



Robert McCrum's Biography has a New Photo of Plum



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Edwin Green, archivist of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank (now HSBC), provided this photograph of Wodehouse as a member of the Rugby Football XV of the London office of Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation in 1900, for use in Robert McCrum's recently published biography, *Wodehouse: A Life*.

The book, published at the end of August, has been reviewed very positively in most of the daily and Sunday broadsheets, and our Patron Stephen Fry has kindly reviewed it for *Wooster Sauce*, see page 14. There will be further comments on particular parts of the book from members with specialist expertise in the December *Wooster Sauce*.

Wodehouse is seated, second from the right. The captain, O J Barnes, who is seated in the centre, was the Bank's London manager later in his career. The London manager at the time was Sir Ewen Cameron, standing at the far left.

An offer to members from Viking-Penguin to enable us to acquire a copy of the biography at a discount of 25% is enclosed with this edition of *Wooster Sauce*.

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Spreading the Word at Home, in Australia

Murray Hedgcock, a regular contributor to *Wooster Sauce* and a proud Australian by birth, duly flew the flag for The Master at the British World Conference, held at the University of Melbourne on July 2-4.

The third in a series studying the impact of British language, culture and institutions on the Old Dominions, this drew an attendance of 146 academics mostly from Australia, but including other parts of the Commonwealth – and just three 'Independent Scholars'.

In his role as one of the 'independents', Murray sought to assess *The Impact of P G Wodehouse on Australian Perceptions of England and the English*.

And if he conceded in his 20-minute paper that the case was 'Not Proven', he did provide an appreciated

touch of comparatively light relief in a weekend containing much heavyweight assessment on a vast range of topics.

The paper should be available on a conference website, and details will be given in due course in *Wooster Sauce*.

Editor's Note:

Murray's authority must be persuasive! On August 22nd, Neil Wiseman, a columnist on the Brisbane Sunday Mail, wrote a commentary on the fallout from the recent resignation of the Governor of Tasmania, Richard Butler. Member Alan Symons provided a copy, which proposes Bertie Wooster as his successor, and demonstrates a refreshingly good grasp of the adventures of Bertie and Jeeves.

Wodehouse's Straight Plays

by Tony Ring

When considering Wodehouse's career as a writer of straight plays, it is important to understand at the outset that he never claimed that he was as proficient a playwright as he was a novelist; indeed in a number of letters he said just the opposite. For example, in April 1951:

I know my limitations so well as regards stage-work. I think my dialogue is good, but, left to myself, I am apt to fall down on the story. I have never had a success on the stage when I have written the story, and I have never had a failure when the story has been supplied by someone else.

In my view, this is clearly confirmed by the quality of the novels he wrote from plays, for it is noticeable how regularly such titles as *If I Were You*, *Doctor Sally*, *The Old Reliable* and *Ring for Jeeves* are mentioned in discussions of which were his least successful books between 1920 and 1960. Nobody could criticise his lack of effort, though, since he was involved in the production of more than 20 straight plays and a number of sketches for revue or variety. And as with the fiction of his mature years, much of his work for the stage seems to have had several versions.

Plum was never one to restrict his options, and this was equally true when he was writing for the stage. Some of his work was performed first in England, some in America. Some, including much of his most successful work, was adapted from translations of the plays of continental European authors. Most of the rest was also written in collaboration with a co-author, such as his friend Guy Bolton, probably the most prominent, although at one stage it looked as if this honour would go to the British novelist and playwright Ian Hay. There was just one novel, *Hot Water*, which Plum both wrote and dramatised on his own – as *The Inside Stand*.

As with most areas of his work, Wodehouse started his career providing the spoken word for the stage somewhat experimentally. As early as 1907 he was offering a sketch entitled *Cricketing* to the London revue market. The typescript, which fortunately still exists, includes his own annotations including drawings using the matchstick men figures of which his old headmaster, A H Gilkes, was so scathing. We do not know that this sketch was ever performed, but few collectors of revue and variety programmes from the early twentieth century are actively on the look-out for Wodehouse accreditations.

A second sketch he wrote around this time, 1910 or 1911, is *After the Show*. Again I have seen no evidence that it ever appeared on stage. If you have read most of his fiction, this would give you a feeling of déjà vu, as it was the stage equivalent of the short story *Ahead of Schedule*, which appeared in *Grand* magazine in the UK in 1910, one of his first uses of a smart valet.

Wodehouse's first important stage production was *A Gentleman of Leisure*. His novel, *The Intrusion of Jimmy*, had been published in May 1910 and he was approached by a John Stapleton for permission to adapt it for the stage. It is unclear how much time Plum put into the adaptation, but he does seem to have been involved to some degree, for he later had a terrific row with Stapleton when it came to selling the film rights. *A Gentleman of Leisure* was staged in New York in 1911, starring Douglas Fairbanks, and reprised in Chicago in 1913 as *A Thief for a Night*, with a young John Barrymore. For both men, Jimmy Pitt represented their first leading role.

Brother Alfred was written jointly with Herbert Westbrook and, starring Lawrence Grossmith, managed fourteen performances at the Savoy Theatre in London in April 1913. Writing later to LHBradshaw, Plum laid the blame for the short run at Grossmith's feet:

Grossmith made me write and rewrite till all the punch was lost, and it ran just a fortnight to empty houses.

He then received a credit for 'additional scenes' in the 'second edition' of a Revue for CBCochran at the London Pavilion in 1921, called *London, Paris and New York*, but so far I have not been able to clarify exactly which of the sketches were his, although we know that his lyric, *Sir Galahad*, appeared in the original production. Indeed, this seems to have been just another experiment with the straight theatre, undertaken as a diversion, hopefully money-spinning, from his novels, short stories, lyrics, musical comedies and casual journalism. And the author and producer, Arthur Wimperis, was an Old Alleynian.

I believe his experimental period in the theatre finished about 1925. For between 1926 and 1930, he wrote four novels and over forty short stories, contributed part of the libretto and/or lyrics to five musical comedies and, in addition to the rest of his workload, still found time to write or adapt seven

The Guide to Living with Cancer According to PG Wodehouse

by Katherine Vaughan-Williams

John Fletcher was present at a monologue based on Katherine's work, presented by Gary Stevens at the Riverside Studios, in Hammersmith, and gives his reaction.

'Sleep', as the Swan of Avon so pithily puts it, 'knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care'; and two lines later, describes it as the 'Balm of hurt minds'. But it is precisely the ravell'd sleeve of care and the hurt mind that chase sleep away. However, there is no sleeve so ravelled nor mind so hurt that Wodehouse cannot calm or raise our spirits.

Katherine Vaughan-Williams, who loved Wodehouse, and knew all this, had terminal cancer. At once the question she asked became "If Wodehouse had had cancer, how would he have described it?" She then described it as he might have. Her knowledge and love of his work glow in every line.

Robert McCrum (perhaps because he had had a stroke) understood this too, and joined her when she read her piece to the Poetry Society in June 2002. Katherine read it again at the Hampstead Theatre Studio in July 2003, once again with McCrum.

She died later that year. But those who read or heard her composition cannot doubt that the last months of her life were happy, and she has made others happy since. Many thought her work should

live. The Rosetta Alive Festival (www.rosettalive.org), which encourages those in various hospices to express themselves artistically, asked Gary Stevens to read Katherine's monologue again. He did so three times, in the last week of June.

It was not an occasion to fall about laughing, but rather to understand again that Wodehouse was wise as well as therapeutic as well as funny. It was moving partly because we knew Katherine the author had died. It was brilliant because she found the right Wodehousean metaphors (Yessers, Vice-Yessers, Noddors) for the various levels of the medical profession grouped round her bed. Her use of Bertie's style was hard to fault, even though it did not feel to me like pastiche:

The lumps turned up in my body unannounced, without so much as a by your leave, let alone a formal invitation, and in fact they were not at all the sort of character you would invite within miles of your person, given the choice, which I wasn't.

But above all it showed how to look at the world with a Wodehousean eye. Some people win fortunes, others die of cancer, others are interned; justice is rare. But with an attitude that Wodehouse conveys best, life including extremes can be exciting. This deserves to be re-presented every two or three years.

Wodehouse's Straight Plays, continued

plays for the West End or Broadway. Of these, four were adapted from a European original and three were co-written with Ian Hay. To the extent that he had a purple patch as a playwright, this was it.

So this is, I believe, an appropriate point at which to mention the fundamental difference between Wodehouse's own writing and much of what he was to write for the stage in this period and later.

When you think of Wodehouse the author, you think of Jeeves and Wooster, Blandings Castle, the Oldest Member, Mr Mulliner, Ukridge, the Drones. Casting the mind a little further afield you think of the aunts, the spirited young popies and the blonde bimbo airheads, the vacant minds of the bachelors and the scheming uncles. What you don't think of, generally, are bedrooms, sexual relationships, adultery. Wodehouse, prolific author as he was, kept out of the bedroom, except to make an apple pie bed,

or put frogs or fretful porpentines between the sheets as a punishment or practical joke.

But many of his successful plays were adaptations of the work of a spirited assortment of continental European playwrights: Ladislaus Fodor, Siegfried Geyer, Ferenc Molnar, Sacha Guitry and Jacques Deval. And what all these continental playwrights liked to write about was sexual relations. You only need to read *Candlelight*, *The Play's the Thing*, *Don't Listen Ladies*, or *Her Cardboard Lover*, and you'll see that Wodehouse did not shy away from writing about extra-marital affairs and infidelity.

In the next article, I'll start by commenting on the impact the Censor had on his theatrical work in the UK.

This article is the first of three based on a talk given by the author at the 2003 TWS Convention in Toronto

Beware the Wodehouse Beauties

by Gwendolin Goldbloom

Recent articles on the subject of Wodehouse (and women have spurred me on to put my thoughts into readable shape, but the idea has been with me since, at a Society gathering a while ago, I heard a fellow Wodehousean remark that, really, there are only two categories of women in PGW's stories, namely the formidable aunt or the dippy young girl. At the time I was far too taken aback to recite a list of all the Janes and Jills who are neither, but I still wonder what gives people that impression, when even Bertie Wooster (although he does have, in Aunt Agatha, the most formidable of aunts and, in Madeline Bassett, the dippiest possible female acquaintance) numbers so many good eggs and sound potatoes, charming and pretty girls, among his female acquaintance.

Not all girls who are neither dippy nor aunts are charming, of course. Above everything else, Bertie and his fellow men would do well to beware of spectacularly beautiful young ladies, as quite probably there will be something wrong with them. If they are tall and stunning, they are likely to have ideals, like Florence Craye; or to be scheming, like Cynthia Drassilis (in *The Little Nugget*); or calculating, like Claire Fenwick (in *Uneasy Money*) and Vera Upshaw (in *The Girl in Blue*). If they are just ravishing, without being tall and stately, beauties may well belong to the class that 'starts something'. Here the most notable is Bobbie Wickham, but temperamental Hollywood beauties, like April June, Lottie Blossom and Corky Pirbright are perfectly capable of starting something at the slightest provocation (or, indeed, without provocation). And, yes, some beautiful girls are indeed dippy – not only Madeline Bassett, but also, quite impressively so, Veronica Wedge (*Full Moon*). No, unless the beautiful young woman in the case wishes to learn golf and is suitably impressed with the young man's handicap, beauties are better avoided. The spectacular outer crust, one might say, is not everything.

The girls whose stunningly spectacular outer crust does indeed hide a correspondingly appealing personality are few and far between. Joan Valentine (*Something Fresh*) is said to be tall, golden-haired and beautiful, and while her partner in enterprise, Ashe Marson, considers her to be just a little bit too emancipated and independent, there is no suggestion that she is either full of ideals or calculating. Or, indeed, dippy. Aurelia Cammarleigh (*The Reverent Wooing of Archibald*) actually suffers from her stately and considerable

good looks, because young men are inclined to think that she must be as idealistic as she is beautiful. Hermione Rossiter (*The Man who Gave up Smoking*, from *Mr Mulliner Speaking*), 'the loveliest thing that had ever breathed the perfumed air of Kensington', worries that men love her for her beauty only, when she wants to be loved for her intellect (which is also quite considerable).

The vast majority of young ladies in the Wodehouse canon, however, are neither divinely tall nor breathtakingly beautiful; they are slim and pretty. In many cases they are pretty enough to make strong men reel, and they are usually trim, jaunty and vivacious. They are generally so charming that, if the situation compels them to behave in a formidable manner, this may well pass unnoticed. They are tough and practical, but not superwomen. They are idealistic and romantic, but not oppressively so. They have to stand on their own feet, financially or emotionally, often both. They are the Jills and Janes and Sallys with whom our sympathies lie and each of whom is 'the only girl in the world' for one of the strong young men usually called Bill.

In a letter to his daughter Leonora, dated 4 February 1924, PGW said about *Bill the Conqueror*, 'Flick, the heroine, is so like you that the cognoscenti cannot help but be charmed'. As we all know, Flick is not the only one who is like Leonora – in fact most of these slim, trim, pretty girls are to a greater or lesser degree related to her, and they charm not only the cognoscenti.

There are Sally Nicholas (*The Adventures of Sally*), Sally Painter (*Uncle Dynamite*) and Sally Foster (*Ice in the Bedroom*), who have to take matters in hand and galvanise their young men into constructive action, while Sally Fairmile (*Quick Service*) finds events overtaking her rather. Like the last-named of the Sallys, Jane Opal (*Hot Water*) and Jane Abbott (*Summer Moonshine*) start out engaged to the wrong men, while Jane Martyn (*Company for Henry*) is even engaged to the worst man possible, Lionel Green. So is Ann Benedick (*Money in the Bank*) who, like Ann Chester (*Piccadilly Jim*) – misguidedly, of course – at first heartily dislikes the hero. Both, however, discover the entertainment value and solid worth of the respective young men just in time. Jill Mariner (*Jill the Reckless*) is handicapped by an unreliable uncle and Jill Willard (*Do Butlers Burgle Banks*) decides to burgle a bank to save her man.

The Spoils of Victory

by Elliott Milstein

This is the third instalment of the story of how Elliott Milstein, former President of TWS, wrote a thesis on Wodehouse whilst at St Michael's College, Toronto. It is based on the talk he presented at the TWS convention last year.

There was strong opposition in the University English department to my doing a thesis on Wodehouse. Several professors attempted to get the committee to revoke its approval of the topic. When I found out that one of them was the head of the St Mike's English department, I was so angry I put in for a transfer to Victoria College.

About a week later, I heard that the whole subject had blown over and so I was off and running. I only found out years later that good old Professor Cameron had acted behind the scenes on my behalf. He had contacted Father John Michael Kelly, president of St Mike's. Father Kelly was a gruff old bird, feared or detested or both by most of the student body. I don't think I ever detested him but I sure feared him. I found out only long after he died that he had taken a special interest in me, protecting me from the occasional fits of anti-Semitism that threatened from time to time.

When Cameron came to him with the tale of professors plotting against me, he called the group of them into his office for a meeting. I never heard the particulars of that meeting, other than it was very short, the discussion was entirely one-sided, and the issue was closed before the office door was opened. My personal opinion is that he threatened them with excommunication.

During the course of my researches, I found out why St Mike's had such a lovely Wodehouse collection. It

belonged to one Father Scollard, an old priest-librarian who, though long retired, still hung about the library, helping out. He had been reading and buying Wodehouses since he was a schoolboy and upon entering the priesthood, donated his library to the Basilian order, which, ultimately dumped them in this library. When my thesis was completed I gave Father Scollard a copy, which he immediately deposited in the Rare Book Room, where it resides to this day.

After thanking me profusely, Father Scollard took me up to the fourth floor of the library, which was, then, nothing but storage. He knew exactly where he wanted to go, because he walked right up to the section and pulled from it a small, thin, old green pamphlet. It was the Oxford University *Periodical*, Volume 24, Number 200, July 15, 1939. Page 70 quotes the Horatian hexameters of the Public Orator, Dr Cyril Bailey, in honor of Mr P G Wodehouse's receiving his honorary Doctorate.

It is now one of the most cherished possessions in my collection, not just for its rarity and value, but for its commemoration of that wonderful act of generosity on behalf of the ancient cleric. Whenever I look at it, I remember his kindly old face and his open horse laugh when we traded Wodehouse nifties back and forth. He is also the only person I had ever met that read the school stories as they came out. He said his favourite Wodehouse would always be *Mike*, because it was the first one he read and he was such a young boy when it came out. Re-reading it was, for him, a Madeleine de Proust.

Further instalments of this fascinating tale are still to come.

Beware of Wodehouse beauties, continued

And then, of course, there are all those girls whose first names are not among those mentioned. But whether they're called Elizabeth or Lucille, Kay or Prudence, Sandy, Polly, Terry – or Jane, they are not dippy and they are not aunts. They may misunderstand sterling young fellows or occasionally boss them around, but they do not talk babytalk. And while they may, of course, in the fullness of time, become aunts, that, surely, should not be held against them.

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges - 31

“Did yer know,” [Lord Uffenham] said at length, “that the Herring Gull, when it mates, swells its neck, opens its beak and regurgitates a large quantity of undigested food?”

“You don't say? That isn't a part of the Church of England marriage service, is it?”

From *Something Fishy*, 1957

Dr Wodehouse and Mr Waugh

Jan Kaufman concludes her comments

A correspondence began in the 50s when Wodehouse sent Waugh a card thanking him for some public letters of appreciation he had written.

Lady Donaldson has described Waugh's social quandary:

We dined at Piers Court and Evelyn showed us the letter. He said he had been in a great difficulty to know how to reply. The letter he received had begun 'Dear Evelyn . . . ' Evelyn could not reply 'Dear Wodehouse . . . ' for fear of seeming cold, nor 'Dear P G Wodehouse . . . ' because he detested this form of address, nor 'Dear Plummy . . . ' in the simple manner that Plummy had addressed him, because he did not know him. "I think, however," he said with pride, "that I have found the solution. I have put 'Dear Dr Wodehouse.'" Ever after this he referred to him and addressed him in this manner.

In this initial letter he said

'I can't write, to my revered master, 'Dear Plum' but I am most exhilarated by your very kind card. I hope you had a more cheerful Christmas than we. Influenza, mild but vexatious, swept the house. Only *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* passed from sick bed to sick bed relieved the gloom.'

He concluded by signing this letter 'Yours, with very deep respect.'

Waugh's greatest influence as an admirer of Wodehouse probably came from three perceptive and eloquent articles he wrote over a twenty year period.

In *The Tablet*, in 1939, in an essay called *An Angelic Doctor*, he reviewed the publication of the *Week-End Wodehouse*. He lauded Oxford for conferring an honorary degree on Wodehouse, and said that in this action worthy of its traditions, the University:

. . . is speaking, as it is one of its most splendid functions to speak, for the educated class of the country, in recognizing Mr Wodehouse's place in literature, not perhaps, as Mr Agate claims, as 'a little below Shakespeare's and any distance you like above anybody else's', but certainly as the equal among his contemporaries as Sir Max Beerbohm and Msgr Knox, and high in the historic succession of the master-craftsmen of his trade.

Waugh says he is confident that Wodehouse will attain lasting renown:

It may well be that in future generations . . . Mr Wodehouse's public may shrink . . . In a hundred years' time 'the kind of man who reads P G Wodehouse for pleasure' may become synonymous with an extravagantly fastidious taste . . .

Later, in 1956, Waugh wrote in the *Spectator* an article called *Dr Wodehouse and Mr Wain*, about the young novelist John Wain's unfavourable review of *French Leave*. Wain essentially claimed Wodehouse was out of date. Waugh replied 'It is a world that cannot become dated because it has never existed. . . . He inhabits a world as timeless as that of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Alice in Wonderland*; a world inhabited by strange transmogrifications.'

Finally, in honour of Wodehouse's 80th Birthday in 1961, Waugh gave a tribute which was broadcast on the BBC and reprinted the next day in the *Sunday Times*, titled *An Act of Homage and Reparation to P G Wodehouse*, which is invariably quoted by every writer on either author, as well as on the Penguin paperbacks. He starts off by again refuting the old incorrect charges about the war broadcasts of twenty years earlier. Then he examines his reasons for admiration:

The first thing to remark about Mr Wodehouse's art is its universality, unique in this century.

What is the secret of his immortality? One essential, of course, is his technical excellence achieved by sheer hard work.

He satisfies the simplest taste and the most sophisticated.

He is an heroically diligent planner and reviser.

Most of us who rejoice in his work do so primarily for the exquisite felicity of his language.

It is appropriate to end with more familiar words from this homage of Waugh's:

Mr Wodehouse's idyllic world can never stale. He will continue to release future generations from captivity that may be more irksome than our own. He has made a world for us to live in and delight in.

This is the second and concluding part of the article by Jan Kaufman, based on a talk given at the TWS Convention in Toronto last year.

Letters from Members

From John Tyerman Williams

I was delighted to read the late Helen Murphy's eloquent and persuasive presentation of Wodehouse as a feminist writer (*Wooster Sauce* 29, March 2004). Incidentally, I would also warmly endorse her definition of feminism as 'the willing support and encouragement of women in whichever sphere they choose to occupy themselves'.

Enjoyment of Wodehouse is certainly not confined to men. My late wife was, and my present wife is, an admirer. As for the women in Wodehouse, some are unpleasant, like Aunt Agatha, some irresponsible, like Bobbie Wickham, but even they are strong and full of vitality. Even Madeline Bassett, though she may hold odd notions about the stars, is shrewdly realistic about this world. Remember how firmly she dealt with Lord Sidcup when he thought of renouncing his title. She made it quite clear that she was willing to become the Countess of Sidcup, but certainly not mere Mrs Spode.

It is true that Bertie Wooster and Jeeves often make hostile generalisations about women, but they were confirmed bachelors who feared women as potential invaders of their realm; a fear that recognised the strength of women. Interestingly, this fear had been shared by Jeeves's favourite philosopher, Spinoza.

Let us all hope that Helen Murphy's argument will undermine the myth that Wodehouse is exclusively a 'male thing'.

The Smile That Wins Favourite Nifties - 28

... he could balance himself with one hand on an inverted ginger-ale bottle while revolving a barrel on the soles of his feet. There is good in all of us.

From *The Adventures of Sally*, 1922

From Sir Edward Cazalet

Earlier this year, Christopher Gibbs gave an address at the Memorial Service of the late Paul Getty. His words included the following paragraph:

His love of England was a romantic's, rooted in the movies and in literature. It was about history, freedom, courtesy and honour and a feeling for the divine harmony and balance in the way things are ordered. It encompassed the Holy Catholic church, the Crown, democracy in the guise of the Tory Party, the army (in particular the SAS and the special forces), cricket, foxhunting, landscape and architecture, the MCC, Pratt's and the Roxburghe Club. There were heroes – Churchill, Wodehouse, Matthew Arnold, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Rossetti and Swinburne, Wilde and Beerbohm, Brunel and Denis Compton. But if he looked back he looked forward too, was swift to explore and master the new technology, relished the *New Scientist*, never missed *Tomorrow's World*, but remained delighted to trade rare clarets for wooden gramophone needles with an Eton beak and to hear the voice of Count McCormack pour from a giant horn.

From Simon May

Lucky enough recently to be able to spend a sabbatical term in Cambridge, I found one thing had not changed: I was still as much in thrall to Wodehousean diversion as when I was a young Cantabrigian twenty or so years ago. It occurred to me that, Plum's forebears coming from Norfolk, there was a good chance of some juicy material turning up in the University Library, but, to my surprise, the catalogue of manuscripts yielded only one item: a letter from PGW to Owen Seaman who was about to take up the editorship of *Punch*. It was written on Constitutional Club notepaper, with their address crossed out and '22, Walpole St., Sloane Square, SW' inserted. Dated February 15th, 1906, it shows considerable poise and self-confidence and one smiles to think the author was only 24 at the time.

It reads:

Dear Mr Seaman

May I add one to the pile of letters of congratulation you have received? I was awfully glad when I read it in the paper this morning.

You were so good to me when I was starting writing that I shall always feel that you gave me the first leg-up. I shall never forget how patient you were with my stuff.

Yours sincerely

P. G. Wodehouse

The *Times* of that morning made considerable play of the change in editorship from Sir F Burnand to Seaman, and coincidentally the same issue records the final results of the General Election which saw Lord Wodehouse (Plum's 3rd cousin twice removed) being returned as a Liberal member of Parliament. One suspects that it was not family success uppermost in Plum's mind that day.

Master of Folly ~ Part II

This is part two of the series about Wodehouse and architecture and architectural follies and I realise that I haven't told you yet what my own (broad) definition of follies is: idiosyncratic buildings whose primary purpose is to please. Funny buildings, in short (too short). Strengthened by the knowledge of this all too succinct delineation we can go about our business again.

Here we go again, omitting no detail, however slight. Let's start with a description of a 'stupefying spectacle' (identified by Norman Murphy as the Château Impney Hotel at Droitwich): Walsingford Hall in *Summer Moonshine*.

Whatever may be said in favour of the Victorians, it is pretty generally admitted that few of them were to be trusted within reach of a trowel and a pile of bricks. Sir Wellington least of all.

Walsingford Hall had had to be rebuilt after a fire and proprietor Sir Wellington Abbott fancied himself as an amateur architect. He built

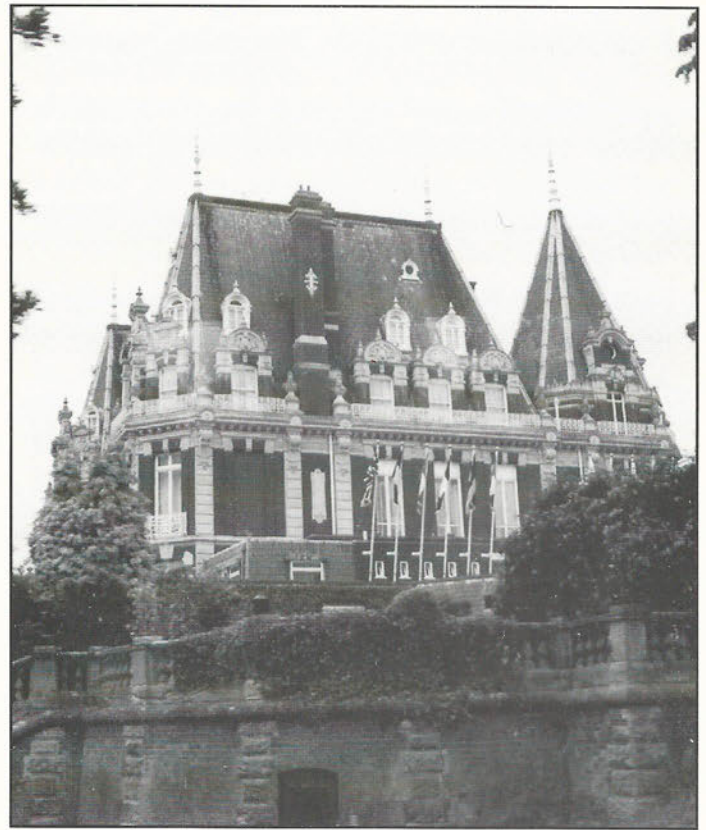
a vast edifice constructed of glazed red brick, in some respects resembling a French château, but, on the whole, perhaps, having more the appearance of one of those model dwellings in which a certain number of working-class families are assured of certain number of cubic feet of air. It had a huge leaden roof, tapering to a point and topped by a weather-vane, and from one side of it, like some unpleasant growth, there protruded a large conservatory. There were also a dome and some minarets. Victorian villagers gazing up at it, had named it Abbott's Folly, and they had been about right.

This is the only folly called folly in Wodehouse, and he hated red-brick-Victorian architecture, as we saw in the previous issue.

Piccadilly Jim opens with a description of the residence of Mr Peter Pett, the well-known financier, on Riverside Drive, New York. Wodehouse calls it a leading eyesore. It

. . . jumps out and bites at you. Architects confronted with it reel and throw up their hands defensively, and even the lay observer has a sense of shock. The place resembles in almost equal proportions a cathedral, a suburban villa, a hotel and a Chinese pagoda. Many of its windows are of stained glass, and above the porch stand two terra-cotta lions, considerably more repulsive even than the complacent animals that guard New York's Public Library.

It also sounds a perfect folly.



Château Impney, Droitwich

Towards the end of his glorious writing career Wodehouse gets an idea that might lead to folly building. *Ring for Jeeves* contains the admirable suggestion as a way out of difficulties that a house be taken down stone by stone and rebuilt in America.

William Randolph Hearst used to do it, didn't he? I remember visiting at San Simeon once, and there was a whole French Abbey lying on the grass near the gates.

I would call that a folly. The same suggestion occurs in *Ice in the Bedroom*: about Castlewood in Valley Fields:

I wasn't sure, I said, if I wouldn't have it taken down and shipped over to America and set up on my big estate in Virginia. Like William Randolph Hearst used to do.

Wimbledon Common has remarkably large houses. Here is Lord Tilbury's in *Frozen Assets*:

Outwardly it was of a nature to cause sensitive architects, catching sight of it, to stagger back with a hand over their eyes, uttering faint moans.

In its 'gloomy magnificence' it ' . . . looks like a municipal swimming bath.'

Finally there is Ashby Hall in *Company for Henry*.

Pieter Boogart continues his review of the architectural features of Plum's fiction



Virginia House, Richmond, Virginia, USA (an example of a rebuilt English priory)

Again, the original Elizabethan house was burnt to ashes and in its place came

a hideous pile that looked partly like the Prince Regent's establishment at Brighton and partly like a mediaeval fortress. Local humorists were accustomed to speak derisively of it as The Castle . . . it's not a thing you want to come on suddenly . . . particularly to be avoided by nervous people and invalids . . . designed by an architect steeped to the tonsils in spirituous liquor as so many architects were in the days of the Regency.

Strong words and funny, by the Master of Folly.

We shall now let fictional follies pass us by like the idle wind which we respect not, and talk about real-life follies that might be mentioned in Wodehouse. With me it is the work of an instant. Here we go. Reading from left to right, as it were.

Jack Straw's Castle, a castellated pub that features in *The Swoop*, until recently looked very folly-like, but I hear it's been taken down again, and anyway it wasn't the building that Wodehouse had in mind, for Jack Straw's Castle had been replaced. It is interesting though that a Russian general was captured in this pub.

In *The Man with Two Left Feet* the story *Bill the Bloodhound* refers to a play called *The Girl from Brighton* in which there is a waitress at The Rotunda

on the Esplanade. As an example of a folly it is extremely thin, I agree.

In *Indiscretions of Archie* there is a hotel called 'The Hermitage', and one called Belvidere/Belvedere in *Money for Nothing*. That last book also mentions a Martyrs' Memorial. The Swiss Cottage in London (*Summer Lightning*) was originally a folly, and indubitably looked a lot like the chalet in the Alps mentioned in *William Tell Told Again*, which was of course a real Swiss cottage.

The Albert Memorial in London is in *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* and plays a part in a simile in *Laughing Gas*. It is considered a folly (unlike the Albert Hall, which is in *The Swoop*, *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* and *Very Good, Jeeves (Jeeves and the Song of Songs)*), where it also plays a part in a simile, a very unkind one about a massive woman built 'a bit along the lines of the Albert Hall').

Finally, as already stated, the Prince Regent's establishment at Brighton gets a mention in *Company for Henry* – the Royal Pavilion is arguably the largest folly in Britain. Titbits all in all, really. Less than the dust beneath your chariot wheels, I shouldn't wonder.

Time to wrap this up. If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well 'twere done quickly. I'll be back with Part III of this article. We shall meet at Philippi.

The Maestro's Amazing Memory

Most Wodehouseans know that the Pickering Motor Company, the chapter which hosted the 2003 TWS Convention in Toronto, is named after Dudley Pickering, the motor magnate in *Uneasy Money* who had become engaged to that unpleasant gold-digger Claire Fenwick. The poor man was so infatuated that he could think only of his luck in having acquired 'the latest model, self-starting, with limousine body and all the newest'. But there are other, less well-read people who will miss this allusion, and that's the trouble with allusions. They fall flat if the audience doesn't know enough to get the point. It's unlikely, for example, that many people remember what is meant (in *Money for Nothing*) by 'that Kruschen feeling', which was supposed to be produced by a tonic designed to keep us young. The ads, in such magazines as *The Strand*, featured an elderly gentleman jumping fences and behaving much like the men in today's Viagra ads. These ads in their turn will mean nothing to later generations.

Wodehouse no doubt expected his allusions to be understood by people who had had a public school education. But today, most of us lack his education in the classics, fewer are as familiar with the Bible, we know our Shakespeare less well, and no one has as good a grounding in poetry. So we will continue to miss half the fun that Wodehouse himself got out of his allusions until Norman Murphy publishes his work in tracing them.

Authorities agree that his six years at Dulwich provided Wodehouse with his stock of allusions, most of which were no more than those any Victorian school boy would have had at his finger tips. But his real-life headmaster, Gilkes, a renowned classical scholar, must be credited with inspiring Wodehouse as powerfully as the Rev Aubrey Upjohn terrified Bertie Wooster, and as other headmasters terrified Oliver Sipperly and Sacheverell Mulliner.

Education in Victorian days meant one thing and one thing only, namely, education in the classics. Gilkes's pupils had to translate Greek and Latin verses into and out of English, a discipline that undoubtedly helped Wodehouse develop his ear for rhythmic language.

Wodehouse left Dulwich in 1900, and by the time he published *The White Feather* in 1907 was already addicted to using allusions and quotations to 'heighten narrative effect'. In this early story, he has an ingenious if none too subtle way of introducing

THE STRAND MAGAZINE. 1

Holiday Spirits

For weeks you've been all eager anticipation. How your spirits soar when at last you're free to shake the dust of the workaday world from your holiday shoes!

For the first day or two you're simply at the top of your form. Never remember having such ripping times before. And then—then comes the hint of a reaction. Nothing very serious, of course; just a blunting of the razor-edge of your enjoyment.

The explanation simply is that your inside is a little out of sorts. You haven't given it a chance to adjust itself to the changed conditions—new air, new food, abundant outdoor exercise. And unless you give your inside some assistance, that adjusting process will take time. The cloud on your enjoyment will persist unless you seek the aid of your old stand-by, Kruschen Salts.

"As much as will cover a sixpence every morning," tasteless in your breakfast cup of tea, provides all the help your eliminating organs need; for the "little daily dose" is a full day's supply of just these six vital salts which your body must have, but your overtaxed system can't extract from your food.

All the clogging waste matter that accumulates to sap your energy is gently but surely expelled. Clean refreshed blood is sent pounding gloriously through your every vein. From tip to toe you are all a-tingle with "that Kruschen feeling!"

Pack a bottle of Kruschen and cut out the "off days" from your holiday this year! Persist with the "little daily dose" and make the most of every minute!

Kruschen Salts

Good Health for a Farthing a Day.

Advertisement from *Strand*, August 1926

them. The pugilist Joe Bevan had previously travelled with a Shakespearean repertory company, which enabled him to quote advice from *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, such as " 'Nor do not saw the air too much, with your hand, thus, but use all gently.' That's what you've got to remember in boxing, sir."

And when stories in *The Man with Two Left Feet* appeared between 1914 and 1916 Wodehouse had accumulated a collection of allusions that he used again and again, for example 'God's in his Heaven' (together with the larks and snails), 'reason returned to her throne', and 'the maddest, merriest day of all the glad New Year'. Recycling must have kept Wodehouse in touch with a vast number of references, and we can enjoy seeing them used in different contexts. In 1915, for example, a distaste for Chicago 'made Lot's attitude towards the cities of the plain almost kindly by comparison'. And in 1971 we have Aunt Dahlia saying 'that sort of thing might be overlooked in the cities of the plain, but not in Market Snodsbury'.

Given his classical education, we need not be surprised at his references to Horace, Virgil, Lucretius, Juvenal, Xenophon, Marcus Aurelius, Demosthenes, Cicero, Diogenes, Laertius, Old Pliny the Elder and all. Jeeves, of course was always ready to spout Latin phrases such as *nolle prosequi* and *rem acu tetigisti*, which he translated for Bertie as

Dennis Chitty takes a broad look at Wodehouse's sources

“You said a mouthful”. And in *Pigs Have Wings*, British barmaids such as Maudie Stubbs are said to have the queenly dignity of the late Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi.

We know less about Wodehouse's education in scripture other than that he was brought up on the Bible. We do know that some of the aunts who looked after him in his holidays were wives of clergymen. And if his school experience was anything like that of Richard Osborne's he would have had six years of ‘community prayers twice a day, chapel once a day and twice on Sundays, Bible-readings, Divinity classes and Latin graces before and after meals’.

Many of the scripture allusions are easily recognized. For example, when Bertie compared his hangover to the feelings of Sisera as Jael the wife of Heber drove spikes (actually nails) into his head; when Ronnie Fish realized that in getting engaged to Millicent, he, like Samson pulling down the temple, has gone too far; when Aunt Dahlia complained that Job's troubles are so much less than hers; and when Bertie called Stiffy Byng and Balaam's ass sisters under the skin. Such comparisons call for no amazing memory, only genius in applying it.

But Wodehouse also stored in his memory such lesser incidents as that of the regime change wrought by Samuel on King Agag, a very minor character, who ‘came unto him delicately’ before being hewed in pieces. In *Uncle Dynamite* Wodehouse has Pongo Twistleton descending the stairs ‘mincingly, like Agag,’ – ‘mincingly’, not ‘delicately,’ which is more evidence of an amazing memory for the incident if not for the exact words.

Further evidence of a good memory comes from the witty exchanges of biblical quotations in the three Buck-U-Uppo stories, in which Augustine and the bishop sling 16 quotations back and forth from *Proverbs*, *Song of Solomon*, *Numbers*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Hosea*, *Psalms* and *Deuteronomy*; also from *Ecclesiasticus* and *Esdra* from the Apocrypha. For example, the bishop, being afraid to face his wife with the news that he has given the Steeple Mummery vicarage to Augustine, explains that “A bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell of the matter. *Ecclesiastes* x 20. I shall inform her of my decision on the long-distance telephone.”

Shakespeare was another major source of Wodehouse's allusions. No great feat of memory would have been required for him to remember

Othello, for his young lovers were always suffering from jealousy. Thus Ronnie Fish became Othello's younger brother; Blair Eggleston became a blond Othello; and Ambrose Tennyson became a man who, if ‘smeared with a bit of burnt cork . . . could step right on to any stage and play Othello without rehearsal’.

Allusions to King Lear, Cleopatra, and Romeo are also easy to recognize, but what about the allusion to Ross, a minor character, but an ‘astute nobleman who noticed things’, especially Macbeth's pallor after seeing the ghost of Banquo (“His highness is not well”) and would have noticed similar symptoms in Pongo Twistleton, who was scared, when there came a knock on his bedroom door, that he would be discovered alone at 2:45 am with Elsie Bean. Although, like all Wodehouse characters, Pongo was innocent of sexual misconduct, he wisely decided to hide Elsie in a closet before opening the door to a suspicious and homicidal Bill Oakshott.

His fourth major source was the poets, and in the next issue of *Wooster Sauce* there will be a short competition, for amusement only, on the subject.

But that the Wodehouse imagination was still in high gear is also shown by the story of Stiffy Byng and her attempts to catch the conscience of her uncle, Sir Watkyn Bassett, who had, she thought, swindled some unsuspecting man by giving him a mere five pounds for a thousand-pound statuette. She therefore persuaded her fiancé, the Rev ‘Stinker’ Pinker, to preach a sermon on Naboth's vineyard. He duly composed the sermon and laid it on a table on which stood an oil lamp. Stinker, alas, was always bumping into things, and true to form, he bumped into the table, upsetting the oil lamp, setting the sermon on fire, and leaving himself no time to rewrite it. So Stiffy thought up another scheme for getting at Sir Watkyn, a scheme for which she asked Stinker, when in London, to enlist Bertie Wooster's help. Bertie at first told him that nothing would induce him to revisit Totleigh Towers, but circumstances forced him to change his mind. So his arrival surprised and delighted the Rev Pinker, who ‘was no doubt murmuring to himself “Rejoice with me for I have found the sheep which was lost.”’ I believe this was the first time Wodehouse had used this quote. It shows that at the age of 82 the maestro's memory was still amazing.

The quality of the talks at the TWS Convention in 2003 was uniformly high, and this was another from which we are pleased to publish extracts.

Bertie's College – a Contemporary View

by Miguel Herrero and Jennifer Kasten

Wodehousean scholars have debated hotly for years the controversial issue of whether Bertie Wooster was a member of Magdalen or Christ Church College during his years in Oxford. It is not a slight matter, since if Bertie were to rise to the heights of political, artistic or scientific fame, his portrait would hang in the Hall of his College, in company of either Sir William Gladstone, King Henry VIII and Lewis Carroll, on the one hand, or the Magdalen Nobel Prize-winners on the other. And though he has not, for the moment, betrayed an inclination to rise to any height else than winning the darts tournament in the Drones, we must remember that various and sundry personages in his life intended to cast him in a political mould: Florence Craye's instruction in Ethical Theory, for example, was but a step in her plan to have him stand for Parliament. And with Jeeves shimmering as his shadow advisor, Bertie would be sure to be a great statesman, whose portrait would be worthy of decorating any Hall on the Isis.

The data are stubbornly contradictory. In *The Code of the Woosters* he said clearly that he was a member of Magdalen. But in *Thank You, Jeeves*, Bertie's pal Chuffy Chufnell claims that after a bumps supper, Bertie once insisted he was a mermaid and wanted to dive into the college fountain and play the harp supper, and it is Christ Church that has the fountain.

How to resolve this quandary? Perhaps PGW purposefully left this ambiguity to spread discord among two traditionally rival Colleges. Perhaps he knew the Master of Magdalen, recanted his decision to place Mr Wooster in ChCh and threw Bertie into that ignominious house (by 'ignominious,' we of course mean 'venerable and leafy') as a personal favour. We could also posit cheap compromising subterfuges like a change of College midway through Bertie's Oxonian career, but that strikes us as rather rummy: changes of College are extremely rare and due mostly to academic needs, which Bertram Wooster, as we know him, is not likely to have felt.

So the debate must needs be solved in favour of one side or the other. To this important task we have devoted hours of study and deep thinking, and our conclusions leave no room for doubt. The whisper is rapidly spreading from tower to tower (including Magdalen's): Bertie is definitely a member of 'the House!'



The fountain at Christ Church College, into which Bertie may have wanted to dive after a bumps supper.

Our reasons may be summarized as follows:

1. *Politician or scholar?*

Christ Church is the College where most prime ministers (13) and Viceroys of India (11) come from. It is only natural, if Bertie's parents were like his aunts, that they would send him to a place where he would be trained for some high destiny. Even more if he were an early orphan and his inimitable aunts took it upon them to train him up 'properly'! Have we forgotten how Aunt Agatha wished to introduce him to the Cabinet Minister A B Filmer, with the idea of Bertie's becoming his personal secretary, only for him to end up marooned on an island with the sole company of an angry swan?

Magdalen, on the other hand, is known by its scholarly competence in all fields. If Bertie had been expected to be a great scholar, he might have been sent to Magdalen. But despite his brilliant prize in Scripture Knowledge under the tutelage of the Rev. Audrey Upjohn, and his article on *What the Well-*

Miguel and Jennifer were both at Christ Church College, Oxford during the last academic year, when they conducted this survey.

Dressed Man is Wearing, it should have been clear to everybody that a career as a man of letters was simply not on the cards for Bertram Wooster, who never went beyond a thrilling whodunit. Not that such a career would have been expected of him, of course, seeing as he comes from a family in which the old *primum vivere, deinde philosophari* is taken seriously: the nearest thing we have to scholarship in his family is Uncle Tom's interest in silver, not much appreciated by the rest, to be sincere.

2. The psychology of the individual:

This line of approach so often recommended by Jeeves also leads us to Christ Church. The House was known in the late 19th century as a place where a sporting squire was urged by his chaplain to go 'if only for a term or so' with the assurance that there was not the least occasion to open any book except those 'excellent books' the Stud Book and the Racing Calendar. (Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Christ Church*, 1950).

We don't have a clue of what subject Bertie read but we do know about his fondness for those aforementioned 'excellent books.' Of course things changed under Dean Liddell, and the College has since been known for its scholarly excellence, but the reputation for social glamour has never abandoned the House. The authors still find ChCh to be a place replete with dashing good sports and have themselves engaged in many Woosterian antics. By contrast, Magdalen is where Rhodes Scholars gather by dozens and you can hardly throw a brick without hitting a Nobel laureate. Its misty parks, white deer, and lovely trees are fit for dreaming, romantic spirits – sensitive plants, what? – Madeline Bassett would have felt quite at home in Magdalen. But Bertie's favorite metaphor when talking of sunshine is a slice of underdone roastbeef (one gets exactly that sensation, by the way, when gazing skywards from the Christ Church Master's Garden). He might not quiver with the beautiful May blooming in Magdalen gardens, but he knows exactly when he needs a w and s. And a strong w and s is a fundamental cornerstone of a student's life in the House, we can guarantee.

Lastly, we recall Bertie's sporting prowess. After all, he did row a term, with Beefy Bingham shouting unkind things about his stomach from a towpath. Kindly remember that there were Woosters at Agincourt; Bertie models himself as the *parfait gentil*

preux chevalier. Would such a type have been content to be placed in Magdalen College, what with its emphasis on books over oars, or would he have chosen Christ Church, with its ample river frontage, excellent tradition of sport and dashing cavalier attitude?

3. Other reasons:

We have, in our Wodehousean canon, countless mention of boys whom Bertie knew at both school and Oxford. Where else could an old Etonian like our hero have gone? Christ Church is the obvious trajectory after Eton; Bertie would have been surrounded by ex-schoolmates.

Freddie Threepwood, Bertie's fellow member at the Drones, was sent down from Oxford for pouring ink over the dean of his college. Only Christ Church, which houses the Cathedral of the diocese of Oxford, is presided over by a Dean. Freddie corresponds precisely to the phenomenology of the ideal Houseman as described above. We would like to humbly offer this brilliant correlation as proof of the seamless and rigorous quality of our reasoning and methodology.

4. Well, we mean to say, what? Absolutely!

We shall now play the trump card: Magdalen has shown no interest in claiming Bertie in their ranks. We have looked for clues in the College, pored over innumerable musty tomes of College history, asked any old members if they knew one Bertram Wooster, or if anyone ever espied him watching the deer. An austere "No, he is not in our files" was the invariable answer we got. On the other hand, in Christ Church there are hordes of people claiming to have seen him, and enthusiastically support his membership in the Junior Common Room: he seems to have acquired his skill for darts in various midnight sorties in the JCR.

We therefore offer a challenge: may Magdalen show their arguments in these very pages, if they want to join the battle. We remain cool and confident in our assertion: Bertie belongs to us!, we say, claiming no impartiality whatsoever.

Editor's Comment: The pages of Wooster Sauce are open to any reasonable argument seeking to rebut this claim and establish that of Magdalen in its place.

Wodehouse: A Life by Robert McCrum

Reviewed by Stephen Fry

The facts, briefly, are these: Pelham Grenville Wodehouse (two unremarkable British Prime Ministers in one name) was born in 1881 and died in 1975. In that time he edited a newspaper column, collaborated on Broadway musicals with, amongst others, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter and George Gershwin, adapted straight plays, wrote hundreds of short stories and gave the world more than ninety books whose charm, verbal brilliance and completeness of tone, characterisation and plotting earned him an Oxford doctorate, a knighthood and an unassailable reputation as the greatest comic novelist of the twentieth century. The word ‘reputation’, of course, does not begin to describe the adoration, admiration, addiction and deep, deep affection in which the works, and therefore the man, have been held by so many around the world.

Wodehouse’s literary world has often been described as innocent, prelapsarian, paradisaical, Elysian, idyllic, but he himself was fond of finding different ways of observing that every Eden contains a serpent. In the salad of Wodehouse’s otherwise perfect life there lurked one undoubted caterpillar. The Berlin Broadcasts Business (hereinafter referred to as the BBB) continues, quite wrongly, to affect and infect Wodehouse’s status in the world. There will always be those who wrinkle their nostrils and say, “Ah yes, *Woadhouse*,” (they go out of their way to repeat that pronunciation despite knowing better), “wasn’t he some sort of fascist or something?”

It comes as no surprise then that McCrum’s biography *Wodehouse: A Life* (modestly eschewing the definite article, despite the project’s standing as family approved – estate bottled, as it were) opens *in media res*, with Wodehouse in his late 50s being arrested as an enemy alien in Le Touquet by Hitler’s invading army. The dark import of this prologue hangs over the first half of the book like a cloud, or an Impending Doom, as Wodehouse might say. To those of us who venerate PGW this opening is something of a disappointment. “Oh no,” we moan, “he’s going to turn the blasted BBB into the defining moment of his life.”

I shan’t spoil the story by going into further detail or interpretation, McCrum’s exposition is lucid, fair-minded and proper and while it necessarily doesn’t go into as much detail as Iain Sproat’s more specific *Wodehouse At War*, it has the advantage of placing the whole business in a better perspective, that of Wodehouse’s life up until that crisis.

Wodehouse’s apprenticeship in his craft was steady throughout the turn of the old century and into the new and McCrum captures quite marvellously the flavour of the particular London in which our hero worked, astutely anatomising the language and manners of the age, sifting the codes and nuances of the parade of Knuts, Mashers, Coves, Dudes and Blighters that bestrode the Edwardian stage. The Pooters of Holloway, Jerome K Jerome’s be-blazered boatmen, the ballads of W. S. Gilbert and what E M Forster called ‘the suburban sniggers’ of *Punch Magazine* are rightly identified as being quite as influential in the forging of Wodehouse’s style as the more obvious monocled asses and gooseberry-eyed butlers with which he is associated. America follows, providing the final linguistic ingredient to be added to ‘the marriage of suburban vernacular with classical syntax’ and to the mix of clerkish slang, youthful ‘buzz’, society yammer and aristocratic drawl to create the peerless Wodehouse prose cocktail.

While not claiming to be a literary biography, McCrum’s book allows these connections between early life and final artistic flowering to be perfectly made. The rest is supremely well told and, considering its lack of eventfulness (the BBB excepted) surprisingly riveting.

There are some odd inconsistencies: on the subject of the Roman comic playwrights with whom Wodehouse has sometimes been compared, McCrum quotes a Wodehouse letter denying their influence ‘for some reason Plautus or Terence never came my way’ and yet less than a hundred pages later he firmly states ‘Wodehouse certainly knew his Plautus and his Terence.’ He describes the agony of plot creation, as does Wodehouse himself in many letters. At several stages in his literary career Wodehouse repeated his own plots or went so far as to borrow or buy the plots of others, yet McCrum suddenly claims ‘The plot-making was always the part he revelled in’ which certainly runs counter to orthodox Wodehousean belief.

These and one or two other quibbles are far from caterpillars in the salad. Mere pips in a juicy grape. No lover of Wodehouse will want to be without this masterly appraisal of the good life of a good man. Who happened to be a very, very great writer indeed.

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A fuller review by Stephen Fry of Wodehouse: A Life was published in The Observer on September 5th.

My First Wodehouse Experience

by Tad Boehmer

It is amazing how someone so great as Wodehouse can elude you for so long, and then suddenly jump on you like Madeline Basset on Bertie after she breaks one of her engagements. I had been a devout Anglophile for well over a year and a half after my first trip to London in 2000, but, oddly enough, I had overlooked the mounds of wonderful fiction it has to offer. I specifically mention fiction because, for years, I had only wanted to read about things that had actually happened, much to the dismay of my mystery-loving mother.

Then one day, Christmas Day 2002 to be exact, I brought up the topic of *Fawlty Towers* or some such show to a friend's sister, who then told me of what she called 'a great little show about a man named Wooster who gets into all sorts of trouble, and his valet Jeeves who gets him out again'. I had no idea what in the world a valet was, but I casually said that I would see if I could find a copy at a local video store. I doubted it very much, though. But, as you can suspect, I found the complete collection on tape and watched them all in a matter of about a fortnight! I devoured them like Tuppy Glossop does steak-and-kidney pies. Those marvels Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie, and all the other wonderful actors, portrayed Wodehouse's characters perfectly; they were born to play them. Because they were the first I saw of Wodehouse's characters, they are the people I envision in my mind when I read the stories. Most people despise it when their favourite books are turned into a film or television series: it ruins their mental perception of the setting and characters. However, it was completely the opposite for me: I saw the show before I read the books. The moments are few when you don't find me whistling the show's opening theme! When I thought about it later, it seemed that the show was meant for me: a combination of my favourite period in British literature and my favourite author.

A few weeks later I found *Carry On, Jeeves* in the bookstore, and, following my habit of reading series stories in chronological order, I finished *Jeeves Takes Charge* on January 18, 2003. Now I have read all the short stories, but there are still ten novels to go. No rush, though! I have rid all of my local bookstores of their stocks of Wodehouse, especially those with the great illustrations by David Hitch, which I relish above all others. I won't even let anyone touch my Wodehouses without previous consent and a short lesson in how not to ruin the jacket!



Then, in February of that same year, I took four Wodehouse books on my father's sabbatical to the Dominican Republic, where I whiled away the many idle hours delved deep into Bertie's world. I even drew pictures from the books to decorate my otherwise bland walls!

Don't think for one minute, however, that I limit myself to a small corner of the great Wodehouse mansion. Mr. Mulliner, Reggie Pepper, Lord Emsworth, and St. Austin's stories all line my bookshelves. At last I hit the motherlode: I discovered your fantastic society, which I shall remain faithful to, even though I cannot come to your meetings or cricket matches because I live four thousand and fifty-four miles away. So I shall keep myself going with a good Mr. Mulliner story and my copy of *The World of Jeeves and Wooster* CD. Though I am only fourteen years of age, I will never forget Fry, Laurie, and the others who introduced the Master to me, and I shall ensure that I keep a steady stream of Wodehouse going through me for as long as I live.

Tad Boehmer is a young member from Urbana, Illinois, USA, and can be contacted at his e-mail

David Jasen at the Savage Club

Christine Hewitt took detailed notes of his talk

On a visit to New York last autumn Tony Ring met David Jasen at David's home on Long Island and invited him to address The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) if a suitable occasion arose. Happily David and his wife Susan came to London this summer and were able to join our meeting on July 6.

Members gathered just a little later than normal. Many of us were delayed by a Formula 1 parade in Central London and had to battle in warm weather through many thousands of people goggling at cars. Reaching the sanctuary of the Savage Club was therefore even more welcome than usual.

Upon being called to order we first took a quiet moment to think of Helen Murphy. Helen had been our speaker at the previous Savage Club meeting. She had always been a prime contributor to meetings and we all missed her. You will have read in June Wooster Sauce that sadly Helen died in April.

After notices and news we were delighted to welcome David Jasen. David wrote the first biography of Wodehouse, published in 1975: *P G Wodehouse: A Portrait of a Master*; also *A Bibliography and Reader's Guide to the First Editions of P.G. Wodehouse* and *The Theatre of P G Wodehouse*. He has written on other subjects, including ragtime and an encyclopaedia of Tin Pan Alley. David is a professor of fine arts, still teaching today.

So how did he start to get to know the very private Mr Wodehouse? When they first met, Plum was in his middle seventies and had just published *Cocktail Time*. David was a keen college student who loved Wodehouse's books and musical shows and wanted to interview him for the college magazine.

They both lived on Long Island, although many miles apart. Their first meeting was a stroll taken in the company of Jed the dachshund and Bill the mongrel. Later a luncheon meeting was set up, to which Plum invited Guy Bolton. Although Plum had already written the autobiographical *Bring on the Girls* he was at first taken aback at the suggestion that a narrative should be written about him. He agreed to the project, mentioning that some other fellow had set out to do his biography earlier but had become sidetracked by the life of his elder brother, Peveril.

A Portrait of a Master is the result of years of painstaking research on both sides of the Atlantic. David detailed for us his visits to libraries and archives; many meetings and conversations with

Plum and his wife Ethel; and interviews and correspondence with relatives, friends and literary figures all over the world. He proudly recalled such coups as being lent (by publishers) Plum's personal diary in which he recorded all his earnings from the sale of work in the early days.

During his great odyssey of research he discovered some 'lost' work and persuaded Plum to allow him to publish it. Sadly Plum died before David's compilation of the work was finished; therefore *The Uncollected Wodehouse* was published after his death, with a foreword by Malcolm Muggeridge. The Savage Club was at rapt attention; we had all enjoyed an enthralling glimpse into the character of Wodehouse and also into how to write a biography.

Questions followed. One teased out David's views on book collecting. He is a purist for seeking out only the very best and is immensely proud of his own collection of over one hundred signed first editions acquired 'one at a time, over many years'. Giving a tip to collectors David recommended looking in small quiet shops, where the owner is also a fan.

Members were eager to learn more. Somebody asked about Ethel. David replied that she let Plum get on with whatever he wanted to do; she supported but did not interfere.

Was Plum ever at peace over the wartime broadcasts? David replied that he was hurt when friends turned against him; Plum could not understand the fuss.

Why shift from lyrics to books? Simply the world of light entertainment was changing and Plum did not want to change with it.

What gave Plum inspiration when he lived quietly at Remsenburg in his later years? He did not need outside influence, he just kept writing. Nothing interfered with his literary life.

What was Plum like as a conversationalist? He was not a natural 'performer' but when required he could create another persona, eg for dealings with publishers.

David feels very proud and privileged to have known Wodehouse as a friend and believes in nothing but the very highest respect being given to Plum's life and work.

He left us with the words "he was a genius".

A Visit to Emsworth

by Mike Underdown

I had come to Emsworth in search of P G Wodehouse, the author who not so much wrote as orchestrated the English language.

It was one of those rare spring mornings when the sudden warmth encouraged a mass of butterflies to venture out of their winter woollies and take wing. A sight echoed by the colourful sails of the flotilla of small boats flitting across the harbour waters shimmering in the sunlight.

Tucked away in North Street the other side of the busy roadway that neatly chops the town in two I found the museum, which, in a typically Wodehousean manner, sits above the local fire station, and is open, as the hand-wrought sign says, on 'Sats, Sunis and Bank Holidays only'.

Climbing the wooden canvas-covered stairs, I was greeted by two charming ladies whose enthusiasm and manners made me think they could easily have stepped out of the pages of Plum's books, and shown the permanent exhibition. Immediately you enter into his world of silly asses, fearsome aunts entering like galleons in full sail, country houses full of coveys of mildewed females, bellicose gentry, conniving butlers, lovelorn golfers, bewildered clergy and so on. The plot lines are extremely clever

but maybe unimportant – it is the way they are written and the absolute joy of the phrasing with the comic imagery they invoke that is the delight of PGW.

Very few authors have made me laugh aloud on journeys as PGW – a practice regarded as a sure sign as dementia by the horrified faces behind their quivering *Times* on commuter trains and grudging amusement by the frantic thumb-wielding text merchants.

I grew up loving the written word and enjoyed Charles Dickens's 'He left wrapped in a greatcoat and silence'; Stephen Leacock's 'He leapt on his steed and rode away in all directions'; anything by Spike Milligan (whose flights of fancy soar off into the stratosphere), S J Perelman, Alan Coren and Tom Sharpe, whose wit has enlivened many a dull day, but nothing really compares with Wodehouse.

So many of his characters take their name from the area around the town: Lords Emsworth, Hayling, Stockheath and Bosham, the Duchesses of Hampshire and Hayling, Lady Anne Warblington, the Countess of Southbourne and of course Freddie Threepwood, named after the house where PG stayed in Emsworth itself. Just for old times' sake I walked along and took a photograph of it.

Another Tribute to Wodehouse, from Emsworth

A number of members, notably Patron Henry Blofeld, have commented on the assistance they have received from reading Wodehouse while recuperating from a serious illness. A perfect example emerged during the special Emsworth Museum Wodehouse exhibition around Easter. An early entry in the Museum's visitors' book for 2004 was from Peggy Tillman Sjulstad of Tucson, Arizona, who added in the 'comments' column:

Thanks to Jeeves and Wooster I survived chemotherapy.

The Editor contacted Peggy Tillman Sjulstad to ask permission to quote her comment, which was freely given, and she provided some background to her visit. She had been born in Portsmouth and has numerous cousins still in Hampshire, including Emsworth, and says that her 'heart and soul are still very much English'. She added the excellent news that her oncologist remains optimistic about the success of her treatment.

Bollinger-Everyman-Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction

The Bollinger-Everyman-Wodehouse prize for comic fiction, presented annually during the Hay-on-Wye literary festival, was awarded to Jasper Fforde for his third book, *The Well of Lost Plots*.

The judges were Boris Johnson, MP, James Naughtie, David Campbell (Everyman publisher) and Peter Florence, Director of the Hay Festival. Peter Florence described the winning book as having . . .

the true Wodehousean joy of brilliant verbal playfulness, and seems genuinely and outrageously original. The robustness of the comedy is matched with imaginative fireworks in plotting. It's a happy marriage of delightful intelligence and complete lunacy.

Jasper Fforde's prize included a jeroboam of Bollinger, a set of Everyman Wodehouse and a Gloucester Old Spot pig named after the winning book. The others on the short list had been Alexei Sayle, Deborah Moggach and Andrey Kurkov.

The Gold Bats Succumb to the Dulwich Dusters reports Paul Rush

There was something of the feel of a Wodehousean country house weekend to this year's annual cricket match between The Gold Bats (cricket team of the P G Wodehouse Society) and The Dusters (the staff team of Dulwich College), which took place on Friday 18th June.

Perhaps it was the setting: the grounds of Dulwich College looking serene and peaceful on a summer's evening, rivalling any rural retreat unlucky enough to be hosting Bertie Wooster. Perhaps it was the format of the game with each side bowling 20 overs, each player contributing two. Two overs to be bowled underarm. Any player scoring 25 runs to be honourably retired. Certainly a format not found in the stricter texts of the MCC.

Perhaps it was the presence of one A A Milne playing for the Dusters – surely lured to the country for the weekend in the hope of his being persuaded to contribute a piece to *Milady's Boudoir*. Perhaps it was the tea provided during the break between innings – a feast of which even the great Anatole would justifiably have been proud. Or perhaps it was the fact that one umpire was French and watching his first game of cricket. The presence of Americans in the assembled crowd (if crowd is the *mot juste*) further added to the atmosphere.

The Gold Bats, resplendent in their new team caps, batted first. Julian Hill and Christopher Read both retired on reaching scores of 25. At the close, Cassandra White, the first lady ever to represent the Gold Bats, was left on 1 not out and Paul Rush on 14. The team score was 109 for 6.

Once the tea had been devoured, the game resumed. The Dusters quickly lost their first wicket as a good piece of work by wicket keeper Patrick Gilkes saw the opening bat stumped off the underarm bowling of Paul Rush. Any thoughts of repeating last year's victory quickly faded, however, as the Dusters set about their target with gusto. With 4 overs and 4 wickets left in hand, the Dusters reached their target and the game was over.

Thanks must be expressed to the players of both sides, the umpires and supporters and, most of all, the providers of the tea, all of whom contributed to this wonderful event. For those of you who have never experienced a Gold Bats game, now is the time to make a note in next year's diary.

And to the Sherlock Holmes Society admits Robert Bruce

It was probably over-confidence. The Gold Bats were still resplendent in their new caps. Perhaps the burnished gold bats crossed on a field of plum adorning their headgear took their minds off the task. Whatever it was, on a misty, drizzly late-June day at West Wycombe the cricket team of the P G Wodehouse Society lost for the first time in the four years of this fixture to The Sherlock Holmes Society of London. Yet it was a titanic low-scoring struggle of ebb and flow tightly fought down to the wire at a tie with one wicket to fall.

It had all been so promising. A past-President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales had been engaged to act as scorer. Rectitude was guaranteed. But in the mists the Wodehouse innings never quite found its way. Many scored a few. Several scored less. But all of them were out sooner than they had hoped. The best partnership was between Greatbatch and Lloyd but they were parted just after lunch. Even the first husband and wife combination ever to play for the team, Paul and Lesley Rush, managed a mere two between them with Mrs Rush a gallant last man out. The total was 84.

Greybeards in the pavilion thought this some 40 runs short of a winning total on the day. But then another factor came into play. In West Wycombe Park, just over the boundary, they were rehearsing for that night's *Spitfire Prom*. The terrifying sight of Chris Read rollicking in to bowl with *The Ride of the Valkyries* booming out behind him brought him no wickets but his sequence of four maidens in a row made it a tight game. Wickets fell regularly. At 36 for 6, (“a dastardly ball”, said the departing Sherlockian), the game looked won. But by tea it was 57-6.

Then captain Bob Miller played his masterstroke. The Gold Bat's lob bowler was immediately deployed after a lengthy tea. It was 59 for 7 by the third ball. With two wickets for Jonathan Fisher the score stuttered to 62 for 9.

Up stepped the Sherlockian's hero, a tall chap called Plunkett. And Plunkett he did. The lobs went for 16 in an over, mostly into the nettles at square leg. The scores crept level and a straight drive settled the matter. Browsing and sluicing in the George & Dragon brought the day to a satisfying close.

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

Bring On The Girls – Part II

In the last issue, we started to examine Wodehouse's twenty contributions to *Playboy* magazine between 1955 and 1970. This time, we will finish the job.

Most of Wodehouse's biographers have drawn a discreet veil over his association with *Playboy*. As we saw last time, there are brief references in Connolly and Phelps. The only other biographer to mention Wodehouse's connection with *Playboy* is David Jasen, who states that 'While working on the last two novels (*Frozen Assets* and *Galahad at Blandings*), Plum had also been writing a number of short stories for magazine publication. There was little short of a sensation when it became known that the magazine they were to appear in was *Playboy*. The stories were published in volume form on 22 September 1966 under the title *Plum Pie*. And the Wodehouse/*Playboy* publicity didn't do anyone any harm' (PG Wodehouse: *A Portrait of a Master*, p250).

There may be a kernel of truth (or an aside from Wodehouse) underlying Jasen's claim of a sensation, but it cannot have been in relation to the *Plum Pie* stories, the first of which appeared in *Playboy* in January 1965, by which time, as we saw last time, Wodehouse already had eleven appearances under his belt.

Playboy apparently had a policy of only publishing material which had not previously appeared in print in the US. For this reason, the US publication of *Plum Pie* did not occur until 1 December 1967, some 14 months after the UK publication. This was to allow *Playboy* to feature *George and Alfred* (January 1967, D51.16), *Ukridge Starts a Bank Account* (July 1967, D51.17) and *A Good Cigar Is a Smoke* (December 1967, D51.18). However, *Playboy* does not seem to have been consistent in the application of this policy, as *Uncle Fred Flits By* (D51.2) appeared in *Playboy* in August 1955, some twenty years after its first appearance in *Red Book* in July 1935 (D53.8).

Wodehouse's twentieth and final appearance in *Playboy* came in December 1970, with *Another Christmas Carol* (McIlvaine D51.20). This has the melancholy distinction of being Wodehouse's last short story first published in a magazine during his lifetime. It was brought to book in *The World of Mr Mulliner* (B5b) in 1972.

Three of Wodehouse's other appearances, all articles rather than stories, are worth mentioning. The

Courting of the Muse (January 1962, D51.6) and *The Lost Art of Domestic Service* (January 1969, D51.19) have never, as far as I am aware, been published elsewhere. And *Fox Hunting – Who Needs It?* (January 1964, D51.9) has only been republished in book form in the 1967 title, *The Playboy Book of Humor and Satire* (E93).

Editor's Comment

If readers wonder where *Bring On The Girls – Part I* got to, the answer is simple: it was in *June Wooster Sauce*, disguised by a different heading. This had the unfortunate effect of rendering the first sentence difficult to understand fully. Many apologies to Nick and all readers.

Joseph Connolly reprints his Biography of Wodehouse

In 1979 Orbis Publishing Ltd published a short biography of PGW by Joseph Connolly entitled *PG Wodehouse: An Illustrated Biography*. The author has prepared an 'extensively revised and updated' edition which was published by Haus Publishing on September 1, price £ 9.99.

The Folio Society turn to Blandings

Following their successful publication of two Jeeves and Wooster series, the Folio Society has published a boxed set of six *Blandings* novels, priced £ 120 to members of the Folio Society.

The Folio Society has agreed that members of the PG Wodehouse Society (UK) may purchase copies of the set as a one-off purchase with no additional member commitments at a 10% discount on the published price, ie £ 108, (plus shipping).

Wildside Press Republish Early Wodehouse

An American publisher, Wildside Press of Pennsylvania, has used the less stringent copyright laws in the USA to reprint over 30 early (pre-1923) Wodehouse titles in hard back, including some very hard to find material. The easiest way to find more information is by accessing the website of Amazon www.amazon.com, where the full list of titles can be found.

The Play's The Thing

Review by Thomas and Jennifer Smith

Seattle may soon be the 'Wodehouse Theatre Capital of the West Coast', with the June 16th opening of the 1926 Wodehouse adaptation of Ferenc Molnar's *The Play's the Thing* at Seattle's Intiman Theatre. This is the second Wodehouse play to run in Seattle this season. The Intiman Theatre produced this play in 1986 and chose it this year as the feature piece of their annual fundraiser. This production featured Tony and Obie Award winners in the cast and production staff. John Michael Higgins, an actor, director, composer, and lyricist best known for his roles in the 'mockumentaries' *A Mighty Wind* and *Best of Show*, directed the play.

The play, set in a castle on the Italian Riviera, contains a team of two playwrights and a young composer, a womanizing middle-aged actor, a prima donna who is the fiancée of the young composer and the ex-lover of the middle-aged actor, one butler, and an inefficient secretary. The writers, Mansky and Turai, arrive at the castle with their protégé and composer, Albert Adam, to present Adam's newly written score for actress Ilona Szabo's approval. The three men overhear Ilona and Almady, her former lover, engage in a compromising conversation. This devastates Adam and he threatens to destroy his musical masterpiece. Determined to smooth things between the young lovers, and retain the masterpiece, writer Turai engineers a plot that makes it appear that Almady and Ilona were rehearsing for a play.

The Play's the Thing provides the theatre-goer with farce and romance, but the best feature was Molnar and Wodehouse's musings on the technical aspects of writing plays. For example, the play begins with the players discussing how to begin the play and later how to bring down the curtain on the second act. Molnar's story and Wodehouse's adaptation is one of those brilliant pieces of theatre that can withstand the passage of time and manhandling by inept staging. Actors forgetting their lines and sometimes speaking inaudibly marred an otherwise wonderful show. The actors should have taken character Almady's advice and learned their lines by writing them out as letters. And director Higgins allowed his actors to speak many of their lines with their backs to the audience or mouths full of cigars. However, Tony Award winning scenic designer John Arnone beautifully crafted the set.

Nevertheless, the Intiman's production of *The Play's the Thing* is well worth the price of admission.

More Mr Mulliner

Review by Thea Crapper

More Mr Mulliner is the latest CD to be released in the BBC Radio Classics series for the delight of Wodehouse scholars and novices alike. Dramatised and performed by the same team that produced *Mr Mulliner*, with Richard Griffiths playing our favourite raconteur, this collection comprises, on two CDs, *The Knightly Quest of Mervyn*; *The Ordeal of Osbert Mulliner*; *The Truth about George* and *The Bishop's Move*.

In short, these recordings do a world of good in spreading the insuppressibly Good News about Wodehouse.

While the most was made of certain contemporary recordings, (*Let's Misbehave* followed the daubing of Fatty (Hemel of Hempstead)'s statue), a brilliant opportunity was passed up by the bod who chose not to use the song *Sir Galahad*, one of Wodehouse's best lyrics, which opens the printed version of *The Knightly Quest of Mervyn*.

Naturally, the stories have been abridged and adapted; we miss Mervyn's musings on the merits of Bolshevism, not least the unexpected line '*If Stalin had come along at that moment, Mervyn would have shaken him by the hand*'. There are other alterations that buffs will notice and be puzzled by. Why re-Christen Oofy Prosser, Guppie Frobisher, for instance? Why does Mr M. order a 'hot whisky' rather than a hot scotch and lemon? On the other hand, a lot of the improvisation is at once creative and faithful to the humour of Wodehouse; as with the line, "They're a hardy breed, those Dachshunds" or when Miss Postlethwaite says of Miss Bartleby, "I saw her do an impersonation of a small fountain once".

Matilda Ziegler, as Clarice Mallaby in *The Knightly Quest of Mervyn*, sounds something like Cruella De Ville, but, as Clarice was the sort of girl to spurn the love of a decent chap in favour of a strawberry-laden millionaire, neither I, nor Miss Postlethwaite, liked her much anyway. In her other roles though, the actress is charming, indeed the barmaid's character burgeoned so heartily that I fully expect her engagement to a certain Hot Scotch and Lemon to be announced in the next collection, or at least in *The Times*.

This superb rendition does not wear with listening and will soon become, in the words of Susan Blake, a 'precious, beloved, darling, much-loved and highly esteemed' addition to your collection.

More on Fives Bats and Squash

From Geoffrey Harris:

When I was at my prep school from 1950 to 1957 I learnt to play both fives and squash in the same court. The bar above which the ball had to be hit (being at a different height for each game) was adjustable on two pairs of brackets, the higher pair being regarded as a local hazard for squash. At no time was it ever suggested that the names of the games were interchangeable and although I think I had heard of or read about a fives bat, I probably assumed that it was used in one of the other versions of the game, ours being Rugby fives. The ball was hard leather-covered cork and was about halfway between the size of a squash ball and a cricket ball and the only protection was a pair of padded leather gloves.

When I went on to Harrow School I continued to play Rugby fives and was introduced to Eton fives where the ball and gloves were the same but the court had a buttress, a step and an open back. I also learnt that there was a version known as Winchester fives, but whether it involved a bat I know not.

I also learnt to play racquets with a ball of the same hard composition as the fives ball but the size of a squash ball. The court is very much bigger than a squash court and the pace is a darn sight quicker. At the time there was only one racquets court and tradition has it that the boys who had booked the court for the next game hung around the enclosed courtyard to the side of the Headmaster's house, visible to this day from the High Street, using an India rubber or 'squash' ball, thereby inventing the game of squash racquets. They would have used their racquets racquet, since modified to suit squash,

rather than a bat, and by implication squash is a much younger game than fives. In conclusion, I cannot imagine that fives was ever known as squash racquets.

From Harshawardhan Nimkhedkhar

Harshawardhan found confirmation of Geoffrey's comments on the origins of squash, in this more detailed summary, posted on a website.

It explains how squash rackets was derived from the game of rackets by younger boys at Harrow, when they found it difficult to get sufficient time on rackets courts. It seems they had to be content to play in the tiny, stone-walled yards at their boarding houses or in village alleys. The yards and alleys boasted peculiar hazards: water pipes, chimneys, ledges, doors, footscrapers, wired windows and fiendishly sloping ground. Split-second decisions and speedy hand/eye coordination were essential. Rackets, with its long, heavy bat and bullet-hard ball, was difficult for an inexperienced boy to learn in such cramped conditions.

Rubber had just come into use and Harrow boys grabbed a rubber ball, sawed off the butt of their racquets and played a slower, easier game in their house yards. This bastardised version of racquets was called 'baby racquets' or 'soft racquets' or 'softer'. When on 20 January 1865 Harrow officially opened a new complex of rackets and fives courts, the Rugby fives courts never saw any fives play. Instead, Harrow boys took the courts over for their new game of baby rackets, and this became the game of squash.

www.worldsquash.me.uk/squash_in_8_chapters.htm

And More on American Humorists

A number of members have commented on the poor response to the invitation in *Tailpieces* in March to suggest to which American humorists Plum may have been referring when he said there were only about three (in the 1930s).

Allan H Ronald (a former Dulwich Assistant Master) argues strongly for SJ Perelman who, amongst other achievements, scripted some of the Marx brothers films.

Kit Evans agrees, and throws in James Thurber and Robert Benchley, and also suggests Leo Rosten, whose *Education of Hyman Kaplan* was both admired by Evelyn Waugh and on PGW's own bookshelves.

Tim Kearley agrees with Kit Evans' first three, and adds Frank Sullivan and Will Cuppy, both of whom Wodehouse was known to admire at various times. He wrote an introduction to Cuppy's *How to Tell Your Friends from the Apes* in 1931, and approved of his comments on Pekinese.

Finally Patrick Gilkes has provided a list of a dozen names. Apart from the above, he mentions Damon Runyan, Groucho Marx, Thorne Smith, Dorothy Parker, Stephen Leacock, Ogden Nash, Don Marquis, H Allen Smith and Ring Lardner, before plumping for Damon Runyan, James Thurber and Thorne Smith.

Recent Press Comment

Calcutta Telegraph, June 1 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Described a humour quiz dedicated to PGW held at a book store in association with Blithe Spirits, a PGW Society in the City.

New York Times Magazine, June 13 (from Jan Kaufman)

An article on clothing worn by golf professionals starts with PGW's comment: 'I wish to goodness I knew the man who invented this infernal game. I'd strangle him.'

Daily Telegraph, June 16

Mentioned that the £175mn redevelopment of Ascot racecourse has incorporated the expenditure of £100,000 on 'Royal Newt Enclosures' to rehouse the locals pending construction.

New York Times, June 24 (from Jan Kaufman)

A review of trolleys for use in the home is headed *Almost as Good as Jeeves*.

Spectator, June 26 (from Robert Bruce)

Published a poem by Ian Blake entitled *The World of P G Wodehouse*.

Village Voice, June 27 (from Dave Lull)

New York Times, August 1 (from Murray Hedgcock)

North Bay Bohemian, August 4 (from Murray Hedgcock)

All enthusiastically reviewed *Wake Up, Sir*, by Jonathan Ames, a Wodehouse enthusiast, in which one of the characters is Jeeves, a gentleman's gentleman in the service of Alan Blair.

Independent, June 27

In a question-and-answer interview, Terry Wogan said he always had a PGW on his bedside table.

Santa Cruz Sentinel, June 27 (from Elin Murphy)

Mentioned the long article on PGW by Anthony Lane in April's *New Yorker*; the Jonathan Ames book (see above) and the forthcoming biography by Robert McCrum.

Daily Mail, July 1

Writing a tribute to the late Anthony Buckeridge, Keith Waterhouse mentioned that PGW had been a hero of Buckeridge.

Sunday Times Magazine, July 4

A quiz on literary 'Archies' included questions on both Archie Gilpin from *Service with a Smile* and Archibald Mulliner from *The Reverent Wooing of Archibald*.

www.methree.net, July 12

A long interview with Jonathan Ames (see above) included the comment that he had read a lot of

Wodehouse in early 1999 to cure his depression, and *Wake Up, Sir* is his attempt to write a book to make people feel good.

Times, July 14

Carried an obituary of Society member His Honour Judge Hyam.

Clevedon Mercury, July 15 (from Alexander Dainty)

Reported that Society member Dr Cyril Hershon was to be presented with a French knighthood for his work on French civilisation and study of the ancient language of the mediaeval troubadours, Occitan.

Times, July 24

An interview between Kate Muir and Henry Blofeld refers to Henry's love of Wodehouse and his use of Wodehouse-style vocabulary on *Test Match Special*.

Spectator, July 24 (from Robert Bruce)

The winner of Competition 2350, in which the names of twelve games (rummy, scrabble, pool, sardines, tag, loo, monopoly, old maid, bagatelle, brag, squash, snap) had to be utilised, with non-games meanings, in a piece of prose, was a pastiche conversation between Jeeves and Bertie.

Daily Telegraph, July 29

Reported that PGW's contrast between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine may have some factual basis. A study by Stirling University shows that as in 1973 the Scots are less happy with life than those in other parts of Britain.

Times, July 31 (from Sue Deniou)

Brandon Robshaw's article, complaining that the American word 'ass' was taking over from the fundamental British alternative, pointed out that when Bertie described someone as a 'silly ass' it now sounds incongruously foul-mouthed.

Boston Herald, August 6 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Whit Smith, the guitarist for Hot Club of Cowtown, a Texas western-swing trio which is highly regarded in the USA and is to tour with Bob Dylan and Willie Nelson, focuses on the 20s and 30s. He said

"I found out that Bix Beiderbecke read P G Wodehouse. So I've been reading Wodehouse myself."

Scotsman, August 8

A feature article about comedian Paul Merton revealed his appreciation of Wodehouse.

The Archers (Radio 4), August 10

The character Jennifer Archer told her sister Lilian, who was trying on a shooting jacket, that it was 'very Bertie Wooster'.

Press Comment (cont)

Star Publications (Malaysia), August 11 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Used a PGW example to illustrate the difference in meaning between 'shall' and 'will':

"I will follow you to the ends of the earth," replied Susan passionately.

"It will not be necessary," said George. "I am only going down to the coal-cellar. I shall spend the next half-hour or so there."

Test Match Special (Radio 4), August 14

When author and playwright David Nobbs was interviewed by Christopher Martin-Jenkins, he named Wodehouse as one of the authors he read when younger.

Evening Standard, August 16 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Carried an article *World of Wodehouse* by Joseph Connolly.

Book and Magazine Collector, September

Included a review by Tony Ring of Barry Day's *The Complete Lyrics of P G Wodehouse*.

Previews or Reviews of McCrum's biography *Wodehouse: A Life* appeared in:

Bookseller, May 21

The Weekend Australian, July 24

Daily Telegraph, August 27

Spectator, August 28 (by Philip Hensher)

Sunday Times, August 29 (by John Mortimer)

There were extracts in:

Times, August 21, 23

Observer, August 29

Robert was interviewed on *Front Row* (Radio 4) on August 26, and the biography was serialised as *Book of the Week* on Radio 4 from August 30 to September 3. An extended version of the documentary *The Long Exile*, first shown in 2003, was transmitted on BBC FOUR on September 6.

The November issue of *Book and Magazine Collector* will feature a 4,000 word article by Tony Ring on *Books on Wodehouse*, together with a question-and-answer interview with Robert McCrum.

The Drones Club of Belgium Dinner

The Drones Club of Belgium are holding a dinner on November 13 to celebrate their 15th anniversary. It will be held at The Castle of Schoonhoven (1777), in Aarschot, some 40 kilometres from Brussels.

Poets' Corner

In The Air

(With apologies to Mr W S Gilbert)

There are microbes in the bellow of the blast
There is sickness in the growling of the gale.
There are numerous diseases
In the pleasantest of breezes
Epidemics in the air that we inhale.
It is always most unpleasant
To find out that germs are present
And especially in air that we inhale.

Tornadoes are a vehicle for gout.
A cyclone brings you asthma while you wait.
Every breath of air that blows is
Fraught with 'flu', tuberculosis,
Scarlatina or sciatica, they state.
(If they terrify unduly,
Or are simply speaking truly,
I am personally not prepared to state.)

But if it's so, sing bury down bury,
It's evident our very days are done.
Away we'll go, and open our purses
For mutes and hearses. Our course is run.

There is beauty in extreme old age, we know,
But that venerable beauty's not for us.
When what Romans called the Notus
In its deadly grip has got us,
We shall die without unnecessary fuss.
(Though it may seem strange and vexin',
We shall simply hand our checks in,
And expire without unnecessary fuss.)

Does the wind blow chill and biting from the East,
Is it wafted soft and balmy from the South,
Be it sighing, be it brawling,
It is equally appalling,
There is suicide in opening the mouth.

Which being so, sing bury down bury
It's evident our very days are done.
Away we'll go, and open our purses
For mutes and hearses. Our course is run.

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

(Following a report from German experts that
the wind frequently acts as a means of conveying
microbes of peculiar deadliness from one place to
another.)

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FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

October 21, 2004 – Society Formal Dinner

The biennial black tie dinner to be held at the Inner Temple. The dinner has been over-subscribed.

November 9, 2004 – The Savage Club

At the autumn meeting, the 2004 AGM will be held (see circulated agenda) and Robert McCrum will speak about his newly-published PGW biography.

February 15, 2005 – The Savage Club

Advance notice of the date of the winter meeting.

March 12 and 13, 2005 – Dulwich College

An exhibition and celebration of Wodehouse's work. Live performances of words and music on Saturday and Sunday, with dinner on Saturday evening and afternoon tea on Sunday. More details in December.

April 9, 2005 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Join the first of this year's walks round Wodehouse's London conducted by Norman Murphy. Contact him on _____ to arrange your booking and the meeting-place and time.

April 26 to May 8, 2005 – The Beauty Prize

Advance notice of a production of the 1923 musical by Musicals Tonight in New York.

June 17, 2005

Advance notice: The Gold Bats v Dulwich Dusters.

July 9, 2005 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Another opportunity to see Wodehouse's London.

July 12, 2005 – The Savage Club

Advance notice of the date of the summer meeting.

August 11-14, 2005 – TWS Convention, Hollywood

Advance notification of date of the next convention of the American Wodehouse Society, which will be held on the UCLA campus in Hollywood.

September 17, 2005 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Another opportunity to see Wodehouse's London.

The Savage Club is within the premises of the National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London, close to Charing Cross and Embankment stations, and members meet from 6pm.

EDITOR'S TAILPIECES

Barry Chapman of New South Wales commented on the names Wodehouse gave to his fictional products, as listed in *By The Way* 19 and 22 (June 2003 and 2004). He referred to the wartime incident of a group of Australian soldiers, trapped in a Papua-New Guinea jungle by the Japanese, who managed to locate an airdrop of supplies made by the RAAF, which included a tin of Arnott's Army Biscuits and a 25lb tin of Crowe and Newcombe's dried apricots, and suggested that these names had a similar resonance.

Stu Krasner, meanwhile, says that the name Waterbury Watch which appeared on the list was real and earned an asterisk! He adds that The Waterbury Clock Co was incorporated in 1857 and the first watch was produced in 1877.

One of the more unexpected outcomes of the cricket match between *The Gold Bats* and *The Dulwich Dusters* is the availability of a 47-minute DVD recording of the match! Created by Andrew Chapman (who played in the match) and his wife, the DVD may be purchased by sending a cheque for £10 per copy required (plus name and address)

Robert & Hilary Bruce have suggested that members seeking an appropriate house wine for their dining table need look no further than Chateau Sainte Eulalie, a lovely red wine from the Languedoc in southern France. The Wine Society sells it, as does Tanners, a family firm operating in Shropshire around Market Snodsbury country,

Robert and Hilary have not been able to ascertain whether an elderly Roderick Spode is absentee landlord of the vineyard.

Keith Alsop raised the question of whether Plum ever visited Polesden Lacy after visiting the National Trust property near Dorking, owned before the war by the hostess Hon Mrs Greville. One reference book notes that "In the role of hostess, Mrs Greville found her true metier, and achieved a rare distinction. The 'browsing and sluicing', as P G Wodehouse put it, were of the first water." It adds "The cuisine, French of course, was 'unsurpassed anywhere' (according to the *Daily Telegraph* in 1930) and was worthy of the finest productions of Anatole (the supreme chef of Bertie Wooster's Aunt Dahlia)."

Tamas Revbiro wrote to say that the TV series *Jeeves and Wooster* has just been shown on Hungarian TV to popular acclaim.