

# WOOSTER SAUCE



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

Number 3

September 1997

## PARTY TIME!



*The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) invades the Savage Club, July 10, 1997. Happy to be there were John Wells, Lucy Tregear, Lara Cazalet, Hal Cazalet and our President, Richard Briers.*

As foreshadowed in the June *Wooster Sauce*, The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) held a Press launch at the Savage Club on July 10 in the presence of Richard Briers (the President), the Committee, several of our patrons (Lord Oaksey, Sir Richard Scott, Godfrey Smith, Lucy Tregear, John Wells, Tony Whittome, and Patrick Wodehouse) and members of the Press. P G Wodehouse was himself a member of the Savage Club from 1922 to 1929, and, although he rarely visited it during that period, his membership remains a notable connection with today, for our Chairman, Norman Murphy, is a member.

Lara and Hal Cazalet, step-great-grandchildren of PGW, and each on the professional stage, sang *Bill* and *Sonny Boy* respectively, before Lucy Tregear injected a brief moment of tension into the proceedings by arriving unannounced to accuse your Editor of certain untoward advances supposedly made towards her the previous year, in a scene freely adapted from *The Episode of the Hired Past* (in *The Man of Means*, Porpoise, 1991). The unexpected nature of her appearance caused a gratifying number of those present to be taken in for some moments, and the overall effect led to the report in *The Times* referring to her interlude as 'brilliant'.

P G Wodehouse and many other authors have been accused from time to time of relying on coincidence to further their plots. None would have dared use the real coincidence which we discovered for ourselves. Some years ago, Lucy's *alma mater*, Bryanston school, instituted an award for Drama in her name. And two subsequent winners were . . . Lara and Hal Cazalet!

Since the Savage Club proved to be a suitable location for an informal get-together, the Chairman is inviting *all* Society members to join him and the Committee on Tuesday, October 14 (which would have been PGW's 116th birthday) for drinks. Gentlemen will be required to wear ties. The same restriction does not apply to ladies, who will be equally welcome. It is regrettable, but expenditure at the bar will have to be borne by members themselves. It is to be hoped that many members can take this opportunity to meet others, discuss ideas for the Society to pursue, and revel in conversation about the joy of Plum's work.

**PLACE:** *Savage Club, (inside National Liberal Club), 1 Whitehall Place, close to Embankment tube station*

**TIME:** *6pm to 8pm on Tuesday October 14th.*

## SIR FREDERICK LEITH-ROSS, ROLE MODEL

*James Hogg has been reading the memoirs of Sir Frederick Leith-Ross, and has found evidence that he and his friends would have been qualified for membership of the Drones Club or the Pelican Club*

It's not usual, when researching economic history, to come upon passages of Wodehousian high jinks. I wish it was; I might do it more often. But the following gems are to be found in *Money Talks* (1967), the autobiography of Sir Frederick Leith-Ross GCMG, KCB, a civil servant of high distinction and deep seriousness, who was the British Government's chief economic adviser in the 1930s.

In a menu that tends towards the stodgy – international conferences, Keynesian theory in all its aspects and so forth – from time to time Sir Frederick unbends and serves up a soufflé as light as a feather. He doesn't actually say that he was a Wodehouse fan, but I'd put money on it. He starts with an incident from his youth which could have come straight out of the memoirs of Bingo Little.

On Guy Fawkes night in 1907, when he was at Balliol, Leith-Ross and fellow Oxford undergraduates set off on a police-helmet-hunting expedition. As things turned out Leith-Ross went one better and seized an inspector's cap. During the ensuing struggle he managed to pass the cap to a pal, who made himself scarce while Leith-Ross was being carted off to the cells for the night.

When he appeared in court the following morning he found he'd been charged with taking a helmet, instead of the cap, and the inspector swore he'd seen him do it. Things would have looked bad but for the pal, who had managed to get the cap back into Leith-Ross's possession. With a flourish worthy of Sir Patrick Hastings the latter was able to produce it in court and force the inspector to admit it was his. The inspector fought back gamely by trying to have the charge amended to cap-stealing, but was routed in humiliating fashion when the request was turned down on the grounds that he'd already perjured himself. Leith-Ross was acquitted and left the court in triumph. This was a man, it should be remembered, who went on to sit at the Prime Minister's elbow at conferences, feeding him titbits about the influence of exchange rates on the provisions of the Versailles Treaty.

Sir Frederick also recounts a couple of episodes which make one wonder if perhaps some of the fun has gone out of public life. The first concerned the even more august General Dawes. Dawes was chairman of the committee which wrote the German reparations agreement in 1924, was Coolidge's Vice-President

and later US Ambassador to London. Do you get the picture of a stuffed shirt topped by a bristling moustache and a glowering eye? Well, that's before you hear about the dinner-party he threw in Grosvenor Square for fellow ambassadors.

Just for the heck of it Dawes hired a troupe of jugglers to wait at table. They started by dropping the soup-plates and catching them just before they hit the table. While preparing for the next course they threw the fresh plates to each other over the heads of the guests. It seems to have been all too much for the senior ambassador present (country unspecified) – he got up and left.

Later Sir Frederick spills the beans about the French Foreign Minister's smoking-jacket. In 1929 the egg-shaped M Chéron and his Prime Minister, M Tardieu, were preparing to attend a conference at The Hague. Tardieu told Chéron that he must take a smoking-jacket because there would be a lot of informal negotiating after hours. Chéron said he hadn't got a smoking-jacket and there wasn't time to get his tailor in Normandy to make one. Tardieu insisted on giving him the name of his own tailor in Paris, over-riding Chéron's worries that his tailor back home might hear about it. The man was prominent in local politics and chairman of the constituency party and Chéron couldn't afford to offend him.

The day before they left for the conference, during a Cabinet meeting held to finalise the French position, an urgent message arrived for Chéron. It was a letter from his tailor wanting to know how he had come to forfeit Chéron's confidence, stating that he had always done his utmost to fit him, difficult though that was, but since Chéron had abandoned him for another tailor he had no choice but to reconsider his support at the next election.

Chéron went pale and accused the Prime Minister of ruining his political career. After letting him suffer for a while Tardieu put him out of his misery by telling him with many a Gallic chuckle and dig in the ribs that it was only a joke, mon cher Chéron – he had written the letter himself. The story was the talk of the subsequent conference at The Hague, which Leith-Ross himself attended.

I've been trying to imagine Mrs Thatcher pulling that one on Sir Geoffrey Howe, and I can't do it!

## FROM EDWARD CAZALET'S P G WODEHOUSE ARCHIVES

*In the June issue of Wooster Sauce, we printed extracts from a letter from Wodehouse to Guy Bolton concerning a draft of a play *The Code of the Woosters*, about which PGW was unhappy. This further extract from the same letter suggests how Guy might tackle the problem.*

I have a feeling that you can put the play right with your masterly construction. What I feel about it is that act three is terrific, but that the other two acts want fixing. So will you take it on and attend to the placing of it etc?

...

P.S. I hope the enclosed notes will be clear to you. They are to me, of course, but I may have missed out a lot of important points which I have in my mind but which in the hurry of writing I may have omitted. You will probably be confused in most of Act 2, but I can explain what I mean.

... It seems to me in this new version to be very straightforward. But I know I have left out one or two things. For instance, we must make it thoroughly clear that Stiffy thinks – as Sir Watkyn does – that Bertie is trying to steal the teapot for his uncle. This would have to be done early, probably in act one. It is because Stiffy thinks Bertie is after teapot that she pinches it for him – cp *The Hotel Mouse*, where the girl had got a rooted idea that the hero wanted certain valuables and stole them for him.

An explanation of Stiffy's motive for stealing teapot can, of course, be given at start of act three.

I think cutting Aunt Dahlia is a good thing, don't you? It builds Stiffy's part up so much and will enable us to get somebody really good for that part.

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### *What the Papers Said: The Daily Mail (3)*

*On 27 February, 1928, this report appeared in the "People and their Doings" column:*

Mrs P G Wodehouse told me an admirable story of her husband. For a fortnight before the production of one of his most successful plays it was necessary to have a kind of high-tea at 6.30 so that he could go off to rehearsals.

Finally the first night arrived, and the cook and the rest of the staff were given tickets. At the fall of the final curtain Mr George Grossmith made a speech in which he referred to Mr Wodehouse, who, retiring as usual, only showed himself for a second on the stage and then disappeared.

Next morning Mrs Wodehouse asked the cook what she thought of the play. "Oh! I was very disappointed," was the unexpected reply. "I had no idea that the master had such a small part."

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### NEW BOOKS PUBLISHED

*Tales of Wrykyn and Elsewhere*, by P G Wodehouse. (Porpoise Books; £25). This book contains 25 school stories never collected before into book form in the UK.

*Wodehouse Goes To School*, by Tony Ring and Geoffrey Jaggard. (Porpoise Books; £20). The mammoth Millennium Wodehouse Concordance project reaches its halfway stage with the publication of the fourth volume.

*Wodehouse at the Wicket*, edited by Murray Hedgcock. (Hutchinson; ISBN 0 09 180191 5; £12.99)

### NEW FROM CHIVERS AUDIO

The latest in the series of unabridged audiotapes produced by Chivers Audio Books of the works of PGW is *Uneasy Money*, read by Nigel Lambert.

This is not one of Plum's best-known works, by any means, but was written during what the Editor (not wholly flippantly) calls his 'feminist phase', when the strongest character in the book is a determined young woman. This aspect is emphasised by the reading, which gives Lord Dawlish a 'silly ass' voice, perhaps undeservedly.

Available at £14.95 from Audio Book Collection.  
(Freephone) 0800 136 919

## AND NOW FOR SOME MODERN DUTCH!

*George de Ceuninck van Capelle, President of the Dutch P G Wodehouse Society, writes about the activities of the oldest PGW Society, which originated, as its name suggests, in Finland.*

The P G Wodehouse Society ('PGWS') was founded in 1973 by a group of prominent Dutch journalists who happened to be in Helsinki (Finland). On one of those famous Finnish nights the group suddenly found that there was a common item of interest: almost every participant had at that moment a Wodehouse book on his or her bedside table. As Dutchmen usually are swift and decisive, PGWS was founded then and there. This festive occasion was of course celebrated in a rather lavish style!

Back in Holland, the idea continued to occupy the minds of those brave men and women, but it was not until the summer of 1981 that the Society in its present form was relaunched. So historically PGWS is the oldest of the PGW-clubs but the honour of being *the* first is left, graciously, to *The Wodehouse Society* in America. PGWS possesses a letter from the master in which he expresses his pleasure with the initiative and in which he formally acknowledges the PGWS as a regular 'fan-club'.

### *PGWS in 1997*

Now, in 1997, PGWS boasts a membership of about 300. The club convenes every three months in a beautifully situated pub, sitting on one of the famous Amsterdam canals. This pub bears the proud name of *Mulliner's Wijnlokaal (Mulliner's Winehouse)*. Mostly for its typical Dutch-Wodehousean atmosphere, with memorabilia and pictures of PGW, this pub is nowadays considered one of the 'top ten' in Amsterdam.

Ours is a very strange club. We cannot (and will not) imitate or replay the atmosphere which PGW created in his books. We try hard to establish a mix of English humour and typical Dutch eloquence, we favour 'heckling' and we try to live up to our motto *Nothing Serious*, which is, by the way, also the name of our quarterly newspaper.

### *Special Events*

Every now and then PGWS organises a special PGW-related event. These have included the unveiling of the PGW/Sir Philip Sidney monument in the ancient town of Zutphen (where Sidney died), the First International PGW Memorial Dinner, the presentation of the "Rosa Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse" last June 7th at the Hortus of Leyden University, and of course, the PGW awards for prominent public figures in this country. *Aunt Dahlia* is Cabinet Minister and former Olympic Champion Erica Terpstra, MP. Rosemary Spencer, KMG, British Ambassador to The Netherlands, has been awarded the PGW-rose medal, and there are also *The Anatole Award for Superb Cookery*, *The Rupert E Psmith Award for Outstanding Society Journalism*, *The Galahad Threepwood Chair* and *The 'Said Mr Mulliner' Medal for Supreme Eloquence*.

In close cooperation with the Belgian-based *The Drones Club*, PGWS tries to spread the Wodehousean gospel in the Low Lands. A few months ago a vast delegation of PGWS attended the Drones' Annual Darts Competition at their seat, Millfleet Hall.

As the Dutch are almost bi-lingual, meetings are conducted in English as well as in Dutch. The editors of *Nothing Serious* recently adopted a policy of writing partly in English, and we will try to make our paper accessible to English-speaking readers.

### *An Invitation to UK Society Members*

After the huge success of the PGW Memorial Dinner, we plan to have such a meeting in October 1998 and hope to see visitors from the UK and USA. Feel free to join us at our next meeting, this October 25th, at Mulliners. (Contact the writer on

for details.) And visit our Internet website at:

<http://inter.NL.net/users/H.deCeuninckvanCapelle>

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### **DID YOU KNOW?**

#### **Publishing Errors – 3**

In 1979 Barrie & Jenkins Ltd republished *Nothing Serious* as one of a new series in common format. What was less common, though, was the spine of the dust jacket, which read:

**P.G.WODEHOUSE**

**Jeeves Nothing Serious**

### **I SAY!**

#### **Favourite Exchanges – 3**

"Sorry to call you up at this hour. But will you marry me?"

"Certainly. Who is that?"

"Smallwood Bessemer."

*Tangled Hearts*, from  
*Nothing Serious*

## A NEW SOCIETY FORMED IN INDIA

*Mr S Kitson has written with news of a fledgling Indian Society, called  
The P. G. Wodehouse Society (India)*

The Indian Society is a loosely formed Society (based in Calcutta) with 18 members, consisting of retired business executives, college students, a school principal and some Government officers.

"I am not rushing things, and am content to first let the members get an idea of what it is all about – there aren't many societies of this kind here. Our newsletter is called *Faute de Mieux!!* Since no one, as yet, could come up with an appropriate title, I chose this, and we reserve the right to change it when necessary.

An initial subscription of Rs 100/- is asked for. There will be no further dues. When we come up with planning an event, or a meeting, we will pass the hat around. Members are also asked to donate a book, any book, and to pass on clippings etc, to help build up a library and a reference section."

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

I too am anxious to receive clippings from any source where PGW or his characters are mentioned, to keep the feature on page 8 as fresh as possible. Also references in biographies which readers come across, or novels, such as that appearing in chapter 10 of Ruth Rendell's *The Keys to the Street* (Arrow, 1997):

Holding up the bunch of flowers and looking constricted in his dark suit, with his black hair slick and short, he seemed like an illustration to P G Wodehouse. And in a Wooster-ish way he said:

"Aren't you going to let us in?"

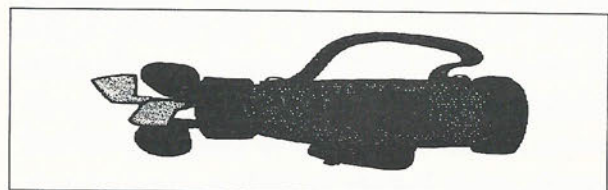
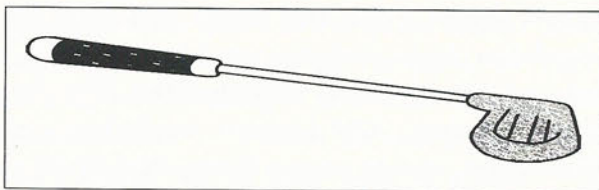
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## AND NEWS FROM SWEDEN

*We have also heard from Jacob Bagge, President of  
The Wodehouse Society Sweden*

He tells us that their membership amounts to about 90, and that their journal, *Jeeves*, is published biannually. At present it is presented wholly in Swedish, but the possibility of an English section is raised from time to time.

Their main activities for members are two golf days: the County Championship, in spring, open to members and non-members, and the President's Cup, in autumn, for members only. In addition, they try to have two general meetings a year, "but turn-out is usually very limited".



### EDITOR'S NOTE:

One of OUR members has volunteered to run a golf day.

For more information, see PAGE 12

# Was Bertie a Cricketer?

asks Murray Hedgcock

All right-thinking Wodehouse buffs (and who among us is not right-thinking?) know that Jeeves was named after a genuine character – an English professional county cricketer. But there is no hint that our Jeeves, the gentleman's personal gentleman *par excellence*, ever took the slightest interest in this most English of games. Which leads to the question: *Was Bertie Wooster a cricketer?*

While researching the place of cricket in PG Wodehouse's personal life as well as his writings, I found a scattering of hints and indications, but nothing quite proving that Bertie was indeed a player. The Bertie of the Wooster saga is no longer much interested in anything as strenuous as sport. He had been a sportsman of some note in his time at Oxford, but his experiences there do not seem to have inspired continuing love for any particular outdoor pastime as he moved lazily into his mid-twenties.

The late academic JHC Morris in his series of engaging essays *Thank You, Wodehouse* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981) studies Bertie and Jeeves in ten delightfully detailed and mock-solemn chapters, but *Bertie Wooster, Games Player* runs to no more than 400 words. Morris sagely suggests: "What is surprising is that he [Bertie] did not evince the slightest interest in cricket – not even when there was some talk of altering the lbw rule. But he could recognise the MCC colours when he saw them; he notes that the gardener at The Larches, Wimbledon Common, was wearing a red and yellow tie which suggested – erroneously, Bertie imagined – that he was a member of the Marylebone Cricket Club". And that is the sum total of Bertie's relationship with cricket, Morris argues.

In fact the lbw reference is not from Bertie's own lips; this and the gardener's choice of headgear are recorded in the same episode in *The Mating Season* (1949; chapter 16). The comment is actually made by Madeline Bassett's sporty friend Hilda Gudgeon, who reveals that she went to Roedean, which, incidentally, made history in 1992 as the first girls' school considered to be playing cricket of a standard fit to be recorded in *Wisden*.

The muscular Gudgeon, reading the morning paper, and having "said something about the prospects of the Surrey Cricket Club", proceeded to

inform the utterly uninterested Madeline that the paper "says there's some talk of altering the leg-before-wicket rule again. Odd how your outlook changes when your heart's broken. I can remember a time when I'd have been all excited if they altered the leg-before-wicket rule. Now I don't give a damn. Let 'em alter it, and I hope they have a fine day for it".

This is incidentally a reminder of the Americanisation of PGW, that a mere decade after being cricket-enthused enough to watch Dulwich in action on one of his occasional visits to England from his home in France, he should refer to the lbw "rule" and not "Law" as any properly educated Englishman would do.

But it is strange that Bertie should indicate no personal cricketing involvement when you note that he had been at Eton, which has an honoured tradition in the game, and can boast marvellous facilities which have produced a string of great amateur players. *Barclay's World of Cricket*, the major encyclopaedia on the subject, records: "No school has made a greater contribution than Eton College to the history of the game. The Eton and Harrow match, first played in 1805, became a national institution".

It seems possible that at Eton Bertie was a "wet bob" and rowed (rather than being a "dry bob" – a cricketer), although a reference to his years at Oxford does not suggest much previous interest or involvement on the river. In *Joy in the Morning* (1948, chapter 3) he recalls with distaste that in a weak moment, misled by his advisers, he tried to do a bit of rowing, but gave it up because he discovered that dipping an oar in the water, giving it a shove, and hauling it out again, was not only silly, but also the deuce of a sweat.

Morris argues a case that Bertie actually made the Magdalen Eight, which would obviously have reduced his cricketing opportunities regardless of his inclination. Old Etonian, cricketer and P G Wodehouse Society patron Henry Blofeld offers an intriguing alternative, that Bertie may have been a "slack bob". This handy category, says 'Blowers', was much valued by those not inspired enough to sweat at cricket or rowing, being allowed to take up the third alternative of tennis; which was played in much less strenuous and competitive fashion.

## OH, KAY! at the Barbican

The Barbican centre in London has staged a series of 'lost musicals' on Sunday afternoons during recent summers, and in August it was at last the turn of a Wodehouse show. The one chosen was *Oh, Kay!*, with music by George Gershwin, lyrics by his brother Ira and book by PGW and Guy Bolton. Ian Marshall Fisher is the Director/producer and generally to be thanked for his initiative in creating this series.

The format was the equivalent of a partly-acted play-reading, the songs being supported by a simple orchestra consisting of one piano, and there is no dance. Nevertheless, and especially considering that members of the cast of these musicals are unpaid, the standard of the perfor-

mance was exceedingly high. Louise Gold took Gertrude Lawrence's original role as Kay, and evidently enjoyed playing a cameo part as Jane, when Kay pretends to be a cockney maid. The other memorable performance was that of 'Shorty McGee', played by David de Keyser, a bootlegger who was required to impersonate a butler for most of the show, and who received a number of good one-liners from the wacky authors.

The show concerned the problems of bootlegging, bigamy and illegal immigration, which would be a handful for the most serious play. Of course only the humorous aspects of the three problems were given any attention, as illustrated by the line: "To carry on like that makes it a bigamystery", and the report of Jimmy's first words to Kay: "I'm awfully sorry to bother you, but I'm drowning."

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## Was Bertie a Cricketer? (continued)

And Morris does overlook Bertie's own words suggesting at least a primitive involvement with cricket. His prime sport of course was racquets, that original, senior and faster version of squash, at which he won his Blue, while he was known to dabble in social tennis and golf.

Clearly Bertie knew as much about cricket as was required of gentleman of his age, demonstrating this with occasional figures of speech about questions coming quickly off the bat, or the top-spin they carried. Two of the later *Jeeves* books contain very personal cricket references hinting at a much more active involvement than realised by Morris. In *Jeeves in the Offing* (1960), he wondered why Lady Wickham, mother of the dangerously imaginative Bobbie, was so upset over something she had read in *The Times* that morning: "I turned to the cricket news. Had some friend of hers failed to score in one of yesterday's county matches, owing to a doubtful lbw decision?"

The more significant reference later in the same book (in chapter 17) is to a confrontation between the grown Bertie and his old prep-school head, Aubrey Upjohn. He noted the look of smug satisfaction which always came into the reverend gentleman's face ". . . when he had been counsel for the prosecution in some case in which I was involved, and had spotted a damaging flaw in my testimony. The occasion when I was on trial for having broken the drawing-room window with a cricket ball springs to mind". This of course does not prove that Bertie had actually been playing cricket at the time. Given his guffin and gaby

qualities, he may simply have been tossing a stray ball against the window to test whether glass would resist such stress. It wouldn't – and didn't.

But if we move on to 1971 and *Much Obligated, Jeeves*, it appears that Bertie may have made a habit of this cricket ball window-breaking. He was seeking to persuade the formidable barrister Mrs McCorkadale to vote for his friend Ginger Winship in the Market Snodsbury by-election, unaware that she was Ginger's opponent. Unconvinced by Bertie's amateurish electioneering, she ". . . looked like Aunt Agatha listening to the boy Wooster trying to explain away a drawing-room window broken by a cricket ball".

At least this suggests that Bertie was serious enough about his boyish cricket – or his family believed him to be so – to be equipped with a proper ball, even when playing round the homes of his relatives, rather than make do with a soft ball, as a non-enthused tyro would probably have done.

It warms your heart to realise that even if Bertie had never been a cricket enthusiast, at least he had followed the tradition for all true Englishmen, that at some stage in your youth, you are required to break a window with a cricket ball!

*Murray Hedgcock is Editor of Wodehouse at the Wicket, a Hutchinson publication (14 August, 1997), a compilation of Wodehouse's cricket writings, with an extensive introductory essay about PGW's personal involvement with cricket written by Murray.*

## RECENT PRESS COMMENT

The relaunch of the Society at the Savage Club (see page 1) received coverage in *The Times* on June 12, July 17 and, particularly, July 19, when page 3 of its tabloid supplement *Directory* was largely given over to pictures and comment about the event. It was also mentioned in Godfrey Smith's column in the *Sunday Times* and in the *Sunday Independent*, in each case on July 13.

Other recent references of interest include the following:

### Independent, 11 and 13 June

Miles Kington, a columnist, started his column on 11 June as follows:

I have been carrying around in my wallet for some time a cutting from *The Daily Telegraph* of Friday 27 September 1996, reporting a press conference with Gerry Adams on the occasion of the publication of his book *Before the Dawn*. Occasionally I reread it, wondering why I kept it, and always I remember: it's because Gerry Adams, when asked to name his literary influences, mentioned, among other writers, the late P G Wodehouse.

So, I have been carrying this cutting around with me, wondering how on earth to use such a nugget of information – ie how to effect a *rapprochement* between two such unlikely bedfellows, when all the time the answer was staring me in the face: leave it to a computer.

And that is what Miles Kington claims to have done: fed *The Independent's* computer with data and instructed it to produce a story about Gerry Adams in the style of the master. The story, which involved a stately home, a rich uncle, a romance, Jeeves, golf, an Irish cousin named Gerry, prize pigs, Shakespeare ("He is not all he seems. Whoever it is behind the arras, it may not be Polonius"), concluded with the piggery being blown up, without even the suggested coded telephone warning first.

### The Times, 1 July

For the stressed-out Tory, Viscount Cranborne, Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords, has an alternative to transcendental meditation: pig-keeping. Like P G Wodehouse's Lord Emsworth, Cranborne finds nothing so peaceful as leaning his wellingtons against a fence and gazing into his sty. During the election, in which he served as John Major's chief of staff, colleagues said he could instantly dissolve a tense moment with his pig-talk.

### Daily Mail, 11 July

In a report on the day of action by supporters of fox-hunting, the crowds were said to include "Bertie Woosterish bloods in trilby hats and pin-striped suits . . ."

### Sunday Times, 20 July

In the course of an extremely long article in which he sought to justify his personal hatred of Mr Bean, Bryan Appleyard offered the following:

There are now two English stereotypes in global circulation – the smooth-talking Hollywood villain and this jerk. The first came into existence because we became the scapegoats for imperialism. But whence came the second?

The answer is, I think, that Mr Bean's recognisability springs from, first, tourism – we do a lot of it, but badly. Second, television has, in various forms but mainly through comedy and most notably through John Cleese's epically repressed Basil Fawlty, perpetuated the caricature of the English as a uniquely inhibited species. Third, a certain type of British film – the Carry Ons, for example – depend on a low, belly-laugh humour of sexual repression. And, fourth, a socially incompetent type – say, Bertie Wooster – that we originally created for our own amusement has travelled the world and become a confirmation of the widespread view that, as a nation, we cannot really cope.





## Profile of a Patron

John Mortimer was born in 1923. He lives with his wife Penelope and youngest daughter Rosie in what was once his father's house in the Chilterns, where he pursues his numerous interests. He is a QC who spent many years in practice, and a prolific author and playwright. He confesses to having been a life-time addict of Wodehouse's writing, and says that Wodehouse was a major influence on the very successful Rumpole series. He has written many film scripts and radio and television plays, including adaptations such as *Paradise Postponed*, *Summer's Lease*, (both from his own novels), *Titmuss Regained*, *Brideshead Revisited*, and *the Ebony Tower*. His most recent novel is *Felix in the Underworld* (Viking, 1997). He is Chairman of the Royal Court Theatre and of the Royal Society of Literature, and President of the Howard League for Penal Reform.

### *RECENT PRESS COMMENT, continued*

The Times, 25 July

An article on the sports pages about the Test Cricket debut of the 15th Smith to play for England (and the third 'Mike' Smith) started with a regrettable confusion between Rupert Psmith and Mike Jackson:

One of P G Wodehouse's most colourful characters was born with a name so colourless that its owner knew it needed jazzing up if he was to get on in life. He affected to place a silent 'P' in front of his surname. His name was Mike Psmith.

'Psmith' had the right idea. The surname is too common to be tolerated by an ambitious fellow. It is crushing in its anonymity. Blessed with a silent 'P', Psmith prospered. It is a tale that the 586th Test cricketer to play for England would do well to heed.

The Times, 26 July *et al*

The news stories about the ill doings of three butlers or former butlers led to a rash of references to Wodehouse and Jeeves, the writer frequently falling into such traps as equating butlers with gentlemen's personal gentlemen. *The Sunday Times*, having used the g.. p.. g.. term correctly in an article on 27 July, spoils the effect on the very next line: "With apologies to P G Wodehouse – and to Jeeves, the greatest butler of them all . . ." *The Times* started its news story by saying "It has not been a good week for butlers. The image of an immaculate, unflappable Jeeves firmly but fairly ruling upper-class households has taken a bit of a knock." It exacerbated its error, though in a complimentary manner, by writing its lead article on the topic in the supposed words of Jeeves himself:

#### AN EXPERT WRITES. . .

##### Jeeves speaks up in defence of an endangered profession

This is the week of the butler. And the publicity forces me to break the habit of a lifetime. Only once before in my connection with Mr Wooster have I taken centre stage to speak in public about one of his trifling misadventures. But the law reports of butlers taking over their employers' houses while they are away and humiliating them at home oblige me to set down some principles. . . .

A further comment later in the editorial, with Jeeves proclaiming that he had never revealed his first name (which is probably true, for it was Bingley which actually revealed it) was challenged in the letters column on 8 August.

## LETTERS FROM MEMBERS

From Mr David Hudson of Milton Keynes

Some members of the Society may not be aware that the reminiscences of Galahad Threepwood, long thought lost, have fairly recently resurfaced, due, in part, to the efforts of Norman Murphy, our chairman. Had these reminiscences been published earlier they would undoubtedly have caused a great stir but with most of the participants long gone their appearance has only caused a slight ripple. Now we can read all about those events previously only vouchsafed to us in tantalising hints. Who has not wondered about Tubby Parsloe and the prawns? All is revealed here.

This reader suspects that under our esteemed chairman's veneer of respectability there lurks a kindred spirit who, had he been around at the time, would surely have been a member of the old Pelican Club and featured in these tales. It may well be that some of his ancestors were originally involved in these goings on but if so, as editor, he has hushed it up.

This book is only slightly shocking in this present age of sleaze, but is hilariously funny and thoroughly recommended to all those who are interested in that fascinating era in our history.

**(The Reminiscences of the Hon Galahad Threepwood**

Porpoise Books 1993)

From Mr Brian Doyle of Putney

We all thought that PGW's *The Luck Stone* had made its first and last appearance in *Chums* in the 1908-09 volume. But a friend, Bill Bradford, has discovered a later appearance. The story ran as a serial in the *Chums Supplement* c 1926-27 under the title *The Tear of Allah*. It ran to only around eight instalments and was unillustrated, so it was obviously an abridged version, though the story seemed to be the same generally.

**(The Luck Stone**

Galahad Books 1997)

## POETS' CORNER

### BANK-HOLIDAY

(A Reminiscence)

The sun might shine on Hampstead Heath, its rays might fall on Kew,  
The sands might scorch on Margate shore, as they are wont to do.  
The fare (return) might be reduced to less than half a crown;  
No briny air or moderate fare could lure me out of town.

For other ears did 'Arry play Bedelia on the sands,  
And others passed the afternoon entranced by German bands,  
For others' eyes did 'Arriet flaunt her special summer gown;  
No latest styles could woo my smiles, for I remained in town.

And when excursion trains returned, invariably late,  
And each compartment held a score above its legal freight,  
And every face, once wreathed in smiles, was darkened by a frown;  
Then I was glad that I had had the sense to stay in town.

*This poem first appeared in the UK publication Vanity Fair on 4 August, 1904. The sentiments expressed in the days before popular travel by car, char-a-banc, bus, coach and air maintain a certain freshness to today's reader.*

*Did YOU enjoy August Bank Holiday this year?*

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From Miss Alison J Lindsay of Edinburgh

. . . I came across this recipe for the *Prairie Oyster*, that well-known hangover cure, . . . in the in-train magazine produced by Scotrail. It sounds perfectly revolting!

Two fingers of Cognac  
1 tablespoon of vinegar  
1 teaspoon of tomato ketchup  
1 teaspoon of Angostura bitters  
1 tablespoon of Worcester sauce  
Small pinch of cayenne pepper  
The yolk of an egg

Mix the liquids together in a glass, add the cayenne and the egg yolk. Take a deep breath. Drink it in one without breaking the yolk.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

Even Jeeves did not admit to having all these ingredients in his concoction in *Jeeves Takes Charge*, and unfortunately we never learned very much about what goes into a *Never Say Die*. (*Bill the Conqueror*, chapter 2).

## BOOK REVIEW by Nick Townend

### CRICKET CALLING by Rowland Ryder (Faber and Faber, 1995)

This is a delightful book on our summer sport, part autobiography, part anecdote and part analysis. As the publisher's synopsis says 'Rowland Ryder was once a cricket-mad youngster. Now he is a cricket-mad octogenarian.' Throughout the book, his love of cricket is obvious.

Ryder was born in 1914. His father, after whom Edgbaston's RV Ryder stand is named, was secretary of Warwickshire CCC from 1895 until 1944. Ryder's cricketing memories start with Warwick Armstrong's Australians in 1921 and continue to the present day.

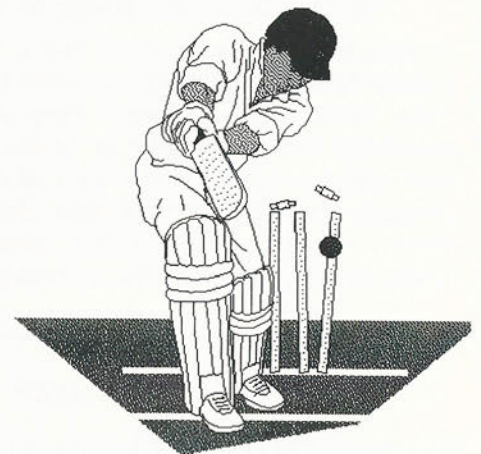
The main chapter of interest for Wodehouseans is *The Unplayable Jeeves*. Ryder's father was sufficiently impressed by seeing Percy Jeeves bowl for Hawes in 1910 to ask him 'How would you like to play for Warwickshire?' After a two year qualifying period, Jeeves first played for Warwickshire in 1912, was top of the county's bowling averages in 1913, and took 4 wickets, including C B Fry's, for 44 for the Players against the Gentlemen in 1914. He became engaged to the Warwickshire scorer's younger sister, but the First World War started before they could marry. Jeeves was killed on the Somme on 22 July 1916; she lived into her eighties but never married.

In 1967 Ryder adapted *The Code of the Woosters* into play form for a school production. (It would be interesting, given the Editor's recent appeal, to know if the adaptation is still extant.) This prompted him to write to Wodehouse, asking if he had chosen the name for Jeeves, 'the inimitable butler' (sic), as a result of seeing Percy Jeeves bowling. Wodehouse's reply confirmed this. Although Ryder had deduced the source of Jeeves's surname independently he was not the first person to become aware of it – a 1962 letter from Wodehouse (reproduced on the dustwrapper of the McIlvaine bibliography) also gives the source.



In response to Wodehouse's letter, Ryder sent him a Warwickshire tie. Wodehouse's letter of thanks stated that it is 'the only one I wear nowadays'. This was confirmed by the *Observer's* photographs of Wodehouse's ninetieth birthday, where the tie could be seen, albeit somewhat singed by Wodehouse's pipe.

Another chapter deals with *Gilbert Jessop - the Most Exciting Cricketer of Them All*. Jessop, who was



known variously as 'the Croucher' and 'the human catapult', was an astounding, fast-scoring cricketer. Readers will remember that Scott, the biggest hitter at St. Austin's, looked forward to facing Mr Yorke's celebrated slow tosh, promising "to show him exactly how Jessop does it when he's in form".

Ryder also discusses the *Mike* stories and Wodehouse's own cricketing prowess in *Cricket and Literature*. This chapter and the following *Cricket, Royalty and Politicians* are the least successful in the book, as both are little more than glorified lists. In general, Ryder's touch is surest when he stays with events of which he has first-hand experience.

Ryder frequently comments pithily. Mentioning that the OED dates 'bowling' to 1755 and 'batting' to 1773, he quips "It must have been paradisaical to have been a bowler during those eighteen intervening years". He also introduces us to some wonderfully Wodehousean cricketers, not least Canon Jack Parsons. His chief weapon when batting was the straight drive – runs scored by deflection he considered unethical. Although a fine slip fielder, he was allowed to field in the deep on Saturdays to prepare his sermons. His captain was the Hon FSG Calthorpe, of whom it was said that during his three years at Cambridge he never met his tutor.

Overall, from reading Ryder one obtains the same impression of days of unending sunshine as one obtains from reading Wodehouse. A book cannot have higher praise than that.

## ACTIVITIES FOR MEMBERS

### Walk Round Bertie Wooster's London

Our Chairman, Norman Murphy, has offered to conduct walks round Bertie Wooster's London on the 11th October and 8th November, 1997. He prefers groups of 6 to 10. If there are insufficient takers for one date, the walk may be postponed to a later occasion.

The walk takes about three hours and covers some unusual aspects of London, as well as Wodehouse topography. Participants are strongly advised to wear comfortable walking shoes.

Those interested should contact Norman Murphy direct

### Members' Evening at the Savage Club

For those members who start reading from the back of the Journal, please see the invitation on page 1!

#### **Invitation From Belgian Society**

Mr Kris Smets, President of *The Drones Club*, the Belgian Society, has written to invite members to *The Great Balloon Hunt*, which they are holding on November 8th. "We start at 14.00 with the actual hunt, which only differs from the real stuff through the complete absence of pheasants, grouse and other game."

### Proposed Society Golf Day

The Oldest Member proposes to hold a Golf Day for members of the Society and their guests at Marvis Bay Golf Club (now known as Tandridge Golf Club, Oxted, Surrey) on a weekday in April 1998 yet to be decided.

The programme is likely to start around noon with a Reception and Dress Parade (with prizes for the best-dressed PGW characters), followed by lunch and an 18 hole **Stableford Competition** under handicap. Those playing with hickory-shafted clubs (other than putters) will receive an additional handicap allowance.

Prizes may include the *Vincent Jopp Trophy* for the best scratch score, the *PGW Umbrella* for the best net score by a man, the *Agnes Flack Shield* for the best net score by a lady, the *William & Jane Bates Prize* for the best combined score by a married couple and the *James Todd/Peter Willard* award for perseverance.

Tea will be followed at about 6pm by a Prizegiving and Reflections on the day by the Oldest Member.

The inclusive entry fee, like the date, has still to be determined, but members who might be interested in participating in the Society's First Golf Day should write to

### DID YOU SEE?

Two Wodehouse inspired films have been shown recently on television, but no advance information was available to us.

*The Girl on the Boat* was shown on Channel 5 during the afternoon of 6 August. Murray Hedgcock was one of the lucky few who saw what he described as 'a curious production in which the PGW plot is followed unusually accurately, and his dialogue is used in great chunks'. Our President, Richard Briers, played the dreadfully seasick Eustace Hignett, who shared a stateroom with the hero, Sam Marlowe, played by Norman Wisdom.

*Step Lively, Jeeves*, whose plot and dialogue by contrast had no connection with PGW, and in which Bertie Wooster did not even appear, was shown in the very early hours of 20 August, on Channel 4.

### AN EMSWORTH PAD?

*Murray Hedgcock* reminds us that back in 1903, Plum first stayed in Threepwood, described as a cottage (actually a substantial suburban house) in the Hampshire harbourside town of Emsworth. He bought the property in 1910 for £200, some two and a half times the salary he had been paid while at the Bank.

He sold the property in around 1914, and there is no hint that it might be on the market today. But the *Daily Telegraph* of August 6 carried a property advertisement for a development of mews properties in Emsworth Town Centre. ... From £132,500.

### POSTSCRIPT

On September 6th, the Editor attended the evening reception following the wedding in Amersham of Martin "Bertie" Wooster and Samantha.