

WOOSTER SAUCE

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How to Be an Author

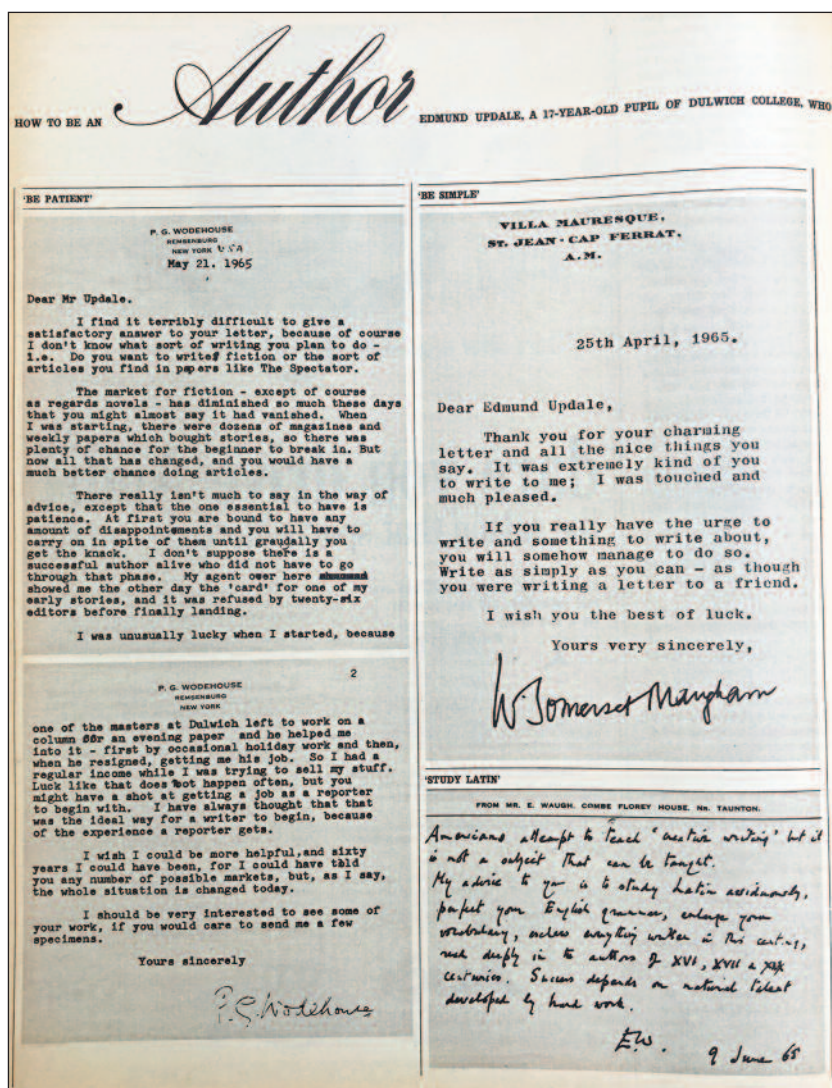
Nick Townend writes of an exciting discovery

In 1898, as a 16-year-old pupil of Dulwich College, Wodehouse wrote to the editor of *Chums* magazine to ask, "How can one become a journalist?" (*Chums*, No 297, 18 May 1898, p619; see also 'Early Wodehouse Letters', *Wooster Sauce*, June 2012; 'PGW's First Published Words?', *Wooster Sauce*, March 2019; and Letters to the Editor in this issue, Page 8.)

Some 67 years later, in an intriguing twist of fate, the roles were reversed when, in April 1965, one Edmund Updale, a 17-year-old pupil of Dulwich College, wrote to Wodehouse (and five other authors) for their advice on becoming a writer. Photographs of the six authors' replies were subsequently published in the *Sunday Times Magazine* on 6 March 1966 under the title 'How to Be an Author' (pp42-43).

The five other authors were Somerset Maugham, Evelyn Waugh, Nicholas Monsarrat, J. B. Priestley, and Compton Mackenzie. Wodehouse's reply covered two sides of notepaper, as did Monsarrat's, whereas the other authors confined themselves to one side. Star billing (i.e. the first column of the article) was given to Wodehouse's reply. Sadly, despite all the expert advice, it seems that young Edmund Updale did not become an author, as I can find no record of any books or other writing by him.

As far as I am aware, this is the first time that Wodehouse's letter has been cited in Wodehousean



circles. It is not listed in either the *McIlvaine* bibliography or the *Addendum to McIlvaine*, and does not appear in either Frances Donaldson's *Yours, Plum: The Letters of P. G. Wodehouse* or Sophie Ratcliffe's *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*.

Dedication of Westminster Abbey Memorial

See pages 2 & 3 for all the details.

The Wodehouse Memorial at Westminster Abbey

At last, it feels as if it's really happening! It seems ages – indeed, it *is* ages – since our announcement at last October's Society dinner that a memorial to Plum was to be laid at Westminster Abbey. Since then, the Society and the Abbey have been involved in a long series of meetings about the project – such is the way with ancient buildings – and only fairly recently have things started to come together.

But now we're delighted we can share the latest on the project, and tell you exactly how you can get your ticket and be part of this important event in the world of Wodehouse.

First, and most importantly, we have a confirmed date for the stone's dedication: Friday, 20 September 2019, at 6.15 pm.

The design of the stone itself has been agreed, and it will soon be in production. We also know where it will be placed – though these are both top



secret at present. Now, within the template of the service of dedication, we are working to create a warm and individual tribute that will reflect Plum's unique contribution to our lives.

We are using an online ticketing system – Eventbrite – on which members can book and print their tickets to the private service of dedication. Naturally, they are free of charge to members; the system will go live on 1 July 2019. Space at the service is somewhat limited, but we are pretty confident that everyone who wants to come will be able to do so.

After the service there will be a celebratory reception at Church House, adjacent to the Abbey, where there will be one or two speeches, more songs, and maybe readings, too.

The Society is inviting a number of guests to both the dedication and the reception; these are people who have helped or served the Society in some way. The rest of those attending the reception will be members who have applied online. If you'd like to come to the reception, find out how to apply in the detailed booking instructions on page 3. Please be aware that the size of the reception room dictates that numbers will be restricted, so not everyone will be successful. Places will be decided by ballot.

With much still to do, the Society's crack team of organisers is absolutely sure about one thing: *It's going to be a great day!*



Plum's stone will not be in Poets' Corner, but never fear, it will be close.

He was in the acute stage of that malady which, for want of a better name, scientists call the heeby-jeebies.

(From *Spring Fever*, 1948)

Dedication of the Wodehouse Memorial

20 September 2019

The dedication of the memorial to P. G. Wodehouse at Westminster Abbey will take place on Friday, 20 September, at 6.15 pm, after Evensong.

The service of dedication will last about half an hour and will, in addition to the formal proceedings, feature readings and songs from PGW's work. Admission is free to members but will be by ticket only. Details of how Society members can apply for a ticket are given below. (*Note: If you wish to attend Evensong before the service of dedication, you will be very welcome, but you will need to show your ticket for the dedication in order not to be seated with the general public, who will be asked to leave before 'our' service begins.*)

After the service, there will be a reception in Bishop Partridge Hall in Church House, a short walk across Dean's Yard from the Abbey. This reception has been made possible with the help of P. G. Wodehouse's immediate family and by generous sponsorship. The venue is larger than anything available in the Abbey, but is still of such a size that admission will be strictly by invitation; again, details are given below.

Taking into account the interest shown by members in this event and the advice of the Abbey about appropriate numbers, we have decided that Society members should be able to apply for *one ticket each*, at least initially. Places at the reception will be allocated on the basis of a ballot.

Application must be made via the Eventbrite website, on which **tickets will be available from 1 July**. The Society's website will carry a direct link, so all members will need to do is go to www.pgwodehousesociety.org.uk and click on the link, which will take you directly to the ticket site. You will be asked for a password, which is Threepwood. You will be offered one general admission ticket, and you should directly click through to the checkout, where you will need to fill out personal details, including your telephone number and email address, which will be used in case we need to contact you urgently about the event. One question will ask if you want to go into the

ballot for a place at the reception. You then print your own ticket for the dedication, which you must bring with you for admission to the service.

The reception in Church House will last for about one hour and will feature further tributes to Wodehouse and his work.

We have decided that the first-come, first-served mechanism we use for the dinner is not appropriate for this occasion. All successful applicants for tickets to the service of dedication who apply between 1 and 31 July, inclusive, will be asked if they want to go into the ballot for a place at the reception. The draw will take place in early August, and those allocated a place will be issued with special tickets before the end of the month.

There is a dress code: gentlemen should wear a suit or blazer, coat, or jacket with trousers; ladies may wear day dress; trousers may be worn; hats are not required. National dress may be worn.

Summary:

- * The service dedicating the memorial to P. G. Wodehouse at Westminster Abbey will take place at **6.15 pm on Friday, 20 September**, after Evensong.
- * Society members will be able to apply for **one ticket each** from Eventbrite via a link on the Society's website. Tickets will be available from 1 July 2019 until capacity is reached.
- * Access to the ticketing website will require a password, which is **Threepwood**
- * After completion of the necessary details at the checkout, successful applicants will receive an email that enables them to print their own ticket, which **must be brought to the Abbey to gain admission to the service of dedication**.
- * **Those who apply between 1 and 31 July and indicate that they wish to be included will go into a ballot for a place at the reception at Church House that will follow the service.** Separate tickets will be issued for the reception and sent to successful applicants.

Say What?

It is often the case that when an author's work is adapted for the big screen, or even the small one, something gets lost in translation. That would explain why we were left scratching our heads after reading this plot summary of an Indian film adaptation (entitled *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha to Aisa Laga*) of a PGW novel, which aired on Sony Max in April: "The story is of a young Punjabi girl, Sweetie, who has to deal with the conservative traditional family that wants to get her married to a young writer who is already in love with her. However, Sweetie keeps a secret close to her heart that she is a lesbian and is in love with another woman. She

ultimately has a fear that her true love might not find acceptance in her family and society. The story is her journey of resolving these issues and bringing the moments which are hilarious, heart-warming and life-changing. The film deals with sexuality and seeking acceptance from the older and more-conservative family members, but still, the core message of 'ELKDTAL' is about love being a universal feeling, one that cannot be chained by society with the old and conservative mind."

Give up? The publicity tells us that "the story was inspired from the 1919 novel *A Damsel in Distress* by P. G. Wodehouse". Given his experiences in Hollywood, Plum probably would not have been surprised by this . . . (Thanks to MURRAY HEDGCOCK)

Society News

Subscription Renewals

Ah yes. It's that time of year again – the season when members get their annual nagging about renewing their subscriptions, which were due on 1 June 2019.

Members who pay their subscription by Direct Debit via Go Cardless aren't troubled by this irritation. Those with Standing Orders are equally serene, because their subs are renewed automatically, too. But every year, those who pay by cheque, PayPal, or bank transfer have to remember to pay their subs; sometimes they do remember, and sometimes they don't.

We hope those who have suddenly realised they haven't yet paid will read this and instantly deploy one of the many methods of payment the Society accepts. And if this little nag is poorly timed or doesn't work for whatever reason, then perhaps the deafening yellow renewal reminder enclosed with this issue will do the trick. Do please renew your membership as soon as you can – it saves us volunteers a great deal of work and time.

If by chance we've enclosed a reminder and you have already paid, we're sorry; if you've a moment perhaps you might drop a very quick email to the membership manager on pgws.uk.members@gmail.com to tell us so. Equally, if you've decided not to renew, a note to the same address letting us know will stop us bothering you again.

Finally, if you are hoping to attend Westminster Abbey for the dedication of the memorial to P G Wodehouse, please be aware that only paid-up members are eligible to apply for tickets.

–HILARY BRUCE

A Fiendish Reminder

It has been bruited abroad – in this very organ – that the by-now traditional July Quiz is, quote unquote, *fiendish*, and its compiler a close confidant of Machiavelli.

Well, it isn't. And he isn't.

Back in the halcyon days of 2011, when this cherished institution was thrust before its public for the first time, it was publicly lambasted by the cognoscenti for being far too easy. And yes, they may have had a point: "What are Wodehouse's initials?" might, in retrospect, have been – how can I put it – an "entry level" question. But then, according to one enraged correspondent, it travelled to the other extreme: "What does Wodehouse have in common with a brand of teabag once advertised by a family of loveable chimps?" (*answer below) might have been taking things a little too far. One lives and learns.

And so the 2019 Quiz will be neither a walkover for the swots, nor a trial for the woefully ignorant. It will be *fun*, so please join us at the Savile Club (69

Brook Street, London) on Monday, 8 July, from 6 pm onwards for an evening of enlightenment and good fellowship, with some browsing and sluicing and a few questions on Wodehouse trivia thrown in. And if that isn't enough, there will be PRIZES!!! Oh, yes.

–PAUL KENT

(* - P.G. Wodehouse / P.G. Tips)

Cricket News

It was such a shame that for the first time, the Gold Bats couldn't raise a team for the long-established match against the Dulwich Dusters. The Bats' Captain for this game, Michael Chacksfield, worked very hard to tempt cricketing members into the team, but ultimately there weren't enough takers.

The timing of this game is tricky for many: it starts at 4.30 pm on a Friday. And, truthfully, we do have a long tradition of being resoundingly beaten by the Dusters, whose staff room appears to burst with keen, fit young men and women, the occasional one bearing the hallmark of having recently played for their county. But surely these are trifles when set against the noble environs and sheer quality of the Dulwich pitch, played on by Wodehouse himself: the warm welcome from the college that Wodehouse regarded as his home and family, and the little grove of trees recognised and loved by all readers of Wodehouse.

Think again for next year, you cricketing members, and stiffen your sinews!

Happily, still before us, on 23 June, we have the annual match against the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. This is played on the picturesque cricket ground in the National Trust village of West Wycombe. West Wycombe Cricket Club is on Toweridge Lane, HP14 3AE. The match starts at 11 am, stops for your leisurely picnic lunch, and tends to finish quite close to opening time at one of the excellent pubs in the village.

There's still time to contact if you are interested in playing. If you plan to enjoy the easy life as a spectator, then just turn upon the day.

Note: Please see the Society's website for any last-minute changes, for example cancellation due to heavy rain.

Personal Libraries

We are often contacted by members, or the families of late members, hoping that the Society will welcome their treasured Wodehouse collections. On a couple of occasions, we have learned that lovely members have formally bequeathed their collections to the Society.

Dear, dear members, please don't. We say this with respect, love, and gratitude in our hearts, but we still say it.

The Society has no infrastructure to deal with quantities of books, whether they are well-loved reading copies or treasured first editions. We have nowhere at all to store them, no means of distributing them, and little time to do anything about them.

If friends and family members don't want the books, please take reading copies to a charity shop – best of all, a specialist charity bookshop, which often don't have any Wodehouses (because once in stock they fly right out the door in the arms of rejoicing Wodehouse fans). For the books loved by your loved ones, that surely is the very best possible home for them.

The Society's website has a page with other ideas on the disposal of Wodehouse collections, including advice on what to do if you suspect some of the books may have a curiosity value or indeed a market value.

About That Paper

Thanks to all members who wrote to vote (and comment) on the paper on which *Wooster Sauce* is

printed. For our March issue this year, we tried out a different “silk” paper on which, admittedly, photographs look decidedly better. Some members absolutely loved it and said so in enthusiastic terms. But the feel and look of the paper was not to everybody's liking, as we learned from those who were adamantly in favour of retaining the bond paper we have been using for so many years. The arguments for both sides were compelling, and sometimes very amusing. Who'd have thought paper could be such a hot topic of debate?

Well, the votes were duly counted, and – I am not telling a fib here – they came out to an exact 50-50 split. When yours truly presented the results to the Committee, all present voted unanimously to leave the final decision to the Editor. So, for reasons I'd rather not get into, bond it will be for at least as long as I remain Editor. Sorry to disappoint those who were so keen on the silk paper, but maybe the next Editor will be more favourable towards it. Time will tell!

–ELIN WOODGER MURPHY

Situations Vacant: Editor, *Wooster Sauce*

We've been dreading this, and now it's happened. Elin Woodger Murphy has announced that she is standing down after twelve and a half years as Editor of *Wooster Sauce*, and suddenly we realise what big shoes she leaves to be filled.

So we are looking for a new Editor or – recognizing that producing *Wooster Sauce* is quite a commitment – more likely an editorial team to produce the journal every three months. We realise that such a team is unlikely to materialise fully formed; we will have to build the team, match up tasks and aptitudes, and find the right people to work together. If you are interested in discussing one or more parts of the job, don't hesitate – get in touch with the Chairman for a chat.

Thinking about the component parts of *Wooster Sauce* gave us some possible ideas for dividing the workload. The journal is made up of contributions from members, and they fall into two main areas:

- (1) News, articles, reviews, reports of Wodehouse-related events, and so on, which are submitted by members or commissioned from them by the Editor.
- (2) Regular columns and features – e.g., Society News, The Bibliographic Corner, Future Events, Letters to the Editor, Recent Press Comment, Cosy Moments, etc. – as well as filler items, all usually prepared by regular writers or items collected from contributors and collated by the Editor.

Our thought is that a two-person editorial team could divide this workload, each being responsible for one of these areas. Then, when all the material is gathered, checked, edited, and so forth, a third person might handle the layout, editing to fit, page makeup using Quark or InDesign, having the issue proofed, and sending it to the printer. There are bound to be other ways to split the job into manageable pieces, so do please consider if your experience could be put to good use in any of these fields.

What personal qualities and skills are needed for the job? Wanting to work with words, for sure, and a good knowledge of Wodehouse and his work; masses of tact and a talent for diplomacy; the aura of one who has an iron fist within a velvet glove; some previous experience of editing or layout work; and having the time and the desire to contribute to the life of the Society.

When Elin became Editor, she was already a writer and copy editor and had previously done layout work. Over the years she has developed *Wooster Sauce* into a much more sophisticated publication, now in full colour and often running to 28 pages. Our journal is and always has been at the very heart of the Society, a feast of news and Wodehouseana that reaches every one of our members. The task of producing *Wooster Sauce* is a big job – but think of the sweetness and light it spreads!

A Sporting Evening

by Andrew Bishop

I regret that I have been somewhat infrequent in my support of the quarterly gatherings of our society, but, since semi-retiring five semi-years ago, I have been looking for an opportunity to improve my attendance record. The alignment of a date in the half-term holiday and a talk on ‘Plum’s World of Sport’ made the February meeting too good an opportunity to miss, and so it was that on the 18th I found myself, for the first time, in the splendid surroundings of Mayfair’s Savile Club, where, among the 40 or so fellow members, I spotted a few familiar faces. Equipping myself with a (very reasonably priced) pint of London Pride, I sallied forth and was soon in conversation with a gin & tonic and a half of mild – the former happening to be Elin Murphy of this parish.

For the final few years of my prep-school teaching career, it was my privilege to serve as editor of the school magazine, and consequently I became familiar with the various stratagems and schemes by which an unsuspecting victim might be neatly persuaded to file a report on a concert or a play or some other school event. The editor of *Wooster Sauce*, with the smoothness of Soapy Sid and the alacrity of the Speaker of the House of Commons in allowing an opposition MP to interrupt Andrea Leadsom, signed me up as correspondent for the evening almost without my realising it, and it was only when she thrust pen and paper into my hand, swiftly followed by a most hospitable second pint of Pride, that I realised that I was to become, for the nonce, one of John Hodgson’s most devout followers.

Our Chairman brought the meeting to order and issued the glad tidings of a newly appointed Society Patron (Ben Elton), followed by a plea for help with organising and managing the cricket match between the Gold Bats and the Dulwich Dusters, and an update on the Westminster Abbey Affair. Moments later, John Hodgson was introduced to us as our visiting speaker.

John recounted Plum’s early experience of sport at his beloved Dulwich College. It is probably common knowledge to many of us that the young Wodehouse demonstrated talent on the rugby and

cricket fields, but perhaps less well known that he distinguished himself in the high jump and ‘putting the weight’. John mentioned in passing that Plum was also a boxer at school, and it would have been interesting to hear a little more about that. However, the main body of the talk focused on cricket and golf – unsurprisingly, as these were the two sports that (a) Plum continued to play in adulthood (at least for a while) and (b) featured prominently in some of his best-known early 20th-century stories.

John’s presentation was sprinkled liberally with suitable extracts from Plum’s diaries, prefaces, fiction, and even his poetry. Hearing again the final verse of ‘Missed’, a 1908 poem about a dropped catch, which features the line “Henceforward my game shall be golf” (pronounced *goff*, of course), led me to wonder why it was another ten years before

Plum took up the game (at the age of 36). Perhaps with all his successes in the musical theatre, he simply didn’t have time.

John dwelt for a while on the question of the ‘out of bounds’ rules with regard to the playing of a ball from within Mrs Smethurst’s house (‘The Clicking of Cuthbert’, 1922) before eliciting a stream of appreciative chuckles from the audience during the concluding section of his discourse, as he gave us some memorable quotes from the golf stories. Some of Plum’s bonnest of mots in these tales combine humour with genuine philosophical observations on the human condition. For example, golf “is a medicine for the soul. . . . It acts as a corrective against sinful pride. . . . If Cleopatra had been outed in the first round of the

Ladies’ Singles, we should have heard a lot less of her proud imperiousness.” (The same might be said for real tennis, Eton fives, and cricket, but probably no other sports.)

John’s talk had been accurately advertised in advance as “a masterly compendium of fact and commentary” and it earned him a warm round of applause and a small gift from our Society, presented by Hilary Bruce. With the evening’s entertainment over, some departed while others returned for a while to the 19th hole for further refreshments and anecdotes about sliced approach shots and trench-digging in the bunker.



John Hodgson holding forth on sport

Profile of a Patron

Victoria Coren Mitchell

It wasn't just her credentials as a journalist, author, playwright, and television and radio presenter that made Victoria Coren Mitchell such an obvious choice to be a Society Patron. Mostly it had to do with her well-known adoration for P G Wodehouse, which finds its way into her writing and presenting on a regular and very enjoyable basis.

Born Victoria Elizabeth Coren, she is the daughter of the late, great humorist Alan Coren and the sister of journalist Giles Coren. In an interview with *The Oldie*, Victoria revealed that, growing up, she was led to believe it was “a bit offensive to say something serious if you could make a joke about it instead”. Consequently, she and Giles talked at great speed and listened to their father – himself once a Patron of the Society – when he said: “If human culture had to get along without P G Wodehouse or Goethe, we would be a lot better off without Goethe.”

A graduate of St John's College, Oxford, Victoria had her first short story published when she was just 14 and subsequently became a columnist for the *Daily Telegraph*, writing about life as a teenager. A job with Charlie Skelton reviewing porn films for the *Erotic Review* led to her first book, cowritten with Skelton, *Once More with Feeling*, about their attempts to write “the greatest porn film ever”. Her play *A Lump in My Throat* was adapted from a book by John Diamond and performed during the 2000 Edinburgh Festival; it was also adapted as a BBC Two docudrama. Ms Coren Mitchell currently writes weekly columns for *The Observer*, has guested on or hosted numerous radio and television

programmes, and has been host of the brainy BBC game show *Only Connect* since 2008. (Those of us who watch the show devotedly can't help but notice at least one PGW reference, often more, every season.) In 2012 she married the comedian and actor David Mitchell (described in an article for the *Daily Telegraph* as her “clever-clogs soulmate”), with whom she has a daughter.

Not content with confining her accomplish-

ments to writing and presenting, Victoria is also a notable poker player, being so successful at the game that in 2016 she was inducted into the Women in Poker Hall of Fame. Two years previously she had made history by becoming the first two-time winner of the European Poker Tour, winning close to £400,000. In 2011 she described her devotion to the game in her book



For Richer, For Poorer: Confessions of a Player.

References to Wodehouse appear early and often in Victoria's writings, as well as in her tweets. For instance, in a column for *The Guardian* published in June 2017, she “decided to compile a list of good things in the world. Things to think about when you don't want to think about what you're thinking about.” One of these things was: “Opening a P G Wodehouse novel on a rainy afternoon and starting to read. (Jeeves placed the sizzling eggs and b. on the breakfast table, and Reginald ‘Kipper’ Herring and I, licking the lips, squared our elbows and got down to it.)”

Is it any wonder that we consider ourselves immensely fortunate to have acquired Victoria Coren Mitchell as a Patron?

A Cosy Moment

Joseph Anton: A Memoir, by Salman Rushdie (2012)
(from Barry Chapman)

In the first chapter of this autobiographical book written in the third person, Rushdie (who adopted the name of Joseph Anton while in hiding after Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa against him) speculates on the motives that might have led to his decision to attend Rugby School in England when he was a teenager:

Why did that boy decide to leave it all behind and travel halfway across the world into the unknown, far from everyone who loved him and everything he knew? Was it the fault, perhaps, of literature (for he was certainly a bookworm)? In which case the guilty parties might have been his beloved Jeeves and Bertie, or possibly the Earl of Emsworth and his mighty sow, the Empress of Blandings.



Letters to the Editor

Reactions, Questions, and Thoughts from Our Readers

I say, what a lot of feedback we received on the March issue – a bumper crop, with only one not pertaining to that issue. I don't know whether to be impressed by the attentiveness and erudition of our readers or embarrassed by some of the boo-boos (see the Errata on page 10). But thanks to all! –EWM

Plum's First Published Words – or Not?

From John Hodgson

In the March 2019 issue of *Wooster Sauce*, Don Taylor began his article entitled 'PGW's First Published Words?' (p.7) by saying: "Until recently we believed that Mr Wodehouse's first published words appeared in *The Alleynian* in 1899 . . ." That is not my belief. My understanding is that his first appearance in print was his article called 'Junior Cup Matches', about third form cricket, published in *The Alleynian* in October 1894, during his first year at Dulwich College. I rely on the information given by Robert McCrum in his biography entitled *Wodehouse, A Life* (2004), pp. 29 and 425; and that given by the late Barry Phelps in his biography *P. G. Wodehouse, Man and Myth* (1992), pp. 55 and 265.

The Editor replies: I consulted Tony Ring on this, and he wrote: "McCrums does not claim that Wodehouse wrote the 1894 piece with his byline, and that would have been unusual. PGW was appointed as an editor of *The Alleynian* in 1899, and it is reasonable to assume he would have had some material published by then – but with non-bylined material there is always a doubt as to the author. Jan Piggott (*Wodehouse's School Days*, p.25) definitively states that Wodehouse's name was first mentioned in 1894 in a cricket scorecard when he was out for a duck in Junior cricket matches, but does not suggest that he was involved in preparing the report. As he had only just joined the school, it would have been extremely unlikely, though Phelps seems definitive in his quoted reference." The matter is therefore debatable until some intrepid soul can check an archive of *Alleynian* issues.

From Nick Townend

I enjoyed reading Don Taylor's article in March's *Wooster Sauce* about what may be Wodehouse's first published words, in *Chums* in 1897 and 1898 (although for some reason the last three words of the *Chums* editor's reply – "to profitable enjoyment" – were omitted from the article). I also enjoyed reading Patrick Kidd's article, expanding on Don's article, in *The Times* of 30 March. The first sentence of Don's article ("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") implies that he has not read my Bibliographic Corner on the same subject ('Early Wodehouse Letters', *Wooster Sauce*, June 2012). My article revealed that Wodehouse's letter of 1898 on becoming a journalist had previously been cited and quoted (together with the editor's reply) in an article in *Story Paper Collectors' Digest* in March 1975, and that Wodehouse's letter of 1897 on losing weight had previously been

identified by the late Terry Mordue. The relevant pages of *Chums* containing the two letters are available online at the excellent Madame Eulalie website, via both the *Chums* page and Arthur Robinson's Addendum to McIlvaine page.

Editor's note: Rather serendipitously, after sending this letter, Nick came across a 1966 Sunday Times Magazine article where a would-be author wrote to Wodehouse asking for his advice on becoming an author; see page 1.

Scotch versus Scottish

From Peter Andrews

The letter from Alan Hall in the March *Wooster Sauce* expressed irritation at the use of 'Scotch' to describe people from Scotland. Readers were invited to comment on a postcard. I hope you'll excuse an email instead.

A. J. P. Taylor, in *English History 1914–1945* (pub. 1965), in a footnote on p.21, says, "Some inhabitants of Scotland now call themselves 'Scots' and their affairs 'Scottish'. They are entitled to do so. The English word for both is 'Scotch', just as we call les français the French, and Deutschland Germany. Being English, I use it."

From Linda Tyler

In the absence of a postcard, I trust an email will suffice. The three adjectives – Scot, Scotch, Scottish – all relate to characteristics of Scotland, but their meaning is nuanced. The general rule is 'Scot' refers to the person, 'Scotch' to whisky, and Scottish as in to belonging to (e.g., Scottish tartan). There are, of course, notable exceptions, such as Scots pine and Scotch egg. That Plum and Jerome K. Jerome, both humorous writers, refer to a person as 'Scotch' leads me to believe they were being very slightly ironic.

From David Mackie

Regarding the letter from Alan Hall (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2019): As a Scot I entirely concur with his old Housemaster in saying that 'Scotch' is always whisky whereas we are 'Scottish' or 'Scots'. I'm no expert on this and don't know if at one time we Scots didn't object to being referred to as 'Scotch', but I can tell you that W. S. Gilbert also uses the expression. In *The Grand Duke or The Statutory Duel*, the Grand Duke, Rudolph, says, "This comes of engaging a detective with a keen sense of the ridiculous! For the future I'll employ none but Scotchmen."

The Grand Duke, the last G&S collaboration, was written in 1896, when Plum was already 15 and shortly to start work on his vast output. Using 'Scotch' may well have been acceptable then, with Gilbert obviously just one of many – including later writers like Plum and (Alan Hall seemed to think) Jerome K. Jerome – who used the expression. It's an interesting point. Perhaps the rise of nationalism in the earlier 20th century had something to do with a desire for change, limiting 'Scotch' to just whisky. I know that a sense of Scottish identity was something that

was very evident in the early days of broadcasting in Scotland – the idea that we are a nation and not just a region – and perhaps voices were raised. Who knows?

Emily Wodehouse Revisited

From John Selborne (Lord Selborne)

Emily Jane Wodehouse was not one of the unnamed daughters of PGW's grandfather Col. Philip Wodehouse in Norman Murphy's family tree (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2019, p.25). She was the daughter of The Venerable Charles Nourse Wodehouse, a brother of PGW's grandfather. I am proud to claim her as my great-great grandmother.

The Editor apologises for her error in the last issue, but the fact is that it was the National Trust that got it wrong in the first place, identifying Emily Wodehouse as a great aunt of PGW. Further correspondence received from Lord Selborne clarified that in fact Emily was Plum's first cousin once removed.

Thoughts on Anti-Semitism

From Mark Taylor

Re. Elliott Milstein's article (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2019, p.14): All stereotypes are founded in reality. The name Robert Maxwell might ring a few bells. When I moved into Stamford Hill in 1985, I saw Hassidic Jews for the first time. I had never seen anyone like that before. Isn't it only natural for people to prefer their own kind? Fagin was based on a real-life gangster named Ikey Solomon. Many Jews did anglicise their names. Hollywood magnates in Wodehouse's day were often Jewish. I disagree about Groucho, but surely describing him as a Jew was no different from describing someone as an Englishman, Scot, or whatever? I found *Gentleman's Agreement* irritating. Can't we all agree that there are good and bad among all peoples and leave it at that?

From Peter Thompson

I must say the latest edition was covering topics not normally associated with *Wooster Sauce*, such as anti-Semitism. I have been reading PGW for over 60 years and never once thought any content was anti-Semitic or anti-anything, except pomposity. Gentle humour is the order of the day. Gentle ridicule, not Gentile ridicule. That Spode rotter gets the full force of the Wodehouse ridicule, and that of course would hardly be indicative of a writer who was anti-Semitic.

Further Musings on the King of Clubs

From Mike Swaddling

I read with interest the comments in the last issue on Ben Schott's *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*. My own opinion is that had I not known about PGW, I would probably have enjoyed it more, and full marks to Ben for a brave try – but anyone is going to suffer by comparison.

However, I would like to pick up on the question asked by David Salter: “[W]hy would the new reader prefer to start with an ersatz version rather than going straight to the real thing?”

Well, David, to answer your question I might venture that the more important name here is actually Ben Schott and not P. G. Wodehouse.

The younger generation of book readers, the ones we want to attract to PGW, know Schott and trust him. They will buy a book just because it's by him. They would buy it if he wrote a 'homage' to Shakespeare, Hemingway, Cervantes, whomever. He is a brand name. What I am guessing may have been in the minds of the Wodehouse Estate is that even if readers buy the latest Ben Schott solely because it is by Ben Schott, by the time they get to the end of the book they just may have been sufficiently entertained and intrigued by the Wodehousian setting and style to want to know more about 'the real thing'. That is one way to get our new reading generation on board.

That is also why Schott has – in my opinion quite deliberately – slightly modernised some of the English Bertie uses. He actually does 'know better'. He has cleverly integrated a little of the language of this younger generation so that it rings familiar, and they are not put off by speech they cannot identify with.

This very important question of attracting the younger generation to the works of the Master is one I have previously suggested could be debated on the pages of this illustrious organ. Using writers with followings, like Ben Schott and Sebastian Faulks, could be one road to success, but are there any other plans afoot to achieve this 'holy grail'? Perhaps someone from the Committee or the Estate could let us know?

From Elliott Milstein

In the March 2019 issue of *Wooster Sauce*, Ben Schott takes on critics (self included) who see his Bertie Wooster as more intelligent than the original. He states that our “perception of an unredeemingly dim-witted Bertie owes more to Hugh Laurie's glorious portrayal . . . than to Plum's actual text.”

I beg to differ and offer as my defence Richard Osborne's description of Bertie Wooster as a “nit-wit among half-wits, a super-fool among super-fools” (*Wodehouse at Work*, 1961, p.151), an evaluation made almost exactly 30 years before the *Jeeves & Wooster* shows aired. A random sampling from any of Plum's books or stories and Schott's book will reveal that the latter's Wooster has more on the ball. It is nothing Mr Schott has to apologise for or explain away. His book is meant to be different from the original works . . . and it is, in many ways, including Bertie's IQ.

Further from Osborne's comments on Bertie Wooster: “It seems to me that to call Bertie Wooster eminently sensible is not only wrong; it underrates by a mile Wodehouse's aims and achievements in handling Bertie as a character. Bertie is not a vapid wastrel, agreed (by all except Aunt Agatha). He is kind and chivalrous, agreed. He is an Englishman, agreed. But as far as brain is concerned, he is as near to being null and void as makes very little difference.”

Cricketing Connections

From Richard Heller

Paul Dakin's perceptive (and rational) piece on Sir Roderick Glossop, “the loony doctor”, and his original, Dr Henry MacBryan, mentioned the latter's son, Jack, as an England Test cricketer. So he was, but with a melancholy distinction. Selected as a batsman for the Old Trafford Test against South Africa in 1924, MacBryan fielded for 401 balls

without taking a catch as South Africa plodded to 116 for four wickets on the first day. Rain wiped out the rest of the match, and he never got to bat. Jack MacBryan was never selected again, giving him an international cricket career of total nullity. However, this appearance did ensure that he became England’s oldest living Test cricketer before he died, just short of 91, in 1983.

Incidentally, most contemporary accounts of Jack seem to spell him McBryan. Did he decide, like Psmith, to branch out from the family surname by dropping the first A?

An earlier England cricketer was also an international nullity. Joseph Emile Patrick McMaster played for England against South Africa in Capetown in 1889 in a match which was given Test Match status retrospectively. He was out first ball. England won the match by an innings. He did not bowl or take a catch. This represented McMaster’s entire first-class career, unlike Mac or McBryan who made over 10,000 runs for Oxford University and Somerset. McMaster at least got to bat in a Test match – and his dismissal was a catch, so (in the absence of DRS) one must assume that he actually hit the ball.

Of Orrery and of Cork

From Ian Alexander-Sinclair

Christopher Bellew’s mention (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2019, p.4) of the Earl of Cork and Orrery, whose titles are inverted by Wodehouse in *A Pelican at Blandings* (1969), stirred my memory. Christopher refers to the present (15th) earl, though in fact the earl in 1969 was the 13th. I like to think Wodehouse may really have had in mind the 12th earl, the redoubtable Admiral of the Fleet William Henry Dudley Boyle, who died, age 93, in 1967, only two years before the novel’s appearance. He had the hallmarks of a suitable Wodehouse character. According to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the Admiral was “small in stature with fiery red hair” and always wore a monocle, like Galahad Threepwood, who looms large in the story. He sat in the House of Lords, down among the barons, by virtue of his English title, Baron Boyle of Marston. Incidentally, he once lost his monocle, together with his dignity and his temper, while making a personal reconnaissance in the snow near Narvik in 1940.

In his memoirs, *My Naval Life, 1886–1941* (1942), the Admiral recounts that when he joined the Atlantic Fleet in 1924, it consisted of eight ships under Vice-Admiral Alexander-Sinclair, my grandfather. “I was,” he wrote, “at one time supposed to have a great resemblance to Admiral Alexander-Sinclair [who also had red hair], and presumably that was so, for many people have greeted me in the belief that I was he. I have often noticed a look of disappointment appear on people’s faces when they discovered their mistake. I can hardly flatter myself that he has suffered in the same way!”

Lord Emsworth told Lady Constance he wondered how you would address the Earl if you met. “One’s natural impulse would be to say ‘How do you do, Lord Orrery?’, but if you did, wouldn’t he draw himself up rather stiffly

Wealth and Wooster

From Elliott Milstein

Two curious things about this reference in the April 27th edition of *The Economist* (below). First, the article is on inherited wealth, and I think it is a fair assumption that Bertie’s wealth is inherited, but the sentence is in the present tense, leading one to think that the “rich relatives” who are financing his japes are still alive. The second curious thing is that the authors of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Bleak House*, and *Howards End* all need to be specified; Bertie Wooster’s creator does not.

Inherited wealth is making a comeback. V

IT IS ONE of the great themes of English literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Novels from Jane Austen’s “Sense and Sensibility” to Charles Dickens’s “Bleak House” and E.M. Forster’s “Howards End” revolve around the question of inheritance. Rich relatives finance Bertie Wooster’s jolly japes. Writers’ preoccupation with inheritance reflected the fact that, back then, transfers of wealth from one generation to the next were enormously significant. Now evidence is emerging which suggests that Britain is entering another golden age of inheritance.

and say ‘And Cork?’” The absent-minded peer might have been doubly surprised if he had made the apparently common error and been met by a brusque, naval “Neither Cork, nor Orrery, nor even Marston” before my grandfather introduced himself.

But, then, the book bursts with impostors.

Errata

In addition to the misunderstanding regarding Emily Wodehouse (see Lord Selborne’s letter), the Editor regrets the following errors that made it into the March issue:

- As noted in Nick Townend’s letter on page 8, Don Taylor’s article ‘PGW’s First Published Words?’ was mysteriously cut off at the end of the page, such that three words were missing: *to profitable enjoyment*. My apologies to Mr Taylor for this goof.
- In Elliott Milstein’s article ‘Wodehouse’s Anti-Semitism in Context’, Elliott wrote of Charles Dickens’s book *Our Mutual Friend* and quoted part of a note written by editor Adrian Poole for the Penguin edition. This was followed by a citation wherein the book title was incorrectly given as *Their Mutual Child*. In the proofing stage, Elliott asked me to change it to *Our Mutual Friend*, but I slipped up and never made the correction. My apologies to Elliott.

–Elin Woodger Murphy

Death Notice

Kenneth Williams of Herefordshire wrote recently regarding two of his aunts. Ann Elizabeth Higgins, née Wodehouse, died on 13 April 2019, age 89; she left three sons. Her sister, Katharine Jane Armine Wallace, née Wodehouse, had died two years previously, on 24 May 2017, age 84; she left two sons and a daughter. Both were the daughters of Richard Wodehouse (1892–1940), who was P. G. Wodehouse’s younger brother.

My First (and Latest) Wodehouse Experience

by Sanjoy Sen

As a Society newcomer, allow me to introduce myself. Earlier this year I subjected myself to the ordeal of appearing on the BBC TV quiz show *Mastermind*, selecting the *Jeeves & Wooster* series as my specialist subject. As reported in *Wooster Sauce* (March 2019), I somehow contrived to win my first-round heat and progress to the semifinal. Interested parties can view my attempts at: <https://bit.ly/2QIleag>

But I can't tell you about my latest Wodehouse experience until recounting my first. There's personal sadness in both, but as many will attest, Wodehouse has an unerring ability to provide a welcome distraction in the darkest times.

My father was an avid Wodehouse reader. They say never judge a book by its cover, but it was those perfect Ionic illustrations that drew me in, and I worked my way through the *Jeeves* stories. In fact, the only thing that my teenage self and my father could agree on was Wodehouse's brilliance.

Thinking back, we were somewhat protective of the legacy. When ITV announced their Fry and Laurie series in 1990, we immediately feared the worst. In the first episode, a worse-for-wear Bertie remained speechless for a good five minutes until revived by his new valet's hangover cure; only until the conversation fired into life did we feel safe.

My personal watershed came between Series 3 and 4. In the intervening 12 months I started at university while my father received a terminal cancer diagnosis. Watching Series 4 without him certainly wasn't helped by the falling plot standards.

Years passed, and I maintained an interest in Wodehouse, later discovering the *Blandings* series. A delay at a fog-bound Calcutta airport saw me discover his world of golf, thanks to buying the last copy of *The Clicking of Cuthbert*.

Moving from the north to London in 2015, I joined the Quiz League of London and, inspired by fellow contestants, applied for several TV and radio quizzes. My personal highlight was appearing on Victoria Coren Mitchell's *Only Connect*, but most non-quizzers (i.e. normal folk) know *Mastermind* better. Choosing *Jeeves & Wooster* felt a fitting choice, but I was determined to keep things secret. My highlight of subterfuge was being

interrogated by colleagues in a taxi while passing through Bloomsbury Square (where Bingo Little denounces capitalism) and the Senate House (Bertie's New York residence in the TV series).

Studying *Jeeves & Wooster*, I watched episodes repeatedly, pausing to note anything that might be fashioned into a question. Luckily, this paid off: John Humphrys did indeed ask the location of the flint museum the Hemmingways dragged Bertie to ('Pearls

Mean Tears', Series 2, Episode 3; Ilmouth, of course). But what really jarred was the constant cast changes: four Aunt Dahlias, while Francesa Folan began as Madeline Bassett but was far more persuasive as Lady Florence Craye.

The black chair experience is held up as a daunting experience; in reality, everyone at the Manchester studios couldn't be friendlier. I froze on the very first

question (an easy one about Aunt Dahlia's home), but after pulling myself together I managed a respectable 13, putting me in second place at half-time. I was lucky with my general knowledge questions, scoring another 15, with my nearest rival falling two short in his chase.

As with most quizzes, the whole *Mastermind* series is recorded long before the first episode is broadcast. My first-round episode was recorded in July, but to my dismay I learned it wouldn't be screened until January. Why the worry? Because my mother had also received a cancer diagnosis. In the end, she thoroughly enjoyed it before passing away peacefully soon afterwards. Anyone with a loved one suffering a terminal illness will know of the empty hours when they sleep or undergo treatment. For me, revising Wodehouse was the perfect escape.

The *Mastermind* producers are strict about ensuring everyone's specialist subjects are sufficiently varied as they progress through the tournament. Sadly, therefore, there could be no further Wodehousian adventures. Instead, my semifinal subject was Sir Alec Issigonis, creator of the Mini car. I scored a respectable 10 in both rounds but was overtaken by a long-standing contestant (and previous finalist) by a single point. The episode aired on 24 May and can be found on YouTube (<https://bit.ly/2JGED66>). Never mind, it was a fantastic experience and rekindled my love for all things Wodehouse at a difficult time.



A Wodehouse Favourite: Rex Stout

by Richard Heller

His narrative and dialogue could not be improved, and he passes the supreme test of being re-readable. I don't know how many times I have read the . . . stories, but plenty. I know exactly what is coming and how it is all going to end, but it doesn't matter. That's *writing*.

That could come from any number of readers of P G Wodehouse. But it was actually written by Wodehouse himself, about his friend and favourite detective story writer, Rex Stout. It is part of his foreword to Stout's official biography, and echoes the compliments the two paid each other in a long, mutually admiring correspondence. Rex Stout is one of the few real writers, living or dead, to get a favourable mention in Wodehouse's fiction. Bertie and Aunt Dahlia actually struggle over a copy of the latest Stout in *The Code of the Woosters*.

It is easy to understand why Wodehouse relished Stout. His full name, Rex Todhunter Stout, is one Wodehouse might have given to a struggling author posing as an expert on pigs – or even to a detective.

Rex Stout had a varied life, with some echoes of Wodehouse's.

He was born in Indiana in 1886, one of nine children of Quaker parents who encouraged him to read omnivorously. As a young child he read the Bible twice over and would have edged Bertie Wooster in a prize contest for Scripture Knowledge. At 13 he became the Kansas state spelling champion. After a variety of short-term jobs, including warrant officer on Teddy Roosevelt's presidential yacht, Stout became a published writer at the age of 24; he served a long apprenticeship, like Wodehouse, in magazines. Unlike Wodehouse, he gave himself a financial cushion against failure as a writer by patenting a successful school banking system. Ironically, he lost most of his money from this in the Great Depression and was forced to become a full-time author.

Stout wrote some serious psychological novels and a political thriller, *The President Vanishes*. Astutely, he published this anonymously and encouraged speculation that it had been written by a major politician. Then, in 1934, he turned exclusively to detective fiction with the publication of his first Nero Wolfe story, *Fer-de-Lance*. Another 72 would follow; the last, *Death Times Three*, was published after his death in 1975. In most photographs, Stout is wearing a beard which even

Gally Threepwood would regard as too extravagant for use as a disguise.

Like Wodehouse, Stout became famous for wartime broadcasts, although for the right reasons, combatting Axis propaganda in America as presenter of a long-running radio series called *Speaking of Liberty*. Unlike Wodehouse, Stout was politically active. He was a cofounder of the left-wing Vanguard Press and a strong campaigner for civil liberties and authors' rights. He was badgered by the FBI and took his revenge on them in a late Wolfe novel, *The Doorbell Rang*. But he also detested communism and unleashed Wolfe against it in *The Second Confession*.

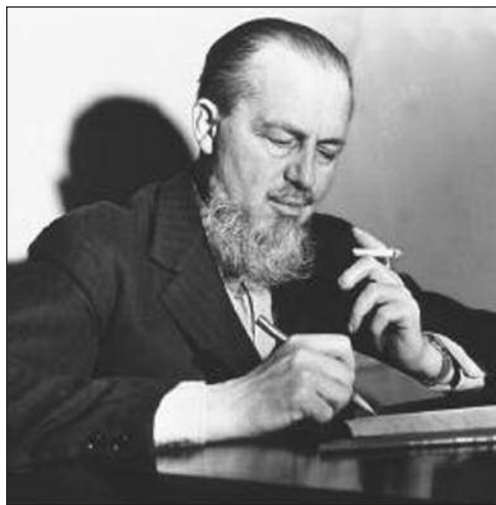
Stout created a few other detectives, including a pioneering woman PI, Dol Bonner. But his greatest creations were Nero Wolfe and his live-in assistant, Archie Goodwin.

Wolfe must be the bulkiest detective, real or fictional, in history. Archie, his narrator, regularly puts his weight at one-seventh of a ton (American, not Imperial), which makes him nearly 290 pounds. He solves all

his cases by deep thought in the chair specially built for him, in the intervals between reading, cultivating orchids, drinking beer, and consuming gourmet meals cooked by his resident chef, Fritz (a loyal and much calmer version of Anatole). Wolfe almost never leaves his house, a brownstone mansion on West 35th Street, Manhattan. Clients and witnesses are delivered to him (usually with a curt instruction to Archie to "bring them"), and Wolfe exposes the murderer in his crowded office in the presence of his ally and occasional adversary, Inspector Cramer of Manhattan Homicide.

For all Wolfe's genius, the murderer usually strikes two or three times before the exposure (as with his fictional rivals Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple). Despite Wodehouse's tribute, plots were never the strongest element in a Wolfe mystery. All too often, Wolfe's solution depends on the discovery of a surprising fact by Archie or Wolfe's brilliant subcontracted private detective, Saul Panzer. The addictive properties in the series are the dialogue, the characters, and the setting.

A Nero Wolfe mystery is a journey into a magic private world, in many ways similar to that of Jeeves and Bertie. In both worlds, intricate problems are



Rex Stout

solved by a cerebral figure for a baffled narrator. Archie Goodwin is considerably smarter than Bertie (although his narration is much less “literary” than Bertie’s). He is far more active as a participant in the stories than Bertie, doing all of Wolfe’s leg work, supervising the subcontracted operatives, and often needing to use his fists or his Marley automatic gun. He regularly has to needle Wolfe into accepting a job. But he shares Bertie’s unabashed admiration for the problem-solving genius of a superior mind.

Like Jeeves, Wolfe likes to spend time with an improving book and is nervous in the presence of women (although there are hints of a romantic past, and he supports a distant grown-up daughter). Wolfe relies heavily on Archie’s ability to charm women (these passages have not kept pace with modern times: Archie’s chat-up routines would now earn a slap or even a jail sentence), but like Jeeves with Bertie, Wolfe frets when any woman gets too close to Archie.

The two pairs cannot live without each other. There are intermittent rifts between Wolfe and Archie to match Bertie and Jeeves’s battles over clothes and the banjolele, and Archie periodically threatens to leave the brownstone and work independently. But the crisis is always resolved. Eventually, Archie achieves a long-term extramural relationship with the wealthy Lily Rowan, which allows him to remain with Wolfe.

Both Jeeves and Wolfe have distinctive dialogue, but Wolfe’s is so stately and ornate as to make Jeeves seem almost vernacular. He dismisses nonsense as “flummery”, and his highest word of praise is “satisfactory”. He reserves his best phrases to describe himself. In the first Wolfe mystery, *Fer-de-Lance*, he announces: “I understand the technique of eccentricity; it would be futile for a man to labor at establishing a reputation for oddity if he were ready at the slightest provocation to revert to normal action.” He puts this point a little more concisely in *Murder by the Book* when he refuses to abandon his set hours with his orchids: “No. A schedule broken at will becomes a mere procession of vagaries.” However, he also proclaims in *Too Many Cooks* that “a guest is a jewel on the cushion of hospitality”. Stout gives Archie a brash, hard-boiled, wisecracking style of narration which perfectly sets off Wolfe’s rolling periods.

Appointments in the Clergy

As ever, we thank MURRAY HEDGCOCK for spotting these candidates for the Great Sermon Handicap, usually in the pages of the *Daily Telegraph*, and sending them along for our enjoyment.

From 29 December 2018: The Rev. Dianne Elizabeth Gamble, assistant curate Sowerby, Sesay and Thirkleby with Kilburn and Bagby (Diocese of York) to be interim priest-in-charge Osmothersley with Harlsey and Ingleby Arncliffe, Cowesby, Felixkirk with Boltby, Kirkby Knowle, Leake with Over and Nether Silton and

Above all, the world of Wolfe and Archie is timeless in its essentials, like that of Jeeves and Bertie. The reader is more aware in Wolfe stories of outside events, such as the war, civil rights, women’s liberation, communism, Red-baiting and the FBI, and ultimately Watergate. But the characters do not age and their behaviours are delightfully consistent. Among the regular supporting characters, Inspector Cramer can be relied upon to bluster, to threaten Wolfe with imprisonment for obstruction of justice, and to chomp a cigar between his lips without lighting it before throwing it away in disgust. But he will rejoin Wolfe’s admirers in the end while arresting the villain. In spite of the numerous murderers he nails with Wolfe’s help, he is never promoted beyond Inspector. In a similar way, the supporting operatives stay in character: Fred Durkin, ponderous but reliable; Orrie Cather, self-satisfied and ambitious; Saul Panzer, anonymously brilliant.

When forced by exceptional circumstances to leave the brownstone, Wolfe will invariably exhibit extreme anxiety in any moving vehicle, even the sturdy Heron Sedan he buys for Archie to drive. In the later novels, Wolfe acquires a television, only to glare briefly at programs before returning to his latest book. In *Please Pass the Guilt* he announces: “I turn on the television rarely, only to confirm my opinion of it.”

Wolfe would have glared at most of the attempts to render him on television, largely because the adapters generally lacked the confidence in the original material which was shown by the best adapters of Jeeves and Bertie. He deserves a first acquaintance in his beloved medium of books. My own personal favourite, read and reread many times, is *And Be a Villain*, which the British publishers incomprehensibly retitled *More Deaths Than One*. The plot is, as Wolfe would say, satisfactory, particularly in the introduction of Wolfe’s Moriarty, the arch-villain Arnold Zeck. It allows Wolfe to rail agreeably at radio advertising. And his vocabulary includes the words “temerarious”, “chambrer”, and “dysgenic”.

Richard Heller has lectured on P G Wodehouse in Pakistan, where the Master has many young admirers, while researching Pakistan cricket for his book (with Peter Osborne) White on Green.

Kepwick, and deanery charge management support for a fixed term of three years (same diocese).

From 4 January 2019: The Rev. James Alexander McDonald, associate minister, St. Lawrence with St. Nicholas, York, Holy Trinity, Micklegate, York, All Saints, Pavement with St. Crux and St. Michael Spurriergate, York, St. Olave with St. Giles, York, St. Helen, Stonegate with St. Martin, Coney Street, York, and St. Denys, York (Diocese of York) to be team vicar, the Langelei team with special ministry responsibility at All Saints, Kings Langley, and St. Mary’s Apsley (Diocese of St. Albans).

My PGW Collection

by Penelope Forrest

The first Wodehouse book I read, at the age of 14 in 1954, was *My Man Jeeves*. It is an undated Newnes edition in faded pink covers, and I still reread it occasionally for sentimental reasons, although the stories have mostly been included in later collections.

Surprisingly, this must have been the only Wodehouse book in our home, although my father had been a life-long devotee of the Master. I was immediately hooked, however, and luckily there was a good second-hand bookshop in Pietermaritzburg, with lots of gems within the reach of a teenager's pocket money, so I was able to build up my collection fairly quickly – lots of Herbert Jenkins hardcovers and a few Penguins, at one or two shillings each. I had a number of these rebound some years later.

About this time Herbert Jenkins began the Autograph Edition. Friends and family knew that a Wodehouse book was always a safe bet for my birthday or Christmas present, and by the end of the 1950s my collection numbered 27, including seven from the Autograph Edition.

In the early '60s I started teaching at the princely salary of £30 a month, so could afford to buy many more. Quite a lot of my books are first editions, though all the early ones lack wrappers and are in far from pristine condition. A school librarian friend found that the copy of *The Clicking of Cuthbert* in the school library was an advance review copy, though no one had any idea how this had found its way into a girls' school in Natal. She offered this to me in exchange for my copy. Inside the front cover had been pasted a picture of a young lady with golf bag, which I take to be from the original wrapper. Also pasted in is a slip reading: "ADVANCE REVIEW COPY. This book will be published on 3 Feb 1922. Will you therefore be so kind as to see that no notice appears before that date. Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., 3, York Street, St. James's, S.W.1"

In 1970 I married another Wodehouse fan, and when we pooled our libraries, lots of duplicates emerged. We ruthlessly jettisoned the more battered

copy of each, though if we kept my husband's, I carefully copied inside the back cover a record of the years in which I had read the book. I am an inveterate record keeper and still have lists of every book I have read since the age of 12.



Of course, every devotee collects peripheral books, from biographies to commentaries. R. B. D. French's biography was the first I found, followed by Geoffrey Jaggard's "indispensable companions", *Blandings the Blest*, which includes a Threepwood family tree (another of my enthusiasms) and *Wooster's World*. Richard Osborne's *Wodehouse at Work* was next, and in later years I have added many more, notably Norman Murphy's *A Wodehouse Handbook* and Tony Ring's *What Goes Around Comes Around*.

Like every other fan who wrote to Wodehouse, I have a letter from him. Mine was written from Remsenburg in August 1960 and tells that he is working on a story of Lord Ickenham at Blandings Castle.

My books had moved with me from school hostel to boarding house to bed-sit, often housed on brick-and-plank shelves, but my husband and I had some really

nice bookshelves made to house our fairly vast library, and the Wodehouse books had a section to themselves. They now live on custom-made shelves in my bedroom, separate from the hoi polloi in the other rooms.

Ten years ago a burst pipe in the ceiling leaked water onto these shelves, but the disaster had a silver lining. Most of the books were salvaged and none the worse for their wash, but *Full Moon* was a write-off and had to be replaced. I bought an Arrow Books edition which had an advertisement for The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) at the back. I joined forthwith, so now my love of Wodehouse brings me the added pleasure of contact with like-minded people – a real treat for someone at the bottom tip of Africa.

.....
Do you have a story to tell about your PGW collection? Send it to the Editor (address on the back page). This has been a fascinating series, and we'd like to see more.

Honorina Glossop was one of those large, strenuous, dynamic girls with the physique of a middle-weight catch-as-catch-can wrestler and a laugh resembling the sound of the Scotch Express going under a bridge. The effect she had on me was to make me slide into a cellar and lie low till they blew the All Clear.

(From 'Jeeves and the Greasy Bird', 1965)

We Remember

Alexander Dainty

Long-time member Alexander Dainty passed away on 6 February 2019, at the age of 80. Born John Geoffrey Alexander Dainty, he had been a keen member of the Society and a frequent contributor to *Wooster Sauce*. Because he lived in the West Country, he was unable to attend as many Society events as he would have liked. Alexander boasted an extensive collection of Wodehouse books of which he was very proud; some of them had belonged to his father. One of his *Wooster Sauce* articles concerned the foreign-language titles he owned and how he had acquired them. His sister, Harriet Gay, informed us that at Alexander’s memorial service, the rector read from ‘Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!’; the passage had been chosen by one of Alexander’s friends, a Franciscan brother. We will greatly miss his contributions to the journal and his enthusiasm for all things Wodehouse.

Cyril Hershon

Doctor Cyril Hershon, a Society member for many years, died on 12 January 2019 after a long battle with cancer; he was 81. Cyril had been a university lecturer who had conducted research into the mediaeval lives of the troubadours in the Occitan region of southern France and northern Spain. Over the years he published more than 40 books and articles. Described in *The Jewish Chronicle* as “Merseyside’s Renaissance Man: teacher, historian and French scholar”, Cyril was also a devoted family man who had enjoyed two happy marriages. His second wife, Helen, wrote a very touching letter about him, and we couldn’t write a better obituary, so here are Helen’s words:



He had derived so much pleasure from reading his books by P. G. Wodehouse; he had a massive collection, many of them first editions, collected together after many years. Cyril’s suffering was monstrous in his last months and days, but his great love of Wodehouse sustained him and helped to occupy his mind. He thoroughly enjoyed reading *Wooster Sauce* and *By The Way*. . . . For Christmas, Cyril asked for a copy of *A Plum Assignment* by Armstrong and Milstein, and he was able to enjoy reading it before collapsing and being admitted to hospital on January 5th. . . .

Cyril kept a detailed diary of all PGW’s books that he read, and I see that *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* was the first one he read in June 1963! Actually, his favourite of all time was *Joy in the Morning*. But, oh, how he would have loved to have owned a copy of *The Globe By The Way* book!

Helen also wrote of Cyril’s contributions to *Wooster Sauce*, of which there were several; the journal’s pages

benefitted from his words and wisdom. As she copes with the loss of her beloved husband, Helen said, “I take down one of PGW’s books and, oh, how it helps me. Reading the books is not only giving me pleasure, but a great deal of comfort, too, knowing this was Cyril’s favourite author.” Helen has renewed Cyril’s membership of the Society in her own name. We extend our deepest sympathy to her on her loss of a very special man.

Jelle Otten

Born in The Hague on 26 December 1942, Jelle Otten passed away in Deventer, Netherlands, on 10 March 2019 after a long illness, age 76. In addition to his membership of the UK Society, Jelle had been president of the P.G. Wodehouse Society (Netherlands) from 1999 to 2004. He proudly bore the nom de Plum of Chas Bywater of Rudge-in-the-Vale.



According to the current Dutch Society president, Peter Nieuwenhuizen, Jelle first discovered Wodehouse in the 1950s when he came across some Dutch translations. While he was a pharmacy student at Leiden University, he was challenged by classmates to recite a poem by heart. He chose to recite ‘Be!’ from ‘The Aunt and the Sluggard’, shouting it out from a tabletop. That set the tone for his thorough devotion to Wodehouse, always expressed with joy and enthusiasm. He read the stories in English as well as Dutch, and only learned there was a Dutch society after joining the American one, The Wodehouse Society (TWS), in the 1990s. During his five-year presidency of the Dutch society, he led an effort to publish more Dutch translations of Wodehouse in order to attract younger readers to the books.

Jelle and his wife, Marjanne, attended the US society’s biennial conventions for many years, and always delighted fellow attendees with their original costumes at the banquets. They also took part in Wodehouse events in other countries, including the Russian Wodehouse Week in 2008 and the UK Society’s Week With Wodehouse in 2007, plus several of our biennial formal dinners. Jelle was a principal organiser of the Dutch society’s Wodehouse tour through England in 2009, and when the Amsterdam chapter of TWS, The Right Honourable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney, was formed, Jelle wrote the chapter reports for *Plum Lines* for several years.

Even in the last stages of his illness, Jelle continued to listen to instalments of the Dutch Wodehouse podcast on the website moderndutch.nl. As Peter has written, “Wodehouse was his best medicine to the end.” All members of the UK Society who knew Jelle were greatly saddened to learn of his loss, and our hearts and sympathy go out to Marjanne and to the Otten family. Jelle was a kind, gentle, and amiable man whose joy in Wodehouse was infectious. He is very much missed.

Jeeves and the Song of Songs

Reviewed by Steve Griffiths

I saw in the Future Events page on the Society's website that there was to be a World Premiere of an adaptation of *Jeeves and the Song of Songs* on 11 April. Having never been to a World Premiere of anything before, I trotted along to the King Alfred Phoenix Theatre in Golders Green, London, to immerse myself in the experience.

The original story had first appeared in 1929 in both the *Strand Magazine* in the UK and *Cosmopolitan* in the USA. It also made appearances in other publications before being included in *Very Good*, *Jeeves* as one of 11 short stories alongside such gems as 'Jeeves and the Yule-tide Spirit' and 'The Love That Purifies'. The PGW aficionados among us will know the story backwards, but for those still exploring Plum's world, it is about Bertie and his friend Tuppy Glossop being persuaded to sing 'Sonny Boy' to an East End audience of costermongers, blood-orange sellers, whelk stall attendants, and others of the proletariat. The complexity of the plot centres on how Jeeves manages to ruin Tuppy's infatuation for opera diva Cora Bellinger, Tuppy having given the mitten to Bertie's cousin Angela, much to the chagrin of Angela's mother, Bertie's Aunt Dahlia. Still with me? I said it was complicated.

On arrival at the theatre, I introduced myself to the management as a member of The P G Wodehouse Society and said I would be submitting a review of the production for the Society's quarterly journal. This news caused great excitement, and a little later I was approached by none other than Francis Beckett, the play's writer. We had a very amicable chat about, among other things, his success in obtaining permission to have his play performed. He was particularly proud of the fact that Sir Edward Cazalet had expressed his personal liking for the script.

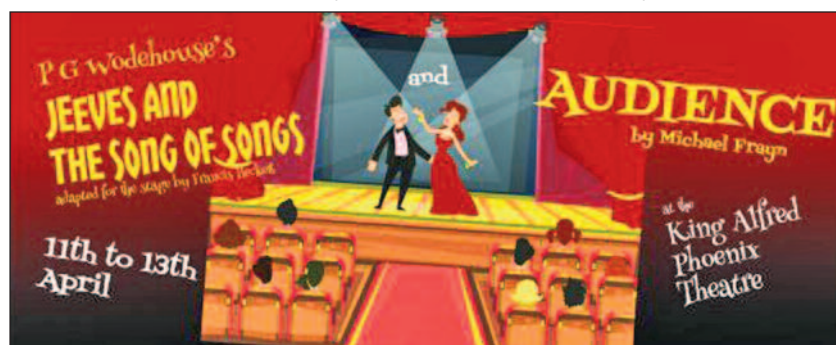
Francis admitted that in order to reduce the story to a 70-minute one-act play, he had to make some changes to the original story. Of these, two are worthy

of note. The first is that the whole play takes place at the Oddfellows Hall, where the proletariat are to be entertained; there are no lunch scenes at Bertie's flat involving Tuppy and Cora. The second is that Francis's cast of characters includes Aunt Agatha (who does not appear in the original story) as the one to command Bertie's appearance on stage; in the original, Aunt Dahlia is the irresistible force in Bertie's flat. Other than that, the play follows the story's scenes at the concert with commendable accuracy.

The production was a very funny, exceptionally well-written and well-acted comedy. I paid particular attention to the character portrayals and found that Francis and his assistant, Anjali Hall, had chosen wisely and well both the actors and their delivery. For example, Diana Bromley's Aunt Agatha, for all her guest appearance in the story, was the perfect haughty, aristocratic character, like Lady Bracknell chewing a bumble bee. And Aunt Dahlia, played with great gusto by Francine Ross, had the perfect genial, sporty good-eggedness, with a voice that carries across ploughed fields in a high wind.

The two main characters were equally well portrayed. Edwin Coutts played Bertie with a charm and insouciance borne of one constantly on the receiving end of unappealing demands and the butt of insults to his intelligence. Edwin was particularly adept at the pregnant pauses between adamant refusal to obey and acceptance of his lot. Gerry Zierler's only fault as Jeeves was that he was a little too old for the character, but he played his part to perfection. This was every bit the Jeeves that we read about in the story: calm, dutiful, impeccably dressed, unemotional, imperturbable, all the while clearly orchestrating events to reach a successful denouement.

This play had a very short run at this theatre, but I would urge you to catch it if it comes your way. It is another gem from the PGW canon that will please aficionados and introduce the next generation to his wonderful works. Well done to Francis Beckett for enabling this to happen.



Jeeves and the Song of Songs played at the King Alfred Phoenix Theatre from 11 to 13 April 2019 and was also performed at the Barn Theatre in Welwyn on 18 May as part of the Welwyn Drama Festival.

The effect on young Tuppy was rather remarkable. His eyes bulged and his hair seemed to stand up, and yet his mouth went on opening and shutting, and you could see that in a dazed, automatic way he was still singing 'Sonny Boy'. Then, coming out of his trance, he began to pull for shore with some rapidity.

(From 'Jeeves the Song of Songs', 1929)

A Damsel in Distress

Reviewed by Caroline Franklyn

The Whitefield Garrick is an extraordinary little building, tucked away in a tiny street off the main road. And inside, 20 minutes before the show, the foyer (where there was on display a small board promoting The P G Wodehouse Society) – brightly lit and welcoming – was buzzing with people eager to be let in for the entertainment.

And entertaining it certainly was! Much of the original book's characters and incidents survive in the play: the three pairs of thwarted lovers battling against the repression and snobbery imposed upon them by Lady Caroline and her nephew Percy, the servants' sweepstake, and Leonard's Leap, to name but a few. All three couples are neatly paired off come the final scene. In the Bury production, the shenanigans, misunderstandings, witty repartee, slapstick, and visual humour (an incident concerning a false moustache and a strawberry trifle comes to mind) that occur from the opening scene to the end were performed by a word-perfect cast, each of the characters compellingly and consistently portrayed.



The story was acted out in a tiny space against a cleverly designed set (by Christine Ashton and Martin Ashton), which was transformed from Stage Door to Stately Home to Ye Dolly Vardon Tea Shoppe – complete with potted palms – by a simple folding-over of panels. The set itself was rewarded with its own round of applause at each change.

The non-professional cast were all – without exception – excellent. However, if I had to select one or two as particularly noteworthy, it would be Janet Leather and Andrew Gradwell. Janet, who played the housemaid, 'young blighted' Albertina (originally Albert in the book), could 'gurn' for England, and she emitted a high-decibel cackle capable of slicing through granite. Andrew played each of his five parts with total assurance, so that one was not in the least confused by his frequent reappearances in different trousers and moustaches.

To sum up, let me quote Plum on his own rereading of *A Damsel in Distress* over fifty years after its many adaptations into film, musical, and play: this was 'darned good stuff'.

A Damsel in Distress, written by Ian Hay and P. G. Wodehouse and directed by Andrew Close, was performed from 11 to 18 May at the Whitefield Garrick Theatre in Bury, Greater Manchester.

Wodehouse Quiz 31

Ship Ahoy!

by David Buckle

- 1 What is the name of the ocean liner on which Jane Hubbard, the girl on the boat, meets Sam Marlowe, Eustace Hignett, and Bream Mortimer in *The Girl on the Boat*?
- 2 In which novel does Sam Shotter travel on the tramp steamer *Araminta* in order to avoid the company of Lord Tilbury?
- 3 In *A Pelican at Blandings*, who does Lady Constance Keeble introduce to the castle, having met her on an ocean liner on her way to England from America?
- 4 Thomas Blake, skipper of a pair of barges, the *Ashlade* and the *Lechton*, appears in which early work by P. G. Wodehouse and Herbert Westbrook?
- 5 In *Joy in the Morning*, Lord Worplesdon, husband of Bertie Wooster's Aunt Agatha, is thwarted in his attempts to meet with whom, in order that the Pink Funnel Line and the Clam Line might merge?
- 6 In which novel does Jimmy Pitt fall in love in with Molly McEachern, a policeman's daughter, on the SS *Mauretania* during a voyage from England to New York?
- 7 Both *The Girl on the Boat* and *The Luck of the Bodkins* have accounts of onboard concerts in aid of which charity?
- 8 In 'The Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace', whom do the twins wrongly assume that they will be meeting on board ship during their voyage to South Africa?
- 9 In which book does American millionaire Patrick (Packy) B. Franklyn rent a boat and sail across to St Rocque in France in pursuit of Jane Opal?
- 10 In *Thank You, Jeeves*, who confines his daughter to his yacht in order to prevent her from meeting up with Bertie Wooster?

(Answers on page 21)

Book News: As this issue was about to go to the printer, we received word that the paperback edition of *Jeeves and the King of Clubs* has just been published by Arrow. It is available at all major retailers and online.



The Word Around the Clubs

Upcoming BBC Radio Tribute

We recently received word that BBC Radio 4 Extra has commissioned a three-hour programme that will pay tribute to Wodehouse. The synopsis reads: “What ho! Martin Jarvis introduces a thoroughly splendid wireless collection of all things P G Wodehouse, reconnoitring interviews and classic stories along with the funniest moments in the lives of his famous creations Jeeves and Wooster.” The programme will include new interviews, recordings, and selections from the BBC radio archive. Produced by Stephen Garner, it will be scheduled to go out in the autumn, so keep an eye on the radio listings as well as the Society’s website.

This Year a Winner

Last year the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for comic fiction was not awarded, the judges having failed to find any suitably funny candidates. There was no such wobble this year. Six authors – Jen Beagin, Kate Davies, Roddy Doyle, Lissa Evans, Paul Ewen, and Nina Stibbe – met the judges’ criteria for laughing out loud while they read the book. Come May it was Stibbe who nabbed the brass ring for her semiautobiographical novel *Reasons to Be Cheerful* (the third part of a trilogy). Stibbe had been shortlisted for the prize in 2015 and 2017, so clearly the third time was the charm for her. Because there had been no winner last year, she received a rollover prize of a methuselah of Bollinger Special Cuvée, as well as a case of the same, plus the honour of having two pigs named after her book: one will be *Reasons*, the other *Cheerful*. And, of course, she will receive a complete set of the Everyman Library’s Wodehouse series – more reasons to be cheerful!

The Final Schott

We’ve had a lot of discussion in *Wooster Sauce* regarding the Ben Schott book *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*. The question of whether readers liked the book or not is directly tied into “the merits of bringing well-loved fictional characters by dead authors back to life”, as Sam Leith pondered in *The Oldie’s* Spring Review of Books. Thanks to MIKE SWADDLING for sending along these extracts from Sam’s article:

Everywhere you look there are reboots, retellings and authorised franchise extensions of characters well-loved and authors long dead, many of them with big and respectable names attached. . . . Sebastian Faulks (a serial offender) and Ben Schott (hitherto best known as an anthologist) have both published *Jeeves* and *Wooster* novels – Schott’s *Jeeves and the King of Clubs* being just last year. . . .

[T]he first consideration is whether the author of the reboot or continuation is any good in his or her own right. . . .

[T]he estates of these authors now seem to have cottoned on to the idea that a franchise extension isn’t worth doing if you don’t have a good writer doing it.

Then there’s the fertility or otherwise of the source material. . . . Writers like Wodehouse are writers where a lot of the action is in the sentence-by-sentence prose. That’s more of a challenge – and accordingly the Wodehouse estate was especially careful to make sure that in Faulks and Schott they had deft mimics on hand. . . . Schott, for instance, told me that the main thing he did was to quicken Wodehouse’s pace for a modern audience. He accepts this, he says, as a fact of life – and points out that if you watch the original *Ocean’s Eleven* you’ll be astonished by how slowly it goes. And you can see the odd touch of Faulksian melancholy darkening the usually sunny world of Wodehouse in his version.

Biblioquotes

The monthly *Bibliophile* is a mail-order book catalogue divided into sections according to topic. Each section is led off by an appropriate quote from a well-known author, and Wodehouse has made frequent appearances over the years. The March 2019 issue had quite a few, and they are worth sharing; your Editor’s personal favourite is the first one. (Thanks to TONY RING)

Food and Drink

A depressing musty scent pervaded the place, as if a cheese had recently died there in painful circumstances. (*Leave It to Psmith*)

Crime Fiction

Am taking legal advice to ascertain whether strangling an idiot nephew counts as murder. If it doesn’t, look out for yourself. (*Right Ho, Jeeves*)

Words and Dictionaries

“I said, ‘Don’t talk rot, Old Tom Travers.’ ‘I am not accustomed to talk rot,’ he said. ‘Then, for a beginner,’ I said, ‘you do it dashed well.’” (*Right Ho, Jeeves*)

Modern Fiction and Romance

I am not always good and noble. I am the hero of this story, but I have my off moments. (*Love Among the Chickens*)

Humour

She laughed – a bit louder than I could have wished in my frail state of health, but then she is always a woman who tends to bring plaster falling from the ceiling when amused. (*The Code of the Woosters*)

Mythology

The thought of being engaged to a girl who talked openly about fairies being born because stars blew their noses, or whatever it was, frankly appalled me. (*Right Ho, Jeeves*)

Erotica

“Love, Miss Halliday, is a delicate plant. It needs tending, nurturing, assiduous fostering. This cannot be done by throwing the breakfast bacon at a husband’s head.” (*Leave It to Psmith*)

The Wooster Source

by Graeme Davidson

*This is the real Tabasco,
It's the word from Bertie Wooster,
At Prep School Malvern House, he gained
much moral learning, but no real nous.
In adulthood in late night dealings
à chambre with peachy Pauline Stoker,
A real preux chevalier was our Bertram Wooster,
When lesser men might simply have seduced her.*



I was about to draft the communication, when, as so often happens to one on relaxing from a great strain, I became conscious of an imperious desire for a little something quick. Oh, for a beaker full of the warm south, as Jeeves would have said. I pressed the bell, accordingly, and sank into a chair, and presently the door opened and a circular object with a bald head and bushy eyebrows manifested itself, giving me quite a start. I had forgotten that ringing bells at Brinkley Court under prevailing conditions must inevitably produce Sir Roderick Glossop.

Jeeves in the Offing (1960)

I give you my honest word that, if I hadn't had authoritative information to the contrary, I should have said that this extraordinary bird, Brinkley, was as sober as a teetotal Girl Guide. All that one of the biggest toots in history had done to him was put a sort of precise edge on his speech and cause him to articulate with a crystal clearness which was more like a silver bell than anything.

"The Devil is in there, murdering Mr Wooster, sir," he was saying. And, except in radio announcers, I've never heard anything more beautifully modulated.

You would call that a fairly sensational announcement, I suppose, but it didn't seem to register immediately with Sergeant Voules. The sergeant was one of those men who like to take things in their proper order and tidy up as they go along, and for the moment, it seemed, he was interested exclusively in the carving knife.

Thank You, Jeeves (1934)

I don't suppose there is anything that makes much better burning than one of those old country cottages. You just put a match to them – or upset a lamp in the hall, as the case may be – and up they go. It couldn't have been more than half a minute before a merry crackling came to my ears and a bit of the floor over in the corner suddenly burst into a cheerful flame.

It was enough for Bertram.

Thank You, Jeeves (1934)

"Ah, Spode. Come on in and take a few chairs," I said, and was on the point of telling him that we Woosters kept open house, when he interrupted me with the uncouth abruptness so characteristic of these human gorillas. Roderick Spode may have had his merits, though I had never been able to spot them, but his warmest admirer couldn't have called him couth.

"Have you seen Fink-Nottle?" he said.

I didn't like the way he spoke or the way he was looking. The lips, I noted, were twitching, and the eyes glittered with what I believe is called a baleful light. It seemed pretty plain to me that it was in no friendly spirit that he was seeking Gussie, so I watered down the truth a bit, as the prudent man does on these occasions.

Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves (1963)

Top 50 Wodehouse Romances

Jen Scheppers, aka Honoria Glossop, writes a blog entitled 'Plumtopia', which is always worth a visit as Jen writes so informatively and intelligently about different aspects of the Wodehouse canon. Earlier this year she ran an online poll to determine the top 50 romantic couplings found in Wodehouse. The results were published on 2 March, and as ever it makes for entertaining reading, with more than 80 couples being nominated from 58 novels and story collections. Jen received over 660 votes and some 130 comments – the power of the internet in action – and collated them all to come up with her top 50. The overall winner: Psmith and Eve Halliday from *Leave It to Psmith* (1923). To see the full list, go to: <https://bit.ly/2ED4Cay>



Poet's Corner

A Word in Season

(A Somersetshire publican, on becoming bankrupt, gave as the cause of his insolvency that all the village had turned teetotal.)

Whenever you the bowl that flows,
Turning a virtuous back, shun,
Say, have you thought what dreadful woes
Proceed from such an action?
The time has come, teetotal friend,
To alter your proclivities,
Your deleterious ways to mend
And plunge into festivities.
The publican, the same as you,
Has got to earn a living,
Teetotal friend, consider, do,
What pain to him you're giving.
To shun intoxicating drink
May be, I own, my brother, wise.
Such conduct sensible I think
The publican feels otherwise.
If, all considered, man was meant
To flee from dissipation,
He couldn't even pay his rent,
And buy his daily ration.
To him your views – though, I repeat,
Myself I hold them sensible –
Mean that he can't make both ends meet.
He thinks them indefensible.
It doesn't matter – not a jot –
If blotches mar your beauty.
To help your fellow-man is what
Is your most pressing duty.
So don't refuse the draughts that cheer,
Forget there's any sin in it,
And when you take your gingerbeer,
Oh, take, I prithee, gin in it.

From *Daily Chronicle*, 18 June 1903

The Bibliographic Corner *by Nick Townend*

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

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 seventh preface to appear was for *Sam the Sudden* (1925).

Wodehouse’s preface begins by stating: “I have always been particularly fond of this one.” He goes on to say, “It may be that it is the setting of the story that makes me take this view. It was the first thing of mine where the action took place in the delectable suburb of Valley Fields, a thin disguise for the Dulwich where so many of my happiest hours have been spent. . . . Valley Fields, in a word, inspired me.” Wodehouse also notes that “It was in this book that Soapy and Dolly Molloy and Chimp Twist made their first appearance. . . . They play an important role not only in *Money for Nothing*, *Ice in the Bedroom* and *Money in the Bank* but in the one I finished the day before yesterday [*Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin*, first published in the UK on 12 October 1972].” He concludes with the hope “that in the thirty-three years since I have seen it* Valley Fields has not ceased to be a fragrant back-water. Though I did read somewhere about a firm of builders wanting to put up a block of flats in Croxted Road, where I once lived in the first house on the left as you come up from the station [no. 62 (NTP Murphy, *In Search of Blandings*, 1986, pp95–97)].”

The Barrie & Jenkins reprint of *Sam the Sudden* containing Wodehouse’s new preface was published in 1972 (A35a17). The dust-wrapper, with a purple panel on the front cover, follows what had been established by the preceding title in the series, *The Little Nugget*, as the standard format through to the end of the series (see Part Four of this series of articles for details). *McIlvaine* notes the presence of the new preface but describes neither the dust-wrapper nor the book, which had black boards

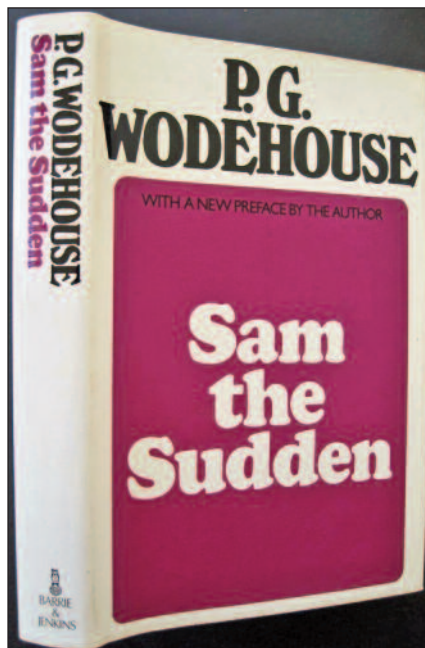
* - This was in 1939 at a dull cricket match between Dulwich and St Paul’s (Robert McCrum, *Wodehouse: A Life*, 2004, p261), which Wodehouse wrote up for *The Alleyman*. His report contains the famous description of a slow-scoring Trevor Bailey, the future England all-rounder, as having “been in a sort of coma for about an hour and twenty minutes” (Murray Hedgcock, *Wodehouse at the Wicket*, 1997, p193).

with gold lettering on the spine. When Penguin first published the title in 1974 (A35a18) the preface was included, and it also appeared in the Penguin reprints of 1978 (A35a19) and 1982 (A35a20).

The next three new prefaces were issued in 1974. It is not clear in what order they were issued, so I will deal with them in the order of the publication date of the UK first edition. The first 1974 title to consider is therefore *Joy in the Morning* (A65b6).

McIlvaine notes the new preface, but does not describe either the dust-wrapper, which followed the standard pattern, with a turquoise-blue panel, or the book, which had black boards and gold lettering on the spine (my thanks to John Graham for this information). When Barrie & Jenkins reprinted the title in 1976 (A65b7), the preface was included. *McIlvaine* provides no details other than date and price for this edition. Once again, the dust-wrapper was in the standard format, with a green panel on the front cover, and the book had black boards with gold lettering on the spine, with the lettering being of a different size and font to that used for the 1974 edition.

Wodehouse’s preface is essentially a reproduction of most of an earlier essay he had written entitled ‘My World and What Happened to It’, which had first been published in *Horizon* in January 1959 (D32.1), and which had dealt with the decline of knuts, spats, and country houses since their heyday in the Edwardian period. His original essay had begun: “It was always a small world.” This was altered in the preface to: “The world of which I have been writing ever since I was so high, the world of the Drones Club and the lads who congregate there, was a small world.” With a few light edits and omissions, the preface then reproduced the sections of the essay dealing with knuts and spats, but omitted the section on country houses. Readers wishing to compare and contrast the preface and the essay in more detail can most easily consult the *Horizon* text in the anthology *What Ho! The Best of P. G. Wodehouse*.



PGW at the British Library

As the British Library exhibition featuring material from the Wodehouse Archive drew to a close (see *Wooster Sauce*, December 2018, p.4), a very special event was held on 21 February 2019 to celebrate both P. G. Wodehouse and the collection, which Sir Edward Cazalet has made available to the BL on a long-term loan. Entitled ‘PG Wodehouse: What Ho!’, the event was held in the Knowledge Centre Theatre, which was packed with people, including a number of Society members. Onstage was a panel consisting of Wodehouse biographer Robert McCrum; Sophie Ratcliffe, editor of *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*; Wodehouse’s great-grandson Hal Cazalet, himself a singer, composer, lyricist, and director; and BBC broadcaster Matthew Bannister, who chaired the evening. Also onstage at different times were Stephen Higgins, who accompanied Hal on the piano; the actor Terence (Terry) Wilton, who read some passages from Wodehouse; and Edward Cazalet, who spoke movingly of Plum and Ethel’s happy marriage and described ‘A Day in the Later Life of P. G. Wodehouse’.

The evening began with two songs from Hal – Wodehouse songs, of course, which Hal delivered in his usual entertaining fashion – and then the panel began examining various topics, starting with the



Hal Cazalet, Sophie Ratcliffe, Robert McCrum, & Matthew Bannister

question of what made P. G. Wodehouse great. Hal was quick to point out that Plum’s lyric writing was an important factor in his greatness and informed his books. As the discussion expanded, there were descriptions of Wodehouse’s early life, his work ethic, his daily routine (most of this provided by Edward), and (inevitably) his sad wartime episode. The panel looked at these areas in depth, each offering perspectives based on their own knowledge or researches.



Sir Edward Cazalet

Throughout the programme, in addition to the readings, there were pauses to display images of artefacts from the Wodehouse Archive and talk about their significance. These objects included:

- * PGW’s Warwickshire Cricket Club tie, which related not just to the importance of cricket in Plum’s life but also the importance of ties and other clothing in his books.
- * A manuscript page from *Sunset at Blandings*, showing Plum’s corrections and notes.
- * One of Plum’s many love notes to Ethel, showing the love that kept them together all those years.
- * The regalia from Wodehouse’s knighthood.

Following a question-and-answer period, the panel members, joined by Stephen and Terry, took turns sharing some of their favourite PGW quotations, generating loud laughter in the auditorium. The evening concluded with Hal singing ‘My Castle in the Air’, one of Plum’s most beautiful and touching lyrics. It was a fitting end to an evening filled with fascinating stories and much enjoyment, which is ever the case when P. G. Wodehouse is involved!

–ELIN WOODGER MURPHY

A Cosy Moment

Shouting in the Street, by Donald Trelford (2017)
(from Terry Taylor)

At one point in this memoir about his career as a journalist, Trelford describes *The Observer*’s onetime Deputy Editor, Michael Davie: “Michael also wanted to write a biography of P.G. Wodehouse. Once, when he was in the US, he looked up the exiled author’s address in the telephone directory, then turned up on his doorstep in Long Island. When he introduced himself by saying he had been to school at Haileybury, that was enough to gain him admittance to the great man’s home. Wodehouse proceeded to demonstrate how he had scored a try for Dulwich College against Haileybury in 1899.”

Answers to Wodehouse Quiz (Page 17)

1. The Atlantic (of the White Star line)
2. *Sam the Sudden*
3. Vanessa Polk
4. *Not George Washington*
5. J. Chichester Clam
6. *A Gentleman of Leisure*
7. The Seamen’s Orphans and Widows
8. Marion Wardour, an actress
9. *Hot Water*
10. J. Washburn Stoker

Recent Press Comment

Bideford Courier, February 1

“Bally good books, what ho!” wrote Melanie Taylor Coombs. “So far, January has been an exceptionally good reading year. . . . For a hearty, spiffing guffaw, I returned to P. G. Wodehouse. I must admit when I reread Wodehouse I start speaking with a British accent and calling people ‘good eggs’ and saying ‘spot on’ and ‘what ho’ Decades after they were written, the books can still make me laugh out loud.”

The Guardian, February 4 (from Terry Taylor)

Bill Bradbury of Bolton wrote complaining that there was no Wodehouse in the list of 50 great short stories recommended by various authors in the Review section. He recommended ‘Lord Emsworth and the Girlfriend’, ‘Ukridge’s Accident Syndicate’, or virtually any Mr Mulliner story.

The Times, February 4

(from David Anderton and Andrew Bishop)

On the question of the British distrust of digital assistants, the article started, “Bertram Wooster once had to make it perfectly clear to Jeeves that he, Bertram, was not one of those fellows who was prepared to become a slave to his valet. . . . [U]nlike Jeeves, who was infallible, Alexa can make mistakes. . . . [C]hange what the boffins call the ‘wake word’. This is the command by which the device springs to life. We suggest ‘Jeeves’.”

Tipping Point, ITV1, February 6

(from David Anderton)

Q- “Which British actor played Bertie Wooster in the 1990s series?” The contestant did not know the answer.

Daily Telegraph, February 7 (from David Salter, Carolyn de la Plain, and Alan Hall)

The third leader was headed ‘Like Coué, less flu-ey’ and discussed “the recent findings that being kind to yourself really can boost the immune system. In the song ‘Tulip Time in Sing-Sing’, from the Jerome Kern musical *Sitting Pretty*, the lyricist PG Wodehouse made a joke out of remembering the jail fondly, as though it were a conventional *alma mater*: ‘I’d sit discussing Coué / With my old pal Bat-Eared Louie, / Quite the nicest man who ever slugged a cop.’” (For those who are interested, Coué was a psychologist whose ‘optimistic autosuggestion’ method of self-improvement was quite the thing in the twenties.)

Lancashire Telegraph, February 13

Announcing the premiere date for the TV adaptation of Sir Terry Pratchett’s novel *Good Omens*, the show’s producer said that David Tennant and Michael Sheen “brought a PG Wodehouse-like quality to the show”.

New York Times, February 15

The obituary of Betty Ballantine noted that she had “helped transform reading habits in the pre-internet age. . . . [I]n 1939 she and her husband established the American division of the paperback house Penguin books. . . . [T]he couple established Penguin USA by importing British editions of Penguin paperbacks starting with . . . *My Man Jeeves* by P G Wodehouse.”

Metro, February 25

Zoe Ball, in exhorting children to keep on writing, said in answer to a question as to whether any books were

precious to her, “I collect old books – my friend recently got me a whole collection of original Jeeves and Wooster [by P G Wodehouse] and they’re beautiful.”

Hindu Business Line, March

In her quiz on the written word, Joy Bhattacharya’s fifth question was: “Agatha Christie dedicated her 1969 work *Hallowe’en Party* to which other celebrated British author with the words ‘To _____ – 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?’”

Radio Times, March

(from Roger Bowen and Gwen Williams)

A letter questioning whether the rules on *Desert Island Discs* had changed à propos the choice of one book, a BBC spokesperson wrote, “It would be fair to say there had been some elasticity with the rules. Looking back, castaways have been permitted the complete works of . . . P G Wodehouse (a particular favourite.)”

Daily Telegraph, March 2 (from David Salter)

Discussing the assertion that a well-known antacid contained significant levels of salt, the second leader started with: “On swallowing Jeeves’s hangover cure Bertie Wooster felt ‘as if somebody had touched off a bomb inside the old bean and was strolling down my throat with a lighted torch’. But the next minute, ‘the sun shone in through the window; birds twittered in the tree tops; and, generally, hope dawned’.”

The Independent, March 2 (from Robert Bruce)

A list of the top ten titles (of books, movies, and more) changed for foreign markets included the fact that 31 Wodehouse books had different titles between the UK and the US, winning out over Agatha Christie with 25 titles.

Cigar Journal, March 6

The press release for “an upscale lounge in Hong Kong called Bertie’s Cigars” stated that the name “pays homage to two British characters”, one of whom was Bertie Wooster, “A fictional character created by famous British author P. G. Wodehouse. As an idle rich English gentleman, Bertie becomes entangled in awkward situations while trying to help his friends, and is rescued by his wise valet, Jeeves, who also helps him dodge sartorial disasters.”

The Times, March 10 (from Dave Anderton)

Writing about the scourge of slow play in golf, David Walsh cited the Wrecking Crew, and in particular PGW’s description of the First Grave Digger: “He was, if there can be said to be grades in such a sub-species, the star performer of The Wrecking Crew. The lunches of 57 years had caused his chest to slip down to the mezzanine floor but he was still a powerful man. He differed from his colleagues in that while they were content to peck cautiously at the ball, he never spared himself in his efforts to do it a violent injury.”

The Lady, March 15–April 4

(from Caroline Franklin & David Anderton)

What can one say? An entire quiz devoted to PGW! Qs ranged from “Which of Bertie Wooster’s friends ‘keeps newts and has a face like a fish?’” to “Which book was adapted, its second half consisting largely of dialogue, from George S. Kaufman’s *The Butter and Egg Man*?” The answer to the latter, by the way, is *Barmy in Wonderland*.

The Hindu, March 16

In debating “How many books is too many books?” Jerry Pinto wrote: “How can you duplicate books, you might ask, if you only have two or three hundred? Easily enough if you find a book by P G Wodehouse called *The Cat-nappers*, enter into a long haggling session with the second-hand book-seller, finally arrive at a decent price, get into the train, find a window seat, take out the book and discover you have bought the American edition of *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen*.”

The Oldie, Spring 2019 (from Christopher Bellew)

In an article about nicknames, Jo Grimond wrote: “If you think you’ve stumbled into the Drones Club or Blandings Castle, you’re not far wrong. Plum Wodehouse didn’t need much imagination to come up with Gussie Fink-Nottle, Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright and the rest. Wodehouse’s world was his own . . . nicknames were mostly for men. Stiffy (short for Stephanie) Byng, who married the Rev. Harold ‘Stinker’ Pinker, was something of a rara avis.”

In the same issue, Tom Hodgkinson wrote in the ‘Town Mouse’ column: “Sometimes I wonder if it would have been more sensible to invest in a new suit rather than the green velvet frock coat. And I worry what Jeeves would have thought of it. And whether he would approve of my red socks, for that matter.”

The Times, March 30

(from Dave Anderton and others)

In “By Jeeves, what a find! Letter that launched career of PGW, 16’. PGW’s famous late-in-life response to a question about the secret to being a writer was to say, flippantly, “I just sit at a typewriter and curse a bit.” At the age of 16, however, he wrote to *Chums*, a boys’ weekly newspaper, asking for advice on “How can one become a journalist?” The reply, published in 1898, advised “only if Providence has willed it” before giving more useful tips. (The article, by Patrick Kidd, was inspired by the piece by Don Taylor published in the March issue of *Wooster Sauce*.)

The Spectator, March 30 (from Christopher Bellew)

In his review of *Metropolis* by Philip Kerr, Andrew Taylor wrote: “The depth of Kerr’s research is impressive. So is his prose, which sometimes has an almost Wodehousian flavour, albeit a Wodehouse in the grip of a severe bilious attack. (‘One of his ears reminded me of an unborn foetus.’)”

The Times, March 31 (from Tony Ring)

A letter from David Ganderton of Sale read: “Regarding Donald Trump’s dubious golf tactics, PG Wodehouse has the last word on this: ‘The only way of really finding out a man’s true character is to play golf with him. In no other walk of life does the cloven hoof so quickly display itself.’”

The Economist, April 6 (from Chris Dueker)

Commenting on an article about how technology is changing the whisky industry, a reader was reminded of Wilfred Mulliner, “the clever one” of the Mulliner family and possessor of “the brain which had electrified the world of science by discovering that if you mixed a stiffish oxygen and potassium and added a splash of trinitrotoluol and a spot of old brandy you got something that could be sold in America as champagne at a hundred and fifty dollars the case.”

The Telegraph, April 9

Bill Gardner wrote that the story about the son of an MP being banned from a gentleman’s club over claims he gatecrashed Royal Ascot using his father’s badge

“could be a jolly jape straight out of P G Wodehouse’s Drones Club”.

The Times of India, April 11

In ‘Popcorn with Karan’, Monidipa Mukherjee, in writing of her love of Bollywood films, said, “Perhaps the point is that ultimately movies are about entertainment and nothing entertains more than charming escapism. Legendary novelist P G Wodehouse, while talking about his sunny rom com type of novels, said, ‘There are two ways of writing novels. One is making a musical comedy . . . and ignoring real life altogether; the other is going deep down into life and not caring a damn.’ Maybe that’s true about movies too.”

Hindustan Times, April 15

Author Kiran Manral chose Bertie Wooster as her favourite literary hero – “a boy who never quite grew up and never will, he definitely does elevate and, for all of his muddle headedness and confusion, he holds a right mirror to us trying to get out of various situations life throws at us, unfortunately not always with the hilarity that ensues when he does.”

Daily Telegraph, April 27

47d in the Daily Telegraph General Knowledge Crossword: _____ Bodkin: a Drones Club member (5)

Financial Times Weekend Magazine, April 27-28

(from Christopher Bellew)

From the “Reply” column, a reader wrote: “Re ‘Alexa and Siri: from robo-servant to BFF?’ (April 20/21): with more solo households and an ageing population, I see AI relationships evolving from robotic to more personalised, Jeeves-like companionship.”

Juneau Empire, April 28

Peggy McKee Barnhill wrote that she is “a rule follower. . . . [S]ome rules are optional: rules of decorum. We don’t worry so much about these now. . . . I can’t think of the last time I heard someone comment disparagingly on my method of eating asparagus. P G Wodehouse’s characters were always obsessed with this fascinating subject in his Jeeves and Wooster books. . . . Apparently one’s method of eating asparagus was an indicator of that person’s worth as a human being.”

Daily Mail, April 30 (from Babioli Lillington)

The phrase “toodle-pip” was explained as “meaning goodbye; from PG Wodehouse - ‘pip-pip’ was the sound of the horn fitted to early bicycles and was slang for goodbye, and ‘toodle’ may come from ‘toot’.”

Country Life, April 30

Jason Goodwin discussed kombucha, “a fashionable non-alcoholic drink . . . a sparkling beverage . . . full of zing and pep and probiotics. It’s P G Wodehouse’s Buck-U-Uppo.”

Washington Post, May 8

An article on the latest addition to the Royal family had this to say about Archie’s name: “There’s something old public school, gentlemen’s clubby and polo pony about an Archie – an echo of a P.G. Wodehouse character in the fictional Drones Club, a chum to a Biffy, a Monty and a Reggie. It’s also not far off from Bertie, a British royal nickname handed down over the years.”

National Times, May 10

Referring to the newest Royal baby, the author suggested that Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor “sounds like something straight out of P G Wodehouse”.

Future Events for Your Diary

Are you aware of an upcoming or future event, such as a play or a radio programme? Please let the Editor know!

June 23, 2019 Gold Bats vs Sherlock Holmes Society

The Gold Bats will be playing the gentlemen of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London on this date at the West Wycombe Cricket Club, Toweridge Lane, HP14 3AE. As ever, the start time is 11 am, and those who come to urge the Gold Bats on to victory should bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in a bucolic setting.

June 30, 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.

July 8, 2019 Society Meeting at the Savile Club

Yes, it's time for our annual quiz! See page 4 for info on what to expect. As ever, we start 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 20, 2019 Dedication of the Wodehouse Memorial at Westminster Abbey

Tickets must be obtained for this very special event, especially if you wish to join the post-dedication reception. See pages 2 and 3 for full details.

September 29, 2019 Richard Burnip's Wodehouse Walk

Take a walk with Richard and enjoy much about and by Wodehouse along the way! See June 30, 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.

PGW's American Influence

Thanks to MURRAY HEDGCOCK for sending along a clipping from the March 20th *Raleigh News and Observer* (North Carolina), in which the American late-night host Seth Myers was interviewed about "stand-up sequencing, comedy catharsis and the enduring genius of British humorist P.G. Wodehouse".

Q: You've cited the British humorist P.G. Wodehouse as an influence, who was writing in the 1910s. How did you come to appreciate those old Wodehouse books?

A: Yeah, I was lucky in that my parents were both real voracious readers. When we took long road trips we would always listen to books on tape. Those Wodehouse books always read really well. The characters are all so richly drawn. It's so tightly written, too. It's not just the flourishes of the language, but they're all really well plotted with these farcical elements of exits and entrances. Everything is timed out perfectly. You can feel the energy of any Wodehouse book as you read it.

CONTENTS

1	How to Be an Author	14	My PGW Collection
2	The Wodehouse Memorial at Westminster Abbey	15	We Remember: Alexander Dainty, Cyril Hershon, & Jelle Otten
3	Dedication of the Wodehouse Memorial	16	<i>Jeeves and the Song of Songs</i> (theatre review)
3	Say What?	17	<i>A Damsel in Distress</i> (theatre review)
4	Society News	17	Wodehouse Quiz 31: Ship Ahoy!
5	Situations Vacant: Editor, <i>Wooster Sauce</i>	18	The Word Around the Clubs
6	A Sporting Evening	19	The Wooster Source
7	Profile of a Patron: Victoria Coren Mitchell	19	Top 50 Wodehouse Romances
7	A Cosy Moment	19	Poet's Corner: <i>A Word in Season</i>
8	Letters to the Editor	20	The Bibliographic Corner: "With a New Preface by the Author": Part Five
10	Death Notice	21	PGW at the British Library
11	My First (and Latest) Wodehouse Experience	22	Recent Press Comment
12	A Wodehouse Favourite: Rex Stout		
13	Appointments in the Clergy		

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