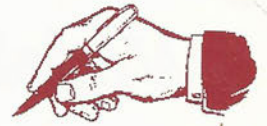


WOOSTER SAUCE



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

Number 33

March 2005

Charles Stone-Tolcher's Visit to India

If anyone reading this had any doubts about the popularity of P G Wodehouse in India then doubt no more, put the notions out of your head, for I have recently returned from a five week trip to India where I met many of the local Wodehouse fans before attending a convention in Bangalore that the local nibs organised to correspond with my visit.

My first port of call was Delhi, where I was to meet Sushmita Sen Gupta and Dr N Rathnasree, who has written a couple of fine articles for *Wooster Sauce*. We had a fun day seeing the sites and browsing and sluicing. In the evening I was taken to dinner where I was introduced to other Wodehouse India members and of course, topic number one was the books of PG Wodehouse. The next evening, after another day with Dr Rathnasree, sightseeing, I was on the train to Nagpur to visit Harshawardhan Nimkhedkhar.

After a long 9 hour train ride I was met with many "What ho's," and a lot of back-slapping. HN and a pal of his pushed me into a car and took me to his home where I was to spend a couple of days. Later that day I was taken to an old friend of his who had two hand-written letters from Wodehouse dated 1966. In one of the letters Plum mentions working on a new book of short stories, which I assume is *Plum Pie*. I was also shown an excellent thesis on Wodehouse's writing and characters which had been written years ago for a Masters Degree.

The following day I was taken to see the 600 year old temple at Ramtec. A most amazing place and well worth seeing. The final day in Nagpur was spent shopping and browsing in bookshops. Books are a lot cheaper in India so I bought a few (non-Wodehouse). And then I boarded another train for a nineteen hour trip to Bangalore and the convention.

On arrival in Bangalore I was met by Sudheer Tanbe who promptly took me to his club, (more like the Senior Conservative club than the Drones) where I was to spend the night. Here, too, was another member of the group who had arrived from Mumbai for the convention and later that evening a few more local members of the Wodehouse India

group joined us at a restaurant. Sonali Khemani had not long returned from an extended, work related, visit to the USA where she had attended a lot of local Wodehouse Society activities, and she is known by the nibs in India as one of the brainy coves. Actually, any member of Wodehouse India who has more than fifty Wodehouse books is considered to be a brainy cove; more than seventy to be a very brainy cove.

The convention was to be held at a tourist resort a few kilometres from Bangalore. A rather pretty place and when we arrived the management had put up a big sign that said 'Welcome Wodehouse India members'. A game of cricket was supposed to be played in the afternoon but, as so often happens on these occasions, it rained. After lunch, where a few pieces of bread were flung about the place, there was a quiz (which without many books for reference was bally hard).

We proceeded to do a few readings from Wodehouse books, including a recitation of Officer Garroway's poem *Streets* (from *The Small Bachelor*), and I read the scene where Mortimer Sturgis (a capital conversationalist) struck up a dialogue with Mabel Somerset (*Sundered Hearts*). Others chipped in with their favourite pieces. Evening meal next and of course more bread throwing. Halfway through a reading of the chapter where Gussie Fink-Nottle handed out the prizes at Market Snodsbury Grammar School the lights went out. When power was restored, the reader (Sushmita) gave us all a critical eye as we all shuffled our feet and looked up at the ceiling, but it was discovered that no foul play was involved as the whole resort had been blacked out.

I would like to thank all my friends in India for their kindness and generosity. I loved every minute of my visit to Delhi, Nagpur, Bangalore and Mumbai (which I have had no space in this article to describe) and can certainly confirm that they love their Wodehouse in India.

Editor's Comment: See the entry for December 12 on page 22 for confirmation of Charles's view!

Wodehouse is Hayashiya (Wood House)

by Mike Iwanaga

For centuries Japanese folks have cherished going to Yose-theaters and listening to *rakugo*, comic stories told by *hanashika* or professional comic story tellers. They are trained as apprentices in stage clans called *Ichimon*, which are led by patriarchal *shisho* or grand masters. Today, there are four major clans, *Hayashiya*, *Yanagiya*, *Katsura* and *Sanyuutei*, as well as several lesser known ones.

When a youngster becomes ready for the stage, he or she is given a stage name. That name roughly corresponds to the Japanese naming order of 'family name – given name' (according to which my formal name is Iwanaga Masakatsu), but uses *Ichimon's* name instead of one's family name. Another thing is that more important ones among these stage names are inherited within the clans; so that today's grand masters are called something like *Hayashiya Shouzou the Eighth* or *Katsura Bunji the Ninth*. One can easily see that *Shouzou shisho* (Master Shouzou) has the long history of the Hayashiya clan behind him.

Now the curious thing is that the Japanese word '*hayashi*' means 'wood', and '*ya*' means house. So, mark you, we Japanese were paying tribute to Plum's comic genius even before he was born!

His name seems to have sunk into relative oblivion among Japanese readers today. But it was not so in the good old days. By courtesy of Mr Keisuke Mada, I list here Plum's novels and stories translated into Japanese and published in book form. In addition, there were some stories which appeared in Japanese



magazines quite soon after the originals were written. In 1926, the *Sinseinen* (monthly) carried *Bertie Changes His Mind* in July; *A Bit of Luck for Mabel* in August; *Ukridge's Dog College* in October; and one of the *Battling Billsons* in November; all translated by Shinichirou Kajiwara.

However, as is evident from the list of titles, the last of Plum's books was printed as long ago as 1983, since when Japanese Plum Freaks have been waiting for the new translations and publications.

Editor's Note:

Mike Iwanaga is presently working on translations of some of PGW's works with his friend Dr Taichi Koyama. Their project covers *Stories of Jeeves & Wooster*, *Blandings Stories* and *Mr Mulliner*, each volume containing 12-14 short stories.

Some of the Japanese Translations

Year	Japanese Title	English Title	Translator	Publisher
1929	Domori Kitan	(Short story mixture)	Shinichirou Kajiwara	Hakubunkan
1931	Shinbunkisha Sumisu	<i>Psmith, Journalist</i>	Ki Kimura	Kaizousha
1939	Senyou Sinnpai Gakari	<i>Sam the Sudden</i>	Shinichirou Kajiwara	Touseisha
1939	Tamago Wo Umu Otoko	(Mulliner stories)	Shuuji Hasegawa	Touseisha
1939	Aikengakkou	(Ukridge stories)	Shigeyuki Oka	Touseisha
1940	Waraino Rettou Yuuryouji	(Ukridge stories)	Shuuji Hasegawa	Touseisha
1940	Koibito Umiwo Wataru	<i>Piccadilly Jim</i>	Shigeyuki Oka	Touseisha
1940	Hiyoko Tengoku	<i>Love Among the Chickens</i>	Hyousuke Kuro	Touseisha
1940	Muteki Soudanyaku	<i>The Inimitable Jeeves</i>	Shinichirou Kajiwara	Touseisha
1940	Koino Kin-Ein	(Mulliner stories)	Hyousuke Kuro	Touseisha
1940	Appare Jeeves	(Jeeves stories)	Various	Touseisha
1941	Kyouen	<i>Laughing Gas</i>	Hyousuke Kuro	Sangakushobou
1961	Marine-Shi Goshoukai	(Mulliner stories)	Various	Chikuma Shobou
1966	Wodehouse Tanpenshu	Collected short stories	Harumi Tanaka	Fuji-Shoten
1981	Golf Jinsei	(Golf stories)	Keiichi Harada	Nihonkeizaishinbunsha
1982	Sumisu in Omakase	<i>Leave It To Psmith</i>	Masayoshi Koga	Soudosha
1983	Goru Ichino Shinjou	(Golf stories)	Masayoshi Koga	Soudosha

Dogs and Cats in the Life of Bertie Wooster

by John Tyerman Williams

From the dog McIntosh in an early episode to the cat in the last of the Wooster novels, cats and dogs play a recurrent and often vital part in Bertie's life, as I discovered when researching for my book on the secret of Jeeves and the hidden depths of Bertie Wooster.

Bertie, I found, got on much better with cats than with dogs. True, the first dog we meet in the Wooster archives receives his approval. He had to look after McIntosh for Aunt Agatha while she was away. When his period of guardianship comes to an end, he comments to Jeeves, "Despite his habit of rising with the milk and being hearty before breakfast, there is sterling stuff in McIntosh." We can only hope that prolonged coexistence with Aunt Agatha does not sour his friendly nature.

No souring was needed for the next Scottie in Bertie's life: Stiffy Byng's Bartholomew. Bartholomew has all his mistress's readiness to start something but none of her charm. One of the things he is always ready to start is to use what Bertie judges are excessively big teeth for a dog his size. We first see him attacking the village policeman, thus setting in train a chain of events which a softer generation would call 'traumatic' and 'devastating', leaving the PC in need of counselling. This fiend-like terrier drives Bertie, the formidable Sir Watkyn Bassett, and – most horrifying of all – Jeeves himself to the humiliating recourse of seeking refuge on top of various pieces of furniture until Stiffy rescues them. To add insult to injury, Bartholomew regards his victims with the air of an elder of the kirk rebuking sin.

Corky Pirbright's Sam Goldwyn is without Bartholomew's self-righteous air, and is boisterous rather than vicious, but his boisterousness is equally disruptive. Corky lumbers Bertie with the dog when he is already embarrassed by masquerading as Gussie Fink-Nottle on a visit to Deverill Hall. Embarrassment increases when Sam Goldwyn bites the butler. Worse complications ensue when he knocks the local bobby off his bicycle. (Rural policemen have a hard time in the Wooster chronicles.) When Gussie, under Corky's siren spell, releases Sam Goldwyn from the lock-up, only Jeeves's adroit coshing of P C Dobbs saves Gussie from arrest and possible imprisonment.

Definitely friendly but equally boisterous is the large unnamed dog in *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*. Though his noisy welcome leads to Bertie's temporary

imprisonment in a shed, the dog redeems himself by chasing the unpleasant Orlo Porter into a swimming pool, with salutary effects on Orlo's behaviour towards Bertie.

The same novel contains the most detailed account of Bertie's technique in establishing friendly relations with a cat. It extends to no less than three paragraphs, and tells us that first steps include chirruping, twiddling his fingers and tickling the cat behind the ears. It also emphasizes the success of this technique by the warm response of the cat, rubbing its nose against Bertie's leg, purring like a rumble of distant thunder, and showing that 'it was convinced that it had found a kindred soul and one of the boys'. All readers of *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen* will remember that Bertie's very success became a source of embarrassment, as the cat kept returning to him, in spite of all attempts to send it away.

Bertie had a much less fraught relationship with Augustus, the cat at Aunt Dahlia's Brinkley Court. Augustus is chiefly notable for his addiction to almost non-stop sleep. Bertie considers this excessive, and says that it has reduced the cat's intelligence to the level of a Cabinet Minister's. Nevertheless, he states that he loves Augustus like a brother. Augustus returns the affection, largely because he believes Bertie is a reliable source of kipper portions. Bertie is also confident that Augustus would endorse his claim to be a skilful behind-the-ear scratcher of cats.

More important, the presence of three cats in Bertie's bedroom helped to convince Sir Roderick Glossop that Bertie was unfit to marry his daughter Honoria, thus saving him from a wife who not only intended to mould him but had a laugh like a squadron of cavalry charging over a tin bridge.

Similarly, when Heloise Pringle displayed unmistakable matrimonial intentions, or, as Bertie puts it, had 'the look of a tigress that has marked down its prey', he was saved by her Aunt Jane's belief that he was a lifelong cat tormentor. She intervened to rescue her cat from Bertie just in time to save him from kissing Heloise, thereby, for anyone as nobly *preux* as Bertie, committing himself to a life-sentence.

On these two occasions cats richly rewarded Bertie's long-standing rapport with them; for it was cats that saved him from the fate that he himself said is worse than death: marriage.

Wodehouse's Hollywood and Mine: Part 2

By Curtis Armstrong

Young people often ask me – well, one did the other day – how does one go about becoming a nodder? There are no academies teaching nodder technique. Universities don't offer degrees in nodding, at least not intentionally. Well, let us examine him: Who is the nodder? The nodder often started off as a troubled youth, possibly from a broken home, who had fallen in with a bad element and had probably had several brushes with the law. If he had a future, it was either in the studio system, or in jail. Of course, as Wodehouse pointed out, that added up to essentially the same thing. The nodder's position may have been negligible but it gave him a sense of community – even if it was a community no right-minded person would want to be caught dead in. In Hollywood nowadays, coming from a broken home, consorting with criminals, and having multiple arrests on drug charges are considered good career moves, but in Plum's day it was still frowned upon, at least officially. A job as a nodder may have been a young loser's last best chance to turn his life around.

Some seventy years after their introduction in Wodehouse's fiction, noddors are still an essential part of Hollywood machinery, even in these tough times. Like their forefathers at Perfecto-Zizzbaum and similar companies, they are keenly aware that their jobs depend on committing to no project verbally until after it has been completed successfully. During the 'development process' which can last, literally, generations, a nodder will be called upon to nod with head-spinning regularity. It is interesting to note that it was when silent film found its voice that the nodder found his as well. This is, perhaps, to be expected.

As films became more complicated, nodding no longer was considered a sufficient or adequate means of communication, if you can call the development process 'communication'. Today's modern nodder is allowed to speak. Some, indeed, can be said to do little else. Speaking, though, is not the same thing as committing verbally to anything. Today's noddors, like the go-getters of Wodehouse's world, are buzzers – as full of monologue as a nut is full of meat, to use an advised metaphor. But it seldom amounts to more than a kind of white noise, like those rain tapes people listen to help them fall asleep. Some writers, in fact, find note sessions to be a foolproof soporific. I have had several meetings with noddors, which lulled me into a dreamless slumber, from which I awoke much refreshed.

In *Performing Flea* Wodehouse tells a memorable story of this sort of thing in his letter to Bill Townend of October 28th, 1930:

MGM bought that musical comedy, *Rosalie* . . . for Marion Davies. Everyone at the studio had a go at it, and then they told me to try. After I had messed about with it with no success, Irving Thalberg, the big boss . . . worked out a story on his own and summoned me to Santa Barbara, where he was spending a few days, to hear it. I drove down there with a stenographer from the studio, and he dictated an entire scenario. When he was finished, he leaned back and mopped his brow and asked me if I wanted to have it read over to me. I was about to say yes (just to make the party go), when I suddenly caught the stenographer's eye and was startled to see a look of agonized entreaty in it. I couldn't imagine what was wrong, but I gathered for some reason she wanted me to say "No", so I said "No". When we were driving home, she told me she had had a lateish night the night before and had fallen asleep at the outset of the proceedings and slept peacefully throughout, not having heard or taken down a word.

There are some who suggest that some of the letters Wodehouse printed in *Performing Flea* were rewritten and are sometimes of questionable veracity. But no one who has spent any time in a script meeting would have trouble believing that one.

To see a nodder at his best, you need to see him in a meeting at which he is, as they say, 'giving notes'. A 'note meeting' or 'note session' is what happens after a screenwriter has handed in the script that he or she has been labouring over with sweat and sleeplessness for weeks, months, or even years. At this point, the script is handed to a nodder – often one young enough to be the screenwriter's child – who then, based on a lifetime of experience and vast knowledge of filmmaking, tells the writer what's wrong with it.

A good example of the modern nodder's contribution was when a writer handed in a screenplay, based upon a true story, about the unlikely friendship that developed between a dog and a whale. The nodder, after expressing the studio's enthusiasm for the project, then asked if the writer would consider changing the whale to a cop. Something like this happened to my former writing

Are Green Wellies Sexy?

Barry Day has drawn attention to a few lines in *Good Morning, Midnight*, Reginald Hill's twenty-first novel featuring Dalziel and Pascoe, in which he makes an interesting Wodehousean aside.

Across the green, a dusty hatchback pulled up in front of St Cuthbert's. The driver got out, looked across at the three policemen, and gave a wave. It was Dolly Upshott, the vicar's sister.

She'd abandoned her Archimagus outfit and looked much more at home in full country-girl kit, green Barbour sweater straining over her bosom, cord breeches doing the same over her bum, long, shapely legs plunging into green wellies. The crown of unruly brown curls

remained the same. Curate's fiancée in a Wodehouse short story, thought Pascoe. Better than him at golf and her parents object.

Though Wodehouse had never observed, to his knowledge, just how sexy green wellies could be.

Earlier in the book, one of the characters thought to himself about another:

I mustn't let him do this to me. He's trying to get me thinking he's Bertie Wooster and I can run rings round him!

Can any Reginald Hill fans among our members quote other instances of his Wodehousean scholarship?

Wodehouse's Hollywood and Mine, continued

partner, John Doolittle, and me during a note session involving our first sold screenplay, which was interestingly enough based on a Wodehouse story, *Honeysuckle Cottage*. As you all know, this famous if atypical Mulliner story involved James Rodman, a writer of hard-boiled detective stories who must spend a stipulated amount of time in his recently deceased aunt's house in order to inherit her wealth. This aunt was a much-despised author of goopy romance novels, and her aura seems to have infested the house so that everyone who enters it becomes a character from her books. This first experience as a professional screenwriter was a dream come true for a while. The movie was cast – Val Kilmer was to play Rodman, Penelope Ann Miller was Rose, and the late great J T Walsh was Andrew MacKinnon, Leila J Pinckney's agent. Our director was Christopher Guest, at the time still best known for *This Is Spinal Tap*. As the son of a peer in the House of Lords, Chris knew Wodehouse and the whole milieu.

Our take on this film was that the actors playing Rodman, Rose, and all the other characters in the main story would also play characters in fantasy sequences based on Leila Pinckney's romance novels and on Rodman's *noir* stuff. Our first niggling concern regarding it all came when one of our producers objected to a joke in the script referring to the great English actor Ronald Colman. His objection seemed arbitrary and capricious. When pressed as to why we should change the line, he turned vague and unresponsive, finally admitting he had never heard of Ronald Colman. "Couldn't you," he suggested helpfully, "put in an English actor people have heard of? How about Sean Connery?" Sean Connery, we pointed out, was Scottish, not English and there the matter lay, but the whole

exchange could have been written for Izzy Schnellenhamer and no questions asked.

Worse was when it was decided that the *film noir* genre wouldn't attract enough of the coveted young male audience to the film and it was suggested that we change Rodman's hard-boiled detective stories to animated Japanese graphic novels. "But Rodman isn't Japanese," I said, putting my finger on the flaw in his argument at once. Again, a minor cultural victory, but we lost our foreign financing shortly afterwards, so the point was moot.

These suggestions underline both the similarities and differences between the nodder of yore and the ones who infest Hollywood these days. The silent nodder committed to nothing unless his superior had indicated it was all right to commit to it. The modern nodder keeps insisting on changes in a script – thereby avoiding commitment to the script as written – until his boss finally reads the final draft and pulls the plug on the project. Wodehouse's nodder kept his job by not making mistakes; the modern nodder keeps his by making his mistakes look like the mistakes of a screenwriter who, despite the nodder's best efforts, can't write a coherent script. Both nodders will take credit for a successful film – at least in letters home. In fact, the primary difference between the two nodders is that today's nodder is actively capable of preventing films from being made at all, which is, I guess, progress of a sort.

This article is based on a talk given at the Toronto Convention of The Wodehouse Society in August 2003. The first part appeared in the December 2004 edition of Wooster Sauce.

Contrasts in the Middle and Late

Elliott Milstein considers four aspects of the

I proposed in my thesis that the ‘Middle Period’ of Wodehouse’s writings begins with the publication of *Leave it To Psmith* in 1923 and the ‘Late Period’ with *Full Moon*, 1947.

While reading Wodehouse I had noticed that many scholars talked about the change in Wodehouse’s style in writing *Leave it To Psmith*, but none mentioned the equally startling change while writing *Full Moon*.

The change I noticed first was in his use of imagery. In the Middle Period, Wodehouse would often use a central image throughout a novel, usually one having to do with the title. The best example is *Heavy Weather*. The main conflict in the book deals with Ronnie Fish’s insane jealousy over Sue Brown, which she calls his ‘making heavy weather’. And the weather throughout the novel is, indeed, oppressively hot and humid. At the tensest moment in the story there is a vicious thunderstorm and, after Ronnie and Sue become reconciled, the air becomes fresh, sweet and cool.

Wodehouse obviously began *Full Moon* with similar intentions toward a central image. The story opens with the moon ‘nearly at its full’ and we are introduced to the characters by following its rays. The moon waxes slowly over Blandings as the various lovers grope their way towards their unions. The highpoint comes with Tipton and Veronica walking in the moonlight. The moon is discussed and they turn in, Tipton all a-twitter, as the moonlight ‘seemed to beckon him’. He goes out again to find solitude on the ‘moonlit terrace’, but Lord Emsworth finds him, mentions the moon again himself and then turns to his favorite topic, the Empress. He talks so much and at such length about his pig that the lovesick and disgusted Tipton wishes ‘that his companion would trip over a moonbeam and break his neck’.

In fact, everything that can possibly be done with the moon is exploited in Chapter 4 and the reader, going on past form, expects this image to continue to infuse the book, but Chapter 4 is the last time the moon is mentioned (except for a later casual reference back to the moonlight walk in Chapter 4). If one works out the time sequence in *Full Moon*, the moon would have been full by the dénouement, but Wodehouse does not point this out. Clearly, when sketching the book out, Wodehouse had intended to use the familiar central image structure, but decided

against it when he came to finishing it. It might be argued that since he was interrupted in writing the book he simply forgot, but I think not. There is no other case in the Late Period of a book with one central image. Wodehouse had abandoned that structure in favor of a multiplicity of images.

Wodehouse was famous for helping to create the distinctive slang of *entre-deux guerres* Britain. He had used popular expressions in his early period, like ‘C-3’ and ‘oojah-cum-spiff’, but in 1923 he began something new, as when Psmith says to Mike Jackson “Let us trickle into yonder tea-shop and drink success to a cup of the steaming”. According to Partridge’s *Dictionary of Slang*, this is the first use of the word ‘trickle’ meaning ‘to go’, and ‘steaming’, initially a military term for pudding, here means ‘tea’.

Other slang words that made their way into the English language through Wodehouse were ‘turpy’, ‘teuf-teuf’, ‘snappers’ and ‘buzzer’, and terms that were already there, like ‘steaming’, had their meaning changed, such as ‘zippy’ and ‘pip-pip’. But the last of these slang inventions was ‘oompus-boompus’ in *Money In the Bank*. I have found no case of an invented slang word anywhere in the Late Period.

Another difference in patterns between the middle and late periods is Wodehouse’s use of violence. We rarely associate Wodehouse’s world with violence, but just as Disney’s G-rated cartoons are steeped with violence and terrifying images, so too are Wodehouse’s lyrical comedies. There are violent images throughout the Middle Period as well as a significant amount of purposeful violence, beginning with the cottage scene near the end of *Leave It to Psmith*, with Freddie’s physical injuries and Psmith’s gunplay. The comedy tends to cover it up, but it is there. We have the relatively harmless destruction of property, such as Aunt Dahlia’s smashing the porcelain figure of the *Infant Samuel at Prayer*, or the Duke of Dunstable’s demolition of his nephew’s sitting room with a poker. But there are also violent attacks on a character, such as Tubby Vanringham’s throttling of Sam Bulpitt in *Summer Moonshine*. The worst violence inflicted is the mayhem committed on Roderick Spode in *The Code of the Woosters*: Gussie Fink-Nottle hits him over the head with a painting, and Bertie ties him up, hits him again, this time with a vase, and finally puts his cigarette out on his hand.

Periods of P G Wodehouse's Writings

works: Imagery, Slang, Violence and Love

Such violence is generally skirted in the Late Period, as you can see by comparing two similar passages, one from the Middle Period's *Money in the Bank* (ch 27), the other from the Late Period's *Something Fishy* (ch 15-16), both involving the judicious use of a substantial tobacco jar to render the hero unconscious and cause the heroine to declare her love for the prostrate form.

If you go back and read those two passages now, one after the other, you will notice that, in *Money in the Bank*, the moment of contact between tobacco jar and skull is described in sickening (albeit humorous detail), whilst in *Something Fishy* the violence takes place wholly offstage. No blows to the head, no knees buckling, no welter of blood. And there is no reconciliation scene as there is in *Money for Nothing*. No cries of "darling", no description of the reunion or examination into why it has happened.

Well, naturally, it had all happened before so there is no reason to go into again. But by 1946 we have had over sixty engagements in the Wodehouse canon. It is understood that young people in love will get engaged and get married. The Late Period

has a significant reduction in the romantic element. That is not to say that love is ignored in the Late Period. It is always there, and often still forms the main core of the plot. But it is definitely diminished. In the earlier books, as soon as the love interest is resolved, the book ends. This is not wholly true of the Late Period. In *Something Fishy*, again, for instance, the real interest is in the tontine, and though the love angle is straightened out about three quarters of the way through the book, there is still the tontine to be settled.

The final extract from Elliott's paper about his doctoral thesis will appear in June.

Coincidentally, Bernard Lewis wrote in with a question about the tobacco jar mentioned in Money in the Bank and Something Fishy. He asked how, where and when Lord Uffenham retrieved the stone tobacco jar from Dolly Molloy after she drove off with it.

Suggestions, please, to the Editor at the address on the back page, with the best receiving a set of four Everyman editions.

Murray Hedgcock claims that Uncle Fred Got It Wrong!

Stamps become not just collector's items, but of super-value, if an aeroplane flies upside-down, a border is flawed, the spelling is awry, Her Majesty looks the wrong way, or in any other respect the printing goes astray. Should a Wodehouse publishing error be equally desirable?

We know of variant editions, differing covers, alternative dust-jackets and so on – but they always relate to their content.

So – what of an audiobook that bears a wrong and quite misleading picture? I have a copy of *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, read by Martin Jarvis in the Random Century Audiobooks series, and presumably issued in 1991.

We recall how Lord Ickenham led a team of imposters – himself as Sir Roderick Glossop, nephew Pongo Twistleton as his secretary/son Basil, and Mustard Pott's delightful daughter Polly as his daughter Gwendoline, in yet another of those invasions which Blandings has regularly endured.

But the cassette case bears a picture, not of the smooth-tongued Earl, but of a young man on a garden seat bestowing a very public kiss on a mildly

reproving housemaid, while in the background, a young blood wearing an eye-glass, and a bobbed blonde, register due shock-horror.

And we know whence that incident, do we not? In *Leave It To Psmith*, our hero advises Freddie Threepwood to kiss the housemaid he suspects of being a detective, her reaction guaranteed to indicate whether she is genuine or not. Psmith and Eve Halliday come upon the 'painful scene', which apparently proves nothing much, although the woman is indeed Miss Simmons of Wragge's Detective Agency, engaged by the always suspicious Efficient Baxter to watch the spoons – or rather, Lady Constance's necklace.

While described in the narrative as 'pleasant-faced', Miss Simmons has been rejected by Freddie as not pretty – and here we see a definitely pretty girl, whose response to the embrace is hardly that of the tough private eye. And the couple looking on are distinctly not Psmith and Eve: he is monocled, certainly, but displays far short of true Psmithian style, while the girl simply looks too ordinary for the charming and lively Eve.

So there it is. What am I bid?

Wodehouse and Philosophy, Part II

David Rathbone delves into the Wodehouse ethic

The complexity of the Wodehouse ethic is not a simple complexity. It is complicated by the way in which Plum is able to pay attention to many levels at once at the expense of none. By *showing* quite clearly what he doesn't say, Wodehouse's attitude exerts an effect to the benefit of the reader, which is one reason why those troubled in body or soul find him such a balm (as lamented/lambasted in *Louder and Funnier*). And balmy he is too to those otherwise healthy individuals afflicted with a love of wisdom, such as, for example, Ludwig Wittgenstein (see Rush Rhees ed., *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*, Blackwell 1981, p148). The thought of his works being critically analysed struck Wodehouse as about as appealing as a trip to the dentist, but as readers we can all change hats, switching between the a cap of leisure, the beanie of familiarity, the bowler of nostalgia, the top hat of hilarity, and yes, even the mortar-board of academia, however awkwardly this latter one balanced on Plum's own noggin at Oxford in June 1939.

Already we've been able to indicate a central aspect of the Wodehouse ethic without, hopefully, betraying it: namely, the notion that not everything can or should be made explicit. And this, as my personal favourite of all of Wodehouse's characters, the unnamed mother of Margaret Goodwin in *Not George Washington*, would tell you if you were to ask her, is precisely what is at issue in the debate between Kant and Hegel. In a world in which mothers-in-law bear the brunt of so much ill humour, how refreshing it is to read of one who is enlightened, profound and indubitably wise. 'She said very little', Wodehouse tells us, 'but what she did say was magnificent.'

Her husband, Dr Eugene Goodwin, a philosopher in both profession and temperament, spends most of *Not George Washington* reading a mixture of German idealism (Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer) and the ancient Greeks (especially Athenaeus and Diogenes Laertius). The choice of these two ancients is of some significance in understanding Wodehouse's playful but nevertheless deep relation to classical literature. For another aspect of the Wodehouse ethic is that the past matters, and knowing about it improves our grasp on a situation.

From the stories in which, say, Jeeves knows the history of a necklace or a manuscript, and so grasps a situation in a way Bertie doesn't, to the allusions

ancient and modern, woven through Wodehouse's comic web, we see that those who know the past understand more than those who don't, and knowledge, as Spinoza reminds us, is power. Spinoza also reminds us that fiction is essential to one's humanity, and in so doing he is expressing a similar sentiment to Diogenes the Cynic, whose *Life*, as related by Diogenes Laertes is not only on Dr Goodwin's reading list, but is also of special interest to Jeeves and Bertie fans.

In that *Life*, Diogenes L. relates how Diogenes C. was shipwrecked, and taken into slavery. In the market place, when asked his proficiencies, Diogenes C. answered "ruling men"; he then pointed out a man, and said "sell me to him, he needs a master". That man (his name was Xenitades) was so amused that he bought Diogenes on the spot, and within months Diogenes C. was running his house so efficiently, and educating his sons so successfully, that he proclaimed that a good *genie* had come into his home. Eventually Diogenes' old friends heard of his fate, passed the hat around, and offered to buy back his freedom for him. Diogenes C. declined, with the reply "lions are not the slaves of those who feed them, but rather those who feed them are at the mercy of the lions" (VI 75).

With that one thought, the whole of Hegel's analysis of the master-slave dialectic in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* comes unstuck. There's no space here for details, but let's just say that in the great Kant v. Hegel debate, at this point the bookies are offering evens on Manny 'Know-Your-Limits' Kant, and 100-1 on Bill 'All-Will-Be-Revealed' Hegel.

In her article *Wodehouse – A Male Thing?* (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2004), the late Helen Murphy based her strong case for Wodehouse as an author whose credibility holds up well to feminist criticism on three things: empathy, the work ethic, and Platonism. By this last she meant that his novels are ideal constructs, not grim reflections of a harsh reality. Wodehouse reflected reality very selectively, ignoring some aspects whilst exaggerating others. The extent to which Wodehouse drew on reality to seed his imagination has been traced in ingenious detail by such authors as her father Norman in *In Search of Blandings* and JHC Morris in *Thank You, Wodehouse*. In his novels, we see not a mirror image of the places and people these sleuths have traced, but rather a kind of composite image, embellished and enhanced in whatever way Plum's

muse instructed. Now orthodox Platonism teaches that such ‘enhanced’ reality is in fact *more* real than the only *apparently* real and very messy world of experience. For Plato, the True, the Beautiful and the Good are actually three aspects of one and the same thing, and this is the only ultimate reality. In this sense, Wodehouse was not an orthodox Platonist, but rather an heretical one. For, as Murphys junior and senior have both pointed out, Wodehouse’s world is the selective synthesis of a creative mind, not the reductive analysis of a scientific one. Wodehouse would not have agreed that suffering and death are mere illusions caused by our ignorance and confusion, as Plato taught.

Returning now to the ‘random’ passage from Martineau in *Jeeves Takes Charge* from *Carry On, Jeeves*:

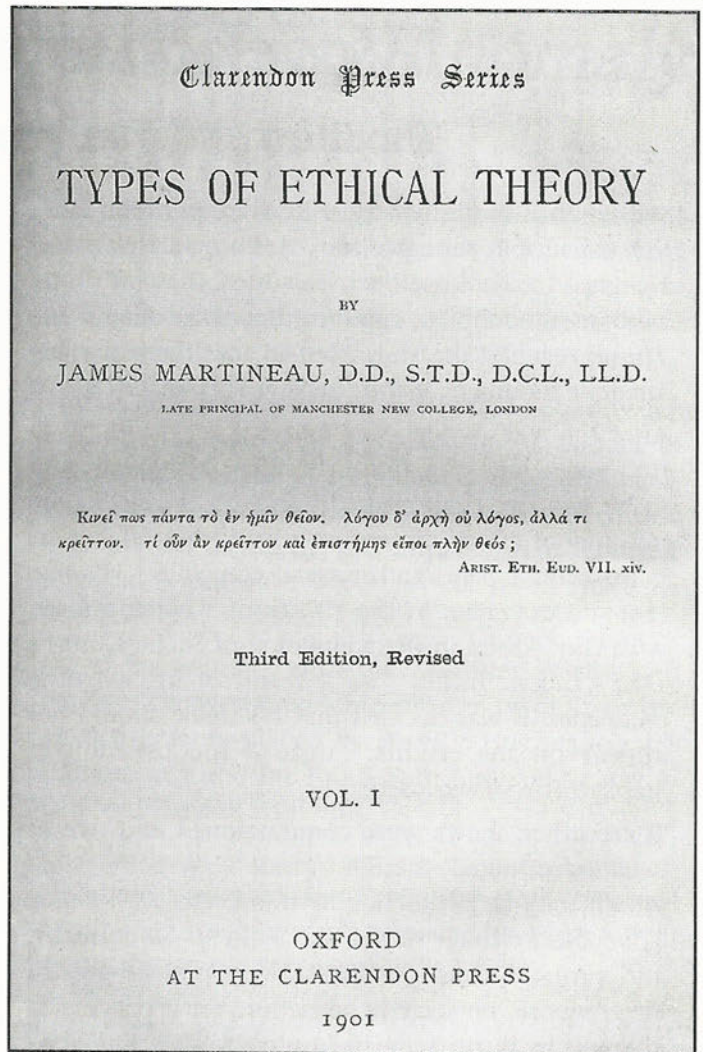
Of the two antithetic terms in the Greek philosophy only one was real and self-subsisting; and that one was Ideal Thought as opposed to that which it has to penetrate and mould. The other, corresponding to our Nature, was in itself phenomenal, unreal, without any permanent footing, having no predicates that held true for two moments together; in short, redeemed from negation only by including indwelling realities appearing through.

Now this is precisely what I’m saying Wodehouse shows he *doesn’t* agree with. For Wodehouse’s selection of reality’s good bits never for a moment denied that the bad bits were just as real. He experienced his fair share of suffering and then some, but that, in Plum’s world, is not what literature is about. It’s bad enough having to experience pain: why dwell on it by writing about it? In other words, it is emphatically *not* the case that:

The postulate or common understanding involved in speech is certainly co-extensive, in the obligation it carries, with the social organism of which language is the instrument, and the ends of which it is an effort to subserve.

because what we *don’t* say is just as important, and in some cases much more so, than what we *do*. So Plum is not just poking fun at a pompous Victorian prose style in lambasting Martineau, but in fact also engaging the ideas in a complex but subtle manner.

So in contrast to Plato’s (and Martineau’s) severe idealism, Plum’s joyful wisdom lies rather in the recognition of the power of the creative mind to find positive aspects in any situation, and focus upon and foster these. The result is not so much a perception of a higher reality, as the mind’s insight into how to go about trying to improve the somewhat chaotic



The ‘Ideal Thought’ quotation is on page 124 of this volume, and the ‘Postulate’ quotation on page 260 of Volume II.

one in which we actually find ourselves. Plum would no doubt have been the first to insist upon his own mere mortality and fallibility – consider, as Murray Hedgcock has done (in *Wooster Sauce* September 2002, p5 and December 2002 p20), his short-shrift of the Australian character; or of his treatment of Peteiro in *The White Feather*, ch22, or of Sam in *Psmith Journalist*, ch21.

In each of these three instances Plum has characters reflect social attitudes which make us wince a little today. But put in context, each is, I think, quite benign, and, at least in the case of Sam, a parody at the *expense* of racism, not in its service. (Ram from *The Luck Stone* also fits this profile.) Note that at the start of chapter 2 of *Laughing Gas*, Plum makes sure all due respect is paid to the coloured brother. And in *Company for Henry* chapter 5 section 2, he distances himself from Ferris’ racial prejudices, which are linked to a cynicism about love, marriage, and the very existence of the human race, amounting to a nihilism worthy of Schopenhauer on a bad morning.

Wodehouse's Straight Plays

The third and final part of Tony Ring's review

Wodehouse made two post-war adaptations from the work of Ferenc Molnar, *Arthur* and *Game of Hearts*. It has long been assumed that only one Molnar-Wodehouse collaboration, *The Play's The Thing*, reached the stage, but in fact there was an amateur staging of *Arthur* in New York in 1978.

After the war, Wodehouse found it very difficult to find magazines prepared to serialise his novels, and as he had five unpublished books on the stocks, he put a lot of effort into reviving his theatrical career, both straight plays and musical comedies. His one real success came in the UK, from a collaboration with Guy Bolton in the adaptation of Sacha Guitry's *Don't Listen, Ladies*. As a result of his wartime escapades, it was decided that his name should not appear on the credits: instead the pseudonym Stephen Powys was used.

Three other shows were commissioned and two at least were staged, though outside New York. One which may be of particular interest is *Don't Lose Your Head* (which started life as *Keep Your Head*), and probably had the least likely plot of any of Plum's work, on stage or in fiction, for it concerned attempts by Burmese head-hunters to sever the head of the heroine, and included two murders. An American professor, E P Conkle, whose students at one time included Tennessee Williams, was the author of this thriller. Plum described it thus: 'no earthly good as it stands but it has a fine central idea' and was asked to turn it into a comedy thriller.

Wodehouse's version was further rewritten before the play was tried out in England, opening in Nottingham and then visiting Brighton before dying at the Saville theatre in London.

Having read the Wodehouse version and the two UK versions, I can confirm that PGW's humour and style were largely eliminated by these further rewrites. No surprise, then, that he chose to thoroughly rewrite his own draft for Billy Miles to put on at the Bermudiana Theatre Club under its original title, *Keep Your Head*, on April 9th, 1951, the plan being that it would then run for about fifteen weeks on the Straw Hat Circuit before opening on Broadway. Plum's report to Townend on the Bermuda experiment read:

The play in Bermuda did very well, but I gather it isn't right. With these stock tryouts you can never tell whether it is the play or the actors that made the thing not seem right. In this one, for instance, they only had six rehearsals and people kept

forgetting their lines. Also, the man who played the Rajah's Prime Minister was no good, and it is a vital part.

So there was to be no Broadway production of a Wodehouse thriller after all.

I could have used the whole of this series of articles just to describe the agony Plum experienced as he wrote draft after draft of a play version of his novel, *Spring Fever*, agony he shared in correspondence with Bill Townend and Guy Bolton, both of whom he soon involved in the process. The draft was sent to several managers; spawned an American version of the same novel, *The Old Reliable*; was tried instead as a musical comedy; and was given several working names such as *Spring Fever*, *Phippis*, and *Kilroy Was There*. But for a variety of reasons the commercial production that the enormous amount of work put into the project demanded never materialised.

But I must return to the one play I have not yet dealt with yet in these articles. His adaptation of a Fodor play as *Good Morning, Bill*, which has been revived in the UK more than any other of his plays by both amateur and professional companies, remarkably enjoyed its New York première only in 2003. It had been an instant success on its first appearance on the London stage in 1927 despite the actions of the Censor's office, which included an important scene amongst its numerous required deletions.

The published text of *Good Morning, Bill*, reflected to a significant degree in the book *Doctor Sally*, is the sanitised version of the play. For those who have read neither the play nor the book, in the opening scene the much married and divorced, but still young, Lord Tidmouth is visiting a hotel on the south coast to find his old friend Bill Paradene, whom he has not seen for ten years or so. Bill is out, but Tidmouth is introduced to a pyjama-clad Lottie, who is sharing Bill's suite. Bill returns, and tells Lottie to go to her room to change. The audience is in no doubt as to the nature of the relationship between Bill and Lottie, but the Censor required the following exchange between Lottie and Tidmouth to be cut:

Lottie (to Bill): My goodness, the way you bully me, anyone would think we were married.

Tidmouth: Good Lord: AREN'T you?

Lottie: Not exactly.

Tidmouth: I see. Er – in the sight of God, what?

Lottie: Well, anyway, in the sight of the hotel management.

Canadian Strands: a Publishing Anomaly

A Gift to the Society invites some comment

When Rowena MacKenzie, one of the founder members of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), died in 2003, she left a collection of some 27 copies of *Strand* magazine from the 1930s, which her friends Dr Winifred and Valerie Alston have donated to the Society. More than half contained Wodehouse stories.

Rowena was Canadian, and a number of the issues demonstrate an inconsistency in the method by which the magazine was prepared for the Canadian market. The post-free annual subscription price in 1934 was 13s 6d, which was not increased when, some time between September and December 1935, the physical size of the publication was increased.

Fourteen of these copies, from December 1933 to March 1935, were published with Canadian prices printed on their covers. The remainder of the smaller issues had UK prices (which may have coincided with a visit by Rowena to England). From December 1935 to August 1937, though, most of the larger sized copies had Canadian price stickers over the UK published price.

The publishers, Newnes, evidently belatedly realised it was uneconomic to print separate jackets for what must have been a very limited market, especially when the cover picture and all the contents were identical with the UK edition.

Thus Canadian readers were invited to study for examinations with such bodies as the School of Accountancy or the Metropolitan College, St Albans. They were wooed by the advantages of pelmanism, and invited to enjoy the improvement in their physical appearance which would result from the purchase of nose shapers from Lees Ray.

Members familiar with the Mulliner stories will perhaps recognise possible sources of plots in the advertisements placed by Frank S Hughes to cure stammering, and for Foot's Bath Cabinets, a sort of personal Turkish Bath unit.

Perhaps the most useless advertisement for Canadian members was that for Canadian Club tobacco! Explicit information was given as to how carefully it would be packed for export!

Wodehouse's Straight Plays Part III, continued

The longest, and to my mind, saddest, cut, went to the heart of the play, and audiences have never been able to appreciate the strength of what Fodor was trying to say. Essentially Bill Paradene had noticed a girl on the golf links, with whom he fell in love at first sight, and decided to drop Lottie, whom he now regarded as having been no more than the mere plaything of an idle hour, and try to get to know this girl. When he told Lottie, she had hysterics, and it was necessary to call a doctor to her. The doctor, of course, turned out to be Sally Smith, the girl on the links, who immediately realised the nature of the relationship between Bill and Lottie. Naturally, Bill was delighted at Sally's arrival as with this introduction he was now in a position to talk to her.

But the Censor cut the next scene, in which he asked Sally if he could retain her as his family physician, and she responded by accusing him of insulting her, suggesting that she supposed he might expect the same services from her in return for her fee as had been provided to him by Lottie. Now that is pretty strong stuff for Wodehouse, and I regret that it has never been restored to the standard text.

After the London run of *Good Morning*, Bill was over, he revised much of Acts II and III into a Variety

sketch at the Coliseum from May 20, 1929, with Sally Smith being played by Heather Thatcher, a renowned actress of the period, who wielded Sally's handbag to good effect.

And finally, after the war, Wodehouse revised the play yet again and gave it an American setting, in the vain hope of arranging a New York production. He could not decide on its title, and in early typescripts he tried *Joy in the Morning*, *Summer Moonshine* and *Nothing Serious!*

Plum was worried about what he saw as a need to spice up his dialogue for the post-war American public? Try this. In reply to Tidmouth's enquiry as to whether Lottie is his girl, Bill answered:

"In a way."

"What do you mean – in a way. She told me she gave you her all."

"Me and a number of others. She's like Caesar's wife. She gets around."

A rude joke. Unwodehousean, maybe, but Plum's attitude was 'Needs must', and away from his beloved fiction, he gave more than lip service to the phrase *Anything Goes*.

The TWS Convention in Hollywood

The biennial Convention held in North America under the auspices of The Wodehouse Society and held in an amenable city is one of the highlights of the Wodehousean calendar. Attendance from outside the USA is encouraged, but for the last few conventions there have generally only been around ten such delegates. Perhaps, with the dollar weak, this is the year for the number to rise substantially.

Elin Woodger provided a history of the TWS conventions in the Winter 2004 edition of *Plum Lines*, and of the next few paragraphs most have been précised from that article. She noted that the first Annual Gathering, held at Delaware Valley College in 1982 and attended by just eight members, was followed by one in Doylestown, Pennsylvania the following year. Probably wisely, they decided at that meeting to lower their ambition and meet only biennially in future.

After a meeting in 1985 at Ithaca College, there was a substantial increase in the attendance at the 1987 San Francisco convention, where such stalwart speakers as the late Jan Kaufman, Len Lawson, Phil Ayres and Dan Garrison (all to become Presidents of TWS) launched their TWS careers. The membership of Kalamazoo, Michigan, accepted responsibility for the 1989 event, at which bread-roll throwing was first in evidence, along with the now traditional convention pin.

Those present argue that the New York meeting of 1991 was the first 'great' convention, with ancillary activities including a coach trip to Wodehouse's home at Remsenburg (with stop-offs at both the cemetery where he was buried and the pets' cemetery where lie a number of the Wodehouse dogs!). Charles Gould, Elliott Milstein and Lee Davis were among the speakers; Norman Murphy wrote the first of the now regular skits. It was also in New York that the idea of the Sunday brunch was introduced.

By the 1993 convention in San Francisco, with attendance firmly established in three figures, many delegates were unashamedly using the conventions to meet up with old friends from across the continent, and, increasingly, across the world, but the warmest possible welcome is given to first-timers as well.

There was a visit to a cricket match, a fore-runner of its own matches which would be played under special TWS rules at each convention from 1995 to 2003. Unfortunately it has not been possible to find an appropriate facility for a match in 2005.

In 1995 in Boston there were three speakers from the UK, including Hal Cazalet, and it was at this convention that the seeds were sown for the recording of his *The Land Where The Good Songs Go* CD. A running competition, *The Scripture Knowledge Contest*, was held throughout the 1997 meeting in Chicago, and the convention as a whole found fame in the *Washington Post* as the subject of an essay by the award-winning writer Michael Dirda. The three subsequent conventions, in Houston, Philadelphia and Toronto have broadly followed the by then established format, though the

Friday has been added as an organised sightseeing day to cater for an increase in the number of members who now choose to arrive on Thursdays. Tables for buying and selling books are a normal feature of the rooms adjacent to the main hall.

The standard of talks at the 2003 convention was such that most have been presented in *Wooster Sauce* and in fact the final part of two of them will

not appear until the next issue in June. This year's speakers and their planned subjects will be listed in June's *Wooster Sauce*.

The UCLA Campus has a number of attractions of its own including the Armand Hammer Museum of Modern Art and the Murphy Sculpture Garden, and is near to the free entry Getty Art Museum. The accommodation is very reasonably priced, and includes breakfast and lunch. Those interested in roomsharing may send a message 'subscribe roommates' to _____ after which you can write to _____ to make contact with others.

General questions can be sent to Gary Hall at _____ and for information how to obtain a registration form or pay in sterling, contact Elin Woodger,

The 2005 Convention

The dates: August 11-14, 2005

The place: UCLA Campus, Hollywood, California

Registration fees:

Convention	\$ 90
Bus Tour of Hollywood (Friday)	30
Friday BBQ and entertainment	35
Saturday banquet	45
Sunday morning brunch	20

Fees rise after July 1

Rooms: Sunset Village, on the Campus

Room prices: Single \$ 119; Double \$ 144

Accommodation bookings must be made by July 22

Jeeves as Spy

by John Fletcher

In one of the *Editor's Tailpieces* in the June 2004 *Wooster Sauce* Louise O'Connor asked why someone as brainy as Jeeves should have worked as a valet rather than being the Head of an Oxford or Cambridge College. Heads of Colleges are not just the brainiest people around. They sit no examination. Being famous internationally for intellectual prowess is useful, but more important today is to be a good fund-raiser, and without blackmail or dishonesty, it is hard to see Jeeves playing that part. The reason why he was not a butler was probably that his kind of brain worked better outside a large organisation. He needed the freedom of serving one person. He was a 'loner'.

That freedom would have been useful to a spy, but liable to conflict with the conventions of the Civil Service. Richard Hannay would never have joined MI5 or MI6, nor would Jeeves. Animal cunning, human manipulation, and contacts are Jeeves's unrivalled strengths, and here more useful than brains. Espionage is often called 'Intelligence', but in the argument about 'Weapons of Mass Destruction', that seems to be the one quality it demonstrably lacks.

Jeeves had five or more employers before Bertie, but he would have had little difficulty in combining espionage with his work for any of them. In *Ring for Jeeves* Bill Rowcester asks:

"Were you in the first world war, Jeeves?"

A normal serviceman would give some direct answer. Spies are used to evading, particularly that question, and his response is exactly what we might expect from an experienced spy:



"I dabbled in it to a certain extent, m'lord".

The government needed spies in New York and Washington first to keep the United States neutral and later to cement the alliance. Jeeves would have been invaluable for his knowledge and contacts. In August 1914 he is there, looking after Bertram, adding to his already great knowledge of Society as *The Aunt and the Sluggard* makes clear.

Exactly how he served the government in later years is less clear. His membership of the Junior Ganymede Club in Curzon Street with its Book of Secrets must have been part of his value. Was it pure coincidence that Britain's espionage headquarters, Leconfield House, was also in Curzon Street?

The government sent Isaiah Berlin to Moscow as a spy in the second world war (code name O Utis). Surely he would then have been more recognisable than Jeeves in 1914. Jeeves moved silently and invisibly from room to room, knew his science and his drinks (and how to obtain them during the prohibition years), and could form his plans at short notice. What government could afford to neglect this human asset?

A Welcome Initiative in Philadelphia

The *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* is a daily paper, published as its name suggests in the evening, in Philadelphia. Its publisher and Youth Features editor, Jeff Quick, are both Wodehouse fans, and both believe that as well as containing news of the day, newspapers should contain pieces you might actually want to read, consider and discuss with others. Jeff is responsible for satisfying the literary needs of younger readers, specifically material which could

'cause a parent to go home and read with their children. This means that I look for fiction and non-fiction that appeals to children and adults.

Wodehouse is pretty near perfect for that sort of thing. The vocabulary might be a smidge obtuse for a 10-year-old, but with a parent on hand, that can be cleared up. We'll be running serialised stories from *My Man Jeeves* throughout January, and maybe a little into February. I hope we may get some more Wodehouse in the paper later this year.'

What an example the *Bulletin* is setting. Perhaps members would like to raise the idea with their city newspapers and suggest the Wodehouse world as creating the necessary ambience for parent-children (or even teacher-children) reading sessions.

Wodehouse's Women

The Good, the Bad and the Pretty, by James Clayton

While we accept, apparently without criticism, that in the worlds created by PGW the men are almost always dominated by their women, one of the interesting tricks that Wodehouse plays on his readers is to make us feel kindly towards women who on the whole are not very nice, but recoil from women of honesty and integrity.

There are exceptions, of course, but to begin by giving two obvious examples from the Wooster saga, compare Aunt Agatha with Aunt Dahlia, and our reactions to them.

Aunt Agatha, Bertie tells us, and he should know, eats broken glass, conducts human sacrifices at the time of the full moon, and devours her young – though not, regrettably, young Thos. Bertie is afraid of her, and rejoices when she gets her comeuppance. But in fact she is a woman of great integrity who wishes Bertie nothing but good. She despairs of his shortcomings, and spends time looking for a suitable woman to make something of him. Yet we dislike her and are pleased when she is humiliated.

Compared with Aunt Dahlia, Aunt Agatha is a woman of towering respectability – and one wonders how the two of them got on with each other when they were children. For Aunt Dahlia is a crook. She does not hesitate to blackmail Bertie by threatening to bar him from Anatole's cooking, and so persuades him to steal cow creamers and paintings and blames him for the failure of schemes which at first she encouraged, such as pretending to be so miserable that she cannot eat one of Anatole's finest dinners. Yet we forgive her. She often uses language that is unbecoming on the lips of a lady, loudly. Yet we like her.

Looking through Bertie's eyes, we see some of the other women in his life in a similar way.

He becomes engaged to Florence Craye and Honoria Glossop, who both want to make something of him but appear to him to be a threat and a menace, and so we dislike them, even though they are essentially good, even if they are impossible.

Bertie might have married Bobbie Wickham, who is shown to be fun and extremely likeable, or Madeline Bassett, whose soupiness is somehow endearing, but both of them are disasters and manipulators.

A similar treatment is given by Wodehouse to some of the women with whom Bertie is not so emotionally involved: one who comes to mind is

Stephanie Byng, lovable, and fond of animals, but a tyrant who persuades her fiancé to steal policemen's helmets.

Among the lesser female characters, perhaps, Wodehouse does not paint such a vivid picture of contrasts. The two Stoker girls are good as well as being likeable, and are typical of many of the younger women who populate the novels.

Older women seem to be treated less kindly. Those ladies of the chorus who have become Grand Old Ladies have also become terrible ogres. The aunts who haunt Deverill Hall are depicted as a bunch of nasties, the barmaids are fun while quite unsuitable, and we are carried along with the idea that authoresses should be viewed with mild contempt. Yet many are people who are kindly and lacking in deceit. Like Bertie, however, we love the Aunt Dahlias and fear the Florence Crayes.

Then we can move on to Blandings, where sisters rather than aunts are to be found, mainly Lady Constance, whose efforts to uphold the family traditions and keep a strong grip on events make us dislike her because we are fond of Lord Emsworth and do not want him to be so bothered by her.

Yet surely her sense of integrity and what is correct for the family are virtues, and Lord Emsworth's woolly-headedness is not, and while he is not as crooked as Aunt Dahlia, this sometimes lead him to misjudgements, picking the flowers in a public park, misrepresenting himself as a salesman, and, worse, plotting against Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe.

Connie's support for Rupert Baxter is in the interests of Lord Emsworth and of the estate, because, after all, it is important that the affairs should be well managed. Someone must do the paperwork and keep the accounts, and Emsworth is obviously hopeless. Yet we detest Baxter, and are pleased at his downfall, and we are annoyed with Connie for bringing him into the household.

Like Connie, Emsworth's other sisters are presented as tyrants or manipulators, or both, and we take pleasure in seeing them outwitted and outmanoeuvred, yet it could be argued that they also are loyal, and try to be a good influence to bring benefit to the welfare of all the members of the family. They may find Emsworth and Gally tiresome, but they wish them no harm, only that they might be more positive and useful.

My First Wodehouse Experience

by Richard Barrett

I have to thank a combination of my former English teacher's ambitious summer reading list, and the far easier and animated TV performances of Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie for my introduction to Wodehouse. However, it was much later, during my basic training with the TA in Pirbright, Surrey, that I picked up a copy of *Very Good, Jeeves* in order to inject some much-needed humour into the proceedings.

The right eye twitched, before his head turned furiously back and forth to the right. "Stop speaking posh, man! We fought wars to speak English." My response to the question of the purposes of a patrol had been too much for my section commander. A small, stocky corporal from Middlesbrough, he bore an uncanny resemblance to the former England footballer Paul Gascoigne, though a shadow of the latter's sporting and linguistic credentials. At 01.30, I could be forgiven for giving a poor answer, but at the time "to secure the integrity of the harbour area and the immediate vicinity" seemed rather sound. Subconsciously I probably wanted to give a clever

answer to avenge my insult of having been called a p**** for some earlier innocuous action. On reflection, I considered the infectious spirit of language.

During two weeks at camp, the brevity, intelligence and grace of Jeeves had been consumed in my evening reading. I had escaped in the riches of the English language and the harmless happenings of Bertie Wooster and his personal gentleman. I laughed aloud at the vivid adjectives and incredibly imaginative similes: 'how it happened, I couldn't tell you to this day, but I once got engaged'; she 'had a laugh like waves breaking on a stern and rock-bound coast'. In a period when English is accused of being 'dumbed down' and anyone under 30 can sum up a conversation with the words 'cool' or 'bollocks', I found Wodehouse's style all the more precious. Of Aunt Dahlia, 'she used to go in a lot for hunting' and generally spoke 'as if she had just sighted a fox on a hillside half a mile away'.

The quality of language to transcend difficulties or at least smooth them over is for me one of the greatest gifts that Wodehouse has left us. In *Very Good, Jeeves*, Jeeves's explanation for disposing of the eye-catching china vase which was 'not in harmony with the appointments of the room' is sublime:

"In order to achieve verisimilitude, I was reluctantly compelled to break it, sir. And in my excitement, sir, I am sorry to say I broke it beyond repair."

Whether argumentative Aunts or coarse corporals confront us, we may take a moment to dip into a plethora of words with humour, poise and grace. When this deserts us, I suggest mix a cocktail, draw a bath and sing a song!

Wodehouse's Women, continued

It is possible to view many of the women in these and other novels as stereotypes and interchangeable as equals, aunts for aunts, and girls for girls. But whatever and whoever they are, they dominate their men.

Almost all his female characters are tyrants who take it for granted that men should be treated like children, but we are made to like those who cause trouble, and dislike those whose dominant stance is just their manner to encourage the 'children' to grow up.

Almost certainly, Wodehouse was describing characters who were composites of people he had known, living the kind of life he was familiar with as a boy in settings he knew well. Whether his depiction of these people tells us anything about Wodehouse the man is a topic for a psychologist or a more perceptive critic. It goes beyond the question of whether or not he was a feminist, because in writing of women in such a way – bearing in mind that they are almost always pretty and never plain – he is manipulating our attitudes so that we like the bad, and dislike the good.

And, of course, he knew exactly what he was doing.

The Smile That Wins Favourite Nifties - 30

A writer, describing Blandings Castle in a magazine article, had once said:

'Tiny mosses have grown in the cavities of the stones, until, viewed near at hand, the place seems shaggy with vegetation.'

It would not have been a bad description of the proprietor.

From *Leave It To Psmith* (1923)

Two Savages and an AGM

Murray Hedgcock and Paul Rush shared the reporting duties

When an author has seen reprints ordered of his new book even before the official launch, has basked in the warmth of almost universally laudatory reviews, and has more than satisfied the specialists in his chosen field, then 'regrets' is not a word you anticipate from his lips. But so it was at The Savage Club on November 9 when Robert McCrum came to tell us about his acclaimed biography, *Wodehouse: A Life* (Penguin Viking).

Despite the 530 packed pages, he needed more room to justify more effort. He wished he had spared more time to observe Edwardian London, the era in which PGW grew from public schoolboy to successful author. He regretted that Plum's most memorable character, Psmith, had not been given much more study and space. He felt the impact of New York on the young Wodehouse, his life and times in that stirring city, could have been observed and spelled out at much greater length. (Robert would start to explore one aspect of this in an article on New York's gangland in *The Observer* on November 24.)

Robert wished he had been able to use the reproduction of the previously unknown document recording Plum's registration for America's World War One military draft. He bemoaned his own lack of German, convinced there was much to study in archive material dealing with the Wodehouse internment, and his time living uneasily under the Nazis, but he said that perhaps his greatest regret was that he had not been able to begin his mammoth five-year project at least ten years earlier, to tap memory from the many Wodehouse contemporaries then alive.

From the number of members with questions, comments and general thoughts, their regret seems to have been that he had not more hours to spare.

Earlier, Chairman Hilary Bruce had given the annual general meeting a cheering report on a productive year; Membership Secretary Christine Hewitt announced we had signed member no 1,016; and Treasurer Alan Wood in a pleasingly simplified report indicated we were solvent. So all felt free to breast the bar, spend up, and relax.

Come February 15, and we all met again. "What was PGW doing, 100 years ago to the day?" queried the Society's Remembrancer, and the answer he gave will be broadcast loud and clear in the June *Wooster Sauce*. Our Chairman had to call for quiet several times during parish notices as member conversed with member in a raucous whisper, but her struggles should be reduced in future, as the Remembrancer presented her with a smoker's pipe: the Society's equivalent of a judge's gavel.

The evening's main entertainment was presented by Christopher Owen, ably accompanied on piano by David Wyks. Christopher has toured extensively with his show *Right Ho, Wodehouse*, which centres on Blandings and Lord Emsworth, and we were treated to extracts in dialogue and song.

And what a treat it was, to listen to Lord Emsworth as, wine glass in hand, he led us through the trials and joys of Blandings: its residents, Beach the butler, pig-calling and, of course, the Empress herself. Lord Emsworth could, he reminded us, listen all day long to the sounds of her eating. About Christopher's performance, we could say the same.

The Gold Bats are on the March again this year: in June

The annual cricket match between the Gold Bats, the Society team, and the Dulwich Dusters takes place on the Dulwich College grounds on Friday June 17, starting at 4pm. Last year, for the first time, it was the Gold Bats rather than the Dusters who included a lady player, and we hope to be able to be able to do the same this year.

The Society prepares a traditional cricket tea for both teams and those spectators who order tickets in advance on the forms enclosed with this issue. We have it on good authority that the quality of the tea leads to severe competition amongst the Dusters players to be chosen for their team.

The match against The Sherlock Holmes Society of London reverts to a Sunday this year, and will be played at the lovely West Wycombe ground (near the location of the old Hellfire Club) on Sunday June 26, starting at 11am. This event is always embellished by players and spectators (many in costume from around 1895) enjoying their own picnics in unhurried peace. No tickets are required to watch.

Bob Miller is our manager for both matches. He would like to hear from all past players and prospective players who would like to play in either match. Contact him

15 Years of the Drones Club

David Colvin attended the celebrations in Belgium

“What with excellent browsing and sluicing and cheery conversation and what-not, the evening passed quite happily.”

Those who find it impossible to believe that the spirit of the Master could be alive, well and living in deepest Flanders should on no account have missed the festivities celebrating the first 15 years of the Belgian Drones in Aarschot on November 13, 2004. It was a white tie night to remember the Knight.

The recently restored neoclassical moated Castle of Schoonhoven, shimmering white under floodlights, was clearly visible from the main road. Yet it took another 40 minutes of frantic motoring to find the muddy lane leading up to its entrance. Plunging down a dark, dank, narrow, winding country lane in the hope of coming upon the Castle from the rear, we found ourselves in the middle of an English sports car rally. Austin Healeys, TVRs, ACs, Triumphs, MGs and Mini-Coopers came hurtling out of the darkness from every direction, spotlights blazing. Alas, it was not the Surprise Act, billed in advance by the Drones. Indeed, it was nothing whatever to do with the Drones. It was just a passing rally, one of many which tear around the Flemish countryside on wet November evenings. More to the point, it would not, as we hoped, lead us to the Castle.

How we finally made it is impossible to relate. But by now an hour late, we were quickly ushered to the top floor of the Castle which is a miniature theatre in red plush. The curtain rose, Kris Smets, Master of Ceremonies, stepped up to the rickety music-stand-cum-podium while the Belle Epoque Orchestra of Aarschot struck up *Mady* (G Destremeau-Stragier) under the baton of Walter Rens. The evening got under way.

The next four hours? Well, browsing, sluicing and cheery multi-lingual conversation certainly. The browsing included tuna carpaccio, salmon trilogy, pheasant mousse with port jelly, wild boar pate, scampi with caper sauce, sea tongues with Ostend garnish, caramelised chicons and tournedos Bordelaise. The sluicing was champagne – what else? – and *aangepaste* wines. The what-not comprised all the rest.

A survey of 15 years of Club life recalled how PG inspired a few friends to found a Club, organise activities in Edwardian style and enjoy discussing his characters, plots and humour, together with other

fans of the oeuvre. A hilarious video showed Millfleet Hall, balloon hunts, archery contests, unveiling a plaque to PG's 1940 incarceration in the fortress of Huy, a tour of London in *Harrison* the pink Rolls-Royce, and the presentation to the HSBC Chairman at Canary Wharf of a plaque which commemorated PG's unhappy banking career. I delivered a *Short History of the Drones Club of London (founded 1826)*, based on a rare volume discovered in an antiquarian bookshop in the Charing Cross Road. Tony Ring brought fraternal greetings and gifts from the P G Wodehouse Society (UK). The owner of the Castle, Ludo Schellens, and I were awarded Knighthoods of the Order of the Millfleet Pig Sty, the Club's highest honour.

The Surprise Act turned out to be the local brass band. In the main hall, it delivered memorable if noisy renditions of *Jerusalem* and *The Drones March* (W Rens). The performance dislodged a bat, still perplexed by the restoration but refusing eviction. A nice touch. We then moved on to the top what-not of the evening, the quest for the ultimate gentleman. A chart showing how the field had been whittled down to ten produced utter bewilderment, as did the final selection itself: P G, Lord Emsworth, Bertie Wooster, Jeeves, Dreyfus, Baron von Richthofen, Sir Philip Sidney, King Juan Carlos of Spain, Sean Connery and Kofi Annan. A show of hands and Lord Emsworth emerged the clear and worthy winner.

More music and an emotional rendering of *We'll Meet Again* (R Packer – H Charles) ended a memorable evening. Belgium, birth place of Magritte and Hergé, once again lived up to its reputation for originality and surreal animation. Inevitably, we got lost leaving. But the signs to Louvain eventually led to the road back to Brussels.

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges - 33

“What has become of Rollo? You seem to have mislaid him. Did you break off the engagement?”

“Well, it . . . sort of broke itself off. I mean, you see, I went and married Mike.”

“Eloped with him, you mean.”

“Yes.”

From *Leave It To Psmith* (1923)

Jan Wilson Kaufman, 1935-2004

Jan Wilson Kaufman, incumbent President of TWS, the American Wodehouse Society, died on December 5, 2004, after a prolonged battle with cancer.

By profession a highly skilled photographer, Jan had kept audiences at a number of American conventions riveted by her slideshows on matters of Wodehousean relevance, such as contemporary fashion (*What the Well-Dressed Man is Wearing*, Boston, 1995).

She had taken on responsibility for the Convention to be held in Hollywood in August 2005, which will now be co-ordinated by acting TWS President Jean Tillson. The UK Society was delighted to welcome Jan to the dinner in October at the Inner Temple, where she in turn was thrilled to meet again so many of her British friends and admirers (and where the photo was taken, by Ginni Beard).

She will be missed.



A Binder for Wooster Sauce ?

From time to time members have asked us if we plan to arrange binders for issues of *Wooster Sauce*. As we are volunteers, and the Society's policy is not to hold stocks of goods, the Committee has decided not to pursue this idea. But recently, we were contacted by Jenny Bevan, a bookbinder, who enjoys making binders for magazines. She writes: 'I consult with the customer on the colour of the spine cloth, the possibility of marbled paper/paste-wash paper or contrasting cloth sides, or a leather or arbetex spine, and about spine lettering.' If members wish to approach her, her address is

Please note that the Society does not accept responsibility for any transaction, whether for sales, purchases, services or otherwise, arising out of any advertisement or reference in *Wooster Sauce*. Members must make their own checks.

ANAGRAM COMPETITION

A disappointing entry for the prize competition was redeemed by a superb group from Terry Wilson, the winner of the four Everyman books. 'Madeline Bassett' became 'Neat damsels bite' and two others, though not the requested 15 characters long, were 'Crooked spider' from 'Roderick Spode' and 'Cripple Maybe' from Percy Pilbeam.

Sue Deniou was our runner-up.

An Honoured Position for Jeeves

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has made available on its website extensive information about those who died in the First World War. On a recent trip to Ieper (Ypres), the Editor visited the British Grenadier Bookshop and asked them to search for the details of Percy Jeeves.

Most of the information given was fairly standard and familiar to regular readers of these pages. He was a Private (service no 611) in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, 15th Battalion, and died on July 22, 1916 at the age of 28. He is buried in the Thiepval Memorial cemetery, where the reference to his grave is 'Pier and Face 9A 9B and 10B'.

In the section of the form 'Additional information', his parents are named as Edwin and Nancy Jeeves of 1A, Craven Street, Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury, Yorks. But the interesting point is that the form goes on to add that he was a: 'Professional Cricketer, played for Warwickshire'.

The owner of the bookshop seemed to take exception to that snippet, wondering why a cricketer should be singled out above, say, a miner or a farmer. He told us that he could not remember any other record which he had down-loaded where the vocation or profession of the individual was given. That is not, of course, to say that it was not given where known, but anecdotally, at least, we can chalk up something else exceptional for the bearer of the illustrious name, Jeeves.

Reggie Pepper on the Radio

Patron Martin Jarvis has written to say that he has adapted five of the seven Reggie Pepper stories for radio. His readings have already been recorded and they are currently scheduled on Radio 4 from August 1 to 5, 2005, each weekday afternoon at 3.30 pm.

Martin adds:

I'll be delighted if their transmission means that listeners are made aware of just how good the Reggie Pepper stories actually are. At the Folkestone Literary Festival in September I was able to demonstrate to an appreciative audience how (with remarkably little re-writing or re-structuring) PG dextrously turned one of his most brilliant Reggie Pepper stories, *Lines & Business*, into the sublime Jeeves tale, *Fixing it for Freddie* in *Carry On, Jeeves*.

Editor's Note:

Reggie Pepper is popularly regarded as the true predecessor of Bertie Wooster, though he had no clever valet to help him solve his problems. Two of the other Pepper tales were belatedly adapted by Wodehouse: Doing Clarence a Bit of Good became Jeeves Makes an Omelette in A Few Quick Ones (1958) and Rallying Round Old George became the Mulliner story George and Alfred in Plum Pie (1966).

Join the Committee for Oh, Clarence! in St Albans

The Abbey Theatre, St Albans, which staged an excellent production of *Come On, Jeeves*, in 2002, is turning again to a Wodehouse theme. From May 20 to May 28 it will be featuring *Oh, Clarence*, the play based on plot lines from a number of Blandings stories which John Chapman wrote in 1968.

The Committee has already contacted members from the surrounding area and has arranged a block booking for the evening performance on Saturday, May 21st for more than 25 members. An attempt will be made to book a further batch of tickets on April 15th. If you are interested, please contact

Tickets are £ 8 (concessions £ 7.50). We stress that Graham will need to receive payment before he is able to make a booking for you.

If you would prefer to go another night, the Theatre's website is www.abbeytheatre.org.uk, and the telephone number of its box office is 01727 857861. All performances start at 8pm.

The Stark-Munro Letters

Geoff Hales sent a brief extract from Conan Doyle's work (below) and suggested that PGW must have known about it when he wrote the short story Scoring Off Jeeves, which appeared as chapters 5 and 6 in The Inimitable Jeeves.

[The narrator has discovered a medal inscribed 'Presented to James Cullingworth for gallantry in saving life. Jan 1879.' and asked the owner about it.]

"What! The medal? It was a little boy. You've no idea the trouble I had to get him in."

"Get him out, you mean."

"My dear chap, you don't understand! Anyone could get a child out. It's getting one in that's the bother. One deserves a medal for it. Then there are the witnesses, four shillings a day I had to pay them, and a quart of beer in the evenings. You see you can't pick up a child and carry it to the edge of a pier and throw it in. You'd have all sorts of complications with the parents. You must be patient and wait until you get a legitimate chance. I caught a quinsy walking up and down Avonmouth pier before I saw my opportunity. He was rather a stolid fat boy, and he was sitting on the very edge, fishing. I got the sole of my foot on to the small of his back, and shot him an incredible distance. I had some little difficulty in getting him out, for his fishing line got twice round my legs, but it all ended well, and the witnesses were as staunch as possible. . . ."

Or would you prefer By Jeeves in Norwich?

Arrangements have also been made for a Society visit to the matinee performance of *By Jeeves* at the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich, on April 30, and for those who wish it, to lunch at Reeds, a private club in the City, beforehand. Committee member Paul Rush has written to members living in the area, but if others are interested, they should contact him,

The deadline for the initial group booking was February 28, but Paul will let you know the present situation.

Other Wodehouse Theatre

In addition to the St Albans and Norwich events, there will be a summer production of a new adaptation of *Pigs Have Wings* by the highly respected City Lit Theatre Company in Chicago. And in the June issue we will review *Ring For Jeeves* (*Come On Jeeves* under another name) staged in Carshalton at the end of February.

A Letter from Italy

Elena Fabbris wrote:

Dear Readers of the *Wooster Sauce*,

I am a member of the Club and I now wish to give my own personal credit to our mutual loved writer. I can certainly imagine that reading his books make us all feel better or sort of enjoy a little bit more what life has to offer us.

Well, imagine what a pleasant evasion it can mean to someone who lives in the Italian country right in the middle between Florence and Pisa: that is to say Province in the worst unimaginable of ways.

No cinema nearby and no theatre unless you go to the cities. I imagine you might think that I am pretending too much but you cannot find a coffee or a tea-house either where you are able to sit down and relax or have a chat. All you are allowed to have is drab and smoky bars where you can only stand and participate in discussions about soccer, cars, money.

One may wonder why I am so critical about my own Country lifestyle, and the reason is that I have been living in London for a long while many years ago and I have seen that a different and more interesting life might be possible.

That is partly the reason why I decided to become a member of the Club: I imagined that one day or another I might have been able to return to London for a couple of days in occasion of a meeting or a promenade around Wodehouse's London or some other happening.

Unfortunately up to now I have not been able to do anything (although from Pisa there are daily low-cost flights to London) due to my child, my family duties and other commitments. I do not give up and sincerely hope that sooner or later, probably in occasion of a business journey, I might manage to do something of the kind.

Well I do not wish to take any longer your precious time but wish to thank once more the one who used to be a nice old man for brightening up my spare time. Actually, I believe that humour in general is not as frivolous as many think and I am convinced that if most powerful men were supplied with just a little bit of sense of humour, certainly there would be less evil in the world.

Rarely in history we read that important people who were cause of great evil had a sense of humour.

Bye now and . . . enjoy your reading!!

Ciao/Elena Fabbris

The Oxford College Debate

September's *Wooster Sauce* contained an article (*Bertie's College - a Contemporary View*) which has generated two replies.

Robin Simpson wrote:

With what beguiling sophistry Herrero and Kasten seek to persuade us that Christ Church not Magdalen was Bertie's College.

Relying on Chuffy Chufnell's assertion that after a bumps supper, Bertie insisting he was a mermaid wished to dive into 'the college fountain' and play the harp, our theorists claim that since the one has a fountain and the other hasn't, ergo Bertie was a member of Christ Church.

Attending many a cheery little supper at the Drones, and having rowed at one time for his college, Magdalen, albeit without much enthusiasm, Bertie would have been a perfect guest for a convivial bumps supper at Christ Church.

But sophistry is no substitute for hard evidence, and Bertie's comment (in *The Code of the Woosters*) when informed by Stiffy Byng that 'Stinker' Pinker had been up at Magdalen puts the matter beyond doubt:

Her mention of Magdalen interested me. It had been my own college. . . .

So, no confusion there, no possible room for mistakes, and inconceivable that Bertie would tell an absolute snorter about his own college.

Even Sir Watkyn Bassett, no fan of Bertram's, would have found the Magdalen case proved beyond even a periwinkle of doubt.

Fr Rob Bovendaard passed on the thoughts of his Canadian confrere Fr Christopher Lazowski, an Oxonian from New College:

I must note a few objections to this stimulating article:

1 Bertie's delicately tuned ear would be profoundly shocked to hear the expression 'Christ Church College'.

2 Bertie and Chuffy, if members of Christ Church talking about the fountain in Tom Quad, would have said "Mercury", not "the college fountain".

3 Magdalen does not have a Master, but a President.

4 Christ Church has neither a Master nor a Master's Garden.

5 It is true that Christ Church is the only college to be presided over by a Dean.

The prosecution have failed to prove their case!

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

Five Years is Practically Half A Decade

The fiftieth anniversary of Wodehouse's first appearance in *The Saturday Evening Post* was marked by an essay from him entitled *Fifty Years is Practically Half A Century*. Last time's column was my twentieth, thereby completing five years of *The Bibliographic Corner*. I therefore feel justified in following such an eminent precedent, and will use this column to cast a retrospective eye over my previous columns.

The column began in March 2000, taking the 'Corner' title as a nod in the direction of *The Captain*, the magazine in which most of Wodehouse's school stories first appeared and which, as Joseph Connolly observed, 'had a quite preposterous number of Corners for a merely rectangular journal. There were *The Camera Corner*, *The Cycling Corner*, *The Athletics Corner*, *The Naturalists Corner*, *The Stamp Corner*, and *The Library Corner*, among not a few other angles' (*P G Wodehouse: An Illustrated Biography*, 1979, p26).

The Corner started, appropriately enough, by considering Wodehouse's first book, *The Pothunters*, and identifying a 1915 reprint with pictorial boards which is omitted from the *McIlvaine* bibliography. The school story theme continued in the September 2000 column, which highlighted various school stories which had been republished in the 1920s in magazines, such as *The Boys' Friend*, often under new titles, unrecorded by *McIlvaine*.

The next two Corners dealt with Wodehouse's little known editorship of the *Answers to Correspondents* column in *Tit Bits* in 1908, and quoted some otherwise unpublished material from that period, which presaged later, typically Wodehousean themes.

June 2001's column looked at *A Gentleman of Leisure*, early editions of which are noticeable for Wodehouse's dedication to Herbert Westbrook, which formed the basis for his later, much better known dedication of *Heart of a Goof* to his daughter, Leonora ('Without whose never-failing sympathy and encouragement this book would have been finished in half the time').

The next column dealt with many of the magazine serialisations omitted by *McIlvaine*. These were included in the *Addendum* issued by the International Wodehouse Association in September 2001, which was reviewed in the December 2001 column ('... fills a long felt want. Every home should have one.').

The next two columns dealt with certain titles from the 1930s through to the 1960s which had been issued in a variety of different coloured bindings, leading to vexed questions over what constituted a variant issue or a reissue.

September 2002's column returned to the school stories, to coincide with the Centenary Exhibition being staged at Dulwich College to mark the first publication of *The Pothunters*. The next column looked at some of Wodehouse's scarcer titles from the period 1904-14, for which bibliographic details are often less complete.

The March 2003 column dealt with *A Damsel in Distress*, highlighting certain points which enable the first three issues to be distinguished, and June saw *My Man Jeeves* under the spotlight, with illustrations revealing that the first three editions all had different artwork on the dustwrappers. Seven magazine appearances which had come to light since the *Addendum's* publication were disclosed in the next column, while the textual differences of various editions of *Something Fresh* and *Something New* were considered in December 2003.

March 2004's column tackled one of the most well known events in Wodehouse's life – the story of his being sacked by the bank for defacing a new ledger. It identified a multitude of appearances: one manuscript dedication in an Old Alleynian dinner book, one autobiography, three magazine articles, two interviews and one LP. In fact, since then I have unearthed a further magazine appearance, under the title *Something Clever*, in *Punch* on 6 October 1954. And there will surely be others discovered in the future: given that Barry Phelps claims to 'have noted some eighty interviews Wodehouse gave at Remsenburg, and [to] have probably missed at least as many more' (*P G Wodehouse: Man and Myth*, 1992, p239), it would be surprising if some of them did not refer to the ledger story.

The next two columns dealt with Wodehouse's appearances in *Playboy* magazine and the most recent, in December 2004, examined the four Jeeves and Wooster short stories with a Christmas setting.

And now for the next five years...

Editor's Note: Back issues of most editions of Wooster Sauce and By The Way are available at £2.50 and £1 each, respectively, from the Membership Secretary at the address on page 24. Please check availability before sending cheques made payable to The P G Wodehouse Society (UK).

Recent Press Comment

Sunday Times, November 7

An article about England's new rugby union coach, Andy Robinson, described him as someone whom you suspect, playing golf, might 'resemble the character from P G Wodehouse who never spared himself in his efforts to do the ball a violent injury'.

The Times, November 11

Alex Neate James, bass guitarist with pop group Blur, moved to the village of Kingham in Oxfordshire, and described the 'feudal system still operating in the Cotswolds' as 'totally old-fashioned; a bit like living in a P G Wodehouse novel'.

Daily Telegraph, November 23 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Reported that plans to shift a newt colony to reopen a quarry owned by the Duke of Westminster in Flintshire to mine limestone were blocked when the Court of Appeal ruled that the newts must stay.

Financial Times, November 23 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Christopher Bland, Chairman of BT, was reported as saying there was no point in being surrounded 'in P G Wodehouse's immortal phrase, by noddors and yessers'. He added that all the people he had worked with really well had been men with their own minds.

The Week, November 13 (from Alexander Dainty)

Ferdinand Mount, former Editor, *Times Literary Supplement*, included *The Code of the Woosters* in list of his 'Best (presumably meaning 'favourite') Books'.

Hindustan Times, November 24 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Vijay Dutt wrote: 'The Yuletide season this year seems to be full of beans, to use the P G Wodehouse expression'.

Observer, November 28

Kazuo Ishiguro mentioned in *Books of the Year* that the paper's literary editor's biography of PGW 'put not just the great comic writer, but a whole English approach to life, under the microscope'.

The Times, November 16 (from John Hayzelden)

David Pannick QC was reporting on a reprieve given to a German shepherd dog accused of biting a woman, and commented approvingly on Bertie Wooster's comment on the idea of imposing a fine for moving pigs without a permit:

"I do not keep pigs myself, but if I did I should strongly resent not being allowed to give them a change of air and scenery without getting permission from a board of magistrates. Are we in Russia?"

BBC Radio 7 (from Richard Vine)

The Little Toe Show, a series aimed at children, has a series entitled *The Adventures of P G Woodlouse*.

Washington Post, December 5

Katherine Powers reviewed the whole gamut of audio-recordings of Jeeves and Wooster which are available on tape in the USA and bestowed the laurels (not unexpectedly) on Jonathan Cecil.

The Business, December 12/13 (from Edward Cazalet)

A front page article said that the most popular leisure activity among Bangalore's growing band of computer whizzkids is to organise marathon quizzes on the works of Wodehouse. 'The works by Wodehouse have become an obsession for a generation of male and female computer programmers,' according to the chief executive of outsourcing company Mphasis.

The Star, South Africa, December 31 (from Murray Hedgcock)

James Clarke started an article by writing: 'Three years ago I wrote of 'inappropriate analogies' – an analogy being a comparison such as when P G Wodehouse wrote of a customs officer: His eyes were as cold and hard as picnic eggs.'

The Africa South African News website, January 1, 2005 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Offered a recipe for the Prairie Oyster as the remedy favoured by Jeeves to revive Bertie W.

Sunday Express, Bombay, January 1, 2005 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Amitava Kumar argued that e-mail has 'restored the world I never had', as exemplified in P G Wodehouse novels, 'where one found that people awaited the delivery of mail not simply once but at different times of the day. In the part of the world that I grew up in, letters took several days to reach their destinations, if at all.'

Guardian, January 12

In an interview about writing the screenplay of the film *Dogville*, Lars von Trier admitted he had not read much classic English literature, and added: 'But I've read Wodehouse, for instance, who uses the same sort of subtle, knowing tone that I've tried to get across in the text.'

Times, January 18

In an obituary for Veronica, Lady Maclean, the compiler recalled advice she received from Ronald Knox, when he advised her not to read too much Wodehouse: 'He writes perfect English, but you don't want to make a diet of it.'

Press Comment, continued

Times, January 18

Robert Gore-Langton concluded a contribution to the *Thunderer* column in which he spoke out in support of pigs: You can keep George Orwell and his Stalinist pigs in *Animal Farm*. Far better, surely, to take a leaf out of the book of Wodehouse's Lord Emsworth, who viewed with the greatest suspicion anyone who was 'unsound on pigs'.

Daily Telegraph, January 20

In a review of the new production of *King Lear* at the Albery Theatre, Charles Spencer wrote that 'Pal Aron gains impressively in strength, despite an absurd first appearance in which he appears to be auditioning for the role of P G Wodehouse's Gussie Fink-Nottle'.

Independent, January 24 (from Peter Read)

Matthew Norman claimed that 'political historians have already come to see [Robert Kilroy-Silk] as our most impressive right-wing ideologue since Roderick Spode founded the Black Shorts'.

Sunday Telegraph, February 13

David Orr followed up on the story of Wodehouse's popularity with India's computer generation.

Times, February 14

Patrick Kidd wrote a persuasive article for *The Thunderer* column, promoting Wodehouse as a romantic author and proposing that St Valentine's Day be renamed St Gussie's Day.

Independent, February 14

Rhodri Marsden reported on an experiment to see if Wodehouse's story of dropping letters out of a window and having them delivered promptly still works today.

Stop Press: More Theatre

We have just learned of yet another Wodehouse Theatre project. James Rayment is hoping to stage his adaptation of *Psmith in the City* at 'The Space' on the Isle of Dogs in June. Look out for details on the Society website from time to time, or contact James

Latest Chivers Audio

The latest Chivers unabridged Audiobook is *Ukridge*, read by Jonathan Cecil (tape and CD). Contact BBC Audiobooks on 0800 136919 for details, or visit the website www.bbcshop.com

Poets' Corner

The Very First

I like to think that once on a time
In the far-off days of yore,
When no-one said at the end of a tale
That he'd heard the thing before;
In the days when man had a simple mind
And Humour had scarce begun,
Somebody took his life in his hands
And shot off the Primal Pun –
The very first, and perhaps the worst,
The original Primal Pun.

Those were the days when the humorist
Was a practical sort of a man;
He didn't rely on verbal points,
But worked on a different plan.

A sudden smack from behind with a club
Was what he considered fun,
Till one fine morning a genius came
And worked off the Primal Pun.

How it must have gone in those dim, dead days!
What a stir it must have made!

How they must have roared till they strained their ribs
And their friends applied first aid!

Jests there have been by the score since then,
But that was the earliest one,

When that light-hearted caveman gave a wink
And uttered the Primal Pun.

I often wonder when lights are low
And my final pipe I smoke,

What was it – that pioneer of mirth,
That earliest verbal joke.

But ever in vain do I rack my brain;
There is none, to tell me, none,

What were the words of the first buffoon
Who shot out the Primal Pun.

Yet often again, when I'm dining out,
And o'er my coffee I sit,

And my host is painfully trying to air
A rudimentary wit,

As he slowly works through his laboured jest
With a dullness that seems to stun,

I say to myself, "It is! It is!"

This must be that Primal Pun!

The very first, and certainly worst,
The original Primal Pun!"

From *Pearson's*, September 1906

Copyright by the Trustees of the Wodehouse Estate

Subscriptions

Members will be pleased to learn that no change is proposed in the level of the annual subscription for 2005/2006. It will remain £ 15 per annum, as it has been since the Society was founded in 1997.

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

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 to arrange your booking and the meeting-place and time.

April 21 to 30, 2005 – *By Jeeves*

Production at the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich. See page 19.

April 26 to May 8, 2005 – *The Beauty Prize*

Production of the 1923 musical by Musicals Tonight in New York.

May 20 to May 28, 2005 – *Oh, Clarence!*

Production at the Abbey Theatre, St Albans. See page 19.

June 17, 2005 – Dulwich College cricket match

The Gold Bats v Dulwich Dusters cricket match at Dulwich College with a famous Gold Bats tea on offer (forms enclosed). See page 16.

June 26, 2005 – Sherlock Holmes cricket match

This year's match is again at West Wycombe, Bucks, starting around 11am. See page 16.

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. Graham Seed (Nigel Pargeter from *The Archers*) will read an extract from a PGW book.

August 11-14, 2005 – TWS Convention, Hollywood

The date of the next convention of the American Wodehouse Society, which will be held on the UCLA campus in Hollywood. See page 12.

September 17, 2005 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Another opportunity to see Wodehouse's London.

October 11, 2005 – The Savage Club

Advance notice of the date of the autumn meeting, which is expected to include the AGM.

Note that the planned Dulwich College events in December have been withdrawn.

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

David Taylor has written to say that a weekend retreat, to be conducted by Abbot Stephen Ortiger, is scheduled for Worth Abbey, near Crawley, from September 9 to 11. Its theme is *God, P G Wodehouse and Winnie the Pooh*.

Hetty Litjens from The Netherlands informs us that a missing seventh ingredient from the Green Swizzle recipe (*Wooster Sauce* December 2004, p20) is carbonated water, though whether this should replace the sprig of mint or the ice she does not say.

Donald Daniel has suggested that members might enjoy two books by Dane Chandos: *Abbie* and *Abbie and Arthur*.

Harshawardhan Nimkhedkhar has discovered that a play opened at the Garrick Theatre, New York, on October 29, 1914 (while PGW was resident in the city) with the title *Milady's Boudoir*. It was written by J C Drum, and directed by Reginald Barlow. None of its cast became household names, so perhaps it is not surprising that it ran for just twelve performances.

Harshawardhan also found a record on the internet of an undergraduate study from the 1990s to create a geological map of the Fortuna-Meshkenet Dunefield, Northern Audra, Planitia, on Venus. It noted that only one aspect (Jadwiga) had been officially named, but other features have been given provisional names, which may be familiar:

Honorina Glossop, Clementina, Stiffy, Florence Craye, Aunt Dahlia, Roberta 'Bobby' Wickham, Aunt Agatha, Tinkler-Moulke, Madeline Bassett, Rosie M Banks, Cora Bellinger, Pauline Stoker, Muriel Singer and Gwladys.

John Moss drew attention to an article in *The Sunday Telegraph* about Lemmy, of the rock group Motörhead. 'When not tying up his girlfriends [of whom he estimates there have been over 2,000], drinking Jack Daniels or taking speed, Lemmy . . . likes to read P G Wodehouse.' *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* is noted as the one which he had most recently reread. Of course Bertie had a lot of fiancées, but nowhere near 2,000, and the term 'girlfriend' might enjoy a different nuance today.