

# WOOSTER SAUCE



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

Number 42

June 2007



## Dash it, Jeeves! Why are we so funny?

*What makes P G Wodehouse's comic creations Bertie Wooster and trusty Jeeves endure? The Telegraph's Literary Editor Sam Leith investigates . . .*

*This article appeared in the Daily Telegraph on April 12, 2007. It is reprinted here by kind permission of the author and the Telegraph.*

The other day, I lifted down the first volume of Hutchinson's old *Jeeves Omnibus*. There are five volumes of this edition; each at least 500 pages long – and that's just the Jeeves canon. Wodehouse was incredibly prolific, and the amazing thing about how prolific he was – the peculiar nature of his genius – is that what he spooled out like a spider does silk is prose that is funny, consistently, almost sentence by sentence.

I was about halfway down the first page when I first giggled aloud. And three quarters of the way through the first page when I giggled for the second time. What makes Wodehouse so extraordinary is the perfection of his comic timing. He is in a select and miraculous group of writers – in America, Damon Runyon is probably the closest analogy – the very texture of whose language is funny.

Forget the door-slamming farces of his plots – with Bertie alternately descending into, and being lifted out of, the soup more or less chapter by chapter, and ending up in each case pretty much exactly where he started. Forget them, indeed, you will: they are very funny and absurd and tightly sprung, and they vanish from the mind with the turning of the last page. The point is that you laugh, or smile, or feel an access of the warmer humours with practically every sentence he writes.

Oddly, Wodehouse professed to have no problem with the sentences, yet said he agonised over the plots: "Writing my stories I enjoy. It is the thinking them out that is apt to blot the sunshine from my life.

You can't think out plots like mine without getting the suspicion from time to time that something has gone seriously wrong with the brain's two hemispheres and the broad band of transversely running fibres known as the corpus callosum." He claimed to make 400 pages of notes before starting to write.

What is it that – of all Wodehouse's comic creations – gives the partnership between Jeeves and Wooster such enduring appeal? If anything, the odds would seem to favour their lapsing into obscurity. They should have dated. They live in a social situation extraordinarily remote from that of the vast majority of their readership: an idyllic, imagined version of the Edwardian gentry.

This is a world in which – having started the day by getting in amongst the toothsome eggs & b – Bertram bowls back and forth between Drones and the Savoy Grill, bumping into the usual bally shower of weak-chinned, bread-roll throwing Gussies and Tuppies and greeting them with fusillades of what-ho-ing. Lunch is always soup and fish. Weekends are always in the country. Engagements are made and broken off incessantly. Aunts are a menace, but a necessary evil, since it is aunts who, invariably, control the purse-strings. Children are generally fiends in human form, doted on by aunts or by the lipping beauties Bertie and his chums are perpetually falling in love with.

Bertie's language – of almost Homeric epithets – may burlesque period slang, but it has been entirely made Wodehouse's own. In the opening pages of the very first book, *Thank You, Jeeves*, we are introduced to the dreaded Sir Roderick Glossop – "a bald-domed, bushy-browed blighter, ostensibly a nerve specialist,



but in reality, as everyone knows, nothing more nor less than a high-priced loony-doctor.” Glossop is in New York, visiting a patient. “This George was a man who, after a lifetime of doing down the widow and orphan, had begun to feel the strain a bit. His conversation was odd, and he had a tendency to walk on his hands.” Isn’t that last symptom just sublimely well-timed?

Felicities of writing on that level, of course, can’t be captured in any film, television or stage version. But the sheer number of adaptations suggests there’s something about these books that survives the transition. You could call it flavour: that of their uniquely sunny world, and the relationship between these two comic types. Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie captured it delightfully.

Jeeves and Wooster remain one of the great comic double-acts of all time, alongside Bouvard and Pécuchet, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Laurel and Hardy, Blackadder and Baldrick. There is a peculiar twist to the dynamics of our pair, though – one which aligns them more closely with Holmes and Watson. Most comic partnerships involve one character who is a fool, and a friend who is equally if not more foolish.

Wodehouse, instead, teams a fool and a sage: and he gives the narration to the fool (except once: the valet narrates the final story in *Carry On, Jeeves*, ‘Bertie Changes His Mind’, and very disconcerting it is, too). Wodehouse puts a further comic twist on it by inverting the master-servant relationship. Jeeves

runs Bertie, as Bertie only half-suspects. Jeeves, with his incomparable, fish-fed brain, shimmers in and out of Bertie’s story. It isn’t always clear what he’s up to, or why – but Bertie trusts him, and his trust is always vindicated.

Just as Watson – dull, amiable, a little blockheaded – is entrusted with a story he only half-understands until the end, so is Bertie. Watson is our representative, much as we long to be Holmes. Likewise, we identify with Bertie – as we enjoy patronising him – but look up to Jeeves.

They survive, perhaps, because their world is so fully imagined, so self-enclosed, and so downright appealing. Even though it is historical, history does not touch it. This is a world in which everything, constantly, goes wrong – but in which nothing actually goes wrong in any irrevocable way. At the end of every story, Jeeves makes things right, and the pieces on the chessboard are returned to their starting positions.

Time stands still. Bertie will never get married. Jeeves will never, permanently, leave him. Oswald Mosley may appear, as the absurd Roderick Spode (swanking around in his footer bags, the perfect perisher), but the Second World War will never happen. There is a rebounding, undefeatable innocence to the whole set-up. Waugh or, later, Kingsley Amis, were sometimes funnier: but nobody has been simultaneously as funny and as uplifting as Wodehouse.

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## Letters to the Editor

### *Reactions, Questions and Thoughts from Our Readers*

*From Jeff Coates, Scarborough*

A recent issue of *Wooster Sauce* [September 2006, p11] carried an article on generating interest among the youth of this country to the works of PGW. Why not get these books on the English Literature GCSE and A level syllabuses? Or is it syllabi? Who better to learn from but the master of English prose? What better subject matter to analyse? It must be more sensible to have students examining beautifully, expertly, majestically written almost contemporary work rather than the medieval blurb of Shakespeare or a million-page dreary epic from Dickens. I read a bit of Shakespeare once and found that it was written in a foreign language. It might be that I’m a bit of a thickie, and I realize that what I’m saying might be pure sacrilege to many people, but surely learning is enhanced if the subject matter is enjoyable – and there is nothing more enjoyable than Wodehouse.

*From Adrian Vincent, Woodham*

As I read Norman Murphy’s *A Wodehouse Handbook: Volume 1*, I jotted down how the book was striking me: “magisterial”, “definitive”, “will never be bettered”, “fascinating”, “entertaining” and “moving”. I also found myself frequently shouting out Lord Emsworth’s description of the efficient Baxter – “the man’s mad!”. I meant this in no derogatory sense, simply that Norman’s depth of research was so ridiculously astonishing.

Imagine my chagrin, therefore, when I read Murray Hedgcock’s review in the March issue. Although Murray gave the book high praise, he spent half of his review discussing what was not in the book, indulging his own thirst for knowledge in posing Norman further questions to look into.

In righteous indignation I began this letter to the Editor to complain about such selfishness. I now find



that I cannot resist the opportunity to ask Norman a question of my own. Several of Wodehouse's characters suffer with the lining of their stomachs – was Wodehouse drawing upon personal experience?

*Blushing prettily as he does so, Norman writes:* It certainly wasn't Wodehouse who suffered with the lining of his stomach. He enjoyed robust health until his seventies, undoubtedly helped by the 45 minutes



*Purported portrait of Beau Wooster, Uncle George's great-grandfather*

of setting-up exercises which he did every day until his nineties.

I have looked hard for mention of an overeating uncle or friend in Wodehouse's life but have been unable to identify one. Because the ailment appears early in PGW (*Something Fresh*), I suggest he may have

simply picked up the phrase as a then-common complaint among Edwardian gentlemen who over-ate and led a sedentary life.

**From Charles Stone-Telcher, Queensland, Australia**

In the latest edition of *Wooster Sauce* [March 2007, p17] you asked members for their thoughts on whether Everyman should publish all of Wodehouse's books, even ones like *The Globe By the Way Book* and *Not George Washington*. I say Ya! to that. Maybe not *Globe* but certainly *Not George Washington*, *The Swoop* and *William Tell Told Again*. The latter two being rather short, maybe they could appear in one volume. A lot of people do not like *Not George Washington* but I am not one of these and I also have this title on audio book. I am happy to say that I have all of the above books myself and I know they are well sought after by most dedicated Wodehousians. If Everyman were to publish them, I am sure they would be snapped up by a grateful public.

**From Tony Ring, Great Missenden**

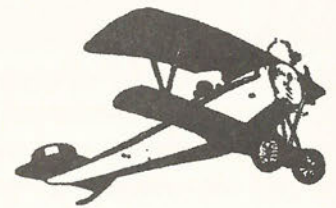
Masha Lebedeva's series of articles on the influence of Russian literature on Wodehouse's writings reminds us how wide internationally was the literary heritage from which Wodehouse drew his allusions. Michael Dirda has recently reviewed a new translation of the 1859 book *Oblomov* by Ivan Goncharov, who, some suggest, may be Russia's 'true national writer' and whose title character was, even

if Wodehouse was unaware of it, the unwitting role model for Rockmetteller Todd in 'The Aunt and the Sluggard', for Oblomov "never really wants to get out of bed". Dirda adds later, as a telling explanatory point to his most literate readers, that "by contrast with Oblomov's childhood home, the sleepy, sun-dappled Blandings Castle of P G Wodehouse is a veritable hive of industry".

I suppose if there had been two pigs at Blandings, 'Empress Oblomov' would not have been a bad name for the second.

**From Eva Fitzpatrick, Sittingbourne**

WOOSTER SAUCE splashed through the mail box – to my huge delight as always. 'The Fun of Flying' was just so-o-o 1920s – it really was. I enclose a copy of a short piece wot I wrote on a similar theme and which was published in *Bygone Kent* last September. . . . My Dad, H G Travers, was a rather PGW character himself – good-natured, resourceful and unresentful of the occasional piece of lead piping on the back of the neck. He had been a brave and distinguished WWI pilot, then worked as a lumberman in Canada and came back to slumpish England, where he taught flying and tested unsafe aeroplanes. Convalescing from a severe illness in the 1930s, he found PGW the greatest source of entertainment and fun. As PGW continues to be for us all.



*Editor's note:* Because of space constraints, Eva's article, 'Flying for Fun in the 1920s and 1930s', cannot be reprinted in *Wooster Sauce*, but it is a delightful piece and includes a picture of a very young Eva awaiting her father's return from a flight.

**From Alexander Dainty, Clevedon**

On Wednesday, 4th March, I visited Bratton Fleming and saw not only the list of previous incumbents, including the Reverend Philip Wodehouse, Pelham's uncle, but also the photograph (that is, the Reverend Philip Wodehouse's picture) which, according to Norman Murphy's *A Wodehouse Handbook*, had a resemblance to Patrick Wodehouse. My friend, a fellow Wodehouse fan, also wondered if Vowles, the builders of the organ at Bratton Fleming, may have given PG the idea for the name for the Blandings Castle chauffeur, who in one of stories actually played a mouth organ one summer evening!

Letters continue on Page 4



## Letters to the Editor (Cont.)

*From Larissa Saxby-Bridger*

I have often wondered what the source and history of Bertie Wooster's wealth is, since to my limited knowledge he often mentions others' source of income but not his own, and neither do other characters. What do fellow members think?

Also, I have often wondered what P G Wodehouse's political stance was, whether he was sympathetic to the Socialist/Labour movement or if he agreed with the Conservatives. I don't think a lot is given away in his books, but having just finished *A Damsel in Distress*, I would say he had leanings towards Socialism, though I could be mistaken. Again, what do other members think?

Finally, I find exceptional pearls of wisdom regarding life in Wodehouse's works. For me his works are a literary Bible, ready to dispense wit, wisdom and anecdotes on the human condition and how adventurous and remarkable life can be. I wonder if other fans have found theological and philosophical insight and guidance in the immortal words of P G Wodehouse, or is it just my theologically wired brain? I hope I am not alone!

*From Alan Davies, Andover*

Do any members have information regarding Estelle & Ivy (Bishop)? I have a number of books signed by the author including *The Intrusion of Jimmy*, dated May 16th 1910, dedicated to the above ladies.

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# Wake Up with Stephen Fry

by Joff Lelliott

The item no P G Wodehouse fan realised they needed is finally here – the Jeeves and Wooster alarm clock. Designed to look like a 1930s period piece, the wonders of modern technology mean that when the alarm goes off, Stephen Fry's voice greets the rousing sleeper with one of 50 Jeeves and Wooster-style greetings.

In his Jeeves persona, Fry greets you with messages such as "I am sorry to disturb you, sir, but it appears to be morning. Very inconvenient, I agree. I believe it is the rotation of the earth that is to blame, sir" and "The rising and shining cannot be delayed indefinitely, sir. Though the shining isn't compulsory in this intractable world, the rising eventually is." The greetings also include some with a more modern bent, such as "Victoria Beckham rang again for you, sir. I told her that if she were to call again I would telephone the police."

If Stephen Fry talking to you is not enough to wake you up, he is followed by a more traditional electronic beep-beeping. When you drowsily hit the off-button, the world's favourite gentleman's gentleman responds with: "Ghastly noise, I agree, sir."

For Simon Carr, the clock's inventor, the project brought together several parts of his life –

entrepreneur, businessman and product designer, as well as long-time Jeeves and Wooster fan. "I'm an enormous fan of the books; I love their everlasting English summer quality, their warm heart and linguistic brilliance. Nothing to touch them has been written since."

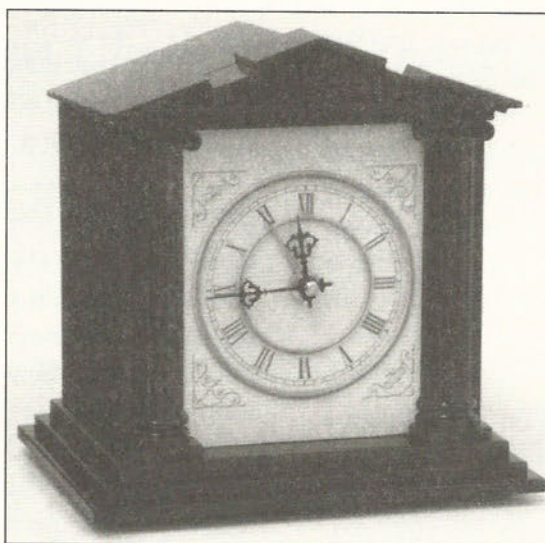
Having Stephen Fry voicing the clock was something of a coup, given that for many people the Fry and Laurie Jeeves and Wooster is definitive. Persuading him was not too difficult, according to

Carr: "Stephen is a friend of a friend, so he agreed to look at the scripts. He liked what he read and that was that."

Sales are brisk enough that from July the clock will be modified to include a light "for night time fumbling" and will be made from wood instead of heavy-duty plastic. Bringing the clock into the age of gender equality, it will also be available in a "Good Morning, Madam" version to complement the current "Good Morning, Sir" clock.

Let's just hope that a future version of the clock also delivers the cup of tea or hangover cure that Jeeves is renowned for.

*The clock can be ordered from [www.voco.uk.com](http://www.voco.uk.com), and at press time it was priced at £29.95.*





# Carry On, Everyman!

You may have thought March 31 was a day like any other, but you'd be wrong if you were both a Wodehousean and a reader of *The Times*. For it was on that day that the venerable London newspaper's Book Section chose to celebrate the publication of Everyman's 50th Wodehouse title with an article by renowned Radio 4 presenter James Naughtie and a quiz prepared by the Society's own Tony Ring. Tony also provided a short list of Wodehouse titles for the 'Critic's Choice'.

The two titles that brought Everyman to their half-century were *The Inimitable Jeeves* and *Money for Nothing*. In May, *Sam the Sudden* and *Big Money* were published, and *Plum Pie* and *The Girl on the Boat* are planned for this autumn, putting them well more than halfway toward publishing most of the Wodehouse canon. (No, folks, Everyman are not publishing everything; see page 3 and *Wooster*

*Sauce*, March 2007, page 17.) But this is mere detail. The fact that the publisher has been doing such a splendid job of re-issuing our beloved Plum's incomparable prose is indeed cause for celebration, and *The Times* did PGW proud in their salute.

The article by Mr Naughtie – 'Carry on, Jeeves! And on, and on . . .' – paid tribute to PGW's 'inimitable, ageless world' and the 'effervescence of his language'. We hope to reprint this article in full in the September issue of *Wooster Sauce* (permission pending). The quiz attracted 520 entries. The winner, Giles Hargreaves of London, received all 50 Everyman titles and six bottles of Bollinger champagne. Ten runners-up won 10 Everyman titles of their choice. For your enjoyment, the quiz is provided below although, alas, there are no prizes for *Wooster Sauce* readers who get all five questions right!

## The Times Quiz

Set by Tony Ring and published in *The Times* on March 31.  
For answers, see page 26.

1. **Book Titles** Complete the titles of these British editions of Wodehouse novels:
  - a Pearls, Girls and . . . . .
  - b The . . . . . Bachelor
  - c Stiff . . . . ., Jeeves
  
2. **Middle names** Provide the middle name of these characters:
  - a Stanley . . . . . Ukridge
  - b Thomas . . . . . Travers
  - c George . . . . . Wellbeloved
  
3. **Stately homes** Where did the following live?
  - a The 9th Earl of Emsworth
  - b Sir Watkyn Bassett
  - c The 7th Earl of Marshmoreton
  
4. **Quotations** Complete the following:
  - a "It is never difficult to tell the difference between . . . . . and a ray of sunshine"
  - b "If not actually disgruntled, he was far from . . . . ."
  - c "Inherited wealth, of course, does not make a young man nobler or more admirable; but . . . . ."
  
5. **Marriages** Whom did the following marry?
  - a Sally Painter
  - b Veronica Wedge
  - c Rosie M. Banks



# My First Wodehouse Experience

by Mark R. Rogers

I would like to share with you how I stumbled upon my first novel by the Master.

January 2006 was another month in a period of recuperation from surgery for an ongoing illness, something that I have had to become accustomed to over the past 10 years. But this time was different – I had to find a pastime to dispel the long hours of solitary boredom that I'm sure many of you can associate with occasions like these that render oneself with to do nothing but sit in front of the television for 12 hours a day, 2–3 hours at a time usually being the norm.

It was at this point that I thought the unthinkable: why not purchase a book? Now, this may seem a perfectly common idea, a 32-year-old chap venturing to his local bookstore to make a purchase, but I hadn't read a book in 25 years (and then I only did so because the primary school curriculum demanded it). Sorry, Meg and Mog, but you just put me off books.

Venturing into my local bookstore was an extremely daunting episode that left me in a position of confusion: what type of book would I like? Which author would suit me best? There are so many to choose from.

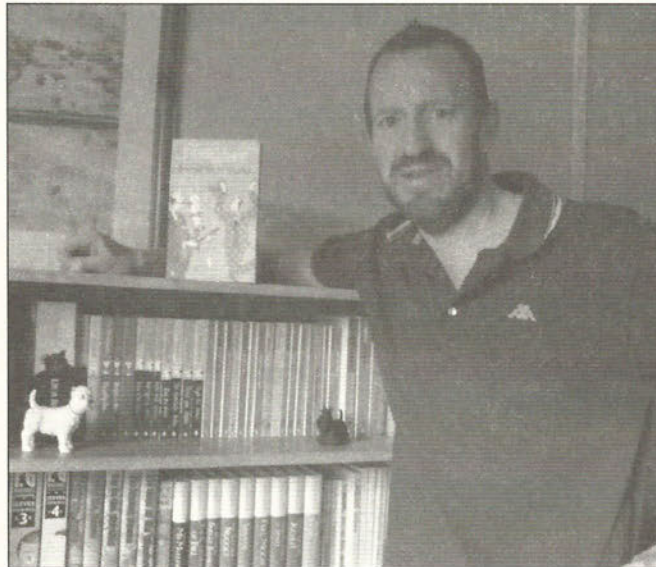
I decided to pick up a book off the shelf that was peering down at me. I cannot recall which book this was because it was the rear cover that grabbed my attention. I refer to a review there

that likened the author of this publication to a P G Wodehouse, a name that meant nothing to me at that time but one that for some reason sucked me immediately to the W section of the bookshelves. *The Jeeves Omnibus* was then purchased at lightning speed and within the hour I was engrossed in *The Mating Season*.

This was the beginning of a wonderful change in my life: for once I could switch off from the misery of my illness and throw myself into the wonderful world of Mr Wodehouse. Eighteen months on and I'm still suffering from this foul illness, but I'm lucky in the fact that apart from the help and support of a fantastic family, I have also got P G Wodehouse to keep me going.

Another plus from the past 18 months is the encouragement that I've received from my reading: I left school 16 years ago with no qualifications to boast, but after a little consideration I decided last year to attend my local College and re-study English/Literature GCSE. I'm enjoying every minute of my return to education, and I am also very proud to now be a member of the P G Wodehouse Society.

So there you are, my first Wodehouse experience. Through the Master's readings my life has been turned around. Here's to the next 40 novels that sit waiting impatiently on my bookshelf.



Mark with the first book in a growing collection that has seen him through some rough times.

## I Say!

### Favourite Exchanges

"No, he didn't get the story muddled up. We were holding hands. But Esmond didn't cast me aside like a worn-out glove. I cast him aside like a worn-out glove. I told him I wouldn't have any more to do with him unless he asserted himself and stopped crawling to those aunts of his."

"He crawls to his aunts, does he?"

"Yes, the worm."

I could not pass this. Better men than Esmond Haddock have crawled to their aunts, and I said so, but she didn't seem to be listening. Girls seldom do listen to me, I've noticed. . . .

*The Mating Season*, 1949



# Wodehouse – A Good Bet!

## (A Postscript to the Bibliographic Corner)

by Eric Coulton

The options available to one who visits a south coast seaside town on a damp autumnal afternoon are somewhat limited; indeed, is there life beyond the Novelty Rock Emporium or the Purveyor of Devon Cream Teas? It was therefore with delight that I espied a purveyor of alternative fodder – second-hand books! After considerable browsing (though sadly without sluicing), I emerged clutching a copy of *Eight Humorists* by George Mikes (pub. 1954), a volume previously unknown to me though not to Elaine McIlvaine (Ref. H83).

George Mikes (1912–87) was a Hungarian-born British author famed for poking gentle fun at the nations of the world in such books as *How to Be an Alien*, *How to Scrape Skies*, *How to Be Decadent*, etc. Such classic quotes as “An Englishman, even if he is alone, forms an orderly queue” drip from his pen. In *Eight Humorists* he surveys the work of four authors as well as Charlie Chaplin, Mr Punch, and some comic strips. He then quirkily explains that the eighth humorist of the title is himself. The four authors are Stephen Leacock, James Thurber, Evelyn Waugh and P G Wodehouse.

In his introduction Mikes states his intention of aiming to write a book of serious essays about humorists on the basis that most critics and essayists either don't take humorists seriously or attempt to infuse a feeling of inferiority into them. His argument is that both attitudes lead to humorists gradually attempting more serious writing – with the exception of PGW, “who alone started in a certain vein and never apologised, never faltered, never changed”. Sadly, Mikes himself appears hoisted on his own

petard – a humorist attempting more serious writing and making sonorous pronouncements on all things Wodehousean:

“Mr Wodehouse writes for grown-up people with a mental age of 15.”

“His great literary skill and wonderful sense of farcical humour is the elementary explanation of his success and (now declining) popularity.”

“Rather than a caricaturist of the upper classes he is their sycophant.”

And his comment on *Something Fresh?* “Excruciatingly boring.”

So where in this humourless book was I to find some humour? Well, the best wine was kept till last. The final three pages consist of a Wodehouse bibliography of such quality as to turn Nick Townend, our regular bibliographic contributor, a whiter shade of pale! Mikes lists 71 titles up to *Performing Flea*, but the selection is somewhat random to say the least. He manages to omit at least seven early titles and introduces American titles at random. Quite incomprehensibly, he also omits *Joy in the Morning* and *Spring Fever*, titles that had been published within the previous eight years. But the two gems of the entire bibliography have totally misquoted titles. The first is where the American title for *Summer Lightning* comes out (incongruously for a mild-mannered author) as *Fight Preferred!* The second, and my favourite, is *The Gold Bat*. In absolute contrast to Mikes' opinion that Wodehouse's popularity was declining, the misquoted title aptly confirms what Wodehouse fans have always known – that PGW is *A Good Bet!*

## Flying High with Wodehouse

Response to Hetty Litjens's article on the Wodehouse Google Earth Project (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2006) has been very positive, and it has brought about yet another way to disseminate the good word about Plum. After the article appeared, Hetty was contacted by Jerome Burg, a chap in California who had just set up a new website called Google Lit Trips. This site describes itself as “an experiment in teaching great literature in a very different way” – and after a cyber-handshake between Hetty and Mr Burg, it now has a link to the Wodehouse Project. Since its launch in March, Google Lit Trips has had more than 20,000 visitors, and there have been almost 3,000 downloads, mostly of the Wodehouse Project, which is the site's most elaborate entry thus far.





# ジーヴス接近中 Jivusu in the Offing

by Hetty Litjens

The author acknowledges the contributions of Ms Tamaki Morimura, who kindly provided much of the information in the following article.

There is an interesting phenomenon taking place in modern Japan. Teenage girls and young women have created their own niche and ‘literature’ in Japanese society, and they have an enormous buying power. The *manga* editions have become a huge industry with different trends. *Manga* is a Japanese genre of comic books (sometimes sexually explicit). Boys have their maids comics, while one of the recent themes for teenage girls and young women is that of the butler.

A pronounced ‘butler boom’ has hit Japan. One of the favourite comedy *manga* currently running is *Hayate the Combat Butler*. There are numerous ‘Maid Cafes’ for *otaku* boys (information-age jet-set boys) and four ‘Butler Cafes’ – three in Tokyo, one in Osaka – for *fujoshi* girls. A television drama series about boys working at the Butler Cafes was aired in Japan this spring.

*Fujoshi* literally means ‘rotten girls’; it is an ironic self-description based on the homonymous word for women – let’s say ‘silly girls’, that is teenage girls and young women up to 30 who still consider themselves girls and who read *manga* stories, in particular stories that involve male friendships. This includes novels with a possible homoerotic content, be it only in their own fantasy.

The craze is said to have increased lately to include women in their 40s. In this case we talk of *kifujin*, the homonym of ‘lady’ – literally, ‘noble rotten ladies’. The *manga* genre for *fujoshi* and *kifujin* is called BL, Boys Love, and some of the stories are specifically written for them. There is a hard-core and an innocent soft-core trend. *Fujoshi* tend to read everything in this homoerotic context and don’t care whether their fantasy is real or not.

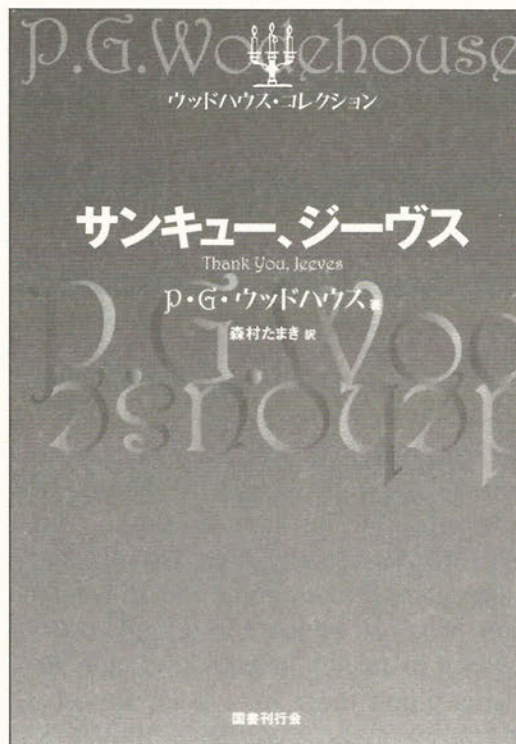
In Western Europe at one time, there was wild speculation about the possible homosexual character of Sherlock Holmes and Watson. In Japan, even Lord Peter Wimsey and Jeeves have not escaped the attention of the *fujoshi*. *Katsuji Club*, a unique book review magazine for girl book-lovers, is also much read by *fujoshi*. It mixes high and low culture and publishes readers’ contributions, including drawings of their favourite characters, such as Bertie Wooster and Jeeves. Some Japanese girls apparently like to fantasize about Bertie and his gentleman’s gentleman, Jeeves. Silly girls indeed.

Let’s say this is just a way in which some of the young generation appropriate the works of literature. Sherlock Holmes is much read in Japan and it looks like Jeeves – Jivusu – is in the offing as well. There is a very serious interest in English literature at present in Japan, and Wodehouse is a star on the rise. But in this case the same theme – Jeeves, and the ‘butler’ in general – is treated seriously in its proper context.

Mr Mike Iwanaga has already translated several Jeeves stories, and seven Jeeves books have been translated by Tamaki Morimura; she has recently translated ‘Jeeves and the Greasy Bird’ and a Wodehouse essay for the prestigious *Hayakawa’s Mystery Magazine*. Her latest translation, *Joy in the Morning*, was published in April by Kokusho-kankokai, who specialises in foreign literature, with authors from Jorge Luis Borges, Henry James, and Herman Melville to P. G. Wodehouse. Kokusho-kankokai has also decided to publish several Blandings



Katsuji Club readers contribute drawings of their favourite characters, including Bertie Wooster and You-Know-Who.



Thank You, Jeeves  
Translated by Tamaki Morimura



novels and other stories. *Summer Lightning*, *The Mating Season*, and *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* are next in line.

Ms Morimura's translations are so beautifully designed that they were mentioned in a book-design magazine. They have a turn-of-the-century look, as foreign books were published a hundred years ago in Japan. The covers have different colour gradients that reminds one of the *ukiyo-e* woodprints by Hiroshige. Very stylish. The drawings of Bertie and Jeeves that readers of these books send in to the book review magazines are based only on the texts of these translations, which is quite remarkable as so far no *Jeeves & Wooster* episodes have been shown on Japanese television.

Last month the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) had a 30-minute special entitled 'The Humour of P. G. Wodehouse' (dedicated to Jeeves). The accompanying textbook shows a picture of Ms Morimura's translation of *The Inimitable Jeeves* and has some excerpts from that book.

Several critics have compared Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* to Wodehouse's works, though they are completely different. Ishiguro has described the butler Stevens in his book as springing from "an international myth about the English butler and English country life that is one that has been fed

all around the world", and "it's that stereotype, the myth that I'm able, then, to tap into and manipulate". It comes as no surprise that literature about butlers and a feudal setting, in particular when it's funny, receives increasing attention in a society that is coming to terms with its own feudal history. Even in Haruki Murakami's *Dance Dance Dance* there appears a golf-playing writer with his own 'gentleman's valet' (who is gay if we are to believe the writer's daughter). So we see that butlers (of course Jeeves is not a butler, but a gentleman's personal gentleman) fascinated not only Wodehouse, who said he lived on the fringe of the butler belt, but an entire country as they have taken Japan by storm.

If you change your computer keyboard into a katakana one and type Ji-vusu, you will see:

ジューズ

This is the Japanese phonetic transcription of Jeeves (the dash indicates a long vowel and the u is almost silent). And doing a Google search for 'Jivusu' produces the message "Did you mean: Jeeves?"

So you see, wherever you are, Jeeves is in the offing. "Shows what a small world it is," Bertie would say (as he did in *Jeeves in the Offing*), "no argument about that."

## Swizzle It Right

Ever wonder what went into a Green Swizzle? In 'Pick of the Mix', an article that appeared in the *Independent Magazine* on March 3, reporter Christopher Hirst named the Green Swizzle number 8 on his list of Top 10 great cocktails. This drink, of course, featured in 'The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy', wherein Bertie encounters it at the Planters' Bar, a West Indian stand at the 1924 Wembley Exhibition, and credits it with saving his life. Wodehouseans have long pondered the Swizzle's ingredients, and Hirst provides a recipe that calls for 60 ml white rum, 1 dessert spoon of green crème de menthe, 1 teaspoon caster sugar, 3 dashes Angostura bitters, and juice from half a lime. This is similar to other recipes found on the Internet that cite crème de menthe as the key ingredient.

But is this what Bertie and Biffy drank at Wembley in 1924? Not likely, thought Norman Murphy when he was researching the matter for *A*



*Wodehouse Handbook*, since he doubted that crème de menthe was readily available in the West Indies at that time. He then discovered an old article in *Punch* describing the Exhibition and referring to the rhyme sung by the Planters' barman while preparing the drink: "One of sour / Two of sweet / Three of strong / Four of weak". After a telephone call to the Jamaican High Commission, Norman had the answer:

One measure fresh lime juice (sour),  
 Two measures uncoloured sugar syrup (sweet),  
 Three measures white overproof rum (strong),  
 Four measures water/soda/lemonade  
 according to personal preference (weak).  
 Mix well and agitate (swizzle) with some finely  
 crushed ice—and the result is a delightful  
 intoxicating drink of a slight green colour.

There is only one caveat – the rum must be *really* overproof!

The man behind the bar told us the things were called Green Swizzles; and, if ever I marry and have a son, Green Swizzle Wooster is the name that will go down on the register, in memory of the day his father's life was saved at Wembley.

From 'The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy', *Carry On, Jeeves*, 1925



# Society News

## *A Week With Wodehouse: The Big Dinner*

Bookings for our week-long tour of Wodehouse's England to celebrate the Society's 10th anniversary are now closed. However, there is still time to sign up for the grand finale dinner at the Arts Club, 40 Dover Street, London W1, on Sunday, July 15. *This dinner is open to all members and their guests*, whether they have signed up for the tour or not.

## *Of Patrons and Committee Members*

We are delighted to announce that HRH The Duke of Kent KG has agreed to become a Patron of our Society. His enthusiasm for all things Wodehouse has already been clearly shown by his participation in the entertainment at recent Society dinners.

In addition, the Society's Committee has gained a new member. Joe Selfe has not only joined the Committee, she has also taken over as Database Manager from David Herboldt, who has, in truly Wodehousean fashion, fallen head over heels in love and skipped it to Australia. We wish David well in his new life Down Under, and extend a hearty welcome to Joe.

## *Logo Update*

In the last *Wooster Sauce*, the Editor hinted at the possibility of a new logo starting in June. As will be clear from page 1 of this issue, we are still working on the logo, but if all goes well, Society members will have some good news in September. Stay tuned.

## *Society Meetings: A New Venue*

After extended deliberations wherein members of your Committee resembled those fretful porpentines we hear so much about, the decision was made to move the location of the thrice-yearly Society meetings from the Savage Club to – at least for now – The George in the Strand. Our final gathering at the Savage will take place on Tuesday, July 10, during the Week With Wodehouse Tour; the first meeting at The George will be on October 30 (see Future Events, page 27). The Committee did not reach this decision easily, but after 10 years of meeting at the Savage, a change of venue was deemed both necessary and appropriate. The George, originally founded as a coffee house in 1723, is an historic pub located at 213 Strand; the nearest Underground station is Temple (Circle and District lines). For more information see <http://tinyurl.com/yqqcwyy>. The Society will meet from 6:00 onwards in one of the upstairs rooms, where there is a staffed bar. Of probable interest to some members concerned about the lining of their stomachs is the fact that it will be possible to order food.

It is not yet certain whether The George will be the site of all future Society meetings, but we look forward to trying it out on October 30. See you there – and be sure to join us at our final meeting at the Savage on July 10.

## *For New Members*

For the benefit of new members of the Society – that is, those who have joined within the last year and will be attending their first Society meeting – a shortened version of the classic Wodehouse Walk will be conducted by Norman Murphy in the afternoon prior to the October 30th meeting. See page 27 for details.



# Whirlwind Wodehouse Weddings

by Norman Murphy

In his generous review of *A Wodehouse Handbook*, Murray Hedgcock unerringly homed in on an omission. As he said, this is a reviewer's privilege. He pointed out that young men and women in Wodehouse seemed to be able to marry without any of the usual formalities. He wondered whether these fast-track weddings were authentic or did Wodehouse just hurry over the formalities to help the plot. And he wondered whether I had chosen to go along with the exercise.

Well, yes and no is my answer to that. I was going to cover it in Volume 1 in the Clergy chapter, but the totally unexpected letter from Australia on the superb family source of Buck-U-Uppo put it out of my head – and Volume 2 was already too long. So I left it alone.

I am sure many, apart from Murray, have noticed these apparently whirlwind ceremonies. In *Something Fresh*, Aline Peters jumps on the 10.50 train from Market Blandings to join George Emerson and they are married the same afternoon. In *Bill the Conqueror*, Flick Sheridan gets left at the altar, is joined by Bill West, and they promptly drive off to get married by the registrar at No. 11 Beaumont Street, Pimlico. In *The Mating Season*, Catsmeat Pirbright, who has 'the licence all ready and waiting', drives Gertrude Winkworth to London, where they intend to get married the following day. And so it goes on. In the Wodehouse world, the possession of a licence means you can, apparently, get married without further notice.

Wodehouse was dramatising, but not by too much. I think he just blurred things slightly, though I should stress that my comments below are written in very general terms since the rules have changed over the years.

So far as registry weddings are concerned, both parties have to be present to apply for the licence and then allow 16 days before the wedding takes place. But from what I have read, before 2001, only one of the parties needed to apply. So a hopeful Wodehouse hero could obtain a licence and carry it around, waiting for the girl to agree. Whether they could then just roll up at any registry office without notice is doubtful, but that is a minor detail and I think we can allow Wodehouse some dramatic licence here.

If the happy couple decide on a church wedding, then things are different. If they belong to a

denomination other than the Anglican church, a civil registrar must attend the church ceremony. But if the wedding is conducted by a Church of England cleric, no registrar is needed. The standard procedure is that the banns of marriage have to be called in the church for three successive weeks before the ceremony so that people can raise any legal impediment to the wedding. However, there has long been a dramatic method of advancing matters – the Archbishop of Canterbury's Special Licence.



In *Stiff Upper Lip*, Jeeves, when Emerald Stoker elopes with Gussie Fink-Nottle, Bertie explains: "She's eloped with Gussie Fink-Nottle. A wedding has been arranged and will take place as soon as the Archbishop of Canterbury lets him have a special licence." In 1984, when, like Murray, I began wondering about those Wodehouse elopements, I called in at No. 1 The Sanctuary, Westminster, to check whether PGW

was exaggerating or not. That building, beside Westminster Abbey, is where you apply for a Special License if you want to get married in a hurry, and by a happy chance the official then in charge was an old Army colleague of mine.

He told me that when he took the position, he had been surprised at the demand for the licences. A common reason was that one of the parties had been badly injured in a traffic accident and wanted to marry before he/she died. Another was that many people had not bothered making a will, assuming that living with someone for 40 years and having children with them would ensure his/her property would pass to the surviving partner. Under English law, this is not the case and a 'deathbed' marriage was necessary to regularise matters. He had also noticed a growth in the number of people who, cohabiting happily in the UK, were suddenly posted abroad to countries where cohabitation was not acceptable and needed to marry before they could travel.

Just in case things had changed in the last 20 years, I telephoned the relevant office today. Yes, the Archbishop's office will still issue a special licence if appropriate and, yes, under extreme circumstances, the marriage can take place the same day as the licence is granted. So perhaps Wodehouse was only reflecting reality after all – but, then, making that point was the reason I wrote the *Handbook*.



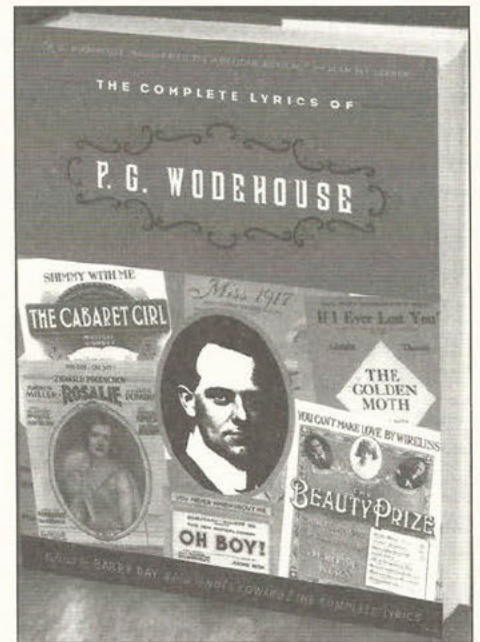
# Books on Wodehouse in Print

by Tony Ring

There has been a plethora of new books about P G Wodehouse and his work in the last decade or so, many of which are still in print, along with two reprints of older works. They include the most authoritative biography yet; the first studies of Wodehouse's lyrics and film career; a comprehensive concordance of characters in Wodehouse's fiction; and, most recently, Norman Murphy's detailed two-volume study of Wodehouse's sources.

The purpose of this short article is to summarise what remains available and, at the same time, to draw these books to the attention of newer members who may not be aware of them. Where the books have been privately printed and are not easily available from regular sources, details of how to find them are given. Otherwise, the title and ISBN should suffice. (See table at top of opposite page.)

There are only a handful of copies of the first book listed opposite still available, which can be obtained only from the author. It reviews Wodehouse's extensive arguments with the UK and US tax authorities and quotes almost all Wodehouse's references to tax in his work. *In His Own Words* tells the story of Wodehouse's life in quotation with some



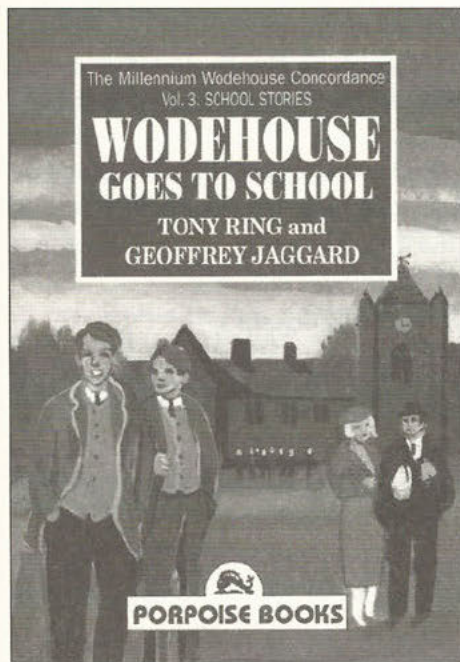
linking text.

*Plum Sauce*, though a new title, is essentially a reprint of parts of the late Richard Osborne's previous acclaimed critical works. Connolly and Jasen were reprints in 2004 of earlier works to coincide with the publication of the official and highly authoritative new McCrum biography, although Connolly was not given consent to include all the quotations from his original version.

Easdale's book is a personal view of Wodehouse's work which did not say anything very new. Barry Day's *Complete Lyrics* is invaluable for readers interested in Wodehouse's career in musical comedy, and Brian Taves's *Wodehouse and Hollywood* is equally invaluable for those interested in Wodehouse on the large or small screen. Norman Murphy's duology has been extensively reviewed in recent editions of *Wooster Sauce*.

In addition, seven of the eight volumes of *The Millennium Wodehouse Concordance* (all except volume 1) are in print

Volume 1 can occasionally be found on eBay auctions. The complete series, which was published by Porpoise Books, is listed below.



## *The Millennium Wodehouse Concordance*

1994	<i>Volume 1</i>	<i>Wodehouse in the Clubhouse</i>	1-870304-14-4
1995	<i>Volume 2</i>	<i>Wodehouse at the Anglers' Rest</i>	1-870304-15-2
1997	<i>Volume 3</i>	<i>Wodehouse Goes to School</i>	1-870304-14-7
1996	<i>Volume 4</i>	<i>Wodehouse among the Chickens</i>	1-870304-16-0
1998	<i>Volume 5</i>	<i>Wodehouse at Blandings Castle</i>	1-870304-18-7
1999	<i>Volume 6</i>	<i>Wodehouse in Woostershire</i>	1-870304-19-5
2000	<i>Volume 7</i>	<i>Wodehouse with Old Friends</i>	1-870304-20-9
2001	<i>Volume 8</i>	<i>Wodehouse with New Friends</i>	1-870304-21-7



### Books on Wodehouse in Print

1995	<i>You Simply Hit Them With An Axe</i>	Tony Ring	1 870304 22 5	Porpoise Books
2001 2001	<i>P. G. Wodehouse: In His Own Words</i>	Barry Day & Tony Ring	0 09 179399 8 1 58567 393 5	Hutchinson Overlook Press (US)
2002	<i>Plum Sauce</i>	Richard Usborne	0 091 88512 4	Ebury Books
2004	<i>The Novel Life of P G Wodehouse</i>	Roderick Easdale	0 9542913 60	Superscript
2004	<i>P. G. Wodehouse: Portrait of a Master</i> (Reprint)	David Jasen	0 8256 7275 9	Schirmer Books (US)
2004	<i>P. G. Wodehouse (Life and Times)</i> (Reprint)	Joseph Connolly	1 904341 68 3	Haus Publishing
2004	<i>The Complete Lyrics of P.G. Wodehouse</i>	Barry Day	0 8108 4994 1	Scarecrow (US)
2004 2004 2005	<i>Wodehouse: A Life</i>	Robert McCrum	0 670 89692 6 0 393 05159 5 0 141 00048 1	Viking Norton (US) Penguin
2005	<i>P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood</i>	Brian Taves	0 7864 2288 2	McFarland (US)
2006	<i>A Wodehouse Handbook</i> (in two volumes)	Norman Murphy	0 9554209 0 3	Popgood & Groulley

#### The BCSA Writing Competition

The article on Zdenek Jirotko's *Saturnin* in the last issue of *Wooster Sauce* included extracts from an essay by Dr Mark Corner, the book's translator, that had appeared in the *BCS Review*, the journal of the British Czech and Slovak Association (BCSA). Dr Corner's essay had been an entry in the annual BCSA Writing Competition, which comes to a close this year on June 30 – too late, probably, for any *Wooster Sauce* readers to submit an entry, but one never knows. According to Edward Peacock, the BCSA Competition Administrator, "Entries should relate to either or both of (a) links between Britain and the Czech or Slovak Republics (at any time in their history) or (b) society in transition in those Republics since the Velvet Revolution in 1989. Wodehousian writing would be most welcome – Galahad's quaffing Pilsner would fall neatly under heading (a)." For more information, visit the BCSA website at <http://www.bcsa.co.uk/specials.html>.

It is so easy for a writer of humorous stories to go wrong, as Oliver Wendell Holmes, the *Autocrat at the Breakfast Table* man, once did. He wrote what he knew to be his masterpiece, and in genial mood gave it to his butler to read before taking it down to the editorial office. The butler giggled a little, then started shaking like a jelly, and finally fell to the floor in convulsions. Holmes had made the mixture too rich. . . .

From *The World of Mr Mulliner* (Preface), 1972

#### Wodehouse and Oppenheim

From Alan Carter of Seaford, East Sussex, comes word of a book by E Phillips Oppenheim entitled *Up the Ladder of Gold* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1931). The dedication says:

To my friend  
 "PLUM" WODEHOUSE  
 Who tells me what I can scarcely believe,  
 That he enjoys my stories  
 As much as I do his

So who was this E Phillips Oppenheim (1866–1946)? Though little known today, he wrote best-selling novels for almost 60 years and styled himself as the 'prince of storytellers'. Like Edgar Wallace, he specialised in



romantic adventure stories that swept the reader along. Oppenheim and Wodehouse became acquainted in the 1920s and used to play golf together at Woking; they met again frequently in the 1930s when the Wodehouses were living in the south of France. Wodehouse recounts somewhere an occasion where his attempt to dictate his book to a shorthand typist didn't work because her deadpan reaction ruined the creative flow. He recalled that Oppenheim had suffered a similar experience when his secretary left him and he had to employ a new one. Whereas the previous girl had thoroughly enjoyed Oppenheim's stuff, expressing her appreciation with squeals of delight or horror as the story proceeded, the new girl refused to show any emotion whatsoever. Like Wallace, Oppenheim made a lot of money from his writing, and Wodehouse respected and envied his ability, like Wallace, to create ingenious, exciting plots without any apparent difficulty.



# Wodehouse Walks Wind Down

Norman Murphy reflects on 25 years of conducting tours

I can't remember when I did my first Wodehouse Walk, though I think it must have been around 1982, after I had published *In Search of Blandings*. I have an idea the first was for a splendid old chap who rang me at some unearthly hour in the morning to say he was over from South Africa and he wanted to give me lunch. Because it was so early, my first reaction to his kind invitation was simply to ask, "What on earth for?" An ungracious comment, whichever way you look at it, but it turned out that he had enjoyed the book so much, he wanted to make his appreciation clear. So in return, I offered to walk him round some of Bertie Wooster's Mayfair. He accepted the offer with alacrity and afterwards we had lunch in Rule's. I still remember how delighted and proud I was when it turned out he hadn't been in England for 30 years but had read *In Search of Blandings* and had come back to see the Wodehouse sites I'd identified.

I think it was the 1989 Wodehouse Pilgrimage that made me realise that elementary precautions safety were needed. It was the first formal Wodehouse 'discovery' trip, led by Phil Ayres, who was then president of The Wodehouse Society (US). It was a splendid event but it taught me one important lesson – Americans need their arms held when they cross busy London streets. I am pretty sure Florence Cunningham was the first lady I saved by grabbing her arm before she walked into the path of a London taxi because, as is only natural, she had looked the wrong way. And over the years, I must have left bruises on the arm of many a Wodehouse Walker for the same reason.

In theory, I did three walks a year, which were announced in *Wooster Sauce*, but then I started to get pathetic telephone calls. I remember one chap telephoning me from Australia, anxiously checking he had the right number and the right man and telling me he was coming to London for just a week and, well, was there any chance at all that . . . ?

"You mean you want a Wodehouse Walk?"

"Well, er, yes. But only if you're not busy with anything else."

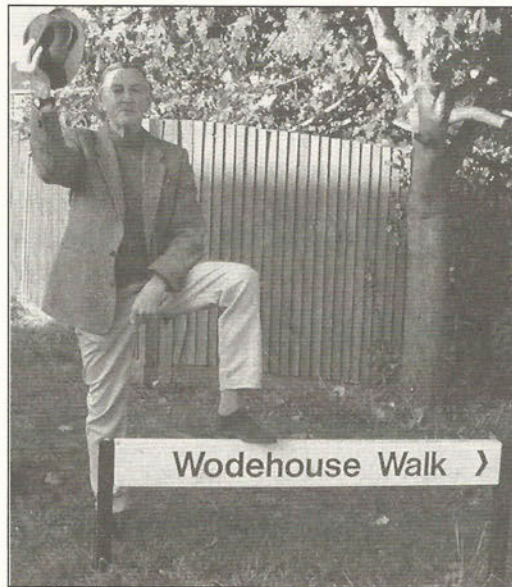
I haven't been not busy with something else for about 40 years, but how do you say no? And he was the first of many. I think I did 12 Walks that year, mainly for overseas visitors, and I began to think of registering my walks with the London Tourist Board or English Heritage.

The Walks parties fall into three categories: the good, the medium and the frankly appalling. The good Walks are the groups who know their Wodehouse and have sufficient background knowledge of English history to know what I am talking about. The medium ones are the groups where people listen but somebody then needs to have my remarks explained because he or she has only read *Blandings* or *Mr Mulliner* stories and knows nothing of Bertie and Jeeves. Or vice versa. There are a surprising number of these.

Then there are the frankly appalling. I remember one lady who turned up and left after 15 minutes with the scathing comment that she wasn't going to spend the morning walking all over London. She'd assumed it would be a gentle stroll of a

couple of hundred yards, no more than that. In some respects, I suppose, she was better than another lady who had heard about the Walks, was in London just for one day, and was *dying* to do one. It was another one-off but she was so insistent, I couldn't say no – but I wish I had. After 10 minutes, it became clear that she had not read *In Search of Blandings* and had no intention of doing so, because "books are a waste of time"; her entire Wodehouse experience had been limited to seeing a couple of the Fry and Laurie TV episodes and what she really wanted was someone to talk to! Or, in her case, someone to talk at. The Walk soon degenerated into a voluble (on her part) window-shopping walk through the West End. Deaf adders had nothing on her.

High points? One I always remember was when I was Society chairman and taking some of the Millennium Tour (2000) on a Walk when every site we looked at had scaffolding being erected or a pneumatic drill in operation. It was murder, and my patience as well as my vocal chords were stretched to





their limit. Robert Bruce's account of the walk summed up the situation in one superb sentence: "The noise and chaos was tremendous and at times not all of it was coming from the Society's chairman." After seven years, I still giggle weakly when I think of his words.

Well, this year sees the last of my walks – over a hundred now – though I hope to continue to do the odd special if Hilary Bruce flutters her eyelashes at me enough. I am 74 and experiencing some of the physical problems associated with that fact, but I am looking forward enormously to the Week With Wodehouse. And for those of you who have heard I speak fast, I can assure you that is a foul slander put about by jealous rivals!

*Editor's note: As reported in the last issue of Wooster Sauce, Norman's final Wodehouse Walk will take place on September 8; see page 27.*

## What's Cooking?

The following appeared in 'Ask the Collector', a column in the *Orange County Register* [California], on May 15, 2007:

**Q:**† My husband found this cook book, along with three others, in our living room wall when he was installing new sheetrock. Is it worth anything?

**A:**† This hardcover book was authored in 1940 by English humorist P. G. Wodehouse, who also created the prototypical British butler Jeeves. Your copy of *Eggs, Beans & Crumpets*, a series of short stories published by Herbert Jenkins in London, has a listed value of \$25.

*Spotted by Tony Ring; see <http://tinyurl.com/yq4qav>.*

## The Word Around the Clubs

### Ankling It

**M**urray Hedgcock has sent along a short item from *Variety* (found on the internet) which states: "BBC chairman Michael Grade has surprised British TV industryites by ankling the pubcaster to become executive chairman of arch-rival ITV, Blighty's biggest private private terrestrial web." Murray writes that this "seems to have a distinct Wodehousean flavour. . . . I know *Variety* gets a PGW mention, and many have ankled, as I recall." There is a challenge here – can any reader come up with examples of 'ankling' in Wodehouse?

### You Bet

**F**or those who think oddball betting such as the Hat Stakes was a Wodehouse invention, think again. The British have a long tradition of unusual betting practices, and a recent article in the *Boston Globe* (sent in by **David Landman**) provides some great examples. As reporter Mary Jordan notes, 10 years ago a 90-year-old man [Alec Holden of Epsom, southwest London] bet his bookie that he would live to be 100; this April he collected £25,000 when he hit his century. Other wagers include what the highest temperature will be in the summer and whether the Loch Ness monster is real. The British love betting: more than £1 million a minute was wagered in the hour before the start of the latest Grand National. Another fact Jordan offers up is that "a surprising number of aristocratic manor homes

fall in and out of families because they are offered up as bets." This should come as no surprise to Wodehouse fans, who know that most stately home owners in the canon are bankrupt because some ancestor had gambled away the family fortune.

### Jolly Good, Hugh

**N**ewspapers and other media on both sides of the Atlantic were all abuzz when Hugh Laurie – now a star on *House* but beloved by Wodehouseans for his portrayal of Bertie Wooster – received his OBE from the Queen at Buckingham Palace on May 23. The P G Wodehouse Society offers congratulations to Mr Laurie for this well-deserved honour.

### Ouch

**O**n May 6, the Browser column in *The Observer* reported: "The winner of the Wodehouse-Everyman-Bollinger Prize, *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*, by Paul Torday (Weidenfeld & Nicolson) – which pipped *Cupid's Dart* by David Nobbs, *Kalooki Nights* by Howard Jacobson, and *Two Caravans* by Marina Lewycka – was announced not a moment too soon. The day before, *The Daily Telegraph* referred, in its masthead, to 'Honaria (sic) Glossop', clear evidence, if it were needed, that the move from Canary Wharf has caused terminal damage to the formerly redoubtable Wodehousian expertise among *Telegraph* sub-editors."

*(Spotted by Murray Hedgcock)*



# A Letter to Country Life

by Bertram Worcester (aka P G Wyndham-Brooks)

*I suspect many of us who love the English language will share some of the sentiments expressed by the author of the following letter originally submitted to Country Life.*

*I say, Jeeves. You remember bringing me the jolly old 'Country Life' with my restorative this morning?*

Indeed I do, sir, the November issue with the colourful frontispiece referring to Farmers' Markets.

*You're a wizard for observation, Jeeves. That's the one alright, but it's left me bally . . . er . . . what's the word, Jeeves?*

Judging by your demeanour, sir, perhaps 'discomposed'?

*That's the word, Jeeves, although decomposed was how I felt after last night's party for Gussie Fink-Nottle at the Drones Club. Your early morning snifter soon settled the old equilibrium, but then I got this severe jolt on opening the weekly journal.*

Indeed, sir?

*Yes, by Jove. It's riddled with split infinitives, poorly constructed sentences and shocking misuse of singular and collective nouns that give me the pip. I blame that blighter Wodehouse for bringing all this slackness with the English language back from America.*

Quite possibly, sir. He certainly contributes to the transatlantic influence and decline in grammar and syntax so evident today. It pains me to hear on my superheterodyne receiver the BBC stating that the Government – a single collective noun – 'are' in session rather than the correct 'is' in session.

*Abso-bally-lutely, Jeeves. Do you know I've just suffered a wretched pig-breeder telling me in print not once but twice that the Hurworth Hunt 'are forbidden' and 'are supported by'. Dashed unsettling, what, Jeeves?*

Undoubtedly, sir. I must confess that I did peruse the periodical prior to your awakening, sir. I observed with some disquiet that even the editorial itself asserted that 'churches are one of the glories of this country'. Unprecedented in my experience, sir.

*A definite howler, Jeeves. You've hit the nail on the proverbial. Do you remember when we stayed at Houghton Hall with dear old Chumley?*

Vividly, sir. You incurred displeasure by feeding blanchmange to his Lordship's ferrets.

*The very same, Jeeves. I doubt if I'll be invited back, but do you know that under 'Town and Country' they tell us that some new-fangled 'process*

*are an ingenious solution' to Chumley's tapestry tribulations and then split the infinitive asunder with 'how to cost-effectively decorate large areas'. A snorter, what? I only hope Chumley doesn't spot it or he'll set the hounds on them.*

A painful prospect, sir. Did you, I wonder, stumble over the non sequitur under the column 'Barometer' from which one concludes that the Prince of Wales appeals to Messrs Burberry to take their production to China? Had they chosen 'neither to close the factory nor take their production to China', any misunderstanding would have been dispelled.

*By gad, I missed that, but what of the other blighter where the British Trust for Ornithology 'says they could die out within a decade'?*

I fear the author intended to imply the demise of the yellow wagtail, sir. Did you chance upon the quotation at the end of Farmers' Markets' where 'they are an event to be savoured'?

*Not half, Jeeves, and I'm going to ring old Emsworth at Blandings Castle to see if this pig breeder is known to him. Unlikely, I would think, judging by the last sentence – 'representatives . . . care too deeply to allow that to ever happen'. If he can split such an infinitive in our hallowed 'Country Life', he could split the jolly old atom. But you've always got a wheeze to meet the situation, Jeeves. What can we do?*

Might I respectfully suggest, sir, that you enlist the resources of the indomitable relative, your Aunt Agatha. A word from that redoubtable lady to Mr Christopher Hussey might see some improvements?

*Jeeves, I've said it before, you are genius personified.*

One endeavours to give satisfaction, sir. Will there be anything else?

*Yes, Jeeves. What the dickens is 'new build'?*

Presumably an adjectival verb couplet, sir. In very bad taste if I may say so.

*Thanks, Jeeves. Before you run my bath and lay out the spats and cravat, get Aunt Agatha on the blower. Oh, and Jeeves – that cerise paisley waistcoat to which you take exception.*

Yes, sir?

*Get rid of it. Give it to someone.*

The window cleaner is already the proud recipient, sir.





# Pigs in the Press

It is the Year of the Pig in the Chinese calendar, which means our porcine friends have been attracting a certain amount of attention from journalists. And right-thinking reporters know that if *anybody* deserves praise for sterling porcine qualities, it's – well, let's let others do the talking.

'Tribute to the Pig' by Ralph Berry, which appeared in the online edition of the *Malaysia Star* on February 15 (see <http://tinyurl.com/2u927a>), included this:

For the pig in literature, look no further than the Earl of Emsworth's favourite, the Empress of Blandings. P. G. Wodehouse described that noble animal in a number of novels. The Empress was a prize-winning sow of remarkable dimensions, the pride of the Earl. "He did not desire for her that school-girl slimness that is so fashionable nowadays." (*Summer Lightning*, chapter 1. How that sentence, written in 1931, resonates today!)

A young man who praises the Empress wins the Earl's approval. "I like that young man," said Lord Emsworth emphatically. "He is sound on pigs. He has his head screwed on the right way."†

For the full Wodehouse flavour, nothing beats one of his titles. The expression *pigs might fly*, meaning "never", is proverbial. The Zurich Bank recently put out a series of TV advertisements containing flying pigs (they sprinted down the runway and took off). The Wodehouse title is *Pigs with Wings*. It conveys the whimsical, affectionate nature of his pig-loving fantasy. †

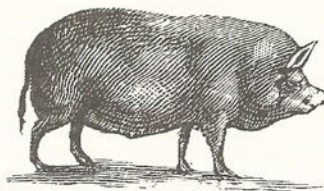
A month later, on March 14, Harish Bhat had the following to say in his article 'Pig-wigs' in the *Times of India* (<http://tinyurl.com/2bfswa>):

The Chinese New Year ushered in recently is the year of the pig. Chinese astrology says that people born in pig years are polite,

honest, peaceful and lucky with money – though perhaps a little too fond of drink.

The world outside China has also known many famous pigs, and this is a good time to pay tribute to some of these pig-wigs. Leading the piglist is Empress of Blandings, the beautiful fat pig created by P G Wodehouse. She is seven times winner of the coveted "fat pigs" medal. She eats anything, has a vicious bite and is repeatedly kidnapped. While there is no reference to her fondness for alcohol, it is well known that her rather unreliable keeper, George Wellbeloved, does have dipso-maniac tendencies.

I doubt that China, despite its unbeatable population, has a pig anywhere in the Empress's league. . . .



Polite, honest and peaceful – could there be a better description of the Empress? But wait! Another website notes: "Like the knights of old, Pigs are often highly regarded for their chivalry

and pureness of heart, and will often sacrifice their own well-being for the greater good." This leads us, naturally enough, to another thought – perhaps Bertie Wooster was born in a Pig year?

On March 10 the Travel section of the *Daily Telegraph* included the intriguing information that pig racing forms a key part of the annual state fair in Alaska, of all places. This nugget of information was accompanied by a picture of a pink pig in racing colours leaping gracefully over a hurdle.

Our final pig report concerns Paul Torday, winner of the 2007 Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse prize for his novel *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*. In addition to the author winning Bollinger champagne and 52 volumes of the Everyman Wodehouse series, a Gloucester Old Spot pig will be named after his book. Torday declared himself extremely pleased as he loved both Bollinger and Wodehouse's works, then added: "I am looking forward to meeting the pig." Quite right – Lord Emsworth would approve!

"I have passed the time of day with him, and I must say that, much as I resent having these infernal secretaries thrust upon me, this time the outlook seems considerably brighter than usual. By a most happy chance, this fellow turns out to be a mine of information on the subject of pigs, and we got along capitally together. We were exchanging the customary civilities, when he suddenly said 'I wonder if you are interested in pigs, Lord Emsworth?' 'God bless my soul, yes,' I replied. 'Are you?' 'They are a passion with me,' he said. 'I'm afraid I'm rather inclined to bore people about pigs,' he went on with a little laugh, and then he told me all sorts of things I didn't know myself. It appears that the ancient Egyptians believed that pigs brought good crops and appeased evil spirits."

From *Pigs Have Wings*, 1952



# Wodehouse and Contemporary Russian History – Part 1

by Masha Lebedeva

Having reviewed Wodehouse's take on Russian history, Masha now looks at the Russian influence on his writing in the 20th century. For a comment on Masha's series on Wodehouse and Russian literature, see *Letters to the Editor* (page 3).

In *Monday Begins on Saturday*, the fantastic novel by the remarkable Russian writers the Strugatsky brothers, there is a chapter in which the hero, using a time machine, visits the 'describing future' and is very surprised when he finds out that most of the people are nearly naked. Then he realises that the cause of this phenomenon is the habit of authors describing a typical character as "a man in a cap and spectacles".

In the same way, Russia appears in the first works of Wodehouse as a scantily attired person. It is quite understandable – there was no place for contemporary Russia in the early school stories. From time to time English schoolboys recalled Napoleon's exploits, but no more than that. In the course of time, however, Wodehouse clothed Russia in more contemporary dress, though – we have to say – dress of rather gloomy, blood-red colours.

Here I must stress one point. Although the world of Wodehouse is extremely sweet and light, even parts of this world are penetrated here and there by representatives of different left-wing movements. But neither Psmith with his socialist ideas, nor Vanessa Cook leading protest marches, nor George Cyril Wellbeloved with his strongly communistic views, nor even Bingo Little at the time of his membership of the 'Red Dawn' could be counted as contributing Russian references unless and until other characters begin – correctly or not – to mention their names in connection with their colleagues, pals, or tutors from Moscow.

Neither do I include the anarchists with bombs who were mentioned in *Summer Lighting*, ch12, since I suppose there were enough anarchists in other countries. However, a brace of bombs coming in through the window and mixing themselves up with the breakfast egg of Vladimir Brusiloff in 'The Clicking of Cuthbert' is right within my brief.

One of the first Wodehouse works where contemporary Russians appear is *The Swoop*, a 1909 story and one of two stories where Russians are active – almost the main – participants in the plot. In *The Swoop* we have the Grand Duke Vodkakoff, the

leader of the Russian army that, along with eight others, had simultaneously invaded Great Britain. Though fortunately this event never took place in historical reality, in reading the story we can readily imagine Russia as a country with a powerful army; a country which, together with Germany, had been playing a leading role in the interventionist coalition (Part 1, ch7). I don't know whether British politicians took Wodehouse's warnings into consideration, but the fact remains that during both the world wars, Great Britain joined in a coalition with Russia. I leave you to draw your own conclusions!

From the pages of *The Swoop* we learn for the first time about the role that Cossacks had been playing in Russian army –

the Cossacks of the Don, those bearded soldiers from the steppes: fierce, semi-civilised fighting machines who know no fear (Part 2, ch7). In 'The Castaways', from *Blandings Castle*, we learn more of the Cossacks' role in Russian political life: they were charged with



A fierce Cossack

punitive functions such as committing pogroms. From *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, ch2, we realise that they had a role in stopping protesters such as Vanessa Cook from shouting certain things during a protest march, and, reading between the lines of *Something Fresh*, ch2, this sometimes resulted in individuals being exiled to Siberia.

So on the whole we can see that pre-revolutionary Russia is depicted in Wodehouse as a militant autocratic monarchy (see, for example, *A Prince for Hire*, ch9, in which the authority of the Czar was compared to that of an unscrupulous moneyed man in 1930s New York) where blood could be spilt in large quantities (*A Gentleman of Leisure*, 1910, ch9), a phenomenon that held some attraction for a certain part of the British populace.

Completing Wodehouse's description of the pre-revolutionary period of Russian history, I'd like to remind readers of the writer Vladimir Brusiloff from 'The Clicking of Cuthbert'. Though Russia never knew him as an author, he was named after the well-known Russian general Alexey Brusilov, a hero of the First World War. Another eminent but fictional



cultural figure was Gotsuchakoff, whose works (alongside those of Thingummyowsky and other foreigners) were permitted (despite being modern) to be played at school concerts (*The Head of Kay's*, ch4). Wodehouse does not specify Gotsuchakoff as being Russian, but Norman Murphy suggests in his *Wodehouse Handbook* that he was PGW's way of referring to Prince Alexander Gortschakoff, the Russian Foreign Secretary of the late 19th century. Norman also confirmed my suspicion that to a 16-year-old schoolboy mind in 1900, Thingummyowsky was Peter Tchaikovsky.

The revolutionary events of 1917 were not described directly in Wodehouse. Only once, in the words of Archibald Mulliner's valet Meadows, do we learn that the revolution *à la russe* includes "massacres and all that" (see 'Archibald and the Masses' from *Young Men in Spats*, 1935), but the attentive reader undoubtedly understands that something important had happened in Russia, after which Europe had been inundated with crowds of "exiled Grand Dukes and dowagers of the most rigid respectability" (*Ring for Jeeves*, 1953). And if some Grand Dukes or Princes – at least, in the minds of the press-agents of gullible actresses – still had enough money to buy expensive presents (such as pet snakes) for these actresses (*Indiscretions of Archie*, ch7), the dowagers, on the contrary, were in the most deplorable state. Not being able to compete with English peeresses who earned fortunes by performing Greek – and even Russian – dances on the New York stage (*Uneasy Money*, 1916, ch6), Russian princesses had to pose before incompetent artists lying on divans in the semi-nude with their arms round tame jaguars ('The Story of Webster' from *Mulliner Nights*).



Vladimir Brusiloff? Or Alexey Brusilov? You decide.

By the way, we can see from Wodehouse's pages how the Europe of the 1930s differed from the Europe of the 1970s, by which time these Russian princesses tended to be in the absolute nude, and the tame jaguars had been replaced by tiger skins (*The Girl in Blue*, 1970, ch2).

Meanwhile, Wodehouse had noticed that, in post-revolutionary Russia, Petrograd had been renamed Leningrad (*A Prince for Hire*, ch9), and the Bolsheviks, who had come to rule instead of the Czar, had settled not in Leningrad but in Moscow, even in the Kremlin. It is interesting that in 1919, in *A Damsel in Distress*, ch21, Wodehouse uses the word 'Bolsheviki', which is absolutely identical with the Russian term, but by 1921, with the revised edition of *Love Among the Chickens*, he changed to the Anglicised version 'Bolshevist'. Later variations included 'Bolshevik' and, in 1931 in *If I Were You*, ch3, the pretty word 'Bolshie'.

I will be examining Wodehouse's attitude to the Bolsheviks in the next article, but I should remind readers that though not every one of his Communists is a Russian communist, every reference to a Bolshevik certainly has a Russian origin. I have traced 12 mentions in the books and short stories from 1919 to 1957, the year when the Bolsheviks themselves (as members of the Bolshevik faction, which was formed after the Party's split at the Second Congress of the Russian Socialist-Democratic Party in London in 1903) ceased to exist. Perhaps this was because most of them – as may have been the case with Orlo Porter's pal in *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, ch8 (1974) – had been liquidated during a course of what Wodehouse so delicately referred to as Old Home Week in Moscow.

## Trésor-Party: An Update

by Tony Ring

Readers may recall an article (based principally on information supplied by the splendid Anne-Marie Chanet) concerning *Trésor-Party*, a play written by a certain Bernard Regnier from the PGW book *Money in the Bank* (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2006, p7). It was referred to with some awe in PGW's correspondence and performed twice on the French stage, latterly in 1975 at the Théâtre Edouard VII. That performance was filmed, and Anne-Marie has now discovered a commercially produced DVD of the play, with appropriate Wodehouse accreditation. It is, of course, Zone 0 PAL, which may mean that not very many of us can watch it. Details

which may help those who wish to track it down are:

Title: *Trésor-Party*

Series: Number 213 in the series 'Au Théâtre ce Soir'

Bar code: 333973 141867

Reference number just above bar code:

314 186 EDV14/DIV10

Produced by: Paramount INA

Year of publication: 2006

This is undoubtedly a unique item in the extraordinary history of Wodehouse in the theatre. Thank you, Anne-Marie.



## A Fine Celebration

*On March 7, as part of the Thalia Book Club series, Symphony Space in New York City presented 'A Celebration of P. G. Wodehouse'. Amy Plofker describes the evening*

A Celebration of P. G. Wodehouse, at Manhattan's Symphony Space, featured actor John Lithgow and author Adam Gopnik embodying neat prototypes of two types of PGW fan, the Enthusiast and the Experienced. Lithgow and Gopnik gave individually brilliant performances, though they rarely interacted.

Lithgow read 'Uncle Fred Flits By' and did possibly the best staged reading of Wodehouse I've ever attended. Especially fine were the distinctions of pitch and accent between characters, including Julia Parker and her mother. Audiobook listeners know how hard it is for men to do Wodehouse's female parts – but Lithgow's mushy Julia was perfect, and I would love to hear him do Madeline Bassett.

Lithgow's facial expressions and gestures also delighted the audience as he mimed a parrot looking offensively with one eye, or an affronted mother sputtering. He played Uncle Fred in ringing tones, signifying a man so full of energy and loopiness that all his social transgressions seemed not only inevitable but logical. The audience clearly loved it, and I was tempted to ask for *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* as an encore.

Lithgow exemplified the PGW fan in what you might call a state of innocence – ardently loving what



John Lithgow

he's read of the oeuvre and feeling no urge to read biographies, literary criticism, or PGW's more obscure works. Such a fan accepts Wodehouse's Edenic world for what it so wonderfully is and does not question how it came to be.

Adam Gopnik proved to be the other main type of fan, the one who Knows His Wodehouse – life, works, and controversies. Gopnik spoke fluently about Wodehouse, touching on his school days at Dulwich and a few other biographical details, including his musical comedy career and the Berlin broadcasts. He expressed the 'heresy' that PGW's short stories were better than his novels – as more loopiness per line could be packed into a short story – and the conventional view that most of Wodehouse's best works occurred from the 1930s to 1950s. He mused that this relatively late prime (age 50–75) must give other authors hope.

Gopnik compared Wodehouse to Charlie Chaplin in meticulous planning of details, and he cited Wilfred Sheed's comment that PGW came close to Flaubert's dream of the perfect artist whose life was all about his art. He also referred to W. H. Auden's having written about Wodehouse as an 'Edenic' author, illustrating his point that some contemporary highbrow authors appropriately admired PGW's artistry, though others scorned his work.

We learned from and enjoyed both Lithgow and Gopnik. All in all, a fine night out with Wodehouse.

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## Marking Plum's 125th

A few months ago, Society member and BBC radio producer Roy Oakshott sent *Wooster Sauce* a script of 'The Song Show' hosted by Russell Davies, broadcast on October 15, 2006 – P G Wodehouse's 125th birthday. To mark that special day, the first part of the programme examined PGW's career as a lyric writer. Mr Davies noted that Wodehouse was "a very important style-setter in the early years of the Broadway (and elsewhere) musical: he and his collaborator Guy Bolton wrote umpteen books for shows, and because Wodehouse was a born narrator (Jeeves and Wooster being only the first to come to mind among his fictional creations) those shows did tend to hang together as stories much better than stage shows had tended to, or needed to, previously."

Among the Wodehouse songs played on the programme were: 'Till the Clouds Roll By' (sung by Bing Crosby), 'Oh Gee, Oh Joy' (played by Ben Selvin & his Orchestra), and 'Tulip Time in Sing-Sing' (sung by Merwin Goldsmith). A few other songs with peripheral reference to Wodehouse were also played. Speaking of 'Bill' (sung by Margaret Whiting), Mr Davies noted that "the way that song gives up on reasoning and just comes down to 'I don't know' shows how close to psychology of everyday speech Wodehouse could come: it was no accident that his best books contained such a lot of fluent dialogue."

It is unfortunate that due to space limitations, the script cannot be printed in full, but we are grateful to Mr Oakshott and Mr Davies for sending it.



# The Comic Opera Guild Recordings

by Tony Ring

In March's *Wooster Sauce*, reference was made to a series of recordings of Kern-Wodehouse shows by The Comic Opera Guild, and of course the obvious question is: Are they worth buying?

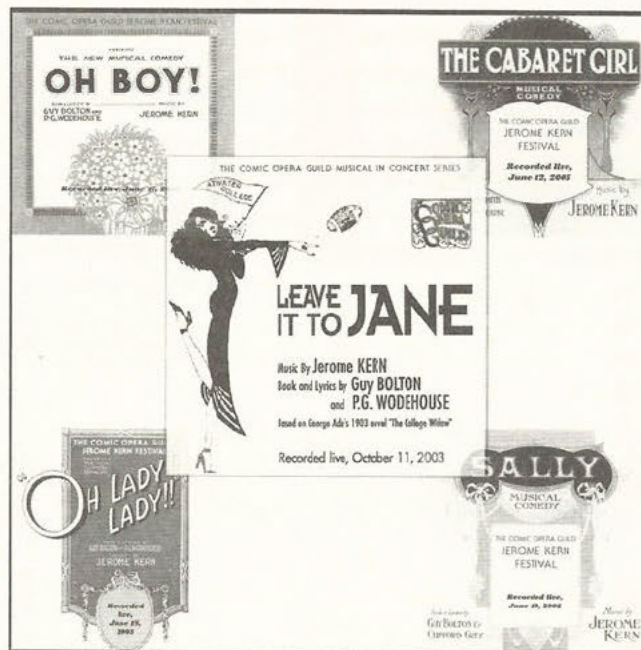
The Guild is a not-for-profit company founded in 1973 and has presented over 70 productions throughout Michigan, all of which have been recorded live. Now it should be obvious that neither productions nor recordings will meet the standards of the top professional shows (especially with sound balance), but if you want to get a feel for what these musicals would have sounded like, they are a good starting point. You will need to use your imagination to some extent to appreciate the dialogue, which would undoubtedly have been easier to follow visually on stage. Some shows (such as *Leave It to Jane*) included a high proportion of the dialogue; most of the remainder used a technique of narrative summaries to a significant degree. Bearing in mind that the other five shows were recorded in a period of just ten days during a Kern Festival in June 2005, that is hardly surprising!

The first Wodehouse-related show, *Leave It to Jane*, was presented in 2003 and my suspicion is that there was considerably more rehearsal time, as it is quite accomplished. The cast may also have had the luxury of listening to previous recordings of most of the songs, an advantage not repeated for the 2005 recordings. Four of the shows (*Oh, Boy!*; *Oh, Lady! Lady!*; *The Cabaret Girl*; and *Sally*) feature George Valenta as narrator and, in particular in *Oh, Boy!*, he seems to be trying so hard to articulate clearly that it

comes over as rather stilted. He also mars *The Cabaret Girl*, otherwise possibly the most enjoyable show, for the English ear by his repeated pronunciation of the 'Marquis' as the 'Marquee'. Generally the voices are more than adequate, and you do get a real feel for most of the songs. Occasionally,

fortunately quite rarely, you wonder whether it is lack of rehearsal time or indifference to a song which makes a treatment sound dreary. The music accompaniment generally consists of two pianos, and the overtures tend to be quite long and very well performed. Full cast and song lists are given for the shows, with incidental notes on the fate of some songs or interpolations which did not survive the whole original run.

So returning to the question posed in the first paragraph: if you would like to hear an authentic Wodehouse-Bolton-Kern show, try one or two. *Leave It to Jane* and *The Cabaret Girl* are the best overall; *Sally*, *Oh, Lady! Lady!* or *Have a Heart* would be my next suggestions. The music on *Oh, Boy!* is up to the standard of the others, but the dialogue and narration for this show is by far the weakest.



## The Smile That Wins Favourite Nifties

In order to make a song a smash it is not enough for the singer to be on top of his form. The accompanist, also, must do his bit. And the primary thing a singer expects from his accompanist is that he shall play the accompaniment of the song he is singing.

From 'The Masked Troubadour', *Lord Emsworth and Others*, 1937



# The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

## Printer's Error – Part 1

Hawk-eyed readers of my last column (a group which excluded the Editor and the author in their capacity as proofreaders) will have noticed that the title of the column was disfigured as *The Bibliographic Corner*. My despondency was alleviated by re-reading Wodehouse's "Printer's Error" poem in *Plum Pie*, but the experience has inspired me to review some of the misprints and errors which have appeared in various editions of Wodehouse's works over the years.

Wodehouse's first published lyric was "Put Me in My Little Cell" (McIlvaine, Gb111) from the 1904 show *Sergeant Brue* (J1). When the lyric was published in 1905, printed by Hopwood and Crew Ltd, there was an initial mistake, as it stated that the lyrics were written by G. E. Wodehouse.

The first three issues of *A Damsel in Distress* (A24b, A24b2 and A24b3) from 1919 and 1920 are very similar in appearance, making identification difficult for the collector. Among the subtle distinguishing points, which were discussed more fully in an earlier column (*Wooster Sauce*, No 25, March 2003), the presence or absence of two typographical errors, unrecorded by McIlvaine, helps to identify the different issues.

All three issues have a typo in the last line of page 18 ("stand-trap" instead of "sand-trap"), which was corrected in later editions. The first two issues also have a typo on page 35 where the last two lines of the first paragraph are reversed, i.e., what should be the penultimate line ("The jazz seems to go their heads. George is all") appears as the last line, and what should be the last line ("right, though, and don't let anyone tell you different.") appears as the penultimate line. This error was corrected in the third issue.

The first two US issues of *Indiscretions of Archie* (A26b, A26b2) in 1921 contained either a typographical error or a rare dish on page 31: 'friend potatoes'. The error was corrected in the third issue.

*The Head of Kay's* was reprinted by A&C Black in

1922 (A6a5) and reprinted again later in the same year (unrecorded by McIlvaine). This was probably because part of the print run for the first 1922 edition was faulty. Pages 18/19, 22/23, 26/27 and 30/31 were not included. Instead, poor-quality offsets appeared of pages 62/63, 166/167, 170/171 and 174/175 from *The White Feather*, which had also appeared in a new edition (A8a4) in the same year. It is likely that when the error was discovered, a fair proportion of the books had to be recalled for pulping, leading to the reprint later in the year.

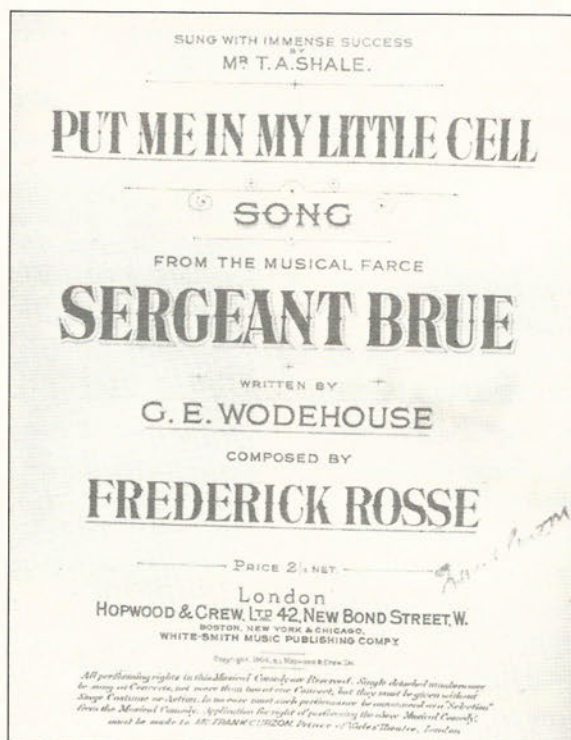
In 1925 the US first edition dust wrapper of *Sam in the Suburbs* (A35b) misspelt Wodehouse's name on the back panel as 'Wodexouse'.

A favourite short story for many readers is 'Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit'. The story appeared in book form in *Very Good, Jeeves* (A42b), which was first published in the UK in the summer of 1930. However, as its title indicates, it was obviously pitched as a Christmas story and had first appeared in magazine form in the UK in *The Strand* for December 1927 (D133.138).

The story began with Bertie receiving a letter from Bobbie Wickham's mother: "She has written inviting me to Skeldings for the festive s." Bertie's shortening of "season"

caused printers numerous problems over the years: it was correct when it first appeared in *The Strand*, but it then variously appeared as "the festives", "the festivities" or even "Christmas" in different editions, until finally being corrected in a 1999 Penguin paperback (AAan42P; for full details, see *The Book and Magazine Collector*, February 2000, p9, and Tony Ring, *Wodehouse in Woostershire*, p166).

The first two US editions in 1933 of *Heavy Weather* (A50a, A50a2), published by Little, Brown and Company, reveal unexpected agility from Beach the butler: the second page of chapter 18 states: "He drew up the toe of his left shoe and rather coyly scratched his left calf with it." The later Triangle Books reprints in 1938 (A50a3, A50a4) corrected the error, with "left calf" being changed to "right calf", in accordance with the first UK edition (A50b).





# A Birth Day Surprise

by Larissa Saxby-Bridger

While making a pilgrimage (from Sheffield) to the P G Wodehouse Society Spring meeting at the Savage Club on 12 February 2005, I visited the Family Records Centre at 1 Myddelton Street, London. I was attempting to uncover juicy details on the Saxby-Bridger family tree, dating back to 1600.

What, I hear you ask, has this to do with Plum? Well, while I was there, silly me, I could not remember what details are found on birth and marriage certificates and, to be fair, the certificates have changed over the ages. I therefore proceeded to the Information Desk and, showing the gentleman there my former husband's family tree, enquired what information on it could be found in the certificates. He smiled at me, pulled out a large black book, and opened it at – the birth certificate of Pelham Grenville Wodehouse.

Wow! I was stunned and speechless, and though it sounds silly, for a few minutes I couldn't even read it. I just stood there looking at the great name on

His/Her Majesty's pink paper and thought, gosh, how little we know of what is to come. It was a magical moment.

I pulled myself together and took in the precious details, explaining to the gentleman that I was in London that day to attend a meeting of the P G Wodehouse Society, of which I was a member. He was impressed, and together we noted the happy and startling coincidence. Though there are other famous people's certificates in the black book, he had simply opened it by chance at that particular page.

I believe the certificate is on display in the black book, titled 'Certificates of the Famous', to show people visiting the Family Records Centre. If you wish to see it for yourself, be prepared to go through security and have any bags searched; in addition, mobile phones must be turned off. But how right and amazing that Plum's birth certificate is included when, so often, he is given a mixed reception by the uninitiated (putting it politely)!

## Wodehouse on the Boards

We are delighted to note several Wodehouse plays being performed on both sides of the Atlantic. Herewith are the more recently advertised shows. If you have seen or will see any of these productions, please send a review to the Editor. Please also let us know if any other show comes to your attention.

**August 13 – September 5:** A professional production of *By Jeeves* will be staged at the Devonshire Park Theatre in Eastbourne; there will be a total of 30 performances, and it may be followed by a short tour in Southern England. The theatre's box office number is 01323 412000.

### U.S. Productions:

**May 6 – June 2:** *Come On, Jeeves* was performed at the Top Hat Theatre Club in Tucson, Arizona.

**June 5 – July 1:** The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is staging *The Play's the Thing* at the F. M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre on the Drew University campus in Madison, New Jersey. For tickets or more information, call (001) 973-408-5600 or visit [www.ShakespeareNJ.org](http://www.ShakespeareNJ.org). (See related article at <http://tinyurl.com/ywko6f>.)



Jeeves as portrayed by actor James Gooden in Tucson

**November 23 – December 6:** San Francisco's 42nd Street Moon ("Making Great Musicals Sing Again") presents *Oh, Lady! Lady!!*, which will be reviewed for *Wooster Sauce* by Chris Dueker. For tickets or more information, call (001) 415-255-8207 or visit their website at <http://www.42ndstmoon.com/>.

**December 14 – March 13:** For three glorious months, the Asolo Repertory Theatre in Sarasota, Florida, will stage *The Play's the Thing*. For information call (001) 941-351-8000 (U.S. toll-free number 1-800-361-8388) or visit the theatre's website at [www.asolo.org](http://www.asolo.org).

### And in other news:

On May 11–14, City Center Encores! in New York City produced 'Stairway to Paradise', a salute to Broadway featuring songs and sketches from classic shows. According to reporter David Rooney in *Variety* (see <http://tinyurl.com/2qomh7>), this production "could hardly ask for a more appropriate opening number than 'The Land Where the Good Songs Go,' penned by Jerome Kern and P. G. Wodehouse and plucked from the relatively unsuccessful *Miss 1917*".

Following up on Toni Rudersdorf's review of *Right Ho, Jeeves* at Stage West in Fort Worth (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2007), an insightful review of that production by the *Fort Worth Weekly's* Jimmy Fowler can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/2xbtj5>.



# Recent Press Comment

*Edited by Tony Ring*

**Broseley Local History Society Journal**, No 28, 2006  
(from Alan Wood)

Suggests that Apley Hall in Bridgnorth was a setting for Blandings Castle.

**The Guardian**, February 22

In an article about the tendency of certain words to start in separate form and, often via the use of a hyphen, merge into a single word, David Mackie used the PGW example from *Summer Lightning* of 'Pretty much the Boy Friend'. He noted that 'boy friend' or 'boy-friend' is the preferred style for the authoritative *OED*, but that *Collins* uses 'boyfriend'.

**Wiltshire Times and Chippenham News**, February 27

In an interview, a local 70-year-old author, Simone Brightstein, said her favourite book was anything by PGW because he "was a master of English language and humour".

**SyfyPortal.com**, February 26

The former host of a popular American comedy series, Mike Nelson, spoke about the art of writing good comedy. He explained that what he really appreciated about PGW was that he created a world all its own so you can read a story and not know whether it was one of his earlier or later works.

**East Anglia Daily Times**, March 3

In an article about programme cooperation between the New Wolsey Theatre and the Colchester Mercury, the Mercury Chief Executive said, "It is quite hard to synchronise because the Mercury might just have done three very heavy duty tragedies and be desperately in need of some P G Wodehouse . . ."

**Telegraph**, March 3

In a report on the European Golf Tour from Phuket (Europe?!), Briton Nick Dougherty "came up with a description of his opening 68 (including 31 for the first nine) which went a long way to capturing golf as seen through the eyes of the inimitable P G Wodehouse. 'After nine holes, I thought that this was it for the rest of my life, that I would never hit another bad shot.'"

**The Scotsman**, March 4

Describing a visit to Deep Sea World in North Queensferry, Robert McNeil wrote that the tiger sharks were only faintly scary. "The classic fins and tail sent a frisson of fear through onlookers, but the beasties' glauk expressions hinted at a brain like that of P G Wodehouse's Archibald Mulliner: 'Had it been constructed of silk, he would have been hard put to it to find sufficient material to make a canary a pair of cami-knickers.'"

**Telegraph**, March 14

A letter in the correspondence column was following up on the leader on March 12 about 'great' books which nobody can read. "I suppose somebody, somewhere, might have read *Ulysses* from what might be called beginning to end. That person has my admiration and sympathy. Then again I was told recently that somebody, somewhere, had read a P G Wodehouse book and failed to enjoy it. Perhaps it was the same person."

**Telegraph**, April 2

Describing Joanna Lumley's performance in *The Cherry Orchard* at the Sheffield Crucible, critic Charles Spencer said she "is a very English Ranevskaya. Indeed, with her throaty, upper-crust voice and manifest pluck when the going gets rough, there's more than a hint of the jolly hockey sticks about her, like one of P G Wodehouse's more amiable aunts."

**Times**, March 24

In his *Wild Notebook*, Simon Barnes wrote about seeing a red deer at Minsmere nature reserve. ". . . there was a little of the pleasure of discovering a private Barnes-deer moment. And then she somehow faded into the reeds and was gone: dematerialising in the way that Jeeves was so good at."

**The Hindu**, March 25

A report on the Indian cricket team's defeat by Sri Lanka noted that "Rahul Dravid's expression said it all. Wearing the gaunt, pinched look characteristic of men who – as Wodehouse might have written – have drained the bitter cup, Dravid waited in the dressing room as the Sri Lankans finished their celebrations."

**Times**, March 30

Noted that the random-generator web feature is a "fine waste of time", especially if it finds the right offbeat subject, as with a random PGW quote, and recommends visiting [drones.com/pgw.cgi](http://drones.com/pgw.cgi). (Note: Members should consider copyright restrictions if tempted to print or circulate a quantity of these quotations.)

**Times**, March 31

In a feature article about the nature of comedy, Richard Morrison reminds readers that "The spectacle of incurably polite people behaving with dogged rationality and impeccable decorum when confronted by ludicrous situations has been the staple ingredient of British comedy since the days of Gilbert and Jerome K Jerome. It surfaced again in P G Wodehouse . . ."



**Times**, April 7

In a Books section letter, Tim Golding thanked James Naughtie (see page 5) for alerting him to “an incisive PGW quote. . . . As an occasional visitor to France but a hopeless linguist, I am more than familiar with ‘the look of furtive shame, the shifty, hangdog look which announces that an Englishman is about to speak French.’”

**Telegraph**, April 12

*Telegraph* literary editor Sam Leith’s article on the enduring comedy of Jeeves and Wooster (see page 1) previewed an offer in the paper of seven free DVDs from the *Jeeves and Wooster* TV series from the early 1990s which, we understand, proved to be their most successful promotion ever.

**Techweb Business Technology Network Blog**,

April 14

Discussing the need for managements of all IT companies to be aware of the increasing likelihood of being a takeover target, it quoted the PGW reference to an “Arabian tale of a traveller who, sinking to sleep one afternoon upon a patch of turf containing an acorn, discovered when he woke up that the warmth of his body had caused the acorn to germinate and that he was now sixty feet above the ground in the upper branches of a massive oak tree. Unable to descend, he faced the situation equably. ‘I cannot adapt circumstances to my will: therefore I shall adapt my will to circumstances. I decide to remain here.’”

**Telegraph Weekend**, April 14

Carried an article about butlers being back, in thoroughly modern style, under the heading *Yo, Jeeves*.

**Telegraph (Seven)**, April 15

An article about novelist and book-collector Joseph Connolly had several references to Wodehouse. There was a review of his new novel, *Jack the Lad and Bloody Mary*, in the paper on April 21.

**BBC4 TV**, April 19 (from Gwendolin Goldbloom)

In the episode from the series *The Edwardians in Colour*, there was Edwardian footage of Algerian Ouled Nail dancers, to whom frequent reference is made by PGW.

**National Review**, April 30 (from Daniel Love Glazer)

The reviewer of *The Life of Kingsley Amis* by Zachary Leader suggests that his biographer needs to explain how there gradually emerged the Solitary Old Volcano that seemed the ultimate Amis persona, a sort of caricature of Evelyn Waugh adulterated with P G Wodehouse.

**Railway Modeller**, May

An article on fictitious estate railway models featured one created by Giles Barnabe and called *Futtocks End*.

He said, “I might have called the layout Blandings Castle, were it not for the potential wrath this might have caused from fans of P G Wodehouse, who know that no such railway is described in any of the novels set in that hallowed location, pigs being far more important than railway engines.”

**Wall St Journal**, May 9 (paraphrasing a recent issue of *Prospect*) (from Tom Ryan)

Julian Gough pointed out that while for the ancient Greeks, tragedy and comedy carried equal weight in the arts, Western culture has emphasized tragedy, “a form of snobbery that has left serious readers with little alternative to a long line of whiny and anxious novels”. He points out that “it took many years for the talents of great comic writers such as Evelyn Waugh and P G Wodehouse to be acknowledged”.

**Guardian Unlimited**, May 3

Noted that the 2007 Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse prize for comic writing had been won by Paul Torday for *Salmon Fishing in Yemen*, who admitted to hugely enjoying PGW’s works. (See also pages 15 and 17.)

**Telegraph (Seven)**, May 6

Reporter Gary Dexter, describing how *Love Among the Chickens* got its name, said prep-school master Carrington Craxton’s disastrous chicken-farming venture gave PGW the material “to fashion a musical-comedy-esque love plot that shaped his novel-writing for another three quarters of a century”.

**Los Angeles Times**, May 10

Commenting on the weakness of Tony Blair’s foreign policy, it suggested that in relations with Washington, use of the ‘Jeeves’ school of diplomacy (with Britain impeccably loyal in public but privately whispering “Is that wise, sir?”) failed.

**Times**, May 16

In a column about a city-dweller going for a walk in the country, Alan Coren delightfully describes his difficulties in identifying trees. “A larch? A beech? A birch? A maple? To me, they are as indistinguishable as the Wodehouse butlers they might well be.”

**[Glasgow] Herald**, May 12 (from Melvyn Haggarty)

In an article about holiday reading suggestions, Rosemary Goring concentrated on the merits of Everyman’s Collectors’ Wodehouse series “dripping a supply of delectable books on to the market. . . . As mere objects these books are a treat: fat, matt-jacketed hardbacks with rich retro covers by the illustrious illustrator Andrzej Klimowski.”



# Poets' Corner

## The Outcast

### A Tale of a Ladies' Cricket Match

Out in the silent Rockies,  
Tracking the Teddy-bears,  
There's a man whose brow is furrowed,  
Whose hairs are silvered hairs.  
Folks in that far-off region  
Know him as 'Jaundiced Jim';  
And now I'll tell you his story,  
How do I know it? I'm him!

Once I was gay and mirthful,  
Ready with quip and jest,  
Strong men shook at the stories  
That I would get off my chest.  
I knew no doubts or sorrows;  
I was filled with the joy of youth.  
But I dished my life in one second  
Through a morbid passion for truth.

Angela Grace Maguffin  
Was the belle of the county then.  
Suitors? Including me – well,  
There must have been nine or ten.  
But I put in some tricky work, and  
Cut out the entire batch  
Till the fatal day that undid me –  
The day of the Ladies' Match.

Cricket was not my forte.  
I never won a match  
With a fifty made against time, or  
A wonderful one-handed catch.  
Rude men called me a rabbit;  
So I thought it were best that day,  
Lest Grace should have cause to despise me,  
To umpire and not to play.

(Why did no guardian angel  
Down to my rescue swoop,  
And hiss in my ear: "You juggins!  
Desist, or you're in the soup!"  
Why did the fates permit me  
To tackle that evil job?  
Why did I offer to umpire?  
Why did – excuse this sob.)

Everything went like clockwork;  
The sky was a gentle blue;  
The sun was shining above us,  
As the sun is so apt to do.  
Everything went, as stated,  
Like wheels of some well-made clock:  
There wasn't a sign of disaster  
Till Grace came in for her knock.

Nature seemed tense, expectant,  
All round was a solemn hush,  
She murmured: "What's this, please, umpire?"  
I said: "Two leg," with a blush.  
Down to the crease moved the bowler . . .  
Ah! Fate, 'twas a scurvy trick.  
My Grace swiped out – and I heard it . . .  
Yes, an unmistakable click.

"S that?" cried the cad of a bowler  
"How was it?" yelled slip, the brute.  
For a moment I stood there breathless –  
Breathless, and dazed and mute.  
"How was it?" All creation  
Seemed filled with a hideous shout,  
I wavered an instant, gulping . . .  
Then hoarsely I muttered: "Out!"

Down where the grizzly grizzlies;  
Out where the possums poss;  
Where the boulders fall from the hill-side,  
And, rolling, gather no moss;  
Where the wild cat sits in the sunshine,  
Chewing a human limb,  
There's a thin, sad, pale, grey hermit:  
Folks know him as 'Jaundiced Jim'.

*From an unknown source, dated 1910; reprinted in The Parrot with footnote by Norman Murphy: "At the turn of the century, the 'New Women' were starting to enjoy all the sports that had previously been male preserve. (Even Kenya had a Ladies' Eleven in 1900.) Wodehouse uses the rhythm of Robert W. Service's 'Dangerous Dan McGrew' (1907)."*

Answers to the Times Quiz: 1a. Monty Bodkin; 1b. Small; 1c. Upper Lip; 2a. Featherstonehaugh; 2b. Portarlinton; 2c. Cyril; 3a. Blandings Castle; 3b. Totleigh Towers; 3c. Belper Castle; 4a. a Scotsman with a grievance; 4b. being grunted; 4c. the young man does not always know this; 5a. Pongo Twistleton-Twistleton; 5b. Veronia Wedge; 5c. Bingo Little.



# What Ho, Watto!

**E**ric Coulton sent in a clipping of a letter to the Editor that had appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* on December 2, 2006. The letter concerns a black man falsely assumed to have been a member of the David Livingston expedition, George Watto (d. 1931), whom the writer, David Stuart-Mogg, describes as “a loveable rogue”. According to Mr Stuart-Mogg, his name, which had also been spelled as Watto, Wattow, Whottow, and Watteau, probably derived from his habitual greeting: “What ho!”



Image: National Portrait Gallery

This got Eric wondering about the origin of the phrase “What ho”. Patridge’s *Dictionary of Slang* tells us that it began around 1860 as a lower-class greeting to call attention to something. Norman Murphy suggests that it could have been a forerunner of “Hallo”. Is he right? All wet? Are there any members out there who can elucidate us?

## Future Events for Your Diary

### July 1, 2007 The Gold Bats at Charterhouse

The Gold Bats will play the Charterhouse Intellectuals at Charterhouse School, Surrey. Contact Bob Miller for details

### July 8–15, 2007 A Week With Wodehouse

The Society’s special anniversary tour takes place in London, Hampshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire. A special supplemental report on the weeks’ events will be published with the September issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

### July 10, 2007 Society Meeting

Join members and participants in this week’s tour for the Society’s final meeting at the Savage Club (see page 10), commencing at 6 P.M. Our speaker will be Robert McCrum, author of *Wodehouse: A Life*. The Savage is within the premises of the National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London, close to Charing Cross and Embankment stations.

### July 15, 2007 Dinner at the Arts Club

Join us for the final night of A Week With Wodehouse; see page 10 for details.

### July 25, 2007 The Gold Bats in Kent

The Gold Bats will be playing a match in conjunction with the Siegfried Sassoon Society at Matfield, Kent. Contact Bob Miller for details

### July 28, 2007 Wodehouse Walk

Norman Murphy offers another London walk. Call him to register interest and obtain details of when and where to meet.

### August 12, 2007 The Gold Bats vs the Freemasons

The Gold Bats will play the Freemasons in a charity event at Audley End House, near Saffron Walden in Essex. Contact Bob Miller for details

### September 8, 2007 Wodehouse Walk

Norman Murphy’s final full-length Wodehouse Walk; but see also October 30 below. Call Norman to reserve a place on the walk.

### September 15–16, 2007 Royal County of Berkshire Show

As in previous years, the Society is sponsoring the prize for the Berkshire Pig Breeders Club Champion of Champions at this agricultural show in Newbury. Judging for this prize takes place at 10 A.M. on Sunday the 16th. For information on and directions to the show, see <http://tinyurl.com/yrwe7b>.

### October 7, 2007 Martin Jarvis Readings

The actor Martin Jarvis, known among Wodehouseans for his PGW books on tape, will be reading two Wodehouse short stories (slightly abridged) at the Cheltenham Literature Festival. These readings will be broadcast live on Radio 4. Further details will be published in September’s *Wooster Sauce*.

### October 12–14, 2007 TWS Convention

The Wodehouse Society (U.S.) will be convening at the Biltmore Hotel in Providence, Rhode Island. If you are not a member of TWS and would like to know more, contact

### October 30, 2007 Society Meeting

Join us for our final meeting of the year, gathering at around 6 P.M. at our new venue, The George, at 213 Strand (see page 10). Our speaker will be Sophie Ratcliffe, who has been commissioned to compile a new book of Wodehouse letters. *Note:* If you have joined the Society within the past 12 months, will be attending your first Society meeting, and would like to experience a Wodehouse Walk, a shortened version will be offered by Norman Murphy in the afternoon prior to this meeting. Call Norman to register interest and obtain details of when and where to meet.



## Something Fresh on Audiobook

There's good news for audiobook fans, as Chivers has just issued *Something Fresh*, read by Jonathan Cecil. This latest release will be reviewed in September's *Wooster Sauce*, but in the meantime here are the details for ordering:

Cassettes (8) – ISBN 9781405604352:

UK£37.95 (excl. VAT)

CDs (8) – ISBN 9781405624718:

UK£45.95 (excl. VAT)

In the U.K.: BBC Audiobooks

St James House

The Square

Lower Bristol Road

Bath BA2 3AX

Phone: (0) 1225 878000

<http://tinyurl.com/2kwwjp>

In the U.S.: BBC Audiobooks America

42 Whitecap Drive

North Kingston RI 02852

Phone: 1-800-621-0182

[CustomerService@BBCAudiobooksAmerica.com](mailto:CustomerService@BBCAudiobooksAmerica.com)

## Saturnin Ordering Information

In the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, an article about Zdenek Jirotko's *Saturnin* included ordering information through the Charles University Press website. For those who can't read Czech (a must when using the website), e-mail the publisher at [distribuce@ruk.cuni.cz](mailto:distribuce@ruk.cuni.cz), and ordering information will be returned in English.

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