

WOOSTER SAUCE

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Smarter Than Your Average Drone?

by Ben Schott

Unlikely as it may seem, my recently published homage to the Master – *Jeeves & The King of Clubs* – was inspired by Donald Trump. Or, rather, by Trump’s former butler, who, in 2016, suggested that President Barack Obama be assassinated. It’s not often that butlers hit the headlines (more’s the pity), and as I read this bizarre story, my immediate thought was: *What would Jeeves say?*

This in turn inspired me to write a short story for *The Spectator*, in which The Donald is a guest at Brinkley Court, where Bertie is forced to play him at croquet and deliberately chuck the match. The response to this whimsical *jeu d’esprit* was unexpectedly enthusiastic, and it set the old lemon ticking: might there be an appetite for a new Jeeves and Wooster novel? And, if so, how might it differ from the embarrassment of riches already in print?

I did not think ‘Young Bertie’ would fly – after all, why would a schoolboy have a gentleman’s personal gentleman? And would he really be able to drink and smoke and lounge in the Drones? What of his parents? And what of the Great War?

Equally, I bridled at the idea of a contemporary Bertie – for who but a cad would wish to bask in the doings of a brash, 21st-century one-percenter?

My leap was to twist the Wooster universe five degrees to starboard, turning the story into a spy caper and transforming Bertie into a British secret agent. To my delight, the Wodehouse Estate bestowed on the idea their blessing and consented to loan me literature’s Crown Jewels.

In writing *Jeeves & The King of Clubs*, I approached the keyboard not with a grand, personal vision, but as a deadly serious frivolity. My aim was to create a fabulous, literary ‘Heath Robinson machine’ – deploying all of the pulleys, levers, and lengths of knotted rope offered by the Wodehouse *oeuvre* to create the finest, funniest, and most charming Wooster homage possible.

I aspired to eschew caricature, pastiche, and (most banal of all) parody to write *in parallel* with Plum: obeying the rules of his narrative style, deploying the linguistic traits of his characters, and respecting the rhythm of his magical prose.

Homage is not impersonation, however, and readers *au fait* with Plum’s Woostershire will notice a few stylistic differences in *Jeeves & The King of Clubs*. There is, for example, a little more action and a tad less description, and Jeeves is, on occasion, given licence for short-hop flights of fanciful loquacity. Moreover, since Wooster women tend to arrive in one of three varieties – simpering fools (Madeline Bassett), exacting harridans (Florence Craye), and brutal aunts (a subspecies of harridan) – it was a joy to devise in Iona MacAuslan a wise, witty, and likeable heroine who might out-Ginger the nimblest of Rogers.

One observation made by a number of readers is that the Bertie of my homage is a little more quick-witted than some felt he was canonically. And so I hope readers of *Wooster Sauce* will humour me if I explore this issue in a little detail.



Ben Schott

(Painting by Harry MacAuslan)

The first thing to say is that I did not set out with any calculated plan to make Bertie significantly brainier. Indeed, to my mind, the idea that our hero is *merely* a drunken, hiccupping imbecile is as erroneous as giving him a monocle.

It's possible that the perception of an unredeemably dim-witted Bertie owes more to Hugh Laurie's glorious portrayal in Clive Exton's joyous *Jeeves and Wooster* than to Plum's actual text, where, lest we forget, in addition to winning the prize for Scripture Knowledge at Malvern House, Bertie attended Eton and graduated from Magdalen College, Oxford. Even in those days, such academic achievements were no cakewalk.

Second, it's fair to ask whether someone as penetratingly sagacious (and eminently employable) as Reginald Jeeves would voluntarily spend some 60 years, 35 short stories, and 11 novels manning the soda siphon for a *complete* fool. The elephant in this particular room is, of course, Jeeves's overheard description of his employer in 'The Pride of the Woosters Is Wounded' (*The Inimitable Jeeves*, 1923):

"You will find Mr Wooster," he was saying to the substitute chappie, "an exceedingly pleasant and amiable young gentleman, but not intelligent. By no means intelligent. Mentally he is negligible – quite negligible."

Although it's tempting to blame such acidity on the *mal au foie* that so grievously plagues Anatole, it's hard not to admit that Jeeves is on to something, which brings me to point three . . .

In assessing Bertie's intelligence – or lack of it – it's vital to consider the calibre of his interlocutor. Compared to Jeeves, Bertie is indeed 'mentally negligible' – but then again, and here's the nub, so are we all. Indeed, it's hard to think of any intellectual equal to the Oracle of Mayfair – excepting, perhaps, Mycroft Holmes or Baruch Spinoza.

Compared to Aunt Dahlia, I'd say Bertie is about par: the pair thrust and parry with equal dexterity, and although Dahlia usually gets the upper hand, this is more a reflection of pragmatic nepotic deference than intrinsic materteral nous.

And compared to his fellow Eggs, Beans and Crumpets, Bertie soars above the pack. Within the intellectually hollowed halls of the Drones, Bertie is not merely *primus inter pares* but *summa cum laude* – if that's the Latin I'm looking for. So while Jeeves may well be correct in his assessment of Bertie's mental negligibility, it's a little like having one's pizzicato critiqued by Paganini.

Point four speaks to what I consider to be the driving tension and creative genius at the heart of the Wooster cannon: P.O.V.

All but two of the Jeeves and Wooster works are written from Bertie's Point of View. And they are, by common consent compounded over a century, some of the deftest comic fiction ever inked. But how can this be, if Bertie is simply a buffoon? No prose authored by an *actual* idiot would be bearable for more than a page or so – which doubtless explains why we've been spared the collected *pensées* of Charles 'Biffy' Biffen. And when the P.O.V. swings to Jeeves, in 'Bertie Changes His Mind' (*Carry On, Jeeves*, 1925), the effect, to my ear at least, is oddly discordant, and the prose is certainly no finer than when the guv'nor is wielding the pen.

Samuel Johnson recounts waking one morning mortified by a bad dream in which he had been bested in a battle of conversational wit. Only as the day progressed did Johnson realise that, since it was *his* dream, *he* had supplied both sides of the dialogue, including the winning lines of his imagined antagonist. Something similar is at work in the Wooster novels, where Bertie has an oxymoronically erudite awareness of his intellectual shortcomings.

This leads me to my final point: the small but significant question of self-deprecation. Notwithstanding the *amour propre* of a *preux chevalier*, Bertie is modest enough to admit that he is "no mastermind" – which speaks to an insight absent from the true fool. Genuinely stupid people never doubt for a second that they possess anything less than genius – as illustrated only too starkly by the Spode-like chancers currently strutting across the global stage. Which, completely coincidentally, brings me to where I came in.

What minor modifications there may be to Bertie's intellect, and other stylistic elements of the corpus, are the consequence of my desire to inject my homage with a shot of pith and pace. If you've ever seen the 1960 film *Ocean's 11* (with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Sammy Davis Jr), you'll know that the 2001 remake (with George Clooney, Brad Pitt, and Matt Damon) is a little like chasing a biplane with the Concorde. Obviously, any such aggressive acceleration would ill suit the sedate world of Wooster, but I felt that any scenario in which Bertie becomes a British spy might benefit from a glug or two of Buck-U-Uppo, if not Brinkley Sauce.

It's hard to describe the combination of joy and terror I experienced writing *Jeeves & The King of Clubs* and attempting to follow in the patent-leather footsteps of Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse. The process was akin to solving a thousand crossword clues a day, where every syllable was an opportunity to stumble or soar. I did not think it possible to have more respect for The Master than I did. I was delighted to discover I was wrong.

© Ben Schott

I've said it before and I'll say it again: you'd have to be loco in the noggin to employ Jeeves and own an alarm clock.
(From *Jeeves & The King of Clubs*)

Society News



A New Patron

Our entertainments impresario, Paul Kent, wasn't at our recent committee meeting, being otherwise engaged in earning a living. Specifically, he was in a recording studio with a well-known gentleman whom we knew to be a big Wodehouse fan.

A few days before, Paul had wondered aloud whether it might be a good idea to invite him to become a Patron. "Why not ask him?" we said. So he did.

Thus it was that, during the meeting, the chairman received a text from Paul saying that Ben Elton had been delighted by the invitation, and had accepted the post on the spot! An outbreak of rowdy cheering ensued around the table as we welcomed Ben into the fold. We'll be profiling him in *Wooster Sauce* as soon as we can and hope to involve him in Society events from time to time. Ben is a really committed enthusiast, so the chances for that are good.

It's Only Cricket

At the time this issue of *Wooster Sauce* went to press, no arrangements had yet been made for the Gold Bats' annual match against the Dulwich Dusters, traditionally held in June. In the hope that we may yet be able to pull it off, members are advised to keep monitoring the Society's website, and if/when a date is set, it will be posted there – as well as in the June *Wooster Sauce* if the timing is right.

Meanwhile, we are happy to say that the annual match against the Sherlock Holmes Society of London has been arranged and will take place on Sunday, 23 June, as usual at the very lovely West Wycombe Cricket Club ground. The game will begin at around 11 am, after which there will be a long lunch break and a tea break during the afternoon. When the weather is fine, these matches are highly enjoyable, and there is usually a post-game gathering in a nearby pub. So, do pack up a picnic lunch and a blanket to sit on, and come join us! If you are interested in playing for the Gold Bats, contact

A Head Start on Subscriptions

Spring is in the air, and if you pay for your membership by cheque or PayPal, it will soon be time to renew it: payment is due by 31 May. But there is a better way – at least there is if you have a UK bank account. GoCardless will remember for you. [Rest of copy deleted.]

July Meeting

Speaking of Paul Kent (mentioned in the first item), he will soon be starting to apply his clever bean to a new quiz with which to challenge members who attend our meeting at the Savile Club on 8 July. The now-traditional summer quiz is always a great deal of fun, so if you'll be in or around London at that time, do come and join in! Watch for further details in the June edition of *Wooster Sauce*.

Plum's Memorial

Our exciting announcement regarding a memorial for Wodehouse at Westminster Abbey was followed by long weeks when it seemed little progress was being made with it. However, it turned out that there had been wheels within wheels, and at the Abbey things had been moving forward, albeit out of our ken. Recently, an artist has been working on the design for the stone, and this will have to be agreed by the various committees before a date for the dedication can be set. At this stage it looks as if sometime in the autumn might be a reasonable bet, but there are no guarantees, so let's hope that all will be revealed in the June *Wooster Sauce*. For now, as the project really starts to come to life, we're beginning to get quite excited!

A New Look for Wooster Sauce?

Eagle-eyed members may notice something a little different about this issue of *Wooster Sauce*. Taking a break from the bond paper we have been using for years, we are trying out a new 'silk' paper that is a bit glossy, but not so much so that light shines off the page – at least we hope it doesn't. Photographs can now be seen with much more clarity, and we think this is a big plus, but we are well aware that there are some who don't care for any kind of a shiny paper when reading text.

[Rest of copy deleted.]

Appointments in the Clergy

The ever-vigilant MURRAY HEDGCOCK is to be commended for continuing to spot applicants for the Great Sermon Handicap in the *Daily Telegraph*. Writes Murray: "I remain fascinated by the regularity with which lengthy lists appear, suggesting much activity within the C of E despite all gloomy proposals that it is losing its influence."

From 21 December 2018, a comparatively restrained one:

The Rev. James Alexander McDonald, associate minister, St. Lawrence with St. Nicholas, Holy Trinity, Micklegate, All Saints, Pavement with St. Crux and St. Michael Spurriergate, St. Olave with St. Giles, St. Helen Stonegate with St. Martin Coney Street, and St. Denys (Diocese of York) to be team vicar in the Langelei Team with special ministerial responsibility at All Saints, Kings Langley, and St. Mary's, Apsley (Diocese of St. Albans).

(Murray comments: "The reverend gentleman is clearly a team player.")



Letters to the Editor

Reactions, Questions, and Thoughts from Our Readers

From David Salter

My diary tells me that the Chinese New Year, starting on 2nd February, will be the Year of the Pig. Lucky old Empress.

From Penelope Forrest

Terry Betts's lament in September's *Wooster Sauce* puzzles me. First, it would be sacrilege for anyone else to write stories about Wodehouse's characters, but even more to the point, how can he complain that there isn't enough to read already? If one rereads one of the Master's books a month (surely the minimum dose for a fan), it would take more than seven years to read them all. Then there is a lot more to enjoy. I recently decided to rearrange my copies of *By The Way*, which had me digging into ten years' worth of *Wooster Sauces* – and bang went most of the day! Most of the articles bear rereading. This is without all the biographies, handbooks, tributes, commentaries, and other material. My lament is the opposite of Terry's: I wish there were more time to spend immersed in all that is available.

From Christopher Bellew

I recently reread *A Pelican at Blandings* (1969), in which Lord Emsworth tells his sister, Lady Constance, that he has been reading Debrett. (This is a distractionary tactic to draw her attention away from misdemeanours.) He muses on how he should address Lord Orrery and Cork, were he to bump into him. Is this the only occasion that Wodehouse uses a genuine title? Did he deliberately invert the name – the real Earl of Cork and Orrery, born in 1945? Wodehouse's deployment of titles and forms of address is flawless, so perhaps this is a deliberate inversion?

From Geoff Hales

I went recently to a play by one of the Great Russians (*Wild Honey* by Chekhov). This jolly piece featured a village schoolmaster who, in addition to his wife and apparently dying child, was encumbered with three besotted women and had a problem with his vodka intake. Finding that it was all getting a bit much, he threw himself under the evening train to Moscow. Towards the end of the evening, I began to be reminded of something. It was Wodehouse's golf stories, perhaps 'The Heart of a Goof'. Same sort of atmosphere and snappy ending.

The Editor replies: Geoff may be thinking of 'The Clicking of Cuthbert', which features that great Russian writer, Vladimir Brusiloff. Or, from well outside the golf stories, there is this classic quote from Jill the Reckless: "Freddie experienced the sort of abysmal soul-sadness which afflicts one of Tolstoy's Russian peasants when, after putting in a heavy day's work strangling his father, beating his wife, and dropping the baby into the city's reservoir, he turns to the cupboards, only to find the vodka bottle empty."

From David Mackie

Considering the numerous references to him, W. S. Gilbert seems to have been much in Plum's mind throughout his life. I've just finished reading *Wodehouse on Wodehouse*, which is

very informative about all his other writings, particularly to me as a musician. There are many references to the Savoy operas, and one in particular stood out for me. At some point he is talking about one of his early shows (I can't remember which one) and says, in effect, that it did all right but wasn't the world's best earner – then he says "the *Ruddigore* of the series". That is interesting because not only did Wodehouse seldom mention the operas by name, but he obviously knew just what *Ruddigore*'s position was in the Gilbert & Sullivan canon – and clearly assumed that his readers would also know that it was never as popular as *The Pirates of Penzance* or *The Mikado*. If that had been written today, I think there would be far fewer people who would understand the reference as G&S is beginning to fade away and fewer young people now know much beyond *Pirates* and *Mikado*. I do hope Plum's reputation doesn't suffer that fate.

Editor's note: David has recently published a book about his years at the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company; see page 20.

From Alan Hall

One of my favourite Wodehouse characters is that ray of sunshine, Angus McAllister. However, I am always slightly miffed when I see the Master refer to him as "Scotch"! As my old Housemaster, a Scot himself, used to say, "The people from my Country are either Scottish or Scots. The wonderful life-enhancing commodity we produce is called Scotch!" Why did an erudite man like Plum, who spent hours correcting his proofs, continue to refer to Scots as Scotch? Quite recently I was reading another author from an earlier generation, I think it was Jerome K. Jerome, who also referred to a Scottish person as "Scotch". Could this be a generational issue, I wonder, or perhaps a century ago Scots did not mind being referred to as "Scotch"! Answers on a postcard, please, to the Editor.

From Gerard Palmer

I got a surprise when looking at the back pages of *Something Fresh* to see the publisher – Arrow – stated that in *Right Ho, Jeeves*, Bertie arranges the engagement of Gussie Fink-Nottle to Tuppy Glossop! Now, I realise that in these modern times such an announcement would be regarded as nothing unusual, but surely in 1934, when the book was first published, it would have raised a few eyebrows, what? Mind you, having read the volume in question several times, I cannot recall this episode, and I doubt that Jeeves would have sanctioned the match.

Members' Reactions to Jeeves & The King of Clubs

In the December issue of Wooster Sauce, we invited members to provide short reviews/reactions to the new *Jeeves & Wooster* novel by Ben Schott. One came at a longer length than requested, but in the interest of fairness to views contrary to the review published in December, we are including it in its entirety. As for the rest – well, see for yourself!

An Opposing View by David Salter

Ben Schott has undertaken the pitfall-strewn task of producing a 'continuation' novel featuring some of P G Wodehouse's best-loved characters. Modestly, he says that his aim has been "to establish base-camp in the foothills of Plum's genius". One might speculate as to his motive for undertaking such an impossible task and why the Wodehouse Estate commissioned him to do so. [See p.1 –Ed.] The only justification I have seen is that it is a way of leading new readers onto the sunlit uplands of PGW's brilliance. But why would the new reader prefer to start with an ersatz version rather than going straight to the real thing?

Most reviews have been positive, some ecstatically so – so I am sticking my neck out in suggesting that this book is not very good. To be fair, Ben Schott is a good writer. This is his first novel, and as such it stands up as a creditable piece of work in terms of structure and storytelling, but in trying to pin it to Wodehouse's coattails he comes a cropper.

To me none of the characters and institutions, nor the predicaments that Bertie finds himself in, ring true. Strangely, Bertie seems too intelligent and normal and lacks the guileless enthusiasm, kindness, decency, and misplaced self-confidence that makes him such a heroic figure. The basic premise of the book, centring round Bertie's recruitment into the Secret Service, is clever but doesn't work – and is impossible to fit into Bertie's long timeline as recounted by PGW.

One problem is the language Bertie uses. There is too much modern English. This may be due to Mr. Schott's comparative youth, and yet one could expect someone who is interested in history and claims great familiarity with Wodehouse's writing to know better. Examples include the use of 'on' (an Americanism and recent import) instead of 'in' (as in 'on Piccadilly') and 'a grand' for £1000. Surprisingly, 'Maitre d'' is used for the Dining Room Steward at the Athenaeum, and the ugly collective noun 'Dronesmen' has been coined for members of the Drones.

I won't continue to list examples, will just add in conclusion that every page is littered with words and phrases that simply sound wrong. Tibby Hogg is described several times as 'smirking'. Unattractive. I imagine that what she was really doing was smiling – conspiratorially, affectionately, or humorously. Bertie lacks the elegant speech patterns and rhythms of the original works, and Ben Schott's reliance on packing his book with snippets of information, à la his *Miscellany*, grates.

Many people like this book. Fair enough. May I suggest that anyone contemplating an outlay of £12 plus would be better advised to buy six battered Penguin paperbacks from the pen of the Master.

Other Members' Views

This was a well-aimed schott. It was a meal, full of original tone, with added Wooster sauce. It went so well with genuine Plum. I enjoyed the revived ingredients, and felt Mr Schott had scored a bull's eye. Another go, please, for the king of clubs.

MR J. LENAHAN

In a word: disappointing. Plum was a master of dialogue (amongst other things), but to the best of my knowledge he never wrote the first three and a half pages of a novel almost entirely in dialogue and providing very little scene setting to bring the story to life. After a poor start, the novel didn't improve in this reader's opinion. The description of the duty clerks in the bank, Trollope's, seems out of place, given the story is told in the first person, and it seems unlikely that Wooster would detail such items. Nor, I think, would he have noticed if a table at the Ritz were 'prestigious' or not. When an idea 'snuck' up on Bertie, approximately a quarter of the way through the book, I stopped reading. The novel is described as 'an homage' to Wodehouse, but it lacks the flair of Sebastian Faulks's *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*.

LINDA TYLER

Doubtless, like myself, many members of the Society were given *Jeeves & The King of Clubs* as a Christmas present. It is written with skill and verve. I found it riveting and very funny. It is described as 'an homage to P. G. Wodehouse' and I am sure he would have enjoyed it,

BARRY LANE

I regret to record that I have not even finished the book, so little appeal did early chapters make. There appears to be far too much conscious effort to echo PGW, with complex, over-the-top similes and passages of dialogue that just do not ring true. Bertie is far too verbose, chattering nineteen to the dozen in situations where a genuine Wodehouse record would be much more restrained. And while I would not wish Spode to marry my sister (if I had a sister), I find it difficult to imagine him as less than a full-blooded Empire-building tub-thumping patriot, if misguided in his precise beliefs and methods. There are other areas that simply do not click, even for a pastiche. It's a pity – but a proper reminder that there can ever be only one Plum.

MURRAY HEDGCOCK

Thank you, Ben Schott. I smiled all the way through reading *Jeeves & The Kings of Clubs*. What joy: a new story setting for our old friends. It gallops along, grabbing attention with torrents of fresh, lively dialogue and a potty plot. It isn't Wodehouse and it isn't perfect, but that does not matter. I absolutely loved it.

CHRISTINE HEWITT

My First Wodehouse Experience

by Charles Gibson

My enjoyment in reading Wodehouse was delayed by about five years as a result of immoderate laughter.

I was 14 and a boarder at a well-known school in Dorset. In my house a junior boy, before graduating to a study shared with one or two others, spent such free time as there was in the Day Room, adjoining which was the library. One boy with reddish hair was a regular in the library, and he was invariably laughing in a hoarse cackle at the book he was reading. Each time it was a P G Wodehouse. I am sorry to say that I blamed the author for causing this irritating cacophony, and I decided that whatever I read, it was not going to be Wodehouse. This was a bad mistake: the true cause of my irritation was a boy not blessed with a euphonious voice, which in any case must have been in the course of breaking. So I missed out on an author who in all probability would have made my not-altogether-happy teenage years much more tolerable.

It was my great good fortune to meet fellow Society member Jeffrey Preston at the Oxford College which was kind enough to offer us both places, and indeed awards. We soon became good friends, and we have remained so ever since. It must have been in our first term or soon after that he, perceiving my character, and in particular my ability to find humour in all kinds of situations, assumed that I was a Wodehouse aficionado. He had been fortunate enough to be introduced to the Master by one of the beaks at his school in Liverpool. I had had no such luck, and I confessed that I had not read a single word of the oeuvre. Jeffrey cured me of this disability in the time it took for me to get only a couple of pages into ‘The Great Sermon Handicap’.

The other 17 stories in *The Inimitable Jeeves* followed swiftly, and over the years I came to love everything to do with Jeeves and Wooster, Blandings, and the Mulliners, and I have enjoyed the golf stories while having minimal interest in the game. In Italy I picked up *Jeeves taglia la corda*. Eh what? When and

where does he cut the cord? Jeeves is many things, indeed virtually everything; but he would surely have shied away from obstetrics and midwifery. One has to search for an approximation to the opening words (“Jeeves posò le sfrigolanti uova [sic] al prosciutto sul tavolo della colazione a Reginald (‘Filetto’) Herring e io . . .”) to discover that one is reading *Jeeves in the Offing*. The translator has done his best, but it is difficult to contemplate Bertie and ‘Kipper’ Herring finding *uova al prosciutto*, however *sfrigoranti* they might be, quite as energising as “sizzling eggs and b”.

I first read all these books many years ago. One of the many beauties of Wodehouse is that he is at least as much a joy to reread as to read, and he has almost invariably been a part of any holiday. I think it most likely that he helped me to have the temperament needed by a barrister and a judge. Most recently the Wooster oeuvre, after yet another rereading, has been a mainstay of a series of spells

in hospital, with the purpose of eradicating a large lymphoma. I venture to think that while the chemicals have undoubtedly done their stuff, the psychological defence has been taken care of by Wodehouse, who has played his part in getting rid of over 80% of the bally thing at half time. If I knew anything about golf, I would say that this is roughly the same as being four up with six to play. In other words, it looks like a winner, but we all know that Fate is always capable of lurking with a stuffed eelskin in hand.

And what became of the boy with reddish hair who started the whole thing off? He has had a distinguished career as a Liberal Democrat MP and subsequently as a Life Peer. I do hope that he has lightened the burden of life in the ‘Westminster Bubble’ with continuing devotion to the Master. If he is a member of the Society and comes to read this, I apologise, over 60 years after the event, for being deterred by the quality and volume of his laughter. I now know exactly what was happening to him.



Translation News: We hear from TONY RING that five Jeeves books translated into Simplified Chinese were published in 2018, copyright Dook Media Group Limited (www.dookbook.com) The Stop Press news is the publication in a single volume of 1,159 pages that include 39 assorted PGW short stories into Korean. There are ten Jeeves stories, seven Drones Club, ten Mr Mulliner, five Ukridge, two Lord Emsworth, and five Golf stories. The publisher is Hyundai Munhak Publishing Co. (www.hdmh.co.kr).

PGW's First Published Words?

by Don Taylor

Until recently we believed that Mr Wodehouse's first published words appeared in *The Alleynian* in 1899, but now it seems that he *may* have started a year or two earlier. In 1897 and 1898 a story paper called *Chums* received two interesting letters to the editor.

In *Chums* No. 236 (March 17, 1897, p.476), the editor reports a letter from a Mr Wodehouse, who supplies the following piece of literary criticism:

I think that 'Rogues of the Fiery Cross' is the best story I have ever read, it knocks spots off 'In Quest of Sheba's Treasure', which I didn't think was quite up to Chums' usual standard.

Mr Wodehouse then asks some supplementary questions as to how to lose weight and whether a bedtime of 11:30 pm is too late. We can't be certain that this is PGW, but the date is plausible.

In *Chums* No. 297 (May 18, 1898, p.619), the editor reports a letter from a Mr Wodehouse of *Dulwich*, who asks: "How can one become a journalist?" The mention of Dulwich is pretty conclusive: this must surely be the man himself. Here is the editor's reply, which, in retrospect, seems wonderfully patronising:

One can become a journalist, Mr. Wodehouse, only if Providence has willed it. The first requisite is, not only that a man shall be able to write about the things he sees and hears, but that he shall be able to write about them in such a way that other people will be interested in his work. If he have this gift, the rest is easy. . . .

Let us assume in charity, however, that Mr. Wodehouse has some of the gifts that go to make a pleasing writer. In that case he should begin by studying the columns of some journal which buys the kind of work he thinks he can write best. When he begins to understand what kind of contribution the editor is in the habit of accepting, let him sit down to his article. His first efforts should be brief; they should be bright; and they should deal with some subject a little out of the common. In this way they are likely to catch the editor's eye, and the author of them to begin a career in which every subsequent step will be in the right direction to recognition and

Much Obligated, PGW!

by Chandrashekhar
Phansalkar

For an avid fan such as I am, P G Wodehouse has not only been a friend but also a philosopher and a guide. And he has remained so since I discovered him sometime in my early 20s. He has been a friend to all his readers without exception, and a guide and a philosopher to some of them. I have the fortune to belong to the latter sect of Plumidolators.

A Wodehouse novel, when one is submerged into it, acquires an almost spiritual complexion by the virtue of its uniquely incorrupt, angelic milieu. It actually becomes a philosophical experience. One transcends the vagaries and miseries of ordinary life and feels infused with a sort of inner radiance that makes one strong enough to take anything on!

Plum wrote of his belief that there are two ways of writing novels: "One is making a sort of musical comedy without music and ignoring real life altogether; the other is going deep down into life and not caring a damn." Funnily enough, his novels – the musical comedies sans music – manage to convey (to me and surely to many) how not to care a damn about the unnerving depths of life and face every damn thing with a giggle.

It was therefore with a touch of disappointment that I read in last September's *Wooster Sauce* about Alan Bennett, another writer who has given me and undoubtedly many others unbridled joy through his writings, laying down his 'sore assessment' of Wodehouse: "I have never managed to read Wodehouse because I'm depressed by the enthusiasm of the people who do."

As a matter of fact, when one comes across an instance of two of one's favourite artists liking each other's work, there is immense pleasure. I for one got the old goose bumps when I read Dame Agatha Christie's dedication in her Hercule Poirot novel *Hallowe'en Party*: "To P. G. Wodehouse – whose books and stories have brightened my life for many years. Also, to show my pleasure in his having been kind enough to tell me he enjoyed my books."

It's a feeling like being embraced in a three-way hug! I have experienced a similar feeling when hearing Ravi Shankar, the sitar maestro, and Yehudi Menuhin, the violin virtuoso, playing together, and upon learning that Sir Donald Bradman had asked his wife Jessie to have a look at Sachin Tendulkar as he felt that Tendulkar played like he had.

Such three-way hugs are strokes of fortuity, and they come one's way at moments few and far between. But – boy! What a thrill they evoke when they do and leave one in one of those 'Much obliged' states of mind that Jeeves so often does for our good old Bertie!

"It isn't so much his dancing on my feet that I mind - it's the way he jumps on and off that slays me."

(From *Money for Nothing*, 1928)

A Storm in a Buttercup

by Richard Burnip

The ‘storm’ in question here is less of a tempest and more the kind of gentle breeze found in many a Wodehousean garden, but it seems worth recording because it throws a little light on the activities of charities in the 1920s as well as giving, I believe, a couple of hints about Wodehouse’s thoughts and methods in revising his work. I arrived at what follows by rather a convoluted route, beginning with a publisher’s notice in a coverless, dog-eared copy of a famous magazine.

Wodehouse had one of the longest associations of any author with that popular monthly *The Strand Magazine*, a remarkable 35 years from 1905 to 1940. The *Strand* published 180-odd of his short stories and serialised four of his novels. From the Great War onwards, his name was frequently prominent on the cover, certain to boost sales in peacetime and morale in wartime.

The editor and staff of the *Strand* were meticulous in their attention to detail and cautious in their desire to avoid any offence to their loyal readers. The magazine’s comfortable, middle-of-the-road style seldom courted controversy. In the February 1926 issue, Wodehouse’s story ‘Mr Potter Takes a Rest Cure’ was given pride of place as the first item in the magazine. Nothing odd there, but tucked away around 40 pages later was an announcement which began as follows:

Referring to Mr P. G. Wodehouse’s story “Buttercup Day” appearing in our Christmas number, we have received a letter from the Secretary of the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, 243, Great Portland Street, London, W.1., reminding us that the Orthopaedic Hospital holds a Buttercup Day every year, and expressing the fear that Mr Wodehouse’s amusing and satirical story of “Buttercup Day” may prejudicially affect future efforts in support of this most excellent charity.

The notice was squeezed in at the end of a story about pickpockets. Was this a veiled indication of criminal activities? What exactly had caused such consternation?

‘Buttercup Day’ features Ukridge with yet another convoluted money-making scheme, in this case derived from his cynical distaste for charitable collections. Desperate to acquire some capital to back a horse, and accompanied by his long-suffering friend and story narrator, Corky Corcoran, Ukridge does his best to avoid the flag-girls collecting for charity around Piccadilly. So far, so typical, but he denounces the practice to Corky in rather strong terms: “This modern practice, laddie, of allowing females with trays of flags and collecting-boxes to flood the Metropolis is developing into a scourge. If it isn’t Rose Day it’s Daisy Day and if it isn’t Daisy Day it’s Pansy Day.”

Furthermore, Ukridge suggests that the public seldom knows where the donations go: “For all we know, we may have contributed to some cause of which



A flag-girl held us up with a brilliant smile.

we heartily disapprove.” This assumption that people will part unquestioningly with their money inspires Ukridge to invent a spurious Buttercup Day. He arranges for a girl to collect for it at one of his Aunt Julia’s bazaars, an event nominally raising funds for a Temperance League. The tables are turned when two confidence tricksters easily dupe Ukridge and his aunt.

The offending passage in the *Strand* was an exchange between Stuttering Sam, one of the con men, here in the guise of a curate, and Ukridge, assisted by Corky:

“There is a young woman in the grounds extorting money from the public on the plea that it is Buttercup Day. And here is the point, Mr Ukridge. There is no such thing as Buttercup Day. This young person is deliberately cheating the public.”

Ukridge licked his lips, with a hunted expression.

“Probably a local institution,” I suggested.

Not only was there a very real and important Buttercup Day, but the publication of the Wodehouse story came at a time when the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital (RNOH) was particularly anxious and, understandably, very sensitive about fundraising.

In the 1920s the RNOH had its central London site on Great Portland Street, an outpatients department at Bolsover Street, Marylebone, and what was sometimes called the ‘country branch’ at Brockley Hill, Stanmore (it remains at the latter two sites, having left Great Portland Street in the 1980s). The annual Buttercup

Day fundraiser in London was one of a number of similar initiatives set up after the Great War, and was usually promoted with the assistance of various members of the Royal Family and the nobility, supported by the wife of whoever was Lord Mayor in that particular year. Buttercups were sold across London on the day by 4,000 women, all of them unpaid volunteers.

Wednesday, 28 April 1925, was that year's Buttercup Day, and the following week Lord Denbigh, chairman of the management committee, was able to report that more money had been raised than the previous year. However, the Stanmore site wanted to double its facilities, aiming for an additional 200 beds: "[T]hey had the ground and were asking for the money to put up the extensions." Lord Denbigh had been "trying to get contributions from various sources, but the competition to get money from those who had it was very keen." The Stanmore extension would cost £50,000, and improvements to the Outpatients Department (attended by almost 6,500 outpatients annually) would cost the same. £30,000 had been raised thus far, leaving a mighty £70,000 to complete the projects.

On Thursday, 16 July 1925, a reception was held at Brockley Hill, hosted by Mrs Wilfrid Ashley (chair of the Buttercup Day committee), for the ladies who had helped organise the fundraising. This also usually took place every year. Mrs Ashley was the wife of the then Minister for Transport in the Baldwin government, the future Lord Mount Temple. Appropriately, she also ran a high-end florist business, Flower Decorations.

The building works on the outpatients extension commenced in January 1926, just after the publication of Wodehouse's story the previous month. Wednesday, 21 April, was the next Buttercup Day, and a letter appeared in *The Times*, reiterating the need for an extra 200 beds, signed by three formidable ladies: the Lady Mayoress, Lady Pryke; Susan, the Dowager Duchess of Somerset; and Mrs Ashley. The public was encouraged to buy and wear their buttercups and send in any additional donations. At the same time, the annual report noted a shortfall of £40,000 to complete the various works: "The urgent and vital need of additional accommodation at . . . Stanmore cannot be exaggerated."

At such a sensitive time for the hospital, Wodehouse's story was challenged, and rapidly at that. The Christmas 1925 *Strand* was available in early December, and the February issue would have gone to

press mid-January at the latest. So, clearly, the hospital Secretary had sent the letter very quickly indeed. Hence the remainder of the *Strand's* announcement in February 1926, which addressed the concerns of the Hospital as follows:

We are confident that this fear is groundless, and that none of our readers could associate the Buttercup Day in the story with the admirably arranged Buttercup Day of the Orthopaedic Hospital, but we gladly give publicity to the matter in order to put it beyond possibility of doubt. We ourselves happen to be supporters of this admirable charity, which we heartily commend to those interested in the welfare of crippled children.

In 1927 it was reported that the total cost of the new buildings, which now included work on a nurses' home, was expected to be £115,000. Although the new Outpatient Hall finally opened in November that year, soon afterwards reference was made to the "heavy debt" incurred by the hospital over the works "nearing completion", now including 150 new beds at Stanmore to "reduce the pathetically long waiting list". By 1929 the work was evidently finished, and a further letter to *The Times* celebrated the patients who "have been cured at this hospital and transformed into healthy and happy children, able to work and play and take their part in life".

Wodehouse spent a good bit of 1925–26 in America, and may not have been aware of any of this at the time, but someone remembered the kerfuffle caused by his 'Buttercup Day' when it was finally collected in book form almost 15 years later in *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*, and a pointed revision was made to the passage with Ukridge, Corky and Stuttering Sam already quoted above (my italics):

"There is a young woman in the grounds extorting money from the public on the plea that it is Buttercup Day. And here is the point, Mr Ukridge. *Buttercup Day is the flag-day of the National Orthopaedic Institute, and is not to take place for several weeks.* This young person is deliberately cheating the public."

Ukridge licked his lips, with a hunted expression.

"Probably a local institution of the same name," I suggested.

That this revised version does not accurately name the RNOH perhaps indicates a half-remembered revision more probably undertaken by the author, rather than an editor. There are other reasons why Wodehouse may have paid particular attention to this

story when it came to be reprinted in *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*.

Perhaps, aware of the original complaint from the charity, and having turned his attention to revising 'Buttercup Day' as a result, he ironed out two more possible sources of confusion in this particular tale. First, Aunt Julia's

"BUTTERCUP DAY."

Referring to Mr. P. G. Wodehouse's story "Buttercup Day," appearing in our Christmas Number, we have received a letter from the Secretary of the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, 234, Great Portland Street, London, W.1, reminding us that the Orthopaedic Hospital holds a Buttercup Day every year, and expressing the fear that Mr. Wodehouse's amusing and satirical story of "Buttercup Day" may prejudicially affect future efforts in support of this most excellent charity. We are confident that this fear is groundless, and that none of our readers could associate the Buttercup Day in the story with the admirably-arranged Buttercup Day of the Orthopaedic Hospital, but we gladly give publicity to the matter in order to put it beyond possibility of doubt. We ourselves happen to be supporters of this admirable charity, which we heartily commend to those interested in the welfare of crippled children.

butler Baxter (in the *Strand*) becomes Barter (in the book), presumably to avoid being mistaken for the Efficient Baxter, who, having very recently reappeared in *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, would be fresh in the minds of both Wodehouse and his readers. Reference to the *Millennium Concordance* reveals that Aunt Julia's butler and/or butlers perform the Baxter/Barter shimmy in another story as well, and perhaps this is for a similar reason.

The other name change in 'Buttercup Day' concerns four references to a man named 'Prosser' in the *Strand* version, president of the Temperance League, who becomes 'Sims' in the book. Clearly this man bore little resemblance to the famous Alexander Charles 'Oofy' Prosser of Drones Club fame. Three stories featuring Oofy were also collected in *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*, in the course of which we learn that "owing to his habit of mopping it up at late parties, he nearly always had a dyspeptic headache", and witness him at lunch, beginning the meal with a nice, dry champagne and apparently not letting up on the liquid refreshment until after the cigars and liqueur, even at that point asking for "another kummel" ('All's Well With Bingo'). Elsewhere in the book we find his "practice of going out on the tiles and returning with the morning milk was familiar", and when Oofy is discovered asleep in the fireplace, his explanation for this – "I came in a bit late last night and sank into a refreshing sleep on the floor" – is far from convincing ('Sonny Boy'). So it made very good sense for the alcohol-free Prosser of the original 'Buttercup Day' to be replaced.

These changes all seem typical of the author who didn't like to drop his characters for too long as he found it difficult to pick them up again. Thus, two characters recently used by him elsewhere are the ones which spring to mind when their names are duplicated.

There is something quite touching about the care taken with all this: we seem to see Wodehouse carefully altering a story to avoid any confusion for his loyal readers and changing his text actively to promote the work of a charity he had inadvertently offended many years earlier.

There was clearly some zeitgeist around flag-girls and farces in 1925–26. Not long after Wodehouse wrote 'Buttercup Day', Ben Travers was having some trouble adapting his 1923 novel *Rookery Nook* for the Aldwych Theatre, where it would begin a very successful run in June 1926. Wishing to introduce a new female character, Travers could not think of a plausible reason for her to turn up at the house until he was visited by a young lady called Betty Tucker, who was collecting on behalf of the lifeboats. Thus was born the idea for Poppy Dickey, the flag-girl who arrives at Rookery Nook both to increase and to help resolve the chaos and confusion in the third act. Whether or not Travers was aware of the issues around the Wodehouse story, there is no question in *Rookery Nook* over the genuine nature of the lifeboat charity, or Poppy's efforts on its behalf.

As for the real Buttercup Day, that of April 1930 showed how far the cause had succeeded in just a few years. The first Buttercup Day had raised £500, that in 1930 in excess of £8,000. The Duke of Gloucester attended the annual celebratory garden party at Stanmore in July 1930 and formally opened the new gates which had been paid for by "an anonymous donor". Through the early 1930s the RNOH needed around £60,000 per annum, and the Buttercup Day collections continued, often supported by the Dowager Duchess of Somerset and whoever was the current Lady Mayoress. Today the hospital continues the tradition in the form of the Buttercup Walk, details of which can be found on its website: www.rnohcharity.org/the-buttercup-walk/index

P. G. Wodehouse as a Master of Suspense

by Penelope Forrest

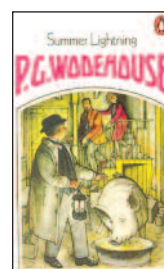
We may think of P. G. Wodehouse as a writer of light, humorous novels, but he's really a master of suspense to rival any of the great mystery writers, exciting pity and terror as unerringly as Aristotle recommended. His psychology and atmosphere owe much to the Russian Masters – though of course he was too wise to be influenced by Sovietski or Nastikoff.

I have reached a point in *Summer Lightning* where two pairs of star-crossed lovers are enmeshed in misunderstandings as well as lacking the money to support married life. Lady Constance and the efficient Baxter are plotting to steal and suppress Gally's Reminiscences, and Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe has lured George Cyril Wellbeloved into his employ with the Shropshire Agricultural Show looming.

I just know that the Empress is destined for a sojourn in the disused gamekeeper's cottage and that

Beach will be worn to the bone supplying her essential daily calories. On top of all that, Percy Pilbeam has insinuated himself into Blandings. Sue Brown is impersonating Myra Schoonmaker and liable to be exposed at any minute. The suspense is killing me.

I admit I may have chortled once or twice in spite of all this, and since this is my tenth reading of the book, I do have faith that everything will come right in the end, but at the moment I am in an agony of fearful anticipation. Why do I keep subjecting myself



to this? A simple whodunit with a few dead bodies and an incompetent policeman would be far less stressful. Is it masochism – or could it be that the writing is so delicious that savouring some felicitous phrase or sentence, even for the tenth time, makes up for everything?

Jeeves and the Power of Emotion Transformation

by Ellie King

I am currently studying for my doctorate in clinical psychology, and in the process I became interested in the concept of emotion transformation. This is the idea that in order to overcome a maladaptive (i.e. unhelpful) emotion, it must be replaced with a more adaptive one. Examples of maladaptive emotions include fear, shame, and guilt, which can lead to us feeling stuck and unable to move forward with our lives. Adaptive emotions, on the other hand, are those that help you to process the experience and move on: joy, humour, forgiveness – even anger, in certain cases.

Leslie Greenberg (one of the founders of emotion-focused therapy) says that the philosopher Spinoza was the first person to point out that in order to change an emotion, it must be replaced with another emotion. In other words, all the rationalization and positive thinking in the world will not help you change your maladaptive emotion unless there is a stronger, more powerful emotion to take its place. Thoughts cannot change our emotions; only emotions have the power to transform other emotions.

While this theory of emotion transformation may seem at first a purely academic concept, it occurred to me, even as I read one of Greenberg's many articles on the subject, that I had seen examples of emotion transformation in literature – most notably, in the Jeeves and Wooster series. All of you keen-eyed Wodehouse fans will no doubt have spotted the Spinoza reference above. I have no idea whether Wodehouse actually read any Spinoza, so the fact that Jeeves uses the theory of emotion transformation to help out Bertie and his friends on several occasions may be a complete coincidence – I suspect it is.

Let me use a quote from Greenberg's article and a quote from Wodehouse to illustrate my thoughts on this.

Thus in therapy, maladaptive fear, once aroused, can be changed by the more boundary-establishing emotions of adaptive anger or disgust, or by evoking the softer feelings of compassion or forgiveness.

– Greenberg

* * * * *

Well, as I say, I went to Jeeves, and put the facts before him. . . . He approached the problem from the psychological angle. In the final analysis, he said, disinclination to speak in public is due to fear of one's audience. . . . We do not, he said, fear those whom we despise. The thing to do, therefore, is to cultivate a lofty contempt for those who will be listening to one. . . . You fill your mind with scornful thoughts about them.

– *The Code of the Woosters*

And there you have it. Gussie Fink-Nottle's fear of Roderick Spode and Sir Watkyn Bassett is turned into scorn, and he is able to view the prospect of making a speech in front of them with no qualms whatsoever.

Let's look at another example from the Jeeves stories, just to demonstrate that this theory is not based

solely on one scenario. This one is taken from my favourite Jeeves novel (in fact, it's probably my favourite ever Wodehouse story), viz. *The Mating Season*. This story features the excellent Esmond Haddock, who appears to possess every attribute designed to endear him to one and all, including a handsome physique, cheerful nature, and robust singing voice. Unfortunately, like Gussie, he suffers from an inferiority complex, but in his case this is due to his five aunts, in particular the formidable Dame Daphne Winkworth. As you may recall, his romantic relationship with Corky Pirbright is in jeopardy because she insists that he stand up to his aunts and he is apparently incapable of doing so. To illustrate the severity of poor Esmond's condition, here is Bertie's reaction on first witnessing him crawling to Dame Daphne:

Of course, what Corky had told me about Esmond Haddock's aunt-fixation ought to have prepared me for it, but I must say I was shocked at his deportment at this juncture. It was the deportment of a craven and a worm. Possibly stimulated by my getting on a chair, he had climbed onto the table and was using a banana as a hunting-crop, and he now came down like an apologetic sack of coals, his whole demeanour so crushed and cringing that I could hardly bear to look at him.

A case as serious as this requires a singularly impressive intervention in order to give satisfaction. Bertie and Jeeves both agree that success at the village concert might transform Esmond's fear into pride and exhilaration, thus providing him with the confidence he needs to stand up to the "surging sea" of aunts at Deverill Hall:

"You mean that if he makes a hit, he will get it up his nose to such an extent that he will be able to look his aunts in the eye and make them wilt?"

"Precisely, sir."

Jeeves is therefore dispatched to rustle up a claque for Esmond, to ensure that his hunting song goes over well at the concert. Was the mission successful? Well, here is Dame Daphne accosting Esmond after the concert, on learning that he has aided and abetted the elopement of her only daughter, Gertrude. Judge for yourselves . . .

"Esmond! Is this true?"

* * *

"Quite true," he replied. "And I really can't have any more discussion and argument about it. I acted as I deemed best and the subject is closed. Silence, Aunt Daphne. Less of it, Aunt Emmeline. Quiet, Aunt Charlotte. Desist, Aunt Harriet. Aunt Myrtle, put a sock in it. Really, the way you're going on, one would scarcely suppose that I was the master of the house and the head of the family and that my word was law."

A truly spectacular transformation. Jeeves really does know all about the psychology of the individual!

P. G. Wodehouse: Balm for the Modern Soul

by Dean Abbott

This essay originally appeared in The Imaginative Conservative (6 February 2018), and is republished here with gracious permission.

Comedy is a funny thing. It can ask us to look at difficult truths while soothing the pain of doing so. Everyone has seen this happen in the performance of a favourite stand-up comedian. The best comedians say out loud the things most of us worry about in silence and thus relieve our anxiety, at least for the moment.

But comedy can do even more. It can draw us into other worlds, absurd places that preserve the charming bits of reality while downplaying the darker, more dangerous bits, in ways that equip us to grapple with the real world. Many of Garrison Keillor's early Lake Wobegon stories did this with great skill.

Among the greatest of writers to do this was the 20th-century English author P. G. Wodehouse. In much of his work, he manages to create worlds that, while as fantastical as Tolkien's, resemble our own. In Wodehouse's worlds, there are no orcs, nor elves, nor hobbits, only bumbling uncles and frightening aunts, numbskull suitors, and nervous young women.

Wodehouse is now known mostly for his series of novels and short stories featuring the wealthy English dandy Bertram Wooster and his unflappable genius of a valet, Jeeves. These stories have been popular since the publication of the first one in 1915 and have remained so since the last one in 1974. Beyond Bertie and Jeeves, Wodehouse's canon extends to the stories of Blandings Castle, home of the clueless Lord Emsworth; a series of novels about a character named Psmith (the P is silent); and numerous stand-alone works.

In all, over his six-decade writing career, Wodehouse produced an enormous body of work. I won't pretend to know it all. I write not as a Wodehouse expert, but as someone only recently beginning to explore the worlds he bequeathed us. Even at this early point, it is obvious why Wodehouse continues to be so esteemed by so many, more than 40 years after his death.

Outside of the sheer pleasure that reading a Wodehouse story provides, there are deeper rewards a reader gleans from his work, benefits that accrue long after any volume is closed. Wodehouse excels at providing the reader two important spiritual benefits: consolation from the sufferings of the world and some insight regarding why we suffer in the first place. In the end, his work is a singular balm for the modern soul, comedy that tends toward theodicy.

To understand this, we must first understand the escapist function of literature. Escape has somehow gotten a bad rap. In modern times, the notion has come into wide circulation that the best of us need no release from the day-to-day indignities of the world. The strong person, we are told, keeps his nose to the grindstone and his eyes fixed on the difficult conditions of man's estate. Tolkien criticized the modern hostility to the idea of escape in his essay "On Fairy Stories", asking, "Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it." Modern critics disdain escape because they do not believe in any world outside our human experience. To them, the prison is all there is. Since there is nowhere to escape to, all attempts to do so must necessarily be futile wastes of time.

Like so many modern notions, this one is hogwash, barely fit for the Empress of Blandings, Lord Emsworth's estimable sow.

Nevertheless, grasping Wodehouse's unique power demands understanding this context. Behind the hostility to the notion of escape lie two ideas. First is the assumption that Modern Man must be strong enough within himself to bear the weight of the impersonal purposeless universe, strong enough to look into the void, strong enough to accept that the prison is all there is. Second, and more relatable to contemporary people, is the idea that modern consumers need no consolation beyond what they find in the endless stream of gadgetry and entertainment that flows their way. Modern Man, we are told, does not need consolation in the face of the void, not because he does not fear it, but because he does not notice it.

The reality is that modern people, even if they are unconscious of it, require consolation, a buffer against and an escape from the disappointment and turmoil of earthly life, as much as people in any other period ever did—quite possibly more so. People in the old world, at least, could admit without shame their need for consolation. We are denied even that.

Art, including the literary arts, has always been one of man's chief sources of this necessary consolation. What Wodehouse offers in this regard is entirely unique. The consoling power of his work arises not so much from the humour as from the detail in which he renders his worlds. Had

Wodehouse merely been funny, the consolation, the reprieve from the troubles of mundane life, would have been lesser.

In these books, we experience the direct opposite of the real world, where sin permeates the creation. Instead, Wodehouse beckons us into worlds where humour, not loss, is woven through the underlying fabric of reality. In the real world, only a tragic view of life ultimately makes sense of our experience. In Wodehouse's worlds, that view would be nonsensical, out of step with how things really are. The power of Wodehouse's stories is in their implied guarantee that no matter how much of a mess we wade through in the middle, everyone will be happy at the end, because indeed this is a world of unshakeable happiness.

As with any novelist, a large part of world-building consists of choosing and relaying to the reader the right details of the time and place where the story is set. When Wodehouse began publishing in the early years of the 20th century, his stories were set in the early years of the 20th century. When Wodehouse died in 1975, his stories were set in the same era. While the rest of the world moved through time, his characters did not. This quality of being frozen, changeless, beyond time and its ravages, offers to the reader the consolation of being able to step out of this time-bound world into one in which human beings are not subject to the passing hour, one that has about it the quality of the eternal.

The physical setting of the stories matters, too. The spacious rooms at Blandings Castle, situated in a place called Shropshire that, although it shares the name of the county in the west of England, can only be a brighter, happier version of the real thing, invite us in. The country home of Bertie's Aunt Dahlia, at which night-time shenanigans are sure to ensue, sparks in us a longing for those places, though they exist not in this world. This longing, insofar as we are capable of believing it will be fulfilled, is itself a kind of consolation.

Beyond this consolation, the works of Wodehouse address in a special way the problem of human pain, suffering, and evil. Theologians and philosophers, especially those in the Christian tradition, have wrestled for millennia with the questions of theodicy, specifically "why do bad things happen if God is loving". These thinkers have offered their answers, some profound.

Wodehouse offers no answers. None of his work is philosophically probing in the normal sense. But that doesn't mean the experience of reading Wodehouse has nothing to offer us on this question. Rather than formulate for us an abstract answer, Wodehouse shows us what a world in which evil were absent might look like.

Naturally, in his many intricate plots, characters break the moral law. One Bertie and Jeeves novel, *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, revolves around Bertie's purloining a yard cat. Relieving someone of the

burden of material goods against his will is a violation of the moral law, even when what that soul is relieved of is a cat.

So, in Wodehouse's world, there is moral law-breaking but no ill intent; there is sin but not harm; threat but not suffering. I do not suggest that in Wodehouse we see a picture of a perfectly redeemed world, one made new and unmarred by the human inclination to malevolence, but certainly we see something as close to it as the human imagination can conjure.

Wodehouse offers us something deeper perhaps than the answers of all the theologians. He does not set out "to justify the ways of God to man", to use Milton's famous phrase. Rather, he invites us into a world where our faith can be strengthened simply by having a look around. Wodehouse provides us not so much with a volume of knowledge on theodical questions, but an open door beyond which those gut-wrenching questions fade into irrelevance.

I am not the first to notice that the worlds Wodehouse created are, in their way, Edenic. Evelyn Waugh said, "For Mr. Wodehouse there has been no fall of Man; no 'aboriginal calamity'. His characters have never tasted the forbidden fruit. They are still in Eden. The gardens of Blandings Castle are that original garden from which we are all exiled."

That's the point. Wodehouse offers us, in the end, both consolation and relief from the world's ceaseless thrum of corruption and turpitude because his vision, mind, and talent are one of a kind. In his novels, the reader will find much more than mere entertainment, but rather a vision of a world unlike our own, the one for which we all long, but to which we cannot return. Wodehouse was not modern enough to believe man a prisoner with no world outside. He knew full well that we are exiles.

In the end, not even a wit as formidable as Wodehouse's can persuade the angel barring the way to that archetypal garden to lay down his flaming sword; but it can lift us just enough above the wall to glimpse the wonders that lie within.

Another Mastermind Among Us

Long-time members will possibly recall that David Buckle began his regular Wodehouse Quiz (originally called the Mastermind Quiz) following his appearance on the BBC TV programme *Mastermind*, for which he had chosen Wodehouse as his specialist subject. Well, we were delighted to learn that Mr Sanjoy Sen also had a go on the programme that aired on 11 January this year (episode 12 of the current season). His specialist subject was the Fry & Laurie TV series of the 1990s, and he won on the night, which entitles him to proceed to the semi-final. Alas, he cannot do another Wodehouse subject for that programme, but we wish him well!

Wodehouse's Anti-Semitism in Context

by Elliott Milstein

In searching the internet for reactions to the recent news regarding Westminster Abbey's plans to dedicate a memorial to P. G. Wodehouse, one of the netizens of PGWNet uncovered an article by Benjamin Ivry in the October 18, 2018, edition of *Forward* whose title really says it all: "How Lovely P.G. Wodehouse Was – Such a Shame About the Anti-Semitism."

To put this publication in context, the online journal *Forward* began life in 1897 as the Yiddish language daily paper *Der Forvart*, dedicated to the advent of worldwide socialism. Today it remains both Jewish and decidedly left-wing.

As we know, socialists, even in Wodehouse's time – let alone today, as their numbers dwindle – were not particularly fond of him, partly because of his parodies of them and their cause, and partly because he was seen as advocating for the leisured class. So we should keep in mind that Mr Ivry and his ilk likely come to Wodehouse already thinking him not so "lovely", despite his use of the word in the title. Ivry even tangentially refers to Wodehouse's efforts to reduce his tax burden, a gratuitous comment that is clearly an attempt to prejudice his leftward-leaning readership, as such actions would be particularly repugnant to any good socialist.

That being said, there are specific accusations made in the article that deserve an objective response, regardless of its author's prejudice. In doing so, we need to examine those arguments not only in themselves but also within the context of the extraordinarily complicated and nuanced concept of "anti-Semitism" itself.

There are those who aver that all anti-Semitism is the same. Like some of the aggrieved women of the #MeToo movement who equate any salacious remark with rape, there are many Jews who see anyone who says they've been "jewed" at the local greengrocer as a Nazi. I personally do not see these issues in pure black and white, but rather on a continuum. Indeed, the majority of scholars on the subject divide anti-Semitism into two categories, frequently labeled "radical" and "genteel".

Radical anti-Semites are true Jew haters: those who see Jews as enemies, Christ killers, members of a global cabal bent on world domination, who sacrifice gentile children and drink their blood (if you are unfamiliar with the infamous "blood libel", I assure you this is not an exaggeration). Such people see Jews as deserving not only of persecution but annihilation.

The more genteel variety are those who merely indulge in Jewish stereotypes: the hard-nosed and even corrupt businessman – greedy, grubbing, cheap,

excessively usurious, vaguely obnoxious; people who look funny, dress funny, and talk funny; what Margalit Fox, in her excellent book *Conan Doyle for the Defence* refers to as "the Other". They would be abhorred at the idea of persecuting or harming Jews in any way, but they'd rather avoid them, if they can, preferring to associate with PLU ("people like us"). They are not above making a nasty crack from time to time, but more in the way of a witticism than a true expression of grievance, much as such a one may callously mock a person with a lisp or physical deformity.

Ivry makes no specific distinction on the continuum but, based on his arguments, seems to see Wodehouse in both lights, though perhaps more genteel than radical. His arguments fall into three categories: the wartime broadcasts, evidence from his writings, and his private reflections and personal letters.

I will not take the time here to rehash the broadcast arguments and counter-arguments. I will assume that the *Sauce* readership is fully familiar with this canard and its refutations. Suffice it to say that anyone who believes, as Ivry clearly does, that Wodehouse made these broadcasts out of sympathy with the Nazi cause would certainly believe him to be a radical anti-Semite, but he would just as certainly be wrong. Let us leave this entire subject in the dustbin of history where it belongs and look at the arguments from his writings.

To begin, we must remember that genteel anti-Semitism was so infused in Victorian and Edwardian society that it was virtually everywhere. Perhaps the most notorious example of an anti-Semitic character of the time was Dickens's Fagin from *Oliver Twist*. But Dickens himself never saw it as such. When challenged by a Jewish acquaintance, Eliza Davis, for perpetrating this "great wrong" against her people, Dickens protested that he had "no feeling towards Jews but a friendly one". When asked why he made such a point of making Fagin Jewish, his long reply could be summed up as "literary convention". In fact, after this exchange, Dickens felt so bad about Fagin that he deliberately made the Jew Riah in his next book, *Our Mutual Friend*, a remarkably good and sympathetic character. Davis responded by presenting Dickens with a Hebrew-English Bible



Elliott at the Society's Dinner in October

inscribed, in part, with thanks for “atoning for an injury as soon as being conscious of having inflicted it”. (*Our Mutual Friend*, Penguin Books, note on page 820 by editor, Adrian Poole)

When I was working on my Wodehouse thesis back in 1976, I was deeply fortunate to have as my adviser J. M. Cameron, a British professor of the old school, recently retired and transplanted from his position as Chair of Philosophy at the University of Leeds to my school, St Michael’s College in the University of Toronto. This article does not give me ample space to fully describe this wonderful man, but he was, for one of his time and upbringing, extraordinarily dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism of all kinds. He told me that after Kristallnacht (November 9–10, 1938), he vowed he would never let even the most innocent anti-Semitic comment made in his presence go unchallenged.

One day as I was discussing my research before I even began writing the paper, he asked me if I had seen any anti-Semitic references in Wodehouse’s writing. I told him I had not. He replied, “He would be quite unique for that period if there were none. Look for them. I am sure you will find them.” And, of course, put on the scent like that, I did. Because, after all, as Prof. Cameron pointed out to me later, virtually every British writer of the time did. The question for us today – post-Kristallnacht, post-Holocaust – is whether, like Henry James, George Orwell, Graham Greene, H. G. Wells, etc., they fell into the genteel category; or, like T. S. Eliot, H. Rider Haggard, Sapper, John Buchan, etc., into the more virulent radical kind; or, like Dorothy L. Sayers, Virginia Woolf, Evelyn Waugh, etc., somewhere on the continuum.

In Wodehouse’s early books and stories, there are several (no more than four or five, I believe) references to “Jews” as such. The most memorable for me was in *Money for Nothing*, when John Carroll, in order to distract Pat Wyvern during an especially embarrassing moment in a night club, remarks: “That man . . . looks like a Jewish black beetle.” A gratuitous remark, until one realizes that the character referred to is a “Mr A. Baerman”, the name of the Jewish literary agent who stole Wodehouse’s copyright to *Love Among the Chickens*. So this quick comment was really just Wodehouse getting a little of his own back at this admittedly nasty man.

But Ivry ignores all of these references (probably he is unaware of them, as they are so few and far between) and, indeed, eschews the more well-known examples of the Jewish money lenders disguised as Scotsmen in *Leave It to Psmith*; Ukridge’s nefarious partner, Isaac O’Brien, in ‘The Exit of Battling Billson’; or the obnoxious behavior of the Cohen Brothers in ‘The Ordeal of Oswald Mulliner’. And truly, all of this is pretty mild stuff. I bring it up merely to point out that, as Owen Dudley Edwards states in his book *P. G. Wodehouse*, “Wodehouse for the most part showed himself far above the

magazines where he learned his craft, and even here his shortcomings, while cheap, have nothing of the smooth venom apparent in many of his fellow-writers’ comments on ‘Hebrews.’”

Ivry instead concentrates *his* ire on Wodehouse’s portrayal of the Hollywood magnates Jacob Z. Schnellenhamer, Isadore Fishbein, and Ben Zizzbaum. There is no doubt that the names chosen are deliberately Jewish-sounding and the characters themselves are far from sympathetic. But it remains that there is no commentary by Wodehouse in the stories on any aspect of their Jewishness, nor are any of the stereotypical attributes played upon. Most likely, these movie executives are given Jewish names for the simple reason that movie magnates in the 1930s were, in fact, predominantly Jewish, something Wodehouse knew firsthand, and it would have been odd if he hadn’t given these characters Jewish names. This is hardly evidence of an anti-Semitic attitude.

It is also important to note that, post-Holocaust, even these mild references to Jews disappear entirely. The character of Ivor Llewelyn – introduced as “Ikey” in *The Luck of the Bodkins* (1935), making fun of him adopting a false Welsh name – comes back in the 1970s in two books as a much more sympathetic figure, and his Welshness is legitimized with a reference to a Welsh school marm in his childhood, removing even the tiny trace of Jewishness with which he was created. Thus, in a way it can be said that Wodehouse, too, atoned for an injury when he became conscious of having inflicted it.

When asked why the word “Jew” had been removed from later editions of *Brighton Rock* and *Stamboul Train*, Graham Greene responded that “after the Holocaust one couldn’t use the word Jew in the loose way one used it before the war. . . . [T]he casual references to Jews [are] a sign of those times when one regarded the word Jew as almost a synonym for capitalist.” In other words, seen through the magnifying lens of the Holocaust, earlier ‘genteel’ anti-Semitism grows to look more like the ‘radical’ version, when clearly that was never the author’s intent. Even the unworldly Wodehouse saw the truth of this and reacted similarly.

The final argument Ivry makes is that Wodehouse’s anti-Semitic attitudes can be gleaned by his references to Jews in his private letters. These are potentially more damning because they reflect Wodehouse the man, not the writer, as speaker and are therefore more likely to reflect his true feelings. Also, many of the examples are post-Holocaust.

The first example Ivry gives, however, is from Hollywood before the war, claiming that Brian Taves notes that “some of Wodehouse’s fellow screenwriters suspected him of being anti-Semitic”. He supports this by citing Philip Dunne, whom even Ivry notes was “left-wing”; Dunne “believed Wodehouse’s ‘hatred’ for members of the SWG [Screen Writers Guild] . . . was an anti-Semitic

matter.” The truth behind this story, which is available in full in Brian Taves’s excellent book *P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood*, is that Wodehouse was being heavily recruited by Dunne to leave the mainstream, extant Screen Playwrights union for the new, socialist SWG, but Wodehouse refused, even showing the other union Dunne’s recruitment letters. Dunne never forgave him and perpetrated this scandal in retaliation.

According to Taves, Dunne was the only screenwriter to accuse Wodehouse of anti-Semitism, not “some of [his] fellow screenwriters”. Here, it seems, Ivry’s prejudice takes the form of deliberate deception to perpetrate what he must have known was a falsehood.

The same is true of Ivry’s use of his later letters. Without rehashing each example, I will say that the only thing damning about the references, when one looks at them closely, is that Wodehouse refers to several Jewish people as “Jews”. Now, one can question why – when complaining, for instance, about how “repulsive” Groucho Marx had become in the 1950s (a perfectly reasonable complaint, I’m sad to say) – he had to describe him as a “middle-aged Jew” rather than a “middle-aged man”, but as Groucho’s Jewishness always was quite manifest, it is hardly significant evidence of an anti-Semitic remark, but more as a colorful descriptor.

The fact is that context is everything. In my own family, when discussing where to dine out, one family member will sometimes turn down a choice of restaurant as having “too many Jews”. Clearly an anti-Semitic remark, right? In actuality, we all know that what she means is that she prefers going somewhere where we are unlikely to run into a lot of people we know. It is a remark made in private to people who know exactly what she means, but, taken out of context and made public, it sounds awful. We must remember that the true context of Wodehouse’s letters to friends and family cannot be fully known.

Attitudes and mores change over time, thank goodness. Context is everything.

Here, finally, is the most outrageous example from Ivry’s article, in which context is deliberately hidden. He quotes the following from a letter to Bill Townend dated January 15, 1949: “A curious thing about American books these days is that so many of them are Jewish propaganda. Notice in [Norman Mailer’s] ‘The Naked and the Dead’ how the only decent character is Goldstein. [Irwin Shaw’s] ‘The Young Lions’ is the same. It is a curious trend. The Jews have suddenly become terrifically vocal. Did you see that picture, ‘Gentleman’s Agreement’?”

Sounds pretty awful, doesn’t it? But then read the passage that Ivry leaves out, which immediately follows: “I am wondering if that book of yours about Jews might not do well over here. If you will send me a script, I will see what I can do with it.” (Thanks to Sophie Ratcliffe [*P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*, p.427] for making this research possible!)

So, what out of context looks like a complaint about the sudden vocalness and pushiness of Jews, is, in context, a prelude to Wodehouse’s offer to promote Townend’s book about Jews. This is hardly the

action of an anti-Semite.

When I see examples of people in the early 21st century judging people over a hundred years ago by today’s standards, I always reflect that the young people of the 22nd century are just as likely to feel the same about me because I eat meat or have supported my local zoo, or committed some other future solecism I cannot even imagine. Attitudes and mores change over time, thank goodness. Context is everything.

P. G. Wodehouse was, by all accounts, a mild, kindly, and benign man, but he was a man of his time. It is natural that his attitudes toward the Jewish people were influenced by that, and such attitudes would manifest. But within context, and especially in comparison to his contemporaries, he still remains, in my estimation, a mild, kindly, and benign man, and our post-Holocaust sense of what constitutes anti-Semitism simply does not apply here.

A Happy Occasion

The remarkably talented Hal Cazalet – singer, songwriter, and all-around good egg – has sent word of a new production which he has co-written with Michael Barry - and it sounds wonderful!

As members know, Hal has released recordings of Wodehouse songs, which he has also sung in cabarets and at our biennial formal dinners – but this doesn’t mean he confines himself to Wodehouse’s output. Fully the measure of his great-grandfather, he has turned this time to Oscar Wilde for inspiration, and his musical rendition of one of Wilde’s most touching short stories promises to be a real treat.

Particulars of the performance are in the accompanying picture.



The Wooster Source

by Graeme Davidson

*This is the real Tabasco,
It's the word from Bertie Wooster,
The one who's maybe, or maybe not,
monocled
And has been so well chronicled, by Plum,
so very comical.*



If you ask my Aunt Agatha she will tell you – in fact, she is quite likely to tell you even if you don't ask her – that I am a vapid and irreflective chump. Barely sentient, was the way she once described me: and I'm not saying that in a broad, general sense she isn't right. But there is one department of life in which I am Hawkshaw the detective in person. I can recognise Love's Young Dream more quickly than any other bloke of my weight and age in the Metropolis. So many of my pals have copped it in the past few years that now I can spot it a mile off on a foggy day.

*'The Inferiority Complex of Old Sippy',
Very Good, Jeeves (1930)*

I can't say I exactly saw eye to eye with young Tuppy in his admiration for the Bellinger female. Delivered on the mat at one-twenty-five, she proved to be an upstanding light-heavyweight of some thirty summers, with a commanding eye and a square chin which I, personally, would have steered clear of. She seemed to me a good deal like what Cleopatra would have been after going in too freely for the starches and cereals. I don't know why it is, but women who have anything to do with Opera, even if they're only studying for it, always appear to run to surplus poundage.

*'Jeeves and the Song of Songs',
Very Good, Jeeves (1930)*

I don't know if it has ever occurred to you, but to the thoughtful cove there is something dashed reassuring in all the reports of burglaries you read in the papers. I mean, if you're keen on Great Britain maintaining her prestige and all that. I mean there can't be much wrong with the *morale* of a country whose sons go in to such a large extent for housebreaking, because you can take it from me that the job requires a nerve of the most cast-iron description. I suppose I was walking up and down in front of that house for half an hour before I could bring myself to dash in at the front gate and slide round to the side where the study window was. And even then I stood for about ten minutes cowering against the wall and listening for police-whistles.

*'Clustering Round Young Bingo',
Carry on, Jeeves (1925)*

Wodehouse Quiz 30 What's in a Title?

by David Buckle

1. 'Uncle Fred' Twistleton, who appears in four novels and one short story, is the Fifth Earl of where?
2. Lord Tilbury was often compared to Napoleon. What was his name before he was given a peerage in *Bill the Conqueror*?
3. Who is Lord Emsworth's oldest son and, therefore, the heir to Blandings and to his father's title?
4. In which Wodehouse novel does Lord 'Shorty' Shortlands wish to marry his cook, but cannot come up with the £200 she needs to buy a pub?
5. We first meet Bertie Wooster's Aunt Agatha when she is Mrs Spenser Gregson. Whom has she married prior to the beginning of *Joy in the Morning*?
6. Who is the owner of Shipley Hall, who, because of financial difficulties, has to rent out his home in *Something Fishy* and *Money in the Bank*?
7. In which Wodehouse novel is John Maude, unbeknownst to him, the heir to the throne of the Mediterranean island of Mervo?
8. What is the formal title of Alaric Pendlebury-Davenport, a former fiancé of Lady Constance Keeble? He appears in *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, *Service with a Smile* and *A Pelican at Blandings*.
9. George Trotter, Lord Holbeton, is secretly engaged to Sally Fairmile in which book?
10. Following the death of his uncle, what title does Roderick Spode inherit?

(Answers on page 25)

PGW at 80 – Almost

On 15 October 2018, *The New Yorker* posted an article from their archive on their website. Dated October 15, 1960, 'P. G. Wodehouse on the Eve of Eighty', by Geoffrey T. Hellman, features an interview with the Master at his home in Remsenburg, with Ethel putting in an appearance as well. Breezily written and enjoyable to read, the article begins by noting Simon & Schuster's imminent publication of *The Most of P. G. Wodehouse* to mark his eightieth birthday – though as PGW himself points out, they are a year early in the celebrations. To read the whole piece, go to goo.gl/h8h15Z. (Thanks to ROBERT BRUCE)

Alice Dovey and Wodehouse

by Tony Ring

The entry for 21 May 1912 in the September 2018 *By The Way* summary of Wodehouse's location from 1912 to 1917 draws attention to his friendship with Alice Dovey, an actress whom he met when she was performing in *The Pink Lady* at the Globe Theatre in London. After a very successful New York run of 312 performances at the New Amsterdam in 1911, it opened at the Globe on 11 April 1912, achieving a respectable 124 performances before closing on 27 July.



That entry and the one for 6 May 1913 intimate how taken Wodehouse was with her, and mention that he retained her friendship for decades to come. This can be confirmed by the tribute he paid to her in his 1937 novel *Summer Moonshine*, where in chapter 10 the character Lady Alice Abbott (née Bulpitt) is described as having met her husband while she was in the chorus of *The Pink Lady*. During this chapter, Alice's daughter Jane met her mother's brother, an American Uncle Sam of whom she had never heard, for the first time. Their conversations were used to describe some of the experiences of a chorus girl such as Alice Dovey in those days.

- a Sam Bulpitt said he hadn't been aware of Alice's stage career. He never saw the New York production of *The Pink Lady*, but saw it twice on its tour of the western states (without Alice) – in Kansas City and St Louis. The show had certainly had a successful tour after its New York triumph.
- b Jane replied that they brought the New York company over to London. Buck (her father)

went to see it and fell in love with her mother at first sight, sent a note round offering supper, and about a week later they got married.

- c Alice is described as “large and blonde and of a monumental calmness which not even earthquakes on the terrace . . . would have been able to disturb. . . . If this placidity should seem strange in one who had once earned her living in the chorus of musical comedy, it must be remembered that it is only in these restless modern days that the term ‘chorus girl’ has come to connote a small, wiry person with india-rubber legs and flexible joints . . .”
- d Further details were added: “In the era of Lady Abbott's professional career, the personnel of the ensemble were tall, stately creatures, shaped like hour-glasses, who stood gazing dreamily at the audience, supporting themselves on long parasols. . . . As a rule, they just stood statuesquely. And of all these statuesque standers, none had ever stood with a more completely statuesque immobility than the then Alice (Toots) Bulpitt.”

The timing of this tribute is very pointed. The character and these descriptions appeared in the first new novel Wodehouse was working on after the death of Alice Dovey's husband, Jack Hazzard, on 2 December 1935. (His previous novel, *Laughing Gas*, published in 1936, was a longer, rewritten version of a serialisation in *This Week* in early 1935.) There can surely be no doubt that when creating the character, he was thinking back with fond memories to his meetings with Alice Dovey – and perhaps also to the momentous experience of some 16 months later, when he had made up a foursome for a blind date in New York, and just eight weeks later married the English chorus girl who was also present.

Plummy Crosswords in the Telegraph

The Cosy Moment on page 23 refers to PGW's frustration over solving the cryptic crossword puzzles in *The Times*, expressed in a letter to the editor in 1934. Eighty-four years later, Wodehouse himself has become a source for clues in the far-less-challenging *Daily Telegraph* crosswords, and late in 2018 there were a slew of them. (Thanks to Carolyn de la Plain for bringing the first two to our attention.)

November 10: GK crossword, 25 down: Bertie Wooster's valet in the stories written by PG Wodehouse (6)

November 12: Herculis crossword, 12 across: _____ Gas, non Jeeves and Wooster novel by PG Wodehouse

December 15: Kate Mephams's General Knowledge Crossword, 22 across: Nickname of Reginald Twistleton, a Drones Club member in the Uncle Fred books by PG Wodehouse (5)

December 22: Giant Christmas GK crossword, 55 down: _____ Aren't Gentlemen, one of around 70 novels by PG Wodehouse (5)

Poets' Corner

Looking for a Plummy Soul Mate

by Ashok Bhatia

Here is what my dream soul mate would be like,
 He may or may not be tall, dark and handsome;
 While handling Life's harsh slings and arrows,
 I merely expect the young prune to be agile and lissome.

A blighter like Gussie Fink-Nottle would surely not do,
 A newt fancier and a teetotaler is bound to leave me cold;
 A chappie like Freddie Threepwood would also put me off,
 Someone like Spode I would stoutly detest, truth be told.

A lack of interest on my part in flowers, pumpkins and sows,
 Rules out any dalliance with the ninth Earl of Emsworth;
 A rugged and handsome Esmond Haddock may make the cut,
 But his domineering aunts would spoil matrimonial mirth.

Like Bingo Little, babysitting should be his forte,
 Not sulking when I invite over a friend of mine;
 Ensuring that never do I miss my afternoon cup of tea,
 Cosying up to me near the fireplace over a glass of wine.

As to tackling life's myriad problems and challenges,
 May he be like Jeeves, armed with superior intelligence;
 Handling visiting aunts and distant cousins with aplomb,
 Displaying a feudal spirit, resolving issues with elegance.

Let him be a dasher along the lines of someone like Psmith,
 Handling life with perseverance, alacrity and grace;
 Spreading love while riding the pale parabolas of joy,
 Neutralizing mischief mongers without losing his own face.

Someone like Ashe Marson could also qualify,
 Dishing out whodunits lapped up by the masses;
 Open to adventurous escapades involving scarabs,
 Handling his bosses well, conducting fitness classes.

Hitching my lot to someone like Galahad could be considered,
 His gallantry is legendary; so is his wit and charm;
 Oh, life would be real fun being with a person like him,
 Things would be easier while I hold on to his arm.

I would not even mind a good pal like Bertie as a soul mate,
 Whose heart would forever remain coated with gold;
 Wrapping him around my dainty fingers would be easy,
 Nice to have someone whose intellect I could mould.

To find a cove with all these shades
 May leave my Guardian Angels twiddling their thumbs;
 Maybe someone else could refer another blighter,
 Who would sweep me off my feet over a roll of drums.

Let the chappie at least be a true fan of P G Wodehouse,
 So the progeny will be blessed with wit and laughter,
 Basking in the sunlit brilliance of the Master's works,
 Going through life with chins up, happily ever after.

Market Blandings in March

by Phil Bowen

As I walked out one morning,
 Heading along Hay Hill,
 At first I felt I shouldn't:
 'Oh what the hell I will!'

On my mind all the time was Millicent
 And that dratted business with Sue,
 Got the cabbie to drop me at Paddington -
 Hopped on the 12.42.

Past Swindon on into Shropshire,
 Where the tick of time's barely a tock,
 Pulled into Market Blandings
 Shortly after 5 o'clock.

A quick one at the Beetle and Wedge;
 The Goose and Gander's various charms,
 And then I bumped into Marlene;
 Booked a room at the Emsworth Arms,

Whose trusted owner, Mister Ovens,
 Provides a parlour fit for dining,
 Oak-timbered in age-old Tudor,
 His home brew, a silver lining,

Served with a smile by Marlene,
 Made for the drinking classes,
 Millicent and Sue behind me
 With all those silly asses

That hold carnival by day at the Drones
 - Top-hatted in Vigo Street -
 Plus a blighter by the name of Pott
 I really didn't want to meet.

As I settled in the snug for supper,
 Safe in this safest of digs,
 Heavy weather for a while subsiding -
 Talked to a man about pigs,

In touch with leaves outside on the pine
 Recent buds adorning the larch;
 Something fresh in tune with Springtime,
 Here at Market Blandings in March.

Special thanks to the Francis Reckitt Trust, who provided a weekend's accommodation in Shropshire, where this poem was written.

The Duke's moustache was rising and
 falling like seaweed on an ebb tide.
 (From *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, 1939)

Two Books of Interest

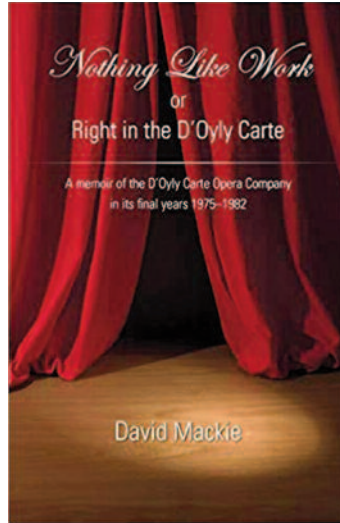
Nothing Like Work or Right in the D'Oyly Carte

Those who know their Wodehouse will be aware that he regarded W. S. Gilbert to be the finest writer of lyrics ever. They also know that Gilbert was hugely influential in PGW's own lyric writing, starting with his very first song, 'Put Me in My Little Cell' (*Sergeant Brue*, 1904). This influence has been described by member DAVID MACKIE in past issues of *Wooster Sauce*, including innumerable examples of the times Wodehouse appropriated Gilbertian lines for his stories.

So it is a real pleasure to learn that David has produced a memoir of his years spent working for the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company – the very company, of course, for which Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan created their famous light operas – first as repetiteur, then as chorus master and associate conductor. It was only after his years at D'Oyly Carte that David began reading Wodehouse, and as he got deeper into the canon, he was struck by the numerous references to Gilbert & Sullivan operas. In a letter to the *Wooster Sauce* editor, David writes that it was obvious Wodehouse knew the operas very well: "As we did them constantly (eight shows a week for 48 weeks of the year), you soon knew Gilbert's libretti inside out, and every reference leaped out of the page at me." (In this regard, see also David's letter to the editor on page 4.)

Nothing Like Work, or Right in the D'Oyly Carte has nothing about Wodehouse in it, but it provides a fascinating account of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company's final seven years before it closed in 1982. For anybody interested in the Company, including fans of Plum who know how much Gilbert & Sullivan permeate his work, this is a must-read and well worth the £12.99 price. It is available online and at all major book retailers.

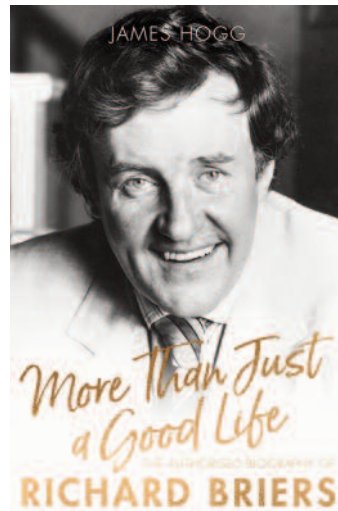
For those who would like to read David's articles examining Gilbert's influence on Wodehouse, see *Wooster Sauce*, March 1998, page 2; December 2002, page 10; March 2003, page 10; and December 2005, page 10. Email the Editor if you'd like to have copies of these articles sent to you.



More Than Just a Good Life

It was a delight to read James Hogg's biography of our late, wonderful President, Richard Briers, *More Than Just a Good Life*. Contained within its 346 pages is a detailed and affectionate account of Richard's long career as an actor, as well as fascinating insights into his family life and personality. Well liked and respected by those with whom he worked, the happy beneficiary of a long, happy marriage that produced two equally accomplished daughters, and, by the end of his life, a national treasure, Richard has long deserved to be the subject of a biography, and James Hogg has done him proud. The book is filled to the brim with captivating stories from those who knew him best and is replete with photographs that represent only a small part of his highly accomplished career.

But what, I hear you ask, has this to do with P. G. Wodehouse? Well, the clue is in the first sentence above. When, in 1997, Richard accepted our newly formed Society's invitation to become its first honorary President, he accepted with alacrity. The invitation had made great sense, since Richard's credentials as not just a fan but an actor of Wodehouse's stories were well known. From his role in the film *The Girl on the Boat*



(1962) to his playing Bertie Wooster in the 54 stories recorded for BBC Radio (1973–80) to his portrayal of Gally Threepwood in the TV movie *Heavy Weather* (1995), Richard never turned down an opportunity to share the Master's words with an appreciative audience.

All this and more is documented in *More Than Just a Good Life*, with numerous mentions of Wodehouse throughout and, on page 229, the message that Richard wrote at the time he accepted the Society's presidency. I won't share it here – it will be up to you to buy the book and read it for yourself. And into the bargain you will get an absolutely dandy biography of a man who charmed and entertained the nation for decades and whose skills as an actor of both comedy and drama gained him the awe and admiration of his fellow actors, just as Wodehouse was so admired by his fellow writers. As this book demonstrates, Richard Briers had a very good life indeed, and he remains very much missed to this day.

– ELIN WOODGER MURPHY

She looked at me in rather a rummy way. It was a nasty look. It made me feel as if I were something the dog had brought in and intended to bury later on, when he had time. My own Aunt Agatha, back in England, has looked at me in exactly the same way many a time, and it never fails to make my spine curl.

(From 'The Aunt and the Sluggard', 1916)

We Remember

Barry Phelps

The death was announced in *The Times* on 1 December of Barry Phelps, who played an important part in spreading information about Wodehouse and his works during the 1970s and 1980s. He was a financial journalist who at the same time became a specialist dealer in the works of Wodehouse, sending out irregular lists of a wide variety of publications, including UK and US first editions and later reprints alongside additional material such as magazines with Wodehouse content, anthologies, books and magazine articles about Wodehouse and sheet music. These lists were eagerly awaited, as on many items they contained contextual information which was not at the time generally available elsewhere. He built a superb, wide-ranging, collection of his own (stated by a Directory of Rare Book Collections to consist of almost 3,000 items), which he later donated to Dulwich College.

Towards the end of the 1980s, Barry devoted considerable time to researching material for a book about Wodehouse, entitled *P G Wodehouse – Man and Myth*, which was published by Constable in 1992. Soon after its publication, he was elected as a councillor in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, a position he retained until 2010, serving a year as Mayor in 2004/2005. Not surprisingly, his profile in the Wodehouse world dropped as his political profile rose. Besides being a member of the US Wodehouse Society, Barry was an early member of our Society after its formation in 1997, although he played no active part in its affairs and resigned in 2006.

In September 1984, Barry had established The Drones, an occasional dining club for like-minded lovers of Wodehouse's writing, with an inaugural dinner at the Carlton Club. The Drones continue to meet two or three times a year, but even here in recent years his attendance became sporadic. At its dinner in February this year, our Society member Chris Makey proposed a toast in remembrance of Barry as the Drones founder. He will be remembered more widely for his tremendous enthusiasm for all Wodehouse works, and the passion that he put into collecting and writing about them.

TONY RING AND CHRIS MAKEY

Simon Gordon Clark

We were saddened to learn only recently that long-time Society member Simon Gordon Clark died on 26 August 2018, at the age of 81. Simon had been a regular attendee at Society meetings for many years until ill health prevented his joining us. We shall miss his presence and fund of Wodehousean knowledge. Our deepest condolences to his family.

Emsworth Museum

Members are reminded that the Emsworth Museum will reopen to the public on 31 March, and will remain open until 11 November during these hours:

Saturdays & Bank Holidays: 10.30am–4.30pm

Sundays 29 April & 6 May: 10.30am–4.30pm

All other Sundays: 2.30pm–4.30pm

St George's Day (23 April): 10am–2pm

All Fridays in August: 2.30pm–4.30pm

A visit to the Museum if you're in the area is always a good idea as they have an excellent section devoted to Wodehouse. Additionally, you can visit the town itself, where Wodehouse lived for ten years in the early 1900s.

Poet's Corner

The Barred Dance

Train up the child, so runs the rede.

The rising generation

Will have to mould in time of need

The fortunes of the nation.

And, though of Britain's matchless power

Full often have I bragg'd, I'm

Convinced we could not last an hour

If babes were reared on rag-time.

When Drake the Spanish hopes upset,

Our men were tough as hickory:

But then they danced the minuet

When worshipping Terpsichore:

When Shakespeare plied his magic pen

And Cranmer to the stake walked,

The genuinely tip-top men

Were those who never cake-walked.

In modern days it's just the same:

The men in lofty stations,

Whose eminence we all acclaim,

Avoid undue gyrations.

They hear without internal thrills

The 'Georgia Camp Meeting';

No wish to dance their bosom fills,

Or, if it does, it's fleeting.

So let the noble work proceed,

Pursue your labours sternly;

And follow the illustrious lead

Of autocratic Burnley.

And thus, when infants have grown old

Who crawling now on floors are,

Their natures will be good as gold.

As, reader, mine and yours are.

From *Daily Chronicle*, 22 March 1904

Sir Roderick Glossop: Wodehouse's "eminent loony doctor"

by Paul Dakin

Editor's note: This article was originally published online in Hektoen International: A Journal of Medical Humanities (Spring 2017). It is reprinted here with the kind permission of the author, who is also a Society member. For reasons of space, the endnotes have been modified to indicate only the sources, without page numbers. To read the article with original endnotes, go to bit.ly/2SEqmvA.

P. G. Wodehouse is one of the greatest comic authors of the twentieth century. He wrote nearly a hundred books containing a fascinating array of characters. Many inhabited the confined geography of 1920s London and country houses, with occasional trips to New York or the French Riviera. This was the world Wodehouse had known as a young man, giving rise to a plentiful supply of interesting people, places, and events that formed the fabric from which he weaved his literary magic.

The early experience of staying with his grandmother and her four unmarried daughters provided the models for Bertie Wooster's favourite Aunt, Dahlia, and the fearsome Aunt Agatha. They lived at Cheney Court in the village of Box, Wiltshire. The establishment, now a language school, became Deverill Hall in *The Mating Season*.

At Cheney, Wodehouse must have encountered Dr Henry Crawford MacBryan, who ran a psychiatric nursing home at Kingsdown House in the neighbouring hamlet of Ditteridge.¹ MacBryan was immortalised as Sir Roderick Glossop, "eminent loony doctor or nerve specialist",² vital to the plots of one Blandings and five Jeeves and Wooster books. Wodehouse modelled Glossop's appearance on MacBryan: "an extraordinarily formidable bird" possessing shaggy eyebrows, a piercing look, and an enormous bald head "like the dome of St Paul's".³ Glossop's house was named after Ditteridge.¹

Glossop, a "pompous old ass",⁴ was a favourite of Bertie's formidable Aunt Agatha. Noting he was President of the West London branch of the anti-gambling league, drank no wine, strongly disapproved of smoking, ate simple food owing to an impaired digestion, and considered coffee "the root of half the nerve-trouble in the world", she advised Bertie to "refrain from any misguided flippancy" because Glossop was "a very serious-minded man".^{3a}

Lord Emsworth remembered Glossop at school, "a most unpleasant boy with a nasty, superior manner and an extraordinary number of spots on his face", nicknamed 'Pimples'. There were rumours of

"a scandal . . . something to do with overeating himself and being sick at the house supper".⁴ Nevertheless, Glossop's practice flourished at 6b Harley Street with a clientele of disturbed noblesse. Bertie's beloved Aunt Dahlia approved of Glossop after he treated her cousin who believed he was "followed by little men with black beards".² Glossop visited the Duke of Dunstable, who "breaks furniture with pokers and throws eggs at gardeners"⁴ and the Duke of Ramferline, who had "cerebral excitement" thinking he was a canary.³

His reputation ensured transatlantic visits to millionaire J. Washburn Stoker's cousin, George, who spoke oddly and "had a tendency to walk on his hands".⁵ Stoker needed Glossop's testimony on George's sanity. Glossop wanted Stoker to buy Chuffnell Hall and run it "as a sort of country club for his nerve patients" or "private loony-bin",⁵ similar to MacBryan's establishment at Ditteridge. Jeeves had to intervene and guarantee success.⁵

'Brain specialists' – "always on the job and never miss a trick" – "watch the subject closely. They engage him in conversation. They apply subtle tests."⁶ Glossop cured "the most stubborn cases" and would "start topics and observe reactions", saying, "It is most unusual for me not to be able to make up my mind after a single talk with the person I'm observing."⁶ He examined a man on a train purporting to be the Duke of Dunstable, and was even persuaded to masquerade as the butler Swordfish to assess Wilbert Cream's sanity.⁶ Glossop was himself impersonated by Lord Ickenham, who commented, "It must be amazingly interesting work, sitting on people's heads and yelling for the strait waistcoat."⁴ Glossop's work, "though sometimes distressing, is . . . full of interest".⁴ Remarking that "A profession like mine is a great strain. . . . Sometimes it seems to me that the whole world is unbalanced",³ he lectured the Mothers of West Kensington on the "tendency of post-war youth towards melancholia".⁴

Bertie was not impressed: "How the deuce people who have anything wrong with their nerves can bring themselves to chat with that man, I can't imagine; and yet he has the largest practice in London."⁷ He described Glossop as "nothing more nor less than a high-priced loony-doctor" who was "cropping up in my path for years, always with the most momentous results".⁵ Aunt Agatha intended Bertie to marry Glossop's hearty daughter Honoria, but Glossop's hatred of cats enabled Jeeves to

extricate Bertie from the unintended engagement. Glossop later prevented Bertie from marrying Stoker's daughter by questioning his sanity.⁵ Glossop's nephew was Bertie's friend, and Bertie was nearly engaged to his niece Heloise Pringle. Another friend, Biffy, whose house was considered for Glossop's sanatorium, asked Bertie to help him break up with Honoria, although the prospect of meeting Sir Roderick again gave Bertie "a cold, shivery feeling".⁷

Bertie conceded that Aubrey Upjohn, his old headmaster, should hear "that Sir Roderick Glossop, the greatest alienist in England, is convinced that Wilbert Cream is round the bend and to ask him if he proposes to marry his stepdaughter to a man who at any moment may be marched off and added to the membership list of Colney Hatch."⁶ Cream was diagnosed by Glossop as a kleptomaniac. Colney Hatch, a large asylum on the edge of London, was familiar to Dr MacBryan.

Bertie knew that Glossop, "janitor to the loony-bin", "has always had my name at the top of his list of 'Loonies I have lunched with'".⁸ Puncturing Glossop's hot-water bottle with a darning needle⁸ confirmed his view that Bertie "ought to be certified" and "under restraint".⁵ After hearing how Glossop had severely castigated Lord Chuffnell's nephew Seabury, Bertie decided that "I had suffered much at his hands since first our paths crossed", but "I found myself definitely softening towards him".⁵ The rapprochement deepened after both were chased at knifepoint by Bertie's temporary valet, Brinkley. Jeeves helped them evade the police in disguise, leaving them "hobnobbing like a couple of sailors on shore leave".² As a result, Bertie "completely changed my mind about . . . Glossop . . . there is much good in him."⁵ Glossop reciprocated: "I reached a hasty judgment regarding your own sanity. . . I was shown to be in error."⁶

Although "Pop Glossop was built for stability rather than speed"⁶ and "his eyes go through you like a couple of Death Rays",⁷ he played Santa Claus at Aunt Dahlia's Christmas party.² Jeeves noted that Glossop had "a pleasing baritone voice and as a younger man – in the days when he was a medical

student – was often accustomed to render songs at smoking concerts."⁵ He married twice, to Miss Blatherwick, Honoria's mother, and, following her demise, to Myrtle, Dowager Lady Chuffnell.

What of Glossop's original? Born in Ireland in 1855, Dr MacBryan applied to run a private asylum in Lancashire before joining Hanwell County Asylum in 1884. He was on the Council of the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland, attending meetings in Bath and London. He supervised Kingsdown House, a well-run institution with 43 patients paying between two and five guineas each week. The Henley Lane site, a 'Mad House' since 1615, became Kingsdown Lunatic Asylum and then a private institution in 1880. Having its own brewery, dairy, and bakehouse, male and female patients were segregated in a caring regime that permitted excursions.

Dr MacBryan lived at Kingsdown with his wife and six children. Son Edward was killed in action in 1917. Another son, Jack, returning from captivity after the Great War, played cricket for Somerset and England, and won a hockey gold medal in the 1920 Olympics. Dr MacBryan died in 1943. His son Gerald inherited Kingsdown House, and it closed in 1946. The gates of the former mental home may now be situated at a nearby crematorium.⁹

Endnotes

1. N.T.P. Murphy, *A Wodehouse Handbook*, Volume 1: *The World of Wodehouse* (2006)
2. 'Jeeves and the Greasy Bird' (*Plum Pie*, 1965)
3. 'Sir Roderick Comes to Lunch' (*The Inimitable Jeeves*, 1923)
- 3a: 'Introducing Claude and Eustace' (*Inimitable Jeeves*)
4. *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* (1939)
5. *Thank You, Jeeves* (1934)
6. *Jeeves in the Offing* (1960)
7. 'The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy' (*Carry On, Jeeves*, 1925)
8. 'Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit' (*Very Good, Jeeves*, 1930)
9. P. Dakin, 'Dr Henry Crawford MacBryan, aka Sir Roderick Glossop (P G Wodehouse's well known loony doctor)', *Journal of Medical Biography*, 19 (2011)

A Cosy Moment

After the Victorians, by A. N. Wilson (2005)

(from Carolyn de la Plain)

In his chapter entitled 'Puzzles and Pastoral', Wilson discusses, among other things, the reactions of various people in the post-Victorian era to the popularity of crossword puzzles. In 1934, a *Times* article related how Sir Austen Chamberlain, half-brother to Neville, had claimed to complete a *Times* crossword in 41 minutes, but then added: "Ask the Provost of Eton [*short-story writer M. R. James*] who measured the time required for boiling his breakfast egg by that needed for the solution of your daily crossword – and he hates a hard-boiled egg." This prompted P. G. Wodehouse to write the following letter:

Sir, on behalf of the great race of rabbits, those humble strivers who like myself have never yet succeeded in solving an entire *Times* crossword puzzle, I strongly resent these Austen Chamberlains and what not flaunting their skill in your columns. Rubbing salt in the wounds is what I call it. To a man who has been beating his head against the wall for twenty minutes over a single anagram it is g. and wormwood to read a statement like that one about the Provost of Eton and the eggs. In conclusion may I commend your public spirit in putting the good old emu back into circulation as you did a few days ago? We of the *canaille* know that the Sun-God Ra has apparently retired from active work – are intensely grateful for the occasional emu.

The Bibliographic Corner *by Nick Townend*

“With a New Preface by the Author”: Part Four

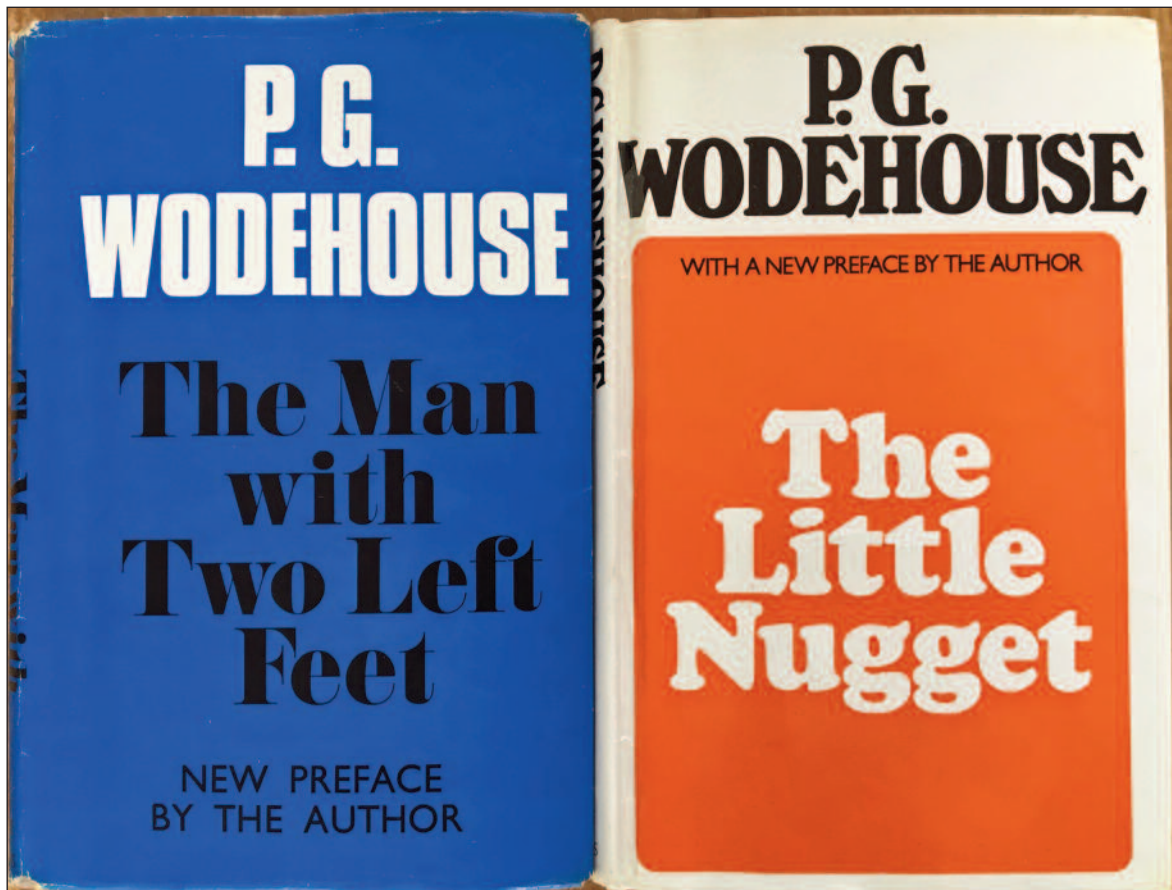
Continuing our review of the series of new prefaces contributed by Wodehouse to 14 reprints of his books issued by Herbert Jenkins/Barrie & Jenkins between 1969 and 1975, the sixth preface to appear was for *The Man with Two Left Feet* (1917).

Wodehouse’s preface states that the stories “take me again to those early days in Greenwich Village, . . . where I wrote them. . . . I think of the old gang . . . and particularly of Archie the literary agent. (If you want to know all about Archie, buy my *The Man Upstairs* – never mind the expense – and read the Preface I wrote for it).”

As in earlier prefaces, Wodehouse’s memory plays him false on points of detail. He says, “I certainly don’t think I had genius from 1909 to 1912. . . . I don’t think any of these stories got into the posh magazines . . . every one of these stories had to find a home in the pulps.” In fact, the 13 stories in the book were first published in US magazines between August 1914 and July 1916, and three of them appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, which was the poshest of the posh magazines. Of the other ten stories, four appeared in *Red Book*, two in *McClure’s*, and one in each of *Ainslee’s*, *Argosy*, *Century*, and the *Illustrated Sunday Magazine*.

Interestingly, Wodehouse states: “There seems to me now something synthetic about [these stories], and there probably was, for when I wrote [*sic*] them I had become a slanter. A slanter is a writer who studies what editors want. He reads the magazines carefully and turns out stories as like the ones they are publishing as he can manage without actual plagiarism. It is a deadly practice.”

The Barrie & Jenkins reprint of *The Man with Two Left Feet* containing Wodehouse’s new preface was published in 1971 (*McIlvaine*, A21a17); his comments about Archie demonstrate that the title appeared after the preceding preface, *The Man Upstairs*, which was also published in 1971. The dust wrapper follows the same format as that used for *The Man Upstairs*, namely Wodehouse’s name in white capitals on the front cover and spine, above the title of the book in black mixed-case text, with “New Preface | By The Author” in capitals at the foot of the front cover. The background of the dust wrapper was blue, in contrast to the red used for *The Man Upstairs*. *McIlvaine* notes the presence of the new preface and describes the book as “Black cover, gold lettering”; copies also exist in purple. When Barrie & Jenkins republished the title in 1978, (A21a18) the preface was included.



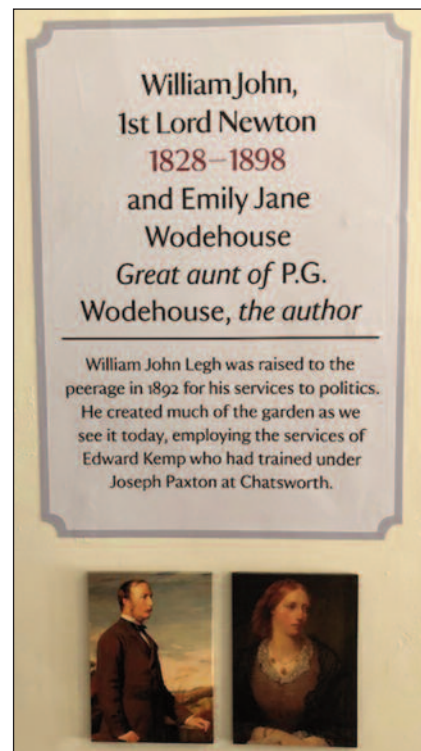
For the seventh preface Barrie & Jenkins chose another title from the 1910s, namely *The Little Nugget* (1913). This preface was published in 1972 (A16a24). Barrie & Jenkins, having had a consistent dust-wrapper format for the first four titles, and then having changed to a different format for the next two titles, changed the format again for this title, but then stuck with the same format for the seven further titles in the series. Wodehouse's name was in black capitals against a white background on the front cover and spine. On the front cover, beneath Wodehouse's name, was a large block of colour, with the title of the book in white mixed-case lettering in the centre and "With a New Preface by the Author" in black capitals at the top. So with the seventh title in the series, the format had evolved to include the wording which gives this series of articles its title. The colour of the colour block on the front cover was to vary from title to title (for *The Little Nugget* it was orange), but the colour from the front cover was always used for the lettering of the book's title on the spine of the dust wrapper.

McIlvaine notes the new preface but does not describe the book, which had black boards and gold lettering on the spine. As far as I am aware, the preface has never been included in any subsequent reprints of this title.

Wodehouse's preface starts by saying that "Between the years 1910 and 1913, when this book was written, . . . I would sit for hours in my Greenwich Village hotel room, staring at my typewriter in the hope that it would give me a plot for a story and eventually having to go and see Bob Davis . . . the editor of I don't know how many pulp magazines. . . . You said you wanted a plot, and he gave you one, and you went away and wrote it." Wodehouse recalls that "Bob [gave] me the plot of *The Little Nugget*. He talked for half an hour. . . . I was able to start writing as always happened after a visit to Bob. The final result was almost entirely my own unaided work, but without him I would never have got off the ground. He accepted the story" and it was published in *Munsey's* in August 1913 (D41.1).

Intriguingly, given Wodehouse's comments about slanders and plagiarism in the preface of *The Man with Two Left Feet*, he goes on to say "I always had a feeling, when in conference with Bob, that the ideas that flowed so freely from him were subconscious memories of stories he had published in his years and years of pulp magazine editing. It seemed incredible that he could have invented them all at the drop, as it were, of a hat. Was he, without knowing it, giving me something he had accepted for *Munsey's Magazine* in 1903 or *The Story-Teller* in 1897?" That is surely an avenue for a dedicated researcher to explore.

Another Limb on the Wodehouse Family Tree



Last year Society member DAVID ANDERTON sent this photo, taken at Lyme Park in Cheshire, a mansion house once owned by the Leghs of Lyme until the National Trust took it over in 1946. This display board was among several devoted to the family lineage.

Back in 2010, James Hogg wrote an article regarding his attempts to trace an Emily Wodehouse, though his quarry predated this one and appeared to have married into the Wodehouse family. So who was Emily Jane Wodehouse? If Norman Murphy were still alive, he would have been all over this, but the best we can do is refer to his simplified Wodehouse family tree, published in *Wooster Sauce* in December 2012. There we see that PGW's grandfather, Col. Philip Wodehouse, had four sisters, with only one of them, Lucy, named in Norman's tree. It is a fair guess that Emily Jane was one of the other three unnamed sisters.

Answers to Wodehouse Quiz (Page 17)

1. Ickenham
2. George Alexander Pike
3. George Threepwood, Lord Bosham
4. *Spring Fever*
5. Percy Craye, Lord Worplesdon
6. George, Lord Uffenham
7. *The Prince and Betty*
8. The Duke of Dunstable
9. *Quick Service*
10. The Earl of Sidcup

Recent Press Comment

The Spectator, November 5

In her review of the newly refurbished Simpson's in the Strand, Olivia Williams wrote: "In the Edwardian era, PG Wodehouse praised it as a 'restful temple of food'. . . . I like to think that Wodehouse . . . would still approve. As Wodehouse enthused in 1915, 'The God of Fatted Plenty has the place under his protection.'"

This is MONEY, November 7

In his city diary *The Dastardly*, Mr Deedes wrote of "crotchety-sounding ex-Kleinwort-Benson banker George Pinto", whose "Times obit portrays him as that irascible breed of golfer whose exploits would have furnished PG Wodehouse with a rich seam of material. . . . He once asked a couple he found copulating in a bunker, 'Are you members?'"

The Times, November 7 (from Dave Anderton)

Talking of said George Pinto, more from *The Times* obit, which spoke of his passion for golf and his preference for playing alone, his favourite day being Christmas, when he had the course to himself. The obit noted, "As PG Wodehouse remarked, to find a man's true character, play golf with him."

Sunday Telegraph, November 11 (from David Salter)

On the letters page the following, from Patricia Evans, appeared: "Sir- The Health Secretary Matt Hancock's suggestion on providing fruit for workers (report, November 4) brings to mind PG Wodehouse and Sir Roderick Spode, who believed that it was the right of every worker to have a British bicycle, a British umbrella and Brussels sprouts."

The Oldie, November 13 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Esteemed Society Patron Henry Blofeld wrote: "It may be a difficult choice, but Blandings has always had my vote over Jeeves. Much as I respect the Empress of Japan for devoting her time to the Jeeves books [see *Wooster Sauce*, Dec. 2018, p.20], I prefer the Empress of Blandings . . . and all the heavenly characters in the Blandings series." He listed numerous characters, including: "Beach the Butler, bringing Clarence, the 9th Earl of Emsworth, his first whisky and soda of the evening in the rose garden, walks across the lawn 'like a procession of one'" and "England's premier stinker, Alaric, Duke of Dunstable". He finished, "My Dear Old Things, what a splendid Wodehouse collection to help steer me now towards the proper job I've been lucky enough never to have."

The Times, November 15 (from Dave Anderton)

Caitlin Moran's 'Celebrity Watch' featured a countdown of celebrity ups and downs. At the number 1 position – an 'up' – was a moustache that Prince Charles once sported back in 1975. Its appearance was brief and, apparently, unlamented, but Ms Moran speculated on why it was grown in the first place: "[B]ack then . . . moustaches were an inimitable part of being just a normal British person, and so, one day, Charles must have instructed his valet to leave the upper lip untroubled by the razor. One imagines a Jeeves-like response of 'I see Sir has recently enjoyed *Smokey and the Bandit*. As you wish.'"

The Hindu Business Line, November 30

In a piece headed 'Can the Wodehousian "butler burglar" set things right in our world?', Omair Ahmad reminisced about an uncle's collection of perfectly preserved Wodehouse books, and of one of his favourites, *Do Butlers Burgle Banks?* After recapping the plot, he linked it to some personal financial difficulties

and noted how things differ in this modern world from Wodehouse's time. He concluded: "Wodehouse's stories turned out well. I desperately hope ours do, too."

The Times, December 2 (from June Arnold)

In the *Times* Diary, Patrick Kidd wrote: "[Michael] Gove's performance reminded me of the greatest opening line in English literature, from PG Wodehouse's *The Luck of the Bodkins*. 'Into the face of the young man who sat on the terrace of the Hotel Magnifique at Cannes there had crept a look of furtive shame, the shifty hound-dog look which announces that an Englishman is about to talk French.' Priceless!"

The Bookseller, December 4

Katie Mansfield wrote that editor Jen Hamilton-Emery described journalist and literary critic Nicholas Lezard as "the P G Wodehouse of squalor and calamity".

The Spectator, December 8 (from Noel Bushnell)

Two PGW references in one issue. (1) In a review of a biography of an obscure poseur: "And sometimes, with his earnest Freudian or Derridean analyses and gushing superlatives . . . you feel that [author Mark] Dery might be – as was said of critiquing Wodehouse – taking a spade to a soufflé." (2) In a rave against the works of John Le Carré, and his *Little Drummer Girl* in particular, Rod Liddle wrote: "Nor would we read Le Carré for humour. Americans are often derisive of the British affection for the comic novel, from Wodehouse via Bradbury to Tom Sharpe. . . . They have a point, too: the best fiction accords to humour the natural, important but not commanding part it plays in our lives."

Emerald Street Stories, December 11

(from Babioli Lillington)

One of the "Five Digi Steps to Instant Cosiness" was the audiobook of *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*. "P G Wodehouse's world of Bertie Wooster, the Drones and Brinkley Court are hideously out of touch with modern times – making them the perfect retreat from . . . attempting to board any overground service during 'festive works'. The language alone, narrated by the late actor Jonathan Cecil, is a pure, escapist delight: 'Would you say my head was like a pumpkin, Wooster?' 'Not a bit, old man.' 'Not like a pumpkin?' 'No, not like a pumpkin. A touch of the dome of St Paul's, perhaps.'"

The New European, December 14

Writing about the late Pete Shelley of the Buzzcocks, Malcolm Garret described him as "the P G Wodehouse of punk".

Washington Free Beacon, December 15

In 'Bah, Humbug', Joseph Buttum wrote of how the season "briefly inverts me into a grumpy, pre-transformation Scrooge. Come December, as P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster observed, "and Christmas was again at our throats."

Sydney Morning Herald, December 16

One of the books that changed author Ross Fitzgerald was *Love Among the Chickens*: "These days, few realise how utterly subversive are Wodehouse's comedies. When working . . . I find that reading Wodehouse helps improve and simplify my writing."

New York Times Magazine, December 16

(from Timothy Kearley)

A review of Ben Schott's *Jeeves and the King of Clubs* turned into more of an appreciation of Wodehouse: "As Buster Keaton is to silent film, as Basho is to haiku, as Missy Elliott is to intergalactic sonic cosmography, P. G. Wodehouse is to the English comic novel. He maxed out every dial on the

dashboard. To read a single Wodehouse sentence is to enter an alternate universe: a zero-gravity caperscape of aristocratic bumbling that seems to transcend time."

Free Press Journal, December 16

Patron Shashi Tharoor described himself as a "rather eclectic reader who loves P G Wodehouse and Gabriel Garcia Marquez almost equally". His favourite genre is: "Humour. No one to match Wodehouse, of course."

The i, December 19 (from Roger Bowen)

On the letters page, Penny Little wrote: "Reading Jenny Eclair's claim that her suggestion to people to take up pilates and yoga are 'acts of kindness', I was reminded of P G Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster referring to his Aunt Agatha's son, the Boy Scout, 'young, blighted Edwin'. He persistently did 'acts of kindness out of sheer malevolence'."

Evening Standard, December 20

In his review of *Mary Poppins Returns*, Matthew Norman said of Emily Blunt, who plays Mary Poppins, that "every exhortation - 'pish-posh', 'jiggety-jog', 'spit-spot' - suggests one of those terrifying P G Wodehouse aunts who could open an oyster from 12 paces with a glance."

Hindustan Times, December 22

Writing about how difficult it can be to buy Christmas gifts, Rehana Munir wrote: "Like many clueless gifters, I make an excellent giftee. . . . A visiting granduncle once said to me in a bookshop: 'Pick whatever you want.' But such generosity can be crippling. I left the store with a single PG Wodehouse title. I still wonder what treasures I could have left with that day."

Mail Online, December 27

Responding to the question "What first gave you the reading bug?" Ben Schott replied: "The worlds and words of P G Wodehouse - the greatest craftsman of comic prose in English and the creator not just of Jeeves and Wooster, but also of Psmith, Ukridge, Uncle Fred and the Oldest Member. I remember my father reading me *Carry On, Jeeves* and sensing the spark of Wodehouse's linguistic genius ignite a smile in my mind. Plum's prose has an effect very similar to champagne - which I recommend drinking as you read it."

Sydney Morning Herald, December 28, & The Age (Melbourne), December 29 (from Tim Richards)

In 'Turning Pages: The enduring appeal of P. G. Wodehouse', Jane Sullivan, referring to Sebastian Faulks and Ben Schott having written Jeeves and Bertie books, asked: "What is it about Wodehouse's stories that have inspired such imitation, the sincerest form of flattery? They were never in fashion, exactly, but they have never gone out of fashion either. . . . Many have tried to pin down the way Wodehouse works his magic on his fans but perhaps the best way to show it is to quote him at random, because he cannot help being witty."

Quote . . . Unquote, January 2019

Asked to provide two examples of the quote "Like Caesar's wife, all things to all men" being taken up and 'gently revised', Nigel Rees first quoted from PGW's 'Archibald and the Masses' (*Young Men in Spats*, 1922), in which the narrator describes the assembly at the Angler's Rest thusly: "As an erudite Gin and Angostura once put it, we are *like Caesar's wife, ready for anything*."

The Guardian, January 2

Sam Jordison asked for nominations for the book that brings the most joy and the best chuckles. "We can . . . spread a little light, taking our lead from none other than the immortal PG Wodehouse, who wrote in *Something Fresh*: 'As we grow older and realise more clearly the limitations of human happiness, we come to see that the only real and abiding pleasure in life is to give pleasure to other people.' The fact that this line was actually the

cue for various witticisms and sarcasms about the mercilessly efficient secretary Baxter and his failure to take pleasure in anything should only encourage us."

The Times, January 2

In his Diary column, after noting that Nigel Farage had been made captain of the Dulwich College old boys' golf society, Patrick Kidd went on to comment: "Dulwich's greatest golf writer was PG Wodehouse, who felt it was a sure test of character. 'I attribute the insane arrogance of the later Roman emperors to the fact that, never having played golf, they never knew that strangely chastening humility which is engendered by a topped chip-shot,' he wrote. His fellow alumnus may disprove that theory."

The Spectator, January 5

Ben Schott alerted the reader to 'The telltale signs your child is texting about Jeeves and Wooster', which included: STFU - Spode's The Fascist Upstart; ASAP - Aunts Seldom Ask Permission; OMG - Our Man Gussie; and LMAO - Like Mastodons Aunts Orate. Members of the Society will no doubt have a few of their own! (To read this piece, go to goo.gl/HLhvoP)

The Independent, January 5

One of '10 novels to help you beat the January blues' was *The Mating Season*. Ceri Radford wrote: "It's hard to single out one PG Wodehouse book as the entire Jeeves and Wooster collection is Bach Rescue Remedy in literary form, but this tale of romantic imbroglio is a priceless hoot. . . . [E]very sentence is a perfectly wrought delight."

Private Eye, January 11-24

(from Gerald Moate, Peter Read, & Terry Taylor)
Included, on page 14, a cartoon showing two security guards ejecting a stunned-looking chap in a dinner jacket out from a room labelled 'Drones Club'. The caption for the cartoon read: *Gatwick Airport: Bertie Wooster arrested.*

Telegraph Magazine, January 12

(from Carolyn de la Plain)
Discussing his four hens - two rescues and two pedigrees - Joe Shute wrote: "They fulfil their class stereotypes to perfection: the posh birds preening and daft as Bertie Wooster, while the hardscrabble hens make up for their bad life chances with an impressive greedy guile."

Daily Telegraph, January 19

(from David Salter & Peter Thompson)
Columnist Michael Deacon wrote: "Like many others I always turn to Wodehouse when I'm ill. It's the lightness, the innocence, the sheer sunlit merriment of him. He's one of those very few comic geniuses whose work is uncontaminated by darkness, bitterness or pain."

Buffalo News, January 20 (from Laura Loehr)

A review reprinted from the *Washington Post* concerned '3 great audiobooks to stave off the winter blues'. Top of the list was "My Man Jeeves: The Jeeves and Wooster Series" to "mark the 100th anniversary of the appearance of P. G. Wodehouse's greatest gift to the world: Bertie Wooster and Jeeves." The re-release of the Jonathan Cecil recordings of eight stories was described as: "A festival of language, happy conceit and peerless delivery: this is a recording for the ages."

Country Life, January 30 (from David Salter)

Two PGW mentions. (1) In the leading article, 'Welcome distractions', the concluding paragraph read: "Whatever the pickle in Parliament, the world doesn't stop. . . . [R]ejoice in the Year of the Pig, an animal which betokens prosperity. . . . Lord Emsworth would approve: come to think of it, Blandings is a B word." (2) In 'How to Survive January', Ysenda Maxtone Graham, talking about increasingly dark adaptations of well-known books, wrote, "Thank goodness, we haven't yet had to watch a Bertie Wooster traumatised by historic child abuse by one of those uncles."

Future Events for Your Diary

May 11–18, 2019

***A Damsel in Distress* at the Whitefield Garrick**

The Whitefield Garrick Society will perform *A Damsel in Distress*, by Ian Hay and P. G. Wodehouse, at the Whitefield Garrick Theatre in Bury, outside Manchester. The Director, Andrew Close, hopes to meet Society members attending this production. For information and tickets, go to www.whitefieldgarrick.org.

May 26, 2019 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.

June 23, 2019 Gold Bats vs Sherlock Holmes Society of London

The Gold Bats will be playing the gentlemen of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London at the West Wycombe Cricket Club, Toweridge Lane, HP14 3AE, starting at 11 am. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in this bucolic setting.

Note: At the time of going to press, no date had been set for our traditional match against the Dulwich Dusters. See page 3 for information.

June 30, 2019 Richard Burnip's Wodehouse Walk

Take a walk with Richard and enjoy much about and by Wodehouse along the way! See May 26, above, for details on when and where.

July 8, 2019 Society Meeting at the Savile Club

This will be our traditional quiz night, with questions set by the devious Paul Kent. The start time and address remain the same: from 6 pm at 69 Brook Street, London W1K 4ER. Gents, no tie is necessary but please be sure to wear a jacket. For all: no jeans or trainers.

September 29, 2019 Richard Burnip's Wodehouse Walk

Take a walk with Richard and enjoy much about and by Wodehouse along the way! See May 26, above, for details on when and where.

October 7, 2019 Society AGM at the Savile Club

No word yet on the entertainment for this meeting, but it is sure to be special, so do hold the date in your calendar!

October 17–20, 2019 TWS Convention in Cincinnati

The Wodehouse Society will be holding its 20th biennial convention, 'Pigs Have Wings', in Cincinnati, Ohio, at the Netherland Plaza Hilton in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Recent and future news: On 8 February, a dozen Wodehouseans assembled in the library of the New Club, Edinburgh, for a wide-ranging exchange of views, enthusiasms, and quotes from Plum which kept them going well into the afternoon. It was resolved to meet again in 2020. (Members in other areas of the country are also encouraged to organise local gatherings – and let us know about it!)

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