

WOOSTER SAUCE



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

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The Drones Club Comes Alive at Gray's Inn

Murray Hedgcock explains how

Enjoined to enjoy, so to speak, and by Royal Command, no less – then we Wodehouseans know how to respond. The message from Clarence House was read in suitably judicial tones by Sir Edward Cazalet, as we gathered on October 19 in the Hall of Gray's Inn for the PGW birthday dinner.

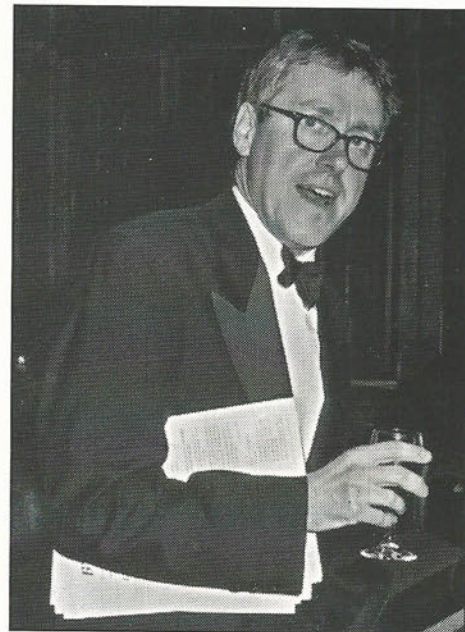
“I regret that I am unable to be with you. However I send my best wishes and, as Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright once said – ‘May you all have a binge to stagger humanity.’”

This was the greeting directive, from PGW's most famous and surely longest-lived fan, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. Truly it did not need Royal assent for a binge of thoroughly pleasing proportions, but the evening gained just that little extra brio as a result. It was all very relaxed: “Just a black tie. We are quite informal here” (as Spode in his ‘sickening geniality’ mode told Bertie in *The Code of the Woosters*). Gallant men and beautifully garbed women socialised Plummily in the softly-lit panelled rooms which were so redolent of the World of Wodehouse.

Preliminary chit-chat and aperitifs having been thoroughly appreciated, we adjourned from ante-room to Hall, to find our places at the dozen tables spread for our pleasure. These were cunningly labelled using Drones Club characters for the table letters – although to conjure Table E out of ‘Bertie Wooster’ appeared a little adventurous.

Your correspondent's Table was marked NelsonCork – which seemed a sly dig at someone or other, given that the Drone Cork in *The Amazing Hat Mystery* is described as ‘built like a minor jockey, with a head like a peanut’.

Tony Ring's clear tenor rose as required to the vaulted ceiling (all 47 feet high) in his role as MC. President Briers proposed the Loyal Toast, Sir Edward Cazalet the toast to the Queen Mother – and then it was the turn of Society patron and definite



Griff Rhys Jones in full flow

good egg Griff Rhys Jones to invite us to honour PGW and The Wodehouse Society (UK). He was fast, he was funny, he was suitably knowledgeable about and admiring of The Master – and flattering to those who spend their hours burrowing in the archives to speculate on matters Wodehousean in divers learned journals and volumes, not least that repository of all knowledge, *Wooster Sauce*. “Seriously unhinged” was his kindly reference to his Wodehouse peers: we were thrilled at the accolade, delighted at his good humour, and honoured by his presence.

The cabaret, unique and unforgettable (see page 3), rounded off an evening which might best be summed up thus: Setting – tophole. Company – convivial to the nth degree. Browsing and sluicing – oojah cum spiff. And entertainment – better even than the legendary Drones' smoking concerts. ‘The Hall has been the setting for many celebrated social occasions’, says Weinreb and Hibbert's authoritative *London Encyclopaedia*. We may feel proud that we continued the tradition.

Notes from a Small Thai Island

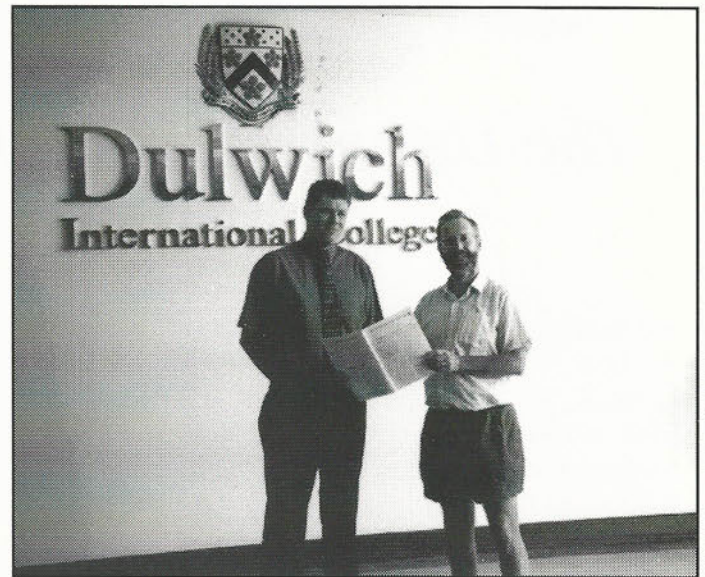
Dr Eric Coulton takes a trip to Dulwich International College

The arrival of June's *Wooster Sauce* with its article by Graham Able on *Dulwich and the Thai that Binds* immediately suggested a not-to-be-missed photo-opportunity during the course of my family's planned summer holiday, visiting a long-standing friend teaching at that illustrious college. Dulwich transported to an island paradise? Shades of *The Prince and Betty*!

Phuket Island (the h is silent as in *Phooh Bear* or *Phooh-Bah*) lies 8° north of the equator on Thailand's western shoreline. Jeeves tells me that in the days when PG should have been steaming his way out east to consolidate his career in the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank rather than investing in typewriters it was known by the unlikely name of Junkseylon, a corruption apparently of *Ujang Salang*, the Malay for 'northern island'. Much obliged, Jeeves. Palm-fringed beaches and coral islets dominate the western coast, whilst the strange limestone islands of Phang-nga Bay lie to the east, immortalised in the film version of Ian Fleming's *The Man with the Golden Gun*. (Was that a remake of *The Crime Wave at Blandings*?) At the turn of the century the island's economy was built on tin – it was originally mined, subsequently dredged – but tin has now been replaced with tourism and on remote beaches around Phuket both redundant dredgers and recumbent tourists can be observed gradually turning a rusty brown.

Driving north out of Phuket Town along the Thepkrasattri Road, with just a brief backward glance to salute the 50ft high hoarding of the king and queen calmly looking down on the frenetic traffic (five, six or even seven individuals to a motor bike!) one takes a left turn which leads through open country to Graham Able's aptly-described *modern interpretation of the Barry buildings against a jungle backdrop*, although with its neo-colonial white facade one could be forgiven for mistaking it for the far-eastern headquarters of the New Asiatic Bank!

Our friend Nia kindly showed us around. The school is spacious and cool, and the entrance hall sports a copy of the original charter given to Dulwich, London, signed by such worthies as Francis Bacon (the one who wrote all those Shakespearean plays) and Inigo Jones. The quality of the work on the multiplicity of notice-boards was impressive, but one feels that the lack of ink-stains or initials carved on desks limits any true comparison with Wrykyn.



Neil Smith and Eric Coulton peruse *Wooster Sauce*

The school is fronted by fine lawns and immaculate variegated hedges, lovingly tended by Thai gardeners without a McAllister in sight to ruin their horticultural designs. I was there during the school holidays, and the headmaster Chris Charleson was away, but the Head of Primary, Neil Smith, very kindly took time out from interviewing the parents of potential Farnies and Ogdens (or more hopefully Mikes and Psmiths) to receive some copies of June's *Wooster Sauce* on behalf of the College with the compliments of the P G Wodehouse Society (UK).

And what would PG have made out of it all? With no Valley Fields beyond the school gates, no busy metropolis to house both Drones and workers, and no stately homes to pop up and down to, he might initially have struggled. But with his eye for noting the idiosyncrasies of fellow-members of the human race, his skill in perfecting complex plots, and his unerring gift for *le mot juste*, I have no doubt at all that in the fullness of time stories would have been flowing from his prolific pen. Schoolboys, millionaire yachtmen, tin magnates, shell collectors, and even headmasters – all would have been incorporated in a rich mix and cooked to perfection by England's one and only literary performing flea. Would *Love Among the Chicken Fried Rice* have the right sort of ring?

(My thanks go to Neil Smith for his courtesy, and to Nia and husband Paul for their hospitality and kindness during our stay on Phuket.)

All For Our Delight

Cabaret Critic Murray Hedcock Reviews “The Hot Spot”

The Hall at Gray’s Inn, built in 1556, saw the first performance of *Comedy of Errors*, in 1594, at the sponsorship of Shakespeare’s patron, the Earl of Southampton, who was a member of the Inn. A mere four and half centuries later – give or take the odd year – the Hall also saw the first presentation of that riveting new dramatic entertainment, *The Hot Spot*. Those who had taken part in its somewhat erratic final rehearsal whispered that it bore every prospect of being a *Tragedy of Errors*. But it is always all right on the night, and all right it certainly was on this night.

This theatrical extravaganza-with-a-message was described in the menu of the Wodehouse Society dinner as *A light soufflé of a musical comedy* – which surely did it no justice at all. Here, at last, was the full and startling explanation of what went wrong with Ronnie Fish’s first major venture into the world of the entrepreneur – his night-club, The Hot Spot.



Madeline and Gussie

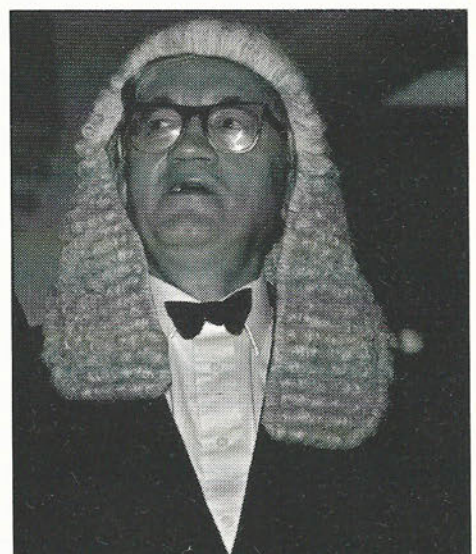


Honorina and Bingo Little

Delving deep into Plum’s world, it assembled a clue here, a hint there, a memory somewhere else, a fact elsewhere, adding up to the moving tale of small, pink Ronnie’s attempts to make his way in the world of big business.

Mr Ned Sherrin does not in private exhude vertical challenge, nor any notable degree of pinkness, but his talents are such that he overcame these handicaps in masterful fashion to act as narrator Fish, switching to dialogue as required, to tell us all. He explained how he prepared assiduously for the opening of what was intended as the centre of Mayfair’s cultural scene, engaging the delightful Madeline Bassett as a member of his (non-existent) chorus.

The Bassett is normally more of a Gawd-help-us than a delight, but as played by Miss Lara Cazalet, what else could she be than delightful? The robust Bingo Little of Mr Ted Hands, the anorak quality (to use a modern phrase) of Mr Simon Day as Gussie Fink-Nottle, the magisterial air of Sir Edward Cazalet as Sir Watkyn Bassett, and the schizoid talents of Mr Tim Taylor, playing both Ralph and Policeman (whose arrival doomed The Hot Spot practically before it could draw breath) made the plot live and breathe. And Miss Lucy Tregear as Honorina Glossop (the role she played so memorably in the musical *By Jeeves*) made it clear why certain PGW characters fell for her very particular charms, both intimidating and seductive, a sort of Margaret Thatcher of her time. With Miss Susie Allan far outreaching the quality of Jas Waterbury at the piano, the songs were accompanied and sung with every freshness and sparkle that marks these great Wodehouse contributions to the stage – *The Enchanted Train*, *Oh Gee Oh Joy*, *Napoleon*, and of course *Bill* (Madeline’s solo).



Sir Watkyn Bassett

Plum would have been pleased that the songs were integrated into the dialogue (well . . . reasonably). And it all took place under the intimidating gaze of the first Queen Elizabeth, her portrait adorning the backdrop wall. “We are not amused” is the legendary verdict of Royal ladies on the antics of their subjects. Surely even Good Queen Bess must have been amused, and highly so, on this merry night . . .

The photos on this page and page 1 were provided by Ginni Beard

An Accident Waiting to Happen

Tom Smith explains the possible origins of Ukridge's Accident Syndicate

The reader of the early Twenty-first Century may find *Ukridge's Accident Syndicate*, published in 1924, to be just another of P G Wodehouse's amusing tales of Stanley Featherstonehaugh Ukridge and his get-rich-quick schemes. In this story, Ukridge gets a group of friends to form a syndicate to subscribe to as many papers as possible under a single name. He hatches the plan after hearing that his friend, Freddie Lunt, had received a five-pound payoff from the *Weekly Cyclist* just for spraining his ankle. At first Ukridge is sceptical until Freddie assures him that many papers offer free insurance to their subscribers. All the Syndicate has to do is have the member, in whose name the subscriptions are made, take a fall and then sit back on their collective haunches while the money comes pouring in.

Unlike many of Ukridge's schemes, this one seems promising to his friends. As one of the members of the Syndicate reports:

"We were interested. This was in the days before every daily paper in London was competing madly against its rivals in the matter of insurance and offering princely bribes to the citizens to make a fortune by breaking their necks. Nowadays papers are paying as high as two thousand pounds for a genuine corpse and five pounds a week for a dislocated spine; but at that time the idea was new and it had an attractive appeal."

The members draw straws, and one Teddy Weeks gets the short straw. Teddy, an actor on the London stage, is not too thrilled about being injured and delays having his agreed-upon accident. Finally, under pressure from the Syndicate, Teddy tells the members that he can't bring himself to have an accident unless they give him a dinner with liberal quantities of champagne to steel his nerves. After the dinner, he gets into an argument with the Syndicate and tells them he never really intended to have an accident. Leaving them, Teddy steps off the kerb, into the path of an oncoming truck.

And here we find the grains of truth on which Wodehouse built another piece of brilliant social satire. In the twenties, when Wodehouse wrote this tale, the papers in London were, indeed, offering their subscribers insurance policies. George Newnes was the perpetrator of the madness, which began in the 1880s. In 1880, the year before Plum was born, Newnes founded *Tit-Bits* as a new weekly paper catering to a 'new class of potential readers' created

by the *Education Act* of 1870. These new readers, according to historian R C K Ensor, 'had been taught to decipher print' but not much else. Newnes saw that the papers of the times with 'long articles, long paragraphs, and long words' made demands on reading skills absent in these readers and overlooked a very large market. He set out to fill the void with *Tit-Bits*, the paper that would publish Plum's first 'overtly humorous story.'

His paper was oriented to 'people who only followed print painfully and with difficulty'. Newnes gave his readers articles designed to hold their interest by using 'short words, short sentences, short paragraphs, short articles, and to print everything as far as possible in story form'. Newnes was also a marketing genius. He was the first publisher to use competitions and giveaways to increase circulation. It would not take long for others to see Newnes' wisdom.

Never travel without "Tit-Bits."

"TIT-BITS" SYSTEM OF LIFE INSURANCE.

ONE THOUSAND POUNDS will be paid by the Car and General Insurance Corporation, Limited, Head Office, 1, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C., and thirty branch offices, to the legal personal representative of the *bona-fide* holder of this Coupon-Insurance-Ticket if such holder shall be killed or fatally injured by an accident in the United Kingdom to any Railway Company's passenger train in which such holder is travelling as an ordinary ticket-bearing passenger, season-ticket holder, or trader's ticket holder. ONE HUNDRED POUNDS will be paid by the said Corporation if such holder, not being a railway servant on duty, nor a suicide, nor engaged in any illegal act, shall be killed or fatally injured by a railway accident in the United Kingdom other than an accident to the train in which he is travelling.

For full conditions governing *Tit-Bits* System of Life Insurance see the issue of March 26th.

In the event of the holder desiring that the money shall be paid to any particular person or persons (for example — the holder's mother, wife, husband, or sweetheart), the holder should fill up and sign the form which will be found on page 302.

"TIT-BITS" COUPON-INSURANCE-TICKET.

This Ticket must NOT be detached.

Available from 9 a.m. TUESDAY, 7th day of JUNE, 1910, to 9 a.m. TUESDAY, 14th day of JUNE, 1910, both days inclusive.

Both this illustration and that on the next page are taken from Tit-Bits for June 11, 1910, which contained the first instalment of The Intrusion of Jimmy

More on Wolff-Lehman

The Editor has received this letter from James Hogg

Dear Sir

Like Joe Harkins in *Wooster Sauce No. 15* I too have puzzled over the varied spellings of Wolff-Lehman, the pig dietician admired by Lord Emsworth. As for why Wodehouse chose such a distinctive name for his calorie expert, I wonder if The Hogarth Press provides a clue.

This publishing house had a remarkable authors' list, including E M Forster, T S Eliot, Katharine

Mansfield, John Maynard Keynes and Sigmund Freud. It was run for many years by Leonard and Virginia Woolf, but in the period 1938-46 their partner and general manager was the writer John Lehmann. The Woolf-Lehmann partnership was too well-known for Wodehouse not to be aware of it. In appropriating the names for a double-barrelled authority on pigfood, was he having a cryptic joke at the expense of Bloomsbury?

Ukridge's Accident Syndicate, continued

In 1888 Alfred Harmsworth, a former employee of Newnes and later Lord Northcliffe, launched a competing paper. The paper fizzled for its first sixteen months. Then Harmsworth used one of his old boss's marketing schemes: he offered one pound per week for life to anyone who could guess the amount of gold in the Bank of England on a specific day. Harmsworth's paper took off and Newnes had to counter the threat. Newnes answered Harmsworth's shot by being the first publisher to offer free insurance, even though 'it was only a modest policy against railway accidents', (see the illustrations).

was an understatement. In their social history of England between the World Wars, Robert Graves and Alan Hodge inform us that as Wodehouse was setting his story on paper, the newspapers of London engaged in 'a bitter and exhausting circulation war'. To retain readers, attract new ones, and cause other papers' readers to jump ship, the *Daily Mail* offered prizes amounting to £125,000 for crosswords and competitions. The *Daily Herald* and *News Chronicle* offered £50,000 each in prizes.

By the 1930s the competitions and giveaways, especially insurance, really did get out of hand. In the race to be the first to reach a circulation of two million readers, free health and life insurance became the favorite bait. According to Graves and Hodge, competition became fantastic. Every time that one paper would add to its list of some new accident or malady from which registered readers could benefit – certified death, tram-collision or diphtheria – a rival would add still another – ptomaine poisoning or a bursting household boiler.

In 1932, the newspapers called a truce in the insurance war and agreed to offer roughly equivalent policies. By 1933, many families were subscribing to multiple papers for insurance policies and prize competitions – and anything but reading. Finally, the *Express* reached its goal of two million subscribers. Upon achieving this, the paper did an exposé on itself and the wild competition. The paper reported that the drive to attract readers had cost 8s 3d per reader and it had spent over £30,000 on the project.

This article will be concluded in the March 2001 issue of Wooster Sauce.

"TIT-BITS" LIFE INSURANCE,

I DESIRE that payment, if due under the terms stated on page 304, be made to—

Name.....

Address.....

Date

Purchaser

Address.....

Occupation or Calling

Note how even at this early date the publishers were conscious of the legal formalities, asking for a statement of preferred beneficiary.

By the 1920s, when Plum sat down to write the Accident Syndicate, the competitive tactics of the papers were beginning to get out of hand. While Wodehouse has his character tell us that the papers, in the twenties, were offering princely bribes, this

Those Three French Girls

Brian Taves looks at PGW's major filmscript in Hollywood

PG Wodehouse was first summoned to Hollywood to write directly for motion pictures as a result of the coming of the sound and the search for scriptwriters appropriate to the new medium, especially those with stage experience. He arrived in town on May 8, 1930, and in October his contract was renewed for another six months. He was initially set to work rewriting *Those Three French Girls*, with a script to be ready by July 8.

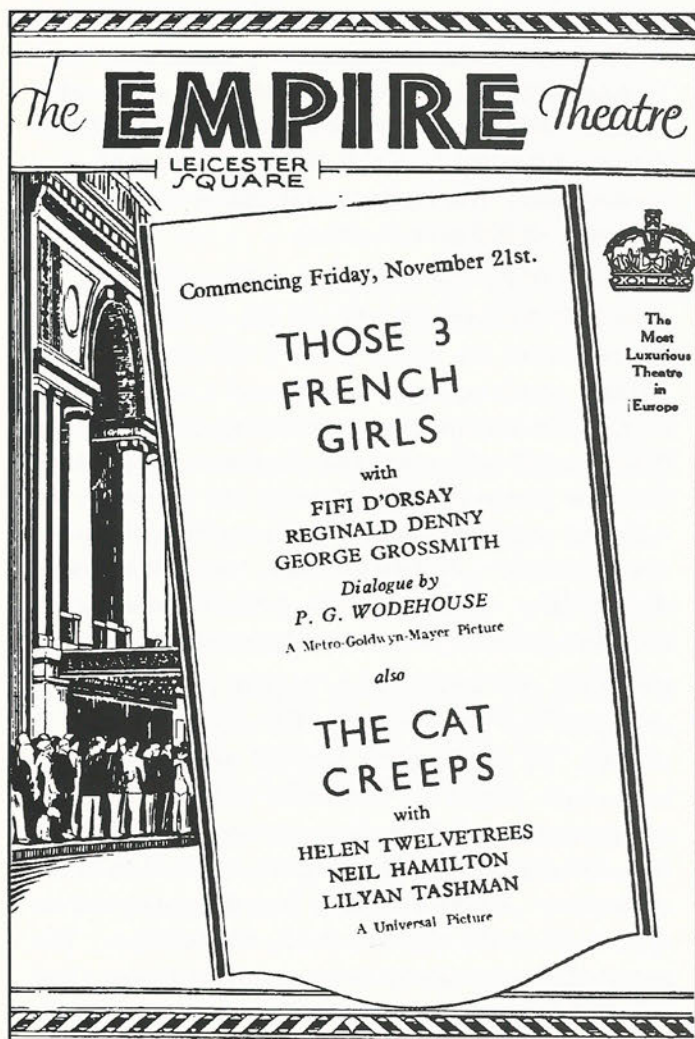
Wodehouse was credited with the dialogue, with adaptation and continuity by Sylvia Thalberg and Frank Butler, from a story by Dale Van Every, Arthur Freed and Richard Schayer. The movie was shot in thirty days, and by mid-September had been edited. It cost just over a quarter of a million dollars to produce, and upon release in the US on October 11 it was modestly profitable.

Those Three French Girls starred Reginald Denny, an ideal choice in a very Wodehousean role as Larry, a wealthy, chivalrous, but not terribly bright young Englishman. He is introduced with a what-ho, and the dialogue for which Wodehouse received sole credit demonstrates his typical phraseology, highlighting his signature phrases to almost an excessive extent. MGM production chief Irving Thalberg hoped to distinguish *Those Three French Girls* by the Wodehouse flavour.

Wodehouse was able to work at home and explained, "I really believe I must have had the softest job on record. A horde of scenarioists have constructed the picture, even to the extent of writing the dialogue. All I have had to do is revise and adapt their dialogue. And they never expect me to go near the studio unless there is a conference." Fortunately, the Wodehouse dialogue is matched to a story that is very similar to his own in style, and verges on the musical comedy form, with several brief songs (resembling the many stage musicals on which he had collaborated). As Wodehouse had noted, despite the fact the script was a committee effort, he clearly also had a certain degree of input into the plot and characters.

Those Three French Girls opens in France with Larry driving up as three girls, Charmain (Fifi D'Orsay), Madelon (Sandra Ravel), and Diane (Yola D'Avril) are arguing with their landlord over their eviction. Larry stops to help them, escalating the war of words by throwing flower-pots on the landlord's head (an idea Wodehouse had used in his stories, most prominently in his 1924 novel *Leave It to Psmith*). The fracas lands Larry and the girls in jail, where they are joined by two rowdy and musically-inclined Americans (played by Ed Brophy and Cliff Edwards, best remembered as the voice of Jiminy Cricket in Disney's *Pinocchio*), veterans of the war who have returned to France.

While incarcerated the men and women pair off, and eventually escape jail by fooling the police through behaving like monkeys. When their car is stranded in a storm, the six take refuge in a barn, where Larry declares his love to Charmain. Arriving at Larry's chateau the next morning, the butler warns Larry's uncle, the Earl of Ippleton (George Grossmith), of his involvement with Charmain. Ippleton tries to buy her off, but first picks the wrong girl, and then tells Charmain that he always



The front of the Empire Theatre programme

has to bail Larry out of misbegotten love affairs. Charmain, angry, ends the engagement to Larry, refusing to let him explain that the one who had to be saved from romantic entanglements was, in fact, Ippleton.

Ippleton buys the three girls a modiste's shop; Charmain is now engaged to him, and Larry is bitter. The two Americans try to help by going to the girls' apartment, but arrive during their morning shower, and only succeed in alienating them further. Larry has a plan, however; he drives his mini-automobile into his uncle's home the morning of the wedding, to assist with the rehearsal. Finally, by exposing Ippleton uncle as a confirmed old bachelor who is far too old and cantankerous for Charmain, Larry wins her back.

Those Three French Girls, as directed by Harry Beaumont, is an amusing if uneven farce, belonging to the early days of sound cinema. Its style, together with the treatment of the women's motivations and costumes in the only manner that was allowed in this period before censorship, gives it an archaic feeling to modern audiences. For Wodehouse *aficionados*, it has special resonance because his dialogue is applied in a thorough way to an appropriate narrative and characters, and it is the only film from his first stint in Hollywood to fully reflect his contribution. Unfortunately, because of its lack of well-remembered stars, *Those Three French Girls* is seldom seen today.

Sadly, although he had just begun in Hollywood, *Those Three French Girls* was as close to a success as Wodehouse was to have at MGM; his only other credit was more minimal (*The Man In Possession*), and the other projects on which he worked (two adaptations of plays on which he had collaborated, *Rosalie* and *Candlelight*) were not produced.

The studio was apparently unwilling to film any of his novels. Wodehouse wrote: "Thalberg, the head man, told me that *Leave It to Psmith* was his favourite novel, but when I suggested that he should

CONTINUED (2)

He then opens desk drawer and produces a steel cash box. He fixes the girl with a cold and business-like eye.

Earl
(pompously)
M'selle -- do you know who I am?

Diane
No, M'sieur. Shall I try to find out for you?

Earl
I am Lord Ippleton.

Diane
Oh - Larry's uncle!

Earl
Yes -- but we'll pass that over. I find myself in the unpleasant position of having to pay for his escapades.

Diane
I do not understand.

Earl
I think you do. Mademoiselle, I am a man of few words. How much?

Diane
How much?

Earl
What is your figure for releasing my nephew from this entanglement? I may say that the usual tariff runs between twenty thousand and forty thousand francs. (He looks at her)
In your case, shall we say fifty thousand?

Diane
You wish to pay me fifty thousand francs not to marry your nephew?

Earl
Exactly.

Diane
Oh, M'sieur.

Earl
Well?

A page of dialogue from the script

come across with money for the movie rights he merely smiled sheepishly and the matter dropped." (The novel would be filmed in England in 1933.) When considering a film around the Wodehouse character Jeeves, Thalberg was influenced by a typical instant poll, deciding against buying the film rights when he discovered that his chauffeur thought Jeeves was his wife's butcher.

Wodehouse's contract ended on May 9, 1931, when MGM did not renew it.

The Smile That Wins

Favourite Nifties – 13

One glance at Mr Devine would have been more than enough for Cuthbert; but Adeline found him a spectacle that never palled. She could not have gazed at him with a more rapturous intensity if she had been a small child and he a saucer of ice-cream.

From the short story *The Clicking of Cuthbert*, in the book of the same name (1922)

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges – 16

"No wasps round here."

"Yes."

"Not in the pavilion at Lord's. You can't get in unless you're a member."

From the short story *How's That, Umpire*, in the collection *Nothing Serious* (1950)

Wodehousean Hotels –

The Previtali and Mathis, Arundell Street, Piccadilly

Dr John Atkinson tells of his family connection

As children being brought up in 1960s Clapham, just off the South Circular, my sisters Elizabeth and Anne and I used to love to visit our Great-Auntie Lid and her brother, Uncle John Mentasti, in their flat in Streatham Hill. Auntie Lid would make wonderful teas with razor-thin bread and tiny bridge rolls with cream cheese. Sometimes there would be buttered toast and 'greengagejam' (I didn't find out what that was until I was an adult).

There were large pieces of Victorian furniture, especially a great cupboard with a glass front containing a wonderful smell and mysteries such as a letterhead embosser, sealing wax and one of those three dimensional slide viewers. There was also silverware engraved with the names 'Hotel Mathis' and 'Hotel Previtali'. On top of the cupboard were bottles of Uncle John's latest wine, which would occasionally pop its corks in an alarming manner.

Our ordinary childhood days were also made extraordinary by being taken to restaurants at an early age by these two wonderful relatives. Uncle John, with his gentlemanly bearing, detachable collars, and an aura of cologne and small cigars, introduced me to baked potatoes, sour cream and chives. From early on he gave the child he was taking a glass of red wine topped up with orange juice. We were never treated as children when taken out but as equals. My sister, Elizabeth, was taken to a wonderful exhibition and lunch. She can't remember the exhibition but she still savours the lunch.

And then there were the stories. How John, Lidia, Flora (my grandmother), Ilda and Rosalinda, born in the 1890's, were brought up in the two hotels in Arundell Street off Coventry Street, Piccadilly. How Giovanni, my great grandfather, and his brothers came over from Albiolo, near Como in Italy, in the 1870's. How the naughty children would frighten off governesses and misbehave in the nursery at the top of the Mathis.

The hotels were family hotels with a good name for languages so people from Europe and South America would stay. Visitors included opera singers – Auntie Ilda remembered seeing Caruso who, she thought, came for a meal. Giovanni used to take my great-grandmother, Giulia, to the opera and, so the story goes, she was so beautiful and regal that she was once mistaken for the Queen of Portugal.

For many years Giovanni's magnificent gold-lined opera cape was in our cousin's dressing-up box and we used it for nativity plays.

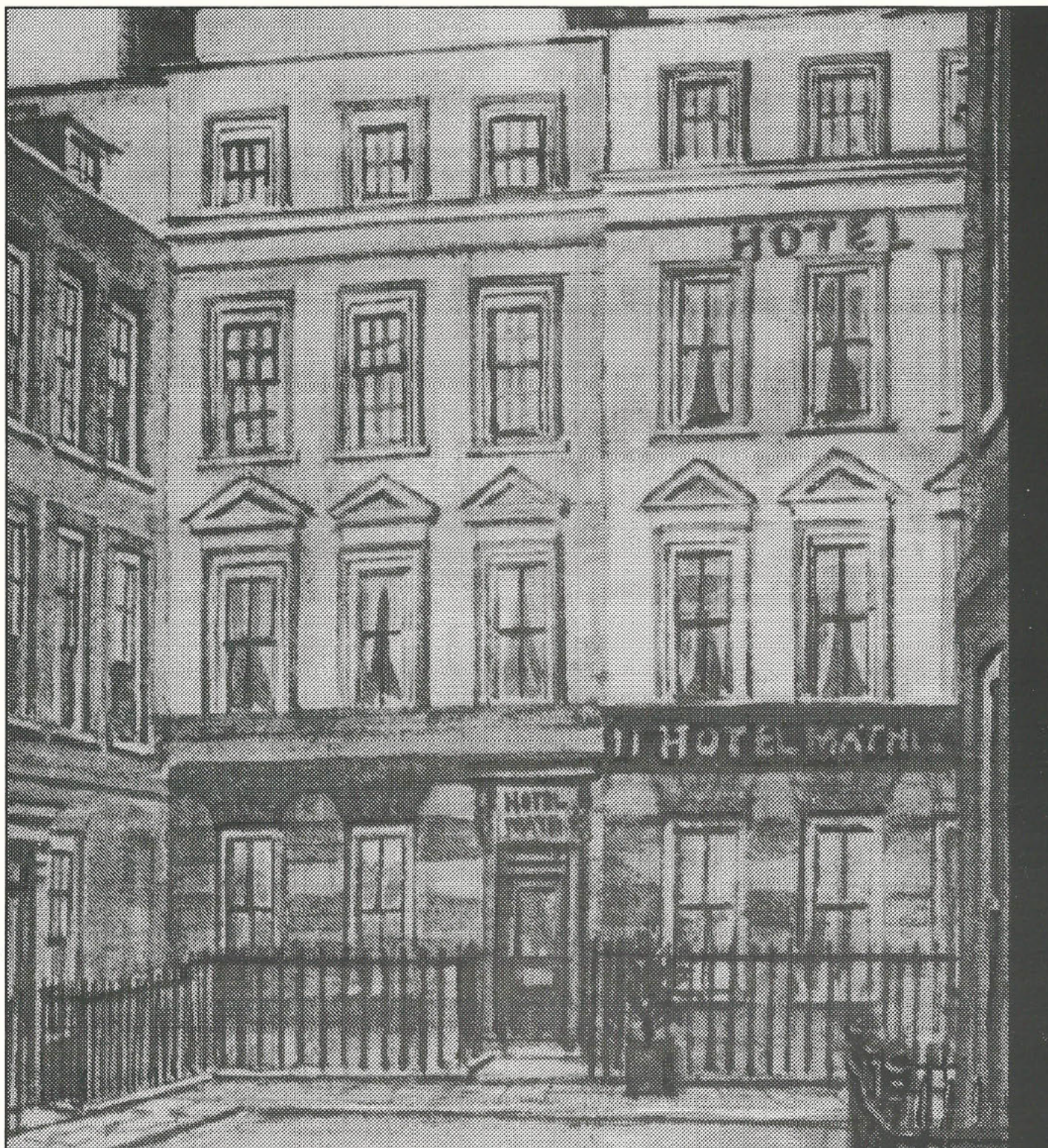
On old maps you can see that Arundell Street was one of the original roads in Piccadilly. At that time it was called Panton Square, both names being associated with the Earls of Wardour, like the nearby Wardour Street. But the family stories were never really followed up by our generation.

Then in 1982 I married Patricia who, having studied mediaeval history at St Andrew's, was a keen and efficient finder of clues and discerner of facts. While we were still in London we spent many interesting hours in the Westminster Library in Victoria.

We found old photographs of Coventry Street (from an Underground survey) and the watercolour of Panton Square, with the Hotel Mathis (see page 9 – the Previtali was on the left hand side). There was a note saying how the Aberdeen Grammar School London Old Boys had held a reunion in the Previtali in 1909. At the corner of Arundell Street there was the Goldsmiths, Lambert's, with its famous Georgian front.

In 1719 Dominiceti wrote a pamphlet *A description of the apparatus of medicated baths erected in Panton Square, Haymarket – with an account of their efficacy in the cure of most disorders incident to the human body*. A foreign ambassador had his head sliced off in the street. All colourful stuff, but there was not much news of the hotels. Then one of our relatives said they thought the hotels were mentioned in a Wodehouse novel.

Years went by, Patricia and I moved to Scotland and after many years have our two wee miracles Eilidh (6) and Iain (5). Throughout our 18 years of marriage, living in tiny flats and now in Glasgow, three bits of the Victorian furniture from the hotels and Auntie Lid's have always been with us, including the wonderful cupboard with the glass front. We also use some of the engraved cutlery and the carving set. When Eilidh was frightened at night I told her about her own fairy, Giulia, who came from Italy 100 years ago and stays in her room at night to look after her. In my pocket I carry a half crown sized advertising medallion for the Previtali – 'for families and gents'.



*The Hotel Mathis in a central position in Arundell Street (formerly Panton Square).
The Previtali is along the left hand side.*

Reproduced by kind permission of the City of Westminster Central Archives

Having children encourages you to find and tell your own stories, so I thought I would follow up some of the long-left leads, especially as I was now a researcher, albeit in Nursing.

Of course now there was the Internet. It took me some time to think of the simplest and most productive action.

“Why not just type in ‘Hotel Previtali Hotel Mathis?’” I thought. And there before me from the ‘Gutenberg project’ which publishes classic texts on the web was:

What was found on the Internet will be revealed in March, when John concludes his tale of investigation and discovery.

P G Wodehouse's Illustrators

Dr Jan Piggott of Dulwich College continues his survey

Whitwell made the first image of Psmith for *The Lost Lambs* in April 1908. When A and C Black started publishing their splendid editions, with coloured designs blocked on the covers, of Wodehouse's school stories and the two subsequent Psmith novels (*Psmith in the City* and *Psmith, Journalist*), the first book in the series, *The Pothunters*, of 1902, had illustrations by R Noel Pocock. Pocock was the artist of the *Public School Magazine*, where part of the story first appeared in serial form, and Black's were its owners. Pocock was again commissioned to illustrate *A Prefect's Uncle* of 1903, which had never appeared before as a serial. *Tales of St Austin's* also appeared in 1903 with illustrations by Pocock, E F Skinner and Whitwell. For *The Gold Bat* of 1904, eight of Whitwell's illustrations were used again from the serial in *The Captain*.

For Black's 1907 publication of *The White Feather* Whitwell's illustrations from the serial publication were ousted by the wooden and markedly inferior

illustrations by Wodehouse's friend since 1897 and his boarding-house study-mate at Elm Lawn when he was at Dulwich, Bill Townend. About Townend he wrote: "We brewed tea together, shoved in the same scrum, and on one occasion put on eighty-seven together for the fourth wicket in a final house



Whitwell's image of the pond on Dulwich Common from Jackson Junior, in Captain, June 1907



One of H M Brock's illustrations for Love Among the Chickens

match". (Introduction to *The Ship in the Swamp and Other Stories* by William Townend). Wodehouse wrote to Townend on March 3, 1905 (letter in the Dulwich College archives): "about the serial bus. I shall make it an absolutely rigid condition that you do the pics. If they won't let you, I shall simply withdraw the story and sling it straight to Methuen. You have had such a hand in the yarn that you're not going to be done out of the profits. I haven't the least desire to see it in serial form unless you do the pics." It looks as if the *Captain* insisted on Whitwell as the illustrator, and that Wodehouse insisted on Black's taking on Townend to illustrate the story of the

Wodehouse in Chechnya

On 21st October, the Radio 4 programme *From Our Own Correspondent* featured a report by John Sweeney on conditions in Chechnya some months after the fighting in that unhappy area came to an end. Fearing the experience would be harrowing, he explained that he took with him a number of Jeeves and Blandings books to calm himself at the end of the day.

The stories he told of the suffering, the hardship and the appalling conditions in that part of the world were quite chilling. John Sweeney left his books with the friends he made in Chechnya, but undoubtedly the calming influence of Wodehouse would be of great benefit across a wider area. A number of publishers in Russia have started to bring this about by producing 30 translations in the last few years.

Wodehouse's Illustrators, continued

boxer. Townend later took to writing very many novels and short stories, all of them forgotten today. Wodehouse wrote to Paul Revere Reynolds in 1920 that "I feel sort of responsible for him as I egged him on to be a writer. He used to be an artist before that." (McIlvaine, N46i, p377).

Luckily, for *Mike* of 1909, which brought together the two Captain serials *Jackson, Junior* and *The Lost Lambs* (which ran monthly from April to September 1907 and April to September 1908 respectively) Black's turned to Whitwell's illustrations from the magazine. Twelve of them were used, and they are superb, especially the image of the Wrykyn boys throwing the local Police Constable into the pond (see page 10). These were followed by the two Psmith books from the Captain: *The New Fold*, an interesting title, in which a Bank becomes the apparent protector for the lost lambs and which was renamed *Psmith in the City* (1910), and *Psmith, Journalist* (serial 1909, book 1915) with its politically incorrect cover of Psmith conking a black man on the head. The latter was published after an unusual delay of more than five years since it had appeared in the magazine. The illustrations to both show several variations on the theme of Psmith imperturbably confronting his anti-type or enemy: the splenetic Mr Bickersdyke; a man with a revolver in a taxi; a thug; the comically inarticulate American office boy; or the aggrieved maudlin contributors to *Cosy Moments* who have been sacked.

H M Brock, who made four brilliant line drawings for *Love Among the Chickens* (George Newnes, 1906), was to replace Whitwell in *The Captain* for three serial issues of *The Eighteen-Carat Kid*. This was published in book form with the addition of a love interest as *The Little Nugget* in 1913, but without the illustrations. *Love Among the Chickens* is perhaps the serial and the book referred to rather



Phyllis Derrick paints in silence, in another of H M Brock's illustrations

than *The White Feather* in the letter already quoted to Townend promising him that he should 'do the pics'. But apart from *The Eighteen-Carat Kid* and the *Bradshaw's Little Story*, which was Wodehouse's second appearance in *The Captain* and was illustrated by E F Skinner, Whitwell illustrated every story and serial by Wodehouse in *The Captain*.

Dr Figgott's occasional series on PGW's illustrators will be continued. The first part may be found in Wooster Source number 13, March 2000.

Wodehouse and Headteachers

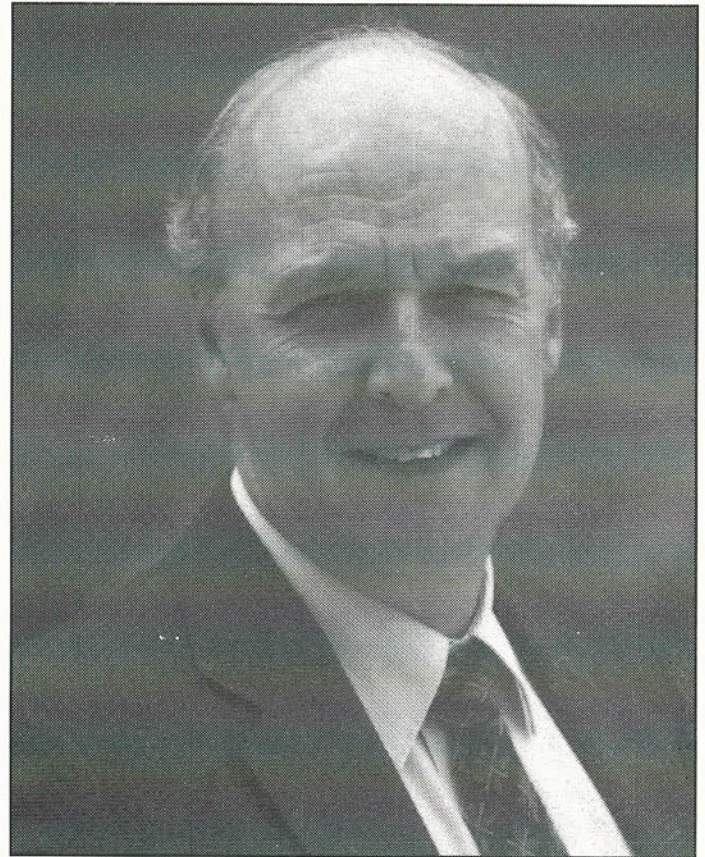
by Tim Andrew

Authority figures are some of the sources of Plum's funniest moments: magistrates, clergymen, policemen, cabinet ministers, pretentious writers and newspaper magnates are all fair game, the attendant self-aggrandisement and pomposity that people in such roles can display mined mercilessly for humour. There is no greater sin in Wodehouse's fictional world than self-importance, and quite right too in real life, I say.

Headteachers also come in for their fair share of attention, and it is here that I must immediately declare my interest. As one who earns the weekly envelope plying that much maligned trade in a largish English secondary school, Wodehouse's treatment of my fellow-sufferers has some fascination for me. We have played our role in some of the funniest passages ever written in English, not least the Prizegiving at Market Snodsbury and the humiliation aimed at Waterbury, Sippy's old headmaster, but in the end received by Bertie Wooster. We have also provided one of the nastiest and most memorable stinkers in Wodehouse in the shape of the Rev Aubrey Upjohn MA.

In the stories written for schoolboys, teachers are an essential part of the scenery and are sympathetic, tough or weak as the plot demands and human nature allows. These stories are so different from PGW's writing for adults that I don't include them in any of the discussion that follows; they merit full treatment in their own right and have been given it substantially by Jan Piggott in *Wodehouse Goes to School* (Porpoise Books, 1997).

Where teachers or headteachers feature in the earlier full-length novels – I'm thinking particularly of the two ex-teachers of *Love Among the Chickens* and the setting of *The Little Nugget* – their treatment, as teachers at least, is relatively sympathetic. Even in Wodehouse's last part-finished book, *Sunset at Blandings*, Jeff Bennison, "Poor darling . . . has had to take a job teaching drawing at a girl's school." (As an insult to my profession, that last sentence could be taken to operate at about 20 different levels, but I will not allow myself to be distracted.) Following a disastrous flutter, Bingo Little is often forced to take a tutoring job to eke out the allowance or until the little woman returns. In none of these instances, though, are the teachers or their schools any more than cogs in the clockwork of Wodehouse plots: teaching, by and large, is something you move on



The very model of a modern teacher-general

from or do when you are desperate (a sentiment with which many teachers in the U.K. these days will identify readily).

We are allowed our moments of glory. For example, when under the influence of an overdose of Buck-U-Uppo and in the company of a similarly excited bishop, the Rev 'Catsmeat' Trevor Entwhistle paints the statue of 'Fatty', Lord Hemel of Hempstead, recently unveiled at his own school, pink. His career is in serious danger until he is rescued by a young Mulliner. The aforementioned 'Fatty' had committed the grave sin of self-importance ('shoving himself forward'), and the headmaster's partner in crime, the bishop, gives the strong impression that Lord Fatty's deflation was worth the risk of someone else's career. ("Well, it's not all jam being a bishop. You wouldn't enjoy it, Catsmeat.") But good triumphed: in Wodehouse's glorious world, the meek always inherit the earth.

The place where we teachers really blossom, however, where we produce our most memorable

Did Anatole Have a Previous Incarnation?

James Hogg examines some evidence

Like Wodehouse, Harry Graham was a humorous writer who also wrote lyrics for musicals – among them *White Horse Inn* and *The Maid Of The Mountains*. Late in life Wodehouse told the musician and broadcaster Michael Pointon in a letter that he'd admired Graham, but did he perhaps carry his enthusiasm a little further and use Graham's work as a source of inspiration?

In 1910 Graham published *The Bolster Book*, a collection of amusing pieces with titles such as *On Ordering Dinner*. Here the fun comes mainly from encounters with waiters, but there is also a short description of the *chatelaine* of a great house, who greets her chef thus: "Good morning, Anatole. His lordship and the young ladies are dining out tonight, and I will have a cup of Bovril in my bedroom as usual."

It wasn't till 15 years later that the Anatole we know and love made his first appearance. But since Wodehouse almost certainly read *The Bolster Book* when it came out, it's not too fanciful to suppose that

the chef's name lodged itself at the back of his mind, ready for use when he wrote *Clustering Round Young Bingo*. We can only imagine the reaction of Anatole of Brinkley Court fame to an order for Bovril. *Froideur* wouldn't be in it.



Peter van Straaten's image of M. Anatole

Wodehouse and Headteachers, continued

characters and greatest comic moments, is in the Bertie Wooster and Jeeves stories. Bertie and his friends have a fixation with school. Bertie falls over himself to help an old school pal, and the moment he tries to play the *nolle prosequi* gag because the *bouillon* into which he is being dragged is too much even for him, the old school is invoked very quickly to overcome his resistance.

The list of memorable characters includes two truly terrifying women: Dame Daphne Winkworth and Miss Mapleton. Even in a surging sea of formidable aunts, Dame Daphne stands out, and Miss Mapleton is a friend of Bertie's Aunt Agatha, so no more need be said.

There is also Miss Tomlinson of *Bertie Changes His Mind*. She is described as possessing a "penetrating gaze and that indefinable air of being reluctant to stand any nonsense", but turns out to have a less than credible gullibility. It may be a necessary device for the plot that when two men turn up with one of her pupils, she takes the word of one stranger that the other is someone special, but that hardly sounds like someone who recalls to mind Bertie's Aunt Agatha. (*Bertie Changes His Mind* is the only

Jeeves and Wooster story told in Jeeves's voice. If the lack of a repeat of the treatment is an admission that PGW did not think it worked as well as when Bertie is the storyteller, you won't hear me disagreeing.)

There is not a large number of headteachers in the Jeeves and Wooster stories I can call on as evidence, but I think there's a pattern to their characteristics: the headmistresses are just plain terrifying, like honorary aunts with knobs on; the senior school headmasters are pompous asses who deserve to be taken down a peg or two, and are; and then there are the prep school headmasters.

In the Bertie and Jeeves books, the treatment of the prep school heads is quite different because they are consistently nasty pieces of work. Arnold Abney MA, in his *Much Obligated Jeeves* incarnation, published in 1971, is remembered as one with whom any proceedings or interview were going to lead up to six of the best from a cane that stung like an adder, while the Rev Aubrey Upjohn stands alone as a horror.

Tim, a Committee Member and Head of Chesham High School, concludes his article in March

By the Sea, By the Beautiful Sea

Stu Shiffman continues his review of strip cartoon influences



When Bingo Little is corralled for the position of judge for a Bonny Babies competition at Bramley-on-Sea in *Leave It To Algy*, he let himself in for more than expected. All ends happily, as Bingo is approached by Wally Judd, the *Dauntless Desmond* man. Bingo admits himself ignorant of this figure. Judd replies:

"I never thought to hear those words in a civilized country. *Dauntless Desmond*, my comic strip. It's running in the *Mirror* and sixteen hundred papers in America. *Dauntless Desmond*, the crooks' despair."

"He is a detective, this D Desmond?"

"A private eye or shamus," corrected the other. "And he's always up against the creatures of the underworld. He's as brave as a lion."

"Sounds like a nice chap."

"He is. One of the best. But there's a snag. Desmond is impulsive. He will go bumping off these creatures of the underworld. He shoots them in the stomach. Well, I needn't tell you what that sort of thing leads to."

"The supply of creatures of the underworld is beginning to give out?"

"Exactly. There is a constant need for fresh faces, and the moment I saw your baby I knew I had found one. That lowering look! Those hard eyes which would be grafted on the head of a man-eating shark and no questions asked. He's a

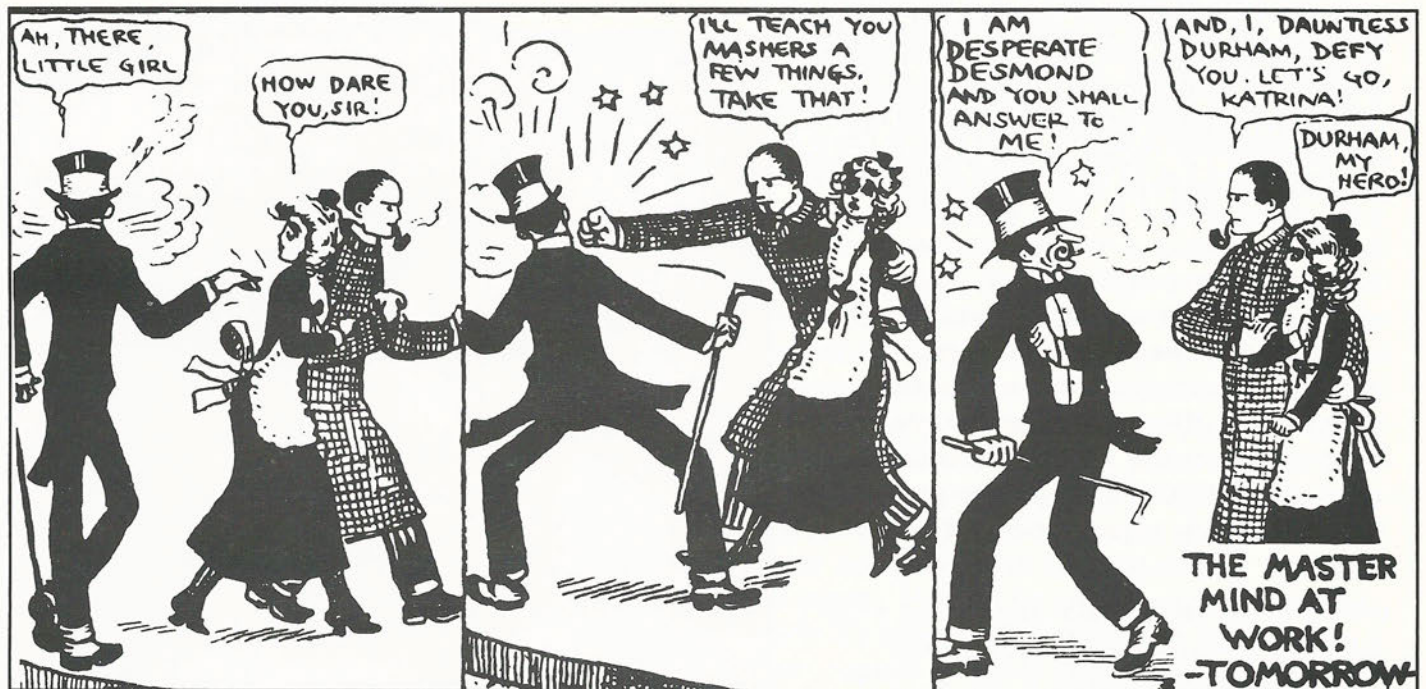
natural. Could you bring him around the *Hôtel Splendide* right away, so that I can do some preliminary sketches?"

The reference to *Dauntless Desmond* seems to be a conflation of two popular but now forgotten early comic strips by Harry Hershfield (1885-1974) for William Randolph Hearst, *Desperate Desmond* (1910-1912) and *Dauntless Durham of the USA* (1913-1914). Both were modeled on the clichés of stage melodrama and inspired by the successful *Hairbreadth Harry* strip by Charles W Kahles.

Comic cliffhangers were rife in both strips. *Desperate Desmond* was the black-hearted and mustachioed eponymous villain always garbed in the dude's uniform of top hat, coat-and-tails and shoes with spats. He was always trying to steal away Fair Rosamond and was constantly foiled by her fiancé, dime-store hero Claude Eclair. The very similar *Dauntless Durham of the USA* was begun some months after the end of the previous sequence. *Dauntless Durham* was the archetypical all-American hero suitable to play the Arrow Collar Man (as illustrated by *Saturday Evening Post* regular J C Leyendecker) and determined to protect his lady love, the waitress Katrina. *Dauntless Durham* has been described as 'a handsome pipe-smoking combination of Sherlock Holmes, Nick Carter and Frank Merriwell'. The strip also featured the 'aristocratic viper' Lord Havaglass (a tubby mustachioed figure with monocle and deerstalker)

and his man Watkins (a very Ruggles or Keggs-like character) as the principal villains. They were eventually retired in order to bring back Desperate Desmond in the villain's role.

wake up every morning at nine and grab for the morning paper. Then I look at the obituary page. If my name is not on it, I get up." Please don't confuse Harry Hershfield with Leo Hershfield or the noted



Hershfield was best known for his *Abie the Agent* series (1914-1932, 1935-1940) starring Abe Mendel Kabibble, one of the few strips about Jewish characters. This classic strip has also been called the first truly 'adult' American comic strip. Hershfield also became well known as a humorist, raconteur and 'the Dean of American Humor' in some quarters. He was the author of such books as *Laugh Louder*, *Live Longer* (Gramercy, 1959) and appeared on such programs as radio's *Can You Top This?* One of his quips from later life was the oft quoted: "I

caricaturist Al Hirschfeld, best known for his theatrical portraits and his illustrations for S J Perelman's books.

In the updated version of *Leave It To Algy* which appeared as *The Ordeal of Bingo Little* in *Blue Book*, the cartoonist Wally Hatt wants to use Algy's face for "the Monster" in his *Steve Bracy* strip, which was inspired of course by Chester Gould's *Dick Tracy*

Stu Shiffman's review will be concluded in the March 2001 issue of Wooster Sauce.

Go and See the PELHAM GRENVILLE WODEHOUSE Orchid

Longer-standing readers may recall that in *Wooster Sauce* No 7 (September 1998), Jim Durrant of McBean's Nursery explained how some of his orchids had been blessed with Wodehousean names. Jim has written to the Editor bringing us up to date with his experiments:

As you know, I have been using P G Wodehouse characters as varietal names for some of my cymbidium orchids (eg Jeeves, Bertie Wooster and Gussie Fink-Nottle for the more earthy colours, and ladies such as Madeline Bassett and Aunt Agatha for more gushing pink colours). This has led to some most unlikely sexual relationships, with 'Jeeves', for example, fathering several

hundred seeds by 'Aunt Agatha' (and resolving no doubt to love them all – Ed.).

Having obtained appropriate consents, I approached the Royal Horticultural Society about the idea of using P G Wodehouse as a plant name. I was told that initials cannot be used in this way, and so my cross of cymbidium 'RED BEAUTY' x 'VIEUX ROSE' is now named 'PELHAM GRENVILLE WODEHOUSE'. It produces flowers of solid shades of pink to red and blooms from December through to April. They will be on display at the McBean's stand at the London Orchid Show on March 17th & 18th, at the Royal Horticultural Society Halls, Westminster.

Who Was Princess von und zu Dwornitschek?

Eddie Grabham puts forward the claims of Gloria Swanson

Who was the inspiration for Princess von und zu Dwornitschek, the terrifying stepmother portrayed so amusingly by P G Wodehouse in his 1937 novel *Summer Moonshine*? At the time he was working for MGM, so Hollywood almost certainly provided him with a prototype.

We know quite a lot about the self-willed Princess. She was a millionairess who inherited a large share in her first husband's fish-glue business. From her second husband, the late Mr Franklin Vanringham, she acquired a couple of stepsons. She married and subsequently divorced Prince von und zu Dwornitschek a couple of years after Vanringham's death. In his West End comedy, stepson Joe portrayed her in a cruel light.

Which great Hollywood queen was Plum's inspiration for this dominating character?

An American who married into the European aristocracy must surely be considered. She couldn't have been too young in 1937 and had probably already had a couple of hubbies.

Of the possible candidates, one seems to stand out.

Gloria Swanson was undoubtedly a strong-willed lady and had already experienced the bridal veil and rice-throwing (a decidedly American habit) twice (the first time to actor Wallace Beery) before entering into nuptial bliss with Henri, Marquis le Bailly de la Falaise de la Coudraye.

Her marriage into the aristocracy went down big in America; she was accorded a sensational 'welcome home' when she returned to the USA after her French wedding in January 1925. Some time later, Miss Swanson became involved with Joseph P Kennedy, which gave her a brush with business and political life in America. By 1937, Gloria Swanson had faded from her starry pinnacle, reached nearly forty years of age and been retired for three years, one of her main directors, Allan Dwan, alleging that she was 'surrounded by sycophants'.

I feel sure that Gloria Swanson gave PGW bags of inspiration for his Princess. Yet it has to be added that she would not have fitted Joe Vanringham's acerbic view of the Princess. Plum created a character who was clearly disliked, while Gloria Swanson – though used to getting her own way – was very popular. Any number of Hollywood actresses would



Gloria Swanson in her heyday

have fitted those Dwornitschek characteristics, but Wodehouse would never have been vindictive.

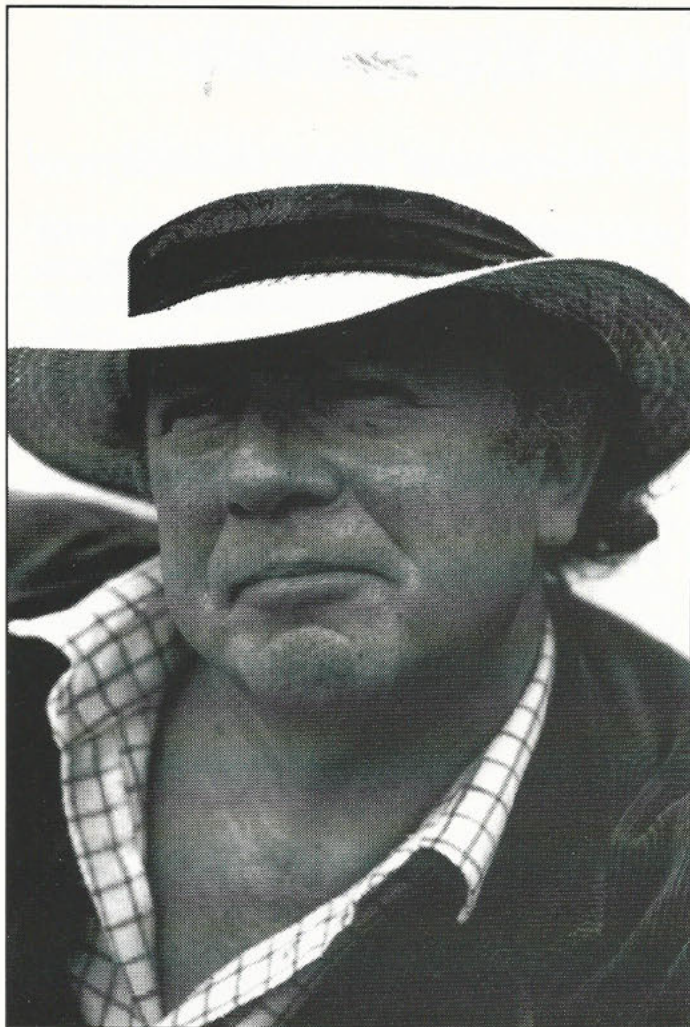
If anyone in the know recognised Gloria Swanson, they would have undoubtedly enjoyed the joke – and that includes Miss Swanson herself who, it is said, was witty and had a delicious sense of humour.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This would seem to be an ideal subject for our correspondence columns, which have been a little empty of late. Can *you* put forward an alternative candidate as model for the Princess von und zu Dwornitschek, preferably in 150 words or less? I look forward to receiving a number of suggestions with which to grace the pages of the March issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

PROFILE OF A PATRON

Alan Coren spent six years at Oxford, Yale and Berkeley, which gave him the time not only to read everything the Master had written, but also to decide that he wished to commit his own life to scribbling in his shadow. He joined *Punch* in 1963, in the high and far-off times, long before it was even a glint in Mr Fayed's shifty eye. Plum was contributing his regular Notes from America in those days, and one of Alan's jollier jobs was to sub-edit his copy, a singularly cushy number as he would 'never have dreamt even of shortening the tail on one of his imperishable commas'. As this left him more time to write his own stuff, he was doubly grateful; a little later, trebly grateful, because 'Plum began firing off generously kind billets-doux about it to me, and, almost as important, to the Editor, Bernard Hollowood'. Thus, Alan says, while the entire world owes so much to Wodehouse, he owes yet more. He can be heard regularly on BBC Radio 4's weekly *The News Quiz*, having been a team captain in every edition since it started in 1977. In 1994, Radio 4 listeners voted him the wittiest person in Britain, and his most recent book, *The Cricklewood Dome*, was published in 1998.



Recent Audio-Books

Your Editor has been listening to the latest Chivers unabridged AudioBook, which has Jonathan Cecil reading *Cocktail Time*, and comparing it with the reading of the same text by Frederick Davidson for the American publisher, Blackstone. These matters are, of course, questions of taste, but I must say that I prefer Jonathan's version. He seems to take greater care to distinguish his voices, and I have come to be irritated by a sort of languid arrogance in the narrative, as opposed to the dialogue, voice adopted by Davidson. What makes it worse is that although he is an Englishman who has lived in the US for over twenty years, every so often his English tones are rent by an outrageous American pronunciation of a word or phrase, which is fine from an American voice but grates in an English sentence.

I have also had the chance to listen to more of the Simon Callow readings of the abridged Jeeves and Wooster books for Penguin Audio mentioned in the last issue. He has a musical voice, easy to listen to, and although he does not try to distinguish voices to the extent that Jonathan Cecil achieves, it is nevertheless not difficult to follow the story's progress. These four audiobooks are recommended.

Right Ho, Wodehouse

Christopher Owen's one man show *Right Ho, Wodehouse* resumes its tour of village halls in March. Full details of bookings are on the website, but he will be visiting Sussex, Newark, Salisbury, Devon, Somerset and Norfolk during March and April. For the non-technically-minded, contact Christopher on [redacted] for details.

The Society's Cambridge Meeting

The Society meeting at Cambridge was held on a depressingly wet and windy October 28, and the attendance of 17 members was most creditable. Tony Ring presented his *The Wider Wodehouse – Man of Prose and Verse* talk, with readings from poems and several recordings of Plum's lyrics, while Norman Murphy offered his illustrated *Wodehouse's Enghnad*, which brings alive the background to so many of the books. The organiser, Geoff Hales, organised a quiz, chipped in with several readings and generally made the afternoon go with a swing. Geoff [redacted] has volunteered to act as a contact point for local members who would be interested in attending or arranging future meetings in the area.

My First Wodehouse Experience

by Andrew Hicks of Romford

It was thanks to Stephen Fry that I stumbled upon PGW. After spending many hours alone with Mr Fry in the cab of my lorry – listening to audio tapes read by the great man – I took the plunge and read *Moab is my Washpot*, a rare occurrence for me to partake in the hedonism of relaxing with a book.



Stephen Fry, along with having a fantastic voice to listen to, ain't a bad writer either and having read of his delight in the works of Wodehouse I went to the library and borrowed *Bachelors Anonymous*. The only time I have read words that danced across the page or screen like this were the times when I watched my daughters *Sing Along* Disney videos, where the words do actually dance.

I read this book within a couple of days; not bad for a lorry-driving father of two, husband of one. I now have a collection of sixteen PGW books, not all read. On the rare occasion I find myself in a bookshop and happen to see a PGW I'll buy it and shelve it for a later date. I would love the *Everyman* Collection, so I must try and convince the Wife to give up some of the hard-earned.

Eighteen months ago, if someone had told me I would be reading every day and that I would join a Society dedicated to one writer I would probably have used some colourful trucker speak to utter my disbelief; but now I'd say with equanimity, "You may find this abstruse, even though we share a propinquity and no, I am not being sardonic, but where my mind was once torpid it is now sagacious, so tonight I am abstemious not because of impecuniosity and yes, I understand your chagrin, but I ain't going for a drink 'cause I'm reading me new PGW", or words to that effect.

So my enlightenment is thanks to Stephen Fry, P G Wodehouse and The P G Wodehouse Society (UK).

by Alexandra Mudd of Liverpool

My earliest memory of P G Wodehouse was in the form of the television drama *Jeeves and Wooster* starring Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie. If I recall correctly it was aired just before *Poirot* on a Sunday evening on ITV. Being at an age when an episode of *Poirot* was watched from behind the safeguard of a pillow, for fear of being murdered in the nineteen-twenties (which although not humanly possible occupied my mind constantly) I did not at first recognise the sharp wit and fantastic humour of my present favourite Mr Wodehouse. Despite watching the episodes almost religiously with my family, I frequently became confused with which character was which and who was marrying who. Although I continually asked them for help, I was usually left to my own devices, for there was no speaking during the programme, and the adverts were not long enough to discuss the complicated plots.



After watching the moving images on the television for three series, it would have appeared to many that I had long forgotten my former favourites. Many years were to pass during which I did not regularly read, see or hear an awful lot about Mr Wodehouse.

Until, having been given a book token at Christmas and wandering around WH Smith, I chanced upon *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*. Although we are constantly told not to judge a book by its cover, I did, and thought the black cat on the front looked rather striking. Recognising that this book was a companion to the television show I used to watch, I bought it immediately. On my arrival home, sitting on my favourite chair and with a mug of hot chocolate, I began a book which was to start what I hope will be a lifelong companionship with the works of Mr Wodehouse. Since then I have tried to read as much as possible by him and about him, and joined the Society. I have found this has opened up a whole new world to me, and this is my way of saying "Thank you".

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

Wodehouse's Answers to Correspondents in *Tit-Bits* (Part 1)

Section N of McIlvaine deals with Wodehouse's letters, and includes notes and comments by Richard Osborne on some of Wodehouse's letters to Bill Townend, the originals of which now seem to be lost. Osborne comments on a letter of October 1908 (N56.4) that "from something Plum is writing, it is clear that he was doing *Answers to Correspondents* in *Titbits*. I don't know for how long he did this. I do know that Townend told me that this fact was not for general publication. They had tried to keep it quiet." Townend's comments to Osborne on this subject were presumably contained in Townend's letter to Osborne of 12 June 1956, which also appears in McIlvaine (Appendix 1, E12.3), but only with the tantalising précis: "Discusses writing *Answers to Correspondents* for *Tit-Bits*."

Wodehouse's authorship of the *Answers* page in *Tit-Bits* is not listed in the periodicals section of McIlvaine. The only mention of it in the secondary literature is by Barry Phelps, who writes "During those two years [at the Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank] he had eighty pieces published including his first overtly humorous piece in *Tit-Bits* in November 1900 and with Townend, he wrote, for a short while, the *Answers to Correspondents* column in that paper" (*P.G. Wodehouse: Man and Myth*, 1992, p69).

However, in *Wodehouse at Work* (1961), Osborne deals at length with the *Answers to Correspondents* section of the *Old Fag* column in *The Captain*. In the revised *Wodehouse at Work to the End* (1976) he adds a concluding paragraph (p61): "From privileged reading of the files of Wodehouse's letters to Townend, I deduce that, for a period in 1908/9, Wodehouse was doing a clandestine temp fill-in job as editor of [the] *Old Fag* column."

There are two points here. The first is that Osborne seems to have confused *The Captain* with *Tit-Bits*. When I wrote to Richard Osborne in 1986 asking for the dates of Wodehouse's editing of the *Old Fag* column, he replied "I have a nasty fear now that I meant *Answers to Correspondents* in *Tit-Bits*." The second point is that Osborne observed Townend's injunction that the information about *Answers to Correspondents* "was not for general publication", only mentioning the fact in the 1976 edition (by which time both Wodehouse and Townend were dead).

In the Wodehouse archives at Dulwich College there exists a letter proving that Wodehouse was indeed editing the *Answers to Correspondents* page in *Tit-Bits*. A letter from the Editor of *Tit-Bits* to Wodehouse, dated 28 October 1908, states "I have just been thinking about the *Answers to Correspondents* page which you have supplied for some time, and am rather of the opinion that this work can perhaps be tackled by one of the members of my own staff better than having it done by an outside contributor. I am very much obliged to you for the excellent way in which you have done this work for me, and regret that I have to ask you not to send in any more copy after next week. Will you kindly let me have the copy for next week's page by Tuesday." On the letter is a marginal comment from Townend which reads "I shared this work with PGW".

This was a period when Wodehouse was helping the less successful Townend: Wodehouse used Townend's stories about Craxton as the basis of *Love Among The Chickens* (N56.1, 1905); he used Townend's illustrations in his book *The White Feather* and asked him to help with *The Luck Stone* (N56.2, 1906); and he obtained for Townend the spare man job on the *By The Way* column for *The Globe* newspaper (App 1, E12.34, 1905/06). Evidence of Townend's assistance with *Tit-Bits* appears in another letter from Wodehouse to Townend (N56.3), unfortunately undated, which reads: "Look here, will it suit you if I pay for *T-bits* stuff every third week. They pay me £3-3 weekly. . . ."

Unfortunately it is not possible to determine the exact dates of the Wodehouse/Townend collaboration. The famous Wodehouse Account Book ends in February 1908, but contains no mention of money received for *Answers to Correspondents* from *Tit-Bits*. Wodehouse's last *Answers* page can probably be dated to the issue of 31 October 1908, or perhaps a week later, depending on how far in advance copy was prepared. As regards when Wodehouse first started the column, the evidence of his account book (nothing up to February 1908) and his letter to Townend (payment by *Tit-Bits* every week) suggests that he could only have begun it in March 1908 at the very earliest.

In the next issue, Nick will examine some of Wodehouse's answers to correspondents.

The Drones Club Ceremony at Huy

Tim Andrew and Tony Ring report from the Citadel

You are eighteen, the son of an English father and a Belgian mother, and at the start of the last war you are living in Antwerp. Your English passport makes you an enemy alien, though, and you are rounded up to become an internee at Huy and then Tost for the duration of the war.

How do you feel when sixty years later, you come face to face once more with the Citadel of Huy, and the dormitory in which you were imprisoned in such discomfort for the first five weeks? This was the question that, on September 9th, was in the mind of Robert Whitby, when the Drones Club met at the Citadel to attach to its walls a plaque commemorating the 60th anniversary of P G Wodehouse's departure from Huy.

Robert was the sole respondent to an advertisement placed by the Drones, inviting any internees to join them at the ceremony. He freely admitted that he had not been looking forward to his first return to the place, and that he had feared that he might break down in tears. He didn't. Such was his courage, an example of the stiff-upper-lippedness which Plum was trying to convey over the air in 1941, that he not only absorbed the bleak atmosphere of the place without flinching, but almost took over the role of tour guide from the local resident aide. Robert pointed out where the kitchens had been, and where the German soldiers had sat with their machine guns, throwing spare chunks of bread to the ground to watch the internees fight for it like a flock of pigeons. He stood with us in the exercise yard, into which fifteen hundred men could barely have squeezed, let alone exercised. He showed us the room where on his first evening at Huy he had found a supply of blankets, and told us how he was almost not strong enough to secure one for himself as a stampede of older, stronger men rushed past him to grab them.

Having Robert with us added an important dimension to what we had immediately appreciated, a stark awareness that the reality was many times worse than the imagination. Plum told us that he slept on stone floors. He did not add that the floors were in effect cobbled, polished bricks protruding



half an inch or an inch through the surface. To look at the cells, and visualise how many men slept in each, was to suspend credibility. The idea that the only way to survive the experience of the camp was to call on companionship, and exclude from the mind all extraneous matters, suddenly became more understandable.

By contrast, the ceremony in the year 2000, just before our tour of the premises, had been a much more pleasant affair. After meeting the Mayor, Anne-Marie Lizin, at the town hall (where the second, rather more peripheral, link between PGW and Huy may be found: a painting on the stairs entitled *Danseuses Ouled Nail*) we transferred by coach and funicular to the fort of Huy, high above the town. Here around 50 assorted members of the Drones Club, the Dutch P G Wodehouse Society, and the public assembled for the unveiling of the plaque by the Mayor and the British Ambassador (Society member David Colvin). The plaque is most tasteful in style and content, and placed in full view of the thousands of tourists who visit the fortress and museum each year.

Speeches were given by the Mayor, David Colvin, Kris Smets (President of the Drones Club) and (on

behalf of Sir Edward Cazalet) Tony Ring, to which Tim Andrew added a French translation.

A remarkable and successful initiative of our colleagues in the Belgian Society. Thank you.

We cleaned passages and wash-rooms. It is gradually borne in on me that we are a ruddy peripatetic fatigue party. We cleaned up Liège barracks and they moved us on, and now we shall presumably clean up the Citadel of Huy and move on again. By the time we have finished, you will be able to eat your dinner off Belgium.

Huy Day By Day, from Performing Flea

Theatrical Presentation of Wodehouse

By an extraordinary coincidence, on successive Sundays

Helen Murphy reports on a Jerome Kern celebration by the Serendipity company

It was a joy to form part of the small group of Wodehouseans attending a celebration of Jerome Kern's works by the local Serendipity company at the packed Millfield Theatre in Edmonton on October 8th. The visiting guest *artiste*, Marilyn Hill Smith, delighted us with *Bill*, and there was a fair rendition of the dozen or so of PGW's other lyrics included in the three-hour programme. Unusually, my greatest enthusiasm was reserved for the *pièce de resistance* from *Showboat – Old Man River*, rendered superbly by Paul Connor, which had another of our group practically out of his seat asking for an encore. We remembered the great men who had written and performed it, and also the great man who had compared it so favourably with the tenor feebly warbling *Trees* in *Quick Service*. (If you are in doubt as to whom I refer, as General Sherman said, "See the books!".)

Editor's note: Serendipity's programme next year (on September 15) will feature the works of Ivor Novello – including more Wodehouse lyrics.

Simon May saw Plum Sauce, presented by Jonathan Cecil and Anna Sharkey.

It was to the Jermyn St Theatre, a jewel set in clubland, that Anna Sharkey and Jonathan Cecil brought their sparkling intimate revue *Plum Sauce* on PGW's 119th birthday. Jonathan has the perfect tone, a voice as rich as port-wine deployed wittily to conjure up a whole gallimaufry of characters, nowhere more so than in *Goodbye to All Cats*. It emphasised just what a theatrical writer Wodehouse is and how good his prose *sounds*. Jonathan and Anna also recalled Wodehouse's early pre-eminence as a lyricist, with such songs as *You Can't Make Love By Wireless* and *Nesting Time In Tooting*. Their presentation was both affectionate and playfully ironic, a subtle rebuke to those who think that musical comedy began with Noel Coward. A superb evening, and an excellent vindication of the Egg, Bean or Crumpet who said he never needed to go East of Leicester Square.

Editor's note: Jonathan and Anna will be putting on two more performances at the Jermyn Street Theatre (020 7287 2875) on February 18 and 25, 2001.

New Publications and a Chance to Win a Jeeves and Wooster DVD

New Penguins

The final editions in Hitch covers are:

- September 2000: *A Damsel in Distress*
Money for Nothing
- 26 April 2001: *Jeeves and Wooster Omnibus*
Life at Blandings Omnibus
Uncle Fred: an Omnibus
What Ho! Anthology

New Everyman Editions

(Don't forget the Society discount on standing orders)
Eggs, Beans and Crumpets, *Psmith in the City*, *Stiff Upper Lip*, *Jeeves* and *Summer Lightning* were published in October.

New Scribner Editions

Mainly for the benefit of North American members, we note that Scribner have issued new editions of *Summer Lightning*, *How Right You Are Jeeves*, *Jeeves and the Tie That Binds*, and the anthology *The Most of PG Wodehouse*.

Millennium Concordance Volume 7

Entitled *Wodehouse with Old Friends*, this book deals with Drones and other recurring characters outside the major series, and can be obtained through Book Systems Plus (Tel: 01223 894870) for £ 22.

WIN a DVD of Jeeves and Wooster Series 1

The first Wodehouse material to appear on DVD has been released by Granada (GVD007). It also contains an audio introduction to the title characters.

The distributors have offered the Society two copies of the *Jeeves and Wooster* series 1 DVD for loan to members (apply to the Editor, who will send them out on a fortnight's loan) and three more as prizes for a competition, to be judged by Robert McCrum of *The Observer*, Kate Jones of Penguin, Norman Murphy, the Society Chairman and the Editor. *You just need to explain, in under 100 words, who is your favourite recurring character in the Jeeves and Wooster books and why.* (Please don't choose Jeeves and Bertie.) Entries to be received by January 31, 2001.

Recent Press Comment

The American Scholar, Summer 2000

Carried an article entitled *The Wodehouse Jacquerie* by Robert McCrum

Woman's Weekly, August/September (from Linda Shaughnessy)

Reprinted the short story *Goodbye to All Cats*

Guardian, August 11 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Previewing a TV programme *Country House*, Jonathan Wright wrote 'PGW once noted that his novels were "a sort of musical comedy without the music". Nonsense. Judging by the eccentricity on display at Woburn Abbey, Pelham Grenville was practically a social realist.'

Evening Standard, August 23 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Pete Clark wrote about the advance of golf amongst its competitors in the sporting arena and recalled PGW's 'chucklesome stories about clubhouse bores and empty-headed young men twirling the mashie and the niblick'.

Words and Music, September

Carried an article entitled *The Underrated Wodehouse* by Tony Ring.

Vanity Fair (US edition), September (from Barry Day)

Graydon Carter, editor, commenting on the theme of the edition ('It-girls') commented that Gwyneth Paltrow is to 'It-ness' what Otis is to elevators or Gussie Fink-Nottle to newt-fanciers.

Surrey Advertiser, September 1 (from Adrian Vincent)

Previewed *Beyond a Joke* at Guildford with a short interview with Anton Rogers.

(Several articles about the play appeared in regional papers, with reviews in the *Daily Telegraph* on the 19th and *The Times* on the 26th.)

Tribune, September 8 (from Peter Viggers)

In an editorial concerning articles by an Anthony Holden proclaiming contempt for Britain and devotion to the USA, Holden was compared to Rockmeteller Todd, 'who urges "With all your vibrant, mighty force of being, Be!" before collapsing on to a Long Island sofa'.

(Ed: we are used to inaccurate quotations from journalists.)

This Week, September 9 (from Alexander Dainty)

Peter McKay, columnist in the *Daily Mail*, included the *Oldest Member* stories amongst his five favourite books.

Sunday Times (Culture), September 10

Selected Simon Callow's reading of *Thank You Jeeves* (see page 21) as one of their Audio books of the Week.

Observer, September 10 (from Peter Viggers)

In an article on Harry Potter and favourite words, Arts Correspondent Vanessa Thorpe reported Helen Fielding as pointing out that her favourite word, singleton, made famous by her Bridget Jones character, was actually created by PGW.

Guardian Friday Review, September 15 (from Murray Hedgcock)

A special *Books of the Century* feature included *The Code of the Woosters* at number 95.

Sunday Telegraph, September 24 (from Pam Bruxner, Janet Inglis et al)

In a review of Richard West's new book on the life of Chaucer, Prof Jonathan Bate commented adversely on a suggestion that PGW fans would recognise in Beatrice the prototype of all the beautiful, bossy girls who became engaged to Bertie and tried to prepare him for marriage by making him read Spinoza and Schopenhauer.

The Times, September 26

In his sketch on Gordon Brown's speech at the Labour Party conference, Matthew Parris wrote:

To misquote PGW on Scotsmen, it has usually been possible to distinguish between Gordon Brown and a ray of sunshine, but not yesterday.

New Criterion, October

Carried an article entitled *The Genius of Wodehouse* by Roger Kimball

History Today, October (from Tristan Godfrey)

Robert Pearce, reviewing *The Dark Valley* by Piers Brandon, commented on the pen-portrait of King Edward VIII, that his private universe was 'a kind of X-certificate version of PGW's Drones Club'.

Quote Unquote, (October 8, Radio 4)

Had an enquiry as to the origin of a line from *Good Gnu*.

Independent, October 16 (from Murray Hedgcock)

In an article *Faith and Reason* by Paul Handley, an introductory sub-heading read:

It is true that Stinker Pinker's game was rugby. But there is something about the thwack of leather on willow which better corresponds to church life.

Evening Standard, October 18 (from Murray Hedgcock)

The return of the Enigma coding machine to Jeremy Paxman by a P Smith from Edgbaston offered the opportunity for some fun involving Psmith and his socialistic tendencies. Robert McCrum advised the police to read all PGW's books, as Psmith might provide a vital clue, and to concentrate their enquiries in the region of Blandings Castle.

More Press Comment

Evening Standard, October 19 (from Murray Hedgcock)

The previous story was followed up by Murray Hedgcock whose comment that Jeeves was named after Percy Jeeves, a cricketer who used to play at Edgbaston, perhaps offered another lead.

The Times, October 20

The Court and Social page carried an announcement of the previous night's Society dinner

Daily Telegraph, October 21

Reported the Queen Mother's message to members as read out at the dinner.

Sunday Times (News Review), October 22

Godfrey Smith opened his report on our dinner with the words

The gloom lifted miraculously when I arrived on Thursday at the glittering dinner thrown in Gray's Inn by the PGW Society in honour of the Master's birthday.

Observer, October 22 (from Murray Hedgcock)

'Browser' claimed to have been told by P Smith that the Enigma had been stolen at the direction of Roderick Spode, to facilitate a Nazi victory in the war, he not having realised it was over.

Observer Review, October 22 (from Kit Evans and Hilary Bruce)

Robert McCrum included *The Code of the Woosters* OR *Joy in the Morning* in a brief list of all purpose English 'comfort' books.

The Third Kid Brady Story

Instead of producing *By The Way* with the December circulation, the Society sends a Christmas present of a specially published Kid Brady story to Society members of longer-standing. Those who received the second story, *How Kid Brady Broke Training*, last year, should now find enclosed *How Kid Brady Won The Championship*, which was first published in the American edition of *Pearson's* for January 1906. Those with one story behind them should receive *Broke Training*.

Members who have paid two full subscriptions should be receiving a copy of *Kid Brady, Lightweight*, while readers in their first year of membership must, alas, wait another year for their first story. There are seven in total, which will be sent annually until the supply, like that of Bertie Wooster's fiancée's, eventually runs out.

We do our best to be efficient but occasional errors do occur with the circulation, so if you are a victim, and have not received the *Kid Brady* story to which you believe you are entitled, please contact the membership secretary, Helen Murphy.

POETS' CORNER

Reformed

Erstwhile a vegetarian,
On curious foods I fed,
A terrible barbarian
In all I did and said.
My matutinal ravages
On oatmeal and fruit
Made me the worst of savages:
In fine a perfect brute.

The shocking deeds I did, oh!
They fill me with dismay.
The orphan and the widow
I cheated every day.
Without a lamp at nightfall
I cycled near and far:
My speed was something frightful
When in my motor-car.

At last, one happy morning,
A medico I knew
Administered a warning,
And gave me counsel, too.
He bade me change my diet.
"You'll find," said he, "I'm sure,
The scheme a sound one. Try it."
I did. It worked a cure.

My hand no longer forges,
No longer robs the till.
All bacchanalian orgies
My soul with horror fill.
I seldom cheat or kill any,
My nature's mild and sweet.
I shun all kinds of villainy.
And why? I live on meat.

From *Evening News and Evening Mail*,
11 March, 1903

McIlvaine Update

A further plea to those members who have unusual Wodehouse material which they think may warrant a mention in the planned update to the McIlvaine Bibliography. Work will start in earnest in putting the text of the proposed work together in the first quarter of 2001, and it would be helpful if contributions could be received by the end of January at the latest. Please see earlier issues of *Wooster Sauce* for the categories of material for which data is most needed.

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

February 13, 2001 – Informal meeting at the Savage Club

Advance notice of our regular evening meeting.

March 25, 2001 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Please contact Norman Murphy on for more information and to reserve a place.

May 26, 2001 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Please contact Norman Murphy on for more information and to reserve a place.

June 15, 2001 – Annual Cricket Match and Dinner

The annual cricket match between the Society team, the Gold Bats, and the Dulwich Dusters will be held at Dulwich College, and will be followed by the annual dinner (lounge suit). *Society members who wish to play should confirm their interest with Bob Miller as soon as possible.*

Details concerning applications for tickets for the dinner will be circulated with the March edition of *Wooster Sauce*.

July 10, 2001 – Informal meeting at the Savage Club
Advance notice of our regular evening meeting.

Oct 12 to 14, 2001 – TWS Convention, Philadelphia

Advance notice of the dates of the next convention of the American-based Society, to be held at the Sheraton Society Hill Hotel.

The event will include a variety of talks, banquet, brunch, optional cricket match and walking tour of Philadelphia. Registration forms can be obtained from the Editor, address below, or ask for further details from one of the organisers,

October 21, 2001 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Please contact Norman Murphy on for more information and to reserve a place.

November 13, 2001 – Informal meeting at the Savage Club

Advance notice of our regular evening meeting .

EDITOR'S TAILPIECES

Congratulations to Jessica Ward and Sarah Thornton, who won for *Penguin* the *Publishers Publicity Circle Bookdata* award for the best generic publicity campaign for the relaunch of Wodehouse's *Jeeves* collection last year. The PPC is a committee made up of publicists from UK publishers, who hold an annual awards ceremony for the best campaigns of the year.

Congratulations also to member Lara Cazalet, one of the cast of the ITV series *Bad Girls*, which won the National Television award for Best Drama.

Tony Whittome drew attention to the 'pre-Booker Booker Prize' awarded at the Cheltenham Literary festival to the best novel published in 1925. *Carry On, Jeeves* was on the shortlist with *The Great Gatsby* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (amongst others) despite the requirement that contenders should be novels! The winner was *The Great Gatsby*, whose American author also breached modern rules.

Following the Society's visit during our Millennium Tour, the Chairman, Norman Murphy, was invited to speak on Wodehouse's England to guests at Weston Park at a dinner which formed part of a *Toast to English Excellence* promotion.

Patron Henry Blofeld's new autobiography *A Thirst For Life* was published in October by Hodder & Stoughton and contains eight indexed and one non-indexed references to PGW.

Victoria Fox noted that Issue 14 of *Classic Wordsearch* had two puzzles featuring Wodehouse characters.

The Drones Club held an air-force themed dinner at Millfleet Hall on November 4 for the retirement of their Patron, David Colvin, the British Ambassador to Belgium. David has attended many Drones Club functions and he was rewarded for his devotion to their cause with a flight in a Belgian Air Force jet.

Eddie Grabham wrote endorsing the positive report of Chris Owen's one-man show, which he saw at Stevenage:

The Gordon Craig Theatre was perhaps a little too grand to replicate the Parva Village Hall but I am convinced that the strains of *Pig-Hoo-o-o-o-ey* rendered by 140 enthusiastic callers would easily have reached Shropshire and done its stuff.

Olivia Barclay reported that the Channel 4 TV programme *Countdown* on 25th August featured Martin Jarvis reading PGW's cricket poem *Missed*.