



# BY THE WAY

Occasional Newsletters from The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

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## Wodehousean Churches

Bearing in mind the number of clergymen who appear, or are referred to, in Wodehouse's writing, it is surprising that so few churches are mentioned by name. Even in the Great Sermon Handicap we only learn the names of the villages where the vicars or curates preached. Here we provide details of eight named churches, four of which are real, and four fictitious.

### The Little Church Around the Corner, New York

A Protestant Episcopal Church of the Transformation (*below*), a little bit of heaven dumped down on E 29th Street in the middle of New York, with a little fountain playing in front of it and with a plaque commemorating Wodehouse on one wall.



It was to be the scene of several marriages between Wodehousean characters – such as Fanny Welch and Freddy Mullett; Elizabeth Boyd and Lord Dawlish; and Dinty Moore and Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps; not to mention the real-life marriage ceremony of Pelham Grenville Wodehouse and his bride Ethel in 1914.

### St Barnabas the Resilient, East Wobsley

The ivy-covered church where, as a child, George Mulliner had enlivened the tedium of the sermon by making faces at the choir-boys. He passed by it at the end of his varied journey home – part by train and part on foot – from his visit to London to see a specialist in the treatment of stammering, but it is a matter of speculation as to whether it was the scene of his marriage to Susan Blake, his prospective wife, matron, spouse, help-meet, consort and partner.

### St Beowulf's in the West

A Church within the diocese of the Bishop of Stortford, who was assisted in his labours by so capable a secretary as Augustine Mulliner. In that capacity, Augustine drew his Superior's attention to a letter from the Vicar of St Beowulf's, who wanted to know, 'How about incense?'. 'Tell him he mustn't,' replied the Bishop, and there the matter rested.

### St George's, 2a Mill Street, Hanover Square, London

Lancelot Mulliner's prowess at dancing did not improve his prospects for marrying Angela, the daughter of the Earl of Biddlecombe, for she explained that his love, even though requited, counted for nothing when measured against the gold and diamonds of her other suitor, Slingsby Purvis, purveyor of Purvis's Liquid Dinner Glue, and if he popped in at St George's in about a month, he could see for himself.

It was also one of the proposed locations for weddings from which Bertie Wooster escaped – as Aunt Dahlia explained to him in *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* – for when Florence Craye was showing Dahlia her cami-knickers ("Not the ones she had on, I don't mean; her reserve supply.") she had let it be known her marriage to Bertie would take place around the following November, and had spoken freely of caterers and bridesmaids.

After the trials and tribulations which faced Tony, who may or may not have been the fifth Earl of Droitwich, it seemed that all his worries were over when Syd Price agreed to remain Syd Price, in order to scoop the pool of revenue

from *Price's Derma-Vitalis*. But when his American love, the manicurist Polly, expressed doubts as to whether she could cope with being a countess, Tony replied: "Don't be so dashed superior about countesses. They're just as good as you are." He added: "You wait till I get you to St George's, Hanover Square (*right*). You'll see how quick you can marry me."

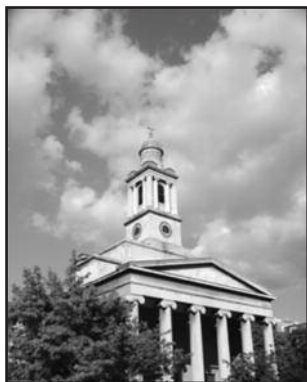
One wedding actually celebrated there was that between Adolphus Stiffham and Geraldine Spettisbury, daughter of Lord Wivelscombe, an event witnessed by many members of the Drones Club, and the subject of considerable rowdiness in its bar following the wedding reception. Pongo Twistleton had cleaned up by accepting, at 100-8, Oofy Prosser's bet that the wedding would never take place.

#### **St Jude the Resilient, Eaton Square, London**

When the Bishop of Stortford found his daughter Kathleen engrossed, not as expected in a work of devotion, but in a novel entitled *Cocktail Time*, he was quick to denounce it from the pulpit of St Jude's the following Sunday. By referring to it as obscene, immoral, shocking, impure, corrupt, shameless, graceless and depraved, he almost certainly added between ten and fifteen thousand to its sales.

#### **St Peter's, 119 Eaton Square, London (*below*)**

Oliver Sipperley mentioned to Bertie Wooster – following one of Bertie's ill-fated attempts to act as match-maker – that he would be marrying Gwendolen Moon, the lady in question, at St Peter's on June 1st, at 11am sharp, and that any presents should be delivered by the end of May.



#### **St Botolph's, Knightsbridge, London**

Once the roost of Lancelot Mulliner's Uncle Theodore, later Dean of Bolsover and most pertinently Bishop of Bongo-Bongo, an appointment which caused him to leave his cat Webster in the care of his nephew.

#### **St Saviour's, St George's Square, Lupus Street, Pimlico, London (*below*)**

Where Maudie Montrose had expected to marry Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe at two o'clock sharp on June 7th, before going off to Paris for a honeymoon. Parsloe-Parsloe claimed that his note to Maudie had referred to June 4th, which is why she had not found him waiting at the door. We merely point out that if his handwriting had been clearer, he might have grown up a nicer and better baronet under the influence of a good woman – but that many of the Blandings books would have remained unwritten as a result.

