

The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

Information Sheet Number 9

Revised December 2018

A Simplified Chronology of P G Wodehouse Fiction: Introductory Notes

The Society has received many queries over the years as to whether there existed a chronological list of the short stories of the main series so that they can be read 'in order'.

In response, in 2011, the Society published **A Simplified Chronology of P G Wodehouse Fiction**, which sought to fulfil this requirement, and this is now reproduced in Information Sheet Number 9a.

There may still be anomalies and room for alternative views of the proper order in a small number of cases. For instance, one or two stories were first published in a different order in the UK from that in the USA. And in any event, the first story written may be set later in a major character's life than later published stories. The Ukridge series started with a novel, *Love Among the Chickens*, in which Ukridge was married, and then reverted to short stories in which his wife was never mentioned. Another example is *Jeeves Takes Charge*, when Jeeves starts his employment with Bertie only after three earlier stories had been written, and was not published in book form until nine years later.

So we do not claim that this Information Sheet (even with its companion Sheet Number 9b, which reproduces six articles from *Wooster Sauce* in which further information was provided about the evolution of specific stories) will provide answers to more than 99% of your questions!

Objectives

- a to provide a simple, yet accurate, chronological guide to the first publication of the stories to be found in books of fiction by P G Wodehouse (whether novels or collections of short stories) published during his lifetime; and
- b to identify the order in which these stories were first published, to help members wishing to use that approach to reading some or all of the works.

Introductory Comment

Because of the sheer volume of Wodehouse's fiction and the range of the magazines in which much of it appeared, the concept of simplicity in presenting a chronology is bound to stretch credulity. Nevertheless, this attempt seeks to provide interested members with information in an appropriate level of detail to meet the stated objectives.

How to Read the Chronology

The Chronology has been designed with five columns (though only three have headings).

The first is the year of publication for the items that follow.

The second provides a code indicating when the book concerns one of ten selected characters or themes.

BC	Blandings Castle	MM	Mr Mulliner	UF	Uncle Fred
BL	Bingo Little	OM	The Oldest Member	UK	Ukridge
FW	Freddie Widgeon	PS	Psmith		
JW	Jeeves and Wooster	SC	Schools		

The third column, headed ‘Published Novel [*Collection*]’ places in chronological order the date of first publication of all of the P G Wodehouse books of fiction which were published during his lifetime. Please bear in mind that this is NOT necessarily the same as the order in which the works they contained first appeared.

The fourth column, headed ‘Published Short Story [*Serial*]’ reflects the fact that virtually all the short stories in the published collections, and a considerable majority of the novels, were published in magazine form in the UK and/or the USA before book publication. Sometimes the delay was a year or less; in a handful of cases it exceeded ten years.

The fifth column, headed ‘*Relevant Collection [Novel]*’ provides the name of the Short Story Collection in which the published Short Story named in column four appears, or the UK name of the novel under which a serialisation listed in column four appears.

Example

Suppose you wanted to read the works published in 1926 in chronological order, and you had access to readily available reading copies of all the relevant books. You would note that *Mr Potter Takes a Rest Cure* was the first new work of 1926, and was subsequently published in the book *Blandings Castle and Elsewhere* (often referred to merely as ‘*Blandings Castle*’). But you would have to move forward to 1935 to discover when *Blandings Castle and Elsewhere* was published. This is an excellent example of the delay in book publication.

Following a similar thought pattern, the next short story is *Keeping In With Vosper*, which from column two you see is an Oldest Member (Golf) story. It appears in the collection *The Heart of a Goof*, which you see from column three was published in book form almost immediately.

The same principles apply to all the others listed for 1926 except *The Small Bachelor*, a novel listed in column four. The first episode of its serialisation was the penultimate new work of the year, and from column five, you can tell that it had the same name when published as a novel in book form. If you look down column three for 1927, you will see that the book was published early in that year.

Explanation of the Principles Used in Creating the Chronology

The principles set out in this section should be read in conjunction with the note about **Unusual Situations** in the next section.

- 1 Books – whether novels or collections of short stories – are referred to by the UK published name only, since the majority of Society members, for whom the Chronology is being produced, are based in the United Kingdom. However, for convenience, where a novel was first serialised under a different title (in the UK or the USA), both the serial title(s) and the title of the subsequent UK book are listed.
- 2 Collections of short stories published in the UK and USA may have different contents even when given the same title. *With the exception of one story published only in the USA edition of A Few Quick Ones (1959)*, the collection referred to is the UK title, and the short story title in the UK book is used where titles are different in magazines and/or books.
- 3 The order in which titles of short stories appear in the chronology is based on the earlier of:
 - 3.1 the date of the first publication of the short story in magazine format, provided it is recognisably the same as the version in a later published book collection; and
 - 3.2 the date of publication of a collection of short stories.For novels, the order is based on the earlier of:
 - 3.3 the date of publication of the first instalment of a serialised novel, provided it has not been materially abridged; and
 - 3.4 the publication date of the novel in book form.*In each case*, the relevant date is the earliest known publication date, whether in the UK, USA or elsewhere.

- 4 Only fiction has been included. None of his plays, whether published or not, has been included.
- 5 The Chronology is restricted to fiction published in book form in the UK or USA during Wodehouse's lifetime.
- 6 Omnibuses and anthologies (including anthologies which include works by other authors) have been excluded from the Chronology with two exceptions. Two stories narrated by Mr Mulliner were published in magazines but, in book

form, only appeared in *The World of Mr Mulliner* (1972). One short story, *Oofy, Freddie and the Beef Trust*, was first published in *The Best of Wodehouse*, an anthology of Wodehouse stories which was published in the USA in 1949, before being reprinted in a 1958 magazine and in the collection *A Few Quick Ones*.

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A Simplified Chronology of P G Wodehouse Fiction: Unusual Situations

There are a number of titles of both novels and short stories where the chronological history has been materially confused by the publication of different versions created from the same basic material. The most important are summarised below, and in the relevant entries in the Chronology listing can be found by a numbered asterisk (*1, etc).

- 1 The books entitled *The Prince and Betty* which were published in the UK and the USA are substantially different novels and treated as such in the Chronology listing. For the avoidance of doubt, although the USA version incorporated a significant part of the plot of the earlier *Psmith Journalist*, that book is also properly regarded as a different novel.
- 2 The novel *A Gentleman of Leisure* was published in 1910. In 1909 a novella entitled *The Gem Collector*, which was obviously used as the inspiration for that novel, had been published in an American journal, but has not been published in book form within our criteria.
- 3 Four stories featuring Jeeves and Bertie Wooster which appeared in the collection *My Man Jeeves* were rewritten to a greater or lesser extent before also being included in the collection *Carry On, Jeeves*, the title of *Leave It To Jeeves* being changed to *The Artistic Career of Corky*. In addition, *Helping Freddie* was rewritten as a Jeeves and Wooster story *Fixing It For Freddie* for inclusion in *Carry On, Jeeves*. All five have been marked with as *3 in the Chronology listing.
- 4 The novella *The Eighteen Carat Kid* was serialised in a UK magazine in 1913, a few months before the publication of *The Little Nugget*, a full-length novel into which it is incorporated. Since it has not been separately published in

book form within our criteria it is not included separately in the Chronology listing.

- 5 A novel entitled *The White Hope* was published in a single edition of an American magazine in 1914. It was then published in book form in 1919 in the UK as *The Coming of Bill*. Since the two texts are almost identical, both appearances have been included in the Chronology listing.
- 6 Two books from the early 1920s, *The Inimitable Jeeves* (*6a) and *The Indiscretions of Archie* (*6b), are best described as ‘Episodic Novels’, each having been crafted by Wodehouse from a series of short stories published in magazines. The chronological order of publication of the stories differed from the order in which they appeared in the books, and in some cases small changes were made to the detail of the plot in order to create the ‘feel’ of a novel in the book format. Likewise, the title of the short story is not always the title of the relevant chapter in the book, especially as each story might absorb between one and four chapters. For these two books, therefore, reference has been made in the Chronology not to the individual titles of the magazine short stories but (in *italics*) to the chapter numbers in which they appear in the UK edition of the relevant book. It should be noted in passing that significant revisions were made to the text of one story (*Pearls Means Tears*) before it was incorporated into *The Inimitable Jeeves* but, when it was included in *The Jeeves Omnibus*, it reverted to more or less the original text.
- 7 The printed serialisation of *The Luck of the Bodkins* was significantly shorter than the version originally submitted for publication. The UK book published in 1935 contains the full original text, while the US book of the following

year has the shorter magazine text. In the Chronology, only the UK book publication has been included.

- 8 *Laughing Gas* was originally written as a novella and serialised in 1935, but never published as a book in that form. The rewritten and much longer book version published in 1936 is sufficiently different to require the earlier serialised novella to be omitted from the Chronology listing.
- 9 The text of *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* was also significantly shortened from the original draft for US magazine publication, by eliminating two major characters. Both the UK and US books, published in 1939, contains the full original text.
- 10 A highly complicated tale surrounds a 1947 short story, *Joy Bells for Barmy* (published only in an American magazine), its evolution from the 1939 story *Dudley is Back to Normal* (published in a UK magazine), its substantial incorporation into the 1952 novel *Barmy in Wonderland* and its eventual revision into a new story, with the title *The Right Approach*, which was again published in magazines (first in 1958), before inclusion in the 1959 collection *A Few Quick Ones*.

In an attempt to keep matters simple, apart from *Barmy in Wonderland*, only the 1958 magazine appearance and the 1959 book collection are included in the Chronology listing.

- 11 The short story *Big Business* was first published in 1952 in magazine form, but was substantially revised for book publication in *A Few Quick Ones* in 1959. Accordingly, the magazine version is not referred to in the Chronology listing.
- 12 Many novels published after the Second World War appeared in substantially abridged form in magazines, often being completed in only one or two issues. These abridged versions are somewhat irrelevant to this Chronology, as the texts are generally inadequate and in many cases the magazine version did not appear until *after* the novel had been published in book form. Consequently these abridged serialisations have been completely excluded from the Chronology.
- 13 The stories listed in the second column were not published in magazines but appeared for the first time in *Nothing Serious* or *Plum Pie*, as the case may be.