



The Remarkable Tale of Harrison, The Drones and HSBC



David Colvin, Kris Smets, Bill Dalton and Edward Cazalet with the commemorative plaque

Photo: Folio 020 7538 5800

We have spoken before in these pages of the remarkable initiatives of our fellow Society, the Drones Club of Belgium, and its irrepressible leader, Kris Smets. The latest incarnation of their unquenchable ambition was demonstrated on November 29, when they presented Mr Bill Dalton, Chief Executive Officer of HSBC, with this plaque to commemorate the centenary of Plum's departure from the Bank's employment.

And being the Drones, they did it in style.

Having left the centre of Belgium at 02.45am en route for Calais, they steamed towards Dover, only then, according to Kris, realising the burden of

responsibility attached to their mission. It occurred to him that while the Board of HSBC and the Board of The Drones Club both represent very respectable organisations, the dimensions of their activities are now of a slightly different scale.

The Drones were reunited with their former Patron, David Colvin CMG, also the former ambassador to Belgium, now living in London. He had arranged the loan of Harrison, a pink Rolls Royce dating back to 1934, who has a most impressive cv, (see page 13, where extracts from the speeches will also be found) for the final leg of the journey to the Bank's new headquarters in Canary Wharf, where Sir Edward Cazalet joined in the celebration.

The Pothunters Centenary Exhibition

Robert Bruce joined other members on the special Society day

It was on a murky and rainy November afternoon that some thirty intrepid members set out from the windy confines of West Dulwich station to celebrate the Centenary Exhibition of *The Pothunters* – that deftly taken single which started Plum's great literary innings. As is traditional, Colonel NTP Murphy took us on a whirlwind walking tour of the Dulwich sites, in particular pointing out the house with the two sphinxes by the door – the *Peacehaven* from which Mike Jackson set out. He guided us past the site on which beehives stood until 1984 and then, in the Dulwich grounds, pointed out both the sacred grove where Mike 'listened to the clock chiming the quarters' and the cricket pitch on which the dastardly Australian wicketkeeper, Darren Berry, has helped thwart the Gold Bats, the cricket team of the Society, in recent years.

Then it was on into the school for a cup of tea and a talk from Jan Piggott, the school archivist. He reminded us that for Plum the years from 1894 to 1900 were years of bliss.

"The brilliant overgrown schoolboy, to whom J B Priestley referred, preferred boarding house life to home. No wonder," as Piggott pointed out, "there are virtually no parents in his school stories."

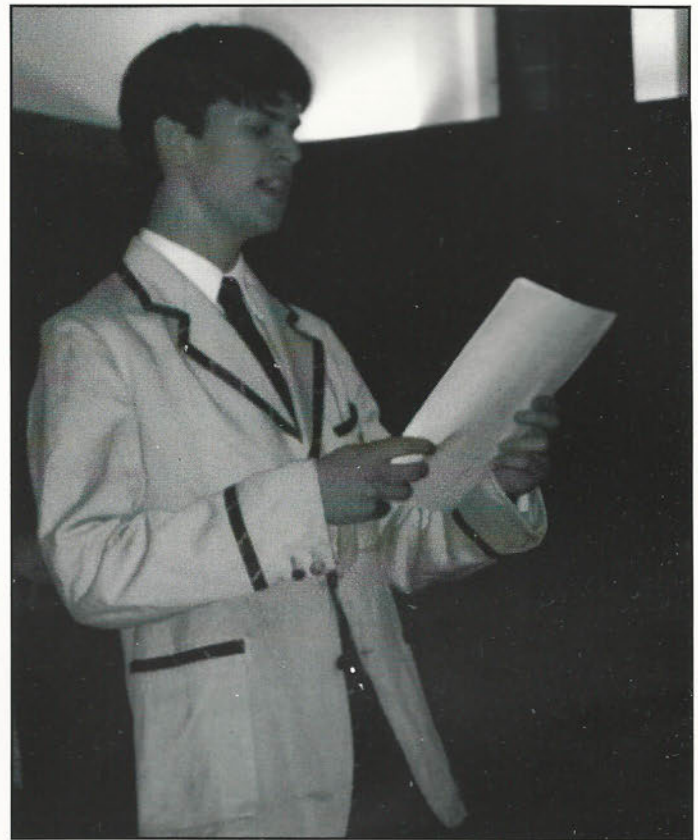
He suggested that the real theme of *The Pothunters* and of many Wodehouse books is 'the pattern of lost and recovered honour' and he quoted from the school reports on Plum penned by the legendary Master of Dulwich at the time, A H Gilkes, whose great-grandson was with us in the audience:

'A most impractical boy',

'The most distorted ideas about wit and humour',
and a more prescient

'If he perseveres, he will certainly succeed'.

A moment from a school concert of July 31, 1899 was recreated. Then, the young PGW sang the song *Hybrias the Cretan*. Now Mark Aldham (pictured



here), the star of last year's Dulwich production of *The Mikado*, and Thomas Hewitt-Jones, shortly off to Caius College as an organ scholar, performed it for us in splendid voice and in period blazers. It was magnificent and when the words referred to 'drones' more than a few heads nodded knowingly as if a flash of future was revealed.

After a lengthy look at the compendious exhibition which the school had prepared to celebrate the centenary, the party settled in to some browsing and sluicing in the Masters' Library, a room so fine with two storeys of book shelving and capacious old leather armchairs, that more than a few of us knew immediately what sort of house extension we would build if that long-lost aunt of our imaginations were to leave us a substantial legacy.

Subscriptions for 2003/2004

The Committee is very pleased to announce that the annual subscription for the year to May 31, 2004 will remain unchanged, for the seventh consecutive year, at £15.

Members paying by standing order will have their subscriptions renewed automatically, while those

paying annually will receive a request for payment and a renewal form from our Treasurer around the end of April.

It is possible for members to pay their subscriptions in either US dollars or Euros, and details of how to do so will be included on the renewal form.

One Hundred Not Out

Plum's friend John Millar reaches his hundredth birthday

One of the Society's oldest – in both senses of the word 'oldest' – members is Mr John H Millar, who lives in France and in the 1930's enjoyed a close friendship with the Wodehouses, often dining with Plum, Ethel and Leonora. We are delighted to be able to congratulate him on reaching his centenary on 14th March. The photograph alongside, of Mr Millar on his exercise bike, suggests that he, like Plum, advocates *mens sana in corpore sano*.

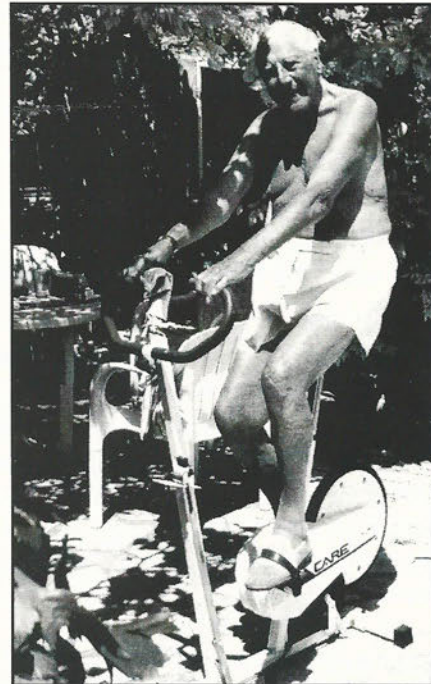
Mr Millar corresponded regularly with Leonora while the family was in Hollywood:

She recalled how Plum was being paid by MGM but they gave him nothing to do, so he used to go on long walks – probably with the pekes.

One day the Studio telephoned to say they required Mr Wodehouse to come to the studio. About an hour later they telephoned again to enquire where Mr Wodehouse was. They were told that he had left his villa immediately after their call. About ten minutes later he arrived at the studio a bit hot and red in the face. He had started walking immediately after their call.

The MGM Top Brass, of course, never walked anywhere.

Her letters were always entertaining. In one, she wrote that on the ship taking them to New York from Southampton, a stranger went up to Plum and said "Mr Wodehouse, I want to thank you for the many interesting hours you have given me in



your book on China." Leonora's comment to me was "The nearest Plum has ever been to China was Le Touquet and of course he has never written a book on China."

After the war he continued to exchange occasional letters with Plum, but, much to his regret, business pressures prevented him from accepting an invitation to go and visit Plum in New York.

The Society is proud to have such a distinguished member.

Is Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe up to his tricks again?

Ian Michaud reports on a major Canadian pumpkin festival.

It seems that every October politics and diplomatic soirees in the Canadian capital are reduced to a mere afterthought as the Ottawa region holds its breath, eagerly awaiting the results of the annual By Market Giant Pumpkin Contest.

Last year Allan Eaton had a huge one, and was confident that he would be crowned as the owner of Canada's largest pumpkin. However, when the organizers placed Eaton's pumpkin on the scale it blew up at its base, forcing a disqualification.

The judges weighed the giant pumpkin anyway and it measured 560.5 kilograms, which would have easily broken the Canadian record of 547 kilograms

set the previous day by Ben Hebb of Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.

Fat pumpkin competitions always throw up disappointments. Roch Rivard of Ste-Angèle-de-Laval, Quebec had set the Canadian record a week earlier with a pumpkin weighing 534.2 kilograms, only to have it broken by Hebb.

Rivard would nevertheless have won the competition and \$3,000 at By Market if his pumpkin hadn't gone on a diet. Between the two competitions, it dried out and lost almost four kilograms, weighing in at only 530.6 kilograms, a kilogram short of that of the winner, Bill Greer of Picton, Ontario.

Change at Wellington for Blandings

Jeffrey Preston joins the fray with a new theory on an old controversy

This business of trains to Market Blandings. To my mind, the key is a major railway event that took place in 1910, namely the opening of a new direct line from Paddington to Birmingham and Shrewsbury, by-passing the earlier route via Reading and Oxford.

Prior to 1910, all trains from Paddington to Shrewsbury went via Oxford and the journey time was roughly four hours (see inlay). After 1910, almost all expresses to Shrewsbury took the new line through Bicester, wholly omitting Oxford, with a substantial saving in time. The reference to a stop at Oxford (in *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*) and the four hour journey time (in more than one place) was thus accurate only up to 1910.

Although Shifnal could well have been the model for Market Blandings, its station cannot have been, as express trains from Paddington did not stop there. Between Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury, they mostly stopped only at Wellington. In fact, Wellington had a regular service of expresses from Paddington right up to the late sixties. While it may be too far from Weston to be the village of Market Blandings, perhaps visitors for the park were collected there.

PGW could well have been familiar with trains to Wellington. Stableford's nearest station was Bridgnorth, reached with changes at Worcester and also, sometimes, Kidderminster. But the nearest station with a direct service from Paddington was Wellington. Is it not conceivable that even in horse-drawn days PGW arranged to be taken from there the twelve or so miles to Stableford? In motor days it would have been almost certain.

I suspect his train times in the stories were largely fictional. Assuming that he placed Blandings in Shropshire because of his fond memories of the area around Stableford, he would also have recalled that his pre-1910 journeys there took roughly four hours with a stop at Oxford. He might not have realised

that after 1910 neither memory was still accurate. His references to Swindon (first, in *Something Fresh*) may well have been caused by confusion with his trips to Cheltenham.

In summary, to make sense of the references, one has to revert to the timetable before 1910, which is precisely when PGW was at Stableford. In my view, Wellington was the station he had in mind when he

first constructed his fictional journeys to Blandings and he relied entirely on his personal recollection of his journeys to Shropshire without consulting Bradshaw. (When he wrote *Something Fresh* he was, of course, living in the USA.)

Finally, a suggestion as to why he called the village *Market Blandings*. Step forward *Market Drayton*, an important village some fifteen miles from Wellington by branch line train, but also fairly easily accessible from Bridgnorth.

It is one of only half a dozen 'Market' prefixed villages and towns in England, and its close proximity to the Blandings area can be no coincidence. It had a grammar school, as well, dating back to 1558, but that . . . leads us to another Market altogether.

Editor's Note

Norman Murphy will respond to this latest suggestion in the June edition of *Wooster Sauce*.

Great Western Railway		
1902 timetable: Fast Corridor Trains		
Depart Paddington	Arrive Wellington	Journey time
09.50	13.43	3hr 53 min
14.10	17.30	3hr 20 min
16.55	20.21	3hr 26 min
Depart Wellington	Arrive Paddington	
08.28	12.15	3hr 47 min
10.17	14.10	3hr 53 min
16.46	20.45	3hr 59 min
18.50	22.50	4hr

Drones on Wipeout

A BBC1 daytime quiz show, *Wipeout*, featured a round about members of the Drones Club on December 4th. Three contestants were faced by sixteen squares containing the names of possible Drones members. Five (including Norman Bones, Woolwich Bagnell and Plum Duff) were not Drones, and contestants selecting them lost all their money. Remarkably, at the end of the round *all* the contestants had lost all their money by selecting wrong names.

Shipton-Bellinger Lives!

reports Murray Hedgcock

I have a feeling you need to be a fairly well-read Wodehouse buff with good recall for the name Shipton-Bellinger to mean much. But the citizenry of that Hampshire village are rightly proud of their modest mention, to the extent of devoting a website page to the association (give or take a hyphen).

The site, *Shipton Bellinger: Past, Present & Future*, provided by the County Council, explains:

You can find us in a valley in southern England, in a finger of Hampshire reaching out to Wiltshire. . . . Two miles north is the garrison town of Tidworth, in Wiltshire. Our local council is the Test Valley Borough Council who have offices in Andover, only eight miles to the east.

The River Bourne, a winterbourne, runs through the centre of the village alongside the High Street. In years past this used to flood, and there are photographs on display in the Village Centre of children enjoying themselves wading through the water lapping at doorsteps. Nowadays the Bourne only fills in times of extreme rainfall and these past few years (1999 and 2000) were the first for many that anyone thought the Bourne might, once again, overflow its banks.

Gilbert is an old name in the village. One of the village's most famous sons left, to eventually become associated with someone called Sullivan and, together, write numerous humorous operettas/operas. P G Wodehouse also used the name of the village for that of a character, Shipton-Bellinger, in one of his books.

The PGW page begins with a potted biography, continuing:

Wodehouse and Shipton Bellinger

Wodehouse immortalised the Village, through the creation of a character called Reginald Alexander Montacute James Bramfylde Tregennis Shipton-Bellinger, the 5th Earl of Brangbolton.

Whilst Shipton-Bellinger never attained the popularity that many other Wodehouse creations did, he appeared in a story called *The Smile that Wins*, part of a collection of short stories called *Mulliner Nights*, written in the early thirties. Shipton-Bellinger and his daughter, Millicent, lived at 18A Upper Brook Street, London, his daughter being the subject of the attentions of Adrian Mulliner.

Whilst there is no evidence that Wodehouse ever lived in, or even often visited, the village, he frequently used real place names in his stories. The most famous example is a cottage named *Threepwood* in the Hampshire village of Emsworth (between Havant and Chichester), which itself gave its name to one of P G Wodehouse's more famous characters, Lord Emsworth.

Further examples of his use of local names can be seen in the 5th Earl of Brangbolton's Christian name, Montacute, which is a small village, to the west of Yeovil in Somerset.

Gazebos Again: Members Research the Dictionaries

On page 23 of December's *Wooster Sauce*, the Editor queried the use of the word 'gazebo' in PGW's 1904 poem *To an Amazon*, in the line:

"Leave the gazebo's wind alone, . . ."

James Hogg and Colin Boyce validated the usage and, more relevantly, confirmed that the Editors of *Punch* had not committed a 'literal', the traditional term for what is now referred to as a 'typo'.

James pointed to Eric Partridge's *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* which includes it as American slang (a gawky or awkward fellow) and also an Australian mid-nineteenth-century term for a foolish fellow.

Colin preferred Jonathan Green's Cassell Dictionary of Slang, where the reader has a choice of gazabo, gazebe, gazaybe, gazebo, gazee and gazooney to choose from.

All are simply defined as nineteenth-century and later, of Irish and American origin, meaning an awkward, strange or stupid person. It suggests that the terms may be derived from 'gazapo', the Spanish term for a sly fellow, but Partridge prefers to link it to the simple verb 'to gaze'.

Wentworth and Flexner's Dictionary of American Slang (James Hogg again) merely refers to gazebo as a fellow, a guy, and says that 'gazabo' is ten times more frequent than 'gazebo'.

How Many Cardboard Lovers Are There?

Brian Taves researches the possibilities

Among Wodehouse's many theatrical accomplishments was transforming foreign plays that would also prove popular, thanks in no small measure to his touch, on the English-speaking stage. Of all these plays, none has had as many screen incarnations as his version of Jacques Deval's *Dans sa cadeur naive*, which Wodehouse and Valerie Wyngate adapted to the stage play *Her Cardboard Lover* for producer-director Gilbert Miller. It opened on Broadway on March 21, 1927, running 152 performances with Jeanne Eagels as the female lead, Simone, and Stanley Logan and Leslie Howard as philandering ex-husband Tony and cardboard lover Andre, respectively. Wodehouse was so confident in his rewriting that, prior to its opening, he bought out a one-third share for \$10,000 and was soon making a \$2,500 a week profit.



Marion Davies in her
1928 pyjama scene

The Cardboard Lover was first brought to the screen the next year, in 1928, in a silent 71-minute version crediting the original Deval source. However, as adapted by Carey Wilson, the gender base is switched; instead of two men fighting over a woman susceptible to the charms of each, it is two women duelling for a champion tennis player, Andre. (This was the probable reason for the title modification from HER to THE.)

Marion Davies stars as Sally, a flapper on tour in Monte Carlo, where she becomes determined to secure the man's autograph. This leads her to follow him and learn of the flagrant infidelity of his *amour*, Simone, in this case with an ageing opera singer whose inscription in her autograph book Sally tears out because it was ungentlemanly. Continuing her pursuit, Sally calls "Banco!" in the casino and finds herself \$50,000 in debt. Andre saves her, but only after securing her promise to help keep him from Simone. But it is a pledge he wishes she would forget, for Simone has him firmly in her grip; even a vicious parody of her mannerisms, with Sally in a costume evoking Simone, fails to turn him. Simone need only announce she is on her way for Andre to once again become her slave, until she walks out when Sally appears in pajamas and brushing her

teeth as if she had taken up a liberal residence. Not until Sally finally punches Andre, and he pushes her in response so that she falls, does he realize he loves her and only her. She takes her time about her recovery, knowing she has won all his love as she is surrounded by flowers and gifts. Davies gives a riotous performance, and it justifies her reputation as a skilled comedienne. Nils Asther fits the role of Andre, as does Jetta Goudal as Simone, and the movie steadily builds momentum as it captures the essential silliness and delight of the play under Robert Z Leonard's direction.

The Cardboard Lover was almost in release by the time of the opening of the play in England on August 21, 1928, with Tallulah Bankhead taking the female lead, Tony Melford as Tony, and Leslie Howard continuing as Andre. The first sound film production of Wodehouse was *Her Cardboard Lover*, released by British Photophone in England in April 1929. This five minute short, directed by Clayton Hutton and shot in Berlin, doubtless took advantage of superior recording studios there, and featured a scene of Bankhead as Simone undressing while talking on the telephone.

Shortly after Wodehouse left MGM after his unsatisfactory year as a screenwriter, production began on another version of the play, the studio already owning the screen rights. Released in 1932, the new film was retitled *The Passionate Plumber* (with a separate French version, *Le Plombier Amoureux*, also produced), with Irene Purcell appearing as the female lead, here named Patricia Jardine. Buster Keaton and Jimmy Durante headed the cast, the first of the three pictures in which they were paired. The picture was filmed in a mere nineteen days, and placing Keaton in this property was considered a measurement of his importance to the studio; for though he was still a box-office draw, they were well aware that he was miscast.

Initially, Keaton and Durante seem imposed on the structure of the play, with it taking secondary importance to their antics. The casting becomes less intrusive as the movie's plot develops in Laurence E

The Rev. C G Wodehouse of Sussex

An inquiry from John Tatum

John Tatum of Brighton recently spotted the name C G Wodehouse (1859) on a list of incumbents at St Peter's Church in Parham Park, Sussex. It was the work of a moment to set in train an enquiry with the Chairman about the Rev's pedigree, and Norman Murphy replied:

As John Fletcher has properly pointed out to me, there are people with the name Wodehouse who have no connection with our lot. It all goes back to the usage of the spelling in Yorkshire and Norfolk in the 14th century, and it is all very complicated. However, Mr. Burke's invaluable *Peerage* has a Reverend Constantine Griffith Wodehouse, who was vicar of Langford, Oxford, in 1911. Born 1827, he married in 1858 and died childless in 1911. The date of marriage is significant, because Mr. Tatum's 1859 date of his becoming vicar of the Sussex church would fit very well with a newly married vicar changing his parish. His new bride would often insist on a better vicarage or nicer parish or something of the sort, and a change of parish often occurred soon after marriage.

If it is the right man, he was the second son of Vice Admiral Philip Wodehouse (1773-1838), who was brother of John, the second Lord Wodehouse. It is difficult to say what relation he was to PG but, at a quick guess, let's say they were second cousins twice removed.

There may well have been other Reverend C G Wodehouses in the Anglican Church at that time, but I'd reckon fairly confidently that he was part of the sprawling Wodehouse family who were to be found all over the world in the late 19th century, either winning bits of empire as gallant soldiers, governing it as gallant imperial servants, or looking after its morals as clergymen.

For what it is worth, Reverend C G Wodehouse seems to have been uncle to another vice-admiral of the Navy, to a general in the Army, and to Miss Evelyn Georgiana Susan Wodehouse, who, from what I have recently ascertained, wrote the words to the second finest waltz tune in the world: *The Eton Boating Song*.

Fancy a Trip to Belgium?

We have written before in these pages about the extraordinary group of Belgians called The Drones, one of whose exploits is recorded in this issue.

If you would like to experience one of their meetings, we recommend the Summer Event, on June 21, or the Great Drones Dinner, on October 25. They also hold evening meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at Milfleet Hall, under an hour's drive from Brussels. For full details contact

Her Cardboard Lover, continued

Johnson's adaptation. As 'Elmer', played by Keaton, falls in love with Patricia, taking on the play's role of her 'cardboard lover', he eventually wins her heart and saves her from a liaison with caddish Tony Lagorce (Gilbert Roland).

In 1942, after Bankhead had played the lead role again the previous year in a summer stock revival in the United States, MGM would remake *Her Cardboard Lover*, the last Wodehouse movie made in Hollywood. George Cukor, who had previously directed the play on stage, helmed the picture, the only production he did in both mediums. Considering that *Her Cardboard Lover* had already been treated satirically when last remade ten years earlier as *The Passionate Plumber*, Cukor concluded that 'the plot was already too dated to engage a wartime audience'. The movie is amusing in its first hour, as songwriter Terry Trindale (Robert Taylor)

impulsively puts himself in monetary debt to radiant socialite Consuelo Croyden (Norma Shearer) to announce his love. To pay off his debt, she hires him as her secretary and asks him to pose as her fiancé, because she finds roguish suitor Tony Barling (George Sanders) irresistible despite knowing he is a cad. Since Consuelo is drawn toward both Terry and Tony, the plot is not amenable to a ready resolution in a series of farcical boudoir situations.

The script places Taylor in awkward positions, such as the pajama scene that in the hands of Marion Davies in the 1927 version had been so delightful. Veering in new plot directions, the delicate balance necessary to the comedy collapses in the last half-hour of *Her Cardboard Lover*. As a result, it leaves a sense of disappointment in the viewer that has given Shearer's last movie a much worse critical reputation than it deserves overall.

Modern Actors in Wodehouse Clothing

Eddie Grabham makes controversial decisions as Casting Director

Like most of us who retire to Woostershire as frequently as possible, I had formed my own visions of Plum's delightful characters long before they were rudely shattered by Ian Carmichael and Dennis Price. However, as the television series got under way, these two superb actors convinced me that they were right and I was wrong. With the likes of Athene Seyler and Eleanor Summerfield hovering in the background as the formidable aunt offensive, I was won over completely.

I soon realised that there were battalions of actors who could portray Wodehousean characters, but is that still the situation today?

There's little doubt that Stephen Fry stepped into Jeeves's well-polished shoes with absolute ease and one can think of no contemporary actor who could play the part half as well. Similarly, following his excellent portrayal on radio, only Richard Griffiths can adequately fill Mr Mulliner's bar-stool.

But what of other characters? With the distinct shift towards more proletarian characters in modern drama, one may shake one's head in sadness as one mourns the passing of the West End silly ass and the crusty aristocrat so admirably impersonated by the likes of Claud Allister and A E Matthews.

In reality, the situation is far better than one may imagine. East-Enders grit may fill the tabloid showbiz headlines, but lurking in the comfortable shadows ready to recall that fancifully glorious Edwardian past are legions of talented performers who could readily take up the challenge. Apart from which, any actor worth his salt can readily portray all sorts of people – it is we, the audience, who tend to put them into neat little pigeon-holes. Lord Emsworth for example – how about Michael Gambon? He would bring the right brooding introspection to the role, don't you think? So, of course, could Richard Briers, an actor born to bring Wodehousean characters to life (he's rather good at Shakespeare too!).

Having followed his exploits in the '*Glen*', Alexander Morton could readily swap his affection from Golly to

that of Angus McAllister. We may be familiar with his experienced eye judging the likelihood of felling a stag, but one can equally see him fussing with the Phlox, eyeing the Euphorbia or caressing the Campanula.

From the same camp, Julian Fellowes could don the cloak of Parsloe-Parsloe with righteous ease, while Martin Jarvis would bring the right spark to the Hon Galahad Threepwood.

But who would play Bertie? Whereas Stephen Fry retains a timeless look suited to Jeeves, one cannot but feel that Hugh Laurie may now be a little too old. Of course! It would have to be Hugh Grant, surely the best 'silly ass' still working – and he would only have to look at a pretty girl to give the perfect impersonation of a scared rabbit. As for everyone's favourite newt-fancier, I can see competition between James Fleet as a rather wistful Gussie Fink-Nottle, while his innate aggression when distributing prizes at Market Snodsbury Grammar school could be realised in hilarious style by Rowan Atkinson – especially if the headmaster was played by Graham Crowden.

While one may recall Robert Lindsay as Citizen Smith, I feel sure that he would bring the right air of shifty enterprise to Ukridge. Jonathan Cecil could have played any number of young bloods from the Drones Club, but one suspects he may now be happier playing a more mature role – I rather fancy him as Uncle Fred; I'm sure he would flit by magnificently!

Edward Fox as the Oldest Member would happily recall many an amusing yarn and, not forgetting our friends across the pond, I would cast John Goodman as the irrepressible Ivor Llewellyn who would no doubt welcome the suggestions above should he decide to put one of Plum's novels before the cameras.

But what of the popsies I hear you cry? And what about the aunts? Well I can assure you that Lady Constance, Aunts Agatha and Dahlia – not to mention Madeline Bassett – are all in my sights, but you'll have to wait until the next issue to discover just who gets which part.

Come and Play for The Gold Bats - or Just Watch

On Friday June 20, The Gold Bats have their annual cricket match against the Dulwich Dusters, played on the College grounds and starting at 4pm. Bob Miller would love to

hear from you if you would like to play.

If you prefer to just come and watch, tea will be laid on for spectators who order it on the enclosed form.

Our second match will be played at West Wycombe against The Sherlock Holmes Society of London on Sunday June 29, starting at 11am. Again please call Bob Miller to book your place in the team.

This event is enhanced by players and spectators in period (1895-ish) costume enjoying their own picnics in unhurried peace. Come and join us.

A Tale of Two Countries

Oliver Wise listened to Elin Woodger-Murphy's thoughts

On November 17 the Society held its AGM at the Savage Club. Norman Murphy, the Chairman, always a fast talker, took the floor, engaged top gear, and rattled through the formal business in nine minutes (see article below). He then introduced the main entertainment: a talk by Elin Woodger-Murphy, the former President of the American Wodehouse Society. If you had thought that brilliant marriages between leading national figures which unite great countries were lost to the days when knights wore proper suits of armour, think again. Lieut.-Col. and Mrs Norman Murphy are a shining modern example.

Elin's talk had the title *A Tale of Two Countries*. For us, it was the best of times. Like Wodehouse, Elin has a real feel for the interplay of English and American culture and did not shirk comparisons. England has too much rain and not enough grape jelly.

The acid test for the Anglo-American migrant is cricket. Submersion in America seems to have reduced Plum's devotion to the game in his later years. Happily, Elin's life in England appears to have

produced the opposite effect. She claims that her "comprehension of cricket leaves a lot to be desired". Elin is too modest. Did she not write a splendid report of the match between The Gold Bats and The Dulwich Dusters? (*Wooster Sauce*, September 2002)

Elin read the passage about the newspaper cricket report from *Piccadilly Jim* in her melodious American accent. So the great Andy Ducat had his name pronounced 'Doo-cat', rather than as the English would pronounce the Venetian currency. But this is nit-picking.

We learned that Americans like their boiled eggs beaten up in a glass. Curious, but broad-minded Britons should be able to tolerate this eccentricity. What matters, is surely the quality of the egg, rather than the violence meted out to it. And in Elin Woodger-M we were privileged to hear a first-rate speaker and a thoroughly good egg. Or perhaps, as more befits a Murphy, we can echo Bertie Wooster's description of Nobby Hopwood in *Joy in the Morning*: Elin is evidently 'an extremely sound young potato'.

AGM Report: Hilary Bruce to be next Chairman

The business of the AGM was quickly handled at the Savage Club on November 17, with no surprises to upset the established routine. . . . Except one.

The Chairman, Norman Murphy, announced that he would be stepping down from the Chair on reaching his 70th birthday in May 2003, and said that the Committee planned to appoint Hilary Bruce as his replacement. Under the rules of the constitution, she would then stand for election at the 2003 AGM, and, if confirmed, annually thereafter.

Having served a 15-year sentence in public relations consultancy, Hilary Bruce was resting at home when her husband Robert reported a chance meeting with The Editor: There was a new P G Wodehouse Society. It was going well, but needed someone to do marketing and PR. Did Robert know anyone?

He did. Apart from the complete absence of salary, it seemed a job tailor-made for a Wodehouse-loving PR and, there being no other candidates, Hilary was quickly reeled in. She has been an active committee member ever since and her ideas have helped the Society grow from about 100 original members to almost 1,000 today. Hilary worked closely with



Norman Murphy to create the memorable Millennium Tour and can usually be spotted at Society events deploying a teapot or bottle of wine.

Robert is also actively involved with the Society, as a lob bowler for The Gold Bats, a correspondent for *Wooster Sauce* and our Society website, and, soon, as Chairman's consort.

Precious Nonsense: More Wodehouse Borrowings from W S Gilbert, Part II

by David Mackie

In this article David continues to compare some of Wodehouse's prose with possible sources in W S Gilbert's writings.

If many of PGW's quotations derive from a source such as *Bartlett* we might expect that they would be given more or less *verbatim* – that is, assuming that he did not know the original work. They could be altered, of course, to make them deliberately vague – possibly to fit a character like Bertie Wooster who would be likely to 'get it wrong' (and equally likely to be corrected by Jeeves) – but so many of them are either 'not quite right' or, more interestingly, recall sources by their similarity of structure (particularly G&S sources which are rarely, if ever, found in books of quotations) that it seems quite clear that PGW knew WSG's work very well indeed.

In Gilbert's own words (*Ruddigore*, 1887):

Let us enquire into this.

In *Bill the Conqueror* (1924) the line

"I've done a good deal of that sort of thing"

recalls

"There must be a good deal of this sort of thing"

from *The Gondoliers* (1889), while

... had failed her in her hour of need ...

recalls

"To fail me in my hour of need!"

from *Princess Ida*, (1884). A third line,

The question was unanswerable

surely has its provenance in *HMS Pinafore* (1878)

"Your argument was unanswerable."

In the story *Strychnine in the Soup* from *Mulliner Nights* (1933) we find the sentence

He kissed her fondly, and went off to pack.

Compare this with a line from the Act I finale of *Patience* (1881)

"She's loved me fondly and has feared to speak."

The rhythmic construction is identical and this is particularly interesting as the original line is sung – one could easily substitute Wodehouse for Gilbert. *Patience* seems to have been a favourite of PGW, judging by the number of references to it in his books. It was revived at the Savoy in 1900; perhaps the now nineteen-year-old was in the audience.

Blandings Castle (1935) is a rich ore to be mined. In *Lord Emsworth Acts for the Best* we find

"Why, go to her and plead with her"

which again recalls *Patience*

"So go to him and say to him"

and, later, in *Mr Potter Takes a Rest Cure*,

"Surely such weather is enough to make any man happy"

which recalls *Iolanthe* (1882)

"That ought to be enough to make any girl happy."

Then in *The Juice of an Orange*, there is

... like poplars in a breeze ...

surely a reference to *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879)

Sad the lot of poplar trees

Courted by the fickle breeze!

and in the same story

"Tell me all about it."

is a direct quote from *Patience* which Gilbert himself echoes in *The Gondoliers*.

"Tell us, tell us all about it."

In *The Rise of Minna Nordstrom*, there is

... how to undo the evil she had wrought ...

which recalls *The Sorcerer* (1877):

"Oh, I have wrought much evil with my spells
And ill I can't undo."

In *Figs Have Wings* (1952) we find

... a living ganglion of conflicting emotions."

'Ganglion' is a fairly uncommon word but it occurs in *HMS Pinafore* in the line

... a living ganglion of irreconcilable antagonisms.

Again the structure of the two lines is identical. In the same book we also have

They were alone and unobserved.

Bunthorne's line in *Patience* is

"Am I alone, and unobserved?"

and in *Ring for Jeeves* (1953) we have the almost identical

"Are we alone and unobserved?"

Two lines in *Ring for Jeeves* also recall *Ruddigore*. Gilbert's

It's like eight hours at the seaside!
becomes

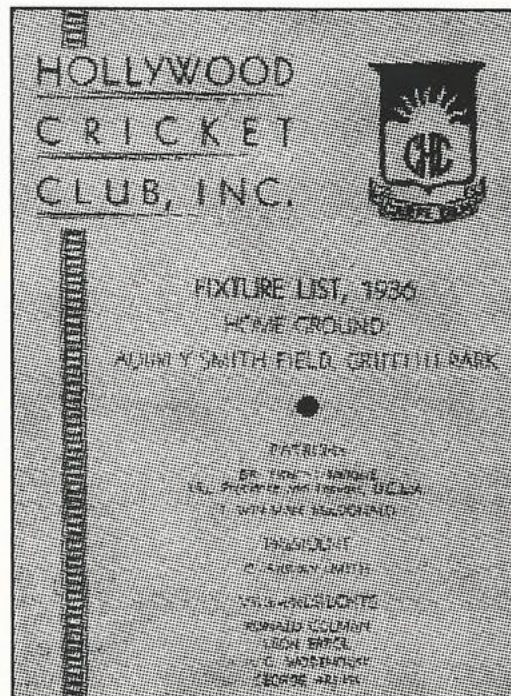
Hollywood Cricket Club is Seventy Years Old and Plum was one of its first Vice-Presidents

Even Murray Hedgcock, the acknowledged expert on matters involving Plum and cricket, has found it difficult to define with certainty PGW's involvement with the Hollywood Cricket Club, which has just celebrated its 70th anniversary. He mentioned in *Wodehouse at the Wicket* (Hutchinson, 1997) that Plum had taken the minutes of the inaugural meeting in 1932 and contributed 100 dollars to become a life member.

As can be seen from the front page of the 1936 fixture list (adjacent) he was a vice-president alongside Ronald Coleman, Leon Errol and George Arliss (whose name Plum immortalised in his version of *You're the Top*):

You're the run – of a film by Arliss
You're the sun – on the Crystal Parliss).

Sir C Aubrey Smith, ex-England captain and Plum's adversary from matches between Authors and Actors at Lord's in years gone by, was the guiding spirit of the club, reflected in the name of the ground where they play. It would be nice to think that he earned his knighthood, awarded in 1944, for founding the Club, but alas, that was not his citation.



Today the Club is dominated by hard-working Asian business and professional men, who have published a celebratory anniversary book, in which Murray's work on Wodehouse's connection is summarised.

Precious Nonsense, continued

... it's like a week at the seaside to them ...

while

"If I can't disinherit my own unborn son, whose unborn son can I disinherit?"

becomes

"If a man can't hiccup in his own house, in whose house can he hiccup?"

But PGW had alluded to this source in the earlier *Blandings Castle (The Go-Getter)* with the clearly similar

If a mother is not entitled to shudder at a prospect like that, it would be interesting to know what she is entitled to shudder at.

This list could be extended for page after page. In these two articles I have mentioned only a few of the many Gilbertian quotations and allusions that I have found and, to date, I have read only about one tenth of Wodehouse's vast output. But let Gilbert, again from *Ruddigore*, have the final word:

In truth I could pursue this ... theme further, but behold, I have said enough.

Footnote

As I was preparing these articles I was given access to researches by fellow Society member Arthur Robinson of LaGrange, Georgia, USA, which are more or less on the lines of my own. Clearly, where we have read the same books our findings coincide, but I have used several of his which are from books that I have not read and I am grateful to him for his willingness for these to be cited. He also has picked up on the *Bab Ballads* connection which I hope to deal with in a future article. Anyone who is interested in communicating with him can contact him at:

The Little Church 'Round The Corner

Gus Caywood makes a plea for its Wodehouse wall

Plum's favourite church, New York's Little Church Around the Corner, needs financial help.

In 1994 The Wodehouse Society (USA) sponsored the installation of a plaque on the North Wall of the Little Church Around the Corner, an Episcopal (Anglican) church known formally as the Church of the Transfiguration. The plaque reads:

P. G. WODEHOUSE, 1881-1975, AUTHOR

married Ethel Rowley in 1914 in this church:

'... the only church that anybody could possibly be married at. It's on Twenty-ninth Street, just around the corner from Fifth Avenue. It's got a fountain playing in front of it, and it's a little bit of Heaven dumped right down in the middle of New York.'

In loving memory,

THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY

The ringleaders of the USA Society's effort were Florence Cunningham, Frits Menschaar and John Graham, supported by Toni Rudersdorf, the President at the time.

The quote on the plaque is from the memorable last chapter of *Uneasy Money*. The *Millennium Concordance* cites further references to the Little Church in *The Girl On the Boat* (ch1), *The Small Bachelor* (chs4, 9), *Barmy in Wonderland* (ch18), and *Company for Henry* (ch4), and the US equivalents. Also some magazine short stories. And don't forget the Wodehouse/Kern song *The Church 'Round the Corner*, from the 1920 Broadway musical *Sally*:

Dear little, dear little church 'round the corner,
Where so many lives have begun.
Where folks without money
See nothing that's funny
In two living cheaper than one.
Of dull care, of course, I'm a scorner
We're busted, but what do we care?
I'll be dressed all in white,
I'll be dying of fright,
At the church 'round the corner,
It's just 'round the corner,
The corner of Madison Square.

So, you see, Plum liked this church and would have given the shirt off his back to help it out. Can we do less?

Well, what I've been trying to say is that the North Wall and the Wodehouse plaque were about to come

tumbling down – 'imminent danger of collapsing' – and over the past two years the Church has had to rebuild the Wall. The reconstruction is just about finished. The rebuilt Wall was dedicated at a mass on December 1 (the Right Reverend Mark S Sisk, Bish of New York, presiding). At last count, however, the Church's North Wall Appeal still had over \$150,000 to go to cover the \$600,000 cost.

Wodehouseans are encouraged to pitch in with contributions. The UK Society has sent \$400 (about £250) to the fund in Plum's memory. If an individual member would care to add a personal contribution, we suggest you mail your cheque or cash (they cannot take credit cards) with a covering letter saying that you are a member of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK). The Church requests that cheques be made payable to 'The Church of the Transfiguration' with the notation 'North Wall Appeal' on the memo line, and sent to North Wall Appeal, Church of the Transfiguration, 1 East 29th Street, New York, NY 10016.

If you need additional information you may call the church office at _____ The church's e-mail address is _____ Further background on the Church and the North Wall project, including references to PGW, can be found at _____ An autumn 2002 update on the North Wall's status is at _____

Chamber-Pots at Dulwich

During Jan Piggott's most informative talk at the *Pothunters' Centenary Exhibition* (see page 2) he referred to a letter from an Old Alleynian, Capt A N Grey, received in 1975. Capt Grey said he was sent from Northumberland to Dulwich to learn English and boarded in Elmlawn House. He was told that PGW had invented the 'Po Game', which took place on the last night of Christmas term.

A rope was thrown from an Elmlawn upstairs window to one in another house, Ivyholme. The handle of a Po was threaded on to rope in each house. The vessels were released simultaneously and the resulting debris fell 'upon the place beneath'.

The Elmlawn Housemaster, Mr J B Joerg, put a stop to the game in the mid 19-teens by supplying enamel chamber-pots in place of the pottery ones *in situ*.

Business and the Arts in Perfect Harmony

Extracts from the Speeches at the Presentation

Kris Smets, President of the Drones Club, opened the formal proceedings outlined on page 1 by recalling how Wodehouse and his use of the English language are woven deeply into the consciousness of the English-speaking world, from Bangladesh to San Francisco. He recalled a speech of Sir John Bond, Group Chairman of HSBC, to the English Speaking Union of the United States earlier in the year:

If language is an operating system, English appears to be 'Windows'. Today English does not belong to the English, nor to the Americans. More people use English in India than spoke it in the whole world in Shakespeare's time. English is successful today because it provides a competitive advantage, which is why so many people are learning it.

Kris added that in Brussels, the centre of the EU, they daily experience English as the centre of the globalised world. One Euro MP, Mr Nirj Deva, even pleads to introduce English as the common language in Belgium to help lower the barriers between its Flemish and Walloon communities.

Harrison's Curriculum Vitae

Owned by John Stuttard, a City Alderman, the car met Her Majesty The Queen Mother at a 1990 Garden Party at Windsor. The *Financial Times* partly sponsored its 11,000 mile journey across much of the old Empire from Peking to Paris in 1997. It has appeared in three Lord Mayor's Shows, including that in 2002.

He concluded that the Drones see and experience English not only as a business language but as a brilliant tool of communication in the hands of a brilliant writer. They wished to remember his time at the Bank, which helped him on the road to professional authorship, and to celebrate the Drones Club of Belgium's four basic values: *Savoir Vivre*, Science of Humour, Comradeship and Generosity, and asked David Colvin to present the plaque.

David paid tribute to the Drones Club's 'ingenious and enterprising initiatives' and expressed particular pleasure to be at HSBC's new headquarters as, in 1999, he had opened the Bank's new branch in the Avenue Louise in Brussels.

He recalled Wodehouse's line:



The Drones Club, with Harrison, Edward Cazalet and David Colvin

They train bank clerks to stifle emotion so that they will be able to refuse overdrafts when they become managers

but concluded that if HSBC had sought to stifle Wodehouse's emotion they had failed. He added:

His immortal spirit, style and humour live on and are encountered all round the globe, often in surprising places. Three weeks ago I appeared as a witness in a trial in Arezzo in Tuscany, Italy, in proceedings to help a friend in trouble with a neighbour from hell who is trying to restrict her access to her house. We dined with her Italian lawyer, David Scarabicchi. He told me, in Italian, that he is still learning English, but had found an author whose work he took to and understood immediately, and who was helping him to improve his command of the language. Yes, it was Wodehouse.

Bill Dalton accepted the plaque on behalf of HSBC, and agreed that Plum's heart had never been in banking:

His attendance record in 1900 shows that he was late for work on 20 days, excluding 'foggy mornings', a number exceeded by only two of his 56 fellow clerks.

He said the Bank was very proud of its connection with Plum, who could be found on the new History Wall on the ground floor. The Bank's loss had been literature's gain, a point touched on by Edward Cazalet, who said how amazed Plum would have been at the honour the Bank was doing him in accepting the plaque

Autumn Lightening at Summer Fields

*P K Purvis (Jamie Randall) and G G Simmons (Jamie Summer)
report on an evening at Summer Fields Prep School, Oxford*

On Saturday evening, November 9, Tony Ring, current President of the International Wodehouse Association, gave an excellent talk on the life of Wodehouse to 150 prep schoolboys, half of whom declared, on a show of hands, to have read at least one of his works.

Mr Ring started by talking about Plum's early childhood and how he became intoxicated by literature and stage performances of the early twentieth century. He then explained the origin of the name 'Plum' and how his hobbies developed. These included writing for his school magazine, boxing and cricket, but sadly he had to give up boxing through poor eyesight.

He pursued his love of writing and in 1904 wrote a lyric for the musical *Sergeant Brue*. He was to go on to write lyrics for many more shows such as *Sally, Oh, Boy!* and *Leave It To Jane*. Next, Mr Ring talked about some of the short stories and longer books, eg Psmith and Jeeves.

He also referred to Plum's lifelong loves: his wife Ethel, their daughter Leonora and their Pekinese dogs. He dipped into the war experiences of Plum and explained briefly why he had made some broadcasts from Germany which had caused suggestions, since discredited, that he had acted in a treacherous manner. This was all illustrated with some fascinating pictures, and was followed by the best part of the night, an extract from *Right Ho, Jeeves*, read by Tony Ring (as Bertie, the Narrator), four Summer Fields masters and three of the boys.

The story is about the teetotal gentleman, Gussie Fink-Nottle, giving out prizes to the pupils of Market Snodsbury Grammar School. On this occasion, however, he is not so sober; in fact, to put it bluntly, he is plastered. Bertie is in the audience watching avidly, but he rapidly departs when he is verbally attacked by Gussie and accused of having cheated when he won a prize as a schoolboy. This little episode was extremely amusing, and those reading the story did so admirably.



Nicholas Aldridge (the 'Bearded Bloke') and Jonathan Cooper (Gussie Fink-Nottle) in the adaptation of *The Prize-Giving*

The Prize-Giving

Cast of Readers

<i>Bertie Wooster</i>	<i>Johnny Bush</i>
<i>Gussie Fink-Nottle</i>	<i>Jonathan Cooper</i>
<i>Jeeves</i>	<i>Andrew Bishop</i>
<i>The Bearded Bloke</i>	<i>Nicholas Aldridge</i>
<i>P K Purvis</i>	<i>Jamie Randall</i>
<i>R V Smethurst</i>	<i>Max Davies-Gilbert</i>
<i>G G Simmons</i>	<i>Jamie Summer</i>

After the story, Mr Ring answered a few questions, commented briefly on the difference in value of first edition books, and so drew a successful and light-hearted evening to a close.

A Times Crossword Clue

Nick Townend spotted this clue in the *Times* Jumbo Crossword on November 9. Solution on page 24.

Wooster's proverbial excuse for Jeeves's contempt?
(2, 3, 2, 1, 4, 2, 3, 5)

Award for Penguin Audio

Penguin audio won the Gold award in the class *Abridged Classic Fiction* at the Spoken Word Award ceremony on October 28, for Patron Simon Callow's reading of *Right Ho, Jeeves*.

Reports of Other Activities

Society Meeting at Bolton

reported by Peter Wightman

A regional meeting of the Society was held for the third time at Bolton Little Theatre on November 2.

The tone having been beautifully set by an excerpt from the audiotape *Right Ho, Jeeves*, fourteen enthusiasts heard a long extract from the story *Indian Summer of an Uncle* read by members of the Theatre. This was followed by a screening of the Fry and Laurie dramatisation of the same, and a lively debate ensued on the merits of the one against the other. The feeling that even such a faithful piece of TV work can never quite give the whole Wodehouse is scarcely new, but fresh insights into each medium and the relationship between them were clearly gained.

Thanks to Mark Reid and Nick Townend for setting up a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon. We are getting to know each other in this North West/North East grouping, and a further meeting is planned for May 17, 2003 to coincide with the Little Theatre production of *Good Morning, Bill* (see page 19)

The Second Anatole Dinner

at the Montcalm Hotel on February 26

The second dinner based on the dishes of Anatole was appreciated just as much as the first had been.

More than thirty diners enjoyed a champagne reception and a menu which featured Anatole's celebrated *Sylphides à la crème d'écrivisses*. This dish, for which a contemporary alternative was offered to vegetarians present, was quite exceptional in both flavour and richness, and it emphasised the extraordinary capacity for absorbing such food which the wealthy had in pre-WWII times. Dinners would often last as many as seven or eight courses, quite possibly including three of this type.

Fortunately, perhaps, Society members from such diverse homes as Lancaster, Coventry, Wiltshire and Germany were restricted to four courses plus coffee and 'Le Trou Normand', a palate-clearing Calvados before the main course. Conversation was incessant, like the flow of wine, and when we left, we felt we understood why the services of a chef like Anatole would have been the subject of bid and counter-bid.

Two American Theatre Adaptations

Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, adapted by Mark Richard, was performed at Stage West, Fort Worth, Texas. The following extract comes from a review by Perry Stewart in the *Star-Telegram* (December 14, 2002):

In a brief pre-curtain welcome speech, director Jerry Russell tells Stage West audiences to 'put on your silly hats'. The remark is meant to prepare you for the discerning foolishness you'll experience in *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*. Thank you, Jerry. You have mixed a tasty cocktail and served it with savoir-faire. The agreeable experience is not unlike last year's holiday treat *Thank You, Jeeves*. In *Feudal Spirit*, Bertie is bullied by his tyrannical Aunt Dahlia into entertaining a boring couple, the Trotters, to expedite a business deal. This leads to a bungled jewel theft, some genteel blackmail and half-hearted wooing of Florence, his sometime fiancée.

A frolicsome ensemble orbits the core characters of Jim Covault, who captures the regal impassivity of Jeeves, and Nick Sandys in outrageous contrast as Bertie, who leaps about like a spaniel, making narrative asides to the audience and punctuating his commentary with a vocal trick that falls somewhere between a giggle and a yodel.

Cocktail Time was simultaneously entertaining Patrons of the City Lit in Chicago, whose production was at least their seventh annual PGW offering. Dean Miller offered the following observations:

The Company, whose ingenuity routinely inflates a set and costume budget of about \$1.98, even provided a perfect catapult-brazil-nut-and-top-hat scene and a maddened swan. Several old Wodehouse hands did full justice to the roles of Sir Raymond Bastable, Peasemarch, Cosmo Wisdom and the others; Don Bender reprised last year's role as Uncle Fred. Bender effortlessly projects a sort of depraved but cheerful boulevardier charm and an inordinate loopiness all combined. Jan Blixt, a talented newcomer, played *all* the female roles – a tearful Phoebe Wisdom, a brash Gertie Carlisle, a peevish Nanny Bruce and a svelte Barbara Crowe. As Gertie she showed almost too much skill with the errant cosh.

The whole delightful affair was directed by Kevin Theis (who in the past dealt nobly with *Jeeves and the Mating Season* and *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*). The Company's managing director is Page Hearn, who doubles as one of the best actors, and who adapted the original novel for this production.

Nine Out of Ten for the Documentary

Asking a Society member to review *P G Wodehouse: The Long Exile*, the hour-long documentary on BBC2 on December 28, is no different to having a life-long Shakespearean scholar comment on a presentation of his life. Omissions will be regretted, the way of making certain points will be queried, and the overriding impression that the programme-makers got it nearly right may be hidden. With this programme, the makers very nearly did get it right.

The format selected was a chronological review of Plum's life. The narrator, who was never seen, was Miranda Richardson, and her script was excellent, barely a word which would have caused serious debate at a committee meeting. Filming of relevant places was supported by previously unknown cine footage of the Wodehouses at Degenerhausen, the German estate where Plum and Ethel spent a couple of summers. The topic of the war took up about a quarter of the programme, but as these pages have pointed out before, if a fair presentation of the facts is to be given, the full background has to be explained. This section was fairly handled, both as regards the interviews and the narrative.

A series of contributions from relevant people: Robert McCrum (whose researches for his forthcoming biography inspired the making of the

programme), Patrick Wodehouse, Edward Cazalet, Barry Pitt, Bob Whitby, Jacqueline Powell and others was mixed with readings from the texts by worthies such as John Mortimer, Tim Rice and Olivia Williams. Hal Cazalet sang snatches from some of Plum's songs to his own piano accompaniment and, generally, Plum's involvement with the musical theatre was given good coverage.

Now the weaknesses. The gravest misjudgement was undoubtedly an asinine impression of how a Drone might have looked and acted. It was a regrettable tabloid moment in a broadsheet programme, and detracted from the whole. The time absorbed by this could have been spent mentioning that Plum lived at Emsworth, and summarising the influence of that part of the country. Or by mentioning the traumatic effect on Plum and Ethel of Leonora's death, which was ignored completely. The final comment in the interview with Lee Davis, that his father would not permit Plum to fly to the UK to be knighted, would have been better understood if the viewer had been made aware that his father was Plum's doctor!

So back to the introductory paragraph. Omissions and lapses from good taste regretted, but overall an extremely good representation to the public of the life of the last century's greatest humorous writer.

News from Russia

Masha Lebedeva has sent two reports:

On October 15, the Russian Wodehouse Society held its second meeting in a Moscow café whose interior was lushly decorated with green and white balloons. An extraordinary 200 people attended, alas not all committed Wodehouseans but some attracted by the jazz band *Pigeons* who were to perform later. PGW's birthday was duly celebrated in champagne, and a Wodehouse quiz, with added improvised questions for the benefit of the incomers, helped to ensure that the party was much enjoyed by the mainly youthful participants.

Our member Natalya Trauberg, meanwhile, has been publicising Wodehouse on another level. She has been broadcasting on the Christian Church and Public Channel in Moscow. On Saturdays she had a half-hour broadcast *Window to Europe*, which in part she was devoting to Wodehouse. She spoke of the idyllic atmosphere of his books, about the difficulties of translating his work into Russian, and planned to close her series of broadcasts by reading two of his short stories.

And from Germany

Murray Hedgcock reports on *Ohne Mich, Jeeves*:

Thomas Schlachter, known to many members from his participation in the *Millennium Tour*, comes from Switzerland rather than Germany, but his latest translation, of *Joy in the Morning*, (Edition Epocha, Zurich) has received the seal of approval of Germany's best-known and most powerful news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, a sort of cross between *Time* and *The Economist*, which usually chooses to abuse politicians rather than indulge in the joys of humorous writing.

After a brief summary of the plot, the reviewer notes that:

Marvellously eccentric types collide with gag after gag – translator Thomas Schlachter has again, with his third Wodehouse book, caught the sound of upper-class nasal accents and exaggerated situation comedy.

The fact that Bertie and his guardian angel are at last able to talk so elegantly in German, is a real contribution to the understanding among nations.

A Source of Misquotation

by Nigel Rees

I was very taken with Philip Hensher's recent celebration in *The Spectator* of PGW's inventive use not only of quotations but of idiomatic phrases, especially ones 'twisted into something fresh and absurd . . . Wodehouse can never resist picking an idiom to pieces.' Indeed he can not.

Take an intriguing phrase like 'thews and sinews', for example – where 'thews' means muscular strength or development. Sir Walter Scott may have been the first to put the two words together but PGW clearly was much taken with it.

'He had a certain weediness and lack of thews and sinews' –

Bill the Conqueror, Ch 5

'I had never looked on old Chuffy as a fellow of very swift intelligence, he having always run rather to thews and sinews than the grey cells'

Thank You, Jeeves, Ch 14.

But PGW does not always pick a phrase to pieces or stand it on its head. Sometimes he lets it speak for itself. One day I must do a study of his use of 'Oh ah', that non-committal response when something has been said that is considered unlikely or preposterous or dubious. When pronounced 'oh arr', it can sound like an imitation of a country yokel determinedly unimpressed by what he is being told:

"Ronald has just announced his intention of marrying a chorus-girl."

"Oh, ah?" said Lord Emsworth

Summer Lightning, Chap. 18.

"Oh, Mr Wooster," he said meeting me on the stairs . . . "You were good enough to express an interest in this little prize for Good Conduct which I am offering."

"Oh, ah?"

Very Good, Jeeves, The Love That Purifies.

In a letter dated 24 August 1932, Wodehouse wrote:

'The first time I met him [H G Wells], we had barely finished the initial pip-pippings when he said, apropos of nothing, "My father was a professional cricketer." If there's a good answer to that, you tell me. I thought of saying, "Mine had a white moustache," but finally settled for, "Oh, ah," and we went on to speak of other things?'

But, of course, it is the quotations and allusions that come round with wonderful regularity – sometimes two or three times apiece in any one novel – and that PGW tinkers with afresh each time. Some more of his stock:

'A woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a smoke' – *Ring for Jeeves* Ch 6. No wonder Jeeves winced when Sir Roderick Spode introduces this line with "Remember what Shakespeare said". It is, in fact, from Rudyard Kipling's poem, *The Betrothed*, inspired by an actual breach of promise case in which the woman had said to the man, "You must choose between me and your cigar."

'As we have seen, Captain Biggar had not spoken of his love – but had let concealment like a worm i' the bud feed on his tomato-coloured cheek' – *Ring for Jeeves* Ch 18. This really is from Shakespeare – *Twelfth Night* (II.iv.112), Viola speaking, though the original is

But let concealment, like a worm i'th'bud
Feed on her *damask* cheek ...'

'My eye, in a fine frenzy rolling, met Aunt Dahlia's, and I saw hers was rolling, too' is an allusion that occurs twice in *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, Ch 13 and 21. This is to Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V.i.7, where Theseus talks of:

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact . . . /
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to
heaven.'

It is common knowledge that Sherlock Holmes never actually says 'Elementary, my dear Watson!' in Conan Doyle. I used to point to the 1929 film *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* – the first with sound as the moment when the phrase caught on. The final lines of dialogue are:

Watson: Amazing, Holmes!

Holmes: Elementary, my dear Watson, elementary.

But this overlooks the fact that PGW had been on to it by 1915. In *Psmith Journalist*, Ch 19, he wrote:

"Elementary, my dear Watson, elementary," murmured Psmith.

And even earlier, in *Psmith in the City*, Ch 8 (1910), Psmith is already reaching towards the finished phrase:

Then I am prepared to bet a small sum that he is nuts on Manchester United. My dear Holmes, how – ! Elementary, my dear fellow, quite elementary.

Sometimes PGW is clearly so taken with a phrase that we may wonder if he did not help turn it into a catchphrase through his inspired attentions.

Review of Ebury Press's Plum Sauce

David Herboldt dips into Richard Usborne's compilation

I tend to categorise books into 'pure reference', 'dip into' and 'read avidly'. The publishers of *Plum Sauce*, *A P G Wodehouse Companion* by Richard Usborne (Random House, £14.99, ISBN 0-091-88512-4) obviously think along the same lines and on the sleeve notes refer to it as 'dip-in' entertainment – the type you pick up and read a few pages, and not necessarily in the right order! It is a paperback – but don't be misled – it is a weighty tome (over 9½ x 7 inches and 232 pages).

It comprises a brief summary of Plum's life and career followed by summaries/biographies of some of the main eponymous characters of his books such as Psmith, Ukridge, Uncle Fred, and of course Bertie and Jeeves. These are interspersed with nuggets of information, quotes, lists, etc. There then follows a 45 page summary of all the books in chronological order (or as near chronological as you can get with different UK and USA publishing dates, magazine serials, etc). I find this approach makes the book more like a very large magazine, with a series of almost unrelated articles and snippets that don't necessarily flow from one to the other – none the less enjoyable for that, but hence my categorisation above.

The *Introduction* and Plum's biography covers only 5 pages and probably reveal nothing new to many members, but still make a nice potted history. The biographies of the individual characters are each preceded by a list of all the books and short stories in which they appear, followed by a summary of their life and discussion of their development as characters. Personally I found some of this a little too deep; I don't dissect flowers to see why they smell sweet, nor psychoanalyse my chums to see why I like them, so I'm not sure how deeply I want to analyse the characters I've lived with for the past 40 or so years (I started very young!). I probably know all their faults and weaknesses and have learnt to live with them, as you do with any friend.

The nuggets that intersperse the chapters are familiar quotes along the lines of *Drink Nuggets* (eg "My Uncle George discovered that alcohol was a food well in advance of modern medical thought"), *Church Nuggets*, *Menservants*, etc. The lists include 'Thirty Postulates for Relaxed Reading of PGW' (eg 'All small boys are fiends', 'All butlers have port in their pantries'), 'Fictional Authors and their books found in Wodehouse' (obviously Rosie M Banks, but a surprisingly long list of others), and a list of lovely similes ('You look like Helen of Troy after a good facial') and insults ('She has about as much brain as a retarded billiard ball!').

The bibliography gives a neat summary of each of 92 books, together with some additional comments and comparisons.

Throughout the book is illustrated in black & white with dust jackets from many of the earlier books plus sketches and artwork from the *Strand* magazine. And one touch I love is the little illustration supporting each of the page numbers (I'll leave you to see what it is when you get the book).

Whilst I enjoyed the book, I found it a bit of a mixture of a cut down version of Tony Ring's and Geoffrey Jaggard's *Concordance*, combined with Usborne's own *Wodehouse Nuggets*, combined with a compressed version of David Jasen's *Bibliography and Reader's Guide*, all mixed together with a few extra bits and pieces. For devotees who have all these, plus *McIlvaine* and other biographies of the master there is probably little new between these covers, but even they should enjoy the book; I know I did. For those lucky enough to still be exploring his work for the first time, I think it is an excellent compilation. If I had borrowed this from a pal to read, would I still buy it? Yes, undoubtedly!

The Smile That Wins Favourite Nifties - 22

That wedding cake will not ring out.

Suggested by Anne-Marie Chanet, from *Company for Henry* (1967)

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

A Damsel in Distress

The first three issues of *A Damsel in Distress* are very similar in appearance. All were published in a deep red cloth with an identical title page, making identification difficult for the collector. However, there are some subtle distinguishing points.

The first edition, first issue (A24b) was published on October 15, 1919 (Wodehouse's 38th birthday) and does not have a publisher's device on the copyright page. The second issue (A24b2) does have the device, but it is missing again by the third issue (A24b3), a point omitted by *McIlvaine*.

For the first issue *McIlvaine* states that:

There is some confusion over the presence of the publisher's device. The decision to make the copy with the publisher's device a variant is based on the inscription dates of a number of copies.

For example, a copy of the first issue exists with an inscription by Plum's father dated Christmas 1919.

Another piece of evidence, omitted by *McIlvaine*, which suggests that A24b did precede A24b2, is the presence of a blind-stamped rear cover logo on A24b (as on the first edition of *Piccadilly Jim*), which becomes a black ink logo on both A24b2 and A24b3. The binding of A24b3 is slightly different from the first issue (*McIlvaine* says that the lettering is navy, as opposed to black on the first issue), and the book is about ¼" thicker than the first.

The presence or absence of two typographical errors, unrecorded by *McIlvaine*, also helps to identify the different issues.

A24b, A24b2 and A24b3 all have a typo in the last line of p18 ('stand-trap', instead of 'sand-trap'). This is corrected in later editions.

A24b and A24b2 have a typo on p35 where the last two lines of the first paragraph are reversed, *ie* what should be the penultimate line ('The jazz seems to go their heads. George is all') appears as the last line, and what should be the last line ('right, though, and don't let anyone tell you different.') appears as the penultimate line. This error has been corrected by A24b3.

Finally, *McIlvaine's* description of the capitalisation and punctuation of certain pages of the first issue is misleading.

McIlvaine states that page 2 reads:

By the Same Author Piccadilly Jim a book of laughter now in its Seventh Thousand. Cr. 8vo.

It actually reads:

BY THE SAME AUTHOR
PICCADILLY JIM
A Book of Laughter.

Now in its Seventh Thousand. Cr. 8vo.

Similarly, when describing the title page, *McIlvaine* omits to mention the presence of what she elsewhere calls '[two ornaments]' (circles, in this case) between LONDON S.W. 1 and MCMXX at the foot of the page.

My thanks to John Graham and Warren Caywood for much information regarding the publisher's devices, stamps and typos relating to the various editions.

A Prince for Hire

With this edition of *Wooster Sauce* you should receive an order form for the new publication by Galahad Books, *A Prince for Hire* by P G Wodehouse.

This novella, of almost 30,000 words, is based on the elusive American version of the 1912 book *The Prince and Betty*, but it was completely rewritten for five-part serialisation in 1931. The journal in which it appeared is so scarce that it does not exist in a single American library, and the story has never appeared in book form.

Galahad Books is publishing it in a limited edition of 1,000 copies, 800 paperback and 200 bound in hard boards with an illustrated dust jacket based on the original magazine cover. It will not be reprinted.

Next Society Meeting at Bolton

The third year of Bolton meetings will commence with an afternoon meeting on May 17 at the Little Theatre, Bolton, followed by a performance of *Good Morning, Bill* by the Little Theatre Company.

The meeting will include a talk by Tony Ring on the history of the play, and its relationship with *Doctor Sally*, the novel based on it. There should also be the opportunity to view the set, and meet the director and cast for a discussion. The meeting will be followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

Members in the North West should by now have received a letter from _____ giving full details. Others interested in attending should contact him

Reviews and Previews

Wodehouse Playhouse

A review by Murray Hedgcock:

For many moons, buffs across the pond especially have longed for *Wodehouse Playhouse*, the 1975-76-78 BBC TV adaptations of short stories (non-Blandings, non-Jeeves). The first series was graced with introductions by the Master himself, only months before his death.

I have always felt that you cannot take truly seriously as representative of Wodehousean gilded youth the major players – John Alderton with his Yorkshire accent, and real-life wife Pauline Collins (best known as a distinctly downstairs housemaid in *Upstairs, Downstairs*). Fine outside upper-class roles, they are limited – too often distinctly acting, rather than being naturals for the part.

“No matter,” the Yanks shout, “we love *Wodehouse Playhouse* – and John is cute and Pauline charming.”

Now the campaigners are rewarded by Acorn Media UK's release of three double sets of video tapes: *The Truth About George . . . The Smile That Wins . . . Anselm Gets His Chance . . .* eleven of the 20 episodes being Mulliner epics.

Much of the quality comes from the splendid supporting cast, including Julian Holloway, Leslie Dwyer, Raymond Huntley, Ballard Berkeley, Syd Tafler, William Mervyn, Joan Sanderson, Simon Williams, Jonathan Cecil, Fulton McKay, Lisa Goddard, Leslie Sands, Bernard Archard, John Baron, and Avis Bunnage. Some episodes are far too leisurely by today's standards: others broaden the comedy beyond Wodehousean limits – such as *Romance at Droitwich Spa*, and *Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo*, where the subtleties are swamped.

Still, Alderton and Collins are good fun, and if erratic in quality, and best in small doses, it's Wodehouse, amiable, and well worthwhile.

Everyman Series

The next four titles in the Everyman Wodehouse series, to be published in the spring, are:

A Gentleman of Leisure

Carry On, Jeeves

Hot Water

Summer Moonshine

This will bring the number of titles issued to twenty-four. They are still priced at £9.99.

Chivers Audio: Hot Water

A report from J Moor of Scarborough:

Owning all the Chivers as well as some other unabridged PGW works as audiobooks, I know that Jonathan Cecil had previously read 20 such books for Chivers. This being his 21st, he should be given some key or other, but in fact he has given me entry into a wonderful 'one-off' novel, with delightfully involved plot and comic situations. I have been introduced to a dozen previously unknown, disparate characters, half of whom are not quite what they seem or brazenly impersonate others.

Of all the readers of Chivers's offerings, Cecil is quite easily my favourite. His transition from narrator to character is always precise, and his tones for the female characters are credible, this I consider most important so that the whole reading is convincing. Here he deals with the dozen characters expertly, with the accents being English, American and French, with quotations from a typically teutonic statistician.

The production by Chivers on six cassettes seems about right. On most sides the end run on exceeds a minute, which is unsatisfactory. The sound level on all cassettes is constant, which is not always the case.

Audiotape My Man Jeeves

Martin Jarvis's rendering of *My Man Jeeves* is innovative to the extent that he has created dialogue between Jeeves and Bertie to introduce and link the five unabridged stories narrated on the tape.

I first listened to Martin performing Wodehouse when he played Bill Paradene in a BBC radio play, *Good Morning, Bill*, back in 1985. He impressed then and continues to do so now. It is no straightforward task to distinguish such diverse narrators as Jeeves, Bertie and Reggie Pepper (for whom, as explained in December's *Sauce*, he used an older voice), the headmistress Miss Tomlinson, young Peggy Mainwaring, the depressed Freddie Bullivant, the Lattaker twins and the serious but angry Angela Vickers. Also, characters from three Reggie Pepper tales who may be less familiar.

If one was forced to select just one voice which best conveyed a character's personality, it would have to be his Jeeves, which somehow seems to be the valet born.

My Man Jeeves 'Audiopartners' Information about purchase from www.audiopartners.com

Letter from a Member

From Louise O'Connor of Richmond

Readers might like to know that you don't have to go to America to see pig racing. At Bocketts Farm, Leatherhead, Surrey, they have pig races twice a day, all year round. They are Gloucester Old Spot pigs, marked with different coloured dyes. A farm worker goes round with a board showing the names of the pigs matched to the colours so you can decide which pig you want to support in the race. They run round the outside of the field, and go really fast. Bocketts Farm is a wonderful day out for the children, lovely animals and a very good café.

Editor's Comment

Following Louise's recommendation, the Society has arranged a visit for members, families and friends on Saturday July 26. More details including directions will be given in June's *Wooster Sauce*. The pigs racing at present are 3-to-6-month old middle whites. Bocketts Farm is open every day; the pig races are at 12.45 and 3.45pm. It is a working farms with llamas, xebus, rheas and wallabies as well as traditional 'farm' animals. They may be contacted on

Another Instalment from Plum's Emsworth Letters

The last extract from Wodehouse's letter to Lily dated December 2, 1914 from Bellport, Long Island, concerned general prospects for his theatrical work. Having explained that, if all were to be produced, he would earn thousands, he continued . . .

My nearest approach to the thousands I am not making is a little sketch which is playing on the music halls here. I get five pounds a week when it plays, but the man who is acting the principal part wants such a large salary that managers fight shy of booking it. The whole sketch costs a manager £150 a week, so naturally he thinks twice before booking it! So far I consider I have been very lucky, for it has played seven weeks out of a possible eight, but I'm afraid that accounts for nearly all the big cities in America.

Editor's comment: we do not know the name of the sketch, or the cities, but if any detectives out there feel like a little research in the theatrical records of the big cities, please report on your findings.

Emsworth Museum is open from Easter until the end of October on Saturdays and Bank Holidays (and Fridays in August), from 10.30 am to 4.30pm, and on Sundays from 2.30 to 4.30pm. It is located at 10b North Street, above the Fire Station.

Report on February's Savage Club Meeting

by John Fletcher

Over 50 people were present for the Savage Club evening on February 11. How many of these were members of our Society and how many were Savages? We cannot tell.

Tim Andrew addressed us. His theme was that PG's fiction was well grounded in the real world. When he said Wodehouse specialised in 'The Psychology of the Individual', six people left the room (presumably Savages). As a headmaster, he started with the school stories, which he said any school staff room would agree reflected the characters, tensions and life of any school. He described people with their own aura, as when Monty Bodkin, tall, handsome, and brainless, even when spatless had a sort of 'spat' aura.

He told us about his own schooldays, when he became utterly speechless in the presence of the father of the girl he loved, a phenomenon often noted in the canon.

He analysed the gushing literature of the Rosie M Banks variety, reminding us particularly of the plot of *Mervyn Keene, Clubman* in *The Mating Season*. He tore to pieces the verbiage of pseudo-scientific psychology with an extract from *Types of Ethical Theory* which Florence Craye expected Bertie to read when she had him under her spell.

He went on to say that these styles were still around today. Writers still tried to impress their readers with this long-windedness. After too short a time he had to leave, with the suggestion that our days were not so different from Wodehouse's own.

Christmas Competition

The Christmas Competition, in which members were asked to list as many fictional brand names from PGW's fiction as they could generated several excellent entries. The top four entries gave 66, 54, 33 and 27 names respectively. The winner was Anne-Marie Chanet of Paris, who receives a copy of *Plum Sauce*, and the two runners-up, Sue Deniou of Ross-on-Wye and Alan Hall of Harpenden, will receive videos.

The entries will be used as the basis for one or two future issues of *By The Way*. The total number of products identified to date is 117!

Recent Press Comment

Daily Mail, November 1

Ben Elton chose 'the largest P G Wodehouse Omnibus I could find' as the book he would take to a desert island. 'He's perfect for a desert island because he transports you so completely into his world that you'd scarcely notice the coconut-and-fly diet'.

The Paul Burrell (royal butler) affair commanded plenty of space. For relevant comments, see, eg:

Daily Telegraph, November 2 (from Elin Murphy)
Tom Utley's column

Guardian, November 6 (from Peter Wightman)
Catherine Bennett's column

The Times, November 8

Philip Howard's column, mentioning Jeeves (as valet), Charlie Silversmith, Deverill Hall, Beach, Blandings Castle and the Junior Ganymede.

Daily Mail, November 10

A review of *The Pothunters Centenary Exhibition* at Dulwich College (see page 2) received four stars out of five, double the rating for Tracey Emin's new exhibition.

Radio 4 (Letter from America), November 10 (from D Taylor)

Alistair Cooke described Galahad Threepwood as one of his favourite characters in literature.

The Times, November 15 (from Donald Daniel)

Recorded that a horse named 'Madeline Bassett' won the previous day's 1.10 race at Lingfield Park (at 7-1).

The Times, November 15

Murray Hedgcock contributed a review on the *Pothunters Exhibition* to the *Register* page.

Sunday Times, November 24

Godfrey Smith reported that his favourite characters in literature include James Bond, Billy Bunter, Bertie Wooster and now Harry Potter.

Observer, November 24 (from Peter Viggers)

In his review of the background to the book and film *Gangs of New York*, Robert McCrum pointed out how PGW incorporated examples of gang culture into *Psmith Journalist*.

Daily Mail, December 2 (from Murray Hedgcock)

The Peter McKay column suggested that Patron Boris Johnson's appearance as stand-in presenter of *Have I Got News For You* was part of 'his diabolical campaign to clown his way to public attention, which involves appearing as a Bertie Wooster clone dropped here by diabolically clever foreign spymasters'.

The Times, December 9

Richard Morrison wrote about the forthcoming production of *Anything Goes* at the National Theatre, which was subsequently reviewed in many papers.

Guardian, December 14

Peter Swaab's full page article concerned the joys of rediscovering Wodehouse after a couple of decades.

The Spectator, December 14

Philip Hensher wrote an excellent appreciation of PGW in a review of the Everyman editions ('This is a writer who is going to last.'). The issue also printed the winning entries for a Bertie and Jeeves pastiche competition.

Süddeutsche Zeitung, December 14 (from Thomas Schlachter)

Wolf Lepenies, a noted German literary critic, filled a broadsheet page with laudatory comments about PGW, providing the German public with a potted biography and general critical review.

The Observer, December 15 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Included a thoroughly good review of the Penguin audio *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen* read by Simon Callow, stressing that

Callow is glorious as Bertie, revelling in his incessant, inane chatter and as subtle as can be when delivering Jeeves's knowledgeable insights.

The Times, December 18

Philip Howard previewed the BBC Documentary in a full-page article. Many papers were to review it after transmission, with generally very favourable comments.

The Times, December 23

Murray Hedgcock again contributed to *The Register* with an article on Wodehouse Societies worldwide.

Sunday Telegraph, December 29 (from Edward Cazalet)

Reviewed *Lives of the Mind: The Use and Abuse of Intelligence from Hegel to Wodehouse* by Roger Kimball (Ivan R Dee). The essentially serious subjects of his philosophical essays in the book are leavened by one on Plum. 'It is nice to read alongside essays on Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard, an essay on the genius of P G Wodehouse' in which Kimball concludes that 'In many ways he accomplished what Flaubert aspired to do: write a novel about nothing.'

Firsts, January (from Charles Gould)

This American magazine devoted nearly the whole issue to an article on collecting Wodehouse, illustrating it comprehensively with black and white photographs of rare dust jackets.

The Times, January 11

An article on the 18,000 colonies of great crested newts in the UK explained some of the problems that protective legislation causes, as their favourite sites are brownfield sites best suited to new building projects.

The Times, January 11

Compared Tony Blair's meeting with Jacques Chirac at Le Touquet with a showdown between Lord Emsworth and Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe about their pigs.

Daily Mail, February 6

Writing about proposed changes to the House of Lords, Keith Waterhouse remembered an eccentric neighbour

Recent Press Comment, continued

who had decided to replace his cabbage patch with a hen-run (on Ukridgean lines). He pointed out that not even Ukridge, with his bold, broad, flexible outlook, would have put seven options to Parliament on how to construct the hen-run.

Sunday Times, February 16

Writing on Ken Livingstone and congestion charging, Ferdinand Mount commented that a sense of humour is not always an encouraging sign in politicians. ‘The late Enver Hoxha of Albania, one of the nastiest dictators eastern Europe ever produced, had a great fondness for the works of P G Wodehouse.’

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges - 25

“Kind hearts,” I urged, “are more than coronets.”

“Who the devil wants a pugilist to have a kind heart? What’s the use of this man Billson being able to knock out an elephant if he’s afflicted with this damned maudlin mushiness.”

From *The Debut of Battling Billson*, in *Ukridge* (1919)

The Cow-Creamer Challenge

A golf tournament, ‘The Cow-Creamer Challenge’ will be held at the Exeter Golf and Country Club on Thursday July 17, tee-times between 11am and noon. All members of the Society who have a current handicap certificate are invited to play. Green fee £20. Details from Madeleine Loates, St Margaret’s Steps, 56a Fore Street, Topsham EX3 OHW (Telephone 01392 670369)

Poets’ Corner

An Ultimatum

Oh, Janet, on this planet
There are maids of every kind:
There are some whose line is beauty,
Some who specialise in Mind.
There are some whose eyes are black as night,
And some whose eyes are blue;
But other men their charms may pen,
For me there’s only you.

Oh, Janet, when I scan it,
Ah! Your face angelic seems,
How it haunts me in the day-time,
How it permeates my dreams.
Around me other faces throng,
They’re comely, it is true;
But other men their charms may pen;
My quill’s reserved for you.

But, Janet, hard as granite
Is the heart that in you throbs.
You scorn my protestations,
And you giggle at my sobs.
Oh, smoothe away that haughty frown,
That merriment eschew,
Or other men your charms may pen,
I’ve something else to do.

From *Pearson’s*, February, 1908

Honour for Henry Blofeld

Congratulations to Patron Henry Blofeld, who was awarded an OBE in this year’s New Years Honours List.

Plum Said It First

Another in the occasional series, submitted by Murray Hedgcock

Wodehouseans will recall the opening scene in *The Custody of the Pumpkin*, in which Lord Emsworth complained bitterly at being swindled in his purchase of a telescope until Beach suggested:

“Perhaps if I were to remove the cap at the extremity of the instrument, m’Lord, more satisfactory results might be obtained.”

On November 9 the *Daily Mail* showed two photographs of President George W Bush peering through binoculars across the demilitarised zone into North Korea. In the top one the caps were still on.

The explanation from the Pentagon was:

Someone handed him the binoculars, and he put them up to his eyes. He did not know the caps were still on. Of course he realised immediately, and took the caps off. But in that second, the picture was snapped.

What the Pentagon did not clarify was whether what the President eventually saw was a North Korean Freddie Threepwood kissing his Aggie, preparatory to eloping and taking a job in the dog-biscuit business, by all reports a thriving local industry.

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

April 12, 2003 – Murphy’s Wodehouse Walk

Join the Chairman on one of his famous walks round Wodehouse’s London. Call Norman Murphy to book a place, and to find out where and when to meet.

May 10 to 17, 2003 – The Little Theatre, Bolton

The theatre will stage a production of *Good Morning, Bill*, with a meeting of the Bolton group during the afternoon of May 17, before the final performance. SEE PAGE 19 for more details.

June 7, 2003 – Murphy’s Wodehouse Walk

See above to join the by-then-ex-Chairman on one of his famous walks round Wodehouse’s London.

June 20, 2003 – Cricket at Dulwich

The annual match between the Gold Bats and the Dulwich Dusters. Contact if you are interested in playing. Help us put out a team of Society Members ONLY.

June 29, 2003 – Cricket against Sherlock Holmes

A match at West Wycombe, Bucks, between The Gold Bats and The Sherlock Holmes Society of London, starting at 11.30. Contact if you are interested in playing. Or dress

up in period costume, bring a picnic and come along to support.

July 8, 2003 – The Savage Club

The Savage Club is in the premises of The National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London, and members gather from around 6pm. Nicola Beanman of Persephone Books will speak about Plum’s friend Denis Mackail’s book *Greenery Street*.

July 17, 2003 – Golf at Exeter

SEE PAGE 23 for details of the Cow Creamer Trophy.

July 26, 2003 – Pig Racing at Bocketts Farm

A Society visit to this Leatherhead Farm for pig-racing, goat-milking and a pig-calling competition. See page 21. Full details in June’s *Wooster Sauce*.

August 8 to 10, 2003 – TWS Convention, Toronto

The next convention of The Wodehouse Society will be held in Toronto. See December’s *Sauce* page 18 or contact Elliott Milstein at ellmilstein@yahoo.com.

September 6, 2003 – Murphy’s Wodehouse Walk

See above to join the by-then-ex-Chairman on one of his famous walks round Wodehouse’s London.

October 14, 2003 – The Savage Club

The regular evening meeting in London at which Edward Cazalet will speak.

EDITOR’S TAILPIECES

Nicola Graydon visited *The Pothunters Centenary Exhibition* at Dulwich (see page 2), and reported on it for the *Mail on Sunday* on November 10. She rated it four stars out of five. The other exhibition reviewed on the same page was Tracey Emin’s new show in Oxford, which was given just two stars.

The Society website was comprehensively updated in August 2000. Since then it has been accessed almost 60,000 times.

Murray Hedgcock, never one to withhold matters of cricket interest with a Wodehousean slant, tells me that Philip Thorn has identified seven test match cricketers with Dulwich College credentials: Trevor Bailey, M P Bowden, Harold and Arthur Gilligan, Neville Knox (who played with Plum), West Indies skipper R K Nunes and Plum’s friend S C ‘Billy’ Griffith.

The answer to *The Times* crossword clue (see page 14) is: ‘No man is a hero to his valet’.

Melanie Ring reported that on December 18, in a ‘Popmaster’ quiz on Radio 2’s *Ken Bruce Show*, a contestant from Leicester said he was a member of a band called ‘Bingo Little’. He was asked “So you’re a P G Wodehouse reader?” “One of us is,” came the reply.

Murray Hedgcock found this in the Appointments in the Clergy for December 30:

Dr Adrian Armstrong, formerly priest-in-charge North and South Muskham, and of Averham with Kelham (Southwell), has become honorary curate (known as honorary assistant priest), Wiveliscombe with Chipstable, Huish Champflower and Clatworth (Diocese of Bath and Wells).

He comments that PGW had no need to make them up. Congratulations to Plum’s great-grandson and Society stalwart Hal Cazalet on his engagement in January to Polly Magraw, of Shipbourne, Kent.