

WOOSTER SAUCE



The Quarterly Journal of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

Number 10

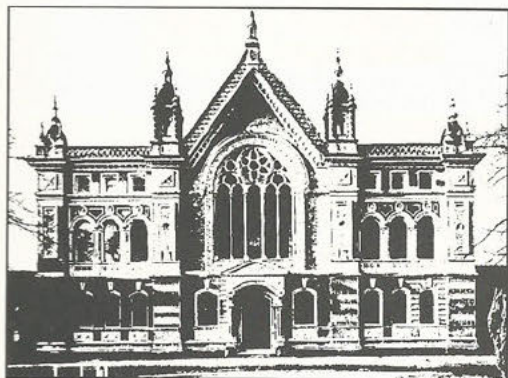
June 1999

Day Out at Dulwich

A Preliminary report by Murray Hedgcock

A corker day – victory over the cricketing foe, the Dulwich Dusters – and dinner in the Great Hall of Dulwich College for 120 enthusiasts and guests: what more could a Plum buff ask?

Sun poured down on June 18 as the Society XI, (now called The Gold Bats) raced to 134 for 8 wickets in 20 overs, David Cazalet, Lorenzo Austin and Alan Hurley the major contributors. The Society bowling was varied – and effective. Only Dusters skipper Danny Kent, who retired under local rules after passing 30, but returned to compile a hurricane 59 off 25 balls, could stem the PGW advance. Hurley took 3 for 5, the Dusters were polished off for 101, and last year's opening fixture defeat was avenged.



Well content, the pleasingly large crowd strolled over to the College Library where they browsed through the PGW exhibition set up by archivist Dr Jan Piggott,

and quaffed a cheering potion, generously provided by Jeeves of Belgravia, before dinner, to which we were delighted to welcome that foremost scholar, Richard Usborne.

The health of Plum's most special fan, HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, was proposed by Sir Edward Cazalet, and the toast to PGW and the Society was proposed and answered by Old Alleyrians.

News of the excellent recovery of Patron Henry Blofeld from his heart surgery was welcomed. Then test cricketer Trevor Bailey recalled his delight at 14 in taking part in the unbeaten Dulwich XI season, leading to a Wodehouse-funded night out at dinner and the London Palladium.

And writer Simon Brett, confessing to being blind to the joys of cricket, reassured us by announcing he had come late in life to Wodehouse – but he loved the genre all the more for his delayed conversion. We could ask no more.

A fuller report will appear in the September issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

The Society's Millennium Tour

A decade ago, Norman Murphy led a small party of Wodehouseans, many from America, on a short tour based on his book *In Search of Blandings*. Greatly enjoyed by all who hurried in the Chairman's footsteps, it was generally agreed that it would have to be a pretty special occasion to duplicate such a splendid event. Fortunately a suitable occasion is almost at hand.

To commemorate the 25th Anniversary of P G Wodehouse's death, and to celebrate the approaching Millennium (since Wodehouse was a classical scholar it is considered that he would prefer the logical to the simplistic commercial approach, and regard the new Millennium as starting in 2001), the Society plans to recreate that tour. Members are invited to join this joyful exploration of the locations immortalised by Wodehouse, among them Weston Park and Sudeley Castle, two of the houses that inspired *Blandings*; Bertie's London clubs; the Junior Ganymede, Jeeves's professional retreat; Aunt Dahlia's London and country homes; and Plum's own beloved *Alma Mater*, Dulwich College. Throughout, the tour leader will be that fount of Wodehousean knowledge, Norman Murphy.

The Society's Millennium Tour will take six days, half of them based in London, and has been provisionally set for July 17 to 23, 2000. Entrance fees, coach travel, and meals and accommodation for the two nights to be spent outside London (ensuite, based on two people sharing) will be included in the approximate cost of £200 per person. Please note that accommodation in London is *not* included but could be arranged at competitive prices.

Full details and a booking form will be enclosed with September's *Wooster Sauce*, but in the meantime Hilary Bruce would welcome enquiries and expressions of interest.

“P G Wodehouse Has Become Fashionable”

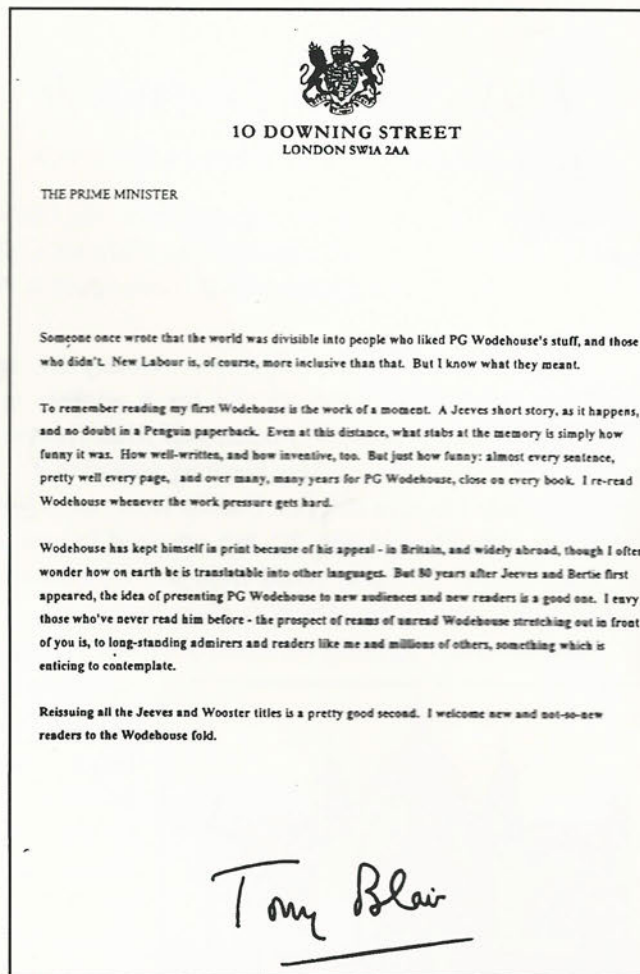
Just one of the reactions that Kate Jones heard at Hay-on-Wye following the launch of the new Penguin editions.

“Sublime comic genius” wrote Ben Elton; “These are the books on Heaven’s library shelves,” suggested Bernard Cornwell; “The Wodehouse wit should be registered at Police HQ as a lethal weapon,” said Kathy Lette. These are extracts from just three of the enthusiastic letters sent to me from other writers, leaders in their field, about P G Wodehouse. There have been many, many pleasures in re-issuing his books but perhaps the universal enthusiasm of his readers is the greatest. Nothing is too much trouble for a Wodehouse fan, no favour is too much to ask if the result might be one more reader of the great man.

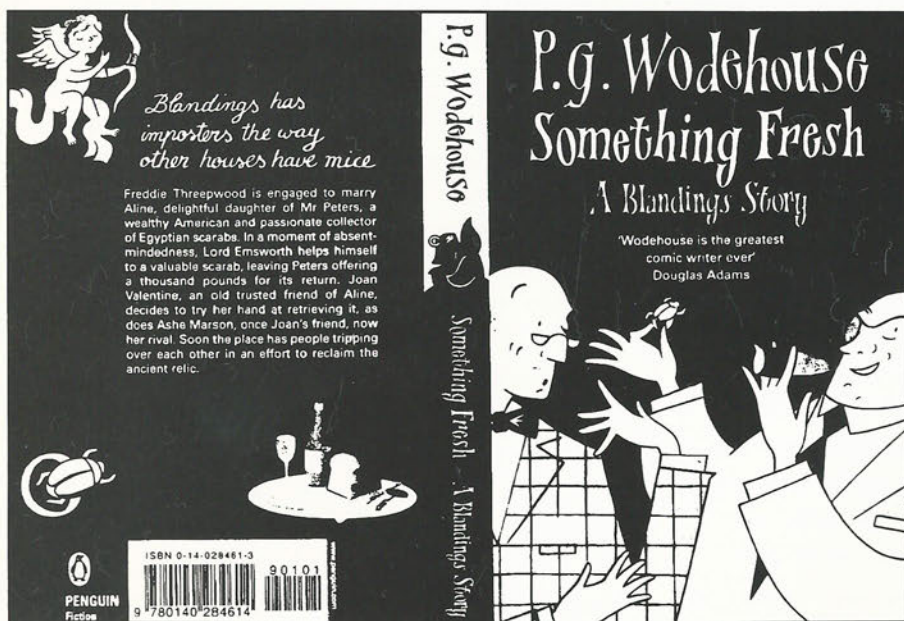
I must tell you that this is by no means a common experience. Asking for quotes to support a new book is usually a joyless affair – one reply to twenty letters sent and that a curt acknowledgement from someone’s secretary. This time, even the “No, thank you’s” were good-humoured. Julian Barnes courteously declined to comment but gave me the name of three other authors he knew to be admirers. P J O’Rourke, as you might expect, spoke for himself:

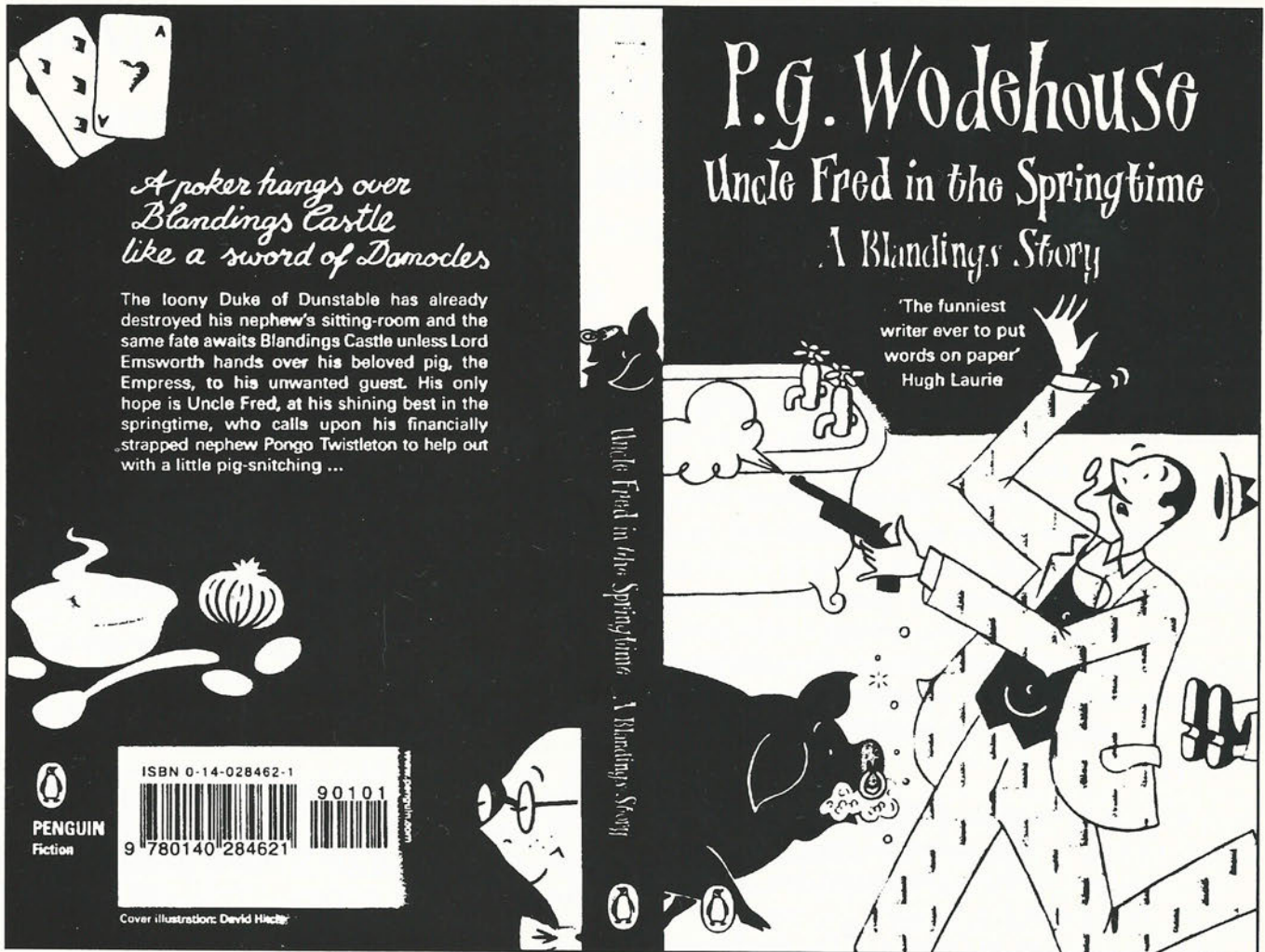
“Sorry to say, I’m not much of a Wodehouse fan. I’ve tried and tried to like him, but in the end I just don’t get it. Maybe one has to be more left-wing to really glory in Wodehouse’s love of the class system.”

I’ve filed that one alongside the rapturous fan letter from Tony Blair.



Christopher Hitchens opened his lecture about George Orwell at the recent Hay-on-Wye Festival by remarking that he could imagine no greater honour than seeing his name on the same title page as P.G. Wodehouse (as he achieved in his role as editor of the new *Penguin Classics* edition of *The Mating Season*) and he went on to compare his hero to Orwell and Oscar Wilde. Lynne Truss was delighted to play a round of golf with Charles Wodehouse (and admit defeat at the sixth bunker at Addington) before writing a terrific piece for *The Times* about her experience. Hugh Laurie wrote a blindingly good introduction for the omnibus *Jeeves and Wooster* which will appear in the autumn. It was even a pleasure to be ticked off by Francis Wheen in the *Guardian*





for an over-enthusiastic and slightly inaccurate press release.

And I'm pleased to report that it's not only writers and the press who have responded so positively – we have seen the most wonderful enthusiasm in the book trade. Geoff Knight, our East Sussex rep, won a special award at a recent sales conference for the unprecedented number of dumpbins [the special promotional containers which can be seen in bookshops from time to time] which he placed in his area. If there is a shop in his area that doesn't have a huge Wodehouse display Geoff will want to know the reason why.

The major retailers *Waterstones, Books Etc* and *W H Smith*, and countless independents have taken window displays and our sales force have been regaled with such tales as "The first time I read Wodehouse...".

Even more pleasing, younger booksellers who had never read Wodehouse before are doing so and are recommending these unbeatably good books to new readers. And finding new readers to join in the fun is, after all, what we had hoped to do.

I shall be fascinated to know whether the note about the Wodehouse Society which is reprinted at the end of every copy results in new members, but it is too soon to tell.

"Isn't it strange," another author said to me, "that P.G. Wodehouse has become fashionable all of a sudden?" Not so strange, but a real joy.

To keep the momentum going Penguin's immediate publication plans are:

1999	
July	<i>Eggs, Beans and Crumpets</i> <i>Mulliner Omnibus</i>
October	<i>Blandings Series</i> (except <i>Sunset at Blandings</i>)
November	<i>Blandings Omnibus</i> <i>Jeeves and Wooster Omnibus</i> <i>Uncle Fred Omnibus</i>
2000	
February	<i>Sunset at Blandings</i>
Later	Much, much more !!

A preview of some of the covers to be used on this next wave of reissues appears in this article.

George Orwell on Wodehouse

Peter Cannon has studied a new twenty volume Complete Works of George Orwell, and has prepared a three-part series about Orwell's relationship with P G Wodehouse

As the author of *In Defence of P G Wodehouse* (1945), George Orwell holds a special place in the hearts of all Wodehouseans. As he did on so many issues, Orwell showed decency and good sense in finding Plum guilty merely of stupidity when he agreed to make those Berlin broadcasts. Certainly Wodehouse himself was grateful at the time, never mind those letters to Denis Mackail, one dating to 1951 and the other to 1956, in which he dismissed Orwell's criticism as "practically one long roast" and remarked: "George Orwell. Why do the eggheads make such a fuss of him? He's quite good, of course, but surely not as good as all that. Weird fellow. I think he genuinely enjoyed being unhappy."

Now, with the publication of *The Complete Works of George Orwell* (1998), edited by Peter Davison in twenty volumes, further information has come to light on the relationship between the two authors. In the entry following *In Defence of P G Wodehouse* in volume XVII, titled *P G Wodehouse to Orwell*, Mr. Davison states that among Orwell's papers were two letters from Wodehouse, dated 25 July and 1 August 1945. Mr. Davison's commentary is worth quoting at length:

In the first of these letters he wrote: "I don't think I have ever read a better bit of criticism. You were absolutely right in everything you said about my work. It was uncanny."

In the second letter, he said: "I want to thank you again for that article. It was extraordinarily kind of you to write like that when you did not know me, and I shall never forget it. . . . I have been re-reading the article a number of times and am more than ever struck by the excellence of its criticism. It was a masterly bit of work and I agree with every word of it."

Orwell had evidently taken the Wodehouses for a meal in a restaurant near Les Halles when he was in Paris for *The Observer*. He had, presumably, wished to follow up the writing of his article with a small, direct, gesture of kindness. The Wodehouses had not been to a restaurant since, but P G Wodehouse was anxious to reciprocate if Orwell returned to Paris, for he felt he owed him "a Grade A lunch".

Orwell had treated the Wodehouses to a meal in February 1945, not 1944, as Plum years later wrote to Denis Mackail. Orwell was at the start of a trip to France and Germany to report on the war. They never met again. Mr. Davison continues:

It seems that Orwell replied to Wodehouse's letter of 25 July and told Wodehouse of Eileen's death, for in his letter of 1 August Wodehouse wrote with warm sympathy of Orwell's loss: "I am afraid there is nothing much one can say at a time like this that will be any good, but my wife and I are feeling for you with all our hearts, the more so as a year ago we lost our daughter and so can understand what it must be for you."

Like the Wodehouses' daughter Leonora, Orwell's wife Eileen had died quite unexpectedly, aged thirty-nine, on 29 March 1945, during an operation that should have been routine. Orwell was still on his Continental tour. Mr. Davison resumes:

In a letter to his friend William Townend, of 29 April 1945, he said that Orwell's "criticism of my stuff was masterly" and he praised Orwell for writing such an article "at a time when it was taking a very unpopular view. He really is a good chap."

This quotation is a condensed version of the text of this same letter as it appears in *Yours Plum: The Letters of P G Wodehouse* (1990), edited by Frances Donaldson. Mr. Davison goes on to comment that Wodehouse wrote to Denis Mackail "in rather different terms", as noted above.

Orwell first mentions Wodehouse in a review dated 5 March 1936 for the *New English Weekly* of a batch of ten *Penguin* paperback reprints, which were then a new publishing phenomenon:

It was a pity not to choose a better Wodehouse book than *My Man Jeeves*, which was the first of its series and contains at least one story which has since been reissued in better form. Still, it was a great day for Mr Wodehouse when he created Jeeves, and thus escaped from the realm of comedy, which in England always stinks of virtue, into the realm of pure farce. The great charm of Jeeves is that (although he did pronounce Nietzsche to be 'fundamentally unsound') he is beyond good and evil.

George Orwell on Wodehouse

(Continued)

Clearly the future author of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Animal Farm* both knew and appreciated his Wodehouse.

Orwell's most substantial assessment apart from *In Defence of P G Wodehouse* is a review of *Quick Service*, which was one of five novels he covered in *The New Statesman and Nation* for 19 October 1940, that is, when England was fighting for its life in the Battle of Britain. Orwell notes that all but one of these novels falls into the category of light fiction, "and in at least three of them the fantasy element is very strongly marked." He proceeds to discuss the fantasy element in Wodehouse:

It is curious that, much as Mr. Wodehouse is read and admired, this aspect of his work never seems to have been studied. He is before all else a 'wishful' writer, a dream writer, giving utterance to a vision of life as he would like it to be lived. By their subject-matter ye shall know them, and the subject-matter of Mr. Wodehouse's books is almost invariably the Edwardian house party, the comic man-servant and the idle young man with private means. Behind the farcical incidents there is manifest a vision of life in which the dividends flow in for ever and ever, and the MCC will outlast the Pyramids. I shall no doubt be telling Mr. Wodehouse's admirers most of what they want to know by saying that *Quick Service* falls into the Blandings Castle group. There is the usual country house, the overwhelming butler, the complicated plot in which someone of innocent antecedents is commissioned to steal something, the American millionaire, the happy ending. The phraseology ("he could even get a certain amount of noise-response out of mashed potatoes") is about up to sample. But what is finally noticeable, as in all Mr. Wodehouse's books, is the complete parasitism of outlook. After reading him steadily for a quarter of a century I cannot remember a single one of his books in which the *jeune premier* really works for a living. His heroes either have

private incomes, like Bertie Wooster, or they end up with some kind of sinecure job in the retinue of a millionaire. And that, however lightly he may choose to treat it, is obviously the way in which he considers it desirable for a young man to live. His whole vision of life was implicit in his first big hit, *Mike*, which must have appeared somewhere about 1912. [In a footnote Mr. Davison gives the correct year of 1909.]

When Mr. Wodehouse was led off into captivity by the Germans, he is said to have remarked to a friend, "Perhaps after this I shall write a serious book." I wonder. It might be very interesting if he did. But what I think is certain is that he cannot continue in the Psmith and Jeeves tradition very much longer. It is already decades out of date. Bertie Wooster is an Edwardian figure, the 'knot' of the pre-1914 period, and, incidentally, a much nicer animal than the moneyed young man of to-day. But now the whole of that way of life is being destroyed too completely to survive, even in fantasy. Blandings Castle is full of evacuees, Bertie Wooster's shares have slumped to nothing, Baxter is in the Ministry of Information, a bomb has demolished the Drones Club. I hope the Germans are treating Mr. Wodehouse decently, and I hope that later on he will write that serious book. Few writers of our time have used words more skilfully, or squandered better talents.

Here in essence is the same criticism that Orwell later made in his essay defending Wodehouse. Of course, Wodehouse never did write a serious book and furthermore, *pace* Orwell, he continued to write the same kinds of 'wishful' books he had been writing all along for another thirty years.

In the next issue of Wooster Sauce, Peter compares the backgrounds of Orwell and Wodehouse and examines the latter's influence on Orwell's novel A Clergyman's Daughter.

THE SMILE THAT WINS

Favourite Nifties – 7

Marie (to Josef): I'm not extravagant. Time after time rather than exceed my [dress] allowance I've had things charged.

From *Candlelight* (the play adapted by PGW from Siegfried Geyer, 1929)

Wodehouse and Weston Park

Jimmy Moxon completes his series of three articles. In the first two he explained how the young Wodehouse had been a weekend guest at Weston Park and undoubtedly absorbed some of the atmosphere which he later incorporated into the Blandings Castle stories.

It would seem that during the seven years he spent in Shropshire Plum had two images on which to base his Blandings cast of characters and, in some respects, he drew on both of them. First of all Orlando, the 3rd Earl of Bradford and an elderly widower, was a lasting image as something of a recluse in his handsome library of leather-bound books – some of which at least would have intrigued young Plum for being a camouflaged disguise for a concealed door, a not-to-be-forgotten escape-hatch for a retreating peer or efficient Secretary.

And then George, the heir, the 4th Earl – a relaxed family man with a mansion full of young people which included one up-and-coming pillar of the Establishment and a host of visitors, both family and friends. The whole company was cared for by a small army of faithful retainers. George lived to be 70 but in 1915, the year of publication of *Something Fresh*, he was succeeded by his son Orlando, then serving in France.

Through successive generations the Bridgemans had been a family of Harrovians – usually followed by Trinity, Cambridge – which perhaps encouraged Plum to give Blandings the Eton and Balliol connection. It was Plum's maxim, suggested to him early on by a down-to-earth New York magazine editor, always to write about what he knew. That obliged him to make his own Blandings founded above all on fact but with a thousand variations, drawn from his own fertile imagination combined with wide experience, giving him the breadth of canvas that he always needed.

It was in 1943 that – so far as I was concerned – all my boyhood images of Blandings jelled into reality when I too first stood on the terraces at Weston Park. It was all there: “a sunlit park, the lake with the Grecian temple, the boathouse and the Wrekin on the horizon”, in the words of Norman Murphy in his classic *In Search of Blandings*, who would complete his painstaking search triumphantly some 30 years later. I had been fortunate, inasmuch as I had not had to search for it. Blandings had been handed to me on a Wodehousean plate with the watercress neatly arranged around it.

I was on my first leave from the Gold Coast where, when off duty, I was serving as a Company Commander in the Accra Home Guard. My father's living – in the

next parish to Weston Park – was in the gift of Orlando Bridgeman, now 5th Earl of Bradford, and indeed my father (the first non-Bridgeman rector for over a century) had stepped into the shoes of the nonagenarian Prebendary E R Orlando Bridgeman, Lord Bradford's uncle. He had been a member of the Governing Body of Denstone College where, until a disabling stroke, my father had been Headmaster.

After church on Sunday, when I was introduced to 68-year-old Lord Bradford in his capacity as Colonel commanding the Weston-under-Lizard Home Guard, he invited me to drop in at the Weston Park stables for a temporary secondment from the Accra Home Guard. This was followed by three glorious months in a real life *Dad's Army*, ‘defending’ Charles II's Royal Oak at adjacent Boscobel against residual pockets of Roundheads and clearing the little that remains of Brewood Forest of secret nests of the enemy. With both Boer War and Great War honours behind him, Colonel Tootles, as we fondly called him, was a leader we were all proud to serve.

Occasionally, after parade, he would invite me in to tell him about the Gold Coast, and he would treat me to a few anecdotes about working for the great and the good in Downing Street both before and after his Boer War experiences. Many years later while on a Hellenic cruise I had visited the excavations at Troy with Lord Salisbury under somewhat pioneer conditions and both my Colonel and I agreed that he was a dear. But Arthur Balfour (whom Gladstone had dubbed ‘Artful Arthur’) sounded like a thoroughly spoilt child. A biographer attributed to him the body of Bertie Wooster and the mind of Jeeves – but it didn't serve to keep him in Downing Street for much more than three years.

The Bradfords lived very simply under wartime conditions in a corner of the West Wing. Weston Park must have cost a fortune to maintain and the Colonel's Countess, Margaret, once told my mother that she couldn't afford to buy a new hat! It was a sad day when I had to call to say goodbye to him and to what I shall always remember as the Blandings Castle Home Guard. If only I could have spotted them, it must have included Sergeant Beach, Corporal Voules and Private Wellbeloved.

Bless them all.

My Great Spiritual Experience

by Ben Goodden of Twickenham

Ben contributes to the “My First Wodehouse Experience” feature.

I discovered PGW entirely by accident. I was aged 13, a new boy at Harrow, and it was the first Sunday of the term. In those days Sundays were observed strictly, no games were played, and apart from having to be present at meals and chapel boys were left to their own devices. That day, once I had written my duty letter home, I felt very spare. As I didn't yet know anybody I decided to take a book out of the house library and read it by the school lake. In the library I found a row of PGW's books. I had never read any of them, so I picked the first that came to hand, *Meet Mr Mulliner*, and having found an empty seat in a pleasant secluded spot by the lake I started to read *The Truth Against George*.

This was the story of Mr Mulliner's nephew, George, who from childhood up had been cursed with a terrible stammer. He had managed to cope adequately with this until he fell in love with the vicar's daughter, but found that every time he tried to tell her how he felt he could get no farther than a sibilant gurgle.

Something obviously had to be done, so George went to see a specialist, a kindly man with moth-eaten whiskers and an eye like a meditative cod-fish. He told George that his problem was shyness, but that this could quite soon be cured. His advice, which he said he gave to all young men who came in behaving like soda-water siphons, was that George should go out and make a point of speaking to three perfect strangers every day. If he kept this up, he said, George would be completely cured within a few weeks.

George found this a terrifying prospect, but no Mulliner had ever shirked an unpleasant duty, and as he started on his journey home his teeth were set and his eyes shone with an almost fanatical light of determination to make an immediate start. To say more would be superfluous; suffice it to say that the story is a classic.

I have never been one for smiling gently to myself when amused by whatever I am reading, and within minutes my uninhibited laughter was echoing round the lake. Before long I was falling about, and a casual passer-by could have been excused for thinking I was having some sort of fit. However, I was certainly observed by several senior boys, who were startled to see a new boy who clearly was mentally deranged. My reputation for being totally off my rocker spread rapidly, and has never been lost, least of all amongst my family. “Arrested development” is one of the kinder descriptions, and if that is what being a lifelong PGW addict implies, I am happy to go along with it.

The whole thing was a bit like falling in love at first sight. Indeed, if you were to compare the effect that it had on me with that experienced by St Paul on the road to Damascus you wouldn't be far wrong. Quite simply, from then on I wanted to spend every waking hour reading Wodehouse, and I made a very good job of it, much to the detriment of my school work.

By the end of my first year I had read many of the Jeeves, Mulliner, Blandings and golf stories, as well as several of the early novels, and without conscious effort I could recite long passages by heart. I can think of no greater treat than to be able to sit down now and read, for example, Uncle Fred Flits By or Gussie Presents the Prizes for the first time. During that year this was happening to me almost every day. It was a magical time.

I wish I shared PGW's talent for making people laugh, but failing that I have used him as a model throughout my career in my attempts to write clear and economical English. It is a sad waste that his reputation as a humorist has caused many teachers of English to fail to take him seriously as a writer, and to look elsewhere for illustrations when they are teaching people how to write. I have never found a better way of mixing business with pleasure.

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges – 10

“What you want, old man,” I said, “is a policeman's helmet.”

“Do I, Bertie?”

“If I were you, I'd just step straight across the street and get that one over there.”

“But there's a policeman inside it. You can see him distinctly.”

Without The Option in *Carry On, Jeeves*, 1925 (Suggested by Roderick Ogley)

WHAT IF . . . The HSBC had pounced on the Midland in Plum's Day?

asks Murray Hedgcock

Sharp-eyed Wodehouseans perusing the morning paper earlier this year no doubt spotted a recent series of full-page advertisements, headed chummily: One Family, Now One Name.

Whether you actually bothered to read these, or simply turned over in search of more obviously entertaining fare, the point is that any PGW enthusiast should definitely have read, inwardly digested, marvelled – and wondered.

The advertisements announced that the HSBC – the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation – was now putting its name on every one of its worldwide subsidiaries, so that everything from The British Bank of the Middle East, to Forward Trust, Hongkong Bank of Canada and Midland Bank would now be called simply, HSBC, complete with that snazzy little white diamond-on-red logo, looking a little like a white tie tied with Jeevesian deftness.

So we have now started to see all Midland Bank branches blossom forth under the new name – HSBC, seven years after the Midland was absorbed into this giant multinational running 5,500 offices in 79 countries.

Oh, yes, you yawn, so what? Does this really have anything to do with the World of Plum in which we are rightly absorbed? Yes, indeed. What if the HSBC had absorbed and renamed the Midland a century ago?

What if that Lombard Street base of the Hong Kong & Shanghai into which the hesitant 18-year-old Pelham Grenville Wodehouse strayed in September 1900 had been devoted not to the indoctrination of staff to become 'big pots' in the Far East, but to training them to become modest-sized pots in branches up and down Britain?

We know that Plum, lost in the strange commercial world in which he found himself, had no desire to be sent to the mystic Orient, there to order the native Johnnies around and wield the awesome authority of 'The Bank'. He stayed two years, and then quit in great relief, convinced – with good reason – that he could escape an uncongenial world and earn a living as a freelance writer, having already made considerable strides by writing in his spare time.

And this is where the story really starts

What if the Hong Kong and Shanghai, with oversight of Midland branches up and down the land, had decided in its infinite wisdom that young Wodehouse might be no great shakes at bustling Head Office, but perhaps would do well enough in a small local branch?

What if, after six or eight months to learn the ropes (he never did learn them, but the fact that the Bank kept him on for 24 months suggests that perhaps his superiors were unaware of that minor problem), P G Wodehouse's name had come up in the list of Head Office postings, appointed junior clerk to some peaceful London suburban outpost?

What if – oh bliss, oh joy – he had been assigned to the Midland Bank at Dulwich? Just think: he could have taken his lunch-hour when the First XV were playing Haileybury, nipping out across Alleyn Park Road to cheer on the Old School – noting say, that young Smithers, who had been pretty feeble in the Seconds pack in Plum's time in the Firsts, was now proving quite a good captain of the College team.

Or in the cricket season, there could have been the hope of ending work with enough light left for a net, or perhaps to find a scratch match involving Old Boys or Masters, who would recognise and welcome him: "Hello, Plum. Wondered! whatever happened to you."

And he would mumble his explanations as he got on with the serious business of simply delighting in being back on the familiar territory he knew and loved so well.

What would have been the effect on his freelance writing? Might he have stuck to a mix of school stories and the occasional foray into a wider world involving the life of bank clerks, as so delightfully depicted in Psmith in the City?

Valley Fields of course was all around him, so the early light novels could have developed much as they in fact did, but with more plots and detail deriving from the community, more about house agent Mr Cornelius and the swans Percy and Egbert, and all sorts of other local characters.

European Engagements

Bravo, Jeeves!

The Swedish Wodehouse Society, whose membership has recently increased from about 80 to about 150, promoted a Wodehouse exhibition called *Bravo, Jeeves!* at Sigtuna museum from May 8 to June 6. Sigtuna is a small town within easy reach of Stockholm.

The exhibition consisted of some fifteen panels of text and illustration concerning various aspects of Wodehouse's life and work, supported by examples of his books (in both Swedish and English), magazines, sheet music and other items. It was visited by a total of 2,712 people.

Wodehouse's principal Swedish translator, Brigitta Hammer, attended the opening celebrations, and subsequent Saturday afternoon events included a reading in Swedish of *The Crime Wave at Blandings* by Jacob Halloncreutz, a local actor; talks in English

on *Golf* and *The Lyrics of Wodehouse* by Tony Ring and Eddie Grabham respectively; and an organ recital by Eyvind Hallnäs including renderings of Wodehouse songs.

Its success means that the exhibition will probably be repeated in other Swedish towns later this year.

News from Portugal

John and Paula Looijestijn report that the Carvoeiro and District Golf Society (in the Algarve) recently held a tournament in which members had to dress in the style of the twenties and play as PGW and his contemporaries did, with only seven clubs and stymies to be played.

John provided copies of *The Heart of a Goof* and *The Clicking of Cuthbert* as prizes, and tells us that not surprisingly the recipients have enjoyed reading them.

HSBC, the Midland, and Plum (continued)

Plum might in time have bought himself a house somewhere in Dulwich Village, where he could set up his study just as he liked it, able to retire there once bank duties were over for the day, and hammer out on his newly-acquired Royal the contributions to magazines and the offerings to Herbert Jenkins that would consolidate his reputation.

Banking might have become just about bearable, provided that not too many complex mathematical demands were made of him – and he could well have become something of a branch 'loss leader' to encourage custom. Old Alleyneians – and current ones – could have been lured to the HSBC/Midland by the knowledge that good old Plum was there; his immediate superiors would have noted, and approved.

And when any query came from an intrusive Head Office about his progress, Lombard Street would be assured that our Mr Wodehouse might not yet be ready for promotion, but he was doing a solid job at Dulwich, responsible in no small measure for the steady expansion of custom.

I suppose it would be too good to last. At some stage, the conflict between the expectations of an

expanding and modernising business world and the financial ineptitude of a dreaming Wodehouse would have come into violent collision.

Or perhaps Plum would have eventually made the same decision that he did in actual life in 1902 – that he was earning much more by his pen (or his trusty Royal) than he was courtesy of the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank, and he might as well take the plunge and go full time.

They would have been sorry to see him go, but his manager would no doubt have accepted that it was for the best of both worlds – banking, and Wodehousean. Colleagues would have drunk his health, regretting the loss of an amiable friend, before he slipped away into the real world, to get on with his mission in life – to amuse, entertain and delight millions of enthusiasts for all time to come.

FOOTNOTE: Sadly for this flight of fantasy, the HSBC archive department has confirmed not only is there no HSBC/Midland branch at Dulwich Village, but there never was one. You couldn't really see Plum settling into branch life if required to work at, say, East Dulwich, the nearest Midland, could you?

Super or Supernatural?

Albert Roux invites you to try Anatoles Nonettes

In March's issue of *Wooster Sauce* we proudly published the first of four of Anatole's recipes recreated by Albert Roux. On page 3 of the same issue, there appeared a letter from Sir Roderick Glossop in which he mentioned the possibly supernatural qualities of another dish, Nonettes de Poulet Agnes Sorel. With the second of M Roux's creations, readers have the chance to judge the veracity of Sir Roderick's suspicions.

Nonettes de Poulet Agnes Sorel by Albert Roux

Ingredients for 4 servings

1 recipe of chicken mousseline (see separate instructions)
80 grams of butter
2 medium truffles, finely chopped
100 grams of pickled pork tongue, finely chopped
150 grams of chicken, skinless breast meat, diced small
2 small shallots, finely chopped
100 millilitres of madeira
300 millilitres of veal stock
Salt and pepper to taste

Advance preparation

Butter generously 4 dariole molds and place in the refrigerator for a few minutes.

When the butter is set, butter the dariole mold a second time.

Using the pickled tongue and half the chopped truffle, line each mold, one half with truffle and the other half with pickled tongue. Leave to set in the refrigerator.

Meanwhile, sauté the diced chicken breast with a little butter. Remove from heat, and add two tablespoons of sauce to the chicken with half of the remaining chopped truffles. Leave to cool.

Fill each mold with the chicken mousseline, making a little well in the centre.

Place the cooked chicken into each of the wells and cover with the remaining chicken mousseline, making sure the cooked chicken is sealed properly into the mousseline. This will keep for one day in the refrigerator.

The Sauce

Sweat the finely chopped shallots with a little butter until translucent. Deglaze with the madeira and reduce to one-third. Add the veal stock, bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer until slightly syrupy. Strain the sauce through a fine sieve.

To Cook and Assemble the Dish

Place the dariole molds into a Bain-Marie, cover with greaseproof paper and bake in the oven at 150°C until the mousse is set. Do not overbake or the mousse will start to rise.

Meanwhile, bring the sauce to a simmer, add the remaining chopped truffle and stir in a tablespoon of butter, a little at a time.

As soon as the Nonettes are cooked, unmold on to a platter.

Using a spatula, lift each Nonette on to an individual plate and spoon the sauce around.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALBERT ROUX'S CHICKEN MOUSSELINE

Ingredients

200 grams of chicken breasts, without skin, diced.
1 large egg white
400 grams double cream
Salt, to taste

Preparation

Place the diced chicken in a food processor, equipped with a cutting blade.

Process for a few minutes until you have a smooth purée.

Add the egg white and process for a few seconds.

Another new photograph of Wodehouse located



Plum is fifth from the left in the back row

Murray Hedgcock, one of our regular contributors, found a photograph of the Bourton Vale Cricket Team for the match against the MCC, played at Bourton-on-the-Water on August 24 and 25, 1906, in which Wodehouse is the middle player in the back row. MCC won the match by 9 wickets, Plum taking one wicket and scoring 3 (run out) and 24 (bowled).

The photograph was part of a collection of local photos acquired by David Hanks of Cotswold Images to whom enquiries should be directed by any member who would like to buy a copy. We are most grateful to David for his consent to reproduce in this issue the second photograph to come to light since *Wooster Sauce* began publication.

Mousseline Preparations (Continued)

Rub the purée through a fine sieve into a bowl set in crushed ice.

Using a spatula, incorporate the cream into the purée a little at a time.

Season with salt.

Poach a little chicken mousse into simmering salted water, to see whether the texture, lightness and seasoning are as they should be.

If necessary add a little cream or salt.

Keep refrigerated.

Nonettes de poulet Agnes Sorel was one of the dishes which Tuppy Glossop refused at dinner in *Right Ho, Jeeves* (ch11) before his unfortunate assignation in the larder with Angela, Dahlia and Tom Travers and a cold steak-and-kidney pie. Bertie described his renunciation of the dish as sensational and sticking out like a sore thumb. Gussie Fink-Nottle, who had been present with Tuppy at Brinkley Court, remembered the dish reverently in *The Code of the Woosters* (ch11), and could not believe Bertie when he told him that his Uncle Tom was considering yielding up Anatole to Sir Watkyn Bassett in exchange for a silver cow-creamer.

Letters to the Editor

From John Fletcher of Porpoise Books

In answer to David Mackie's enquiry (*Wooster Sauce*, March 1999) about the response of publishers to misprinted books, Porpoise Books would replace his copy with a good one. If there were a complete batch of books with, for instance, pages bound out of order, it would certainly have to be recalled, if only for the publisher's reputation. But in our experience batch errors are caught before they reach the publisher let alone the reader. Most such mistakes pointed out by readers are one-offs.

From Erica Kilby of Berkshire

The Times of 19 March carried this brief letter from a Mr H Sutherland Pilch:

I was walking down King William Street in the City yesterday and I saw a bare navel for the first time this year. Surely these days this is a better harbinger of spring than the cuckoo?

In *Over Seventy*, PGW refers in the chapter *Raw Eggs, Cuckoos and Patrons*, to the competition amongst Letters Page correspondents to be the first to report a sighting of a cuckoo, and the importance of being certain that it is indeed a cuckoo and not some poor substitute reed-warbler. One wonders what he would have made of a bare navel on display in the City.

Elsewhere in *Over Seventy* he wrote about the practice of studio executives of allowing an author to overhear a conversation about a tall, blonde girl with large, blue eyes who wears a pink bathing suit and has a freckle or mole in the small of her back. With great ease the prey could be induced to sign a Hollywood contract on the strength of a promised introduction to this girl. PG maintained that it was by this method that 'they got me'. Clearly he was not

immune to youthful feminine beauty, so I suspect the bare navel might have delighted rather than shocked him!

From Stephen Fullom of Hertfordshire

H M Nimkheddar's article *Kipling and Wodehouse* (*Wooster Sauce*, March 1999) reminded me of a PGW reference to Kipling in *Ring For Jeeves*, chapter 1. In describing a character with a bristly moustache, he made the observation that it seemed obligatory for Englishmen, who had served many years in the Far East, to grow a moustache, and adapted stanza 6 of Kipling's *Mandalay*.

One recalls the nostalgic words of the poet Kipling, when he sang "Put me somewhere east of Suez, where the best is like the worst, where there ain't no ten commandments and a man can raise a small bristly moustache."

It tickled me pink when I first read this over 40 years ago. It still does. Seldom have I been tickled pinker.

From Tristan Godfrey of Kent

My most recent step along the road to a complete collection of the Master was the purchase of an old *Penguin* copy of *The Luck of the Bodkins*. Towards the end of chapter 13, there are two lines:

Monty did not take [all the dishes on the menu], but he took enough of them to send him to the boat deck greatly refreshed and in a mood of extreme sentimentality. He felt like a loving python.

Not only had some anonymous hand underlined the last one-and-a-half words but had also written 'Early appearance of Monty Python' in the margin. Is there really some magical link between the Master and Messrs Idle, Cleese, Palin *et al*?

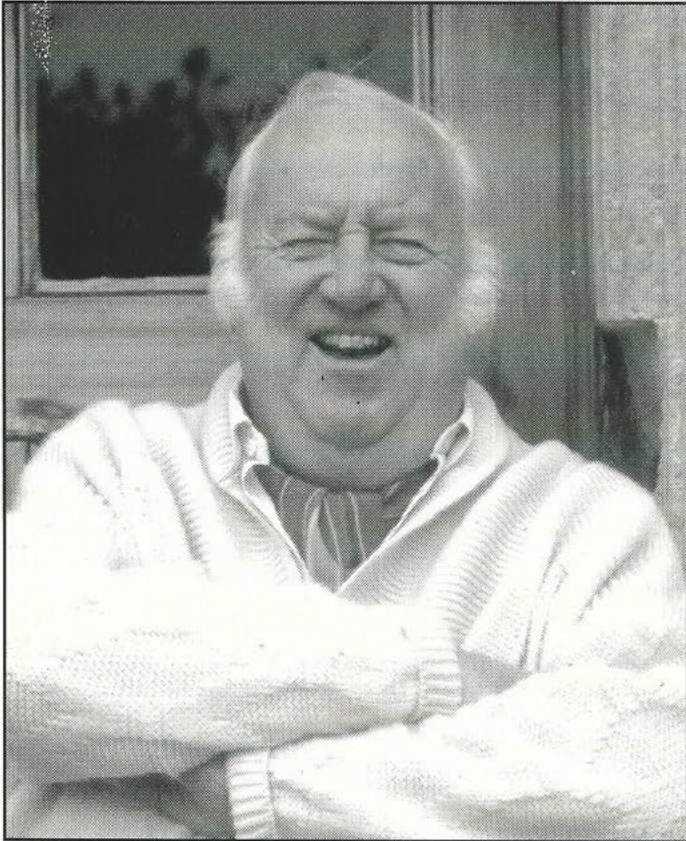
Millennium Concordance Reaches Volume 6

The sixth volume in the *Millennium Concordance* series, covering the short stories and novels of Jeeves and Bertie Wooster, Bingo Little and Reggie Pepper will be published by *Porpoise Books* in October.

In length in excess of three hundred pages, the text (written by Tony Ring using Geoffrey Jaggard's original *Wooster's World* as a base) provides a guide to all the characters in the relevant stories, with substantial essays on the personalities of those who appear most frequently. Also featured are summaries such as: *Court Appearances*; *If That's the Word I Want*; *Impersonations* and *A Man of Letters*.

New illustrations have been commissioned in line with previous volumes, and in addition several of the original sketches from both British and American magazines have been reproduced.

The retail price of the book will be £ 22. However, *Porpoise Books* will honour orders received before September 15 from within Europe, enclosing sterling cheques, at the post-free price of £ 20.



PROFILE OF A PATRON

Godfrey Smith joined *The Sunday Times* in 1951 when he left Oxford and is still there. He was editor of the paper's *Magazine* for seven years and of its *Review* for a further seven. He took over the *Atticus* column from Ian Fleming in 1958 and completes twenty years writing a column under his own name this December. He has written five novels and a trilogy on England. One, *The English Companion*, which he calls an idiosyncratic A to Z on England and Englishness, contains entries under *Wodehouse*, *Wooster* and *Jeeves*. He has been a devotee of the Master's work since the age of 14, when he and his schoolfriend John Bleach discovered the Psmith books and re-named themselves Pbleach and Psmith. Frankly he has always thought that being the Psmith part of the partnership gave him a start in life for which he has always been secretly grateful.

Photo: Steve Day

Crime Wave at Oxford

Enterprising Oxford Undergraduate David Slater adapted that superb short story *Crime Wave at Blandings* into a one-act play, which was performed on the lawns of Trinity College from May 26 to 29. The six-member cast entered into the spirit of the performance with great gusto and although an hour and a half long the audience, sitting in the open air with sun streaming down, showed no sign of restlessness. Lord Emsworth, played by Mike Watkins, was on stage the whole time, and showed many excellent comic touches. David's adaptation stayed very close to the original "because most of the story is dialogue anyway".

The underlying story, the performances and the weather combined to create an excellent piece of entertainment. David has generously indicated that his script can be made available to others who may wish to use it, and he can be contacted through his home

Annual General Meeting

This year's annual General Meeting will be held during the Society's regular Tuesday evening at the Savage Club on July 13. The actress Georgina Beer has agreed to read some Wodehouse to us, and Murray Hedgcock will explain how he tracked down the photograph which appears on page 11.

Richard Usborne's Birthday

Those readers who have visited the Society's website recently may have noticed the tribute to Richard Usborne in celebration of what was said to be his 90th birthday on May 16th. But it seems that this may have been premature, as later researches suggest that he may only have reached 89. Whichever is correct, *Wooster Sauce* adds its congratulations to the foremost Wodehousean scholar and notes that confusion of this type is not unprecedented.

In 1960, Wodehouse's American publishers, Simon and Schuster, took a big advertisement in the *New York Times* to celebrate his 80th birthday. Just in time, it was altered to read "P G Wodehouse is tomorrow entering his eightieth year . . ."

So whether Richard has indeed reached 90, or is merely entering his ninetieth year, we wish him well.

Subscription Renewal

A small percentage of members will receive a subscription renewal reminder with this issue of *Wooster Sauce*. If we have sent you one in error we apologise, but if you have overlooked the renewal date please send your cheque or, preferably, bankers' order, to Helen Murphy as soon as possible.

Notes on the Psmith, Journalist Manuscript

As foreshadowed in *Printers' Error* in *Wooster Sauce* for March 1999, these notes have been compiled from a copy of the autograph manuscript of the novel which was offered for sale last year.

The manuscript reveals information about the writing techniques of the relatively young Wodehouse. Written in America during his second visit in 1909, it is the only known autograph manuscript extant and is, regrettably, incomplete. Part of the original pages were probably extracted for him to work on during the merger of this book with *The Prince and Betty* to form the American story of that name.

For the first five chapters, the heading is *Psmith, USA*. The manuscript, written in ink, has many alterations, but nothing like as many as appear on the drafts of later work. Although Plum undoubtedly went through a process of polishing, it was nowhere near as thorough an exercise as given to, say, books of the inter-war period.

The story was originally written as a serial for *The Captain* starting in 1909, but was not published as a book until 1915. This has confused a number of readers into thinking that *The Prince and Betty* (a 1912 book) was written first. It wasn't. The book of *Psmith, Journalist* had a text virtually identical to that of its serial which, in turn, showed relatively few changes from the manuscript. Some words were amended here and there, and a few paragraphs were omitted. Otherwise, the original draft was used.

Since Wodehouse was in the USA when the serial was published, it is unlikely that he played a major part in the proof-reading. That may explain the most important error in the published text, ie the one highlightd in March: the name of the original editor of *Cosy Moments*. PGW wrote it as J Filliken Wilburfloss, and we would like to know why it was changed to J Fillken Wilberfloss. It is to be hoped that the original name will be restored in any future edition of *Psmith, Journalist*.

The manuscript starts by sending Wilburfloss on a six week vacation. By the first instalment of the serial this had increased to ten weeks, and Plum may well have realised that six weeks would have been too short a time in which to pack all the action which presumably developed as he wrote.

The following represents a selection of the minor changes made in the text to illustrate the relative lack of attention paid to the manuscript after it had been completed:

From

the advertisements had come trooping in
the mosquitoes have diminished their exertions
Psmith has been to New York. He is full of beans.
"I have not so much as seen a murder. And I was given to understand they were on view every night at any decent hotel or roof-garden."
"a good, fruity description of a murder, or something on those lines, would be welcome. . . ."

To

the advertisements had grown in volume
the mosquitoes have relaxed their exertions
Psmith has been to New York. He is full of oats.
"No cow-boy has let off his revolver at random on Broadway."
"a spine-chilling word-picture of a railway smash, or something on those lines, would be welcome . . ."

Otherwise, most of the changes are omissions. An early example is dialogue in a German accent from a waiter, which owes more to that of Herr Steingruber (of *The Luck Stone*, written a year earlier) than anything realistic:

"Der gentleman his hat und stick mit der gloak-room attendant before endering der grill-room leave.
Zo. Und also der gat in ids basget he mit der gloak-room attantant leave."

Another included a term which the OED attribute to him as first recorded user:

a candidate for the lunny-bin

It is of particular interest that he has carefully spelt out the word 'lunny' in capital letters alongside the text. This demonstrates, perhaps, that it is not a term which he expected the proof-readers to know.

A surprising amount of very typical Psmith dialogue was also omitted, including the following example:

"And very consoling that will be," said Psmith indulgently. "When we are piecing our skulls together after they have been fractured by sand-bags, we shall smile happily, and murmur 'What of it? It was not the work of Comrade Jarvis.'"

The manuscript does, of course, contain many more noteworthy amendments than can be included in a brief review. It is understood that a more comprehensive article will be included in *Volume 7* of the *Millennium Concordance*, to be published in October 2000.

Psmith, Journalist *Audiotope Review*

This journal makes no apologies for mentioning Chivers's unabridged audio readings of PG Wodehouse books at every opportunity, for they represent tremendous value for money and can bring much balm to the harrassed driver, the sick or those who just like to hear a vocal rendition of the Master's words. Neither do we have any hesitation in commending the quality of virtually all the readers, and in particular that of our patron Jonathan Cecil. Our opinion was endorsed in December last year by the *Financial Times* contributor Max Wilkinson, who led his review of the year's Audio Books by selecting Jonathan as his top reader, and praising his work with words bordering on adulation:

"Cecil's reading creates a gold standard for this year's selection of talking books."

In referring to his rendering of the Jeeves and Wooster novels, he says that Jonathan tries to portray Bertie as a decent, sensible chap with no giant brain, whose scrapes are just a series of accidents caused by other people.

"Cecil manages to make this seem amazingly plausible. So he exploits the inner nuances of Wodehouse's irony and makes the reader constantly aware of his mocking presence, just behind each character. I should add that Cecil does Jeeves superbly. And you absolutely could not tell his Gussie Fink-Nottle from the real thing.

So there you have it. Wodehouse is a genius, and as for Cecil, well, as they say, it takes one to spot one. Definitely my top tip for Christmas."

The latest Chivers unabridged reading which Jonathan has recorded set a new challenge, for *Psmith Journalist* comes replete with several American characters. It might be thought that having constantly to differentiate between this number of 'foreign' voices might put intolerable strain on an actor's vocal skills, but he handles this aspect valiantly. The story, of course, is one of the few written by Wodehouse which disguised a genuine social message – an attack on political corruption, and the evils of Rachmanism (though not yet known by that term) – and has always been somewhat underestimated. Psmith was the first major character which Wodehouse created (Ukridge did not become a 'major' character until the short stories of the 1920s) and he is portrayed smoothly and efficiently by Jonathan, whom you could imagine stepping into the personality of Psmith himself. The fact that both went to Eton somehow makes this feeling more plausible!

Psmith Journalist is available from the Audio Book Collection, Freepost (BA 1686/1) Bath BA2 3AX; Freephone 0800 136919; or from Chivers North America (1-800-621-0182). Price in UK £ 15.99; approximately 6 hours playing time.

Other Reviews and Publications

Full Moon

Radio 4 broadcast a four-part dramatisation of *Full Moon* in April and May. Recorded by Radio Scotland, all our Scottish members were contacted with invitations to attend the recording.

The production offered some innovations: Hermione Wedge's part was played by Giles Havergal, who doubled the role with that of Lord Emsworth! Each of the characters undertook their own narration, which worked reasonably well, but the intermittent laughter from the live audience gave the work a somewhat unreal air. Some members have expressed views not wholly complementary to the producers.

If Members who heard any of the episodes would like to let their opinions be known, please drop a line to The Editor.

The Inimitable Jeeves

The BBC Record Collection has issued the two-cassette dramatisation of eight stories from *The Inimitable Jeeves*. They were first broadcast in 1973, star Michael Hordern and Richard Briers, and amongst the supporting cast are Jonathan Cecil, Pat Coombs, Andrew Cruickshank, Maurice Denham, David Jason, and Miriam Margolyes.

This recording can be obtained from bookshops or directly from VideoPlusDirect (Tel: 0181 576 2236; Fax: 01733 2306128). Price £ 8.99.

Heavy Weather

A video of the film of *Heavy Weather* broadcast on BBC television on Boxing Day 1996 has at last been released. Produced by Acorn Video, its reference number is AVO132, it costs £ 12.99 and can be obtained to order from most video retailers.

Wodehouse at the Guildford Book Festival in October

The festival this year will incorporate a number of events related to Wodehouse which may interest members, including the following :

October 9 to 30

Mr P G Wodehouse from Guildford

An exhibition on the life of the author, who was born in Guildford. To be held in the Guildford House Gallery, 10.00am to 4.45pm, Tuesdays to Saturdays. Admission free.

October 27

A Damsel in Distress

A talk, a glass of wine and a showing of the film, which was based on Wodehouse's 1919 novel, and on which he worked whilst in Hollywood in 1937. To be held in The Guildhall, High Street, 7.30pm. Admission £7.50.

October 28

Wodehouse's England

An illustrated lecture by Norman Murphy. To be held at Salters, Castle Street, 7.30pm. Admission £3.50.

October 29

Ladies' Night at the Drones

A party for members of both sexes, with fizz and nibbles. Dramatic and musical entertainment supplied by the Guildford School of Acting. Black or White tie compulsory. To be held at Guildford House, High Street, 7.30pm. Admission £15.

October 30

Drones Club Games

A few games and pranks to attract children and silly asses. To be held at Guildford House, High Street, 2.30pm. Admission free.

For advance bookings, write to Guildford Museum, Castle Arch, Guildford, GU1 3SX (01483 44750). Some tickets will be held back for Society members until mid-August, after which tickets will be principally sold through the Guildford Book Festival outlets.

The Museum is anxious for volunteers from the Society to assist with the exhibition generally, and in particular for help in two ways with the Drones Club Games event.

It would welcome the presence of Members to help organise and supervise some of the games (for which there will be prizes), and would also welcome suggestions as to games which could be featured. They need not be absolutely authentically described in the books, but must be of the period and simple to run. Will any athletic member volunteer to be Baxter in 'Pot the Bending Baxter'? Or can a Member make a suitable effigy for that game (which could perhaps be burned a few days later on a bonfire)?

Illustrations of The World of Wodehouse



Over the years a considerable number of book and magazines have illustrated Wodehouse's stories with varying degrees of skill, and have produced many memorable images. More recently Peter van Straaten provided a series of line illustrations for the *McIlvaine Bibliography*, and new illustrations of the pub signs of Market Blandings were featured in *Wodehouse at Blandings Castle* in the *Millennium Concordance* series.

David Thirlby, Editor of the *Vintage Sports Car Club Bulletin* was recently sent an imaginative illustration of the radiator mascot of the Buffy-Porson motor car from Mr Anthony Phillips-Smith, who signs himself as 'Apsley'. A car of this particular model, which belonged to Pongo Twistleton-Twistleton, was referred to in both *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* (chapter 1) and *Uncle Dynamite* (chapter 2).

If other readers would care to submit to the Editor sketches of lesser-known aspects of Wodehouseana (together with a precise reference to their subject in the works) he will be happy to consider including them in *Wooster Sauce*.

The Society's Visit to Emsworth

The Society's visit to the Emsworth Museum, in North Street, Emsworth, on June 5 was a happy event, and we were treated to some impeccable hospitality. After being welcomed to the Museum, which has a permanent Wodehouse exhibition, we heard two talks, the first prepared by the Museum Trust's Vice-President Strahan Soames, who had attended Emsworth House School, and the second given by Norman Murphy. Unfortunately Strahan Soames was ill, and Tessa Daines gave the talk on his behalf. We wish him well. Tessa had prepared such a relevant welcome that we cannot resist printing it below.

We were then escorted to Threepwood, the house in Record Road where Plum lived for many years from 1903. The property is now owned by the Hart family, who very kindly invited us to look at the interior, recently restored to close to its original appearance, and the impressive garden. We thank them very much for their kindness in permitting our intrusion.

Museum Trust Members drove us to a number of local places of Wodehousean interest, including the grounds of the former Emsworth House, Beach Road (from the end of which one can see Hayling Island), Warblington Church and Cemetery, and the site of the old oyster beds about which Plum wrote in *A Damsel in Distress*.

"This week we have had *Heavy Weather* with plenty of *Summer Lightning*, following a *Full Moon* and *Summer Moonshine*. Today, however, there was *Joy in the Morning* and *Nothing Serious* could prevent *The Old Reliable* museum preparing *Something Fresh* and presenting *Service with a Smile*.

The Man Upstairs said 'If I Were You I'd prepare *A Few Quick Ones* for *The Coming of Bill* and some *Company for Henry*. Our visitors might include *Lord Emsworth and Others* with *Mike and Psmith*, *Ukridge*, *Uncle Dynamite* and *Jill the Reckless*.' The committee wondered if *Young Men in Spats* or any *Bachelors Anonymous* could be expected.

I replied 'I think there will be *A Gentleman of Leisure*, people taking *French Leave* and there may be of course a *Small Bachelor*. For a mid-day meal we had better prepare *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*, a *Little Nugget* of *Plum Pie* or even *Something Fishy*.

They could order their own meal as long as we have *Quick Service* and *Hot Water* for the coffee, but we must trust *Cocktail Time* not to leave them *Barmy in Wonderland*. If they get *Louder and Funnier*, behave like *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* and roam around Emsworth like *The Man with Two Left Feet*, possibly repeating the *Indiscretions of Archie*, we may have to call on *The Girl in Blue* or *Doctor Sally* to attend any *Damsel in Distress*.

However, we have been assured there would be *Love Among the Chickens*, *A Pelican at Blandings* and *Pigs Have Wings* before The P G Wodehouse Society would break *The Code of the Woosters*. So, turn on the *Laughing Gas*, *Ring for Jeeves* and let's enjoy ourselves with *The Best of Wodehouse*.' "

The Emsworth Museum, 10b North Street, Emsworth, Hampshire, is open until the end of October: on Fridays (during August) and Saturdays from 10.30am to 4.30pm, and on Sundays from 2.30 to 4.30pm.

POETS' CORNER

Avenged

"O Carpenter," the Walrus said,
"Life's joys soon disappear.
There seem to be no oysters left,
We've swept the table clear."
The Carpenter said nothing but
"I'm feeling *precious* queer."

"O Carpenter," the Walrus said,
"I sympathise with you.
You say you feel rather odd,
I doubt not that you do,
For, curious as it may appear,
I feel peculiar, too."

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of doctors' bills,
Of pulses up to fever height,
Of medicine and pills.
I would not for the world alarm,
But – shall we make our wills?"

"O oysters!" moaned the Carpenter,
And that was all he said,
As on the coolest piece of rock
He laid his aching head.
The Walrus, too, refrained from speech,
He was already dead.

This poem first appeared in Punch on February 11th, 1903.

These verses were written to show what would happen if, in words attributed to Tweedledee, the oysters had been near the isthmus of sewage. Presumably at Emsworth.

Did You Know?

Printers' Errors – 10

Mr P Zimmerman from Vence, France, has an Autograph Edition of *Young Men in Spats*, published in 1957, whose copyright page states:

*First published by
Herbert Jenkins Limited,
3 Duke of York Street,
London, S.W.1
1922*

*First published in the
Autograph Edition
1957*

The correct first printing date for the book is 1936 not 1922.

Recent Press Comment

Thanks to all members who have submitted contributions, and apologies to those whose offerings are not included through lack of space. Please keep sending cuttings.

The Hindu (Madras), February 7 (from Harshawardhan Nimkhedar)

Included *Wodehouse at the Wicket*, edited by Murray Hedgcock, as one of its cricket books of the year.

New York Times, February 14 (from David McDonough)
William Safire referred in a column *On Language* to the return of the word 'gruntled' to the Oxford English and Merriam-Webster dictionaries following its use in *The Code of the Woosters*, describing it as 'a back-formation from disgruntled'.

Sunday Telegraph, February 21

Anthea Fell, translator of the Asterix comic-strip books, wrote about the problem of translating French speech written 'with a truly dreadful English accent. The solution was a stilted English style, the language of the upper-class twit as encountered in the pages of P G Wodehouse.'

Sunday Times, February 28

Godfrey Smith praised the late Derek Nimmo's ability in playing Bingo Little and Freddie Threepwood but took to task the obituary writer in *The Times* for a factual error and challenged one of his opinions.

Daily Mail, March 5

Re Lord Cranborne's dismissal from the Shadow Cabinet, it pointed out that although he surrounded himself with prize pigs he should not be regarded as a relic from the pages of Wodehouse or Trollope.

Times, March 9

Reported that a Chris Burke had produced murals to brighten up the Ottakar's Bookshops chain, one of which contained a clear caricature of PGW.

Time Out, March 10

Previewed the forthcoming *Penguin* reissue.

Richmond and Twickenham Times, March 12 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Published a letter correcting a misleading impression in the last issue that the local Rotary Club's foundation 75 years previously had coincided with the publication of 'PGWodehouse's bestseller *Jeeves*'.

Times, March 13

In a feature on the British breakfast, it was stated that PGW had defined tea as the essence of Englishness in *Thank You Jeeves* when Bertie said: "I don't as a general rule become what you might call breakfast-conscious till I've had my morning tea and rather thought things over a bit."

Independent on Sunday, March 14 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Jane Hughes reported on the return of the freelance valet, 80 years after Jeeves was created.

New York Times March 19 (from Marilyn MacGregor)
Speculated on the possibility that *By Jeeves* would open at the Helen Hayes Theater on Broadway in April, but said that Alan Ayckbourn's schedule would not allow sufficient time for rehearsal.

Daily Telegraph, March 20 (from Ruth Allen)

John Bayley, writing about his *Book of the Century*, distinguished between 'what we think of as great books and the ones we actually go back to reread', saying 'to admire is one thing: to be an addict is another' and that for comfort and refuge we find ourselves sneaking off to P G Wodehouse, Kipling or Buchan, even Nancy Mitford.'

Sunday Times, March 21

John Le Carré named 'All P G Wodehouse, any time, anywhere' as the funniest books he has ever read.

Times, March 30

Alan Hamilton wrote about the 50th anniversary of the 6th Marquess of Bath becoming the first stately home owner 'to admit the common herd. It seemed at the time like a P G Wodehouse story come to life'

[Editor's comment: surely it did not take 30 years after the publication of *A Damsel in Distress* in 1919, in which Belper Castle was thrown open to the public every Thursday, for members of the actual peerage to appreciate the commercial possibilities?]

Observer Review, March 28 (from Peter Wightman)

Michael Bywater introduced an article *Things we could have done without in the past 1,000 years: 9. The Unconscious* by referring to Bertie Wooster's comment after Jeeves had told him that it was his unconscious that had helped him solve a problem while he slept:

"I never actually knew I had an unconscious mind . . . but I suppose I must have done all along, without realising it."

Art Quarterly, Spring (from James Wood)

Reported that a portrait of Sir Armine Wodehouse, c 1759, had been purchased by the National Army Museum with the help of the National Art Collecting Fund.

W, Spring (from Kate Jones)

The quarterly literary magazine, published by Waterstone's, included an article about Wodehouse by David Sexton entitled *Eternal Innocent*.

Recent Press Comment, continued

Independent, April 10 (from Helen Murphy)

When Terry Pratchett was chauffeured between events during the London Literary Festival, he insisted on reading aloud to his driver – from Wodehouse.

Daily Telegraph, April 13 (from Hilary Bruce)

The *Obituary* of Mary Lutyens mentioned that the subject of one of her biographies, the Indian religious teacher Krishnamurti, had a sense of humour, ‘winking at Mary behind the theosophists’ backs and collapsing in stitches of laughter over P G Wodehouse’.

Standard, April 22 (from John Hayzelden)

Robert Harris, a friend of Peter Mandelsohn, was quoted as having always thought of him as Jeeves in the Bertie Wooster stories rather than Machiavelli, the Prince of Darkness.

New Yorker, April 26 (from Jan Kaufman)

Reminiscing about life in the Depression of the 1930s, John Updike said that two hundred ‘Lincoln pennies’ collected in piggy banks could be exchanged for an agreeably lightweight novel by Thorne Smith or PGW.

Sunday Times, May 2

James Herbert named *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* as his funniest book.

Times, May 3 (and for some inexplicable reason May 31 as well) (from James Wood)

The word ‘Oofless’ was defined in its *Word-Watching* game as: from the slang oof and oofiness, meaning *dosh*. NB Oofy Prosser in Wodehouse.

Express, May 31 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Mary Kenny claimed that Paddington Station, from where Lord Emsworth would take the train to Blandings, was still the ‘toffs’ station’, because it had more seats for departing passengers than any other.

Sunday Times, June 6

Jay McInerney named *The Code of the Woosters* as the comfort book which he rereads (‘perfect for depression, world-weariness and hangovers’) and said that ‘anything by Wodehouse – *Joy in the Morning* is a current favourite’ qualified as his funniest book.

Articles at the time of the Penguin reissue

Times, May 9

Richard Brooks, Literary Editor, writing about an unlikely mix of Wodehouse fans, mentioned Tony Blair, Ben Elton, Helen Baxendale and Arabella Weir.

Standard, May 24 (from Helen Murphy)

Pete Clark celebrated the reissue in an article *Hats Off to a Jolly Good Egg* in which he expressed the view that Wodehouse prose was ‘fit to stand alongside the words of Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh or Kingsley Amis’ and that he was a ‘better writer as well as a more reliable deliverer of mirth than D H Lawrence, George Orwell or Arnold Bennett’. He mentioned in passing that Wodehouse’s work is a set text for examinations in Japan.

Times, May 28

Lynne Truss wrote a superb article *A Report from the Bunker* in which she retraced Plum’s steps into the bunker on the sixth hole at Addington during a round at his old course with Charles Wodehouse, a cousin once removed. She recalled James Agate’s statement that Wodehouse’s literary style was ‘a little below Shakespeare’s and any distance above anyone else’s’.

Sunday Telegraph, May 23 (from Peter Cannon and Ruth Allen)

Nicola Shulman wrote about the reissue for a new generation of readers by a writer ‘who never put a foot wrong’. Hugh Laurie had a feature entitled *Wodehouse Saved My Life* in which he told how ‘the comic genius made me clean up my squalid existence’.

Guardian, May 29 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Christopher Hitchens’s article *Breaking the Wooster Code* commented on the correlations and correspondence between the Wildean and Wodehousean universes, but pointed out that throughout Wodehouse there was not a single quotation attributable to Wilde.

Observer, May 30 (from John Fletcher)

Robert McCrum, Literary Editor, called the reissue ‘a terrific corporate decision’ and said that Wodehouse is confirmed as a comic writer of sheer genius, adding that ‘At the *Observer*, more people have tried to steal this set of *Penguin* Wodehouses from my office than any other volume in living memory’.

Guardian, June 2 (from Tristan Godfrey)

Francis Wheen suggested that *Penguin* should reissue *The Swoop* (one of the more difficult Wodehouse books to find, which told the story of nine foreign armies marching simultaneously into Britain) in time for the European Elections on June 10.

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

July 7 – Radio 4 Broadcast

A radio play entitled *Plum's War*, in which George Orwell is provided with the role of narrator. Write and tell us what you think about it.

July 13 – Informal meeting at the Savage Club

Join other members from 6pm, with Georgina Beer and Murray Hedgcock. See page 13 for more details. The Savage Club is in the premises of the National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, which is close to Embankment and Charing Cross underground stations.

August 7 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Join the Chairman on one of his famous walks round Wodehouse's London. Please call Norman on [redacted] to register your interest and confirm where and when to meet in central London.

October 22 to 24 – TWS Convention in Houston

There remain vacancies for this Wodehouse carnival. Full details can be obtained from [redacted]

October 25 to 30 – Exhibition and related events at Guildford Museum

For full details, including information on how to obtain tickets for the three evening events, please see page 16.

November 7 – Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford

Linked with the Guildford Book Festival, it is hoped that Jonathan Cecil and Anna Sharkey will be performing *Plum Sauce*, their 'Words and Music by Wodehouse' show, at 7.30pm at the Yvonne Arnaud.

It is understood that arrangements have not yet been finalised and if the show is to be staged it may even be on a different Sunday around the end of October. More details in September's *Wooster Sauce*.

November 16 – Informal meeting at the Savage Club

Join other members from 6pm. More details later.

2000

July 17 to 23 – Wodehouse Society Millennium Tour

For preliminary information about this event, see page 1

EDITOR'S TAILPIECES

David Landman has written to say that Iona Antiques (0171 602 1193, fax 0171 371 2843, website: <http://www.art-on-line.com/iona>) have available for sale a pair of Modern Pig Prints after original 19th century paintings. One is a Berkshire Sow, the other a Middle White. Price £ 31 in UK, £ 33 overseas.

Have you noticed from the press that the 'protect the newt' season is upon us again. *The Times* reported on June 10, for instance, that Marchington landfill site in Staffordshire is being closed for six months while hundreds of great crested newts, which is an internationally protected species, are lured to safer ground near by.

Murray Hedgcock noticed in the *Daily Telegraph* on June 1 an Obituary of *Air Commodore Ernest 'Bertie' Wootten* who apparently gained his nickname 'after Wodehouse's character – rather more because he came from Worcester than for Woosterish tendencies, though he was a snappy dresser'.

James Hogg noticed while surfing the Internet that a Professor Jeeves has written a history of Psychology at St Andrews University, presumably laying great stress on the psychology of the individual.

Just as the last paragraphs of this issue were being prepared, I received a letter from Dr Alan Davies of Hampshire, who has a number of first editions inscribed by PGW to Estelle and Ivy Bishop and he wonders whether any member of the Society may be able to identify them. In view of the fact that the earliest, dated May 16, 1910, is in *The Intrusion of Jimmy*, the American title of *A Gentleman of Leisure*, it seems likely that they were American friends. Can anybody help, please?

During a visit to North America at the end of June, I hope to see a one-off stage performance of *Right Ho, Jeeves*, by Robert Goodale, at Lamb's Manhattan Church! And also *A Foggy Day*, the musical based on *A Damsel in Distress* which is part of the Shaw Festival, near Toronto. Reports in September.