



## A Late Delivery

Godfrey Smith

Sunday Times

London

Gran's Inn Road

Jeeves's bracher does not contain dynamite as is generally supposed. It consists of lime juice, a lump of sugar and one teaspoonful of Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo. This, it will be remembered, is the amount of the Buck-U-Uppo given to elephants in India to enable them to face tigers on tiger hunts with the necessary nonchalance.

P.G. WODEHOUSE

Tony Ring recently discovered this draft of a PGW letter in Edward Cazalet's archive. When was it written, and was it ever sent, you ask? Unfortunately, we don't know, and Godfrey Smith does not recall ever having received it. He has promised to look into it, however, in order to find out what might have prompted Wodehouse to write to him in the first place, and when. There will be a follow-up in the March issue of *Wooster Sauce*. In the meantime, we are delighted to clear up once and for all the endless speculation about the contents of Jeeves's pick-me-up – and even more delighted to play post office and deliver this letter to Mr Smith some three decades (or more?) late!



# Letters to the Editor

## Reactions, Questions, and Thoughts from Our Readers

### From Marco Farrugia, Malta

Your readers may be interested to learn that at an auction held by Dominic Winters on the 21st June 2007, a first edition/first printing of *Love Among the Chickens* (McIlvaine A7A), not exactly in great shape (catalogue description below) went for a whopping £4,100 plus commission!

Wodehouse (P.G.). *Love Among the Chickens*, 1st English ed., 1st issue, Newnes, [1906], . . . some spotting, old waterstaining to top edge (some internal staining also), hinges partly cracked, orig. pict. cloth, edges and corners rubbed, lower cover darkened, . . . E500–800.

As a keen collector of P G Wodehouse first editions, I have been following all UK auctions for the past few years and participate in quite a few myself (including the above), and this is the highest price I ever recall for a Wodehouse single book (without dust jacket), although to be honest it is one of the most elusive together with *The Globe By The Way Book*.

### From Simon Gordon Clark

Sir,

It was stated in the last issue of *By The Way* that the correct wear with evening dress was the garment popularly known as spongebag trousers.

If any of my gentlemen, particularly Mr Wooster, had worn such trousers with evening dress, I should have tendered my resignation immediately. The correct wear is of course black trousers with a double row of tape on each seam. Trousers to be worn with the modern dinner-jacket have only a single tape.

Yours respectfully,  
R. Jeeves

*Tony Ring replies replies:* As the author writes in all the best books: "All errors are, of course, my own." Needless to say, I am chagrined. In my defence, if such

there be, I can only say that having never been obliged to dress up in white tie, I did not write from experience, and the implications drifted past me as on a cloud.

### From Gary Hall, USA

Regarding the discussion on which of Bertie's fiancées he should have married, it's Bobbie Wickham, without a doubt. They have the best chemistry I ever noted in the various Bertie stories. Yes, she's a bit good at getting Bertie into trouble; but therefore, in wedded bliss, she's the perfect one to get him out of it or, as some more cynically inclined would say, the best one to get him into maximum trouble – marriage! Besides, I like her best.

### From Peter O'Neil, Essex

While reading a book by the much loved country-man and broadcaster Jack Hargreaves, I came across this paragraph: "After years of work with Cindy I decided against all received opinion, to try to perpetrate her kind and match her to a dog of the same cross, though not blood related. She had sixteen puppies and the litter turned out, in the words of Freddie Threepwood, like a blasted zoo."

### From Murray Hedgcock, London (sent in June)

I offer this report:

The Queen's Birthday Honours included the OBE to Richard John Campbell, formerly chairman, Assured British Pigs, England and Wales, for services to the pig industry, and the MBE to Frances Margaret Slade, former chairwoman of Ladies in Pigs, for services to the pig industry.

Why nothing for George Cyril Wellbeloved and his Blandings colleagues, who did so much for the industry?

## And a Clarification from the Editor

In the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, at the end of my review of the new *Thank You Jeeves/Step Lively, Jeeves* DVD, I included a caveat that currently the DVD is "only available in NTSC (Region 1) format and cannot be played on most U.K. machines". The more technically knowledgeable Leonard Goldstein informs me that the NTSC/PAL formats are not connected to regions. What it all boils down to is that most machines these days have NTSC-PAL

compatibility. What is really needed is a player that has multi-region or region-free capability, which an increasing number of machines in the U.K. do have – and some can be made region-free by keying in a code on the remote control. Leonard adds: "DVD player manufacturers will not often tout their region-free adaptability, so if you have (for example) a Toshiba, Google 'region-free Toshiba' to find the code – or, better yet, check before you buy a specific model."

# Plum in Arrow

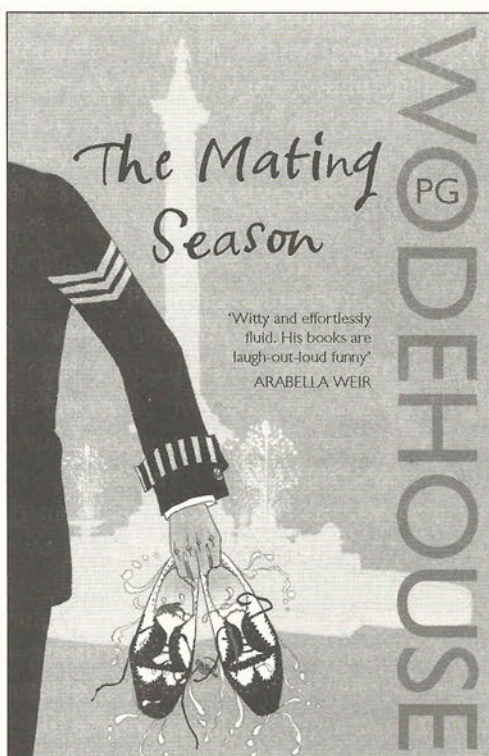
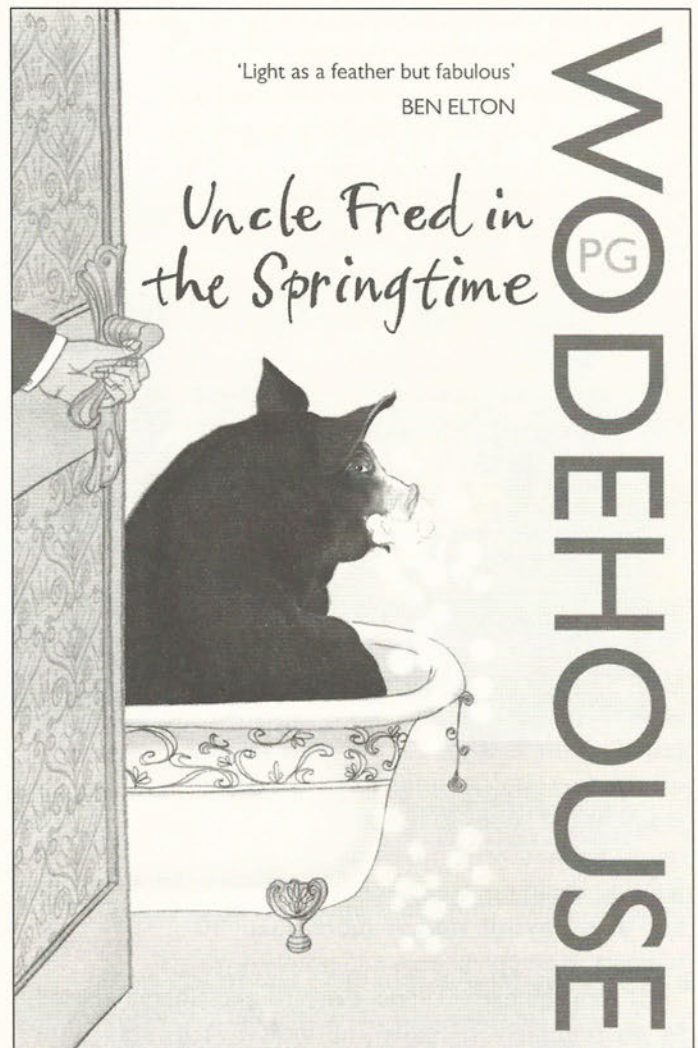
Tony Whittome describes an exciting new publishing venture

When I last wrote in *Wooster Sauce* about the joy of publishing Wodehouse and the challenge of introducing him to a new generation, I did so in sentences with quite a few conditional clauses – for we did not then know which lucky publisher would soon be publishing his work in paperback. Well, it's going to be Arrow, the hugely successful paperback arm of the part of Random House which also includes Hutchinson, inheritor of the Herbert Jenkins mantle. So in a way Plum has come home.

We're going to welcome him with quite a party. In the course of 2008, 45 titles will be republished, all with attractive new covers aimed at the 21st-century reader. Everyone has their own idea of what Jeeves, Bertie, Lord Emsworth, and others look like, so you'll only occasionally find them directly represented – we've gone for telling details instead. Our plan is to present the period detail (which of course is really timeless) in a fresh, vibrant, humorous, and colourful way. And we've been bold in the lettering of the Master's name.

Great care has also been taken with textual editing (we are using the exemplary Everyman texts on which members of the Society advised) and with the internal design of the books – in fact we've rethought every aspect of publishing Wodehouse for today's very different world.

We launch in May with 18 titles, with 15 to follow in August and 12 in October. So it's quite a military exercise!



The marketing, selling and publicity teams are all gearing up for our launch, so watch out next year for lots of new initiatives, including an entirely new dedicated Wodehouse website – [www.wodehouse.co.uk](http://www.wodehouse.co.uk) – with news, extracts, even viral games, which will focus our activities for new younger readers – and for those already of the true faith! We also plan real-life entertainments including a Plum picnic to end all picnics, and we shall work closely with the Society on a variety of events, including, we hope, the biennial dinner.

The in-house feeling for our launch is immensely strong and it involves everyone pulling together to enjoy making it a massive success. We'll be going into more detail in future *Wooster Sauces*.

It is bad to be trapped in a den of slaving aunts, lashing their tails and glaring at you out of their red eyes. It is unnerving to know that in a couple of days you will be up on a platform in a village hall telling an audience, probably well provided with vegetables, that Christopher Robin goes hoppity-hoppity-hop. . . . But it was not these chunks of the great web that were removing the stiffening from the Wooster upper lip. . . . Contemplating Gussie, I found my soul darkened by a nameless fear.

(From *The Mating Season*, 1949)

# Profile of a Committee Member

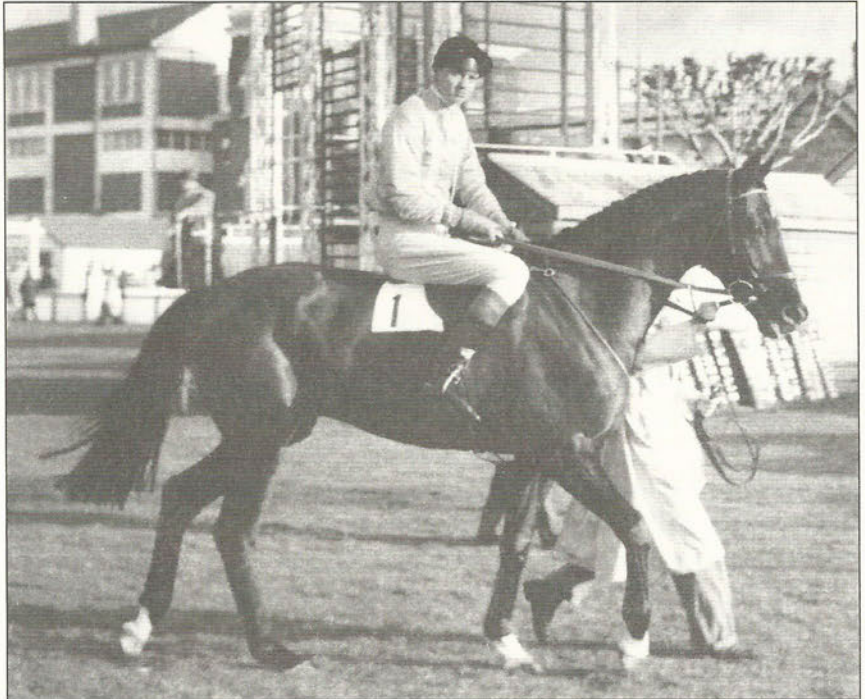
## Edward Cazalet

Edward Cazalet might have been bred to become a Committee member of our Society. It was after a whirlwind romance of six weeks that, in 1914, P G Wodehouse married the widowed Ethel Rowley, thereby also bringing into his family her 10-year-old daughter Leonora, Edward's future mother. Plum and Leonora hit it off from the word go; they grew to adore each other, and Plum adopted her. Leonora eventually married Peter Cazalet, and Sheran (now Hornby and one of our Patrons) and Edward were born. Leonora died in 1944 when a minor operation went tragically wrong.

After the war, Peter established himself as a leading steeplechase trainer. Not surprisingly, horses, riding, and the racetrack dominated Edward's schoolboy and university vacations. He is extremely proud of the fact that, despite his height of six feet and despite having broken many of the bones in his body more than once, he was recognised as one of the leading amateur steeplechase riders of his day, having ridden more than 80 winners in steeplechases and point-to-points.

From the early 1950s, Edward and Sheran started to go regularly (usually individually) to stay with Plum and Ethel, first in New York City and then later on Long Island. Edward greatly valued his close relationship with them both and his firm friendship with Plum. Plum also much enjoyed seeing Edward's wife, Camilla, and loved talking to her about Shakespeare and the theatre. He often tried out the legal aspects of a new plot with Edward, and did him the honour of giving Willoughby Scrope, the genial lawyer in *The Girl in Blue*, Edward and Camilla's home address in London.

A barrister, Edward became first a Silk (QC) and then, in 1988, a High Court Judge; he retired after 12 years on the Bench. He has been chairman of a large number of charities and other organisations connected mostly with either his professional life in the Law, or his sporting life on the Turf. He was a Fellow (Governor) of Eton, his old school, for 15 years. Edward's hobbies include chess, travel, writing



*Edward in 1960, being led out onto the racecourse at Hurst Park on H.M. The Queen Mother's 'Double Star' to finish second in a two-mile chase. This photograph is particularly fitting because, as many readers know, the late Queen Mother was a great admirer of Plum's work and unveiled the blue plaque to him at 17 Dunraven Street, London, in 1988.*

moderate (his word) doggerel verse, and any kind of moving ball game. He has written some lively articles about times spent with Plum and Ethel, and these have been published as a form of light relief in various legal journals.

Edward and Camilla have been married for 42 years and have three children, David, Hal, and Lara, who have been regular star performers at PGW events. There is hardly a dry eye in the place whenever Lara sings 'Bill'.

Over 50 years, Edward has collected at his home in Sussex a massive archive of original manuscripts, letters, and much other PGW personal material and memorabilia. He is delighted that the British Library has recently accepted his offer of the loan of the archive so that it can be preserved for later generations.

Edward's close connection with Plum, the man, his life, and his work, has obviously meant a great deal to him. He treasures these memories and there could be no more loyal guardian of our Wodehouse world.

In the office there was no diminution of Willoughby's exuberance. He was all bounce and effervescence. He hummed little snatches of song, he skipped rather than walked. If there was a sunnier lawyer in Bedford Row that morning, he would have been hard to find.

(From *The Girl in Blue*, 1970)

# A Letter from Aunt Agatha: Part 1

by Ranjitha Ashok

*Ranjitha read this letter to her fellow tourists on the coach during A Week With Wodehouse in July, and would have received a standing ovation if the coach weren't moving. Whether or not you agree that Aunt Agatha has been much maligned, we think you'll enjoy her forthright views of her nephew, one Bertram Wooster.*

I am not quite sure how to begin this letter.

I know all of you belong to that motley group of misguided people who insist on reading my lamentable nephew's chronicles, gathered and presented in book form by a certain author who apparently sees nothing incongruous in an adult going about using a fruit for a nickname. However, I want this missive of mine to reach as many of your kind as possible, because I am tired of seeing myself portrayed as a fiend in human shape by my nephew, Bertram Wilberforce Wooster.

You know him as Bertie. I like to call him the spineless invertebrate.

I was born Agatha Wooster. I became Agatha Spenser Gregson. I am now Lady Worplesdon. Since his birth I have *always* been Bertie's Aunt Agatha.

Bertie likes to put it about that I eat broken bottles, kill rats with my teeth, and wear barbed wire next to my skin. He sees similarities between me and those impossible people in charge of the Spanish Inquisition, and claims I turn into a werewolf during the full moon.

Nonsense.

Glass is not something I include in my daily diet. And while I certainly do not support newfangled fads like vegetarianism, I draw the line at eating rodents, with bare teeth or cutlery. I am certainly not the Madame Eulalie frippery lace and ribbon type, but to say I wear barbed-wire unmentionables is nothing but deliberate prejudice. And no one in my family has ever had anything to do with the vulgar, like the Inquisition, or the commonplace, like werewolves.

I know most of you see Bertie as a harmless, amiable soul, constantly being shoved into the mulligatawny by a platoon of aunts, uncles, various cousins, and diverse acquaintances, led by me and my sister Dahlia. You have been following his career with considerable interest – all of you. Tell me, then, how does Bertram become a Bertie?

He had the best of true-blue British education, Eton and Oxford University. And his achievements are? Winning a prize for the best collection of wild flowers made during summer holidays at his very first

school; later, winning a Scripture Knowledge contest at Malvern House, and then, years later, contributing an article titled 'What the Well-Dressed Man is Wearing' for the Husbands and Brothers page in Dahlia's *Milady's Boudoir*.

And how does he talk?

In incomplete quotes, often totally out of context – even his biblical allusions – or in a series of mixed metaphors. He recalls nothing in full, which accounts for all that "Ta-tum-ta-tum-ta-tum-ta-tum, and only Man is vile" gibberish.

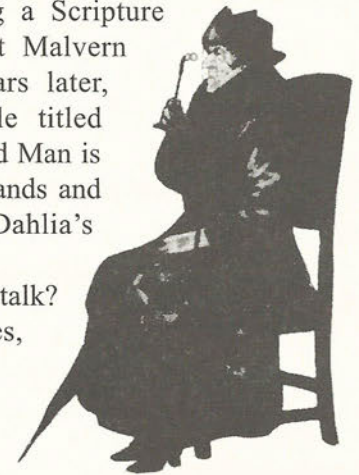
Bertie claims that I can turn him inside out with a single glance. That isn't true. And I can prove it.

Now, I have always believed that marriage would be the making of him, preferably to a girl capable of moulding his personality and compensating for his many defects. Bertie calls me the Family Curse, I've been told. Well, I call him a slippery eel, and it is when I push him towards matrimony that his resemblance to this mucous-covered fish becomes strongest.

Look at the line-up – Florence Craye, Pauline Stoker, Bobbie Wickham, Honoria Glossop, her cousin Miss Pringle, and, of course, off and on with that dear girl, Madeline Bassett. All of them understood that an engagement with Bertie automatically meant that they should start improving him at once. Why, Florence even tried to get him to read *Types of Ethical Theory*.

And what happened – each time? These encounters would, without exception, turn into the most nightmarish of imbroglios and invariably end with these girls going on to marry other men.

*In the final part of Aunt Agatha's letter, to be published in March 2008, we'll learn her views of certain incidents in the Wooster chronicles – and of her feelings about Jeeves.*



*Is Aunt Agatha more to be pitied than censured?*

# Bertie's Uncles George

by Charles E. Gould, Jr

In 'Clustering Round Young Bingo' (*Carry On, Jeeves!*, 1925) we are told of Bertie's uncle, Mr. George Travers. "I don't believe there's no such a person," as Betsey Prig famously declared to Mrs. Gamp of her fictitious friend Mrs. Harris in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Professor Jasen (*A Bibliography and Reader's Guide*) lists him as "Bertie's other uncle suffering from bad digestion," while Professor Garrison (*Who's Who in Wodehouse*) says he "lives in Harrowgate (*sic*); presumably a brother of Thomas."

Nay, not so, as the Angel said to Abou ben Adhem. Presumably he *could* be the brother of Uncle Tom Travers, but Bertie never says so, and when they appear together at Harrogate, though they know each other there's no suggestion that they are brothers. I hope to show that, without a doubt, PGW had in mind here not *another* Uncle George, but the same old Uncle George Wooster of 'The Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace' (*The Inimitable Jeeves*, 1923), and of 'Jeeves and the Old School Chum' and 'Indian Summer of an Uncle' (*Very Good, Jeeves*, 1930), who regularly went to Harrogate for The Cure but did not exactly *live* there, often wanting Bertie to join him to ease the strain . . . the strain of imbibing 12 ounces of warm crescent saline and magnesia as opposed to alcohol. In other words, Wodehouse was nodding. In one other awful word, he made a mistake.

I am well aware that there may be an opposing view. There's no evidence, apart from the textual and stylistic evidence that I am about to present, that the learned Jasen and Garrison, and Wodehouse himself, are *wrong*. That is not the point, for I myself, like a stopped clock, am *right* only about twice a day. But on this subject, in his book *P. G. Wodehouse*, R. B. D. French says:

There is a temptation to follow an endearing fictitious character beyond the printed page and read significance into an author's slips. It should be resisted. . . . No good will come of approaching [characters in Wodehouse] as real persons made up of what has been recorded about them.

Well, there is *one* good to come of it: it's a lot of clever fun; but we really needn't bother, as I am doing now, about Wodehouse's errors, such as having Pop



Stoker say in *Thank You, Jeeves* that he has only one daughter, long before (in *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*) his other daughter, Emerald, elopes with Gussie Fink-Nottle. It's akin to Constable Dobbs's wondering where Cain's wife came from, or Thomas Hardy's (rare) joke about the eremite who wondered who wore the first pants in the Bible. On that basis, let's proceed.

George Wooster first appears in 'The Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace' (*The Inimitable Jeeves*). Bertie introduces him in typical fashion, keeping his public abreast of what he's not sure he has recorded before – which, in this instance, he hasn't:

I don't know if you've ever met my Uncle George. He's a festive old egg who wanders from club to club continually having a couple with other festive old eggs. When he heaves in sight, waiters brace themselves up and the wine-steward toys with his corkscrew.

Toward the end of the story, both Bertie and Jeeves refer to him as "Sir George". In 'Indian Summer of an Uncle' (*Very Good, Jeeves*), he is "his lordship" to Jeeves and "my Uncle George" to Bertie, except of course at Wistaria Lodge, Kitchener Road, East Dulwich, *chez* Rhoda Platt, where he is Lord Yaxley. Now, the Peerage to me is pretty much a closed book, so I simply ask the question: Could Lord Yaxley ever be or have been 'Sir George'? But I digress. In 'Jeeves and the Old School Chum' (*Very Good, Jeeves*), Bertie explains his visit to Bingo Little's place near Norwich by saying, "I had to come away because the family were shooting me off to Harrogate to chaperone my Uncle George, whose liver had been giving him the elbow again." Though perhaps bulging enough for two – "Tailors measure him just for the sake of the exercise" ('Indian Summer of an Uncle') – this is clearly one Uncle George, "my Uncle George" as opposed to "My Uncle George Wooster, Lord Yaxley, but I have another Uncle George."

Let us turn now to the Uncle George in 'Clustering Round Young Bingo' (*Carry On, Jeeves*, 1925) whom Professor Jasen calls "Bertie's other uncle" and who Professor Garrison says is "presumably the brother of Thomas" [Portarlington Travers], whom Aunt Dahlia married *en secondes nocces* the year Bluebottle won the

Cambridgeshire. [*Mirabile dictu*, N. T. P. Murphy in *A Wodehouse Handbook* does not identify the horse, the race, or the year – but he has taught us to think that Wodehouse must have had nonfictional counterparts in mind.]

In ‘Clustering Round Young Bingo’, Uncle Thomas Travers is all present and accounted for: bad digestion that only Anatole can assuage (but no hint of alcoholic intake) occasioned perhaps in part by the assaults made by *Milady’s Boudoir* (*Madam’s Nightshirt*) and the Inland Revenue on the sackfuls of money he made out in the East. But suddenly, we read these words of Jeeves’s: “Mr. George Travers rang up on the telephone shortly after you had left. He was extremely desirous that you join him at Harrogate, sir. He leaves for that town by an early train tomorrow.” In the next paragraph, Bertie fills us in . . . again:

My Uncle George is a festive old bird who has made a habit for years of doing himself a dashed sight too well, with the result that he’s always got Harrogate or Buxton hanging over him like the sword of what’s-his-name. And he hates going there alone.

It can’t be a deliberate coincidence, or even a coincidence. In the (almost) definitive ‘Bertie Wooster’s Family Tree’ and ‘Disentangling the

Wooster Relations’ (*Plum Lines*, vol. 11, no.1), in which this Uncle George Travers (perhaps significantly) does not appear, the learned John Fletcher wisely advises, “Never accept an apparent contradiction in Wodehouse: he knows what he is writing about.” True, indeed; but sometimes he forgets their names. I will not again mention the Aubrey Upjohn/Arnold Abney confusion, which Wodehouse in a letter to me called a ‘bloomer’ but which Mr. Fletcher has ingeniously reconciled (*Plum Lines*, vol. 15, no. 3). But many great writers make mistakes with their creations and their creations’ names (Henry Fielding, Conan Doyle, I think even Dickens in *Bleak House* somewhere – ‘Lady Honoria’ as opposed to ‘Lady Dedlock’). All prolific writers are to some extent self-derivative, as Wodehouse is here with “festive old egg/bird”. I myself have remarked elsewhere that P.G. Wodehouse was the greatest Trick-Recyclist of his century.

I rest my case—and all the rest of me. Giving the name ‘Travers’ to an Uncle George of Bertie Wooster was a bloomer. Garrison, Jasen, and Jeeves, are all in error here – albeit in good company – regarding this George Travers . . . but it’s PGW’s nodding more than their dreaming or documents. *There’s no sich a person as Mrs. Harris, nor Uncle George Travers neither. Take it from me, Sairey Gamp.*

## Impending Doom Revisited

by Paul Rush

*Every young man starting life ought to know how to cope with an angry swan.*

– Bertram Wilberforce Wooster

What to do, however, when there is no convenient raincoat, it being a gloriously warm and bright October Sunday morning, no prudently carried boat hook (somewhat frowned upon as a fashion accessory in the better parts of Norwich), and no handy bush from which the bird can unscramble itself?

Such was the dilemma I faced on a recent Sunday morning when finding myself confronted with an angry swan that was enjoying a pre-lunch stroll along one of the city’s busier roads. I can confirm Bertie’s opinion that a swan’s eyebrows meet in the middle and do, indeed, give them a “sort of peevish look”. A copious amount of neck was also present although this particular example appeared short of the hissing sounds of either a “tyre bursting in a nest of cobras” or “steam escaping from a leaky pipe” associated with Bertie, Jeeves and the Rt Hon Filmer (“a tubby little chap who looked as if he had been poured into his clothes and had forgotten to say ‘When!’”).

Bertie’s swan may have been up there with the intelligentsia; his Norfolk cousin was not. Attempts to

squeeze his (or indeed her) well-nourished frame through narrow gaps in the railing proved as futile on the fifth and sixth attempts as they had on the first and second. The only thing that changed was the visible frustration of the beast with each unsuccessful attempt to return to friends and family on the river below.

My personal method (which I suggest merely if, like me, you happen to be out on a Sunday lunchtime sans boat hook) is to flag down a conveniently passing butcher (so he informed me and I have no reason to doubt him), surround the bird in the classic Impi pincer movement, distract it with a few well-chosen words, and admire the way in which the aforementioned butcher sneaks up behind suitably distracted swan, picks it up, and drops it off the bridge into the water below.

All that remains is to watch as assorted ruffled feathers are smoothed, share a manly, self-congratulatory shake of the hands, and retire to the conveniently local hostelry for refreshment that tasted better for a deed well done.

# Providence: Divine Indeed

*Christine Hewitt reports on The Wodehouse Society convention  
11–14 October 2007 at Providence, Rhode Island, USA*

I began my first convention with a visit to the John Hay Library to view their historic and valuable collection of Jerome Kern and Wodehouse sheet music, some of which was once Kern's personal property. Fascinating.

Elsewhere, in a rain-soaked public park in the picturesque and friendly city of Providence, the famous TWSCC 'cricket experience' was underway. I was privileged to catch the gladiators of the field in a pub later, where I heard them speak with passion on the intensity of the dampness which had invaded their clothing; the brilliance of a catch by Gussie; the amazement of locals driving by the bucolic scene; and whether Alan had been playing or umpiring (nobody seemed to know, including Alan). The city's various purveyors of New England seafood dinners were busy that evening as well over 100 Wodehouseans gambolled into town and fortified themselves for the weekend.

On Friday we of the 'Village Mothers Guild and Church Lads Brigade' boarded two motor coaches bound for Newport, Rhode Island, and their famous mansions. A guided tour showed us many lovely houses and views decorated with glorious fall trees. There were photo stops by breezy seascapes and in pretty Newport before interior tours of two houses.

At Beechwood actors recreated former life in the house, playing members of the Astor family and treating us as if we were a group of 'the 400' preparing to attend one of the great parties of the gilded age. They brought the house to life and skilfully stayed in character when responding to questions and comments. Down the road we were delivered to The Breakers, the divinely elegant former summer home of the Vanderbilts. We wandered open-mouthed from room to room, amazed that such opulence was for use only during the annual season of July, August, and the first two weeks of September.

Evening at the hotel saw us tucking into a buffet supper before being assailed by a jolly parade of happenings known as the Clean, Bright Entertainment. Our convention host chapter, the NEWTS (New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society) had organised the performance of songs, readings,

hilarious sermons on Brotherly Love, and a surreal skit entitled 'Bertie Meets His Maker'.

Saturday was the main day of convention business, with 10 edifying presentations. Margaret Slythe painted a delightful picture of life at Dulwich for the schoolboy Wodehouse; Dan Cohen spoke eloquently on the golden age of gorilla impersonators, and the incomparable Father Wendell Verrill expounded on 'Wodehouse and God'. All this plus

exciting tales from Norman Murphy, Brian Taves on movie adaptations, Sophie Ratcliffe on her book project of Wodehouse letters, and reminiscences from David Jasen. Anne Cotton speculated on what sort of dog various Wodehouse characters equate to, David Trumbull told us about Robert Benchley, and the day was rounded off by Charles Gould, whose talk defies description but had us rolling in the aisles.

The day also allowed time to appreciate our lovely convention

location: the Providence Biltmore Hotel, which dates from 1922 and once had a chicken farm and menagerie on the roof. The menagerie was inside the building this evening as Wodehouseans donned fancy dress for the grand banquet followed by dancing to Glenn Miller melodies in the Garden Room. We heard that both the city of Providence and the state of Rhode Island had declared 15 October (Plum's birthday) to be P G Wodehouse Day, and numerous prizes were awarded for costumes and quiz winners.

On Sunday morning there was brunch at the Biltmore followed by the Great Sermon Handicap. Father Wendell Verrill was required to deliver a sermon based on a Bible verse picked for him at random while a room full of eager punters 'bet' on how long he could talk. The resulting entertainment was priceless.

Desolation, doom, despair (and perhaps a touch of dyspepsia) upon reaching the end of the proceedings was only mitigated by the thought that the Northwodes chapter will create A Little Wodehouse on the Prairie for us in St Paul, Minnesota, in June 2009. Thank you, Jean Tillson, plus all of the NEWTS and their helpers for the wonderful experience of Divine Providence 2007.



*Christine (left), in costume as Dr Sally,  
with Karen Shotting and Norman Murphy  
(Photo by Tamaki Morimura)*



# A Sermon on Brotherly Love

by Stephen Persing

*Among the highlights of The Wodehouse Society's recent Divine Providence Convention was a challenge to write a sermon on Brotherly Love. The hands-down winner was this entry, which, in Stephen's absence, was superbly read by Father Wendell Verrill.*

One day Saint Leontius was lunching with Mehujael, son of Irad, Enoch, son of Hepzibah, and others whose parentage was in doubt, as they traveled the Damascus road. Their repast, purchased at the local watering hole, moved the Saint to speak: "Alas," he said, "what is this muck they calleth 'ale'? It tasteth of drainage ditches after the flooding of the Nile. Verily, there is not a good pub between here and Nazareth."

Mehujael agreed, saying, "Thou canst trust no one these days. Give them an inch, they'll take a cubit."

The Saint agreed, saying: "When thou hast ale, thou shouldst call it ale. When thou hast a mess of pottage, thou shouldst call it thy birthright. There is no room in Heaven for euphemisms. Such laxity of language bids me think of brotherly love among the Hivites and the Hittites."

"Ooh, tell us a story!" cried all and Sundry, son of Etcetera.

"I shall relate a parable," said the Saint, "for that is what Saints do." And here is the parable he told: What the Hivites and Hittites called 'brotherly love' was practised with spears and cudgels, swords, and knobkerries – something like a shillelagh, nice and heavy, very useful in a good donnybrook.

The Lord saw what they were up to and was more than a trifle vexed with them. And when the Hivites rose from their labors at noon to belabor the Hittites, the Lord could stand it no longer. He appeared to the Hivites and spoke, saying: "Hast thou lost thine marbles? Art thou completely round the twist? If this be brotherly love, then the Lord thy God is Marie of Roumania."

The Hivites didn't know what to do. Some took God's words as an admonition to pay more heed to their own kith and kin, and began to wallop their near and dear with the aforementioned arsenal – especially the knobkerries, which, as I said before, are handy for denting the cranium. But a Hivite wise man spoke, and begged the Lord, "Tell us what thou meanest, for we are hungry from a long day's labor and came out to battle with naught but elevenses in our stomachs."

And the Lord spoke again. "Thou catchest not my drift. Smiting thy neighbor is not brotherly love. If thou hungers, let thou eat, and save thy smiting for the beasts of the field, and birds of the air, whom I put on this earth for thy sustenance. And forgetteth not thy

vegetables, also. Hearken to me, for I have had an idea and, being Who I am, it is a pip. Thou shalt sway the hearts of thy kindred thusly; from this day forth thou shalt erect tall signs beside all thy thoroughfares, and take out ads in thy newspapers and all thy best magazines. Yea, shalt thou even broadcast singing commercials over thy wireless, and the message thou shalt send is: Eat more manna!"

The Hivites, being obedient to God's will, spread the word, and created an advertising campaign the likes of which even Solomon could not equal. Every hieroglyph and cuneiform wedge spelled out the Message. The Manna Channel was carried on all cable and satellite systems. Manna was selling like hotcakes, which it closely resembles – sales up 20 per cent in the first quarter alone – while trade in knobkerries declined. Great was the hoopla and ballyhoo, and the sound of the salesman was heard in the land. And, behold! On a full stomach the smiting of Hittites seemed to be too much work. The people took up more peaceful occupations such as football and Parliamentary democracy. So peace came to the lands of the Hivites and, by extension, the Hittites.

And it came to pass that one day a Hivite and a Hittite were walking down the street, when the Hivite spoke, saying, "Begorrah, the Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to eat manna at noon, rather than clout thee and thy kindred."

And the Hittite said, "Faith and begob, thy God is afraid thou shalt have thy hat handed to thee, as 'twas at the World Cup."

Then the Hivite and the Hittite began to smite each other with bladders, being the only weapons to hand, and not as efficacious as a cosh at close range. The Hivites rose up against the Hittites, and the Hittites rose up against the Hivites, and some wandering Jebusites who were just passing through on their way to vacation in Caanan were set upon by both sides. And when the Lord saw this he waxed wroth and began smiting both tribes. The Lord cried out, "Foolish mortals! If this is thy idea of brotherly love, I shall love you all to death!"

And when the battle was over, the bruised and much baffled Jebusites raised an obelisk to commemorate the passing of the Hivites and the Hittites, and on it they inscribed their version of God's words to the Hivites: Make Lunch, Not War.

# Wodehouse and the Bolsheviks, Part 2: The Atmosphere of Spy Hysteria

by Masha Lebedeva



*This is the penultimate article in Masha's series on Wodehouse's Russian references. If you'd like to learn even more, why not participate in the Old Home Week in Moscow? See page 12 for details.*

In an earlier instalment in this series, I said that from the 1950s, Chekhov's plays ousted the novels of Leo Tolstoy from Wodehouse's pages. I now report a similar tendency in the historic-political record, where emphasis on the class struggle gave way to undisguised spy-mania. Thus, we can say, that – according to Wodehouse – the Russia of the first half of the 20th century was a country mainly known in Great Britain for its radical ideological philosophies, whether it was Count Tolstoy's appeals to twiddle the fingers as an alternative to smoking or Red Bolshevik propaganda. After the Second World War, however, the situation changed, and Russia turned into an overtly unfriendly power, initiating more vigorous attempts to destabilise the situation in England by sending over its spies or by staging Chekhov's plays.

The reason for this change of attitude in the political sphere is quite understandable. Moscow did not have confidence in the sort of people whom they had tried to convert to Bolshevism. Yes, Syd Price had a way of twisting people's remarks and making them recoil on his interlocutors like boomerangs because he spent half his time arguing with his Bolshie friends (*If I Were You*, ch3), but most of these so-called Bolsheviks clearly needed more support to bring about the Red Dawn. The charabanc driver Weasel wished Stalin were around to give Jane Abbott a piece of his mind (*Summer Moonshine*, ch19). Bertie Wooster's temporary valet Brinkley, though described as Moscow's Pride, disgraced himself by getting stewed to the gills. As for Orlo Porter, he – like Ukridge's Bolshevik hen, which ate its head off daily at Ukridge's expense and bit the hand which fed it by resolutely declining to lay a single egg – completely forgot his duty of murdering capitalists and the needs of hard-up proletariat, dreaming instead of a Mayfair flat, champagne with every meal, and Rolls Royces, matters that would hardly be approved by the boys in the Kremlin (*Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, ch17). On the contrary, Orlo's dreams, as well as Archibald Mulliner's later meditations, which were definitely hostile to the Masses, would have compelled Stalin to

purse his lips. In such conditions it was quite natural that the Moscow big shots, being disillusioned with their native British followers, preferred to make use of their own Bolshevik spies.

We don't meet an actual Russian spy in the pages of Wodehouse, but the atmosphere of spy hysteria is described in a masterly way in many of his books. We can see that the sweet times of the 1930s, when youth (represented by Sue Brown, alias the American Myra Schoonmaker; see *Summer Lightning*, ch8) was brooding over the situation in Russia, had gone with the wind. Now every British citizen began to feel that he was in the secret service. So one realised that the freelance journalist Murphy was suspected of being widely known at Scotland Yard as an agent of a certain unfriendly power (i.e., Russia) under his real name Ivanovitch or Molotov, especially when he could mop up alcohol like a vacuum cleaner – an apparent requirement of all Russian secret agents, who had been trained to acquire resistance to spirits and liquors (*Frozen Assets*, ch6, 8, 9).

In such an atmosphere of espionage, it was hardly surprising that a former employee of the Foreign Office could go off his onion and begin to send secret official papers over to Russia, believing that he was Stalin's nephew (*Cocktail Time*, ch14). Or that (in *Something Fishy*, ch4), the former butler Keggs set a private eye onto the son of his former employer's friend, and when it was suggested that he should be the head of the secret police in Moscow, he only declined because of the unpleasant Russian climate. Or that the publisher Cyril Grooly was ready to adopt the *nom de guerre* Golinsky, assumed to be a Communist spy, in order to break his engagement with a female novelist ('Sleepy Time', from *Plum Pie*).

Perhaps what was saddest in the Great Britain of the 1950s and 60s was that people had lost faith in the altruism of pro-Bolshevist compatriots. If, at the end of the 1920s, only the proletariat, armed with turnips, was accused of being in the pay of Moscow (*Money for Nothing*, ch7), now one (e.g., the 'Field Marshal' in *Something Fishy*, ch12) might even be suspected of this merely because they voted for Labour blisters who (in the opinion of Lord Uffenham) were nothing but a bunch of bally Bolsheviks. Moreover, not only British citizens, but even their pets, were ready to suspect that a man found sitting on a roof or prowling about the house at night was involved in a Red plot or in the pay of Moscow (*Summer Moonshine*, ch14; *Stiff Upper Lip*, *Jeeves*, ch9).

Completing the theme of Russia's international influence, I must point out that it was not only Russian spies that kept Europe in thrall. Even the representatives of Soviet Russia at the United Nations upset other countries with the firmness with which they issued their 111th veto (*Company for Henry*, ch12), inspired either by the memory of Molotov politics (*The Old Reliable*, ch2) or by the ancient traditions of shifty Russian diplomacy once demonstrated in the remote past by Grand Duke Vodkakoff (*The Swoop*, Part 1, ch7).

No historian could overlook the leaders of a country with the colourful history of Russia. So Wodehouse couldn't pass over the heads of the Russian state in silence. Some have already been mentioned in previous parts of this series of articles, but (particularly for the benefit of new members) I would like to recap. Wodehouse gave us descriptions of the Russian Empress Catherine the Great and referred often to the contemporary rulers of Russia during his lifetime, starting with a casual reference to a Czar living in Petrograd (*A Prince for Hire*, ch9), whom we can deduce to be Nicolay II, during whose period in office Maxim Gorky began his career as a writer.

Vladimir Lenin – father of the October revolution – appears twice, both times in the company of Leon Trotsky, and we have to say that as so represented, Lenin seems to be very human. He enjoys golf – even in the presence of a crowd armed with revolvers, and even playing against Russian novelists ('The Clicking of Cuthbert'). It was probably Trotsky's idea to acquaint Lenin with Russian novelists, organizing the golf matches or inviting the novelists to lunch to meet him. Lenin was always ready to further this acquaintance, and it was not his fault that Maxim Gorky couldn't dash off a trifle in the vein of Stephen Leacock during such a lunch (*Love Among the Chickens*, ch10). Very likely it was Trotsky's fault, because he was a man who couldn't hit a moving secretary with an egg on a dark night (*Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, ch12). It is Trotsky whose photograph, when added to a couple of ikons, produces the gloomy atmosphere of a Russian novel ('The Purification of Rodney Spelvin', from *The Heart of a Goof*) and whose name was considered worthy to be assumed when Bertie's friend Oliver Sipperley was arrested by the police on Boat Race night ('Without the Option', from *Carry On, Jeeves*).

But Wodehouse paid most attention to Stalin, and I have already described some of his references. We

can't expect any tolerance from such a man, whom you never find dancing at a time when the fundamental distribution of whatever-it-is is so dashed what-d'you-call-it ('Archibald and the Masses', from *Young Men in Spats*). Nevertheless, we have surprising confidence that a go-getter like Freddie Threepwood could undertake to ingratiate himself with Stalin if he gave his mind to it ('Company for Gertrude', from *Blandings Castle*). And, without doubt, every young British aristocrat would prefer to have Stalin in his employment than the unspeakable Brinkley (*Thank You, Jeeves*, ch22).

Although, as we know, Wodehouse's was a timeless world, he liked to be up to date and his works reflect signs of the time. That is why, in addition to Lenin and Stalin, Nikita Kruscheff is referred to in *Frozen Assets*, ch9, although regrettably Biff Christopher was unable to obtain any details about what Kruscheff was really like.

Among other distinctive marks of the 1950s and 1960s, we notice the reference in 'Sleepy Time' to students rioting in Saigon, Moscow, Cairo, Panama and other centres, (although, in reality, no student was rioting in Moscow in the middle of the 1960s!). However, the real sign of the Present, which impressed and even frightened contemporaries, was the Russian Sputnik, which might hit you (see the updated version of 'Big Business', which appeared in *A Few Quick Ones* in 1958), though Lloyd's could insure you against this (*Do Butlers Burgle Banks?*, ch6). Speaking of such an achievement of Russian science, we note that Wodehouse didn't pay much attention to the scientists of Russia, his only reference to the University of Moscow having appeared in 1909 (*The Swoop*, part 2, ch2)! So it is all the more pleasurable that he did not forget to mention the great Russian physiologist Doctor Pavlov and his research on induced reflexes (*Galahad at Blandings*, ch5).

And so we approach the end of our investigation. But Wodehouse, as a real Master, not only tells us about the political life of contemporary Russia; he also provides us with information on the country's economics. From his books we can learn about the rouble – for example, that the fees offered to an average Russian novelist for a lecture tour among English suburban literary societies, worked out in roubles, seemed just about right, especially if he knew that his principal creditors had perished in the last massacre of the bourgeoisie or fled from Russia ('The Clicking of Cuthbert'). And though it was risky to buy roubles in 1922 (*The Adventures of Sally*, ch6), in 1931 you could already obtain high returns by investing some of your money in Soviet Russia (*A Prince for Hire*, ch2). Perhaps such divergent outcomes were due to the Five Year Plans of which adherents like Brinkley were so fond (*Thank You, Jeeves*, ch13).



A convenient source of aliases: Leon Trotsky, less gloomy than usual

## Old Home Week in Moscow

If you've been reading Masha Lebedeva's series on the Russian references in Wodehouse (see page 10 for the latest instalment), then you know that Plum's connections to Russia are very strong indeed. During A Week With Wodehouse in July, it was suggested to Masha that The Russian Wodehouse Society (TRWS) might want to put together its own Wodehouse Week, and she has received enough expressions of interest that she and other TRWS members are forging ahead with plans. These include visits to the Kremlin (though we will not, alas, meet the big shots who reside there) and the palatial Tsaritsyno (the would-be Moscow residence of the Russian empress Catherine the Great), as well as walks around Literary Moscow, where the Great Russian Authors once lived and

worked. Participants will also visit one or two suburban mansion-houses of the Great Russians.

While the exact date of Old Home Week in Moscow is not known at the time of going to press, it will be in August next year. Full details regarding the date, our program, and all other important information will be provided in the March issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

## My First Wodehouse Experience

by Jack Smith

Although I am in my eighties, I have only in the past few years discovered with vast enjoyment the splendid works of PGW. For many years, my wife and many friends urged the delights of The Master (I feel sure that he would not object to sharing the sobriquet of Henry James – a very different stylist!), but I was never tempted. Indeed, many years ago, when I was even then a voracious reader, I considered that there was more worth in, say, Thomas Hardy or Graham Greene, than in the (dare I say 'lightweight'?) tales of a writer whose name, I am ashamed to say, I thought was 'P G Woodhouse'. But a year or two ago I picked up one of my wife's old paperbacks (it was, I think, *Hot Water*), and I was hooked. I am now steadily reading through the canon. How wonderful to find such a great new joy at this late stage in one's life! So now I am a fledgling member of the Society, and I look forward to the enhanced pleasure which this will bring.

I had been told about the marvellous plots, the memorable characters, the sparkling conversation pieces, and the wondrous comic invention displayed in the stories. Of course I discovered that these qualities were all there. What I had not realised was that PGW had created a wondrous parallel world which anyone might occupy who picked up any of his books. (I believe that Norman Murphy considers that the stories describe in fact features of the real world, but I prefer to think of Wodehouse-land as a magic kingdom open

to us when we turn the pages – perhaps more a Platonic concept than a comic commentary? But one could discuss this, fruitlessly, for ever and a day).

And I had not realised PGW's widespread awareness, presented in so casual a way, of a wide field of culture, and the comic effect to which he puts his knowledge. The great Jeeves, of course, displays omniscient command of literature and philosophy, little bits of which Bertie Wooster is able (almost) to recall under certain circumstances. But as well, there are the authorial references. I recently finished my first reading of *Big Money*, which contains two remarks which I shall treasure:

The art of exchanging small-talk across the counters of saloon-bars is not given to everybody. Many of the world's finest minds have lacked the knack. The late Herbert Spencer is a case in point.

And even better:

Berry had by this time achieved a frame of mind which would have qualified him to walk straight into a Tchekov play and no questions asked . . .

Perhaps other members, much better read than I am, can point out other instances of PGW's use of cultural reference with such wit and aplomb? It would be nice, perhaps, to create a small anthology!

**What Was That Again?** Tony Ring writes: "The New York Public Library has a computerised search facility for general use. Entering 'Wodehouse P G' brings an initial 293 results but also the somewhat surprising question: 'Do you mean whorehouse cp g?'"

# Bumblepuppy Alive and Well

by Patrick Kidd

Country house cricket seems a very Wodehousean thing, a languid way of spending an afternoon with friends, whacking a ball about a field against the backdrop of one of the stately homes of England. The 2004 edition of *Wisden* reports that E. H. D. Sewell, a journalist in the late Victorian age, said that such work-avoidance “may savour of bumblepuppy”, or “taking things easy”, which in itself sounds like a word that Wodehouse should have coined.

By the 1920s, country house cricket was winding down, a victim, as the former England captain Sir Henry Leveson-Gower (pronounced Looson-gore) described it, of the First World War, the need for amateurs to work for a living and “insidious beguiling golf”.

Yet the P G Wodehouse Society’s cricket team, the Gold Bats, did their bit this summer to revive bumblepuppy with a jolly game in August at Audley End, the stately home of the lords lieutenant of Essex, against the Kirby Strollers, a team formed by the Kirby Masonic Lodge to raise money for charity.

Kirby Lodge was founded in 1900 in honour of William Kirby, a talented freemason who died at the age of 37 after foolishly deciding to explore a gas leak by the light of a match. It was appropriate that the Society should provide the opposition for the Kirby Strollers as Plum himself was a member of the rolled up trouser-leg before wicket fraternity.

Wodehouse was initiated into Jerusalem Lodge in March 1929 and by November of that year had completed his third ‘degree’, becoming a master mason. Jerusalem Lodge, No 197, is one of the oldest English lodges and was founded by masons who met at the Jerusalem Tavern in Clerkenwell, London. As well as Wodehouse, Jerusalem’s famous members include John Wilkes, the political reformer who was initiated 160 years before Wodehouse, and Sir Henry Irving, the actor, who was initiated in 1877 and, by an intriguing coincidence, went on to found the Savage Club Lodge, named after the club where the Society met for 10 years.

Wodehouse lasted only five years as an active mason. He resigned his membership of Jerusalem in 1934 after inadvertently slandering the screenwriter Roland Pertwee, a fellow member. It is possible that Wodehouse attended Masonic lodges when he lived in the United States.

Certainly, Masonic phrases appear frequently in Wodehouse’s work. Lord Emsworth, in ‘Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!’, is told of a magical word to mutter to his sow that is “to the pig world what the Masonic grip is to the human”. Galahad Threepwood, in *Heavy Weather*, conspires with Beach, saying “the meeting is tiled”, referring to the Masonic practice of having a man, a Tyler, outside the lodge room with a drawn sword to keep out intruders. There are various references to strapping on nosebags at the ‘festive board’, the Masonic name for the post-lodge nosh.

To the cricket, then, and the battle between the Gold Bats and the Kirby Strollers was tense and thrilling. To be fair, the Gold Bats had something of an

advantage by having played that season, whereas some of the Strollers had not played at all for years. In fact, one septuagenarian member of the Kirby side admitted that he had last played competitive cricket when Churchill was Prime Minister, but he had faced an over from his eight-year-old grandson before the

game and was confident after hitting four of the six balls.

While the Gold Bats won by almost 80 runs when the Strollers were bowled out for 110, it is a delightful quirk of the game that the Strollers came within three balls of seeing out time and saving the match as a draw. The important thing is that the match was played for charity: almost £2,500 was raised for The Kids’ Company, which cares for underprivileged street children in South London, from the teams, spectators on the day, and via a website. Bob Miller, the Gold Bats captain, chuffed at a rare victory for the Wodehouseans, immediately issued a challenge for a rematch next year, which the Strollers were delighted to accept. Bumblepuppy is again alive and well!



*The Gold Bats and Kirby Strollers at Audley End on August 12  
(Photo by Simon Cater)*

# Plum Did His Bit

by Murray Hedgcock

**P**G Wodehouse took much criticism for his wartime activities, although those who know the full story agree it was good intent coupled with ignorance, rather than anything more sinister, that led to those ill-considered German radio broadcasts. But well before that, he was called in to play his part in upholding wartime morale on Britain's Home Front, as a recent eBay auction confirmed. On offer was a copy of *The Shelter Book*, described as "a gathering of tales, poems, essays, notes and notions, arranged by Clemence Dane, for use in Shelters, Tubes, Basements and Cellars in Wartime".

Published by Longmans, Green & Co. in 1940, a few months after war broke out, this is an intriguing 307-page mix, designed to divert and entertain Britons as they retreated underground in the face of Luftwaffe attacks. It is also a marvellous social document, to remind us of how life still could be lived in particular circles in the Britain of 1940, war or no war.

The front endpapers offer space to record 'When Emergency Calls And Memory Fails'. Beginning with the logical 'Your name . . . Your Identification Number . . . Your Own Address . . . Telephone . . . The Office . . . Telephone . . . The Bank . . . Telephone', it goes on to require 'Your Dog's NARPAC Registration Number', and with a proper sense of priorities, it then moves to 'Your Servants' Addresses' (they of course do not aspire to a telephone). The next entries are for Your Lawyer and Your Clergyman – both of whom, it is taken as read, will be on the phone. And one line is interesting in being somewhat subjective – 'Your Nearest Good Chemist'.

An introduction, 'The Sheltered Life', suggests time in the shelter can develop not only its familiar routine, but also have positive aspects. The book is divided into three prime segments – Evening, Night, and Morning – with recommendations on aids for

those hours, ranging from the best ear-plugs to how to listen to the BBC, with suitable records and literature. In suggested reading, there is special mention of mystery and crime, Miss Dane quoting Plum on the genre:

Fellows who know all about that sort of thing – detectives and so on – will tell you that the most difficult thing in the world is to get rid of the body. I remember, as a kid, having to learn by heart a poem about a bird by the name of Eugene Aram, who had the deuce of a job in this respect. All I can recall of the actual poetry is the bit that goes:

*"Tum-tum, tum-tum, tum-tumty-tum,  
I slew him, tum-tum tum!"*

Riffle through the pages to 111, and you find, filling a chunky 24 pages under the general tag of 'The Frivolous Hour', that perennial PGW favourite, 'The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy', which first saw the light in *Carry On, Jeeves*, published in 1925.

Sadly, I was away from home and unable to lodge late bids for

*The Shelter Book*, the price (with dustwrapper) closing at just £12.25. The top bids to that point had come from myself and the distinguished former editor of *Wooster Sauce* – who also was away and unable to wrap up the deal. Tony Ring said rather grimly: "If we had been bidding at the finish, either you or I would have got it – but at a much higher cost."

But there is always Another Way. I rushed to AddALL Books on the Internet, and bought a copy (no wrapper) for £12, which at least satisfied my thirst for information about this curiosity.

For anyone who wants their own, *The Shelter Book*, although not listed by AdALL Books at last sight, does turn up every so often.



## For Your Information

**Back the Berkshire Latest** John Lewis has opened a brand new Food Hall by Waitrose in the basement of its flagship Oxford Street store. Berkshire pork is on sale as various fresh cuts of meat, ham and sausages. The supplier is Mr Gittus of Brandon Farm in Sussex.

**PGW on the Comedy Map** In the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, we reported on Anton Rogers's visit to the Berkshire sow Patience at Baylham House Rare Breeds Farm, filmed as part of BBC2's series *Comedy Map of Great Britain*. We are now told that the episode including P G Wodehouse will probably be broadcast in January or February 2008. When we know the exact date, it will be posted on the Society's website.

# Ten Years of *By Jeeves*

*Tony Ring writes of an interview with Nic Colicos, who reflects on the latest version of the Wodehouse-inspired musical*

In the first issue of *Wooster Sauce*, one of the principal articles concerned the Scarborough and London production of *By Jeeves*, whose run was just coming to an end. Nicolas Colicos, a Canadian actor who played Cyrus Budge III, Jnr, the only character without a PGW name, has reprised the role in a new production by Eastbourne Theatres, which played at six theatres in the south of England. Nic, one of the Society's Patrons and a staunch fan of Wodehouse's books, has always had a lot of affection for *By Jeeves*, and was delighted to join the new production soon after completing a run of over two years with the fabulous West End hit *The Producers*.

After a matinée performance at Guildford, Elin Murphy, Tad Boehmer, and I discussed Wodehouse and *By Jeeves* with Nic, in company with Bertie Wooster (Robin Armstrong) and Jeeves (Jeffrey Holland). Neither Robin nor Jeffrey had been readers of PGW's books, though both were familiar with the Jeeves series through television productions – the Fry/Laurie and Carmichael/Price series, respectively. Interestingly, both have started reading the books since starting rehearsals – not just as background character study, but out of genuine enjoyment.

Nic told us that the director, Chris Jordan, was familiar with the books and therefore had his own vision of the characters. Accordingly, he did not believe that there was a particular aura of Alan Ayckbourn's original direction over the show. We had certainly noticed an original approach to the use of props to jolly the audience along during the automobile ride and the break-in to Tottleigh Towers. He also mentioned that the whole cast thoroughly enjoyed playing the show – a comment with which Jeffrey Holland agreed (“It’s just like a family”), and which seems to be almost universal when discussing Wodehouse-related theatre with the cast. Robin and

Jeffrey showed onstage an almost instinctive appreciation of the other's work, a point which each confirmed afterwards.

Surprisingly, the audience size at Eastbourne, the opening location where the show ran for three weeks, had been disappointing. We speculated as to whether this may have been due in part to the transient nature of the potential audience – the holidaymakers – who were taking advantage of the belated British summer to spend more evenings in the fresh air. The audience at the Saturday matinée in Guildford was good, though the stalls were not quite full, and

certainly appreciative of the acting and singing skills of the cast. Nic found that the Guildford audiences had been more on the ball than those at Eastbourne, where he had heard a number of comments to the effect that the first 20 minutes or so had been quite hard to follow. (This is the part of the show where Bertie and Jeeves, mostly on their own, explain that the intended banjo concert will be delayed as Bertie's banjo has been stolen, and Bertie is advised to improvise with some anecdotes. The other characters – Gussie, Sir Watkyn Bassett, Madeline, Bingo, Honoria, Stiffy, Stinker, Cyrus Budge – are gradually introduced to the audience, after which the tempo of the show dramatically increases.) This has always led to a problem with a proportion of the critics who review it, who describe it as “a damp squib” or say the show was not funny, without going on to explain why the audience were in a perpetual state of laughter.

Nobody would ever call a visit to *By Jeeves* an intellectual exercise, despite its references to *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Agamemnon* and a *deus ex machina*, but there is always much to enjoy for the audience and, evidently, a great deal of exuberant satisfaction for the cast.



Robin Armstrong (left) and Nic Colicos (right) with their co-star, Jeffrey Holland, who is much taller in real life

Speech seemed to have been wiped from his lips, and I saw, as I had foreseen would happen, his gaze was riveted on the upper slopes of my mouth. It was a cold, disapproving gaze, such as a fastidious luncher who was not fond of caterpillars might have directed at one which he had discovered in his portion of salad, and I knew that the clash of wills for which I had been bracing myself was about to raise its ugly head.

(From *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, 1954)

# AGM and Meeting at The George

by Christine Hewitt

It was very strange not being at the Savage Club, but the Society was trying out a new venue and The George on October 30th proved to be rather good. We will return there in February.

AGM business was dealt with briskly and efficiently. Membership numbers healthy; accounts in good order; plenty of activity undertaken. Major changes have been the handover of the editorship of *Wooster Sauce* from Tony Ring to Elin Murphy and of managership of the database from David Herboldt to Joe Selfe. Officers and Committee Members were re-elected with the exception of Andrew Woodger, who has asked to stand down. This creates a vacancy for the exciting position of Website Editor. Fancy having a go? Don't be shy, talk to Hilary Bruce. We said hearty thank-yous to Tony, Elin, Joe, David, all other members of the Committee and helpers and of course Hilary for all the voluntary work that has made everything happen during the year.



Dr Sophie Ratcliffe, who is editing a new book of PGW letters, due out in 2009

After a pause to refresh our glasses, we settled down happily to listen to Oxford don Sophie Ratcliffe, who spoke to us with engaging enthusiasm about her current project, a book of Wodehouse letters that she is editing. Sophie clearly relishes the research and loves being with Wodehouseans. The audience at The George listened intently and then lobbed in a series of incisive questions, such as was Wodehouse often thinking of a possible future audience when he wrote his letters? What might have been different if Wodehouse had gone to study at university? And how will the letters be arranged? Pretty impressive we were, but Sophie has a way of drawing her audience in and making them want to take part. We look forward to the book and hopefully a further visit from Sophie at a later date.

## A Summary of the Society's Accounts

The Society has had another successful year, financially. Although there has been a slight dip in the number of members to 1,076, it remains higher than in 2005, with the number of new members averaging around 12 each month

Bank deposit interest increased this year, but this has been reduced by taxation to equal that received last year. This liability was introduced in the 2006 Budget. There has been an overall surplus from last year's events and meetings. So as not to let this be absorbed into the general running of the Society, the Committee has decided to allocate £2,000 to a future events fund.

The increase in size and the introduction of colour into some editions of *Wooster Sauce* made the total costs more than that of 2006 but is considered a worthwhile expense. Administration remains near the 2006 level, largely due to the Committee's increasing use of emails. The Society continues to be a member of the Alliance of Literary Societies. We continue to sponsor the Berkshire Pig Breeders' National Championship. The Committee is not intending to alter subscription rates.

### The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

*Income and Expenditure Account*

*Year ended 31st May 2007*

Subscriptions	£ 14,375
Surplus from meetings, events etc.	1,641
Sales of publications, <i>et al</i>	343
Bank interest	879
Donations	46
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£ 17,284</b>
Publications	£ 11,084
Administration	1,240
Insurance	510
Donation	130
Income tax	153
Sundry expenses	99
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£ 13,216</b>
<b>Surplus for year</b>	<b>£ 4,068</b>
Transferred to Events Fund	£ 2,000
<b>Balance to General Funds</b>	<b>£ 2,068</b>



## Society News

### Meetings and Wodehouse Walks

As the report opposite shows, on October 30th we met for the first time at a venue other than the Savage Club. Our evening at The George at 213 Strand was a success, and we will meet there again in February, though it is possible the Society will try a different locale later in 2008. Stay tuned for developments.

Prior to the meeting, there was a Wodehouse Walk for new members that encompassed parts of the walks for Bertie Wooster's Mayfair and Wodehouse's Early London. Though led not by Norman Murphy but his faithful wife (and your faithful editor), it was an enjoyable walk for the few who took part, and we may repeat the experience in 2008. Meanwhile, your Committee is still working on ways to make all of Norman's Wodehouse Walks available to members, whether in printed or recorded form. Again, stay tuned.

### Website Volunteers Needed

Sadly, Andrew Woodger is stepping down as editor of the Society's website, so the hunt is now on for a new editor. The task entails coverseeing the website's content and ensuring it is kept current. In addition, we are looking for people willing and able to contribute to the website in other ways, whether as reporters of events or as content writers – or both! If you have the time and the inclination to help out with updating and adding to the website, or if you are interested in becoming Website Editor, please contact

## We Remember

The Society marks with sadness the passing of two of its Patrons, who will be sorely missed.

**Ned Sherrin** (18 February 1931–1 October 2007) was born into a Somerset farming family and read Law at Oxford, where he produced student revues, one of which made it to television. After two years with ATV, he joined the BBC in 1957, and in November 1962 he produced the satirical show which was to make his name, *That Was The Week That Was*. Featuring Millicent Martin, William Rushton, Roy Kinnear, and David Frost – all hand-picked by Sherrin – it soon attracted an audience of 13 million. Sherrin subsequently worked on a series of plays and farces for TV and then branched into films. He also worked as a theatre director and in 1976 directed *Side by Side by Sondheim*. The 1980s saw the first of two long-running programmes hosted by him, 'Loose Ends' and the musical quiz 'Counterpoint'. He went on to write his memoirs and a novel, and he compiled the *Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations* in 1996. A remarkable man, he succeeded in every field of entertainment and brought out the best in all those fortunate to work with him.

**Alan Coren** (27 June 1938–18 October 2007), the son of a plumber, attended Oxford, Yale, and Berkeley. While in America, he began submitting contributions to *Punch*, and he joined the magazine as assistant editor in 1963. He remained with *Punch* for 25 years, becoming editor from 1978 to 1987. He reached a wider public as a member of the Radio 4 News Quiz team for 30 years and was equally successful in the TV programme *Call My Bluff*. He will probably be best remembered, however, for his books, delightful comic satires on every subject under the sun; *The Sanity Inspector*, *A Year In Cricklewood*, and *Golfing for Cats* are just three of many that are still a delight to read today. It was Coren who first used in print "Narmean?" and "Wosname?" for the common pronunciation of "Know what I mean?" and "What's its name?" Like Wodehouse and Thurber, whom he greatly admired, Alan Coren was one of those fortunate people who saw the funny side of anything, no matter how commonplace and dull it might appear to everybody else.

We also note the passing of Mr **Tom Mott**, who had sent Norman Murphy a photograph of the black pig of Hunstanton Hall, Norfolk, in the 1920s, when Wodehouse frequently visited there. He thus provided an important source for the Empress of Blandings. Mr Mott died in August after a long illness. The Society extends its condolences to his wife.

# Something Fresh on Audio-book

A Review by Tony Ring

One of the difficulties an audio-book reader faces when deciding how to represent his characters is that which arises when he has already recorded stories or novels in which some of those characters appear, but which were written at a later date. Where this occurs, significant changes may have been made in an individual personality, and this certainly applies in the case of Beach, the Blandings Castle butler.

In *Something Fresh*, the first book in the saga, Beach is not the homely, jovial man, willing to assist in the theft of pigs, who appears in later stories. He is a ponderous, self-centred individual concerned primarily with the medical problems of his feet or, when a new topic is required, his digestion. Jonathan Cecil, who has already read *Leave It to Psmith* and *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* for Chivers, addresses the problem by putting aside aspects of his earlier interpretation and creating an appropriate – indeed, a very appropriate – and fairly monotonous, precise tone which is easily identifiable wherever Beach appears.

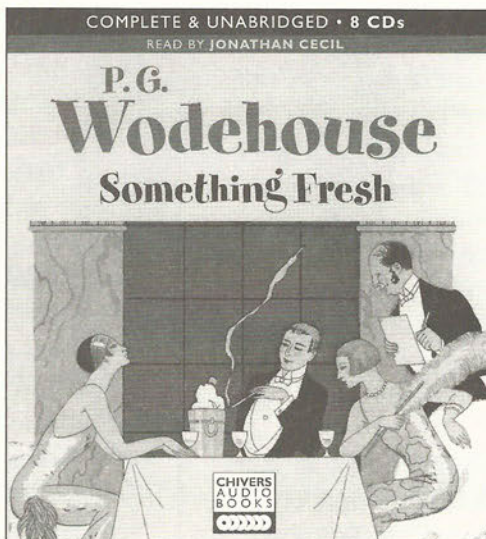
Another question which occasionally arises is that of pronunciation, often of names. Usually, the difficulty arises in relation to surnames, such as Ukridge, and more recently I entered a debate as to whether Myra Schoonmaker's name should be pronounced 'Shoon' or 'Skoon'; 'macker' or 'mayker'. Jonathan offered what seemed to me to be an original take on the Christian name of Aline Peters, who could be fairly described as the second female interest.

Having been married for a long time to an Elaine, I thought I had heard all possible ways to say Elaine,

Eileen, Irene, Aileen, Ellen, Helen, and Aline, not to mention our editor's name, Elin. But Jonathan is always original, and came up with A (as in the French *à la carte*) – Lean. I am not personally convinced that it is how Wodehouse would have envisaged it, as to

my ear it does not have the flowing rhythm and cadence which Ay-leen would provide, but I am not known for my musical perception.

An earlier unabridged recording of the book by Peter Barker contains my favourite spoonerism from any of the numerous audio-books I have heard: 'two teafoonspuls'. I listened carefully to see if Jonathan would avoid the same trap and, although in some ways it was a matter of mild disappointment, I must



report that he did.

Opinions vary as to the merits of *Something Fresh* as a typical example of Wodehouse's work, but its position as his first serial to be published in *Saturday Evening Post* assures its importance in his canon. It is appropriate that Chivers have now published an audio version, and Jonathan's rendering is up to his usual standard.

*Something Fresh*, available in cassette or CD format (CCD 1023), can be ordered from:

BBC Audiobooks  
Customer Services  
Windsor Bridge Road  
Bath BA2 3AX  
01235 878000  
[www.bbcaudiobooks.com](http://www.bbcaudiobooks.com)

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## Martin Jarvis at Cheltenham

by Tony Ring

Martin Jarvis was in masterly form at Cheltenham Literary Festival on October 7, when he read his own adaptations of two Jeeves and Wooster stories before an audience of 600 or so at the Everyman Theatre. The first, 'Fixing It for Freddie', will be broadcast on Radio 4 at 11:30 a.m. on Christmas Eve; the second, 'Bertie Changes His Mind', will be aired on New Year's Eve at 11:30 a.m. on Radio 4.

The broadcasts will incorporate snatches of mood music in the form of the 1929 melody 'Painting the

Clouds with Sunshine', and this required each reading to be precisely 27 minutes long. By modern standards, this is a relatively generous allowance for a short story, so the reductions required for the adaptations were minimal, and those that did have to be made were seamless. Probably by design, each story allowed Jarvis to speak in the voice of a child, to the undoubted delight of the younger element in the audience. Peggy Mainwaring may not be Violet Elizabeth, but in terms of Wodehouse, she is probably the next best thing.

# The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

## A Wodehouse Introduction, Preface, or Foreword

### Part 1

Avid Wodehouse fans are naturally keen to read every word written by the Master. Once such fans have diligently read all the novels, omnibuses, plays, and magazine appearances (listed in McIlvaine's bibliography in sections A, B, C and D, respectively), their attention is inexorably drawn to section E of *McIlvaine*, which provides a listing of other authors' books containing introductions, prefaces, and forewords contributed by Wodehouse.

*McIlvaine* section E lists 12 such books, and the *McIlvaine Addendum* adds another two. However, *McIlvaine's* 12 contains one item which is simply a short 'blurb' by Wodehouse (on the dustwrapper of Denis Mackail's *Romance to the Rescue* (E145)), and of the two in the *Addendum*, one is simply a reprint of an introduction previously listed in *McIlvaine* and the other is listed in error, so the true number for avid fans to track down is a manageable 11.

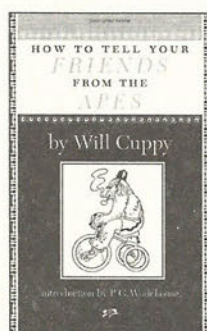
Perhaps unsurprisingly, Wodehouse's first introduction, in 1928, was to a book entitled *The Ship in the Swamp and Other Stories* (E148) by his old friend Bill Townend. ("Bill Townend shared a study with me at school. We brewed tea together, shoved in the same scrum, and on one occasion put on eighty-seven together for the fourth wicket in a final house match.") The text is more easily available in the English version of *Weekend Wodehouse* (B6b) under the title 'Old Bill Townend'.

There then followed a relative spate of introductions, as Wodehouse's fame and popularity was at its peak. In 1930 he introduced *And the Greeks* (E141), by another old friend of his, Charles Graves. ("Inasmuch as Charles Graves, in his column 'Looking at Life,' once informed two million readers of the *Daily Mail* that I had a face like a rubicund archbishop, I should prefer to devote my space to saying what I think Charles Graves looks like. I feel, however, that this is perhaps a personal matter, a thing to be threshed out between two strong men, and not of general interest to the public.") Wodehouse had started the introduction by acknowledging, "My relations with the Graves family date back to the beginning of the century". In 1901–02 he had shared digs in Walpole Street with Perceval Graves, elder brother to Charles and Robert (author of *Good-bye to All That*).

The year 1932 saw Wodehouse introducing *Bindle Omnibus* (E143), written by his own publisher, the late Herbert Jenkins, who had died in 1923. ("For myself and for all the other authors who were privileged to

drop in on him for stimulation in moments of depression, the world became a greyer place when overwork killed Herbert Jenkins.") The volume is in the same series as the *Jeeves Omnibus* and the *Mulliner Omnibus*. At 960 pages (of which only three are by Wodehouse), it occupies a considerable amount of shelf space.

In 1934 Wodehouse introduced the work of another friend and fellow humorist, Will Cuppy, in *How to Tell Your Friends from the Apes* (E138).



Wodehouse obviously esteemed the work of a fellow dog-fancier and fan of detective stories: "He is the author of the best thing said about Pekingese, viz. 'I don't see why they should look so conceited. They're no better than we are.' And he has been for so many years America's leading reviewer of detective stories that,

though he has never actually murdered a Baronet in his library, he knows fifty-seven ways of doing it and throwing suspicion on the butler. Mystery writers may befog thousands, but they cannot befog Will Cuppy. He is the man who always guesses right at the end of Chapter Two." Wodehouse had been in correspondence with Cuppy since at least 1931 (NTP Murphy, *A Wodehouse Handbook*, Vol 1, p158), and in 1933 had written to him on the subject of detective stories (*ibid*, Vol 2, p359).

The *McIlvaine Addendum* lists crime writer Anthony Berkeley Cox's *Trial and Error* of 1937 (E149), published under the name Anthony Berkeley, as containing an introduction by Wodehouse. However, neither I, Tony Ring, nor Arthur Robinson (Cox bibliographer and member of our Society) have ever seen a copy of this book containing a Wodehouse introduction, so we believe the listing in the *Addendum* to be wrong. The book was, however, dedicated to Wodehouse by Cox, and is correctly listed as such in the Dedications section of the *Addendum* (EB10 – on the very same page as the erroneous E149 entry).

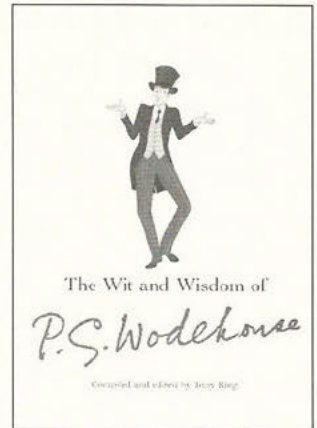
Due no doubt to Wodehouse's wartime experiences, after his introduction to Cuppy's 1934 book it was to be 21 years before he was to be asked to contribute another introduction. In part 2 of this article we will examine post-war introductions by Wodehouse.

# Wodehousean Holiday Shopping Tips

## *Witty and Wise Wodehouse*

Just in time for Christmas, *The Wit and Wisdom of P. G. Wodehouse*, compiled and edited by Tony Ring, is a corker of a book for anybody who loves reading and quoting Wodehouse (which probably covers all Society members). Containing some of the best Wodehousean gems ever compiled, this small, 120-page book is simply organized, with examples of Wodehouse wit (“We just happened to be sitting in a cemetery, and I asked her how she’d like to see my name on her tombstone”) on the left-hand pages, and his wisdom (“A woman’s smile is like a bath-tap. Turn it on and you find yourself in hot water”) on the right-hand pages. Published by Hutchinson, *Wit and Wisdom* retails for £9.99 and is available in bookstores and through online outlets such as Amazon.

*Would you like to review this book for Wooster Sauce? If so, please get in touch with the Editor (contact details on back page).*



## *Buying the Best*

Another gift to consider is Everyman’s anthology *The Best of Wodehouse*, published in June this year. With an introduction by John Mortimer, the book includes *The Code of the Woosters*, *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, 14 stories, and three autobiographical pieces. It retails for £12.99 in the U.K. and \$30 in the U.S. – a bargain! Look for the anthology in bookstores and online.

## *A Terrific Tea Towel*

The really good news is that the Society’s commemorative Week With Wodehouse tea towel is still available. Witty images of PGW sources and themes are printed in sepia and green on linen union to create a delightful image of Wodehouse’s England, as designed by Jane-Ann Cameron. Supplies are dwindling, so order yours now! The price is a mere £8, postage included.



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## *London Shopper’s Alert for Plummies*

In July this year, American Members **Tom and Betty Hooker** went shopping. Here is their report on what they found.

### *First: A Bargain*

All Drones Club members wishing to enhance their evening elegance should leave the splendour of the Burlington Arcade, cross Piccadilly, and descend into the second, lower arcade there. The haberdashery shop on the left at the lower end of the arcade offers an elegant cummerbund and necktie set in black silk with rows of tastefully rendered gray bees, with wings at rest. Jeeves, and for that matter Beau Brummel, would clearly approve. This subtle nightwear has no relation to crimson satin neckties with little horseshoes sometimes worn in the light of day. Cost? £120! But (at time of writing) – on sale: 50% off!

### *Second: Serious Stuff – Cow Creamers*

Hopkins & Jones Ltd., 7 William IV Street 2C2 off



Trafalgar Square offers jewellery comparable to the jewellery on display in the Burlington Arcade. Their display windows gleam. We carefully inspected the offerings and found two silver cow creamers, priced £670 and £925. They are both highly polished – one cow seems to smile (see photo).

## Wodehouse on the Boards

Alas for those who did not get the opportunity to see the latest production of *By Jeeves* when it went on tour in the autumn. It is hard to imagine a more light-hearted, thoroughly enjoyable take on the Bertie and Jeeves stories than this Andrew Lloyd Webber–Alan Ayckbourn musical. The superb cast – featuring Robin Armstrong as Bertie, Jeffrey Holland as Jeeves, and Society Patron Nicolas Colicos as Cyrus Budge III, Jnr – seemed to enjoy every moment they spent on stage. The plot may be confusing, but the joy is evident from start to finish. As member Louise Brooke, writing for the Society’s website, noted: “*By Jeeves* is a fun-filled romp of constant surprises, with laughter from beginning to end, toe-tapping tunes, and a script of syncopated wit and humour throughout. If it doesn’t tweak your sense of humour, nothing will.” For another view of this musical, see the article on page 15.

Alas as well that there are currently no Wodehouse-related theatre productions being staged in the U.K. However, if you live in or are planning a trip to the States, following is what is on offer there. If you go to see any of these productions, please send a review!

**November 23–December 16:** 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. The good news is that ‘Bill’ – originally cut in out-of-town tryouts – has been restored to the second act. 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).

**January 30–March 2:** In Oak Brook, Illinois, the First Folio Shakespeare Festival presents *Jeeves Intervenes*, a play adapted for the stage by Margaret Raether from the short story ‘Jeeves and the Hard-Boiled Egg’. For tickets or more information, call 630-986-8067 or see the website: [www.firstfolio.org](http://www.firstfolio.org).

**April 4–27:** The Phipps Center for the Arts in Hudson, Wisconsin, is putting on its own production of *The Play’s the Thing*. For tickets or more information, visit [www.thehipps.org](http://www.thehipps.org); or call 715-386-8409.

## Poets’ Corner *The Gourmet’s Love Song*

How strange is Love; I am not one  
Who Cupid’s power belittles,  
For Cupid ’tis who makes me shun  
My customary victuals.  
Oh, Effie, since that painful scene  
That left me broken-hearted  
My appetite, erstwhile so keen,  
Has utterly departed.

My form, my friends observe with pain,  
Is daily growing thinner.  
Love only occupies the brain  
That once could think of dinner.  
Around me myriad waiters flit,  
With meat and drink to ply men;  
Alone, disconsolate, I sit  
And feed on thoughts of Hymen.

The kindly waiters hear my groan,  
They strive to charm with curry;  
They tempt me with a devilled bone –  
I beg them not to worry.  
Soup, whitebait, entrées, fricassees,  
They bring me uninvited.  
I heed them not, for what are these  
To one whose life is blighted?

They show me dishes rich and rare,  
But ah! My pulse no joy stirs.  
For savouries I’ve ceased to care,  
I hate the thought of oysters.  
They bring me roast, they bring me boiled,  
But all in vain they woo me;  
The waiters mutter, “Foiled!”  
The chef, poor man, looks gloomy.

So, Effie, turn that shell-like ear,  
Nor to my sighing close it,  
You cannot doubt that I’m sincere –  
This ballad surely shows it.  
No longer spurn the suit I press,  
Respect my agitation,  
Do change your mind, and answer, “Yes”,  
And save me from starvation.

From *Punch*, 24 December 1902

Her eyes, which were large and dark and lustrous, like those of some inscrutable priestess of a strange old religion, focused themselves on him as she spoke, and seemed to go through him in much the same way as a couple of red-hot bullets would go through a pound of butter. He rocked back on his heels, feeling as if someone had stirred up his interior organs with an egg beater.

(From ‘Feet of Clay’, *Nothing Serious*, 1950)

# Recent Press Comment

*The Banjoists Broadsheet*, February 2005 (from Peter Gooday)

Somewhat late, but an unusual publication! On its first page it not only had articles about Wodehouse fans Stephen Fry and the late Douglas Adams, but also a comment on a sentence from *The Bath Chronicle*: “Whether playing with Bath band Daily Planet or with cats from Nashville, Leon Hunt makes a joyous sound.” The editor adds: “When the word banjo is uttered, it does not evoke a feeling of joy in the hearts of many people. Jeeves handed in his resignation when Bertie Wooster took up the instrument, and many would have done the same. . . .”

*The Times*, August 20

Golf Correspondent John Hopkins wrote about the merits of match-play tournaments, and mentioned that PGW “filled his golfing stories with characters such as Gladstone Bott, who ‘fussed about like a hen scratching gravel’, and Bradbury Fisher, who ‘lashed out with sickening violence in the general direction of the ball’”.

*The Independent*, August 22

Miles Kington wrote an article about Damon Runyon, whom Alistair Cooke had apparently claimed that American readers didn’t like because the New York he described did not exist. Kington pointed out that PGW had always been popular in America, but it had never occurred to him that Americans believed in a world where all young men had valets, fearsome aunts, and titled relatives with huge castles. So why should Cooke believe Americans took Runyon at face value?

*PlayTV Launch*, August 23

PlayTV is a TV tuner upgrade for Playstation 3. Its launch report, accompanied by an explicit illustration, explained that “it offers the ability to pause and record live TV and will allow you to record to the hard drive while watching, say, *Jeeves and Wooster*”.

*Spectator*, August 25 and September 8 and 22 (from Murray Hedgcock and Hilary Bruce)

Published letters from Alan Magid of Durban, South Africa, rebutting an earlier claim by Robert Stewart that there is “no major cricket novel” and referring, of course, to *Mike*; and from Timothy Straker of London reminding readers that Wodehouse based his book on the facts of Malvern College and the cricketing Foster brothers. These were followed by an article by columnist Frank Keating comparing *Mike* with other cricket books and agreeing it came out on top.

*Daily Telegraph*, August 31

Published a letter from Christopher Goulding of Newcastle referring to the use of the term *standee* in *Right Ho, Jeeves*.

*The Guardian*, September 1

In commenting on the fashion of seeing “colourful boxer shorts bursting from the low-slung top of your denims”, it argued that “Trousers . . . should be subject to the canons of taste, as Jeeves was constantly forced to remind Wooster”.

*The Times*, September 7

Jane Shilling included Wodehouse’s formidable regiment of aunts in a list of spinster groups through the ages.

*The Times*, September 7

In ‘Questions Answered’, David Sear of Mapperley noted that, like Conan Doyle, Wodehouse had been a good cricketer and named Jeeves after the first-class cricketer of that name.

*The Times*, September 7

In reply to a question in ‘Modern Manners’, Philip Howard wrote that “The necktie is no longer Jeeves *de rigueur* in many occupations, age cohorts and situations”.

*University Challenge*, September 10

St Edmund Hall, Oxford, sadly failed to recognise Roderick Spode as the man whose eye could open an oyster at sixty paces.

*American Heritage (Blog)*, September 13

Fredric Smoler noted that Wodehouse raised the question of British literary culture in America in a special way, as he was a peculiarly hybrid author, who from early on wrote with an American audience in mind. Smoler said that teaching Wodehouse sits happily alongside teaching Plautus

*The Times*, September 14

‘Questions Answered’ posed the question: “Who were Bertie Wooster’s parents and which parent was brother or sister to the formidable aunts?” There were two replies on September 21, from Tony Ring (who pointed out that his parents remained anonymous, but that since Agatha was born Agatha Wooster and Dahlia was referred to as her sister, they were sisters of his father) and Kenneth Wood, who added some comments about Jeeves’s relatives.

*The Observer*, September 16

William Keegan’s article about Bank of England Governor Mervyn King’s problems with the interest rates did not go into technical details, “believing, with PGW, that ‘while the conversation of the extremely wealthy is fascinating in its way, it tends to be a little too technical for the average man’”.

*The Independent*, September 26

Emily Dugan mentioned that Hugh Laurie’s band (‘Band From TV’) has been very popular on internet

# Another Christmas Carol – or a Pudding at Christmas?

by Tony Ring

One of the final short stories which Wodehouse ever wrote can be found in the omnibus entitled *The World of Mr Mulliner*, first published in 1972 by Barrie and Jenkins. In that volume it appeared as ‘Another Christmas Carol’, the title also used for its American magazine appearance, in *Playboy* for December 1970.

The theme of the story is the urgent need for Egbert Mulliner to diet, even though he is about to have Christmas lunch with his even larger (and wealthy) aunt Serena, who is likely to be offended if he does not partake heartily of the meal.

But an earlier version has recently come to light, in the *Sunday Telegraph* for December 22, 1968, under the title ‘Pudding at Christmas’. Apart from its title, and one other small amendment, this version is identical to that in the omnibus. The other change made in the book is to change Egbert’s nickname from

‘Pudding’ (which gave some point to the story title in the *Telegraph*) to ‘L Nero Wolfe’, which I had assumed had been made for the benefit of American readers of *Playboy*.

However, this was not the case. Strangely, Egbert is referred to in that version as Pudding. So why change the title for *Playboy*? Perhaps it was to con the journal into thinking it was a new item, knowing their policy of only accepting original unpublished work. The introduction was changed, as well, and there was no pretence of Mr Mulliner telling the story at the Angler’s Rest. “Beside him, Orson Welles would have looked slender” was a new observation, and a few other minor changes, either adding new sentences or Americanising the existing text, can also be found. The *Playboy* version represents a slightly polished version of the original, and it is quite surprising that it was not this version which has become the standard.

sites MySpace and YouTube, resulting in their version of ‘Minnie the Moocher’ (more funky than his piano version on ITV’s *Jeeves and Wooster*) becoming the most popular recording of the song ever made.

*Dallas Morning News*, September 28

Gave a favourable review to the Contemporary Theatre of Dallas’s production of Mark Richard’s adaptation of *Right Ho, Jeeves*.

*The Times (Books section)*, September 29

Andrew Taylor explained the difference between a good story and a plot; emphasised that good comic writing, like good crime writing, needs tight and careful plotting; and mentioned PGW’s habit of rewriting his books until he felt they were right.

*The Times*, September 29

Martin Jarvis wrote an article entitled ‘The Immortal Jeeves’ to support his appearance at Cheltenham Literary Festival, at which he was recording two Jeeves stories (see page 18).

*Liverpool Echo*, October 6

A feature about local adventure writer Brian Jacques (ex-merchant seaman, railway fireman, docker, lorry driver, stand-up comic, and police constable) mentioned that he now reads the works of Damon Runyon, Richard Condon, and P G Wodehouse.

*Inquirer (Philippine News for Filipinos)*, October 17

In an article commenting on some new writings about servants being cleverer than their masters, the author wrote: “As far as maids being smarter than their masters are concerned, that too isn’t new and original. Britain has the quintessential Jeeves . . . Jeeves is funny, and like most things that are funny offers much

truth in the form of a wicked commentary on prewar class-conscious British society.”

*Chefscatalog.com*, October (from Sharon Mitchell)

Sharon drew attention to two entries in an online catalogue for a food and catering company in the USA. (Sale prices not shown here – it is suggested that anybody checking the entries online should check the fine print of their medical insurance before doing so.)

*La Quercia Rossa Prosciutto*

Herb and Kathy Eckhouse studied prosciutto making in Parma, Italy for more than three years before moving to Iowa to manufacture the first breed-specific, dry-cured pork available in the USA. Their purebred heritage Berkshire pigs are meticulously raised, cured and aged to develop the deep red color, silky texture and flavor that the country’s best chefs have come to love. One boneless piece, perfect for home slicing.

*Pork Chops*

Mark and Rita Newman have been raising purebred, six-spotted Berkshire pigs for years on their farm in Missouri. Small-scale production, selective breeding, high-quality feed, clean pastures and precision slicing produce richly marbled meat, making these the juiciest, richest pork cuts around.

*Sunday Telegraph ‘Seven’ magazine*, November 4

‘Bound for Posterity’, an article on the Folio Society’s 60th anniversary by Joseph Connolly, included several Wodehouse mentions. The Folio edition of *The Plums of P. G. Wodehouse* rated 40th in a list of members’ top 50 favourites.

# Future Events for Your Diary

**December 24 & 31, 2007 Martin Jarvis on Radio 4**  
Listen to the Martin Jarvis readings of 'Fixing It for Freddie' and 'Bertie Changes His Mind' recorded at the Cheltenham Literature Festival earlier this year (see page 18). The first story will be broadcast on December 24 at 11:30 a.m.; the second will be aired on December 31 at 11:30 a.m. Consult your local listings or the Radio 4 website for further details.

**February 19, 2008 Society Meeting**  
After a successful meeting at The George in October (see page 16), we will return to that accommodating pub for our February gathering; the address is 213 Strand (across the street from the Royal Courts of Justice). Start time is around 6 p.m., and our speaker will be Kate Elton, who will fill us in on Arrow's plans to publish 45 PGW paperback titles in 2008. For a preview, see page 3.

**June 20, 2008 Gold Bats v Dulwich Dusters**  
Tentative date for our annual match. The fixed date with full details will be published in the next issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

**June 29, 2008 Gold Bats v Sherlock Holmes Society**  
Tentative date for our annual match against the Sherlockians. See the next issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

**July 8, 2008 Society Meeting**  
Details in the next issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

**July 23, 2008 Gold Bats at Matfield, Kent**  
The Gold Bats and the Siegfried Sassoon Fellowship will play the Matfield Cricket Club at the annual Flower Show match in Kent.

**August 3, 2008 Gold Bats v Hollywood Cricket Club**  
The Hollywood Cricket Club is visiting the U.K. in August, and the Gold Bats' captain, Bob Miller, has arranged a match on this date, commencing at 2 pm, at a venue still to be determined. The March 2008 issue of *Wooster Sauce* will contain full details about this special match.

**August 10, 2008 Gold Bats v Kirby Strollers**  
The time and place of this match will be published in the next issue of *Wooster Sauce*. (See also page 13.)

**November 18, 2008 Society Meeting**  
Details in the next issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

**October 23, 2008 Society Formal Dinner**  
For our 2008 black-tie dinner, the Society will return to the glorious surroundings of Gray's Inn. Application forms will be mailed with the June issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

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