

WOOSTER SAUCE



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

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NEW PHOTOGRAPH OF WODEHOUSE AT DULWICH HAS BEEN RESTORED

Wooster Sauce is delighted to be the first journal to publish a new photograph of P G Wodehouse which has recently been restored

This picture of Plum looking dapper in plus-fours at Dulwich had been pasted into a copy of the Wodehouse novel *Bill the Conqueror*, purchased in a second-hand bookshop many years ago by Michael Pointon. It has been restored by Dulwich College, and we are most grateful to both the College and the owner for permission to reproduce it in the journal. It is thought to be the latest known picture of Wodehouse at Dulwich, being dated to July 1929, although it remains uncertain exactly which cricket match he may have been attending. The building on the left is the Alleyn Arms pub, and that by his left elbow is the sanatorium, close to the cricket pavilion.

The text on the reverse of the photo read:

P G Wodehouse

Old Dulwich Boy the well-known author who writes funny stories, and has produced several comic plays in London.

K B Stevens

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL MEMBERS

The greeting on the right comes from a Christmas Card in Sir Edward Cazalet's archive.

Sir Edward, Richard Briers (President), Norman Murphy (Chairman) and the rest of the Committee send members the season's greetings and wishes for a prosperous, Wodehousean New Year.

*Wishing you
a very merry Christmas
and the happiest
of New Years*

P. G. Wodehouse

The Thing Became A Habit: The Lyric and P.G. Wodehouse

by Charles E Gould, Jr

P G Wodehouse, occasionally with a collaborator, wrote about 210 lyrics for about 30 shows, some of which are pretty obscure; but by 1930, when he was 45 and his career as a lyricist about finished, he had written also about 45 novels, not to mention what would amount to a medium-sized volume of verse originally published in *Punch* and other periodicals. *Bab Ballads* probably puts W S Gilbert in the lead in this non-contest, but the point is that Wodehouse was amazingly prolific because as a versifier he was amazingly good, and could write lyrics almost on the side.

His skill at that has been attributed to his having been set, at an early age, verses to write in Latin and Greek; and there can be no doubt that one gets an ear for metre fast in a language not one's own. Ultimately I failed Greek; but I played with Latin verse and English doggerel throughout school, when I should have been doing my algebra – or somebody's algebra, mine was useless – and I spent an unconscionable amount of time putting my favourite bits of *Paradise Lost* into Latin verse, as Milton could have done in his sleep, if he hadn't already. Most of my students today – and I am not mocking them for it, I'm mocking something else – regard "verse" as an extra-curricular activity in lieu of a sport; but writing it, however awful, should be part of their ear-training.

Wodehouse differed from Gilbert in a quite remarkable way. David Jasen (*P.G. Wodehouse: A Portrait of a Master*) quotes Wodehouse as saying: "Jerry [Kern] generally did the melody first, and I put words to it. W S Gilbert always said that a lyricist can't do decent stuff that way, but I don't agree with him." I surmise that the reasons he didn't agree are that he liked the irregularity the music might enforce upon his verse, and that he instinctively knew that an audience would respond predictably to musical high spots, no matter what the lyric, and therefore he wanted to accommodate – or expand upon – those. That seemingly small but unique recognition separates Wodehouse from numerous contemporaries and followers . . . distinguishes him, in fact.

David Jasen, Lee Davis (in *Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern*) and others have noted that Wodehouse's lyrics are not mere set pieces, but movers of the action of the show. This seems to me rather a glib observation, since Lorenzo Da Ponte did the same for Mozart in 1778, anticipating, to re-apply the words of Christopher Finch (*The Art of Walt Disney*), "the

ingenuity with which Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II incorporated songs into the structure of *Oklahoma!*" in 1943. Finch quotes Walt as saying, in 1937:

It can still be good music and not follow the same pattern everybody in the country has followed. . . It's still that influence from the musicals they have been doing for years. Really we should set a new pattern – a new way to use music – weave it into the story so that somebody doesn't just burst into song.

One understands the idea here, but actually making a song part of the action was no more original with Wodehouse than it was with Walt or Oscar. Even Christoph Willibald Gluck in 1762 didn't have a lyricist (Ranieri Calzabigi) who stopped the show. *Che faro senza Euridice* advances the action at the same time it defines it. All good lyrics do that.

Indeed, with few exceptions (*Tit-Willow* is one), Gilbert's lyrics are so deeply anchored in the book – so "woven into the story" – that excerpting them makes them all but senseless, as is true of most of the songs in *Oklahoma!* Wodehouse, on the other hand, could do either or both: his greatest lyrics fit seamlessly with the fabric of the show, while at the same time they are marvellous songs on their own.

A Year from Today (Sitting Pretty) is to me one of Kern's most beautiful melodies and one of Wodehouse's most poignant lyrics, but nobody would choose it for recital because its text is so plot-oriented – and therefore I would not call it one of Wodehouse's "greatest" songs.

Wodehouse's most famous song, *Bill*, which no matter how it was intended to fit into the action of *Oh, Lady! Lady!* was dropped from that show, became a hit explicitly as an interpolation – a Performance within a Performance – in *Showboat*.

Wodehouse's most popular song, *Till the Clouds Roll By (Oh, Boy!)*, to some extent typical topical patter (in the phrase of Anna Russell), can be lifted out of context as a sweetly cynical statement of the human – or at least the romantic – condition, while at the same time it fits just fine in the show.

Another lyric from the same show – not well-known – seems to me to achieve the best of both worlds, adding a poetic vision of which I think Gilbert and Hammerstein were rarely capable, despite their unassailable genius.

Here is the first Refrain:

I never knew about you, dear,
 And you never knew about me.
 Life might have been Heaven,
 If I, then aged seven,
 Had but met you when you were three.
 We'd have made mud pies like affinities.
 We'd have known what rapture may be.
 I'd have let you feed my rabbit
 Till the thing became a habit, Dear!
 But I never knew about you
 (Ah! What might have been.)
 And you never knew about me.

This verse is not, as you might think, “deceptively simple.” It’s deceptively profound, invoking the central theme of every English novel since Fielding and every lover’s attitude since Catullus, whose free translation of Sappho’s Greek “And I lie down alone” expresses the same sense of lost possibilities in the

presence of their live images. This verse, too, is couched in the subjunctive . . . as are all our best lives. “What might have been,” as another poet observed, is tough. But in one refrain Wodehouse belies my ancient notion that you can’t be cute and sexy at the same time; and he proves that what we recall is what is real. I myself never made a mud pie, nor did I ever have a pet rabbit; but the Refrain above somehow evokes every love I’ve ever known. And if, for the sake of peace, you will accept “romantic nonsense” as one definition of poetic vision, Wodehouse had it.

Charles E. Gould, Jr., an amateur Organist, has been a member of the Department of English at Kent School, Kent, Connecticut, for 25 years. The foregoing piece is the first of two parts of a revised and somewhat amplified extract of an article which appeared as “Apollo and the Liar” in Book Source Monthly, P.O. Box 567, Cazenovia, NY 03035-0857. Vol. 13, No. 1, April 1997.

SOMETHING ODD by John Fletcher

In the first Blandings novel, *Something Fresh* or *Something New*,
 can you help to sort out what happens on each day of the story?

Tony Ring, as author, and I, as publisher, are working on the volume of the *Concordance* dealing with the Blandings saga. A logic problem to do with the calendar arises from our analysis of the action of *Something Fresh*, and we need help!

George Emerson, Aline Peters, Ashe Marson and Joan Valentine all go to Blandings Castle on a Friday (ch 3, §3 and §9). Chapter 5 is set on that same Friday. Chapter 6 describes the next day, Saturday. In §1 Baxter disturbed Ashe Marson and Joan Valentine in the small hours as they independently converged on the scarab. In §2 later in the morning Ashe and Joan agreed to take turns at trying to raid the museum to steal it. Ashe, having won the toss, started on that Saturday night, and would then have marauded on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the following Sunday and Tuesday, with Joan taking the nights in between.

Chapters 7 and 8 are both about the day “ten days after Joan and Ashe had formed their compact” (7§1). Baxter had had nine sleepless nights since first interrupting Ashe (7§2) or “ten nights to cool off” by “nearly two o’clock” on Sunday morning (8§1). George had dined eleven nights at Blandings (8§2). As I count the days and nights, that should take us to the second Tuesday/Wednesday night, when it was Ashe’s turn. In his prowling he collided with George Emerson bringing food to Aline (8§4), so waking up the house.

In chapter 9§1 Ashe “recounted the events of the past night” to Joan and tried to dissuade her from taking her chance next “after what happened last night”. So it must be Wednesday, and this is supported by Joan’s insistence on sticking to the rota agreed. By half-past eleven on the following morning (logically, Thursday), when Baxter woke up, the scarab had been stolen, Peters was magnanimous to Emsworth (9§4), Ashe told Peters that Joan had been the thief and Joan assumed that Ashe had broken his word and stolen it himself.

BUT when Baxter woke up, “It being Sunday morning, . . . most of the occupants of the place had gone off to church” (9§2). Which was it? Thursday or Sunday?

Any suggestions as to how this conundrum can be resolved would be most welcome, preferably in writing to Tony at 34 Longfield Great Missenden Bucks HP16 OEG or by email to me at: johnfletcher@lineone.net

John Fletcher is proprietor of Porpoise Books and a member of the Society’s Committee.



PLUM and ROSIE – A Match Made in Heaven

The first part of Helen Murphy's Chicago talk



As we all know, PGW drew upon all sorts of popular culture to make people laugh. He quoted, with a casualness sometimes amounting to invisibility, from the *Bible*, *Hymns A & M*, popular poetry, literature and songs. He even, in *The Swoop*, poked fun at the Boy Scout movement, and invasion fears, which in those days was pretty daring. This series of articles will refer to some of the covert and overt references he made to popular literature, and then to some of the inspirations for Rosie M Banks and her ilk.

Certain trades and professions featured frequently in PGW's works, for example servants, the clergy and especially policemen. The reader was told in *Joy in the Morning* that the first thing that the Big Four taught the new recruit to the police force was the correct use of the word "Ho!" and although it is not clear whether this is still on the curriculum at police training-schools, the original Big Four, as they were referred to in the popular press, Messrs Hawkin, Fred Wensley (Mr Vensel, to the East End), Cocky Carlin and Neil were giants on earth in those days, pursuing villains by guile and hansom cab.

But what was PGW's favourite occupation for the struggling young protagonists (when they had a job at all)? Surely, as a writer. Opening onion soup bars or health farms would only do for the end of the story, offstage. Once again, he was following the injunction to write about what he knew. Ashe Marson had to write about *Gridley Quayle, Investigator*, in the sort of trashy tale popular for years. Dixon Hawke, *Investigator*, and many others, all followed the two syllables one syllable rule of detective nomenclature established by Sherlock Holmes. Many had a junior assistant, who would call him 'Guv'nor'. Dixon Hawke and the rest called the assistant in return 'the youngster', as in the well-used phrase: 'A half of bitter, landlord – and some lemonade for the youngster'.

Frequently characters in the novels, especially Bertie, compared themselves consciously with those in books. It may be that the fictional character was named, like Robinson Crusoe with his credit and debit columns, or it may be "some cove who, when it became necessary for him to put people where they belonged, was in the habit of laughing down from lazy eyelids and flicking a speck of dust from the irreproachable Mechlin lace at his wrists". So Bertie proceeded to take Stiffy to task while "laughing down from lazy eyelids and flicking a speck of cigarette ash" from his "irreproachable cuff". This was from *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, but PGW doesn't tell us that.

That was a more or less direct quotation, but he might adapt a popular catchphrase. In one of the school stories a character discussing the menu for tea, asks: "What's the matter with biscuits? *They're* all right". You wouldn't notice this as a reference to anything at all – unless you remember that there was a popular song some years earlier: "What's the matter with Gladstone? *He's* all right."

Very occasionally he got his source wrong. In *The Girl in Blue*, a very late book, a character referred to the Cheeryble Brothers being in *Oliver Twist*, instead of *Nicholas Nickelby*, where they properly belong. The error had no comic effect whatsoever, and was probably a genuine slip.

The faintest kind of reference is where PGW took an action cliché or a verbal cliché, and used it himself for comic effect. Often it was so hackneyed that one could not be sure whether PGW was referring to a specific book, and such a reference may then not be precise. For example, Dame Barbara Cartland, 97 not out and still going strong, has no truck with modern ways in literature. She is still using the same phrases which PGW started mocking so many years ago. Bertie told us of a girl wearing a garment "which accentuated rather than hid the graceful outlines of her figure, if you understand me", and in *The Old Reliable* Bill goes to change into a frock of "some clinging material which will accentuate rather than hide my graceful outlines". Dame Barbara would write about a Russian Countess who was "wearing a diaphanous negligée which revealed rather than concealed her figure".

The comedy in PGW's usage of such clichés, came from the fact that, while it may have been perfectly appropriate for Conan Doyle to speak of a "nameless dread" in the sinister context of *A Study In Scarlet*, it could scarcely ever have been suitable for the sort of problems which Eggs, Beans and Crumpets found themselves facing.

In A Harcourt Burrage's *The Vanished Yacht* a young lady, after a shock, "reels, and would have fallen". How often did Bertie not do the same? And later, when someone needed to row out to the ship, she said: "What good could a poor weak woman like me do?" As it turned out, not very much – her nerves failed and she almost muffed it. Now consider the antithesis of a poor, weak woman, Aunt Dahlia in *The Code of the Woosters*:

"Bertie, I am only a weak woman "

I raised a third hand. This was no time for listening to aunts.

“Bertie,” said Aunt Dahlia, “I am only a weak woman, but if you won’t tread on this insect and throw the remains outside, I shall have to see what I can do . . . Spink-Bottle, you ghastly, goggle-eyed piece of gorgonzola, will you hop it or will you not?” . . .

“Yes, Mrs Travers. At once, Mrs Travers . . .”

Rosa Nouchette Carey wrote very pure tales – as if any other kind would have been considered! – for the *Girls’ Own Paper*, begun shortly after the *BOP* and almost as popular. While much of her work was serialised, some appeared in book form, such as *Our Bessie*. Her mother was a gentle, sweet faced, motherly type which PGW’s heroes always hoped for and never got, and her father was the kindly, hard-

working local doctor. At one stage mother reflected upon the “priceless jewels of innocence and purity, which are the fairest adornments of a young girl”. The mind of the PGW reader instantly leaps to Lord Emsworth’s niece Veronica Wedge, whose “aim in life was to look as like a chandelier as possible” and of whom PGW wrote: “a lovely girl needs, of course, no jewels but her youth and health and charm, but anybody who had wanted to make Veronica understand that would have had to work like a beaver”.

Helen Murphy is a member of the Society’s Committee, and works for the Metropolitan Police Inspectorate. This series of articles, based on a transcript of her talk to The Wodehouse Society’s Chicago Convention, will be continued in the next issue of Wooster Sauce.

DID YOU KNOW?

Publishing Errors – 4

An unnamed Chinese publisher produced an edition of *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* in Shanghai from Jenkins sheets, but with its own unique dust-wrapper. The advertisement below appears on that jacket!

EGGS, BEANS, AND CRUMPETS

By P. G. Wodehouse

Thirteen priceless new short stories, starring Stanley Feartherstonehaugh Ukridg (who is Bettie wocster with atouch of juvenile delinquency) the Drones, and other in situation only Wodehouse could imagine.

Price.....\$6.00

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges – 4

“This is a pretty state of affairs. My daughter helping the foe of her family to fly . . .”

“Flee, father,” corrected the girl, faintly.

“Flea or fly, this is no time to be talking about insects.”

The Romance of a Bulb-Squeezer, from Meet Mr Mulliner

PARLIAMENTARY REPORT

Speaking in the House of Lords during a debate on 29 October 1997 concerning ‘Magistrates Courts’, Lord Meston said:

Finally, there is much force in the proposal for a single stipendiary bench with a national rather than a local jurisdiction. I am tempted to remind your Lordships that there is a good fictional precedent in P G Wodehouse where his character, Sir Watkyn Bassett, felt able to exercise his powers with equal ferocity both in London and at home.

I am intrigued by the idea of a possible new title for stipendiary magistrates. Having spent many long hours in Bow Street and Marlborough Street courts representing shoplifters and drunken drivers, I have heard stipendiary magistrates called a variety of names, none of which would seem suitable. Perhaps the noble and learned Lord should consider offering a prize.

Source:- Hansard, House of Lords, 29 October, 1977, Column 1063

LETTERS FROM MEMBERS

From Miss Alison J Lindsay of Edinburgh, who has drawn our attention to an active club in Dover Street to which all members might aspire:

Do you yearn to drop a reference to "My Club in Dover Street" into conversations, and fool casual acquaintances that the Drones has accepted you as a member? *Travelling Light*, a company which specialises in year-round warm weather clothing, is offering its customers the opportunity to do just that. Customers in its shops or from the mail-order catalogue who spend more than £500 in twelve months have the chance to join their Best Customer Club for a year. The front half of the downstairs floor of the shop at 35 Dover Street is given over to members who may, during normal opening hours, use the room as a haven from the bustle of London. Free tea and coffee is provided (plus essential loos), and luggage or shopping may be left for later collection.

For further details, contact *Travelling Light*, Morland, Penrith, Cumbria CA10 1BR.

David Thirlby, Editor of the Vintage Sports Car Club Bulletin provides this reminiscence:

Sandy Skinner once recommended to me that as a motoring writer, I should have a London Club and he explained that if you joined the Steering Wheel Club, though the proprietor liked to put up the subscription every year you could ignore his blandishments if you paid by bankers' order. He might exhort you to pay more, but he would still cash your bankers' order every year on the simple basis that five bob in the hand was better than no member at all. I joined and paid at the then going rate of 27/6d a year and stayed a member until the the going rate had risen to £25, at which rate the club changed hands. I was thrown out, presumably with Skinner who was only paying £0.25 a year. I was pleased to be a member of the Steering Wheel Club, for when I read Norman Murphy's *In Search of Blandings* it seemed more than likely that Jeeves's Junior Ganymede Club used the same premises. To find the Steering Wheel Club you enter the Shepherds Market area from Curzon Street with a bridge over. A discreet doorway immediately on the left took you to the first floor by a narrow staircase where the club operated and a bar occupied the bridge area; a second floor housed the restaurant which served the sort of food men liked.

From Mr W H Grove, of Kingswinford, West Midlands:

Your readers may be interested to know that, in addition to Highgate Common in London, there is a Highgate Common in Staffordshire. If you visit these latter acres and proceed in the right direction you will come to a small pond and adjacent thereto an official notice which reads, 'Under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1991* it is an offence to remove or disturb the newts in this pond'. Obviously, Gussie Fink-Nottle was there. I do not know when this was – your readers may know – but his visits to adjacent Worcestershire are fairly well recorded.

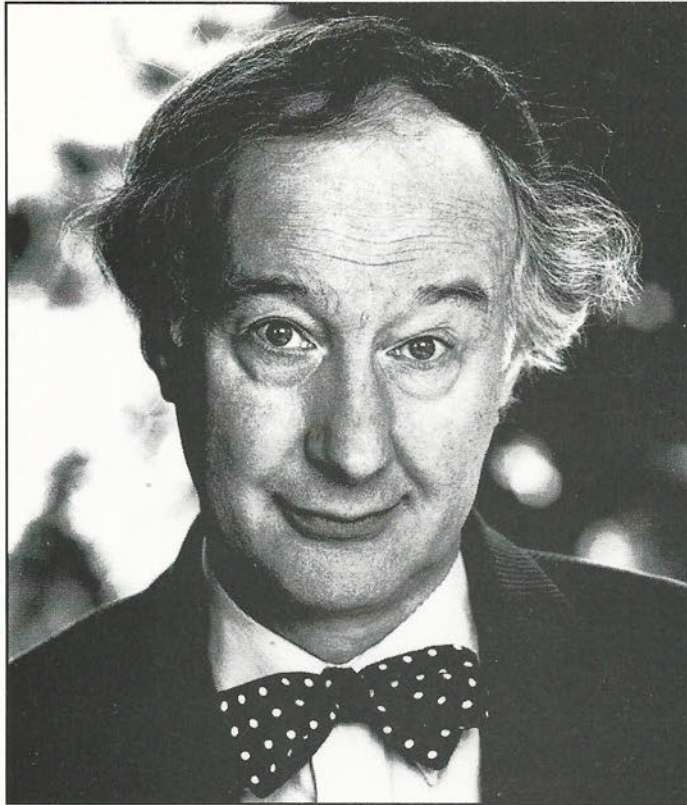
From Mr John Ross Phillips of Northampton, commenting on Alison Lindsay's letter in Wooster Sauce Number 3:

Your note on the letter from Miss A J Lindsay refers to the possibly more limited ingredients in Jeeves' bracer, "a little preparation of my own invention" as he modestly calls it. While the recipe may not be confined to the three ingredients Jeeves describes, they are clearly the *active* constituents and lack only the pharmaceutical additive which is required in a "Never-Say-Die". Judson Coker (*Bill The Conqueror*) guarantees that one of these will "make a week-old corpse spring from its bier and enter for the Six-Day Bicycle Race", and a little earlier specifies:

One raw egg in half a wine-glassful of Worcester Sauce, sprinkle liberally with red pepper, add four aspirins and stir. Put you right in no time.

There is no caution against breaking the egg yolk so generally insisted upon in recipes of this type, just 'and stir', but we shouldn't pedantically depend on the correctness of Coker's instructions because he was said to have the voice of "a man delicately endeavouring to keep the top of his head from coming off" and in such a condition precise recollection tends to be elusive.

A curious variant is given in *Approved Cocktails* (Authorized by The United Kingdom Bartenders' Guild, Pall Mall Ltd, no date, Foreword by Giovanni Quaglino). Before going on to the classic *Prairie Oyster*, which ends with the ritual "Do not break the Yolk of the Egg" it gives instructions for the *Prairie Hen*: 2 dashes Vinegar; 1 teaspoonful Worcester Sauce; 1 Egg; 2 dashes Tabasco Sauce; A little Pepper and Salt. Do not break the egg (*sic*). The mind rather boggles at *how* the egg is to be ingested in that case, if at all!



Profile of a Patron

In his long and varied acting career – from Chekhov to Ben Travers in the West End, from Fellini to Frankie Howerd in films, from Shakespeare to sitcoms on television – Jonathan Cecil has maintained links with P G Wodehouse. His 30-year Wodehouse association, which he describes more fully below, has probably been more consistent than any other actor's apart from Jonathan's old friend, our President, Richard Briers.

As a schoolboy he devoured Wodehouse and wireless, which each proved more useful to him than Greek and Latin, though these did help in appreciating gems such as Jeeves's '*Rem acu tetigisti*'. His favourite radio comedians were Terry-Thomas and Claude Hulbert, both splendidly Wodehousean coves.

His next, perhaps final, ambition is to play Lord Emsworth.

Jonathan Cecil writes on his 'Wodehouse Career'

For Chivers Audio Books I have recorded twelve Jeeves books (for which I won the 1996 Earphones Award). Said a kindly American critic: "If they are not playing [these tapes] in Heaven, I don't want to go there."

My television Wodehouse debut was as Pongo Twistleton, the nephew to Wilfred Hyde White in *Uncle Fred Flits By* (1967 – does a copy still exist?). Mr Hyde White occasionally ad-libbed his lines but his suavely anarchic Uncle Fred must surely have delighted Plum.

I played an Eton-and-Balliol gorilla in *Wodehouse Playhouse* and starred as Bertie Wooster in the 1981 centenary tribute *Thank You P G Wodehouse* wearing an eyeglass – for me as fundamental a prop as Holmes's pipe. The essential thing is never to let it drop!

On radio I played all the second juveniles – Bingo, Gussie, Boko, etc – in the long-running series *What Ho, Jeeves*. I adapted and read four Drones club stories for Radio 4, was heard in *Galahad at Blandings* and recently in *The Oldest Member*.

On stage I had a small hit as Lord Tidmouth in *Good Morning, Bill* (1987, Leatherhead and Richmond).

Chivers Unabridged Audios

The unabridged readings of P G Wodehouse's books (both novels and short story collections) which have been produced by Chivers over the past few years are of extremely high quality, but many members are barely familiar with them.

Most can be borrowed from local libraries at very modest cost, but to encourage members to buy their own copies, Chivers are making an exclusive offer to members details of which can be found on the separate enclosure.

In addition, Chivers are offering a prize of three of their unabridged readings, signed by Jonathan Cecil, for the correct answers to the questions in the quiz on the left. Assuming, as we are entitled to do, that more than one person will get all the answers right, a draw will be made on April 21, at the Society Golf day, to determine the winner.

ENTRIES to the Editor by MARCH 31 please.

CHIVERS/JONATHAN CECIL QUIZ

- 1 Which character appeared in both *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* and *Thank You, Jeeves*?
- 2 A mixture of which two spirits caused Gussie Fink-Nottle to be under the influence of the sauce when he handed out the prizes at Market Snodsbury Grammar School speech day?
- 3 Who was the winner of the *Great Sermon Handicap*?
- 4 Which two unfortunates were married to Bertie Wooster's Aunt Agatha, though not at the same time?
- 5 Who caused Mike Jackson to get out just short of his century by walking in front of the sight screen behind the bowler's arm?

Answers to all these questions can be found in books read by Jonathan Cecil on Chivers Unabridged Books.

WHAT HO, CHICAGO!

TWS Biennial Convention Another Resounding Success

The biennial Convention of the largest Wodehouse society, ('TWS' – The Wodehouse Society) based in the USA, was held at the beginning of October in the Inter-Continental Hotel on North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, and was thoroughly enjoyed by the 200+ members who attended. The Rest of the World was represented by Margaret Slythe, John Fletcher, Hal and Lara Cazalet, Tim Andrew, Helen Murphy and Tony Ring from the UK, Sven Sahlin from Sweden (the foregoing all members of our society), Jelle Otten from the Dutch Society, and Will Richardson from New Zealand.



Photo: Jan Wilson Kaufman

The International team, John Fletcher (left), Helen Murphy, dressed appropriately for the banquet, and Sven Sahlin, pay rapt attention during the final of the Scripture Knowledge Contest in which they proved victorious.

The Convention had that elusive quality of appearing more informal and mildly disorganised than it was. Because it attracted so many people from all over the U'SA, members started arriving midway through Thursday, even though the formal events did not start until tea-time on Friday. Newcomers were gathered into groups and made welcome almost before they arrived, and from the start of the Convention proper until the last retirement on Saturday night, there were few unsmiling faces to be seen. Brunch on Sunday has evolved as the traditional way of saying goodbye, and the steady stream of friends leaving the hotel throughout the day was both evocative of a glorious few hours of exuberant escapism, and a realisation that it would be two years before we would meet many again.

The press coverage achieved by the organising committee (the 'Chicago Accident Syndicate' is the name selected by the local chapter) was extraordinary, and the best way of providing an overall flavour of events is by way of quotations from three leading dailies which can be found on page 9. I would merely like to add a few additional points of particular interest to our Society. The paper given by Helen Murphy on *Plum and Rosie - A Match Made in Heaven* was outstanding, and the first of several extracts from it appears on page 4. A paper on *Conan Doyle's Influence on Wodehouse* was presented by one of our own American members, Marilyn MacGregor (Membership Secretary of TWS), and the March issue of *Wooster Sauce* will feature an article based on one of Marilyn's other talks on Wodehouse and Sherlock Holmes.

Secondly, in the final of the *Great Scripture Knowledge Contest*, a quiz competition between teams of three which was a cross between *Mastermind* and *University Challenge*, an international team consisting of three of our members, (John Fletcher and Helen Murphy from the UK, and Sven Sahlin from Sweden) narrowly beat a very game Newts team from New England. The final round, held during the banquet on Saturday night, was enlivened by the diners, who threw bread rolls at the Chairman whenever they thought that a question was unreasonably hard.

Thirdly, late morning on Convention Saturday is the traditional time for one TWS President to hand over the baton to his successor, and Dan Garrison, (described in *The Washington Post* as 'a shifty-looking capo', who claims to be head of the classics department at Northwestern University. 'Who's he kidding? Next this raffish character will be telling me he's the editor of a standard Latin text of Horace. Obviously a fiendishly clever con artist . . .) took over. Newt Elin Woodger, another of our members, assumed the position of Vice-President.

Finally, the banquet was attended by Michael Hodge, MBE, the resident British Consul-General and his wife. Despite having an early appointment at the airport to meet a minister the following day, the Hodges stayed the course and left at an hour that Bertie Wooster and his friends would recognise. It is to be hoped that if necessary, Jeeves would have been there in the morning with a life-saver.

CONVENTION PRESS COMMENTS

As Reported by the American Dailies

The *Chicago Tribune* carried a preview of the convention written by Charles Leroux, in its 1 October issue, extending to about half a (broadsheet) page.

Today's world has spun far from the cozy time capsule of turn-of-the-century England in which Wodehouse's fiction resides. Every other year, however, Brigadoon-like, the author's take on the Edwardian era lives again in the convention of The Wodehouse Society, an organisation its press release terms 'loosely-structured, often chaotic'.

...

To celebrate the world according to Wodehouse, conventioners will don Edwardian dress; take the names and *personae* of characters (Gussie Fink-Nottle, the teetotal keeper of newts; Psmith – "The P is silent, as in pshrimp", etc); pelt each other with dinner rolls (waitstaff [what would PG have made of that term?, *Ed*] at the hotel will be warned, past gatherings have turned ugly) and quote from the enormous Wodehouse canon the way attendees at a religious conference might spout Scripture.

***New York Times*, October 7, 1997 (Section B – The Living Arts)**

Paul Lewis, who attended the whole convention, wrote somewhat more than quarter of a (broadsheet) page, of which the following are but minimal extracts:

Before the banquet, Plummies played the mindless games popular at the Drones Club, where large sums were staked on egg-and-spoon races, throwing playing cards into a top hat and putting golf balls at overturned whisky tumblers.

...

The convention was a weekend of lectures, serious and droll. The members also sang along with the lyrics Wodehouse wrote for Jerome Kern melodies, with Wodehouse's step great-grandchildren, Hal and Lara Cazalet, both professionals, performing such hits as *Bill*, which was sung in *Showboat*, and *Go Little Boat*, from *Miss 1917*.

***Washington Post*, 19 October, 1997 (page X15)**

Michael Dirda, a prize-winning literary critic who not only attended the Convention but presented a paper, contributed a 2,500-word article, including the following gems:

Friday Noon: Having unexpectedly landed in Chicago, instead of on the banks of the River Styx, I make my way to the Hotel Intercontinental, site of the biennial convention of the P G Wodehouse Society. As a member of Capital! Capital!, the DC chapter of this least objectionable of all organisations, I've foolishly agreed to talk about *Wodehouse and the Critics*. Doubtless some post-hypnotic command accounts for my inability to recollect exactly how I was brainwashed into this. While entering the hotel lobby I bump into a dark-complected young man, perhaps of Pakistani or Indian descent, sporting a top hat, gray cutaway, soft gloves, and, it goes without saying, spats. He murmurs "Sorry, old chap" and strolls off down Michigan Avenue, apparently unconscious of the stares from numerous passers-by.

8 pm: After the opening ceremonies, the convention hosts a spirited reading of two Wodehouse stories, *Jeeves Takes Charge* and *Bertie Changes His Mind* performed by members of the City Lit Theater Company.

Saturday 9am: Before my talk, the latest round of questions in the Wodehouse Scripture contest. Sporting a striped jacket and a tie emblazoned with pink pigs, the quizmaster, Tony Ring, looks like a particularly untrustworthy racing tout . . . Over the weekend the battle of wits attains an intellectual intensity not matched since Kasparov played Deep Blue.

Saturday afternoon: Funniest of all, businessman Peter Sinclair relates, with slides, the saga of J Fillken Wilberfloss (inspired by the character of that name in *Psmith, Journalist*). As a lark, Sinclair began telling unwanted callers to his DC company that they needed to speak to Mr Wilberfloss who had, unfortunately, just stepped out. This tireless executive, who never returned a call or answered a letter, was soon receiving huge quantities of mail from banks, job applicants and even a reference book publisher that hoped to honor him in a forthcoming volume devoted to titans of industry.

RECENT PRESS REFERENCES

With Contributions From Members

The American Press did The Wodehouse Society proud in its coverage of the Chicago convention, and substantial extracts form the bulk of the report on the Convention on pages 8 and 9. The Daily Telegraph referred obliquely to the toast to the Bulgarians at the Members evening at the Savage Club on October 14 (see below). Generally there was a substantial volume of references of different types, of which the following is a selection:

Sunday Times, 26 October, 1997

Godfrey Smith included P G Wodehouse “who was simply the master” in his list of eleven guests whom, given *carte blanche* to include anybody since Adam, he would invite to dinner, along with St Paul, Horace, Madame de Sévigné, Disraeli, La Rochefoucauld, Benjamin Franklin, J Maynard Keynes, W H Auden, Chekhov and Noel Coward.

Times (*et alia*, including Barclaycard envelopes!)

In an advertisement for short stays in Le Touquet, the text started:

Le Touquet became as fashionable as the Riviera in the 1930's, when Noel Coward, P G Wodehouse and others entertained in villas among the pinewoods . . .

Times, September 12, 1997

Philip Howard wrote about the ‘stiff upper lip’:

All recorded evidence shows the stiff upper lip to be of American Puritan origin, from 1830 onwards. It is the reverse of the American ‘down in the mouth’. Harriet Beecher Stowe urged Uncle Tom to keep a stiff upper lip. A century later P G Wodehouse, expert in American slang, was one of the first British writers to introduce the image “Carry on Jeeves, stiff upper lip!”. Graham Greene, another expatriate Briton sound on American usage, distinguished *machismo*, the Spanish equivalent of the Roman *virtus*, as having little to do with a stiff upper lip. And indeed, antique Roman and Homeric heroes blubbed a great deal at the appropriate occasions, provided they did so in a manly way, not making a ritual display of screeching like a woman.

Times, September 11, 1997

Robert Bruce, Accountancy and Audit correspondent, identified Wodehouse as setting basic principles for businessmen to follow:

It was P G Wodehouse who established the basic principle for dealing with tax inspectors. It comes in the lyrics he wrote for a show called *Sitting Pretty*. “You simply hit them with an axe” was his advice. It is excellent advice and applicable to all occasions. In particular it is a principle that people working on financial reporting rules should take to heart. All rulebooks are too long and need ruthless pruning . . .

Robert went on to say that Arthur Andersen, in commenting on a proposed new reporting standard, adopted the principle of ‘avoiding the camel’ and specified this as merely a variant on the Wodehouse principle.

Wisden Cricket Monthly and *The Cricketer* each carried favourable reviews of *Wodehouse at the Wicket* in their October issues, WCM giving a full page to their complimentary comments on ‘a small but perfectly formed anthology’.

Evening Standard, 20 October, 1997 (from Murray Hedgecock)

Matthew Norman referred to the financial difficulties apparently besetting Prince Michael of Kent, and suggested that, like Fergie, he should turn for resolution to ‘credulous Americans’.

The answer, as so often, lies in the pages of P G Wodehouse. Bertie Wooster’s wastrel friend Bingo Little hatched a debt-clearing scheme in New York, whereby he introduced huge groups of provincial meat merchants to his uncle, Lord Bittlesham, one at a time.

All Michael has to do, then, is find an apartment in New York and entice Her Majesty over, telling her he has ‘a few friends’ he would like her to meet. The bad news is that, given Her Majesty’s current reputation with former colonials, the \$1 a handshake rate still applies, so it will take time.

(Murray had a letter published on 22 October in response, correcting the Wodehousean errors which had surfaced in the original piece.)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please continue to send in copies of references to Wodehouse or his characters, environs, and so on. I am willing to forward photocopies of articles not reproduced in full on receipt of a request, a stamp and a cheque payable to the Society of whatever amount your conscience dictates!

Daily Telegraph, October 16, 1997

P G Wodehouse fever has hit Bulgaria. Thirty Wodehouse novels have recently been translated into Bulgarian, and are now storming the best-seller lists. "I have a copy of one," Tony Ring, editor of *Wooster Sauce* tells me. "The title is in Cyrillic, but I am sure it is *Thank You, Jeeves* because the figures on the cover have blackened faces."

Guardian Weekend Supplement, 25 October, 1997 (from Peter Whiteman)

Judith Williamson, in her *This Life* column, referred to the poems (and in particular the one simply entitled *Be!*) of Rocky Todd, which she said were recalled by the Calvin Klein advertisements for a fragrance of that name. She then went on to comment on the irony of Rocky Todd lolling around with his feet up exhorting people to 'Be!', and expanded the scope of her article to cover other manifestations of 'a contemporary trend towards "Be!"ing'. This covered divers matters such as the new Oasis album title (*Be Here Now*), Michael Portillo's claim to *be* caring and compassionate, and the enormous amount of rhetoric surrounding what Tony Blair is personally supposed to *be*.

Times, 23 August 1997 (from Nick Townend)

An article by Simon Barnes drew attention to a sporting row which erupted during a cricket match between Marlborough College and Radley College. Marlborough batted first and refused to declare until just before 6pm, leaving Radley 18 overs to score 170 to win. As a result all sporting fixtures between the two schools were reported to have been suspended.

As it happens, an almost identical situation is portrayed in a cricket story by P G Wodehouse, which has just been collected in what must be the cricket book of the season, *Wodehouse at the Wicket*, edited by my old friend Murray Hedgcock.

The Oldie, October 1997 (from Richard Ingrams)

Sylvia A Matheson recalled the day in 1933 when, as a teenager, she had been brash enough to ignore Wodehouse's vow never to give another interview to a woman journalist (*Ed: following the revelations of his off-the-record comments to a female interviewer from the Los Angeles Times in 1931*), and was granted an interview. She recalled her surprise that he spent so much time on a 'teenage nobody', particularly as he had a terrific backlog of work, and recounted an anecdote about the time when, trying to practise his French, he had danced with the French wife of a friend and told her: "*Vous dansez comme une plume, Madame.*" He should have said: "*Vous dansez legere comme une plume*" had he wanted to compliment her dancing as being like a feather, whereas he had actually said she danced as stiffly as a pen or a stick!

Mail on Sunday, September 28, 1997 (from S K R Frazer)

Brian Viner contributed an article about the need for a local hero if golf is to become popular in Russia, and recalled Vladimir Brusiloff's prowess in *A Clicking of Cuthbert*.

Attaché (the magazine of US Airways), October 1997 (from Caroline Pokrivchak)

Robert Sullivan wrote an article entitled *The Shakespeare of Golf* (P G Wodehouse loved the mashie, the niblick and the well-turned phrase). This was an informative review of Wodehouse's attachment to golf and his life-long preference for referring to clubs by their names, rather than numbers. A printer's error may have spoiled the impact of the last sentences:

He wrote months before his death: "I believe one still drives with a driver nowadays, though at any moment we may have to start calling it the Number One wood, but where is the mashie now, where the cleek, the spoon and the baffy?" Wodehouse died in 1994. I think titanium did him in.

Donald Duck Adventures, No 46 October 1997 Direct market Edition (from David Landman)

The third and last strip cartoon in this book covered 82 panels and was entitled *The Butler Did It*. The action started at the 'Wodehouse Butler Academy', with which Donald Duck graduated before becoming butler to the Chief Examiner, Lord Glossop.

A Source for Wooster? by Oliver Wise

Murray Hedgcock's learned and amusing article in *Wooster Sauce* No 3 asserts that there is nothing in P G Wodehouse's writings which quite proves that Bertie was indeed a cricketer. If one limits the evidence to references to cricket in the stories about Bertie, I agree. However, I suggest that one can look at other evidence and draw inferences which indicate that he must have been a cricketer well into his teens.



Bertie went to Eton. Henry Blofeld is quoted as referring to the existence of the Eton 'slack-bob', ie the Etonian who neither rows nor plays cricket. It is important that such a status would have been impossible to maintain throughout the Etonian career, if at all, as PGW knew. If anyone was cut out to be a slack-bob, it was Psmith. In *Mike and Psmith* chapter 26, Psmith pointed out tactfully (for a non-rower) that cricket was compulsory, and Psmith had left Eton only one summer previously. It follows that Bertie must have been either a dry-bob (a cricketer) or a wet-bob (a rower).

In *Joy In The Morning* chapter 8 Bertie said:

At Eton, Stilton had been Captain of the Boats, and he had rowed assiduously for Oxford. His entire formative years, therefore, as you might say, had been spent in dipping an oar into the water, giving it a shove and hauling it out again. Only a pretty dumb brick would fritter away his youth doing that sort of thing – which, in addition to being silly is also the deuce of a sweat – and Stilton Cheesewright was a pretty dumb brick. A fine figure of a young fellow as far northwards as the neck, but above that solid concrete.

This is the traditional condemnation – although PGW expresses it more wittily – by the Etonian dry-bob of the wet-bob.

Earlier in the same book Bertie talked about when, in "a weak moment at Oxford, misled by my advisers, I once tried to do a bit of rowing". This is surely inconsistent with any significant previous experience of rowing, which he could not have avoided if he had been a wet-bob.

Oliver Wise is an Old Etonian member of the Society's Committee.

Nick Townsend also wrote to take issue with one point in Murray's article:

Mr Hedgcock cites Hilda Gudgeon's "There's some talk of altering the leg-before-wicket rule again" in *The Mating Season* (1949) as evidence of Wodehouse's Americanisation, on the grounds that "any properly educated Englishman" would use "Law" rather than "rule". I would venture to suggest that Mr Hedgcock, an Australian, is being *plus Anglais que les Anglais*. In *The Odd Trick* in *Tales of St Austin's* (1903, before Wodehouse had ever been to America) the following exchange occurs:

"It's an awful pity, don't you think, that they don't bring in that new leg-before rule?"

"Seems to me," said Tony bitterly, "the old rule holds pretty good when a man's leg's bang in front."

The one game we know Bertie excelled at was rackets. He was recognised as a blue by Hilda Gudgeon. The correlation between success on the rackets court and prowess with the cricket bat is well established. Current examples of distinguished rackets players who are first class cricketers are M G N Windows of Gloucestershire and R R Montgomerie of Northants. M C Cowdrey and C T M Pugh are examples from the previous generation. Back in PGW's day the Fosters of Malvern and Worcestershire were great names in both games.

I suspect that Bertie's cricketing skills, while being well above average, were not good enough to make it worth the effort to make the Eton XI. If he had played for Eton at Lord's in the (then) great social occasion of the year, surely he or someone would have mentioned it. I see him as purely a batsman, as commanding against fast bowling as he was against a hard-hit rackets ball, but liable to be duped by a wily slow spinner. Perhaps his attention in the field was apt to wander. I do not think that it was in his character to be like Psmith: "a slow left hand bowler with a swerve". Fast bowling would have been "the deuce of a sweat".

We know that Wodehouse had cricket on his mind when he named Jeeves after the Warwickshire bowler. I suspect that cricket was not far away when he came up with Bertie's surname. Wooster is pronounced as Worcester, the usual abbreviation for one of the more aristocratic and amateur counties of the day, and it was Warwickshire's neighbour. Barclay's *World of Cricket* reports that at the turn of the century the list of Worcestershire's presidents and vice-presidents included three earls, the son of an earl, a viscount, a baron and two baronets.

A source for Wooster, perhaps?

NEWS FROM OVERSEAS SOCIETIES

Australia

The President, Mrs Jose Van Dijk, has written to say that the Australian Society has been formed but as yet is very much in an embryo state. Members who have friends in Australia whom they think might be interested in joining are invited to contact Mrs Van Dijk at:

Her telephone number is _____, and fax contact can be made to her office on _____.

Russia

A Russian Society has also been formed, and details can be obtained from Mikhail Aleksandrovitch Kuzmenko at:

At present I have no telephone number, but the Society has a website accessible through;

<http://mech.math.msu.su/~gmk/>

Belgium

The President, Kris Smits, wrote with the following information:

The Belgian Society, known as The Drones Club, was founded in 1989 and has 48 members. It holds three events annually: a General Assembly in February, The Drones Club Darts Championship in June and The Great Drones Balloon Hunt in November (which was referred to in the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*).

Its existence and aims spring exclusively from the literary works of PGW. In their activities, and in their cooperation with overseas societies, they consistently strive for an abiding interest in his achievements, in a 'highly playful atmosphere'.

Its journal, published four times a year, is called *Drommelse Drones* and is largely written in Dutch. Their meetings take place at Millfleet Hall, a country house with lake, boat and two swans in a rural setting in Herselt, the centre of Flanders. It is owned by the Society's Master of Ceremonies. Membership costs £7 *per annum*, and contact can be made through the Editor or their internet address:

<http://bewoner.dma.be/Jeeves36>

POETS' CORNER

SUFFRAGETTE SONGS

There was a young girl from a mill
Who fought with such vigour and skill
That Constable Y,
Whom she hit in the eye,
Is wearing a shade on it still.

One lady, apparently meek,
Was a golfer with muscles of teak.
A policeman, 'tis said,
Had to hop off to bed
When she whacked at his shin with a cleek.

A maid of Newcastle-on-Tyne
Desired as a martyr to shine
She would languish, she cried,
In a gaol till she died
But some humorist stumped up her fine.

There was a stern female of Lee
Who made for a timid MP,
But, eluding her grab,
He got into a cab
For he wished to get home to his tea.

There was a young lady of Cheam,
Who couldn't do much except scream.
But the bystanders say
She could beat – on her day –
An engine that's letting off steam.



There was a stout lady of Chester,
Who said the disturbance distressed her,
So she sat on the ground
Till a crowd rallied round.
(It took seven men to arrest her.)

This group of limericks first appeared in the April 1907 issue of *The Books of Today and The Books of Tomorrow*.

BOOK REVIEW

HENRY BLOFELD reviews *WODEHOUSE AT THE WICKET*

(Edited by Murray Hedgcock, Published by Hutchinson at £12.99)

Murray Hedgcock has done the millions of Wodehouse lovers a great service. By bringing so many of his cricket offerings together in one book, we are able to appreciate the better his skill as a writer about the game. The game of cricket was a wonderful vehicle for his schoolboy heroes, led of course by Mike Jackson, in his early books.

Reading *Wodehouse at the Wicket* made me feel for a while that the Master had quite properly thrown off the shackles of the grave and had come back to give us one last treat.

One difficulty in compiling this book must have been that some of those early cricket chapters were so interwoven into the fabric of the story they were supporting that they are difficult to disentangle as cricket stories on their own. *When Fillingshot Scored* is one and the Cricket theme in *A Prefect's Uncle* when the star player in the school side goes AWOL during the lunch interval and does not re-emerge until the game is over, is another.

A point that came to mind in reading this delightful anthology is that Neville Cardus, for one, had a great piece of luck that Wodehouse did not remain in England and turn his hand to cricket reporting. As Hedgcock points out in his admirable and fascinating introduction, when PGW crossed the Atlantic his public became American as well as English and as cricket did not excite emotions in the USA, it had to take a back seat in his offerings from then on.

Those charming golfing stories had a more universal appeal. If he had made his life in England, it makes one's mouth water to think what other cricketing tales Hedgcock would have been able to put into this book. Blandings Castle would surely have had its own ground, to Lady Constance's perpetual annoyance. Beach would have been pressed into service as the game's stateliest umpire. Maybe Beach and Jeeves would have stood together in the same match when Bertie Wooster and Gussie Fink-Nottle would have got themselves into an irretrievable muddle over the matter of a quick single. What fun it would have been.

The only story in the book I cannot remember having read before is *Between the Innings* when original sin came to cricket and was gently but firmly put in its place. Tommy Heath's youngest sister had come out in the middle of the night to water the pitch to try and save her brother from losing a £50 bet to the odious Wentworth Flood.

The narrator, PGW himself, of course, is going for a late night walk across the ground, bumps into the girl who is carrying a watering can and persuades her that to doctor the pitch is akin to stealing money from the collection box. Reluctantly she agrees and virtue is instantly rewarded as the first drops of a particularly heavy storm begin to fall.

At the end, there are some delightful tit-bits which originally found their way into his *By The Way* column in the *Globe*. One year soon after the turn of the century, Surrey were captained by all manner of people without great success. PGW wrote: "If all the Surrey skippers skipped simultaneously there would be in earthquake."

Yes, this book is a gem and required reading for all Wodehouse lovers. I shall dip into it frequently; I am about to take it to Pakistan with me and I shall give it as Christmas and birthday presents until I run out of friends or Hutchinson's forget to print it any more. I can hear Jeeves clearing his throat in that most respectful way of his and saying: "Most entertaining, sir."

Henry Blofeld is an Old Etonian, a Patron of the Society, and well-known cricket commentator and journalist. He is, of course, one of the celebrated team who provide so much pleasure to millions of listeners each summer on Test Match Special.



BOOK REVIEW

Ruth Dudley Edwards reviews *Tales of Wrykyn and Elsewhere* by P G Wodehouse
(Porpoise Books, 1997, £25)

This book is for Wodehouse buffs only, but then that's what we are. And enthusiasts as daft as us will revel in all twenty-five of these school stories, searching eagerly for and then pouncing happily upon those moments that show the master's wicked potential shining through the often formulaic and workmanlike prose. Though his innocent and childish enjoyment of school shines through even the most pedestrian offering.

I found most enjoyable the two anarchic parodies of Conan Doyle (*The Strange Disappearance of Mr Buxton-Smythe* and *The Adventure of the Split Infinitive*), in both of which Wotsing gets seriously on the nerves of Burdock Rose by solving the mysteries ahead of him; in the stories of the inspired persecution by the St Austin's humorist, Scott, of Pillingshot, his fag; and in the most successful of all, *The Guardian*, where a cherubic new bug sees off the bullies.

I also learned from *A Corner in Lines*, in which two entrepreneurs set up the Locksley Lines Supplying Trust, Ltd, the genesis of the civil service's approach to parliamentary questions:

"Have you looked at this, Dunstable?" he asked.

There was a time-honoured answer to this question.

"Yes, sir," he said.

Public-school ethics do not demand that you should reply truthfully to the spirit of a question. The letter of it is all that requires attention. Dunstable had looked at the lesson. He was looking at it then. Masters should practise exactness of speech. A certain form at Harrow were in the habit of walking across a copy of a Latin author before morning-school. They could then say with truth that they had 'been over it'.

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AUDIO-CASSETTE REVIEW

The Editor reviews *Psmith in the City*, read by Jonathan Cecil
(Audio Book Collection, £14.95)

This unabridged reading necessitates six tapes to hold the five and a half hours running time. The reader faced a new challenge to the extent that he had not read any of these characters before, and for Comrade Rossiter had to find a Mancunian accent.

Listening to the tapes, we are reminded that the story contains a considerable amount of pseudo-autobiographical material dating to the unhappy time spent by Wodehouse in the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank at the start of his professional career.

The whole system of banking was a horrid mystery to him. He did not understand why things were done, or how the various departments depended on and dove-tailed into one another.

Another worthy addition to the growing list of unabridged readings from the Chivers stable. They have taken the opportunity also to add *Joy In The Morning* to the ABC list; a title that costs £15.95.

Freephone 0800 136919 or by post to The Audio Book Collection FREEPOST (BA 1686/1) Bath BA1 3QZ. P&P £2.50 (1 title) or £3.50 (more than one).

Review of *Tales of Wrykyn and Elsewhere*, continued

Now, for the serious bibliophiles. What we have here are fourteen stories which have never appeared outside the original magazines of ninety years ago (*Captain, Pearson's, Royal*, etc), four which have appeared only in Jasen's *The Swoop! and Other Stories*, three only in his *The Uncollected Wodehouse* (both anthologies out of print) and the rest are to be found only with the twenty-three otherwise unobtainable stories in *Plum Stones - The Hidden P G Wodehouse*, the set of twelve booklets published by Galahad Books (limited edition of 250, £120 per set). So what we have is a beautifully produced, first edition of a collection of splendidly obscure stories (complete with original illustrations) at a quid a time.

If your bookshop lets you down, copies can be had from Book Systems Plus Priors Hall Farm Widdington Essex CB11 3SB Tel 01799 542254 (Credit cards accepted.)

WODEHOUSE GOLF DAY PROGRAMME DETAILS

Details are now available in relation to the Society Golf Day, which has been arranged at Tandridge Golf Club, near Oxted in Surrey. The date selected is Tuesday April 21, 1998.

An application form is enclosed on a separate fly-sheet and should be returned as soon as possible to John Wilson at the address shown. April may seem a long way away, but a maximum number of players has been set by Tandridge.

Members may bring up to two playing guests, and non-playing guests to a number virtually without limit! All guests may participate in the Dress Parade and will be eligible for its prizes.

WITH A CUNNING WORTHY OF UKRIDGE HIMSELF, the Committee has decided to hold the AGM at the end of lunch! This highspot will include a report from the Chairman on our first year's activities, and an opportunity to hear Members' suggestions for the future. Bread-roll throwing will not, unfortunately, be permitted! Should any intrepid member wish to attend the AGM only there will of course be no charge.

So fill in your form, before you forget!

EDITOR'S TAILPIECES

All members are invited to the **next meeting** of the Society at the **Savage Club**, (inside the National Liberal Club), 1 Whitehall Place, London, to be held on **February 17, 1998**, (the Tuesday following the 23rd anniversary of P G Wodehouse's death). Revels will start at 6pm, and from about 7pm Jonathan Cecil will entertain with spirited readings from his favourite short stories.

The death has been reported of Arthur Tracy (1900-1997), popularly known as 'The Street Singer' with such songs as Pennies From Heaven, Roses of Picardy and It's a Sin to Tell a Lie. It is believed that his nickname was the inspiration for that of Gladys Bingley in The Story of Webster (Mulliner Nights), when she was referred to as 'The Sweet Singer of Garbidge Mews'.

I spent a very pleasant weekend in Amsterdam recently, the highlight of which was attending a meeting of the Dutch Society at their famous clubhouse, *Mulliner's Wijnlokaal*. This bar doubles as a normal public drinking establishment except when the Society meets, on occasional Saturday afternoons, when it is turned into a seething mass of humanity from all over the Netherlands. The proceedings, not surprisingly conducted in Dutch, resemble one's notion of what the AGM of the Drones Club would be, but everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. A toast was given in memory of a recently departed member, a gift of books was auctioned for Society funds, a member displayed one of four volumes in Braille which made up a single Wodehouse novel, and it rained. The whole of Sunday as well. But the hospitality was excellent.