodehouse on the same day? I do hope so.

Mike died, age 69, on 24 February 2016, much missed by his wife, Jude, and all his family and friends. He was a cricket fan, supported Manchester United through thick and thin, and had a well-developed taste for Rioja and Robinson’s bitter, but, judging by his lovingly preserved complete set of Plum’s books, reading Wodehouse topped the lot.

Jeeves and Wooster offered Mike comfort when he was ill. They have certainly helped me cope with our kid not being around any more. P. G. Wodehouse cheers you up when you’re down, calms you when you’re agitated, and always makes you laugh. The hero of my crime novels, Salford private eye Gus Keane, turns to Wodehouse at times of stress, considering it a harmless

addiction. How right he is.

Jeeves in the Offing introduced me not only to the Wodehouse world but to the whole world of books. It also made me want to be a writer. Now there is a more important reason why I love P. G. Wodehouse. Reading his books over and over again (surely the only way to read them) reminds me of that summer more than half a century ago, and I remember Mike as he was.

Editor’s note: Bud is the author of Tackling Death and other murder mysteries that would undoubtedly have gripped Freddie Threepwood to the core.



Mike on the left, with Bud, his best man on his wedding day in 1978

Another Percy Jeeves Connection

Thanks to all the recent publicity, as well as the book *The Real Jeeves* by Brian Halford, you would think there was nothing left to learn about Percy Jeeves, the cricketer who would (unknowingly) have a great impact on British literature. But TONY RING has pointed out that the Stone House Hotel in Wensleydale, Yorkshire, can also claim a connection with Percy. On the website page describing the hotel’s history, it is noted that the building’s original owner, Hugh Crallan, had employed a gardener named Percy Jeeves, who “played cricket for Hawes and was reputed to be a ‘demon bowler’. He was also responsible for the upkeep of the grounds and wicket.” See www.stonehousehotel.co.uk/heritage/.

Resuming the Debate

by Noel Bushnell

Those who followed last year's discussion concerning whether Bertie's last name in 'Extricating Young Gussie' was Wooster or Mannering-Phipps might remember that Noel came up with what seemed like a good theory – to wit, it was Bertie's mother who was a Mannering-Phipps, and she was sister to his Aunt Agatha. However, a knowledgeable Wodehousean in the USA pointed out that, while this theory works for the 1915–16 stories, "later in the canon Wodehouse tells us that both Agatha and Dahlia are sisters of his late father, so it doesn't help to resolve the apparent contradictions that come up when one considers the whole canon." Noel cogitated on this and sent the following in February, but it fell between the cracks until now.

The fullness of time has arrived. Actually it's taken a couple of fish dinners . . . I mean, after all, the obstacle to my solution to Tony Ring's problem raised by our American colleague appeared insurmountable. I have been trying to track the reference down, but, although I do remember Bertie blurting out this understanding of his genealogy, I'm dashed if I can find it. Other sources were no real help. No doubt Mr Ring has been smiling smugly at the difficulties of your (and his) Down Under correspondent. And to tell the truth, he would have had good reason for savouring a gotcha moment. I very nearly exited hurriedly pursued by a bear.

But then, after having consumed a great deal of the Pacific Ocean's finest products, I had a flash: what would Jeeves do? Why, of course, he would consider the psychology of the individual. It is well known that he regards his master as having

negligible intelligence. Bertie himself reckons he has about half the brain a fellow ought to have. He sells himself short in my opinion, but time after time he demonstrates that he is less than Oxford's best.

No, I'm afraid Bertie's record of incompetence in the matter of white mess jackets, cummerbunds, blue alpine hats, soft silk evening shirtings, and the like leads me to an inevitable conclusion: he is wrong. I'm not quite sure how, because I haven't been able to find the context, but it seems clear to me that in his customary enthusiasm Bertie has left out the word 'half'. Agatha and Dahlia are the half-sisters of Bertie's father. In other words, they are the progeny of a Mr and Mrs Mannering-Phipps, and on the demise of Mr Mannering-Phipps (a war somewhere?), his widow married Mr Wooster and begat Bertie's father.

This also explains Bertie's reference to "Aunt Dahlia's late father", as Mr Ring cites John Fletcher. Also, I feel sure that if, somewhere I can't remember, Agatha and Dahlia are referred to as Woosters, that would mean either Mr Wooster having adopted them, as suggested by Mr Fletcher, or Bertie has got it wrong again, as I prefer. I am comforted by Mr Jaggard's note on Dahlia Travers which raises the possibility of Bertie being mistaken as to his genealogy.

All this does mean I have to recant my earlier view that Bertie's mother and Agatha are sisters. It was an elegant solution, but let no one say I cannot adopt the big, broad, flexible outlook when required.

Cosy Moments

The Burglar Who Thought He Was Bogart,
by Lawrence Block (1995) (from Lynn Vesley-Gross)
In this novel the hero, Bernie, plans to hide out in an empty apartment in an upscale building in New York City. He reports that at least he has something to read because he tucked a P. G. Wodehouse novel into his bag. After his torch battery runs out, he has a rather rough night. In the morning he resumes his reading and remarks that when he went back to Bertie Wooster, "everything he did and said made perfect sense to me. I took that as a Bad Sign."

A Different Kind of Weather: A Memoir,
by William Waldegrave (2015)
(from Christopher Bellew)
In his political memoir, Waldegrave lists a number of precociously high-brow books he read as a child, then writes: "There was also John Buchan and Scoop and 'a Wodehouse or two', so I was not totally inhuman."

Many years later, when under immense pressure during the Scott Inquiry, he could not sleep, therefore "I could not read anything except wholly escapist comfortable words; Wodehouse mostly." Christopher notes that perhaps Waldegrave unintentionally echoed the Queen Mother's remark that when she was unable to go to sleep, she always read some Wodehouse.

Wedding Tiers, by Trisha Ashley (2009)
(from Carolyn De La Plain)
Spotted in chapter 30:

The bride was one of those soppy, Madeline Bassett types who should have stayed safely incarcerated in a P. G. Wodehouse novel telling people that the stars were God's daisy chain. She showed a distressing tendency to refer to her husband-to-be as Peter Rabbit and, in return, he called her Bunnykins. Urgh!



Letters to the Editor

Reactions, Questions, and Thoughts from Our Readers

From Charles Gould

Neil Constable's piece ('A New Member of the Junior Ganymede Club', June 2016, p.1) is very entertaining: I liked reading it. I've never gone in, I'm not sure why, but I know exactly where The Only Running Footman is, just around the block from the Washington Hotel, where I've often stayed when in London. I read those Margery Allingham novels long before Norman Murphy made the Junior Ganymede connection known to me. And one of the Richard Jury Mysteries (all of which are named for English pubs) by the American Martha Grimes is entitled *I Am the Only Running Footman*.

* * * * *

In chapter 4 of *Bill the Conqueror*, Judson Coker, in despair because the pubs in the King's Road had not yet opened, "made for the Underground station at Sloane Square, bought a ticket for Charing Cross and descended to the platform. . . . A train came in." Six paragraphs later, "The train rattled on, bearing a raging Judson westward."

East is east and west is west, whatever the train you meet. And if you board one at Sloane Square bound for Charing Cross, it's not bearing you westward.

From Alan Hall

Oh Dear No! I say, it really won't do, don't you know! We can't have fabrications, if that's the word I want, being bandied about in *Wooster Sauce*. It is not a matter of preference, as you have suggested (*Wooster Sauce*, June 2016, p.5), but a banjolele is a banjolele and not a ukulele – they are different. A ukulele has a guitar-shaped body. Mark Smith's instrument looks like a tenor ukulele, but a banjolele has the round body of a banjo and the fretted neck of a ukulele. This was the instrument favoured by George Formby and, indeed, Bertie Wooster – but, unfortunately, not by Jeeves (*Thank You, Jeeves*).

It has always been a mystery to me why the writer Clive Exton changed the banjolele to a trombone in the *Jeeves and Wooster* TV series. The trombone is a pretty staid and solemn instrument, which doesn't get many laughs, while the banjo (as well as the banjolele) exudes humour and merriment and has been the butt of numerous jokes and jibes. I know – I play one!

The Editor apologises for this mortifying goof. She should know better.

From Alan Symons

In May my wife and I were passengers on the small, 100-passenger expedition ship *Silver Explorer* travelling from Lisbon to Edinburgh. One day we were able to pay a visit by zodiac to Fair Isle in the Shetlands. The maximum temperature was 5°C, which was not to the liking of subtropical Queenslanders. We were grateful to get

ashore, and the warmth and friendliness of the 50 or so locals made up for the cold and wind.

I was shown around their Church of Scotland kirk and was interested that the kirk doubles as their lending library. I cannot help but glance at books whenever I am in that situation, and was intrigued to spy a copy of Barry Day and Tony Ring's *P G Wodehouse: In His Own Words*. I told my hosts that I had a copy of that book back in Australia, whereupon they decided to borrow it, and checked it out to themselves on the spot! They seemed to recognise the name 'Wodehouse', but I gained the impression that they had not seen the book before. Perhaps there is a Society member living on Fair Isle? I must say their sheep looked in excellent condition with plenty of lambs, but I didn't find a pig!

From Gerard Palmer

After perusing N.T.P. Murphy's excellent companion to the works of the Master, the thought struck me that had PGW lived in the modern era, he might have struggled to find originals suitable for inclusion in his books. I mean to say, where today would you find eccentric pig-loving peers, members of the Drones Club, ferocious aunts, and imperturbable valets? The only fiends that are still with us seem to be dodgy financiers and boring politicians, and I doubt whether even PGW could keep churning out amusing tales about them, what?

From Martin Breit

I just want to add a little correction to 'Wodehouse, Titleist' in the recent *Wooster Sauce* issue (June 2016, p.12). I enjoyed the article very much, but at one point the author is wrong: the German title of *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen – Fünf vor Zwölf, Jeeves!* – is not so meaningless as Mr Gould says. The idiom *fünf vor zwölf* (literally: five before twelve) means something like "Don't waste time" or "It's high time". So the clock on the cover is just subtly capturing the idiom in the picture.

Although it has been a while since I read that novel, I am pretty certain that some of Jeeves's quick thinking is urgently needed, so "Don't waste time, Jeeves!" is not too bad as a title. Certainly it would suit many a Plum novel, but, as Charles Gould points out, why not "another Wodehouse?" There have been much worse German titles, oh yes.

CHARLES GOULD REPLIES: Of course I did not know that German idiom, and Herr Breit makes a pretty good point: when one knows the idiom and doesn't read the title literally, it is not as meaningless as I thought . . . but it still doesn't mean much! Subtle, indeed: the stable clock in the cover illustration on the German edition shows the time as five minutes before twelve, whereas in the original Osbert Lancaster illustration for Barrie and

Jenkins, the time is five minutes *after* twelve. (No, I'm not planning to write another 1,000 words on this earth-shattering observation.)

From Laurence Ogram

About two or three years ago I bought a Wodehouse book from Adrian Harrington Rare Books, which at the time was located in Kensington Church Street but has now moved to Royal Tunbridge Wells. Recently I received their summer catalogue, which contains four Wodehouse books on offer, one of which I think is of particular interest. The first is listed as a combination of Arthur Conan Doyle and PGW and is the *Strand Magazine* vols. 43–44 (George Newnes, 1912), which, apart from the Doyle short story, contains the *Prince and Betty* novel and two short stories that later appeared in *The Man Upstairs* and *My Man Jeeves* collections. They do not state the actual story titles, however. The price? £1750!

Of more interest, in my view, is a book called *Twenty-Five Cricket Stories* (George Newnes, ca. 1909), which includes four short stories by Wodehouse. The book states that three of them were being published for the first time in book form, these being: 'Tom, Dick and Harry'; 'The Wire-Pullers'; and 'The Lost Bowlers'. The fourth story is 'How Pillingshot Scored', which appeared in *Tales of St. Austin's*, published in 1903. Harrington describes the book as the "first and only edition, exceedingly scarce", which is why the price tag is £2500!!

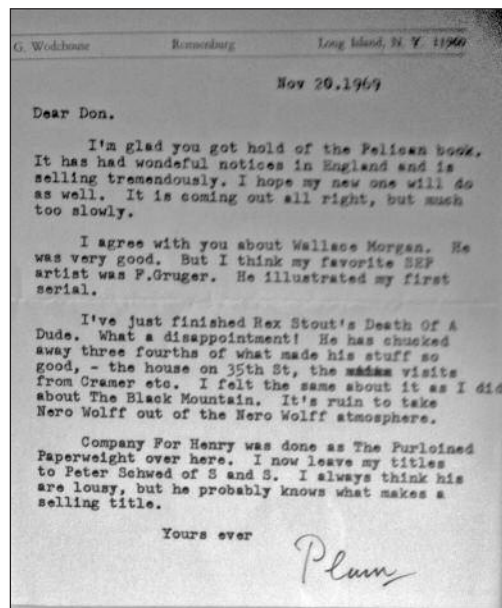
The other two Wodehouse books are more conventional: a first edition of *Joy in the Morning* (Jenkins, 1947) and a first edition of *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* (Jenkins, 1954), both of which are priced at £295. Needless to say that, as I have yet to win the lottery, I have decided leave the purchase to those wealthier than I!

From Graeme Davidson

Regarding Charles Gould's article 'Wodehouse, Titleist' (*Wooster Sauce*, June 2016, p.12), I have a letter dated 20 November 1969 from Wodehouse to Don Bensen (his publisher/writer/editor-friend at Pyramid Books/Berkeley Publishing) where PGW makes himself unequivocally clear (in private correspondence) on the matter of titling by Peter Schwed. While acknowledging that Schwed's professional judgement as to the commerciality of a title may be one thing, the letter makes very clear that the personal appeal to PGW of Schwed's title suggestions was quite another.

The last paragraph of the letter (*see photo*) reads:

Company for Henry was done as The Purloined Paperweight over here. I now leave my titles to Peter Schwed of S and S. I always think his are lousy, but he probably knows what makes a selling title.



An Open Letter to Norman Murphy

Dear Norman,

I know you were only joking when you set out (*Wooster Sauce* 78, June 2016) to dispute my suggestion of Apley Hall and Park as the *geographical* location of Blandings (*Wooster Sauce* 77, March 2016). You will have been well aware that I did not suggest that Apley Hall was the prototype for Blandings Castle (beyond noting that the drawing used to illustrate the 2008 Arrow edition of *Something Fresh* is of Apley) or that Apley Park in any way resembled the grounds and messages of Blandings.

My opening remarks made it quite clear that I was not looking for the architecture or horticulture of PGW's mythical Eden but merely to find a spot that fulfilled as many of the tantalising criteria that he provided over the years for the location of Blandings. I made that very clear when I said, "Norman Murphy's research, exhaustive and thorough, established Weston Park, in Shropshire, as the most similar landscape to the park at 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." I then went on to detail the numerous geographical criteria and coordinates that seem to match Apley's location with that of Blandings. It was mischievous of you to point out that the Wrekin is visible from Lancashire – Blandings's location in southern Shropshire is beyond dispute (which does not preclude its physical inspiration being outside the county).

Finally, I absolutely agree that "reconnaissance cannot be done by looking at a map". I have walked (and driven) the ground extensively. My day at Apley and Norton with a clear blue sky and low winter sun was magical.

With very best wishes,
David (Salter)

P.S. Is the river Severn really mentioned only once in the Blandings saga? I am surprised.

The Editor replies: Norman checked with other knowledgeable Wodehouseans before making this statement, which he believes to be correct. If anybody can find any instance of the Severn being mentioned in the saga more than once, we'd be glad to hear of it.

P G Wodehouse's Creative Writing Lessons

by Sam Jordison

This article first appeared in May 2014 as part of The Guardian's online book club, 'The Reading Group'; see www.theguardian.com/books/series/reading-group. It is reprinted here with the kind permission of Sam Jordison and The Guardian.

"I have been wondering where you would take this reading group for the book, although very enjoyable, isn't particularly nuanced or layered. What you read is all you get."

So wrote Reading Group contributor AlanWSkinner last week. I've been wondering too – worrying even. *Leave It to Psmith* offers plenty of delights. I laughed all the way through this story of impostors, jewel thieves and poets at Blandings Castle. But it's true that most of the novel's pleasures lie on the surface. AlanWSkinner may be right that there isn't much more than meets the eye. That's not a problem. But what scope does it leave for literary inquisition?

The truth is that I'd feel like I was attacking a soufflé with a pickaxe if I were to start hacking around for deep themes, dark images and political implications. Maybe it's possible to make something of the hilarious moral qualities Wodehouse ascribes to clothing. Why does he present Lord Emsworth "mould-stained and wearing a deplorable old jacket"? When we first meet Psmith, is it important that we are treated to the sight of "a very tall, very thin, very solemn young man, gleaming in a speckless top hat and a morning-coat of irreproachable fit"? If this were Shakespeare I'd be looking for great significance in the similar descriptions that run throughout the book. But in Wodehouse, it just seems too much like over-explaining the joke, like attaching too much weight to an admirably light book. I think it's probably safest to assume that the only thing that really matters is that these sartorial notes are funny and help conjure up that magical inter-war world. Safe not least because burrowing any deeper would put us firmly into the camp of the poets and poseurs that Lady Constance Keeble has started to inflict on her poor old brother at Blandings Castle. And who wouldn't sympathise with Lord Emsworth when he declares: "Look here Connie . . . You know I hate literary fellows. It's bad enough having them in the house, but when it comes to having to go to London to fetch 'em . . ."

Fortunately, although I don't want to go deep, there are still things to say about *Leave It to Psmith*.

For a start, that surface is covered in gems:

The door opened, and Beach the butler entered, a dignified procession of one.

"My son Frederick," said Lord Emsworth, rather in the voice with which he would have called attention to the presence of a slug among his flowers.

It contained a table with a red cloth, a chair, three stuffed birds in a glass case on the wall, and a small horsehair sofa. A depressing musty scent pervaded the place, as if a cheese had recently died there in painful circumstances. Eve gave a little shiver of distaste.

As the erstwhile editor of a series of books about Crap Towns, I also can't resist quoting the following description of the fictional Wallingford Street, West Kensington, at length:

When the great revolution against London's ugliness really starts and yelling hordes of artists and architects, maddened beyond endurance, finally take the law into their own hands and rage through the city burning and destroying, Wallingford Street, West Kensington, will surely not escape the torch . . . Situated in the middle of one of those districts where London breaks out into a sort of eczema of red brick, it consists of two parallel rows of semi-detached villas, all exactly alike, each guarded by a ragged evergreen hedge, each with coloured glass of an extremely regrettable nature let into the panels of the front door; and sensitive young impressionists from the artists' colony up Holland Park way may sometimes be seen stumbling through it with hands over their eyes, muttering between clenched teeth "How long? How long?"

How wonderful to be in the presence of a master.

Such writing cannot be equalled. I wouldn't recommend that anyone should try. I'd also attempt to conceal from budding authors the horrifying information that Wodehouse wrote 40,000 words of this quality in just three weeks in 1922 and wrapped up the entire novel in a matter of months.

Otherwise, *Leave It to Psmith* should be compulsory reading for creative writing classes around the world. Especially when backed up by P G Wodehouse's own generous suggestions for a wannabe writer in a *Paris Review* interview given two years before his death in 1975 (a mere half-century after he wrote this novel): "I'd give him practical advice, and that is always get to the dialogue as soon as possible. I always feel the thing to go for is

speed. Nothing puts the reader off more than a great slab of prose at the start.”

In *Leave It to Psmith* the younger Wodehouse does just what his 91-year-old incarnation recommends. He hits the dialogue within a page of opening, and although many beautiful descriptions follow, a quick flick through suggests that there is never any more than a single page without some conversation. No danger of getting lost in details here.

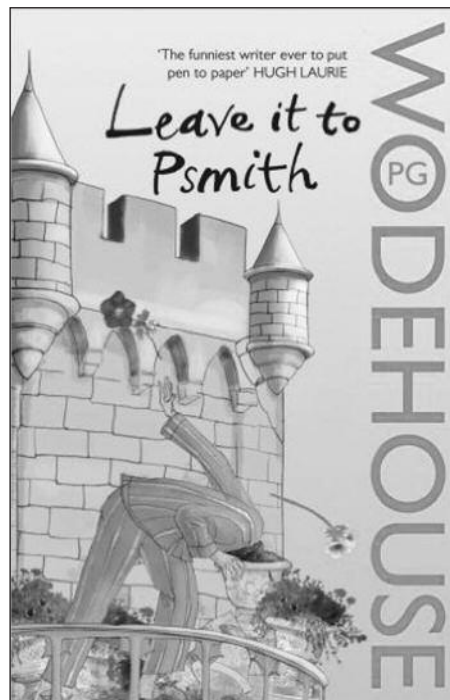
In the same interview, he said: “For a humorous novel you’ve got to have a scenario, and you’ve got to test it so that you know where the comedy comes in, where the situations come in . . . splitting it up into scenes (you can make a scene of almost anything) and have as little stuff in between as possible.”

Again, it’s all but impossible to find anything “in between”. All the action takes place in clear, discrete scenes and each one leads to the other naturally and easily and with remarkable precision. It’s lean. It’s heading somewhere.

It almost didn’t surprise me to learn that the book was successfully adapted for the stage during Wodehouse’s lifetime. Almost. Because although the scenes are laid out as neatly as moody Blandings gardener Angus McAllister’s flowerbeds, there’s still a fiendish complexity behind them. Wodehouse also told the *Paris Review*:

I think the success of every novel – if it’s a novel of action – depends on the high spots. The thing to do is to say to yourself, “Which are my big scenes?” and then get every drop of juice out of them. The principle I always go on in writing a novel is to think of the characters in terms of actors in a play. I say to myself, if a big name were playing this part, and if he found that after a strong first act he had practically nothing to do in the second act, he would walk out. Now, then, can I twist the story so as to give him plenty to do all the way through?

Yes, he thought about how things might work on the stage. But the crucial phrase here is “twist”. The practical exercise I’d give to those lucky creative writing students would be to try to draw a schematic diagram of the plot of *Leave It to Psmith*, using coloured pencils, and, if they want to get really fancy, algebraic symbols for each of the characters and their movements. The resulting equations would be of fiendish complexity, there would be rainbows and arrows all over the place, leading to increasingly thick clumps where, with exquisite timing, Wodehouse has managed to land everyone in the same place at the right time. To give one quick



example, the way in which he gets Psmith to Blandings Castle depends on at least three incredible coincidences, four or five bravura pieces of scene shifting that ensure Psmith lands in a chair opposite Lord Emsworth (and recently vacated by the Canadian poet Ralston McRodd) – not to mention a quite brilliant sleight of hand to enable Psmith to convince the Earl that he is the “Singer of Saskatoon” and expected at Blandings . . . and that’s before he meets the Honourable Freddie Threepwood on a train and the plot really gets moving.

It’s a masterpiece of timing and technique and the beautiful thing is, as a reader, you hardly

even hear this intricate mechanism that Wodehouse has set ticking, so wonderful is everything else. There’s a famous quote from V S Pritchett about his fellow Dulwich College alumnus: “The strength of Wodehouse lies not in his almost incomprehensibly intricate plots – Restoration comedy again – but in his prose style and there, above all, in his command of mind-splitting metaphor. To describe a girl as ‘the sand in civilisation’s spinach’ enlarges and decorates the imagination.”

I don’t entirely agree. I think his plots are extraordinary. Few writers are better at moving characters around the board, even if few make them do sillier things. Their complexity is part of their charm, and it’s no surprise that Wodehouse said: “It’s the plots that I find so hard to work out. It takes such a long time to work one out.”

What is surprising is that he then added: “I like to think of some scene, it doesn’t matter how crazy, and work backward and forward from it until eventually it becomes quite plausible and fits neatly into the story.”

Plausible! That’s almost as funny as his intentional jokes. The other delight of the Wodehouse plot is that it is almost entirely, gloriously absurd. But still. If you want to know how to construct a story, there are definitely worse places to look than *Leave It to Psmith*.

Where Pritchett is right is in saying that the real glory of Wodehouse’s scenarios lies in providing a platform for all his other talents. For getting Freddie Threepwood into a situation where he might propose to Eve Halliday by stating: “I say, I do think that you might marry a chap.” For getting us all wondering what Ralston McTodd means when he invites us to look “across the pale parabola of joy”. For sending Baxter tumbling down some stairs in a “Lucifer-like descent”. For making, in short, this work of genius possible.

Where Was Wodehouse? And When?

The Emsworth Enigma

by Norman Murphy

The September issue of By The Way begins a new series covering P. G. Wodehouse's whereabouts during certain periods of his life. This article provides an introduction to the series and describes a particular problem Norman encountered in his researches.

I was never an assistant at the King-Hall school, but I used to stay there a lot and eventually bought a villa called Threepwood in Beach Road.

PGW to Walter Simmons, 14 December 1952

As many readers will know, my particular interest has been in identifying the people and places which gave Wodehouse ideas for his stories; I found most of them through his correspondence. The sheer frequency of his movements began to intrigue me, and from around 1908 his changes of address occurred so often that it became a point of pride to try and trace his movements.

I conducted my first Wodehouse Walk in 1982 and found that people were puzzled by the number of London houses Wodehouse had lived in – 16 at least. He and Ethel would come to London, take a service flat, and move again after a few months. It wasn't rootlessness; it was just that they were popping over to New York so often that it probably wasn't worthwhile buying a house here.

Ever since *In Search of Blandings* came out in 1981, people have been kind enough to send me information, and I take this opportunity to thank them and hope they will continue their own searches. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Patricia O'Sullivan and John Dawson. Patricia has spent a long time working on a history of the Hong Kong Police, whose records show that Wodehouse's father retired in 1898 and not in 1895/6 as I and everybody else assumed he had. John Dawson has similarly provided information showing that Wodehouse's mother often travelled back to the UK on her own – and that answers some questions on PG's childhood.

My dates often disagree with Wodehouse's biographers: Jasen (1974), Donaldson (1982), Phelps (1992), Davis (1993), and McCrum (2004). This is in no way a criticism; they were writing a biography, not a detailed travelogue. Also, there are two important points to make in their defence. In many instances, firm dates of Wodehouse's movements were unknown until recently. Secondly, although

David Jasen, the first biographer, was able to correlate Wodehouse's accounts of his life with dates of shows and book publication, he had only Wodehouse's memories of his movements and addresses – and Wodehouse was by then an old man. And, understandably, subsequent biographers followed Jasen. For example, he wrote that Westbrook married Ella King-Hall in 1909. Donaldson and Davis followed him on this; Phelps was nearer the mark with 1911, but only McCrum got it right; it was 1912.

As for Emsworth, Jasen says that Herbert Westbrook called on Wodehouse at 23 Walpole Street, Chelsea, in 1903 with a letter of introduction and invited him down there, where Westbrook was a master at Emsworth House School. Wodehouse went down, met Baldwin King-Hall, the school owner, and got on very well with him, so King-Hall invited him to stay. According to Jasen, "Plum took up residence there in a room above the school stables. His stay of six months was punctuated by trips to town only when required by the *Globe*. . . . This rural idyll came to an end in August 1903 when William Beach-Thomas resigned from the *Globe* and Plum inherited his position as assistant to Harold Begbie on 'By The Way'."

I have never been happy with this. Certainly Wodehouse and King-Hall got on very well, but would one really invite a new acquaintance, no matter how pleasant he seemed, to come and stay for six months? Also, Wodehouse was then still a freelance writer. He had left the Bank and was writing for any paper and magazine that would take his stuff. In April 1903 he had seventeen articles published in six papers and worked six days at the *Globe*. In June 1903 he had thirteen pieces in four papers and worked eleven days at the *Globe*. Was it realistic to base oneself 76 miles from London when the journey by rail took over two hours? Further, his *Phrases & Notes* for the period show he was still visiting Dulwich regularly. Could he, as an impecunious freelance, afford to continue paying rent for his room at 23 Walpole Street, Chelsea, if he wasn't living there?

I suggest it is far more likely that King-Hall issued a general invitation to pop down for odd weekends, which Wodehouse was delighted to accept.

Much of my information comes from the *Hants & Sussex County Press*, the Emsworth weekly paper. I found the copies in the British Library invaluable, although none were available for 1908 or 1912. I did

not find any mention of Wodehouse until December 1906, when Emsworth House School staged a show by the boys, followed by another staged by adults. Attended by “a number of gentry of the district”, the burlesque was billed as: “Messrs Westbrook and Wodehouse’s new play *The New Guy Fawkes*”, in which Wodehouse played Lord Mounteagle. The review ended: “We understand that Mr Herbert Westbrook has had another book accepted by Messrs Cassell and Co who will publish it in the new year. The title is *Not George Washington*.”

In 1907 Wodehouse took part in another school burlesque on 3 August and also played in the Emsworth House adult cricket team against Mr White’s XI. I don’t know whose idea it was, King-Hall’s or Wodehouse’s, but 1907–14 saw Wodehouse playing in a series of games against local teams, usually during the school summer holidays. The Emsworth House team comprised King-Hall, Wodehouse, sometimes Westbrook, a few more adults, and pupils who lived nearby. The names of three schoolboy brothers, the Durands – Reginald, Alan, and Mortimer – appear in just about every match from 1907 up to July 1914, long after they had left the school. Alan usually vied with Wodehouse as the best player, both as batsman and bowler, and in one series “c. Durand, b. Wodehouse” and “c. Wodehouse, b. Durand” occur so often, it is easy to see why *Mike* was dedicated to Alan Durand. (He inherited a baronetcy in 1955 and died in 1971, aged 77.)

But the question remains: where did Wodehouse live in Emsworth? Some biographers follow Jasen and believe that, from 1904 to 1914, Wodehouse rented Threepwood, Record Road, whose garden backed on to Emsworth House. I went along with this idea until two years ago, when I came across one firm piece of information.

The Emsworth Rating Valuation List for 1914 states that Threepwood was indeed occupied by Wodehouse, but was owned by Dr Morley of Portsea. Unfortunately, the Rating Valuations for 1900–1913 are unavailable, and I had to look for information elsewhere: *Kelly’s Directory* for Hampshire (1903, 1907, 1911) and *Who’s Who* (1908–14). *Kelly’s Directories* make no mention of Wodehouse, but the 1903 and 1907 volumes state that Major Thomas Moore lived at Threepwood, Record Road. Wodehouse’s first two entries in *Who’s Who* (1908 & 1909) state firmly that his addresses were “22 Walpole Street, Chelsea, and Casey Court, Emsworth”.

I then tried the Electoral Registers from 1903 to 1914, hoping the name Casey Court would appear somewhere. It did not, but the Registers show Major Moore at Threepwood in 1905, 1908, and 1909. So wherever Wodehouse was living from 1903 to 1909, it wasn’t at Threepwood.

This tedious exercise had an unexpected bonus, though. In the 1909 and 1910 Registers, I was surprised to read that H. W. Westbrook and P. G.

Wodehouse were shown as registered voters at Tresco, Beach Road, just south of Record Road.

The apparent contradiction for his 1909 addresses (Casey Court, Emsworth / Tresco, Beach Road) is, I think, easily explained. The Electoral Roll came into effect on January 1 each year, and in a small place like Emsworth, I suggest the local official would come round from September onwards to check names and addresses. Westbrook and Wodehouse must have been living in Tresco, Beach Road *before* January 1, 1909, and could have moved *from* Tresco on January 1, 1910, but their names would still appear in the 1910 Register. *Who’s Who*, a far bigger volume, would need more time, and Wodehouse would probably have filled out their form early in 1908, *before* he moved into Tresco with Westbrook. Furthermore, when *Who’s Who* sent the form for 1909, we mustn’t forget that Wodehouse was in New York for most of that year. So, with no other information, *Who’s Who* just repeated the Casey Court address. (From 1910 to 1915, *Who’s Who* has no addresses for Wodehouse.)

Since the Registers show that Tresco was occupied by somebody else before and after 1909/10, and since there are no other residents shown at Threepwood from 1910 to 1914, the year we know Wodehouse lived there, I suggest we can now reappraise his time in Emsworth.

I believe he came down first in 1903, met King-Hall, got on well with him, and thereafter spent the odd weekend or week at the school. Because of the continual references in *Phrases & Notes* to his activities in London 1903–05, I do not believe he rented anywhere in Emsworth until 1906/7 – Casey Court, perhaps? Sometime in 1908, he and Westbrook moved into Tresco, Beach Road, but in April 1909 he went to New York and resigned from the *Globe*. He was certainly back in Emsworth in December 1909 (another pantomime), and I believe he moved into Threepwood in early 1910, while still maintaining a base in London. I also suggest he gave up Threepwood after his marriage in New York in September 1914.

It was a complicated exercise, and a major problem was the practice of people naming houses, not numbering them. House names are easily changed; about half the houses in Record Road changed their names in just five years. To make the point, I came upon one Emsworth house “variously known as Lawn Villa, Minerva Lodge, Lawn Cottage and Valetta”!

But I shouldn’t complain. When I first visited Emsworth in 1975, I drove slowly down Record Road and saw a brand-new ‘Threepwood’ sign over a door. I stopped, rang the bell, and started asking questions. The owner had just moved in and he said that for many years, it had been called ‘Stanmore’. His mother-in-law remembered that it had once been called ‘Threepwood’, so he restored the old name.

But I still wish I knew where Casey Court was.

Much in a Lot

by Graeme W. I. Davidson

Readers may recall that *Wooster Sauce*'s December 2015 issue carried my report ('Lots of Interest') about two interesting lots which came up at Sotheby's in London on 14 July 2015, comprising some very early Wodehouse-related artwork, by Philip Dadd and Bill Townend, for the first editions of two of Wodehouse's earliest books, *William Tell Told Again* (1904) and *The White Feather* (1907). That artwork came from the archives of early publishers of Wodehouse, A. & C. Black.

From the same source, as if to defy the idea that lightning does not strike twice in the same place, a further consignment of wonderful Wodehouse-related artwork was made to Sotheby's for their English Literature, History, Children's Books and Illustrations Auction on 15 December 2015.



That second consignment, believed to be the last such consignment to be made from those archives, made up a single substantial lot: Lot 65, comprising around 20 images, made up of watercolours, gouaches, and pencil and pen-and-ink drawings.

Though Lot 65 is too extensive to cover properly in this article, the opportunity is taken to report here on two particular illustrations included in that lot. They are singled out, not to diminish the importance of other items in the lot, but rather because there is some linkage between those two illustrations and the ones mentioned in my earlier article, being artwork from the very early period of Wodehouse's career. It seemed appropriate that this article should turn the spotlight on them, as a follow-up to 'Lots of Interest'.

One of the small band of important British illustrators of Wodehouse's early work was R. Noel Pocock (born 1878, died circa 1959). The two illustrations in Lot 65 which it is thought readers would be particularly interested to hear about are illustrations by R. Noel Pocock.

The first of the two illustrations is an original ink-and-monochrome watercolour used to illustrate

Wodehouse's first published novel, *The Pothunters*, when it was published in three-part serialised form in the short-lived (1898–1902) *Public School Magazine* (published by A. & C. Black, London) in the three monthly issues issued in January, February, and March 1902, prior to the novel's publication in book form on 18 September 1902 by A. & C. Black.

The illustration appears as the title vignette at the commencement of each of the three parts of the serialisation issued in the January, February, and March 1902 issues of *Public School Magazine*. It shows Jim Thomson and Drake, characters in *The Pothunters*, racing against each other.

In the book version of *The Pothunters*, the closely fought tussle between Jim Thomson and Drake culminates in a major scene recounted in Chapter XI ('The Sports') of the book version of the story, where, in the chapter's closing lines, Drake wins the Mile race in the School Sports by a foot. In the magazine serialisation the outcome is, in contrast, cursorily covered in an extract from a letter from Jim Thomson to his brother, Allen. That letter is used as a device in the March 1902 issue of *Public School Magazine* to tie up various loose ends in an accelerated and abbreviated way (which might seem a bit of an unseemly rush), to bring about the story's conclusion within that issue, the last of the magazine's production.

In addition to containing the title vignette, the serialisation of *The Pothunters* contained four other illustrations by R. Noel Pocock. Having published *The Pothunters* in serialised form, A. & C. Black quickly proceeded to follow up by publishing *The Pothunters*, untruncated, in book form on 18 September 1902. For the book, they used three of those four other illustrations from the serialisation, along with seven further Pocock illustrations, made up of six which had not appeared in the serialisation and one (appearing facing page 62 of the book) being, for some unknown reason (perhaps a damage/quality issue), a redrawn version of one that appeared in the serialisation (as the first of the two illustrations in the February 1902 issue of *Public School Magazine*). (The information in this paragraph contrasts with information given on the page facing the half-title page of the Everyman and Overlook editions of the book produced in 2010.)

Had *Public School Magazine* serialised the story in a less accelerated and abbreviated way than it did, the magazine serialisation would presumably have employed more than the four illustrations (and title

vignette) that it did. Indeed, a less abbreviated telling of the story, one which included, as the book version does, the pacy telling of the Mile race tussle between Drake and Jim Thomson, would arguably have made the use of an image of the two runners slogging it out side by side a bit more clearly on point and less abstract as an image for the title vignette.

The second of the two Pocock illustrations in Lot 65 is another original ink-and-monochrome water-colour. It was used as one of the ten illustrations that graced *The Pothunters* when it was first published in book form on 18 September 1902. The watercolour shows Drake and Jim Thomson at the finishing line of the Mile race in the School Sports, and it was used as the illustration for the frontispiece to the book. The caption to the illustration is: ‘The white line quivered, snapped, and vanished. Drake had won by a foot.’



In the aesthetically very pleasing subsequent 1915 re-issue by A. & C. Black of *The Pothunters*, for which sheets of the 1902 first edition were used, the Pocock illustrations were again used, and the cover illustration (coloured in grey and blue) appearing on the front cover of the re-issue, with gold and light blue lettering, was from the illustration used for the frontispiece to the first edition.

A number of other covers for *The Pothunters* that have followed over the succeeding years have majored on the race. That is despite the race being but one of many events in the story (and indeed one that that is virtually entirely excised in the telling of the story in the magazine serialisation). That has to be down, to a very major extent, to the potent and lasting influence of Pocock’s artwork.

As in the case of the Townend and Dadd artwork which sold at Sotheby’s in July 2015, Lot 65 in the December 2015 auction was acquired by a British

Wodehouse collector. It carried a pre-sale estimate of £2,000/£3,000, and, despite going for way over top estimate, it is understandably considered by the successful bidder as a great purchase and an absolute bargain.

The illustrations by R. Noel Pocock for *The Pothunters* are illustrations for Wodehouse’s first published novel, his first published book, the first in the best part of a century of books by Wodehouse which followed over the years. As such, the watercolours used for those illustrations, being from the original magazine serialisation of that novel and from its first-edition book version, are totemic, of very considerable interest and historical importance. They would be the first image that a reader of *The Pothunters* would see either on starting to read the magazine serialisation or on opening the book.

The two Pocock watercolours may perhaps also be – though anyone out there who knows to the contrary might usefully pipe up – the only surviving original illustration artwork from the magazine serialisation and first-edition book of *The Pothunters* still in existence, or certainly known to be in existence. That makes them even rarer and to be valued all the more, and the collector who acquired them all the more fortunate.

The Dadd artwork and Townend artwork would be stonking additions to any collector’s Wodehouse collection, but the Pocock artwork, being not just for an early published Wodehouse novel but for Plum’s first published novel, is arguably an even greater trophy – and, rather appropriately, that’s precisely what any pothunter would want!

The writer gratefully acknowledges Tony Ring’s very helpful assistance with certain information contained in portions of this article.

A Cosy Moment

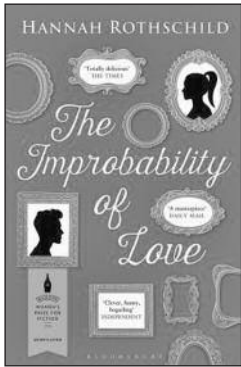
The Last Englishman: The Double Life of Arthur Ransome (2009),
by Roland Chambers

(from Simon Frazer)

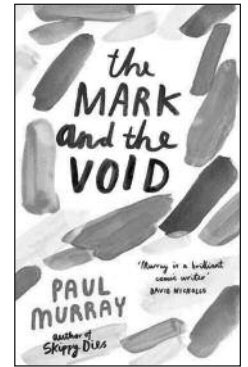
This biography of English author (and Wodehouse contemporary) Ransome was written by an American. Simon spotted this in chapter 21:

One way to consider the effect of the war on the popular imagination is to think of the books that were published immediately in its aftermath: . . . In 1919, in Germany, Hermann Hesse produced *Demian*, in which the eponymous anti-hero declares, ‘Whoever wants to be born must first destroy the world.’ In England, in the same year, P. G. Wodehouse published *My Man Jeeves*, which enchanted its readers by forgetting the war altogether, or rather, by perfecting the art of ignoring what could not be forgotten.

Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize



For the first time in the history of Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize, there are two winners, as announced just prior to the Hay Festival in May. The prize is awarded annually to the book considered to have best captured P. G. Wodehouse's comic spirit. Winners are presented with a set of Everyman Wodehouse books and a Gloucestershire Old Spot pig who is named after the winning novel. This year the lucky recipients were Hannah Rothschild for *The Improbability of Love* and Paul Murray for *The Mark and the Void*. According to one of the judges, James Naughtie, "It was impossible to separate these two books because they made us laugh so much." Sounds like books worth getting!



Little Nuggets

The Master Word Coiner

The website *Interesting Literature* has posted an article demonstrating just how much Wodehouse has influenced the English language. Its list of '10 Great Words Coined by P. G. Wodehouse' includes 'crispish', 'gruntled', 'oojah-cum-spiff', 'persp.', 'plobby', 'plonk', 'pottiness', 'snooter', 'whiffled', and 'zing'. Each definition is accompanied by an appropriate – and often very familiar – Wodehouse quotation. To see the article, go to the website: <http://bit.ly/1U7t9ES>.

Another Candidate for the Great Sermon Handicap

For the Rev. Philip West, his new parish appointment is clearly a matter of all points West, East, North and South. As recorded in the *Daily Telegraph* of February 15, he is to become "the h for d assistant curate for Burstwick, Burton Pidsea, Humbleton with Elsternwick, Halsham and Easington with Skeffling, Keyingham, Welwick and Hedon, Paull, Sproatley and Preston in Holderness, Withernsea with Owthorne, Garton-in-Holderness with Grimston, Hilston, Thorngumbald, Winestead, Hollym, Holmpton, Roos and Tunstall (Diocese of York)." And in case you were wondering, "h for d" means "house for duty" – that is, the curate will be given a house in which to live in exchange for duties performed. (Thanks to MURRAY HEDGCOCK for his continued vigilance in all matters ecclesiastical.)

Love Song for Bobbie Wickham

by John Whitworth

'A one girl beauty chorus, a pippin if ever there was one,' according to Bertie's Aunt Dahlia, but also 'with the disposition and general outlook of a ticking time bomb'. She'll do.

See the sunshine shining hotly on the toffering towers at Totleigh,
Shining on a rather motley crowd of aunts and girls and chaps,
Stiffy Byng, that utter corker, Rupert Psmith, the endless talker,
Prudence Stryker, gay New Yorker, spiffing girls and sterling chaps.
I know just the way to pick 'em, I'm in love with Bobbie Wickham,
Lithely, blithely, boyish Bobbie sets my senses in a whirl.
Red of hair and fair of feature, Mother Earth's divinest creature,
Nature's finest, Bobbie Wickham, you're my sugar, you're my girl.

Linger long in Steeple Bumbleigh; though it seem a trifle crumply,
True love here's a *fait accompli* more than just a vague perhaps,
Lottie Blossom, Kipper Herring, Nobby Hopwood, deeds of derring-
Do and stolen kisses, this is so much more than just perhaps.
Spick and span and Bristol fashion, Bobbie Wickham, she's my passion,
Bobbie posh and oh my gosh her daddy's just about an earl.
Snub of nose and long of leg, face freckled like a plover's egg,
Yes, you're my pippin, Bobbie Wickham, you're my sunshine, you're my girl.

Haste to Market Blandings, Salop where the jolly hunters gallop,
And the nicest people pal up at another view halloo,
Corky Pirbright, Bingo Little, Bonzo Travers, oh the tittle-
Tattle, ah the lovers' prattle till the time to say 'I do.'
Heartsick I and like to die for Bobbie Wickham, bright of eye; for
Bobbie Wickham's roister-doister, I'm her oyster, she's my pearl.
Ring for Jeeves and Bobbie Wickham, thick as thieves with Bobbie Wickham,
Aphrodite in your nightie, Bobbie Wickham, you're my girl.

Hear the pipes of Elfland piping, Pelham Grenville Wodehouse typing,
Come at last to Basket Neck, Long Island, hear the siren song,
Pelham Grenville swiftly striding, through the shadows softly gliding,
Dreaming English Neverlands, for life is short but art is long,
Plaiting plots as is his wont, it's now you see him, now you don't, it's
Plum entwining Love and Money, hear the pipes of Elfland skirl.
Bobbie Pippin, Bobbie Menace, 'Is there anyone for tennis?
Is there anyone at all?' Brave Bobbie Wickham, you're my girl.

Poet's Corner

The Thought-Reader

The Zancigs are a wondrous pair:
Of that there's not a doubt.
Your inmost thoughts 'ere you're aware
They subtly ferret out.

You ask them what is in your mind:
They give an answer, quick . . .
But, after all, I, too, I find
Can do the Zancig trick.

'Twas at a dance the other night.
Around the room I swept,
Too careless (for my heart was light)
To look just where I stepped.

My eye was bright, my smile was bland;
I was a great success . . .
A noise like distant thunder, and
I'd torn my partner's dress.

She gently said, "Don't mention it."
She murmured "Not at all":
It didn't matter, not a bit;
The damage done was small.

Beneath a smile her wrath she hid:
Her speech was mild, not stern . . .
Just then I caught her eye . . . and did
My big thought-reading "turn".

From *The World*, December 25, 1906

(Note: Jules and Agnes Zancig were magicians whose specialty was performing a mind-reading act.)

Wodehouse and Edgar Wallace

It is well known that one of P. G. Wodehouse's favourite authors was Edgar Wallace, and further illumination is provided in a 2014 biography: *Stranger Than Fiction: The Life of Edgar Wallace, the Man Who Created King Kong*. The two authors were friends as well as mutual admirers: Wallace dedicated his 1924 book *A King by Night* "To my Friend, P. G. Wodehouse." In his 'Sanders of the River' stories, the character of Bones (aka Lieutenant Tibbetts) is described as a pre-Bertie Wooster monocle-wearing "silly arse". Wallace also referred to his friend in an article entitled 'Among the Highbrows', writing: "I am partial to shower-baths, luxury travel, P. G. Wodehouse and the down-trodden book-making class. In other words I am a lowbrow."

Mastermind Quiz 20: Wooster's Women

1. With which female Wodehouse character, who appears in eight short stories and one novel, does Bertie Wooster become enamoured, she being "constructed on the lines of Clara Bow"?
2. In which novel does Hildebrand 'Tuppy' Glossop accuse Bertie of being in love with his cousin Angela Travers, Tuppy's onetime fiancée?
3. What does the Hon. Mrs Tinkler-Moulke, Bertie's neighbour at C6 Berkeley Mansions, complain about that forces him to move to Chuffnell Regis?
4. Who is the owner of the dog Bartholomew who gets Harold 'Stinker' Pinker to steal a policeman's helmet in *The Code of the Woosters*?
5. In *The Mating Season*, which of Bertie's female chums, also known as the film star Cora Starr, refuses to wed Esmond Haddock until he has put his house in order?
6. Who was described by Bertie in *Joy in the Morning* as "a blue-eyed little half portion with, normally, an animated dial"?
7. In which novel does Emerald Stoker, sister of Bertie's former fiancée Pauline Stoker, take a job as a cook to Sir Watkyn Bassett?
8. What is the title of Lady Florence Craye's thoughtful and serious novel that Bertie Wooster is not keen on reading?
9. In which novel does Bertie become engaged to Vanessa Cook, family friend of Major Brabazon Plank?
10. Who thought that "every time a fairy sheds a tear, a new star appears in the Milky Way" and that "the stars are God's daisy chain"?

(Answers on page 21)

Clark's biography contains many jokes regarding Wallace's prodigious output, in which regard PGW wrote: "Can you get anything to read these days? I was in the *Times* library yesterday and came out empty-handed. There wasn't a thing I wanted. To fill in the time before Edgar Wallace writes another one, I am re-reading Dunsany." But he could equally make fun of his friend's lavish lifestyle: "Edgar Wallace, I hear, has a Rolls-Royce and also a separate car for each of the five members of his family. Also a day butler and a night butler, so there is never a time when you can go to his house and not find buttlings going on. That's the way to live."

(Thanks to TERRY TAYLOR for this cosy moment.)

The Bibliographic Corner *by Nick Townend*

‘Bungalow Books’

In this column we will examine those single short stories by Wodehouse which have been published as a stand-alone book in their own right, i.e. a one-story book, or, if one can excuse the pun, a ‘bungalow book’.

The bungalow book that is probably best known to most readers is *The Great Sermon Handicap*, which is also one of Wodehouse’s most well-known short stories, but that title was not the first story to be accorded the honour of stand-alone publication. Instead, the rather obscure school story ‘Homeopathic Treatment’ was the first bungalow book published (*McIlvaine*, A44A). It appeared in the US in 1931 in miniature book form (4.2” x 5.4”) as an advertising tool published by the owners of the monthly scouting journal *Boy’s Life*. At the time of the book’s publication, the story had only previously appeared in magazines: in the UK in *Royal* magazine in August 1904 (D126.3) and, under the title ‘Scent per Scent!’, in *The Boys’ Friend* on 9 December 1922 (DB2.4); and in the US in *Boy’s Life* in April 1931 (D10.1).

The Great Sermon Handicap (A49a) was, in fact, the first bungalow book published in the UK, appearing in 1933. It was the only Wodehouse first edition to be published by Hodder and Stoughton. Like *Homeopathic Treatment*, it was a miniature book (3” x 4¾”), and was published with red boards (made to look like leather) with gold lettering and decorations, with a dust wrapper featuring Bertie and Jeeves. The story had, of course, already appeared in book form in *The Inimitable Jeeves* (A30a) in 1923. As well as being the first UK bungalow book, it also has the distinction of being the only one (thus far) to have gone into a second edition, being reprinted by St Hugh’s Press in 1949 (A49a2), again in miniature form (3½” x 4¾”) with green boards and gilt lettering. There was even a US edition, published by James Heineman in 1983 in a limited edition of 500, with red card covers; *McIlvaine* confusingly shows this as the third English edition (A49a3), rather than treating it as the first US edition.

Another obscure story, ‘Dudley Is Back to Normal’, was the next bungalow book to appear, being published by Doubleday Doran in the US in 1940 as a registration copy (A63A) in order to secure American copyright. The story had been published in the UK in the *Strand* magazine in July 1940 (D133.216), but did not appear in book format in either country until *Plum Stones 8* in 1994 (A108.2h).

The next bungalow book did not appear until 1975, when the 16-page *Quest* (A98a) was privately

published by Alan Salisbury in plain blue paper wrappers. This was a printing of the original text published in the *Strand* in July 1931 (D133.173), which had had its beginning and end changed for its original book publication as ‘The Knightly Quest of Mervyn’ in *Mulliner Nights* in 1933 (A48a). Like the first two US bungalow books, this is a very scarce publication; your columnist is only aware of one copy having emerged at auction in the last 20 years (selling for £402 in 2000).

The next bungalow book, *Sir Agravaire*, published in 1984 by Blandford Press (A102a), also had a knightly quest theme, reprinting a story from *The Man Upstairs* (A17a) that had originally appeared in *Pearson’s* in December 1912 (D118.24b). The book was issued in red boards with gold lettering on the spine, and contained numerous full-page colour illustrations by Rodger McPhail, one of which was reproduced on the dust wrapper.

None of the subsequent bungalow books have been published with a dust wrapper, but the US Redpath Press’s 1986 printing of *The Clicking of Cuthbert* (A103a) did have flaps attached to the covers of the paperback book.

The next book had no covers at all: Tales for Travelers published *Uncle Fred Flits By* (A104) in the US in 1987 as a single folded sheet of paper, aimed at commuters who could read it in a confined space. The same arrangement was followed by Travelman in the UK, who published *Goodbye to All Cats* (A111) in 1998.

The Drone Rangers, the Texas chapter of The Wodehouse Society published *The Reverent Wooing of Archibald* (A105) in 1999 in paper covers.

Subsequent to the publication of the *McIlvaine Addendum* in 2001, two further bungalow books have been published. In 2011, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of its Modern Classics series, Penguin published fifty Mini Modern Classics, one of which was *The Crime Wave at Blandings*. And in 2014 Galley Beggar Press, of Dover Street (Norwich, not London), published *Honeysuckle Cottage* as one of a series of four ghost stories by various writers.

Finally, mention should be made of a couple of titles that did not quite slip under the bar, being ‘double-decker’ titles, rather than bungalow books. In 2005, to mark the seventieth anniversary of its paperbacks, Penguin published seventy Pocket Penguins, one of which, on the spine and cover, was titled *Jeeves and the Impending Doom*; on the title page it was titled *Jeeves and the Impending Doom and Other Stories*. Both titles were misleading, as it contained two stories, namely ‘Jeeves and the Impending

Doom' and 'Jeeves and the Song of Songs'. Confusingly, the copyright page, as well as including the copyright information for the two stories which were included, also includes copyright information for 'The Clicking of Cuthbert', which, together with the *Other Stories* part of the title page, implies that the original intention may have been to include that story as well.

In 2008 Arrow, as part of its publicity for the publication of numerous Wodehouse titles in its paperback range, published *Extracts from stories by one of England's best comic novelists*. This was a book with two front covers: on one side, under the

Extracts heading, it was subtitled *The Inimitable Jeeves*; flipped over, it was subtitled *Blandings Castle*. Inside, the first title page announced "'The Great Sermon Handicap' from *The Inimitable Jeeves*", and the second title page announced "'Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend' from *Blandings Castle*". The book was intended to be distributed for publicity purposes (there was no price printed on it). It is possible that other *Extracts* combinations were also produced, and your columnist would be pleased to hear from any reader who has information on the subject.

The Word Around the Clubs

The Nodding Mentality

The following letter appeared in the *Financial Times* on 21 July 2016. Need we say more?

Sir, How good it was to see Lucy Kellaway ("My ambition to look more like Theresa May in meetings", July 18) detailing the many different ways that non-executive directors nod during meetings. She was following in noble nodding footsteps. The great humorist PG Wodehouse turned his brief experience as a screenwriter in Hollywood into a series of stories in which the "noddors" in the studio hierarchy played a significant role. Explaining this in a letter, Mr Wodehouse said: "The chief executive throws out some statement of opinion, and looks about him expectantly. This is the cue for the senior Yes Man to say Yes. He is followed, in order of precedence, by the second Yes Man — or Vice Yesser, as he is sometimes called — and the Junior Yes Man. Only when all the Yes Men have Yessed do the Noddors begin to function. They Nod."

Hilary Bruce
Chairman, The PG Wodehouse Society

An Eccentric Lord Revisited

The June 2016 issue of *Wooster Sauce* included a letter (p.8) from DAVID MACKIE, who described the eccentricities of Gerald Hugh Tyrwhitt, Lord Berners; David suggested Berners could be a model for Lord Emsworth. Shortly after that issue reached members, an article appeared in the *Daily Telegraph's* Saturday magazine that provided a potted biography of Berners, listing even more of his unique qualities. Very timely!

Wodehouse: Song Book Lyricist

ROBERT BRUCE sent a thoughtful clipping from the *TLS* of 18 March 2016 regarding a book entitled *The American Song Book: The Tin Pan Alley Era*, by Philip Furia and Laurie Patterson. The book features 30 songs dating from the first quarter of the 20th century, each prefaced by an essay. The *TLS* reviewer writes:

The Song Book lyricists were mostly Jewish immigrants, but included one Englishman: P. G. Wodehouse. Furia and Patterson report that Wodehouse began with the idea that the lyrics came first – that songs were essentially light verse set to music, in the manner of Gilbert and

Sullivan. Working with Jerome Kern on Broadway, he discovered that the composer's "sequence of 'twiddly little notes'" inspired him to vary his phrasing and to play with internal rhyme.

The Wodehouse selection in the book is, of course, 'Bill', and as the reviewer notes: "A thousand wives gazed fondly on a thousand husbands when the singer confessed: 'It's surely not his brain / That makes me thrill, / . . . he's just my Bill'."

A Choice Comment

Thanks to TONY RING and MIKE SWADDLING for sending along the following from *The Guardian's* online Books Blog for 27 June 2016:

[One of our readers] enjoyed a classic – and came up with a wonderful metaphor for reading Wodehouse:

Finished re-reading Leave It to Psmith by P.G. Wodehouse – the usual amiable nincompoops, plucky heroines, stern aunts, false identities, jewellery theft and pigs are all present, correct and accounted for, but it was a forceful reminder that no one can turn those ingredients into an art form quite the way Wodehouse does.

To me, a good Wodehouse has always been somewhere between comfort food and a sublimely performed ballet (to thoroughly mix my metaphors) – you may know what you're getting and what's going to happen, but that doesn't make it any less wonderful.

As Tony points out, this is a rather perceptive comment, though perhaps many of us could substitute another sort of sublime moment for the ballet!

Bertie, Jeeves, and Brexit

Among the slew of analytical articles following the UK's historic vote to leave the EU was one entitled 'Bertie's Brexit', which appeared in several publications. The piece presented a conversation between Bertie and Jeeves concerning the vote's impact on, amongst others, Aunt Dahlia's chef Anatole (who will be going back to France). The discussion ended with the bombshell that Jeeves was handing in his notice as "you see, sir, my name is not really Jeeves but Jevonski and after Brexit I am going back to my home in Poland". (*From several members*)

Only Connect — to Wodehouse

Congratulations to Society member Mark Smith, who was part of the winning team that appeared on the July 25th episode of the BBC game show *Only Connect*, hosted by Victoria Coren Mitchell. Mark and his teammates had applied to the show separately but were teamed up when the producers discovered they were all Wodehouse fans. And the team name? Of course, of course, it was the Psmiths, old horse!

There were no Wodehouse-related questions asked during the show, but it mattered not – clearly all three had followed Jeeves’s example and eaten plenty of fish beforehand as they easily trounced their rivals, moving them into the semifinals. (Keep your eye peeled



on the TV listings as no date for their next appearance was known at the time this issue went to press.)

Eagle-eyed readers of *Wooster Sauce* will remember that Mark performed an original song, ‘Why I Love Plum’, at the Society’s meeting in February (see the June issue, p.4) – a man of many talents!

The Word in Season *by Dan Kaszeta*

Mazuma

Just when I thought I was running out of ideas for this column, a new word struck me while reading *Piccadilly Jim* (1917). On page 25 of the recent Penguin paperback edition, Jerry Mitchell, the New York fitness instructor, says: “It’s always the way with those boys when you take them off a steady job and let them run round loose with their jeans full of mazuma.”

The exceedingly rare Wodehouse reference to jeans aside, what is mazuma?

At first glance, the word reads almost as if it can be inferred to be “fire in the loins” or something similar. That is too risqué for a Wodehouse novel written in 1916, even when referring to louche idlers like Jimmy Crocker.

So, disregarding mazuma’s possible naughty definition, we must dig into what else may be in one’s jeans. *Mazama*, with an a, is an extinct volcano in the US state of Oregon. This word derives, apocryphally, from a Native American word for ‘mountain goat’. It’s doubtful one jaunts around town with a mountain goat in one’s jeans, although one passes no judgement.

Mizuma is a corruption of a Japanese word for a type of salad green. Hmm. No joy.

Finally, my Baltic connections (those are worthy of a long tale some other time) tell me that *mazuma* exists as a word in Latvian, but due to the odd

declensions of nouns in that language, nobody can actually describe what it means in English.

The meaning becomes clearer when I dig deeper and earlier into the Wodehouse canon. *The Little Nugget* (1913) uses this sentence: “It’s all settled, if only I can connect with the mazuma” – in reference to the perennial Wodehouse trope about having enough funds to marry. Another work of the period, an obscure short burlesque drama entitled *The Wardrobe of the King* (W. McKiernan, 1911,) refers to ‘mazumas’ as a fictional currency.

Prior to these uses, there was a famous gold and silver mining boomtown, called Mazuma, Nevada, which was destroyed in a flood in 1912.

By context, at least, *mazuma* means money. The prevailing opinion, as espoused by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is that *mazuma* is slang for cash, as in spondulicks, dosh, or dough, and is based on the Yiddish word *mezumen* (alternately transcribed as *m’zumon*), which literally means the ‘ready necessary’ – as true a definition of cash as one could ever ask for. This definition is further confirmed by consulting the amazingly obscure yet informative *Nevada Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary* (1974). It gets further confirmed when one realises that the Yiddish word for an ATM cash machine is *mezumenke*.

I wish I had some mazuma in my jeans this week.

Buyer Beware

by Laurence Ogram

Have you ever thought you had a connection with one of P. G. Wodehouse's characters – a sort of inevitable similarity? Well, an incident happened to me recently that made me feel just like Bertie Wooster!

Prior to leaving for his annual holiday, Jeeves was describing Bertie to his understudy: "You will find Mr. Wooster an exceedingly pleasant and amiable young gentleman, but not intelligent. By no means intelligent. Mentally he is negligible – quite negligible."

Substitute my name for Wooster's and you have me to a T! How did I come to this conclusion? I will tell you.

I was visiting my local supermarket, and as I walked past the magazine and book section I noticed what I thought to be a Wodehouse Guide to Writing. To say this surprised me would be putting it mildly. First, I had no idea such a thing existed; second, who would expect to find Wodehouse in a supermarket? Up till now the only comments I had seen by Wodehouse about his literary skills were in his letters to William Townend in *Performing Flea*.

Quick as a flash I bought it and took it home. What a disaster! As soon as I unwrapped it, I discovered I had bought a pack of tea bags! Well, on the cover it said 'PG Tips, so naturally I thought . . . well . . . it just goes to show you how careful you have to be! This proves how true, and how important it is to remember, that well-known phrase "Never judge a book by its cover"!

My only concern now is that drinking all that tea may link me to another Wodehouse character, Buffy Struggles. According to Gally Threepwood, Buffy gave up drinking alcohol, despite Gally's warnings, and thereafter concentrated on tea. Within two weeks he was dead, having fallen under a hansom cab.

I suppose my only consolation is that we no longer have hansom cabs! Phew!

Augustus Robb adjusted the horn-rimmed spectacles which had made so powerful an appeal to Mr. Cobbold senior, and gazed down at the fishy-eyed ruin before him with something of the air of a shepherd about to chide an unruly lamb.

(From *Spring Fever*, 1948)

The Wooster Source

by Graeme Davidson

*This is the real Tabasco,
It's the word from Bertie Wooster,
The bozo who relates to us his latest
frothy news
And banishes, amidst the ballyhoos,
all misery and our bally blues.*



When it is a question of a pal being in the soup, we Woosters no longer think of self; and that poor old Bingo was knee-deep in the bisque was made plain by his mere appearance – which was that of a cat which has just been struck by a half-brick and is expecting another shortly.

'Jeeves and the Impending Doom',
Very Good, Jeeves! (1930)

I tried to reason with the poor chump.

"But your guv'nor will have to know some time."

"That'll be all right. I shall be the jolly old star by then, and he won't have a leg to stand on."

"It seems to me that he'll have one leg to stand on while he kicks me with the other."

'A Letter of Introduction',
The Inimitable Jeeves (1923)

Sir Roderick Glossop, Honoria's father, is always called a nerve specialist, because it sounds better, but everybody knows that he's really a sort of janitor to the looney-bin.

'Introducing Claude and Eustace',
The Inimitable Jeeves (1924)

Bingo reached for his paper and consulted it.

"Girls' Under Fourteen Fifty-Yard Dash seems to open the proceedings."

"Anything to say about that, Jeeves?"

"No, sir. I have no information."

"What's the next?"

"Boys' and Girls' Mixed Animal Potato Race, All Ages."

This was a new one to me. I had never heard of it at any of the big meetings.

'The Purity of the Turf',
The Inimitable Jeeves (1923)

Answers to Mastermind Quiz (Page 17)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Roberta 'Bobbie' Wickham | 4. Stephanie 'Stiffy' Byng | 8. <i>Spindrift</i> |
| 2. <i>Right Ho, Jeeves</i> | 5. Cora 'Corky' Potter-Pirbright | 9. <i>Aunts Aren't Gentlemen</i> |
| 3. His playing of the banjolele | 6. Zenobia 'Nobby' Hopwood | 10. Madeline Bassett |
| | 7. <i>Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves</i> | |

Recent Press Comment

Idaho State Journal, May 28

Leonard Hitchcock, in an article headed 'A recommended escape', was of the view that "what we all need, pretty obviously, is something cheerful to read . . . a book with prose that dances on the page . . . and, if at all possible, it should be funny." He went on to recommend any book by PGW: "Those of us who admire Wodehouse's work tend to focus . . . on the sentences, for they have a felicity, an inventiveness, a virtuosity in the use of language, that is astonishing." Hitchcock noted that when asked, at the age of 75, why he wrote so much, Plum said that "it was not that I had a particular message for humanity. I am still plugging away and not the ghost of one so far, so it begins to look as though, unless I suddenly hit mid-season form in my eighties, humanity will remain a message short."

The Irish Times, May 30

When asked "What is your favourite quotation?", author Henrietta McKerverey replied: "PGW's 1926 dedication in *The Heart of a Goof* to his daughter Leonora. By summing up so sweetly what he felt about her, it also sums up what I feel about his writing." PGW was also one of the writers she would invite to her dream dinner party.

The Daily Telegraph, June 4 (from Carolyn de la Plain) Michael Deacon's parliamentary Sketch column started: "Normally Michael Gove is a figure of Jeeves-like imperturbability. The weightless composure, the scrupulous diction, the polysyllabic prolixity, his face expressionless but for the occasional flicker of an eyebrow."

The Times, June 4 (from Nirav Shah)

In the Saturday Review section, a piece about a book of letters written by Roald Dahl to his mother contained this line: "As Dahl settles in to the rotten regime of Repton in Derbyshire, his letters home begin to take on the high colour and cracking pace of PG Wodehouse."

The Week, June 4

(from Roger Bowen and Alexander Dainty)

The historian Ruth Dudley Edwards chose 'The Crime Wave at Blandings' as a favourite book, saying that "when life seems terminally gloomy, there is always Wodehouse to restore one's joie de vivre."

The Times, June 10 (from Keith Alsop)

In his political sketch, Patrick Kidd likened Boris Johnson's appearance in a televised EU referendum debate to "Bertie at a gathering of the Wooster clan, surrounded by a surging sea of aunts".

The Daily Telegraph, June 10

A letter from Mr. Rob Reid on the subject of the Queen's interest in George Formby noted: "SIR:- The instrument George Formby is playing in the picture accompanying your report (June 7) about the Queen's

fondness for him is not a ukulele but a banjolele. This has the body of a banjo and the fretted neck of a ukulele. It was favoured by Bertie Wooster but not by Jeeves, who temporarily left his master's service because of his incessant playing."

The Observer, June 12

In a piece on Maria Sharapova, Catherine Bennett spoke of MS's use of "a fantastic sounding drug called meldonium, which is said to improve stamina and even, not unlike PG Wodehouse's fabled Buck-U-Uppo, gives the user 'mental focus' and a sharper edge."

The Week, June 20 (from Alexander Dainty)

In his list of best books, Steve Jones, emeritus professor of human genetics at UCL, chose *The Code of the Woosters*, which he described as "a peerless masterpiece: it contains my favourite Wodehouse quote, describing the right-winger Roderick Spode as having the 'sort of eye that can open an oyster at 60 paces'."

Luton on Sunday, June 19 (from Brian Porter)

Western Daily Press, June 25 (from Alexander Dainty) Property Talk: A six-bedroom home in Apley Hall, the subject of much debate as to whether it is the model for Blandings Castle, is on the market for £950,000 (a snip!) Both sides of the argument have been set out in *Wooster Sauce*. (See the letter on page 9.)

Albany Times Union, June 29

In the course of 'Nobody does it better than Plum', an article extolling the virtues of the Master, Tucker, a golf aficionado, started with some lines from 'The Salvation of George Mackintosh', in which Celia admits to killing George with her niblick. The Oldest Member opines, "If the thing was to be done at all, it was unquestionably a niblick shot." Tucker concluded that PGW's "gift to golf remains, in my opinion, more important than any other golf writer".

The Guardian, July 7 (from Jo Jacobius)

Several articles on Brexit dragged in Bertie Wooster and Jeeves as 'observers', but Lucy Mangan took a different tack. Under the header 'As the EU-apocalypse beckons, where's Jeeves when you need him?', Mangan wrote of her need for some comfort reading. "But finding the right comfort read is a delicate art. . . . If you're banishing a mood rather than a condition, things are trickier. I am looking at my beloved Wodehouses at the moment and want to burn them. You unthinking fool, Wooster! . . . Where's my Jeeves? Where's the omniscient valet the nation wants to clean up a proliferating set of potentially disastrous consequences set in motion by the idiocies of a group of pea-brained Old Etonians like yourself? Where do you get off, being fictional when the rest of us are stuck in the real world? Wodehouse will not serve today."

The Times, July 9

A letter to the editor pointed out that Percy Jeeves was one of many professional cricketers killed in the Great

War. The writer mentioned that Wodehouse had seen Jeeves play and later borrowed his name.

BBC Radio 4, July 9

In 'Reflections with Peter Hennessey', Vince Cable spoke of his love of ballroom dancing. Mr Hennessey observed that "to use a phrase that Bertie Wooster used of Jeeves you swing a dashed efficient shoe on the dance floor".

BBC Radio 4, July 10

In "What's the Point of Golf?" Quentin Letts managed to mention Donald Trump and PGW in the same breath. Discussing The Donald's ownership of Turnberry (amongst other things), he said, "Perhaps PGW got it wrong when he said that golf was a corrective against sinful pride. I attribute the arrogance of the later Roman Emperors almost entirely to the fact that, never having played golf, they never knew that strange chastening humility that is engendered by a topped chip shot."

Racing Post, July 10

Mention of the drink Buck's Fizz led writer David Ashforth to reflect upon the founder of Buck's Club, Herbert Buckmaster, and his barman Malachy 'Pat' McGarry. Ashforth noted: "The Club, the Fizz and McGarry became so famous that in P G Wodehouse's *The Inimitable Jeeves* (1923) Bertie Wooster visits a Club where the barman is McGarry."

The Times of India, July 14

Riya Sharma reported on a 'secret' Wodehouse society, founded in 1966, that meets at St Stephen's College in Delhi. (Society patron Shashi Tharoor was once a member.) Though inactive for some time, the society was re-formed last year and focuses on playing pranks throughout the campus. It is "all about spreading some cheer" according to members.

Blink, July 16

Question 6 of Joy Bhattacharjya's Google-proof quiz was "visuals: Arthur Conan Doyle, PG Wodehouse. The one on the left was supposed to have written it, the one on the right actually did." Points were awarded for the names of the authors and the fictional characters involved. The answer, revealed on July 29, was "Elementary, my dear Watson", which Doyle never wrote. Rather, it was first uttered in print by PGW's Psmith in *Psmith Journalist*.

The Write Stuff, BBC Radio 4, July 19

The popular literary quiz show featured P G Wodehouse. The two teams were led by novelists John Walsh and Sebastian Faulks, and the show started with each panellist sharing favourite PGW lines; it ended with each reading their own pastiche of Wodehouse. Questions in between included "What connects Gussie Fink-Nottle with former mayor Ken Livingstone?" (The answer, of course, is newts.)

The Mail on Sunday, July 24 (from June Arnold)

An article about Tracy Worcester, a marchioness and animal welfare activist currently campaigning against intensive pig farming, began: "She might seem to spring straight from the pages of a PG Wodehouse novel: a pig-obsessed aristocrat driven to outlandish escapades." The article later points out: "Wodehouse's Blandings stories famously deal with amusing skullduggery in toffish pig pens but there is nothing humorous about the conditions Tracy seeks to expose."

The Daily Telegraph, July 30

Clue number 1 across in the GK Crossword was: "Author Pelham Grenville, who penned more than 70 novels including *Leave it to Psmith*, *Right Ho, Jeeves*, *The Code of the Woosters*, *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* and *Galahad at Blandings* (9)." Think very, very hard . . .

Daily Mail, August 12 (from Stephen Payne)

In a report of how he happened to stumble on a meeting of Jeremy Corbyn supporters in a pub, Tom Utley described the tweed suit he was wearing, "the sort of outfit Bertie Wooster might have worn on a visit to Blandings Castle".

Mail Online, August 20

A review of the St James's-based restaurant Wiltons opened by noting that there, "time doesn't just pass. Rather, it strolls and perambulates, Like Bertie Wooster on his way to luncheon at the Drones".

The Washington Post, August 24

The headline of a book review described *The Gentleman*, by Forrest Leo, as "a Wodehouse wanna-be that (kind of) does". The reviewer, Michael Dirda, noted that the book "pays homage to late Victorian melodrama and in its tone aspires to a P.G. Wodehouse-like insouciance".

Press Coverage of Percy Jeeves's Tree

Among the throngs attending the ceremonial tree planting at Cheltenham in July (see report, page 1) were dozens of reporters and photographers. The Society's special commemoration of Percy Jeeves had attracted the attention of the Press in a big way, even before it had taken place (see bit.ly/2aWhgmX and bit.ly/2buomA6) – but on the day itself it was difficult for many to see over and around the cameras and microphones. Chairman Hilary Bruce was interviewed on BBC Radio Gloucestershire, while regional television stations BBC1 Points West and ITV West Country featured reports on their early and late evening news programmes. Both the BBC and the ITV reports included comments from Hilary as well as Sir Edward Cazalet, Wodehouse's grandson, and Keith Mellard, Percy Jeeves's great-nephew; ITV also interviewed writer and Society patron Godfrey Smith. Some local newspapers carried articles, and *The Daily Telegraph* printed 'A spiffing tribute to the real-life Jeeves' in its edition of 31 July. In all, the Press coverage was extensive and gratifying, for it brought attention not only to Percy Jeeves's inadvertent contribution to literature but also to the sacrifice he and countless others had made, tragically losing their lives on the Somme a century ago.

Future Events for Your Diary

September 23–November 6, 2016

Psmith, Journalist at the City Lit Theatre

Chicago's City Lit Theatre is staging another Wodehouse-based play, this one adapted by artistic director Terry McCabe. For information, see City Lit's website: www.citylit.org

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

There is already a small waiting list for places at the Society's biennial dinner at Gray's Inn, London, though we're reasonably confident that we'll find seats for those members by the time October comes. The chance of success will be less strong for those applying now, .

November 23, 2016

Society Meeting at the Savoy Tup

Our last meeting of the year – the AGM – is later than usual, but there you are. Following the business meeting, we will hear from Gabriella Valentino about translating Wodehouse into Italian; see page 4 for more. As ever, we will convene from 6 p.m. onwards at the Savoy Tup.

February 15, July 12, and October 4, 2017

Society Meetings

These are the provisional dates for the Society's regular meetings in 2017. Confirmed dates and locations will be announced in the December edition of *Wooster Sauce* and on the website.

October 19–22, 2017

TWS Convention in Washington, D.C.

The Wodehouse Society will be holding its 19th biennial convention, 'Mr. Wodehouse Goes to Washington', in, appropriately enough, Washington, D.C., at the Hamilton Crowne Plaza.

"You are very right," responded Psmith. "Comrade Windsor, a man of alert and restless temperament, felt that a change was essential if *Cosy Moments* was to lead public thought. I have no quarrel with Comrade Wilberfloss. But he did not lead public thought. He catered exclusively for children with water on the brain, and men and women with ivory skulls. Comrade Windsor, with a broader view, feels there are other and larger publics. He refuses to content himself with lading out a weekly dole of mental predigested breakfast food."

(From *Psmith, Journalist*, 1930)

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