

WOOSTER SAUCE



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

Number 38

June 2006

Centenary of Love Among the Chickens

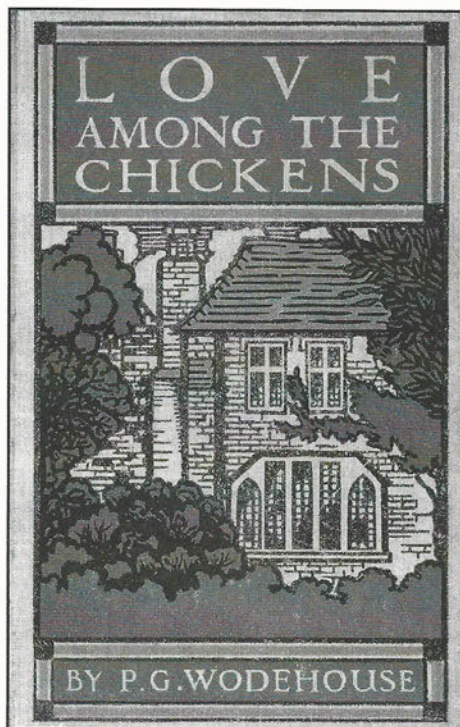
2006 is the centenary of the publication of *Love Among the Chickens*, Wodehouse's first book for adults. It introduced one of his most controversial characters, Ukridge, about whom fans have distinctly equivocal views, Evelyn Waugh describing him as 'contrived'. But member David Butler has drawn attention to an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* of June 19, 1924, when the reviewer of *Ukridge*, a newly published book of short stories, took an opposing view:

The point is that he is a creation of Mr Wodehouse's and therefore makes the reader giggle aloud, first to the mystification and then to the open annoyance of other people in the railway carriage. Mr Wodehouse has such a way with him. There is really no more to be said about it.

Ukridge was one of Wodehouse's likeable rogues, rather like Soapy and Dolly Molloy but in heroic mould. While in general Wodehousean characters are not allowed to benefit from their nefarious activities (and this philosophy is usually followed with the Ukridge stories), Wodehouse relaxed his stern principles to allow Ukridge to take some satisfaction from the outcomes of several adventures.

Love Among the Chickens is a book with an interesting history, both bibliographically and as far as the characters are concerned. In the 1906 edition, Ukridge more or less shared equal status as the 'hero' with the narrator Jeremy Garnet, who is involved personally in many of the major incidents, although the rewrite for the 1921 Herbert Jenkins edition changed the balance somewhat. (Wodehouse claimed to have 'practically rewritten' the book for the later version, as 'there was some pretty bad work in it'.)

Herbert Jenkins had become Wodehouse's UK publisher in 1918, with *Piccadilly Jim*, and by 1921



had published three more new books and reprints of *A Gentleman of Leisure* and *Piccadilly Jim*. *A Gentleman of Leisure* had also been updated in one or two respects, such as changing the name of the Prime Minister.

The time spent on revising *LATC* seems to have given Wodehouse the idea of writing a series of Ukridge short stories. In June 1922 he asked Bill Townend for plots, as he had to write another series for the *Strand* and wanted to write stories with Ukridge as the main character. 'At the date of the series he is still unmarried and I can make him always in love with some girl or other, like Bingo Little, if necessary'. A year later, he told Townend that he had no

more ideas for plots and would have to drop the Ukridge series for the moment. 'I wanted the last two stories to be about how he got married, and it looked as if it would be pretty easy, but I'm darned if I can think of anything for him to do.'

For in *Love Among the Chickens*, written more than fifteen years earlier, Ukridge is a married man, the spouse of Millie (Millicent, née Lakenheath). The device of returning him to bachelorhood for the short stories enabled Wodehouse to involve him with five separate women during his fictional life of forty years: Dora Mason, Mabel Price (to whom he was engaged), Millie Lakenheath, 'Mabel', and Myrtle Bayliss. The exploits concerning the first three all occurred in the stories making up the *Ukridge* collection in 1924, whereas the latter two were relative afterthoughts in 1926 and 1928. Millie Lakenheath appeared in the last story in *Ukridge*, and was the second of his two fiancées, and clearly, if the Wodehouse brain had been in mid-season form in 1923, so that his wedding to Millie could have been described, at least some of the later stories could not have been written.

P G Wodehouse's Russian Salad *

by Masha Lebedeva

Our Russian member Masha Lebedeva, who joined us on the Society's Millennium Tour in 2000, has recently completed a study of 90 of Wodehouse's books, researching the extent to which he, like Raymond Parsloe Devine, was influenced by Russia and the Russians. Her findings, which touch on many aspects of the country, its culture and history, and the spirit of its people, will emerge gradually over the next several issues of Wooster Sauce. She has referred to more than 150 quotations of relevant references, and selections from these will appear in the *By The Way* accompanying this edition of Wooster Sauce, and in those of the next two Junes.

Although P G Wodehouse never visited Russia, that did not stop him making hundreds of references to Russian matters in his books, from 1909 to 1974. I have restricted myself to talking only about the Russian appearances in fiction stories, leaving out those essays where we can find Wodehouse's commentaries on the situation in Russia, and his autobiographical books, where Plum writes about his meeting with living Russians (see, for example, his description of Chaliapin in *Bring on the Girls*, ch 9(2)).

Reading Wodehouse's novels and short stories, we meet personages who can provide us with necessary information on foreign countries: Plum's books abound in French cooks, Italian waiters, Indian colonels and Africa explorers, at least. But actual Russian characters appear in only two short stories – *The Swoop* and *The Clicking of Cuthbert* – playing their quite important, but rather negative roles. As for exploring Russia, this idea came to another two of Wodehouse's characters. Jimmy Pitt (*A Gentleman of Leisure*), legging it about the world because of his unhappy love, had been wondering if he wouldn't give a trial to Russia, but abandoned his travel plans when his romance revived. Then in *Barmy in Wonderland*, Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps was dissuaded from staging his play in Moscow by Dinty Moore.

I could not have completed this research without the help of highly knowledgeable people, who helped in various ways. Norman Murphy and Bengt Malmberg provided me with necessary explanations about some of Wodehouse's quotes; and with infinite gratitude I should call Jelle Otten the co-author of this article, because he not only answered all my numerous questions, but did a great deal of work in finding for me the original English texts of the

quotations that I had only in Russian. My special thanks to Tony Ring, who edited these articles and translated them from my own English to that which every reader can understand. And, certainly, I should mention the Russian Wodehouse Society's website (www.wodehouse.ru), which was created by our chairman Michel Kuzmenko, and was very useful in all respects.

I have divided my researches into three main topics: Russian Culture, Russian History and the Russian Spirit. In this first article, I concentrate on the first aspect of Russian Culture: the Ballet. Aspects of Russian Literature will follow in the next two articles, and the *Volga Boat Song* and paintings of Russian princesses lying in the nude on tiger skins, which might hardly be considered cultural phenomena at all, are considered later.

The Russian Ballet

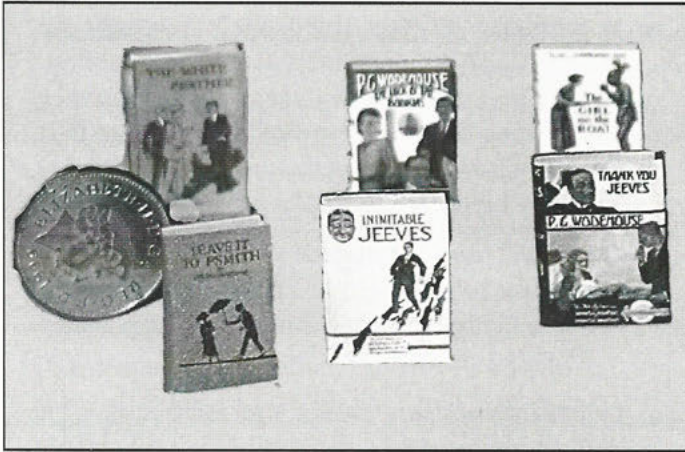
The Russian Ballet as a cultural phenomenon of world-wide fame certainly couldn't be ignored by Wodehouse, especially because it was a subject which the English intelligentsia was ready to discuss both in 1917 (*Piccadilly Jim*, ch9) and in 1931 (*The Voice from the Past*, from *Mulliner Nights*). The Russian Ballet theme figured even in the knockabout cross-talk acts at village-halls up and down the country (*The Mating Season*, ch9 and 22). We can only regret that Wodehouse – unlike the guests of Mrs Pett – wouldn't give his attention to the inner meaning of the Russian Ballet, but concentrated upon its outward manifestations, although he did once tell us about the famous *Swan Lake* (*Bachelors Anonymous*, ch10).

Here and there Wodehouse mentions the Russian ballet dancer – sometimes unnamed, sometimes Nijinsky. I decided not to attribute to Russia quotations such as 'He spun round with a sort of guilty bound, like an adagio dancer surprised while watering the cat's milk' from *Joy in the Morning*, ch3, as I don't wish to deprive other countries' dancers from certain merits in the sphere of ballet.

Mostly, he prefers to describe this and that step of the dancer to express, first of all, this and that state of mind of the character. It may be an unexpected pleasure, when Jeff d'Escrignon learned of Mr. Clutterbuck's plan to sell a hundred thousand copies of his book ('The Ritz grillroom did a Nijinsky leap before Jeff's eyes', *French Leave*, ch8(1)); or something more unpleasant, as when Bingo Little

How Eccentric is This?

Dolls' House Model Wodehouse Books



One of the most eccentric Wodehouse-related offerings to appear on the internet ebay auction site has been a series of miniature books described as 'doll's-house-size' with covers and/or jackets of Wodehouse books. They stand about the height of a 1p coin, and the detail on their covers is extraordinarily clear. They are of course small blocks, and do not contain any text, nor do they open.

The creator of these fascinating items is Ken Blythe of North Shields, whose e-mail address is

At the time of writing he has prepared for auction thirteen different sets of six titles, meaning that almost all Wodehouse's output is available in this format! The accompanying photo gives no more than a taste of what is available.

Wodehouse's Russian Salad, continued

realised that Mrs Bingo knew all ('... the offices of *Wee Tots* did one of those *entrechats* which Nijinsky used to do in Russian Ballet', *Bingo Bans the Bomb*, from *Plum Pie*). The reference might be to a mere expectation of unpleasantness, as when Bertie Wooster was on the very brink of his next engagement to Madeleine Basset ('The mice in my interior had now got up an informal dance and were buck-and-winging all over the place like a bunch of Nijinskys.' *The Mating Season*, ch10).

It was not only a restaurant grill-room, but even a respectable liner such as the *Atlantic* which could behave like a Russian dancer and lower Nijinsky's record for leaping on the air and twiddling the feet before descending, though in fairness to the ship we should add that its behaviour was caused by a terrible storm (*The Luck of the Bodkins*, ch13).

Wodehouse characters who themselves acted like Russian dancers should certainly be at least partly excused for their behaviour. In fact, from the quotations in *By The Way*, you can see that Lord Emsworth, Bream Mortimer and James Corcoran shouldn't be blamed very much at all, because they made the Ballet pas whilst under considerable stress. Especially we should excuse Mr Trout (*Bachelors Anonymous*, ch10), who had been floating about the room like something out of Swan Lake because of pure love which had suddenly come to him.

As for the case of Adrian Peake, he undoubtedly should refrain from jumping 'with a lissom grace,

like something out of the Russian ballet' (*Summer Moonshine*, ch6). His action resembles Cyprian Rossiter's adroitness in avoiding a blow from a dagger. ('If he fails as a critic, there is always a future for him as a Russian dancer', *The Man who Gave Up Smoking*, from *Mr Mulliner Speaking*)

Far more revolting is the situation when the Brinkley Court servants, dancing at a country house ball, make Bertie Wooster think he might as well be living in the middle of the Russian Ballet (*Right Ho, Jeeves*, ch22). A similar remark may be addressed to Mr Slingsby after springing forward with war-cries and treading on a casual golf-ball (*The Spot of Art*, from *Very Good, Jeeves*).

It is curious that the female characters in Wodehouse's works exhibit rather an enviable restraint and are rarely found practising steps from the Russian Ballet. Marcia Ferris, an early fiancée of Tipton Plimsoll did so (*Galahad at Blandings*, ch 10(1)), but otherwise we have to turn to Mrs Fisher, who contrived to turn even golf into the Russian Ballet, for assistance (*Keeping In with Vosper*, from *The Heart of a Goof*).

* Footnote about 'Russian Salad'

You're the top, you're a Russian Salad
You're the top, you're a Gershwin ballad

(PGW's changes to the lyric for Cole Porter's song *You're the Top*, introduced for the London production of *Anything Goes*)

A Wodehouse Tribute to Henry James?

Peter Nieuwenhuizen needs to be persuaded

Peter Nieuwenhuizen, President of the Dutch Wodehouse Society, found an article in The Henry James Review Volume 21 (Winter 2005), pages 99-104, by Marijane R Davis Wernsman of Texas Tech University, entitled The Figure in the Carpet of Honeysuckle Cottage: P G Wodehouse and Henry James. Her thesis is summarised below, and members are invited to send their views to the Editor. The most persuasive reply (in favour or against her arguments) will receive four books from the Everyman Wodehouse range.

The central plank of Marijane's article is that Wodehouse wrote the Mulliner story *Honeysuckle Cottage* (which appeared in two magazines in 1925 before being included in *Meet Mr Mulliner* in 1927) as a form of tribute to Henry James, whose work he admired. She suggests that he had long wanted to write a decent ghost story and wrote this one with James's ghost stories in mind: 'subtle, slightly humorous or at least ironic, with psychological terror, they are polar opposites of the flat-out burlesque quality of the Wooster stories'.

She highlights the fact that on at least two occasions Wodehouse claimed that this was his funniest story, and suggests that he said this to see how many readers and critics would realise the story itself was 'Wodehouse's longest and funniest tribute to Henry James'. She points out that 'few, if any, have ever got the joke'.

Wernsman sought to compare similarities in the approach of the two authors: that they both reflected life in late Victorian and Edwardian upper-class society with a high degree of accuracy; that they both delved into the hearts of the aristocracy and gentry of London and the Midlands with perspicuity; that they both had three phases to their career; that they both tried and rejected the world of commerce and profession; that they both wrote stories about writers with sympathy, understanding and compassion; that they were both playwrights (though James was unsuccessful in this genre); and that they were both expatriates.

She points out that Wodehouse had characters refer to James in early school stories, and used as a pen-name for Mr Prosser in *Pots O' Money (The Man With Two Left Feet)*, Edith Butler, who appeared in James's *Death of the Lion*. Her conclusion is that *Honeysuckle Cottage* is a parody of *The Turn of the Screw*, to which Mr Mulliner himself refers.

The writer identifies several pieces of circumstantial evidence to support her proposition:

- a Wodehouse uses a third-party narrator to recount Mr Mulliner's tales at the Anglers' Rest, which she compares to James's use of Douglas recounting the adventure of a governess to a group who had gathered for a traditional English Christmas ghost tale.
- b Douglas overestimated the governess's intellectual ability; Mr Mulliner wrongly believes his relations to be paragons of physical and mental skills.
- c In both stories the 'ghosts' are associated with places, not people: they are 'true hauntings'.
- d Neither Rodman's apple-cheeked housekeeper nor the governess's Mrs Grose provide any support, refusing to believe that the apparitions pointed out by the victims really are ghosts.
- e Wodehouse uses Henry as Colonel Carteret's first name, and James as Rodman's.
- f Carteret is a name used by James in *The Tragic Muse* (1890), and his relationship to Rose Maynard duplicates that of guardian and ward in *Watch and Ward* (1871, James's first novel), with the hero adopting the orphaned daughter of the man he has befriended, and raising her, hoping to marry her when she is of age.
- g James used the name 'Mulliner' for a minor character in the short story *The Lesson of the Master*, which was about authors.
- h Rose Maynard is described as '... a tender fairy creature ... an elfin child ...'. James notes in the preface to his book that it is a fairy tale and 'Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are not ghosts but goblins, elves ...'.
- i Several aspects of James Rodman's personality mirror those of James: he is a serious writer of mysteries; his work habits; the revulsion they both felt at the 'glutinous sentimentality' churned out by popular novelists.
- j Wodehouse and James both avoided scenes of overt sexuality. Wodehouse wrote that it was 'no good doing what you can't write; there are few people who can do it well'.

In summarising this paper, I am only too conscious that I have read little James, and cannot comment on

Anyone for Cocaine?

David Mackie's attention was drawn to the furore earlier this year surrounding the alleged use of cocaine by one of the leading British models, because he was reading Wodehouse at the time.

Jane Gets Off the Fairway, from *The Heart of a Goof*, contains some telling lines about the activities of the cubist painter Miss Osbaldistone ('a manly young woman'). After informing Jane Bates that she had come in to borrow a cigarette, and following some discussion about the origins of Rodney Spelvin's heroine Eulalie, she went on:

"You're sure you've no cigarettes? No? Well, how about a shot of cocaine? Out of that, too? Oh, well, I'll be going, then. Pip-pip, Bates."

David wonders whether the use of cocaine might have been legal in 1926. 'I can't believe that P G would introduce anything that would have been contentious. And are we to assume that Jane Bates also has shots of cocaine? She is, after all, a heroine of more than one story.'

Editor's Comment: *Jane Gets off the Fairway* first appeared in 1924, while Plum was still involved with the theatrical world both in London and New York. It was more than a decade before the appearance of the Cole Porter's famous lines from the Wodehouse-Bolton show *Anything Goes* (1936):

Some get a kick from cocaine
I'm sure that even one sniff
Would bore me terrifically, too
Yet I get a kick out of you

Plum would have been conscious of the illicit activity around him, including, of course, the consumption of alcohol in the USA from January 16, 1920. Light-hearted comment on the impact of prohibition appears in a number of books, especially *The Small Bachelor* (1927).

PGW in a German Calendar

Manfred Porsch complains that not too many references to or quotations from PGW may be found in Germany. But he found one on the page for February 15th, 2006 in a German tear-off calendar.

MITTWOCH
15
FEBRUAR

* 1564 Galileo Galilei, Pisa
* 1746 Wilhelm Heinse, Langewieschen bei Ilmenau
† 1781 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Braunschweig
* 1887 H. M. Bateman, Moss Vale in Australia

His brow was sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought and his air was that of a man who, if he said 'alloy girls' would have said it like someone in a Russian drama announcing that grandpapa had hanged himself in the barn.

P. G. Wodehouse

The quotation is from *The Mating Season*, ch2.

Manfred added 'The Raben-Kalender is a kind of literary calendar with quotations and cartoons from famous or not so famous authors. As you can see it also gives the dates of birth and death of authors and other artists. It is a funny smorgasbord running now for 15 or so years and I look forward every morning to what the new page might hold in store.'

Wodehouse and Henry James, continued

the weight to be given to his side of her argument. But in asking members more familiar with his work to comment, I would invite them to bear in mind the following flaws in her factual argument:

i *Honeysuckle Cottage* first appeared in early 1925 in the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Strand*. Wodehouse told Townend in a letter dated 1 October, 1924, that it was the 'funniest idea I have ever had'. In the magazine story Mr Mulliner did not appear.

It was not until 1927, when Wodehouse's publishers required a ninth story to complete a

Mulliner collection, that Wodehouse introduced Mr Mulliner as narrator.

ii As a result, Mr Mulliner is neither specified as being at the Anglers' Rest nor is he speaking to a group of fellow-imbibers. A further seven 'Mulliner' stories did not start life that way, but were adjusted to meet the demands of the publisher, one by the mere expedient of adding the words '(said Mr Mulliner)'.

The pages of the September edition of *Wooster Sauce* await your verdict as to whether Marijane Wernsman has made her case.

Animal Crackers

by Elin Woodger

This article is derived from a paper presented by Elin at the Hollywood Convention of The Wodehouse Society in August 2005.

As we all know, P G and Ethel Wodehouse loved animals and kept numerous pets over the years. When they were living in Hollywood, the Pekinese in residence were Susan and her daughter Winks (also known as Winky). One of the Wodehouses' greatest pals was the actress Maureen O'Sullivan, (best known as Jane to Johnny Weismuller's Tarzan). In 1932 Wodehouse dedicated his novel *Hot Water* 'To Maureen O'Sullivan with love from Ethel, Leonora, Miss Winks, John-John, and the author.' John-John, yet another Peke, belonged to Miss O'Sullivan but was staying with the Wodehouses at the time.

Another great pal, from Wodehouse's Princess Theatre days, was Marion Davies, who was devoted to William Randolph Hearst and her dachshund Gandhi. She had acquired Gandhi while in Germany with Hearst, and when she couldn't bring him with her to England because of the quarantine rules, he was left behind in a suite at the Wagram hotel in Paris. There, according to Davies, 'he stayed with my maid and took advantage of the trees in the Tuileries. He practically ruined them all.' Gandhi settled in nicely at San Simeon, although when Doris Duke, the tobacco heiress, came to stay, he took a fancy to her and followed her everywhere. Davies wrote: 'He was a dirty little chiseler. . . . I had thought Gandhi would never leave me. But he followed her continually. I decided he was after her money; she was richer than I was.'

Hollywood stars were and still are frequently pictured in the papers with their animals of choice, whether dogs, cats, horses, birds, monkeys, or snakes – and this was, of course, reflected in Wodehouse's stories. In the early *Uneasy Money* (1917), Polly Wetherby, on the advice of her press agent, acquired a snake and a monkey for publicity. Oddly, her husband Algie did not seem to care for the additions to the household, as she described in a letter to Claire Fenwick:

Things came to a head this morning at breakfast. Clarence, my snake, has the cutest way of climbing up the leg of the table and looking at you pleadingly in the hope that you will give him a soft-boiled egg, which he adores. He did it this morning, and no sooner had his head appeared above the table than Algie, with a kind of sharp

wail, struck him a violent blow on the nose with a teaspoon. Then he turned to me, very pale, and said: "Pauline, this must end! The time has come to speak up. A nervous, highly-strung man like myself should not, and must not, be called upon to live in a house where he is constantly meeting snakes and monkeys without warning. Choose between me and –"

We had got as far as this when Eustace, the monkey, who I didn't know was in the room at all, suddenly sprang on to his back. He is very fond of Algie.

Would you believe it? Algie walked straight out of the house, still holding the teaspoon, and has not returned. . . .

The renowned film actress Lottie Blossom had a similarly cavalier attitude toward the animal that had been foisted on her by her publicist. Lottie caused problems wherever she went, which were illustrated explicitly by the long-suffering ship steward, Albert Peasemarch:

"A very larky young lady she is, sir. . . . Well, let me give you an instance, sir. Half an hour ago it may have been, the bell rang in her shed and I went in and there she was, reddening of her lips at the mirror with a red lipstick. 'Good evening,' she says. 'Good evening, miss,' I says. 'Are you the steward?' she says. 'Yes, miss,' I says, 'I am the steward. Is there anything I can do for you?' 'Why, yes, steward,' she says, 'there is. Will you be so good as to open that little wickerwork basket on the floor there and reach me out my smelling-salts?' 'Certainly, miss,' I says. 'Only too happy.' And I go to the basket and I lift the lid and I pretty near do a somersault over backwards. And the young lady says: 'Why, steward,' she says, 'what is it? Your manner is strange. Have you been having a couple?' And I says: 'Are you aware, miss, that there is a living organism in that basket, a living organism that snaps at you when you raise the lid and would pretty near have took the top of my thumb off if I hadn't of looked slippy?' And she says: 'Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you. That's my alligator.' There in a nutshell, sir, you have the young lady next door."

Hollywood has loved attention-getting devices ever since 1910, when the producer Carl Laemmle faked the death of the actress Florence Lawrence to stir up interest in her new film. Thereafter, publicity stunts

Wodehouse Reviewed on Japanese TV

Reported by Mike Iwanaga

Mike Iwanaga is one of the two contemporary translators of PGW into Japanese. Collections of short stories under the titles *The Casebook of Jeeves* and *The Misgivings of Lord Emsworth* are proving very popular, the former being in its fourth printing, and the latter in its second.

On the morning of February 19, NHK-TV (the Japanese equivalent of the BBC) broadcast its regular *Book Review programme*. The presenter was Ms Yoko Yamazaki, writer and critic, who introduced and commented on the second recent Japanese translation of Wodehouse stories: *The Misgivings of Lord Emsworth*. The programme lasted for fifteen minutes. Ms Yamazaki approved the skilful translation, and commented:

“I have long been an addict of Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers and others, but had not read a single Wodehouse, to my great regret.”

“All the stories are soul-healers for today’s Japanese, and I congratulate the publishers on the wisdom of publishing Wodehouse’s works, which represent elegant and refined humour, after their long oblivion.”

“I hope that many, if not all, of Wodehouse’s stories and novels will be translated for Japanese readers so as to position Wodehouse in the rightful seat of foreign literature.”

A third collection, of Mulliner stories, is in the final stages of preparation.

Animal Crackers, continued

in Hollywood were as common as the California sun, and animals were often a big part of the action. The popularity of jungle movies meant that apes were frequently employed in various capacities, as was demonstrated in *Monkey Business*. In this story Mr Mulliner described the resident gorilla of the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation as having been:

... one of the cast of the super-film, *Black Africa*, a celluloid epic of the clashing of elemental passions in a land where might is right and the strong man comes into his own. Its capture in its native jungle was said to have cost the lives of some half-dozen members of the expedition, and at the time when this story begins it was lodged in a stout cage on the Perfecto-Zizzbaum lot at a salary of seven hundred and fifty dollars a week, with billing guaranteed in letters not smaller than those of Edmund Wigham and Luella Binstead, the stars.

Later in the story, Montrose Mulliner met the gorilla on a rooftop and, expecting to be torn limb from limb, is surprised when it speaks to him instead. When Montrose commented favourably on its English:

The gorilla waved the compliment aside modestly.

“Oh, well, Balliol, you know. Dear old Balliol. One never quite forgets the lessons one learned at Alma Mater, don’t you think? You are not an Oxford man, by any chance?”

“No.”

“I came down in ’26. Since then I have been knocking around a good deal, and a friend of mine in the circus business suggested to me that the gorilla field was not overcrowded. Plenty of room at the top, was his expression. And I must say,” said the gorilla, “I’ve done pretty well at it. The initial expenditure comes high, of course . . . you don’t get a skin like this for nothing . . . but there’s virtually no overhead. Of course, to become a co-star in a big feature film, as I have done, you need a good agent. Mine, I am glad to say, is a capital man of business. Stands no nonsense from these motion-picture magnates.”

The gorilla – whose real name was Cyril Waddesley-Davenport – was not joking. Animal stars were a big thing in Hollywood and could make quite a bit of money if they played their cards right – especially dogs, such as Lassie, Rover (an English collie who hit the big time in 1905 with *Rescued by Rover*, about a dog saving a baby who had been kidnapped by gypsies) and Rin Tin Tin.

Wodehouse, of course, was aware of all of this, and in the early 1930s, while living in Hollywood, he combined his sharp observation of the world around him with his love for animals to write a short story that is little known among Wodehouseans. *Gone Wrong*, written in first-person dog, appeared in *The Cecil Aldin Book* in 1932, and included a sly reference to Wodehouse’s own Peke, Susan, as well as to his contemporary address in Hollywood.

Wodehouse's Worcestershire

by Chris Garner

As if the sheer enjoyment of reading Wodehouse isn't enough, I always manage a second tingle of delight each time I dip into a novel or short story. Being a Worcester man, as well as a Wooster man, I'm always delighted to find references to the county in Wodehouse's work, and there are plenty to choose from.

Both Norman Murphy and Geoffrey Jaggard remind us that 'Worcestershire is the heart of Wodehouse country'. With its nine stately homes, eight pubs and 'more village names than any other in the opus' it is obvious that Wodehouse had a great fondness for Worcestershire, and knew the county very well.

Whether through characters' names – Bertie Wooster, Lady Malvern, Lord Pershore, the earls of Powick, Droitwich and Kidderminster, or familiar settings – Beckford, Droitgate Spa and Market Snodsbury, Wodehouse's love of the county is always evident and nowhere more so than in the semi-autobiographical short story *In Alcalá*. Rutherford Maxwell, a young writer, was struggling to keep body and soul together in a New York apartment house. He dreamed of home as he talked to Peggy Norton: "Way over in England, Peggy, there's a county called Worcestershire. And somewhere near the edge of that there's a grey house with gables, and there's a lawn and a meadow and a shrubbery, and an orchard and a rose-garden, and a big cedar on the terrace before you get to the rose-garden. And if you climb to the top of that cedar, you can see the river through the apple trees in the orchard. And in the distance there are the hills." (The village of Norton, by the way, lies just two miles south of Worcester and is famous for Norton Barracks, the home of the Worcestershire Regiment since 1877.)

Wodehouse's connections with Worcestershire are traced through his paternal grandmother, Lydia Lea. Lydia, daughter of wealthy Birmingham merchant Joseph Lea, was born in Old Swinford near Stourbridge in 1809. In 1832 she married Colonel Philip Wodehouse, veteran of Waterloo and twenty-two years her senior. While the Colonel pursued his army career, Lydia remained in Old Swinford to give birth to her first child, Lydia Josephine in 1835. The family then moved to Great Malvern for a short time where their second child, Philip Joseph, was born in 1836. Following Colonel Philip's retirement from the army in 1837 the family moved to Wribbenhall near Bewdley, leasing Severn House, an ugly, square block of property, standing at the end of Whispering

Street. During his time in Wribbenhall, Colonel Philip interested himself in local life by becoming involved in the running of Church Schools and later in the management of the Children's Weekly Penny Payments Scheme.

Severn House was Lydia's home for the next twenty years. During that time she gave birth to a further seven children including Plum's father as well as laying her husband to rest in the local church, when he died, on 15 December, 1846, aged 58.



The Terrace

In 1860 Lydia decided to move closer to Worcester. She leased 'The Terrace', a magnificent Queen Anne House overlooking the village of Powick. As well as her nine children, the household consisted of a cook, a ladies maid, a housemaid, a kitchen maid, a page and, of course, a butler. Lydia spent the next ten years of her life at The Terrace, watching her family grow up and leave home. Charles and Albert followed their father into the army; Philip and Frederick joined the church; Henry Ernest joined the Civil Service and left for Hong Kong in 1867; and William, who studied theology, remained throughout his short life in Powick. Two of Lydia's three daughters married local clergymen; Harriet chose the Reverend Henry Bromley Cocks, vicar of Leigh, while Lucy wed the Reverend Edward Whitmore Isaacs, vicar of Hanley Castle. Lydia Josephine, accepting the responsibilities of the eldest daughter, remained at home with her mother throughout her life.

By the 1870s it must have been obvious that a smaller house was needed. To meet their changed circumstances Lydia moved to Ham Hill House which lies just outside the village overlooking the hams, where Roundheads fought Cavaliers during the English Civil War.

In which the author identifies a wonderful Wodehousean coincidence

Ham Hill House, according to the present owner, was built at the beginning of the 19th century by a prosperous local cordwainer named Edward France. To suit his station in life he designed a home in the Cottage Orne style. Originally called Ham Hill Cottage, it suffered almost total destruction when the thatch caught fire in the 1830s. Rebuilding gave France the opportunity of enlarging the property. So much so that it was considered grand enough to become the Marquis of Queensberry's hunting box, when he moved his stables to Worcestershire in 1869. It was at Ham Hill that Lord Alfred 'Bosie' Douglas was born in October 1870.

When Lydia took up residence in 1871 she was accompanied by her daughter Lydia Josephine together with a housekeeper, a housemaid, a kitchen maid and a page. Lydia lived at Ham Hill until her death in 1892, and it was this house that Wodehouse loved so much as a child. In later life he told a friend that the annual visit to Ham Hill 'was always the great event of the year', one reason being that the boys were left very much to their own devices. There was, however, the daily audience with Grandma. After one such occasion Armine asked Plum, "Did you ever notice, Grandma looks like a monkey?". "But a kindly one," replied Plum.

Whilst visiting Ham Hill, the boys would also stay with Uncle Edward and Aunt Lucy Apollonia at the Old Rectory in nearby Hanley Castle, enjoying the company of their cricket-loving cousins. As nephew of the local vicar, Wodehouse would be taken on visits to the big houses in the district. 'In my childhood in Worcestershire,' Plum wrote later, 'I had met earls and butlers and younger sons in some profusion.' One house that would have been honoured by a visit stands just across the road from his uncle's church; Severn End, the beautiful red-brick home of the Lechmeres, became the model for Brinkley Court, the Worcestershire home of Aunt Dahlia where Bertie enjoyed the exquisite cooking of Anatole, the French chef. Much closer to the church is Hanley Castle Grammar School, the inspiration for Market Snodsbury Grammar School where Gussie Fink-Nottle gave out the prizes with such disastrous results.

During his visits to Worcestershire the young Wodehouse was unconsciously soaking up the atmosphere which he was to use to such wonderful effect in his fiction. Those endless Sunday evenings spent in church listening to Uncle Edward's sermons

during evensong may have been deadly to the young Wodehouse, but when we read such gems as *Anselm Gets His Chance* we can only be eternally grateful.

The effect Worcestershire had on Wodehouse was evident throughout his writing career. While his school stories were based on his time at Dulwich, he appears also to have drawn on his personal experiences of playing cricket at Malvern. In *A Prefect's Uncle* one boy tells another that 'the Malvern wicket is like a billiard table'. An even greater inspiration comes from these same playing fields. In his most famous school story, *Mike*, Wodehouse introduces Mike Jackson, cricketing hero and youngest of the Jackson brothers, who are all good cricketers. These characters are no doubt based on the Foster brothers who played cricket for Worcestershire between 1895 and 1910 and whose father, the Rev. Foster, was a housemaster at Malvern College.

As a successful author, Wodehouse maintained his connections with the county. In the 1920s and 30s he made frequent visits to Droitwich Spa, staying at The Impney Hotel, (now the Chateau Impney), in order to avoid the social life of London he disliked so much. When there were plots to be constructed he would 'go to Droitwich to brood'. Once there he would visit the brine baths, relax in the shallow end and make notes. Droitwich suited Wodehouse's desire to avoid the limelight. He once wrote to a friend: 'Personally, I've always liked wandering around in the background. I get much more kick out of a place like Droitwich than out of something like the Taj Mahal.' In another letter from Droitwich he said, 'I'm having a great time out here. Brine baths, quiet work on my Art and riding about the country on a push-bike.' Even though he claimed the Impney Hotel as one of his favourites, it did not prevent him from using it as a model for the hideous Walsingford Hall in *Summer Moonshine*.

Even during the darkest period of Wodehouse's career, Worcestershire continued to play a part. When the infamous broadcasts were transmitted by the Germans in 1941, the first place in this country to receive them was the BBC listening station at Wood Norton, near Evesham.

There remains one final Wodehouse connection. I forgot to mention the name of the present owner of Ham Hill House. It is, believe it or not, Mike Jackson, and if that isn't the most perfect coincidence – I don't know what is!

Richard Usborne 1910-2006

Some Personal Memories by Norman Murphy

I first met Dick Usborne at Moor Park in Surrey in May 1973 when he acted as tutor for a Wodehouse weekend seminar. I was thrilled to bits because I had read Dick's stuff when he was assistant editor of the *Strand* magazine in its last years and I revered him as the author of *Clubland Heroes* (1953). This was the book that made his name, an affectionate but extraordinarily witty review of three best-selling writers of the 1920/30s, John Buchan, Sapper and Dornford Yates. Dick, modest man that he was, would never believe he had started a new literary genre. Following closely on his heels, Claud Cockburn published *Bestseller*, Colin Watson produced *Snobbery with Violence* and Julian Symonds wrote *Bloody Murder*. All enjoyable but they didn't have Dick's superb lightness of touch. Wodehouse enjoyed *Clubland Heroes* so much that he decided Dick was the right person to write *Wodehouse at Work*.

Much of the Moor Park weekend is now a blur; I recall meeting an Australian journalist called Murray Hedgcock (whatever happened to him?), but I remember my first impression of Dick vividly, those bushy eyebrows, that pleasant voice and that lovely slow smile. The discussion sessions were splendid, though I muttered darkly during a presentation on the location of Blandings Castle. Then it was my turn to speak and I presented my first-ever Wodehouse paper, on the relationship between the Drones Club and the Pink 'Uns and Pelicans of the 1890s.

During the tea-break afterwards, Dick came up to me and said: "I liked your paper. You made some interesting points there. Why don't you submit it to *Blackwood's*?" I thought he was just being polite and couldn't believe that *Blackwood's* (then Britain's oldest literary magazine) would be interested, but he was quite serious, he thought it was just the sort of thing they liked. He was right, they did like it and I became an author (though very part-time).

I wrote to thank him and it was soon after this that he asked me to check the background to Gally Threepwood's anecdotes in *Sunset at Blandings*. Later, he was kind enough to write and tell me how much he had enjoyed *In Search of Blandings* and told me that he wasn't going to waste time looking for the facts behind Gally's Pink 'Un anecdotes so long as I was on the end of a telephone! It was some months later that I attended a talk he gave at the South Bank and my daughter Helen gazed at him



The Late Richard Usborne

and said, "Dad! Look at him, that tweed jacket, the way he stands. He looks exactly like the Low cartoon of Wodehouse!"

Over the next few years, I chased down odd references for him, always punctiliously acknowledged in print, and then he lost his wife Monica and went into the Charterhouse. He took a quiet pride in being the only real Carthusian in the place (he had been at school at Charterhouse). Charlotte and I visited him there, and he would talk about Wodehouse and tell us anecdotes of the writers he met in his days on the Strand. He used to come down to lunch with us, look round the bookshelves and murmur approvingly that TV clearly hadn't taken over our household. When he was throwing out photocopies of the notes he had gathered for *Wodehouse at Work*, I asked him to throw them my way, which he was happy to do.

He was a link with a gentler pre-war world; always kind, always courteous. I and many others will miss him.

Richard Usborne's Funeral Service was held in the Chapel of Sutton's Hospital in Charterhouse. The Society was represented by around a dozen members, including Norman and Elin Murphy, Sir Edward Cazalet, Jan Piggott, Margaret Slythe, James Hogg, Andy Bishop, Nick Aldridge, Marilyn MacGregor, Tony Whittome and Tony Ring.

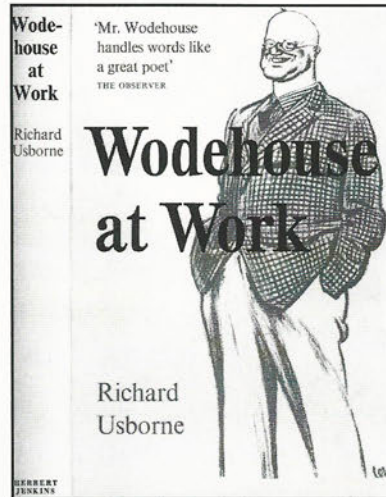
Some of Usborne's Writings On Wodehouse

Since Richard Usborne wrote so prolifically on P G Wodehouse and his work, this can be no more than a brief summary of his work. (References are made to *McIlvaine* where possible.)

His first book was the critical analysis *Wodehouse at Work* (H41) written in 1961. It was the first detailed review of Wodehouse's approach to writing, and attempted to describe the various characteristics of the different series of personnel about whom Wodehouse wrote. Usborne entered into lengthy correspondence with Wodehouse to ask about the background to many matters, and where he might have obtained inspiration, but the pair did not meet until long after the book was published.

This book was highly acclaimed, and its life was prolonged by the extended version *Wodehouse at Work to the End* (also H41) published in 1981, the centenary of Plum's birth, with new material.

Meanwhile, Usborne was working on *A Wodehouse Companion* (H39), also published in 1981. This is a



most useful reference book, briefly summarising the plots of all the novels, and providing a brief pen-portrait of 64 characters from the books. It includes a small selection of Nuggets, but has a weakness in its perfunctory description of the short story collections. He went on to produce a fuller selection of Wodehouse quotations with *Wodehouse Nuggets* (B30) in 1983, but attached no commentary.

Much of the text from H39 and H41 was then remixed into *The Penguin Wodehouse Companion* (H38), which also incorporated the texts of the Berlin broadcasts.

His third original work was *After Hours with P G Wodehouse*, 1991, an invaluable collection of writings and essays from various sources and on various subjects, including *Valley Fields*, *Wodehouse's Apprentice Years*, and the text of a lecture that Usborne gave during the Centenary Exhibition

of Wodehouse material at the South Bank in 1982.

Finally, in 2002, Ebury Press issued *Plum Sauce*, a revised version of *A Wodehouse Companion*.

Edward Cazalet writes about Jacqueline Powell

Jacqueline Powell died on 11 February last, aged 92 years. She was a good friend and a great support to Plum and Ethel during their last three years living in Le Touquet, which ended so tragically in 1940. Jacqueline was the daughter of Arthur Grant who, in the 1930s, was the much respected English golf professional at the Le Touquet Golf Club. Plum and Arthur became firm friends.

At this time, the Wodehouse home badly needed support from a Secretary/PA and general help. As a sweet, intelligent and very attractive girl in her early twenties, Jacqueline generously took on this role.

When she reminisced to me much later on (when I first met her in the early 1980s), she particularly remembered occasions in 1940 when Ethel would ask her to come in to help entertain British servicemen who had been invited up to Low Wood, the Wodehouse home, 'to get away from it all'. Ethel, who loved a party, would often roll back the carpet and they would all dance – except, of course, Plum who would 'glide' immediately! A favourite record was *My Heart Belongs to Daddy*.

In May 1940, shortly before the Germans arrived, the Wodehouses and the Grants made an attempt to flee Le Touquet in convoy in their respective cars. It was too late – they soon found that the roads were completely blocked by a mass of vehicles and people, with German aircraft also strafing the roads. They turned back, with Jacqueline a rock of calm in a terrifying situation. It was only a short time later that Plum and Arthur were taken off into internment, as happened to all male alien citizens under 60.

In a recent BBC documentary on Wodehouse, Jacqueline was a star. When asked by an interviewer if she thought Plum was pro-German, she simply replied in the most scathing terms, "Of course not. How could you possibly ask such an absurd question of me who knew him so well?"

She was married in 1950 to Lieutenant Colonel Atherton (known as Tony) Powell, who died more than twenty years ago. She was a tremendous character, vivacious, direct and full of fun. She will be sadly missed by her family and many friends.

Letters to Billy Griffith

Wodehouse's thoughts on contemporary cricket

Members will be aware that Mike Griffith has agreed that we can reproduce extracts from some of the letters which Plum wrote to Old Alwynian Billy Griffith, who played cricket for England.

In this article it seems appropriate to provide some of Wodehouse's comments to Billy Griffith about the noble game, starting with a reflection from 1937 about the problems of being an amateur cricketer:

The trouble is, life has got too stern and earnest nowadays for amateurs. Men simply can't give up whole summers to the game. I often wonder if Wilcox would have been one of the great batsmen if he had been able to play regularly.

[The Wilcox he refers to, Denys, was another Dulwich boy who made a century for Cambridge at Lord's and went on to captain Essex. His son Mark is a regular member of the Gold Bats.]

After Griffith had kept wicket for England in the 1945 Test Series against Australia, Wodehouse wrote:

Doesn't it seem extraordinary that when I first knew you you were fielding in the deep (and incidentally busting your knee just in front of my deck chair). You would have thought that if Dulwich had a potential England wicket-keeper in the side they would have said to themselves "Ha! An idea. This chap shall keep wicket."

Soon afterwards he described his own most recent cricketing experiences:

I took [cricket] up again in camp after a brief lay-off of twenty-seven years. I found I could still skittle the rabble out, but was helpless when I came up against a decent bat. . . . One of the things I discovered after the twenty-seven year interval was that I had completely forgotten how to hold a bat. I wanted to grip it like a golf club. We used to play in the yard with a string ball, but towards the end of my stay they let us out once a week to the sports field, where we had a real ball.

In camp we used to play stripped to the waist, which lent terrific zip to one's bowling. We had some great games. In one of them I went in first and made five in polished style. The other ten batsmen failed to score. Total 5. Our camp pitch was a dirt path studded with roots of trees. There was one root just where a good length ball pitched, and if you managed to hit it just right you got an unplayable break.

A little later, he passed on his musings about the cost of cricket equipment in the difficult post-war days:

Yesterday I was sitting in my chair with my feet on the table and my eye fell on my grey flannel bags, and the thought suddenly came to me "How the dickens does a cricket pro pay for his flannels these days?" Mine cost me four mille, which is twenty quid. I asked the *Daily Mail* man, and he said he thought pros got along with what they could manage to scrape up, which conjured up a vision of Surrey v Middlesex at Lord's with short leg in black trousers with braces, as in the village match. Also the England opening pair going out to bat with one brown pad apiece.

Letters from 1957 and 1959 shows that the quest for brighter cricket is nothing new:

Thanks for the notes of the MCC debate on brighter cricket. I'll tell you what I have always felt about first class cricket. When I used to go to the Oval, it was to see Surrey bat, and it was always a frightful blow if I found that Lancashire or Middlesex had won the toss and I would have to sit through the day watching them. How much better it would be, I thought, if cricket was run like baseball. At baseball three men of one side go in and when they are out the first three of the other side go in. I think in first class cricket – from the spectator's point of view – after one side has lost three wickets the other side ought to bat till they have lost three wickets and then the next three of the first side.

I wish they would reduce the number of first-class counties. I was reading somewhere that the trouble is that there aren't enough first class players to produce so many teams. But there always has been something wrong with county cricket and I suppose there always will be.

The idea of reducing the number of counties playing first-class cricket has been under active discussion by the powers-that-be for a few years now, while this extract from a letter in 1965, forty years ago, discusses another idea for modernisation:

I'm sure you're right about there being too much first class cricket. There's a good letter in the *Cricketer* suggesting that there should be one match a week, to last four days including Sunday.

(The four day game was normal in Australia and was eventually adopted in England in 1988.)

Piccadilly Jim: The New Film on DVD

Reviewed by Eddie Graham

Piccadilly Jim still leaps off the page so merrily, it seems hardly possible that it first appeared in serial form some ninety years ago. The hilarious story of the dissipated young American who cannot reveal his true identity to the girl of his dreams is the very stuff of farcical cinema.

This new film version takes full advantage of the opportunities offered; there are colourful characters galore and side-splitting misunderstandings, all tarred with a liberal splash of satirical snob-bashing. However, closer inspection reveals that this is Wodehouse given a contemporary language-spin for the multiplex generation. Somewhat surprising really, for one would have expected screenwriter



Hugh Bonneville (Lord Wisbeach) disguising from Brenda Blethyn (Nesta Pett) that he is a German spy



Sam Rockwell (Piccadilly Jim) and Frances O'Connor (Ann) dancing at the Embassy Club

Julian Fellowes to have been more sympathetic to Plum's style. A modernistic approach has also spilled over into both direction and performance and, whilst an attempt has been made to recreate an appropriate period, there are far too many occasions when one winces.

The script includes crude modernisms which Plum would never have used, thus destroying the light, witty dialogue one had hoped for. Not that the film is a write-off by any means. The basic plot has been retained virtually intact. Various identities are shuffled with dizzying regularity and strong-willed sisters compete with venal dexterity on the society front. Nesta's revolting son Ogden is indeed revolting, but his language defies belief even for this little monster.

Luckily, a good cast keeps it zipping along at a fairly reasonable pace. Tom Wilkinson was particularly

effective as Bingley Crocker, longing to return to the life that once he led, while Brenda Blethyn shows her talent for comedy as Nesta Pett. Frances O'Connor was a delight as Ann Chester, whose poetry had been so mercilessly trounced by *Piccadilly Jim*, while Allison Janney was amusingly and suitably frightful as Eugenie Crocker.

I wasn't quite so convinced by Sam Rockwell's far too modern *Piccadilly Jim*; apart from anything else, his hairstyle and intermittent face stubble just don't ring true, while his lack of a tie on several pertinent occasions suggests that the period was not taken too seriously. I felt that Hugh Bonneville, whilst generally effective, slightly over-played his role as the dastardly Lord Wisbeach. Luckily, Austin Pendleton struck just the right note as Peter Pett, giving something for us to look forward to as we wait for this particular worm to turn.

Completing the cast, Geoffrey Palmer is suitably and amusingly aghast when he's introduced to Ann as Jim's father and Pam Ferris shows us all how the efficient detective can overcome a wig problem with aplomb.

What a pity director John McKay, who seemed to have some difficulty in coming to terms with the Wodehouse style, did not opt for songs from the correct period; those selected were hardly top of the charts stuff, even by today's standards.

To enjoy this film, for it definitely has its moments, it's best to put Plum to the back of your mind. Just rejoice that the undisputed master of mirth has provided an outrageously delightful farce to counter the appalling so-called comedies usually found in your local cinema.

Murray Hedgcock on Set

Our Correspondent enjoys a privilege accorded to few

One of the key locations selected for filming *Piccadilly Jim* was The Atlantic Bar, downstairs at the Regent Palace Hotel, constructed in 1915, and still breathing Twenties style and headlong zest for life.

Wooster Sauce was granted special access to a day of filming, which, to the novice eye, seemed to consist largely of people standing around, just waiting to go to work.

It was immediately obvious that the script takes liberties with PGW's plot, as the scene being shot featured an exotic and terrifyingly energetic dance routine headed by Jimmy and Ann – instantly putting them on an intimate footing (or stepping) far beyond anything achieved in the novel. It was startling to find Ann of the film dressed – well, almost dressed – in a costume revealing eye-catching cleavage (a term derived by the American 'Johnston office' in 1945, meaning 'the shadowed depression which divides an actress's bosom into two distinct sections') and a most generous display of leg.

The dancing in fact is ferocious when seen close-up: cinema and TV screens simply do not reproduce the extraordinary physical effort hurled into a dance scene, the astonishing muscularity and stamina of girls as much as of men. It is a little like standing on the edge of a whirlpool – you instinctively draw back, to prevent any risk of being sucked into the maelstrom of leaping bodies and rainbow outfits, with the feeling you would never be seen again.

You scratch your head mentally: is there any dancing in *Piccadilly Jim*? Answer: there was none in the book, but there jolly well is in the film. While the nightclub scene features a mix of professional dancers and extras who can dance, full credit goes to the principals. Frances O'Connor as Ann and Sam Rockwell (Jimmy) are now both approaching the big 4-0, but they hurled themselves into their *pas de deux* with astonishing vim. As joint producer Pete Czernin said simply: "I was very lucky to have a girl like Frances O'Connor available for the role."

Pete Czernin was eventually nailed down for a few more words. He explained first how the director and producer work together.

"Some things you decide yourself – I have a vision of what I want. But you have to give up a few things you want, in hope that he will give you some things you want. And you pick your moments to argue – you still have to work with him next day".

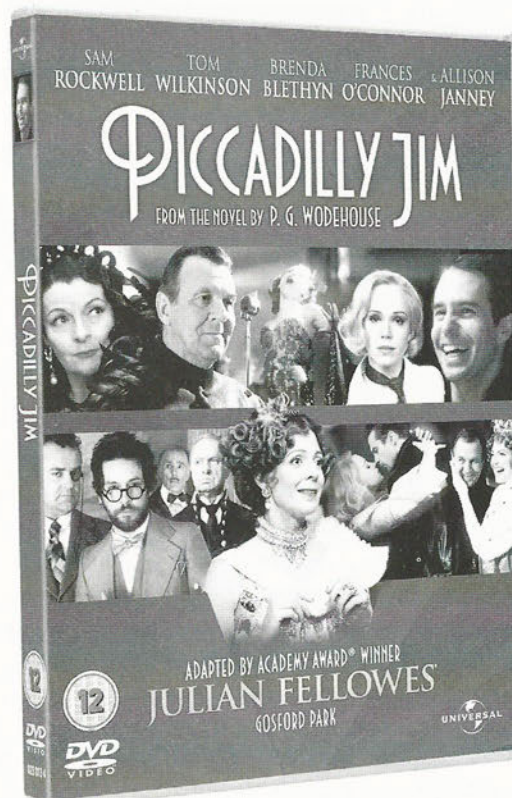
So where did the *Piccadilly Jim* film idea come from?

"*Piccadilly Jim* is a great story – a fantastic story – a great love story, apart from the humour, and full of transatlantic appeal. It's a comedy of manners, and of course Julian Fellowes as scriptwriter was just right. Reading the book again, I'm very proud of what we've achieved. I'm cautiously optimistic that we have got it right. It's a nice blend of English and American. We hope to find a whole new audience while not treading too heavily on the sensitive toes of Wodehouseans."

But he has one confession:

"I'm afraid the famous cricket scene where Bingley Crocker gets Bayliss the butler to explain the game to him has had to go. But we do have a great plus in Geoffrey Palmer as Bayliss. There is a lovely scene when Sam as Jimmy Crocker wakes up with a hangover, Geoffrey comes in with the hangover cure, and Sam asks. 'Why are you painting yourself yellow?'"

It seems a fair question – and if the lugubrious Geoffrey Palmer does not immediately spring to mind as a Wodehouse butler (and he did tell the Editor that, quite surprisingly, he has never been a Wodehouse reader), then we can be confident he will bring his own distinctive quirky character to the story.



Earlier Film Versions of Piccadilly Jim

The first was back in 1919, the second in 1936

Have you ever wondered about silent movies? Some seventy or eighty years after the advent of talkies, we may have lost sight of the reasons why, for example, musical comedies such as the Wodehouse-Bolton-Kern hits *Oh, Boy!* and *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* were turned into silent films.

Piccadilly Jim also enjoyed its five minutes of fame as a silent movie, having been produced by the Selznick organisation in 1919. It had a title song, presumably intended to be sung live by the pianist who played intermittently through the showing.

The lyric, entitled simply *Piccadilly Jim*, was just dire. It would have taken some remarkable melody to make it bearable. It was written by Al Wilson and Lou Klein, and the music was by Irving M Bibbo:

You've heard of Peck's bad boy
 And Huckleberry Finn
 They were never happy unless mischief they were in
 Wherever there was trouble they were always in the swim
 But they were really mild compared to Piccadilly Jim

Chorus

Piccadilly Jim
 He had a bit of the devil in him
Piccadilly Jim was awf'ly wild
 He'd love to play a joke
 On ev'ry Harry, Dick or Jack
 And if he knew that you were sunburned
 He'd just love to slap you on the back
Piccadilly Jim
 He'd get in all kinds of trouble and then
 He'd smile his way right out again
 He stopped sowing his wild oats to settle down
 For the girl he loves is sewing on a wedding gown
 Oh, how I envy Piccadilly Jim.

Though Piccadilly Jim
 Would play a joke on you
 If you ever needed money he would always see you through
 Now ev'rybody loved him as a pal and as a friend
 There was no halfway 'bout him he'd stick right to the end
 Perhaps this is the simplest illustration of why
 movies in those days were best kept silent!

By contrast, the 1936 offering from MGM, starring Robert Montgomery, Madge Evans (both in the scene opposite), Eric Blore, Robert Benchley and Billie Burke, was described by *Film Weekly* as 'one of the most amusing romantic comedies you have seen for a long time.' It went on to add that the part of Jim was 'a perfect Montgomery part'.

WIN A COPY OF THE DVD IN OUR COMPETITION

Universal Pictures are providing three copies of the new DVD as prizes in a special competition for members.

You are invited to identify the original sources of the following four quotations, taken from a round of Nigel Rees's radio programme "Quote . . . Unquote", which is celebrating its 30th anniversary. See if you can do better than panellists Simon Brett, Dave Gorman, Stephanie Merrett and John Lloyd.

'Do you recall telling me once about someone who told somebody he could tell him something which would make him think a bit? Knitted socks and porcupines entered into it, I remember.' (From *Jeeves in the Offing*)

'The snail's on the wing and the lark's on the thorn, or rather the other way round, as I've sometimes heard you say.' (From *Much Obligated, Jeeves*)

'Miss Halliday is a very old and valued friend of mine. We two have, so to speak, pulled the gowans fine.' (From *Leave It To Psmith*)

'Hullo, fathead, what news on the Rialto?' (From *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*)

Entries, which must be received by July 31st, should be sent to the Editor by post to the address on page 28 or by e-mail to tring@sauce34.freeserve.co.uk.



Other Aspects of Piccadilly Jim

A German Code Book

Coincidentally and quite remarkably, the title was the subject of an investigation by the FBI during the second world war. On January 24, 1945, J Edgar Hoover sought a copy of the English language Tauchnitz edition of *Piccadilly Jim* (printed in 1929), as the New York office of the FBI considered it to be a possible code book! By April, they had not been able to locate a copy, and also reported that even the first American edition and the 1928 14th English edition were missing from the shelves of the Library of Congress. A copy of the Tauchnitz edition was finally forwarded to the FBI from the US Embassy in Paris in January 1946. Within a week it had been examined in a laboratory ‘as a possible key book for unsolved cipher messages’ with negative results.

Other Translations

Translations of the book have appeared in Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian,

Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Spanish and Swedish. New German and Italian editions have been published within the last year to coincide with the release of the film.

British Editions in Print

The novel has been reprinted in the UK on numerous occasions in both hard covers and paperback. It is presently in print in both the Penguin and Everyman series (ISBN 0-14-003039-5 and 1-84159-135-1 respectively).

Audiotapes

Piccadilly Jim has been recorded as an unabridged audiobook by Jonathan Cecil for Chivers Audio Books (CAB 2724) and by the late Frederick Donaldson for the American Blackstone Books.

In addition, Martin Jarvis recorded what is fairly described as a ‘long abridgement’ of five hours for CSA Word (ISBN 1-904605-36-2).

Other Matters of Society Interest

Psmith as an aide-memoire

Sushmita Sen Gupta found a marvellous item in the colour magazine attached to the *Calcutta Telegraph* colour magazine for May 21, in an article by Rahul Verma on Indonesian food:

A long time ago – when ASEAN was a five-nation body – those who wished to remember the names of its member states used a simple acronym to jog their memories. The eccentric Wodehousean character Psmith was the clue – its letters were the initial letters of the nations that constituted the Association for South-East Asian Nations.

(ie, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand.) Sushmita adds that the people of all these countries are very fond of one ingredient in their diets – fish!

Hal Cazalet in Concert

Wodehouse’s step-greatgrandson Hal Cazalet sang in a *Festival of Song* concert in New York on May 17 and 18 with pianist Steven Blier, and included five Wodehouse songs: *There’s Only One Girl*; *Saturday Night*; *You’re the Top* (UK version); *I’m So Busy*; and *You Never Knew About Me*.

Autumn Everyman Editions

Everyman have told us that their two new titles for autumn 2006 will be the long-awaited *My Man Jeeves* and *Uncle Dynamite*.

Letter from Jonathan Bacchus

Novelist Will Self’s description of Wodehouse as ‘effete’ (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2006) makes me wonder if he knows what the word actually means.

My Concise Oxford Dictionary defines it as ‘exhausted, worn out, feeble, incapable’ – a term far more applicable to a writer who has managed just thirteen books than one who published over a hundred, together with verses, plays, lyrics, short stories, letters and so on, during a working lifetime of three-quarters of a century.

Bed and Breakfast by Hammock

Murray Hedgcock drew attention to a facility being offered by the Mighty Oak Tree Climbing Company, near Lostwithiel, Cornwall. After an al fresco dinner, you climb by rope to spend the night in a tree-top hammock, where, in the morning, breakfast is cooked for you. How would Gally Threepwood have enjoyed that experience, one asks.

Some Thoughts About the Club Book

by John Looijestijn, from Portugal

In an article which appeared in the *Telegraph Sunday Magazine* on December 6, 1981, a certain colonel informed Pearson Philips that Wodehouse never invented a thing. Everywhere Wodehouse mentioned and everybody in his books were just thinly-disguised versions of real places and people.

“Once I discovered he had written about places a year after he’d visited them, it became simple. I just had to track ’em down.”

The same N T P (Norman) Murphy mentions in his book *In Search of Blandings* that Wodehouse studied Classics at Dulwich, which in those days meant constant Greek and Latin, prose and verse, translating into both languages and out of them. By the time he was sixteen Wodehouse was writing Greek and Latin verse with ease. It is unlikely that any other subject occupied more than a quarter of his time – and it is the significance of this that has often been overlooked. I suggest there is at least one connection to be made between Wodehouse’s knowledge of the Classics and the way Norman tells us to investigate.

Because in *In Search of Blandings* we learn that the ‘Junior Ganymede’ is the club which has the honour to include Reginald Jeeves among its members, and it also has a famous club book. Early in the Bertie Wooster saga we hear of the club, but we do not enter its portals till *Much Obligated, Jeeves*, published in 1971 on Wodehouse’s ninetieth birthday. Its membership is restricted to valets, butlers and gentlemen’s personal gentlemen; it is cosy, select and well-appointed. Maybe the book of this club also had a historic source, especially since it had such a

powerful influence on our friend Wooster. In this book Jeeves informed us (in *Much Obligated, Jeeves*) that there are eleven pages about Bertie Wooster; however this was before the visit of Bertie to Totleigh Towers. After Jeeves has completed his report of those misadventures there will be eighteen pages.

The Junior Ganymede club book is a historic document. It has been in existence more than eighty years. I think it existed much longer than that, because while in Rome I read the following:

At the beginning of this stretch of the Via Sacra, opposite the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, stood the Regia Pontificis, which according to legend was originally the house of King Numa. It was a small marble building and was the seat of the College of Priests (Pontifices), who met under the presidency of the Pontifex Maximus, the chief religious authority of the Roman State. Here were drawn up the calendar and the official lists of consuls and of the holders of triumphs; here the rules were fixed that governed sacrifices at altars and temples, and here were decreed the punishments for crimes against religion. All of the activities were recorded in written form in the famous Books of the Pontifices.

One last remark in relation to the Junior Ganymede. Ganymede, according to Greek mythology, was the most beautiful youth of all mortals, the son of the Trojan King Tros and the nymph Calirroe. Zeus ordered the eagle to abduct him and to bring him to Olympus. What specifically did Wodehouse have in mind when choosing the name for Reginald Jeeves’s club?

The Smile That Wins Favourite Nifties - 35

As in the March issue, *The Smile That Wins* features similes about wildlife which Dennis Chitty used to form the basis of a quiz at the Hollywood Convention.

I uttered a stricken cry, like a cat to whom the suggestion has been made that she part with her newborn kitten.
(*Joy in the Morning*, 1947)

He roared like a lion which had just received an ounce of small shot in the rear quarters while slaking its thirst at a water hole.

(*Uncle Dynamite*, 1948)

Sir Aylmer was feeling cheerful; as cheerful as a Colosseum lion which after a trying day when everything has gone wrong has found itself unexpectedly presented with a couple of Christian martyrs.

(*Uncle Dynamite*, 1948)

Where's the Red-Hot Staff – III?

More of the Robert/Hilary Bruce reading of Murray Hedgcock's Paper

In the second part of the paper presented at the Hollywood convention, we undertook a detailed analysis of the staffing of *Cosy Moments*, the journal which employed Psmith in the USA for most of *Psmith, Journalist*. The next development, as Tony Ring puts it in his studies of the saga, was *The Prince and Betty*, 'written as a sickly love story which, for American book purposes, was beefed up by the journalism section from *Psmith Journalist*'.

This 1912 tale offers curious variants from the original. For example, *Cosy Moments* became *Peaceful Moments*; it was owned by the hard-to-love financier Benjamin Scobell; and had J Brabazon Renshaw as editor-in-chief. 'All matters of finance were in the hands of Mr Scobell's solicitors.'

The weekly consists of just eight pages – but they would still need to be processed. It is no wonder that Renshaw was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and was ordered three months in Europe. Rupert Smith was his assistant editor, but unlike Billy Windsor, he had the advantages of a Harvard education. Despite this, he worked on a paper which insulted Jim *Thompson* (not Williams), and boasted a heavily-armed editor.

Smith had graduated to New York, and joined the staff of the *News*. 'His presence in the office of *Peaceful Moments* was due to the uncomfortable habit of most of the New York daily papers of cutting down their staff of reporters during the summer.' This is an intriguing twist to British experience, where summer regularly sees the hiring of extra casual staff as 'holiday relief', to cover for reporters taking holidays while their children are on vacation.

Heroine Betty Silver arrived as stenographer, and enlivened the world of the acting editor, who became increasingly bored. 'He was practically nothing but an ornament. The staff of regular contributors sent in their various pages. There was nothing for the man in charge to do.' There is one reference to editor Smith checking galley proofs, which have appeared from no stated sources – but no other mention of the vital production procedure.

When Smith sacked his contributors Betty pointed out that he could not write it all himself. He, like Windsor, fell back on his friends. "I propose to apply to a few of my late companions of Park Row, bright boys who will be delighted to come across with red-hot stuff for a moderate fee."

A sporting section was added, devoted primarily, as was *Cosy Moments*, to publicising the aspirations of Kid Brady to meet Jimmy Garvin for the lightweight title. Betty discovered the renamed tenements, now in Broster Street, and fired off her crusading copy overnight – 'Just a wail of pity, and cry of indignation, straight from the heart, and split up into paragraphs. Smith read it with interest, and sent it off to the printer unaltered.'

An editor surely is doing no favours to his recruit, his publication, or the cause that has stirred his writer and himself, by failing to make obvious corrections. Furthermore, Smith did not have the report 'legalled', ie checked for libel or other risk by a specialist in newspaper law. Perhaps there was no such system in New York when PGW wrote *The Prince*. Anyway, we know 'freedom of speech' is guaranteed under the First Amendment.

Smith hired as his new assistant John Maude, actually the Prince of Mervo. We learn that 'in their last year at Harvard, Smith and John, assisted by others of a congenial spirit, had published a small but lively magazine devoted to college topics, with such success . . . that on the appearance of the third number, it was suppressed by the authorities.' Eventually John decided, in a Psmithian gesture, to invest some of his fortune as Prince in buying the paper . . . and so it goes on.

In 1930, Plum rewrote for serialisation a much shortened and updated version, *A Prince for Hire*, with a number of further changes, although in most cases it is difficult to see just why they were made. Editor J Brabazon Renshaw (downgraded from editor-in-chief) had a staff of one stenographer and one office-boy, with all the material apparently submitted by contributors.

Thus Renshaw, too, was ordered three months in Europe, and reporter Rupert Smith, engaged as acting editor, hired his old classmate John Maude as 'acting assistant editor' (at a hundred dollars a week – not bad money in the Depression). Why is Smith at liberty? 'Owing to his enterprise in trying to beat the town on a story that unfortunately did not occur, a burglary planned by a friend of his which was interrupted by an unfeeling police force, Smith had been laid off by his paper . . .' That is a nice reminder of the methods of the Yellow Press – perhaps not altogether remote from those of the British equivalent, the 'redtops'. But both sets of

Daryl Lloyd reports on *The Gold Bats* pre-season dinner

As Spring finally arrived on March 24th, some 26 Wodehouseans and Sherlockians met at the Cricketers' Club of London for the annual Gold Bats and Sherlock Holmes Society Cricket Club dinner.

Held in the 'Dennis Compton Room', we were overlooked at dinner by a splendid image taken from Lord's of a number of the England greats; many of whose skills are aptly recognised within our own teams! Immediately following dinner Captain Bob Miller welcomed all, including our own Chairman. Hilary then led the way with toasts for Captain Peter Horrocks and, in remembrance of the lately departed Gold Bats leg-break bowler, Alan Fitzpayne.

After dinner we were privileged to be able to listen to Murray Hedgcock, who was quick to inform us all

that the most important piece of news from the week had NOT been England beating India in India for the first time in 20 years, but rather, as an Antipodean himself, the news that it is officially acceptable for the English team to be referred to as 'Pommie Bastards'. Our own Remembrancer was also quick to point out that PGW himself even once used the second of these words if not this phrase!

Murray then gave a very interesting speech on J M Barrie and his Allahakbarries, for which both PGW and Arthur Conan Doyle played. This led to the most important question of the evening: do Captain Bob or Captain Peter select players as Barrie did; namely by how attractive their wives are?

We shall no doubt find out this season.

Where's the Red-Hot Staff – III, continued

papers were or are run by highly skilled, professional journalists, while Smith's friend Maude has no experience in the business.

"I'm not very good at editing", admitted Smith. He was, however, decisive enough – and the first duty of an editor is to take decisions – to sack all his feeble contributors. He set out his policy: "*Peaceful Moments* . . . must make both sides so mad that both will read it in order to denounce it."

But there is no hint of new contributors – the crusading journalism of Betty and John appears adequate to have filled the paper. Betty Silver, again with no journalistic background and hired as a stenographer, assembled 'her first journalistic effort' – that scathing piece about slums.

She appears to have found inspiration, got interviews, assembled background material, and wrote her very first news report all in a day (despite being able to use a typewriter 'not awfully well'), by staying late at the office. And acting editor Smith, tears in his eyes, again agreed to print it as was, 'mistakes and all'. Very strange.

John Maude added to the explosive mix by writing on the profiteering of Prohibition, arousing 'the ferocious indignation of the drys, the speakeasy interests, and the beer runners'. Circulation trebled – 'and it's getting some advertising'. We are also told of 'the startled business department', who cordially agreed with the acting editor's view that 'the magazine was getting good'. And the staff was augmented by the appointment of Miss Bronson as stenographic successor to Betty.

As in *The Prince and Betty* John Maude, Prince of Mervo, bought *Cosy Moments* and was set to marry Betty – and maybe the story will start again . . .

A Prince for Hire was first published in book form by Galahad Books in 2003, with a modest print run. Copies may still be obtained from Nigel Williams Books; in case of difficulty contact the Editor.



Back the Berkshire and the Newbury Show

As a result of Backing the Berkshire, several members have established cordial relations with champion Berkshire pigs, as well as with the pigs' proprietors, the Berkshire Pig Breeders Club, a charming and committed group with whom the Society is working to keep the Berkshire breed in good heart.

Our association with the BPBC is mutually beneficial – for example sending BPBC members the Berkshire supplement resulted in at least one new member for us. In June, the BPBC attends the World Pork Expo in Des Moines, Iowa, equipped with Berkshire ties and supplements. We've alerted the American Wodehouse Society and hope some members will go to lend their encouragement and report back to Wooster Sauce.

Last year's newspaper and radio coverage proved that the novel association between a literary society and a pig breed society is media-worthy; now we have to devise the next phase of the campaign. But in the meantime we hear rumours that Berkshires may be starring on TV later in the year – we are sworn to secrecy, but keep your eyes peeled for a series featuring a chef called G**d*n R*ms*y.

The Society is proudly embracing the Emsworth Paradox by serving Berkshire pork at our dinner at Grays Inn in October. We have sourced the pork direct from BPBC member Christine Coe, the breeder who talked to us so very entertainingly at the Savage Club last autumn.

The Agricultural Show season is in full swing now and all over the country, Berkshires are putting their best feet forward to qualify for the BPBC Champion of Champions competition, sponsored by the Society, which takes place in September at Newbury, Berkshire. Once again, we will present the prize; last year, several members enjoyed the surreal spectacle of the Chairman pursuing a camera-shy Champion round the ring, intent on placing the silk sash on the slippery sow. Will she be more successful this year? Come along and see!

News of the Society Dinner at Gray's Inn

The Society's fourth formal London dinner is to be held at The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, London WC1 on Thursday 5 October, 2006. Dinner will be 7.00 pm for 7.30; dress code is black tie.

Members who attended previous dinners will be aware how quickly the places were all booked. Gray's Inn Hall has a capacity of about 120 diners. It is therefore strongly recommended that members apply for tickets by return on the form enclosed with this edition of Wooster Sauce.

Places will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis, although some will be reserved until August 15 for overseas members. In view of the possible need to restrict numbers, we regret that at this time the invitation must be restricted to members only. If places should still remain available at the end of August, a note to that effect will appear on the website and in the next Wooster Sauce, in which case partners and other non-members will be welcome to join us.

Thanks to most generous sponsorship from PricewaterhouseCoopers, it has been possible to restrict the cost to members to £75 per head.

Several of our Patrons have already indicated an intention to attend, and as always, a tremendous programme of speeches and entertainment has been planned.

Members will know that the Society is an enthusiastic supporter of the campaign to Back the Berkshire. We hope to play our part in this campaign by providing Black Berkshire meat as part of the menu at the dinner, although there will be an alternative for members who advise us in advance that they would prefer not to eat pork or have other dietary requirements. We believe that the majority of our members who attend the dinner will particularly appreciate the opportunity to experience what has become known as the Emsworth Paradox: the best way to preserve the Black Berkshire breed is to eat it

To participate in what promises to be a wonderful evening, please complete the form and forward it, with your cheque for £75 made payable to 'The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)', to: Tim Andrew, 1, Codmore Crescent, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 3LX. (e-mail: tjandrew@waitrose.com; tel: 01494 771265).

When Bertie Met a Green Goddess

by Mark Howarth

Mark Howarth contacted the Society in March with the news that motor-vehicle number-plate PGW38, which appeared on Bertie Wooster's car on the cover of *The Code of the Woosters*, was up for sale. Subsequently Mark, a journalist, had the story printed in the *Sunday Express*, and has allowed us to reprint this synopsis of his article:

OOHJAH-CUM-SPIFF!

It's a plotline worthy of the upper crust farces penned by P G Wodehouse himself. But it's true – 'Two Jags' has snaffled a couple of grand for selling on Bertie Wooster's licence plate.

In the real world, it saw service on the frontline, nailed to a Green Goddess owned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott. But to fans of the books, PGW 38 is far from Government property – it's the car reg of the dapper layabout and his faithful manservant Jeeves. Now it's found a new owner – though one who seemingly craves anonymity like Wooster in an aunt's house chock full of eligible spinsters.

PGW 38

The 50-year-old plate was sold through Government subcontractor Witham Specialist Vehicles. Sales manager Douglas Landy said: "We knew straightaway that the PGW prefix had the P G Wodehouse factor though we didn't make the connection with Bertie Wooster's car specifically. You'd think that 'PGW 1' and 'PGW 100' would be more valuable but 'PGW 38' was the first one which found a buyer."

Licence plates are a lucrative business. Ones like these are termed 'cherished' because they have the potential to match someone's initials and that's usually where the value lies. "Hopefully, we'll get some more business from Jeeves and Wooster fans for the other dozen or so PGW number plates we have."

PGW 38 appeared on the original cover of the 1938 story *The Code Of The Woosters*, presumably as an amalgamation of the author's initials and the year of publication. The picture shows Jeeves and Wooster driving up to Totleigh Towers, stately home of curmudgeonly Justice of the Peace Sir Watkyn Bassett, one of Bertie's many nemeses.

Tony Ring, editor of the P G Wodehouse Society journal, *Wooster Sauce*, commented: "What I don't understand is how the Government managed to be in possession of Bertie's registration number in the first place. Perhaps Sir Watkyn managed to get his hands on it after banning Bertie from driving and then sold it on at vast profit to John Prescott's department. Maybe that is how he funded the purchase of Totleigh Towers."



The Green Goddess fire tenders are a British design icon after coming to the rescue of the British public during the fire strikes of 1977 and 2002. Manned by soldiers during the industrial action, they nevertheless remained part of the civil defence force which falls within the remit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Green Goddess PGW 38 was built sometime between 1953 and 1956 and was among the last batch of forty to be finally pensioned off in March 2005. Lincolnshire-based Witham Specialist Vehicles – which has the contract for offloading all spare vehicles from the MoD, Driving Standards Agency and Mr Prescott's department – sold it on to a German middleman for around £2,500. It then found its way back onto the frontline with a fire brigade in Eastern Europe.

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges - 37

"... Lord Wisbeach said he wanted to talk to mother privately. Mother sent me out of the room, so, of course, I listened at the door."

"Do you know where little boys go who listen to private conversations?" [asked Piccadilly Jim].

"To the witness stand, generally," [replied Ogden].

From *Piccadilly Jim*, 1917

Wodehouse in the Theatre

The Editor enjoyed three of PGW's shows in a week. A record?

Oh, Lady! Lady!!

For the third successive year, Mel Miller's Musicals Tonight theatre group included a Wodehouse musical in his season of five shows at the diminutive 45th Street Theatre in New York. *Oh, Lady! Lady!!* played to houses of just 100 from April 25 to May 7.

A high quality portfolio of songs composed by Jerome Kern with Wodehouse lyrics forms the mainstay of the show which has a straightforward farcical plot of misunderstandings getting in the way of true love. (Wodehouse later used the libretto as the basis for the second half of his novel *The Small Bachelor*.) *You Found Me and I Found You* and *Before I Met You* both tease the listener, while *It's a Hard, Hard World for a Man* is one of the show's highspots.

Without exception the cast had good voices and excellent enunciation, which, coupled with the fact that their sole musical support was a piano, meant that the lyrics could be heard. That is the whole point of a Wodehouse song. The one disappointment, perhaps, was that Mel Miller opted for the *Showboat* version of *Bill* instead of the original written for this show. The different nature of the lyric reduced the impact of the song, but it was sung beautifully by Amy Bils as Molly.

Similarly, there were no weak players among the cast as far as dialogue was concerned. Maxime Alvarez de Toledo, who played Bill, has a French mother and Argentinian father, and although he has been in the USA for eight years, had to concentrate hard to hide his natural accent and produce the appropriate rhythms for his dialogue and songs, but he achieved this superbly. Even Roger Rifkin, playing the droll minor part of a superintendent of a block of apartments, made an impression, with dry wit highly reminiscent of 'Smiler' in BBC TV's *Last of the Summer Wine*.

The Play's the Thing

Washington DC is teeming with small theatre groups. Washington Stage Guild, closed its 20th season in May with Wodehouse's adaptation of Ferenc Molnar's *The Play's the Thing*.

Ideally suited to a small theatre (again with a capacity of around 100) with the audience on three sides and a cast of only seven, the play has some excellent exchanges of dialogue as well as a third act which includes one of the more challenging roles for

any non-native French speaker, in which the lecherous Almady has to pay for his transgressions in a scene involving a concentrated series of names such as Brigadier-General Pierre Jean Bourmond de la Seconde-Chaumiere-Rambouillet and the Marquis Jean François Gelette de Tour d'Argent. He came through his ordeal with flying colours.

The set was simple, attractive and functional. Molnar's theme is a satire on the theatre as a whole, encouraging delightfully exaggerated acting in a melodramatic style. Wodehouse's contributions were evident in wickedly funny exchanges which came from the heart and continue the theatrical satire.

The whole cast fit their roles perfectly and were convincing in their characterisation. Mention should be made of the only woman in the cast, Jennifer Timberlake, playing Ilona Szabo, the prima donna of the operetta being produced by the other three major characters. Now affianced to Albert Adam but with experience of both life and Almady, she conveyed an innocent worldliness with no little skill

Oh, Kay!

The Hampton Hill Playhouse near Twickenham is a theatre seating 200, and was the setting for the Barnes and Richmond Operatic Society production of *Oh, Kay!*, with book by Bolton and Wodehouse, music by George Gershwin and lyrics by his brother Ira. First produced in the mid-1920s, it uses the phenomenon of prohibition as the setting for the typical musical comedy plot of misunderstandings about a wedding which is disapproved by interested parties.

The libretto used was based on that for the 1973 Mercury Theatre Colchester production and included three songs for which Wodehouse had written lyrics for a 1960 New York revival. It also included that exquisite song *Someone to Watch over Me*, sung beautifully by Sue Astbury.

The fully amateur cast provided excellent entertainment in a full show rather than a concert version (like *Oh, Lady! Lady!!*). This meant we were treated to a considerable number of well-rehearsed dances by a chorus of 14 Cottontails. If there is a criticism, it is that the volume of sound produced by the four musicians (keyboard, bass, percussion, reeds) was a little too loud for the small theatre and the relatively weak voices of one or two of the male singers to permit all the lyrics to be clearly heard.

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

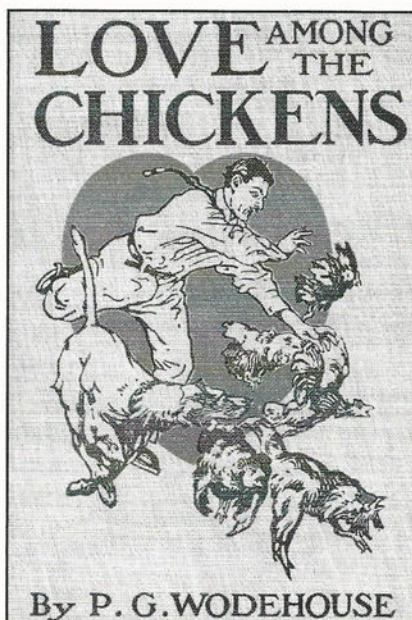
Love Among the Chickens

As mentioned on the front page of *Wooster Sauce*, 2006 marks the centenary of the UK publication of *Love Among the Chickens* (McIlvaine, A7a), which introduced Stanley Featherstonehaugh Utridge to an unsuspecting world.

Joseph Connolly (*P G Wodehouse: An Illustrated Biography*) lists the UK first edition of *Love Among the Chickens* as one of the five rarest Wodehouse titles, an opinion confirmed by Barry Phelps (in his *Spring Fever* catalogue, Spring 1992) when he said that apart from *The Globe By The Way Book*, this title is as scarce as any in the opus.

The true second issue is dated August 1906, according to McIlvaine (A7a2). Additionally there is, unrecorded in McIlvaine, a later issue dated November 1906 which, somewhat confusingly, also states second issue on the verso of the title page.

The title was not published until 1909 in the US (A7b), where the publisher appears to have issued many copies of the first edition with a full page printed insert titled 'Publisher's Advance Copy (No. n)'. One dealer, for example, has offered number 155 in a catalogue. Although not noted by McIlvaine, this book was issued with a dust jacket. It is plain brown, like a paper bag, save for the art work replicated from the front cover.

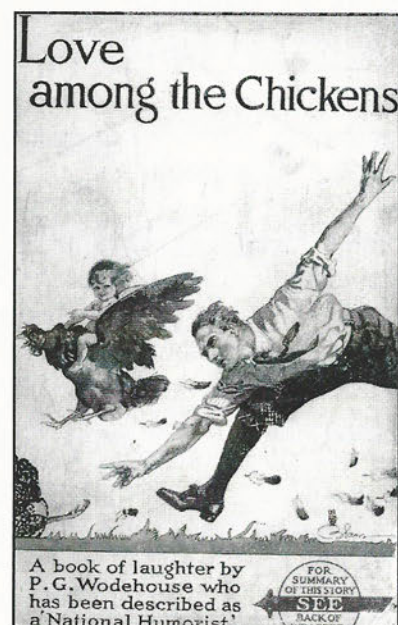


The cover of the US edition

Love Among The Chickens was substantially rewritten by Wodehouse and published in a new UK edition by Herbert Jenkins in 1921. McIlvaine records two issues of the new first edition (A7c and

A7c2), stating that the second issue had blue boards. Unrecorded by McIlvaine, copies of A7c2 also exist with green boards. McIlvaine then records that the printers were changed and the book reset. In fact, before this happened Herbert Jenkins published a third issue of the first edition, printed by Love and Malcomson, the original printers, in 1922. Like the first issue, the book is bound in green cloth (though some copies also exist in red), but eight Wodehouse titles are listed in it, rather than six as in the first issue. The eight titles appear on the verso of the half-title in this order: *Piccadilly Jim*, *A Damsel in Distress*, *The Coming of Bill*, *A Gentleman of Leisure*, *Jill the Reckless*, *Indiscretions of Archie*, *The Clicking of Cuthbert* and *The Girl on the Boat*.

The dustwrapper is identical to that of the first issue, except for some minor changes: the placement of the ad for *The Lady of the Lawn* is now listed as the sixth title at 2/- net rather than as the third title at 7/6 net; and the color of the ruled box on the back panel is now green, not red. According to one bookdealer, the price of 2/6 is the same as the first issue; however, the *Addendum to McIlvaine* states that the price of the first issue was 3/6.



Dust jacket of the 1921 edition

It is the 1921 text which appears in all later editions of the title (eg the current Penguin issue). Given the scarcity of the earlier UK editions, readers wishing to read the original 1906 text would do best to seek out a copy of the more common US first edition, which appears on eBay several times a year.

A Moscow Winter with Wodehouse

A report from Masha Lebedeva



В ролях: Ксения АЛФЁРОВА, Егор БЕРОВ, Эра ЗИГАНШИНА, Михаил ПОЛИЦЕЙМАКО, Даниил СПИВАКОВСКИЙ, Георгий МАРТИРОСЬЯН, Павел БЕЛОЗЕРОВ, Ольга ТУРАЕВА, Анастасия БУСЫГИНА, Владимир ЮМАТОВ



The first quarter of 2006 was unusually cold in Moscow, but it has been made warmer by the unusually intensive Wodehousean life.

A TV Film

On January 21, the Russian state TV channel 'Culture' presented a film made specifically for television of *The Truth about George*, based on the P G Wodehouse short story from *Meet Mr Mulliner*. This short movie, which lasted about 13 minutes, was a part of the Culture channel's project *Non-long Stories*, a TV series based on short humorous stories of Russian and foreign authors.

The film can be seen on the Russian Society's website at <http://wodehouse.ru/media/george.avi>, although it might be necessary to have 'DivX codec' installed on your computer to receive it. Visit the website at <http://www.divx.com/divx/play/download/> to download the necessary software.

(Editor's Note: any member who downloads this software does so entirely at their own risk. Neither the Society nor its contributors can be held responsible for any consequences of so doing.)

Five O'Clock with Wodehouse

The Russian Wodehouse Society has started a new project: *Five o'clock with Wodehouse*. This involves regular meetings of Russian Wodehouseans in the Moscow bookstore 'Bookburry' on Saturday afternoons. The main objective of the project is to

acquaint recent Russian Wodehouse enthusiasts with short stories which don't belong to Jeeves & Wooster cycle and, therefore, are not so well-known to the Russian audience. The first two meetings were on February 25 and March 25, and as the bookstore has its own cafe, those attending were able to enjoy both the stories and the five o'clock tea.

On February 25, *Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend* and *Sir Agravaire* were

presented by the professional reader Irina Yerissanova. On March 25, the Moscow actor Oleg Kasin (who led The Russian Wodehouse Society annual meeting in 2004) presented the stories *Strychnine in the Soup* and *A Sea of Troubles*, each of which touches on crime.

Wodehouse on Stage

March 2006 was marked by the première of the play *Silver Cow* – the adaptation of Wodehouse's *The Code of the Woosters* by Alexander Shavrin – on the Moscow stage. Before its première in Moscow, this play had been performed in two other Russian cities well-known from Wodehouse's works – St Petersburg and Nijni Novgorod. In Moscow, it was presented on the stage of the Theatre of Estrada. The cast of the play, featured on the copy of the show's poster above, is excellent. The younger members are modern Russian stars of theatre and movies; the actors and actress taking the roles of the older characters hold titles of Honoured or People's Artists of Russia.

On March 23 – the night of one of the first Moscow performances – the theatre was full, and the audience accepted the play quite warmly, though Russian Wodehouseans, brought up on the Granada Television's *Jeeves and Wooster* series, were surprised by some nuances of the novel's interpretation.

Reminiscences of Wodehouse

Neil Midkiff and Harshawardhan Nimkhedkar have been busy with their researches. Neil found a detailed reminiscence about Wodehouse's time at the MGM studios in *Mayer and Thalberg: The Make-Believe Saints*, by Samuel Marx (1975)

It describes the occasion when Wodehouse was summoned by director Harry Beaumont, from 'the sunlit garden of his Beverly Hills mansion' to do a revision for an important scene in *Those Three French Girls*. A studio limo was sent to fetch him but when it got there, Wodehouse was not at home.

Two hours later he showed up and announced he had walked the five-mile distance in record time. He assured the director he could easily fix the scene but wanted to do it outdoors. Beaumont found a sunny spot for him on a saloon porch on the Western street and provided him with desk, chair and writing paraphernalia.

By late afternoon, there had been no word from Wodehouse. An assistant director was despatched to the back lot, but returned to say the saloon set was uninhabited. The equipment had also disappeared.

It was learned that Wodehouse had developed a ravenous appetite from his long walk, so he had gone to lunch. While he was away, a watchman had seen the deserted desk and typewriter, thought it was mislaid by the prop department and returned it. In turn, when Wodehouse saw it had been removed, he took it as a hint that his work wasn't needed after all. He went home the same way as he had come to the studio. He walked.

Harshawardhan's discovery was in *American Heritage* and concerned the 'Garden of Allah' hotel on Hollywood's Sunset Strip. The author 'dropped' a lot of names of those who reputedly stayed there, and suggested that among the most loved residents was the humorist Robert Benchley. He claims that while relaxing round the pool Benchley once held forth to Wodehouse about the Hollywood Noddies.

Wodehouse had completed his first sojourn in Hollywood in 1931 (before Benchley's arrival around the end of 1932, the time when the Hollywood-based Mulliner stories featuring Noddies were starting to appear). Since he did not return to Hollywood until 1937, and Benchley was still present then, it seems much more likely that their discussion, if it happened, was at that later time, with Benchley asking Wodehouse about the 'Nodder' phenomenon rather than the other way round.

Philip Henscher on Open Book

On Radio 4's *Open Book* for March 19, Philip Henscher was invited to advise a reader who said she wanted to start reading Wodehouse but didn't know where to begin. Philip Henscher made four suggestions in an entertaining interview with Mariella Frostrup (who admitted to being 'a Wodehouse virgin'), in which he produced some memorable nifties of his own:

His first choice was *The Code of the Woosters*, but cautioned that "no-one in the history of the world has ever talked like Bertie Wooster". He then recommended *Psmith in the City* and *Mr Mulliner Speaking*, commenting that this contained two or three of the funniest stories in the English language. Tongue in cheek, he speculated that *Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court* showed that Wodehouse as an author was underestimated as a precursor of magical realism.

His final choice was *Ukridge* ("a comic mock Scotsman"), adding that one of the most enjoyable things in all literature is the unsuccessful con artist, and *Ukridge* is the most unsuccessful con artist ever.

Quote . . . Unquote March 20

Guest John Lloyd said that if he were to write a book of quotations he would put on the front cover one of PGW's:

If it were not for quotations, conversation between gentlemen would consist of an endless succession of 'What hos'.

Radio 4: *The Code of the Woosters*

Radio 4's *Classic Serial* adaptation on April 9 and 16 featured *The Code of the Woosters*, with Marcus Brigstocke as Bertie and Andrew Sachs as Jeeves. Trying to adapt a complex novel into a two-hour dramatisation is a difficult task, and the general consensus of Committee members who heard it is that it was beyond the adapter, Judith French.

BBC Audio-Books

It is thus a fortunate coincidence that BBC Audio-Books chose the same week to inform us that they are publishing in CD form four of the classic 3-hour dramatisations starring Richard Briers, formerly only available on cassette. *The Code of the Woosters* and *Stiff Upper Lip*, Jeeves were published in May, and *Joy in the Morning* and *Right Ho, Jeeves* in June.

Recent Press Comment

Japan Times, February 19 (from Mike Iwanaga)

The first leader concerned the decision by *AskJeeves.com* to drop the name 'Jeeves', and concluded that 'The icon lives; it's only an impersonator who has retired'.

Spectator, February 25 (from James Hogg)

Philip Hensher reviewed *1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die* and suggested one anonymous contribution (on *Thank You, Jeeves*) was 'possibly the stupidest 200 words I have ever read on the subject'. The contributor suggested there was no engaging plot or interesting characterisation, that PGW was unfashionable and that his novels had not stood the test of time.

Kansas City Star, March 3 (from Sallie Hobbs)

Barbara Shelly also commented on the *AskJeeves* decision, but suggested he could have done more good if stationed in the White House for the last decade. 'Dick Cheney is no Jeeves'.

Times Magazine, March 4

Emily Mortimer recalled in an interview how she was lazy because her father was happy to read her Wodehouse and Sherlock Holmes and help her write her homework essays.

Daily Telegraph, **Times** and others, March 22

Carried long obituaries of Richard Usborne.

Entertainment Weekly, March 31 (from Tom Smith)

At number 7 in *The Must List* is 'P G Wodehouse: Ask Jeeves to procure Overlook Press's handsome set of hardbound yarns from this peerless Brit wit and unrivalled master of comedy of manners.'

New York Times, April 2 (from Wendell Verrill)

Columnist David Brooks defined a new term: 'The relationship between staffer and boss is marred by the *Jeeves Principle*, which holds that in most large organisations the really intelligent people end up as subordinates while the blandly charismatic, effortlessly slender, excessively well-groomed ones end up as top dogs.'

Gardeners' Question Time, April 9 (Radio 4)

Aunt Dahlia was mentioned as part of enquiry as to whether parents should be banned from giving children the names of flowers and similar objects.

Sydney Morning Herald, April 10, (from Murray Hedgcock)

Irish novelist Sheila O'Flanagan listed Wodehouse ('He's very funny . . . if I'm depressed I read him), thriller writer Lee Child and Marian Keyes amongst her favourite authors).

Guardian, April 15

Pointed out in its leader that PGW's Drones Club was the scene of discussion about Lloyd George's sale of peerages in the 1920s.

Star of Mysore, April 16 (from Murray Hedgcock)

K K R Rao recalled an occasion when he was reading *Pigs Have Wings* at the airport and found he was sitting next to the Finance Secretary of the Assam State. After a discussion about the works of PGW, Rao found his onward flight reservation was unconfirmed. But the Finance Secretary arranged it 'because you are a Wodehouse fan'.

Daily Telegraph, April 18 (from Murray Hedgcock)

China correspondent Richard Spencer has one serious book about China on the go, and a novel to balance things out and help him to stay sane. He added that these days he was resorting more and more to PGW.

Economic Times, India, April 18 (from Hilary Bruce)

Regretted the absence of *The Empress of Blandings* from the third annual Pig Olympics in Moscow.

Sunday Express, April 23 (from Edward Cazalet)

Belinda Lang included *Carry On, Jeeves* amongst her favourite books.

Sunday Times, April 30 (from John Baesch)

A feature on Brogyntyn Hall, a Shropshire stately home on sale for £5.5mn, started with references to Bertie, Lord Emsworth and the Drones.

Daily Telegraph, May 4 (from James Wood)

Carried a political cartoon of Charles Clarke wearing a nappy, chained hands and feet to a rock, with a vulture ('Scandal – Latest') approaching. The caption was the PGW quote: 'He groaned slightly and winced, like Prometheus watching his vulture dropping in for lunch.'

Test Match Special, May 14, Radio 4 (from Murray Hedgcock)

During a rain break, the commentators spoke at length about *The Gold Bats* programme of matches for this summer.

New York Times, May 14 (from Daniel Love Glazer)

Crossword clue: Agatha, Dahlia in P G Wodehouse books (5).

Daily Telegraph, May 16 (from Elin Murphy)

Following a review of a new novel by Jilly Cooper, in which the critic wrote that the same characters with different names were up to the same things, Douglas Brewer wrote a letter drawing attention to the PGW *Introduction to Summer Lightning* in which he explained how he out-generalled such critics.

Sunday Telegraph, May 21 (from Elin Murphy)

An article on Worcestershire by Nicholas Coleridge stressed the county's importance in the Wodehouse canon.

Desert Island Discs, May (from Sir Sydney Kentridge, QC)

Daniel Barenboim chose, as Jeeves might have done, to take a book by Spinoza with him to a desert island.

Poets' Corner

Song About Whiskers

The world is in a mess today,
 Dam sight worse than yesterday
 And getting a whole lot worse right along
 It's time that some clear-thinking guy
 Got up and told the reason why
 America has started going wrong.
 If laws are broke and homes are wrecked,
 It's nothing more than you'd expect
 With all the fellows shaving all the time.
 Yes, *sir*, the moment you begin
 To crop the fungus from the chin
 You're headed for a life of sin
 And crime.

What this country needs is men with whiskers
 Like the men of long ago.
 It would be all hunkadory
 With the nation's pride and glory
 If we let our grogans grow.
 Grants and Shermans and Davy Crocketts
 Never used to go around with razors in their
 pockets:

What this country needs is men with whiskers
 Like the men it used to know.

What this country needs is men with whiskers
 Like the men of earlier date.
 They were never heels and loafers
 And they looked like busted sofas
 Or Excelsior in a crate.
 Whitman's verse, there is none to match it,
 And you couldn't see his face unless you used a
 hatchet.

What this country needs is men with whiskers
 Like the men who made her great.

From *Punch*, 28 September 1955.

(Lines to be said by a small bearded American who goes to a party and when asked to sing something says the only thing he knows is a song about whiskers.)

The pioneers were hairy men,
 Reckless devil-may-care-y men
 Who wouldn't have used a razor on a bet.
 For each had sworn a solemn oath
 He'd never prune the undergrowth:
 Their motto was "To hell with King Gillette!"
 And when they met on country walks
 Wild Cherokees with tomahawks,
 I'll say those boys were glad they hadn't shaved.
 If cornered by a redskin band
 With things not going quite as planned,
 They hid inside their whiskers and
 Were saved.

What this country needs is men with whiskers
 For the whisker always wins.
 Be it war or golf or tennis
 We shall fear no man's menace
 With alfalfa on our chins.
 Don't forget it was men with whiskers
 Who founded your Detroit's, New York's and San
 Franciskers.

What this country needs is men with whiskers
 Out where the vest begins.

What this country needs is men with whiskers
 Like the men of Lincoln's day.
 At the Wilderness and Shiloh
 They laid many a doughty guy low:
 They were heroes in the fray.
 Theirs is fame that can never die out,
 And if you touched their beards
 A couple of birds would fly out.
 So lets raise the slogan of 'Back to Whiskers!'
 And three cheers for the U S A.

Wodehouse and Slang

Alan Carter found a review of *Slang, Today and Yesterday* by Eric Partridge in *The London Mercury* for January 1934 which included this extract:

... Mr Partridge feels that slang is indicative not only of man's earthiness but also of his indomitable spirit, and he regrets that it is a rather neglected aspect of language. Part II contains the nucleus of a history of English slang and among the contemporary influences it is pleasant to find P G Wodehouse, whose monocled lunatics reflect the depth of present-day inanity, and somehow manage to intensify it, by their stammering and yet amazingly expressive use of monosyllables.

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

July 2, 2006 The Gold Bats at Charterhouse

The Gold Bats have arranged two further fixtures in July. The first is against the Charterhouse Intellectuals, to be played at Charterhouse School, Surrey, starting at 2pm. Directions on the website, or from Bob Miller

July 11, 2006 Savage Club

The summer meeting, at which Jonathan Cecil plans to present some of the more interesting songs and poems from the pens of others which appear in Wodehouse's fiction.

July 15, 2006 Wodehouse Walk

Join a walk round Wodehouse's London conducted by Norman Murphy. Contact him to confirm your booking and arrange the time and meeting-place.

July 26, 2006 The Gold Bats in Kent

The Gold Bats are playing in a 'Flower Show Match' in conjunction with the Siegfried Sassoon Society, at Matfield CC, Kent, starting at 2pm. Once again, directions on the website, or from Bob Miller

August 20 to 24, 2006 P G Wodehouse in Wartime Tour

Patrick Hinchey will lead a tour party to central Europe to retrace the route followed by Wodehouse during his wartime days in Germany. Full details of the tour may be found on

September 16, 2006 Wodehouse Walk

Another opportunity to see Wodehouse's London.

October 5, 2006 Formal Dinner

Our formal dinner will be held at Gray's Inn. The application form for tickets is enclosed with this edition of *Wooster Sauce*.

November 14, 2006 Savage Club

Advance notice of the date of the autumn meeting.

October 12-14, 2007 TWS Convention

The next convention will be at the Biltmore Hotel Providence, Rhode Island.

EDITOR'S TAILPIECES

It was only a matter of time before someone introduced the name P G Wodehouse into the debate surrounding Dan Brown's alleged plagiarism in *The Da Vinci Code*. A reporter in *The Times* made his argument in a slightly obscure manner, criticising Brown for trying to 'make an argument out of improbable juxtapositions. He cites his old school, the Philips Academy in New England, as having produced Gore Vidal and John Irving in a way that a Dulwich College schoolboy might lay claim to the talents of P G Wodehouse.'

Towards the end of March, a number of items relating to *Piccadilly Jim* appeared on the Ebay auction site. One was the contract which Robert Benchley signed in September 1934 (he played a character, Bill Macon, who did not appear (at least with that name) in the film). Another was a cinema poster 28" x 22" for the same film. A third was a still of Harlem Tommy Murphy and Owen Moore from the 1919 silent film, from which there was also a glass slide with the film title and some credits.

We were sad to learn of the early death of Alan Fitzpayne, LLB, CA at the age of 57. Alan's appearance for The Gold Bats in the inaugural match against The Sherlock Holmes Society merited a mention in his obituary in the *Glasgow Herald*.

Listening to Radio 4's *A Point of View* while recuperating from a back injury, Larissa Saxby-Bridger heard Brian Walden exhort those who appreciate Wodehouse to introduce his works to younger friends and relations. He had been commenting on Lord Bragg's selection of *Twelve Books which Changed the World*, which had not included one of Walden's own favourites, *The Code of the Woosters*.

The *Sunday Times Culture* section briefly describes forthcoming live performances in various genres. In a recent 'Comedy' section, it said about Andy Zaltzman and John Oliver: 'The pair's tightly scripted satirical monologues are like listening to a mildly socialist P G Wodehouse discussing global warming. In a good way.'