



BY THE WAY

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Wodehouse's Lesser Clergy – Part III

In this issue we complete the roll call of the lesser clergy who appear by name in Wodehouse's fiction, together with some examples of clerics about whom we have snippets of information but no name, and a few other religious references which caught our eye.

Rector of Pudford

Captain of the Pudford village cricket team who had such a rudimentary acquaintance with ethics that he thought nothing of inviting three Oxford almost-Blues to play in the annual Little Bindlebury match.

(*A Prefect's Uncle*)

Rev. Randall

The Bray Lench curate, an old Trinity man.

(*'The Fifteenth Man'*, uncollected short story)

Rev. J J Roberts

The vicar of the village of Fale-by-the-Water, Glos., who received 10 minutes in the Great Sermon Handicap.

(*'The Great Sermon Handicap'* in *The Inimitable Jeeves*)

Rev. James Robinson, DD

The rather sporting headmaster of St Martin's College who accepted the suggestion of three students and made entry to future Sixth Form Poetry Prize competitions voluntary.

(*'The Prize Poem'* in *Tales of Wrykyn*)

Rev. Aubrey Sellick

The vacationing editor of *Tiny Tots* and *Just Tots*, a well-known writer of stories for the young who always strove to take the sane middle course.

(*Heavy Weather*)

Rev. Canon Edgar Shepherd, DD

Sub-Dean of His Majesty's Chapels Royal, Deputy Clerk of the Closet, and Sub-Almoner to the King who denounced Hubert Wales's novel.

(*The Swoop*)

Rev. Leonard Starkie

The loquacious incumbent of Stapleton, Glos., was a scratch entry and joint favourite in the Great Sermon Handicap.

(*'The Great Sermon Handicap'* in *The Inimitable Jeeves*)

Stuttering Sam

A curate of curious tendencies.

(*'Buttercup Day'* in *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*)

Vicar of Tooting

A scratch golfer who excelled at short approach shots and recommended 'The Voice That Breathed O'er St Andrews' as a wedding song.

(*'Sundered Hearts'* in *The Clicking of Cuthbert*)

Rev. Joseph Tucker

The vicar of Badgwick, Glos., proved at a mothers' meeting that he was prone to take the bit between his teeth, and in consequence he was made a scratch starter and joint favourite in the Great Sermon Handicap.

(*'The Great Sermon Handicap'* in *The Inimitable Jeeves*)

Rev. Aubrey Upjohn

The headmaster at Malvern House had a malign influence on Bertie Wooster and his contemporaries. He ran an over-disciplined and mean establishment which, despite its success in sending pupils to Eton and Oxford, seems to have ill prepared its charges for the challenges of the adult world. Upjohn was 5'7" tall, with a face like a cassowary and a moustache of the walrus (or 'soup-strainer') variety covering the upper slopes of his mouth. To the infant Wooster he had seemed 8'6", with burning eyes, foam-flecked lips, and flames coming from both nostrils. During conversation he made his lip twitch and had an arrogance common to self-seeking leaders, which manifested itself in his book on *Prep Schools*, his attempt to obtain the nomination as parliamentary candidate in the Market Snodsbury by-election, and his desire to revise Dahlia Travers's guest list when invited on his stepdaughter Phyllis Mills's coat-tails to visit Brinkley Court as a guest himself, for which offence he was summarily and justly expelled. He also sought to demonstrate ruthlessness in pursuing his libel suit against the *Thursday Review* in relation to Kipper Herring's article (reproduced in *By The Way*, December 2013), but he proved no match for a determined Bobbie Wickham.

(*Joy in the Morning, The Mating Season, Jeeves in the Offing, and elsewhere*)

Rev. Gideon Voules

A minister from Flushing, New York, who deputised at the wedding of George Finch and Molly Waddington. He was a dull man with a poached-egg-like eye, and his recent record in the Wedding Stakes had been less than impressive. His last three ceremonies had all been followed by deaths, successively, of the bride (knocked down by a motor lorry on leaving the church after the ceremony), the groom (from a fever with pink spots), and both the bride and groom (when a girder fell on top of them from a building under construction within a month of their marriage).

(*The Small Bachelor*)

Rev. Orlo Waterbury

Author of *My Two Years in Sunny Ceylon*.

(‘Strychnine in the Soup’ in *Mulliner Nights*)

The Hon. and Rev. Herbert Wingham

The third son of the Earl of Sturridge had a cure of souls at Twing and was Bingo Little’s successful rival for the hand of Mary Burgess after the ill-fated village concert.

(‘The Metropolitan Touch’ in *The Inimitable Jeeves*)

Did You Know?

The Oldest Member once had to choose between resigning from the Baptist Church or giving up playing golf with Alexander Paterson, such was the likelihood that Paterson’s playing style would cause him to explode.

(‘Ordeal by Golf’ in *The Clicking of Cuthbert*)

The Oldest Member also thought it was a moot question as to “whether the clergy, considering their peculiar position, should not be more liberally handicapped at golf than the laymen with whom they compete. I have made a close study,” he said, “of the game since the days of the feather ball, and I am firmly convinced that to refrain entirely from oaths during a round is almost equivalent to giving away three bisques. There are certain occasions when an oath seems to be so imperatively demanded that the strain of keeping it in must inevitably affect the ganglions or nerve-centres in such a manner as to diminish the steadiness of the swing.”

(‘Chester Forgets Himself’ in *The Heart of a Goof*)

Cuthbert Wickham told Rollo Finch that at his wedding, “There will be a bishop, Finch, and assistant clergy, Finch, and bridesmaids and choir-boys, and about six hundred guests of assorted sexes, and as I totter up the aisle, Finch, these bishops, these assistant clergy, these bridesmaids, these choir-boys and these guests will all laugh their fat heads off at me. Add vergers, beadles, first and second grave-diggers and

Anon

A vicar who, while the golfing partner of Rupert Blake in a friendly foursome, smashed his putter on the last green, being unable to relieve his feelings over his bad luck in any other way.

(‘Chester Forgets Himself’ in *The Heart of a Goof*)

Anon

A clergyman in Kent who was Bertie Wooster’s uncle.

(*Much Obligated, Jeeves*)

Anon

The vicar who introduced Eustacia Pulbrook’s violin solo at the King’s Deverill concert, conveying the impression that while he knew as well as the audience that she would be as corny as they come, they had better make the most of her, as after that they would have the Kegley-Bassington gang at their throats.

(*The Mating Season*)

Anon

The American clergyman who was to have married George Finch and Molly Waddington but sprained an ankle while climbing chairs.

(*The Small Bachelor*)

what not, all in gales of mirth, and you will understand how I’m feeling.”

(‘Dudley Is Back to Normal’ in *Strand*)

The Apostolic Claims of the Church of Abyssinia fascinated a number of characters. Bill Shannon persuaded Phipps that he had hit Joe Davenport with a bottle during an argument on the subject (*The Old Reliable*). Jane Benedick assumed that her uncle failed to turn up for lunch at Barribault’s because he had become deeply involved in a discussion on the same topic (*Something Fishy*).

A number of reverend gentlemen, real and imposters, appeared or were referred to in *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*, a moderately successful play (London’s New Theatre, 1929) adapted by Wodehouse and Ian Hay Beith from the latter’s short story ‘Locum Tenens’. Rev. Augustus Beamish is in office at Tuckleford; his offstage *locum tenens* is Rev. Aubrey Wyndrum. When Hugo Bonser (Beamish’s cousin) and Chickie Buff arrive at the Vicarage whilst escaping from the police and find nobody at home, they don clerical garb as a disguise. Two other members of the cast visit and request an immediate wedding, but Hugo avoids embarrassment by declining to conduct the ceremony on the spurious grounds that the licence they show him is invalid as it is not pink.

Supralapsarianism (the belief of some Calvinists that, even before the Fall of Man, God had predestined whether each human would move on to Heaven or to the other place) proved to be a matter of concern to an unnamed bishop.

(*Money in the Bank*)