

Hollywood Comes to England

by Robert Bruce

Plum's experience of Hollywood was distinctly bittersweet. He may have earned shedloads of money for screenwriting while there, but he didn't enjoy the experience very much. So he probably drew great solace from being in at the founding of the Hollywood Cricket Club, taking the minutes of its first meeting in 1932, and then watching the star-studded teams (everyone from Errol Flynn to Boris Karloff) disport themselves. And it was this enjoyment which was celebrated at the meeting of the Society's cricket team, the Gold Bats, and the Hollywood Cricket Club's social side, the Hollywood Golden Oldies, at Bushey in Hertfordshire at the beginning of August.

You could tell which team was which. For the first time in their history the Gold Bats were captained by Wodehouse's godson, Mike Griffith, onetime captain of Sussex.* The Hollywood stars sported the odd ponytail and an earring or two.

On a grey day and suffering a bit of jet lag, the Hollywood team batted first with its distinguished opening pair of Kamal Azeez, President of Hollywood Cricket Club, wearing a distinctly authentic pair of 25-year-old pads, and David Sentance, author of *Cricket in America 1710–2000*. Kamal was out with the score on 3, caught at mid-on, his bat cracked. "I hit it and nothing happened," he said. At 14, Sentance was run out. Shortly after this a batsman dispensed with his helmet and handed it to Umpire Murray Hedgcock, the great expert on all things cricketing and Wodehousean. Hedgcock held it gingerly. It was a baseball helmet. Meanwhile Nick Phillips, whose father had conducted the Duke Ellington orchestra at one time, set about hitting the bowling to all parts and was eventually retired with his score on 36. Roy Hooper took a stunning slip catch. Chris Read took 3 wickets for 9, and Hollywood's innings came to a close on 89.

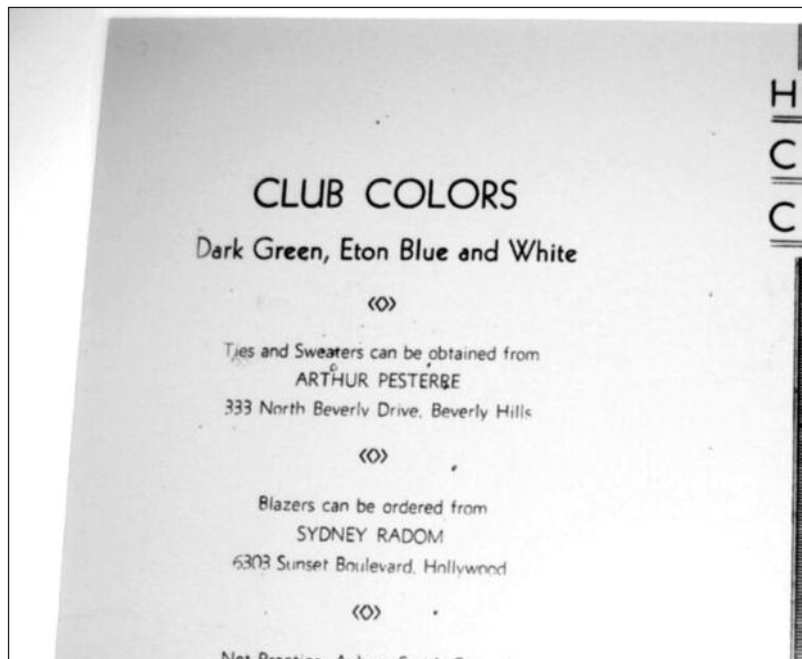


The Hollywood Golden Oldies and the Gold Bats, sunny despite the weather (Photo by Jamie Jarrett)

A proper cricketing tea, on a scale to put the fielding side at a huge disadvantage, was then taken. So imagine the shock of the Gold Bats to find themselves at 7 for 2 and then 20 for 3, both Phillips and Sentance proving nippy and full of guile. A further setback came with Umpire Hedgcock denying Richard Heard an imperious four on the grounds that the other umpire had temporarily left the field to collect an umbrella and to inspect the health of a pint of beer he had left in the scorer's box.

But gradually, as the rain fell, the Gold Bats gained the upper hand, and by the end, with Heard retired on 38 and the rain coming down in quantities that Gene Kelly might have enjoyed, the Gold Bats were home, though not dry, on 90 for 3.

The rest of the evening was spent sharing jugs of beer and talking of Wodehouse and American cricket. Hilary Bruce, Chairman of the Society, presented the visitors with a copy of a Hollywood Cricket Club fixture card from 1936, and asked if they still bought their blazers from the outfitters advertising on its front. Kamal presented her with fraternal greetings from the Los Angeles chapter of The Wodehouse Society. Murray Hedgcock gave an entertaining talk about Wodehouse, cricket, and baseball and presented Kamal with a rare copy of his book, *Wodehouse at the Wicket*. David Sentance talked on American cricket



The 1936 Fixture List that Chairman Hilary Bruce presented to the Hollywood Golden Oldies (photo by Jamie Jarrett)

and presented Hilary Bruce with a copy of his book. Literature and cricket became happily intertwined as the rain came down outside.

Finally Kamal suggested a return match back in Hollywood – *The Gold Bats Go West!* It will make the big screen yet.

* And if you're wondering about Mike Griffith's name, yes, his father named him after Wodehouse's book.



Letters to the Editor

Reactions, Questions, and Thoughts from Our Readers

From Alexander Dainty, Somerset

With regard to the recent 'Newtworthy News' (June 2008), I wonder if *The Archers* is aware that it has been given a mention in *Wooster Sauce* due to its receiving an amphibian award for its newts-saving storyline? [The Editor replies that the BBC has not come calling – yet.] Furthermore, I notice that the 'manga' article contained a picture of Aunt Agatha. I thought that the pen-and-ink drawing of Aunt Agatha contained a slight resemblance to Mary Wimbush. She not only played the part of Nigel Pargetter's mother in *The Archers*, but also the part of Aunt Agatha in the ITV production of *Jeeves and Wooster*.

From Alan Carter, East Sussex

The boxed quote on page 17 of the June *Wooster Sauce* ("My uncle George discovered that alcohol was a food well in advance of modern medical thought") reminded me of the Edgar Wallace classic in *The Face in the Night* (John Long, 1924): "There's nothing

clever about booze, except the people who sell it."

(Editor's note: Alan edits *The Edgar Wallace Journal*, and if you know your *Wodehouse*, then you know that PGW was a great admirer of Wallace, a superb writer of thrillers.)

From Robin Simpson, London

On reading Steve Griffiths' review of *Come On, Jeeves*, I was surprised that, albeit a PGW aficionado, he cannot recall any greater emotion from Jeeves than the quiet raising of an eyebrow. Granted that any such display was rare, on occasions the mask undoubtedly slipped. I cite three examples.

Following Bertie's account of the dark and smelly antique shop, the cow-creamer, and Pop Bassett (*The Code of the Woosters*), whilst as Bertie put it, Jeeves does not often smile, "now a distinct simper had begun to wreath his lips" – though he then saw that "his mirth had been ill-timed. He reassembled the features, ironing out the smile."

And on suggesting a title for Corky's new series of humorous drawings – 'The Adventures of Baby Blobbs' – Jeeves smiled paternally, or in Bertie's words, "he had a kind of paternal muscular spasm about the mouth, which is the nearest he ever gets to smiling" ('The Artistic Career of Corky').

Finally, a treasured moment when true emotion welled up from the depths ('Jeeves and the Hard-Boiled Egg'). Bertram – having grown a moustache which has cut Jeeves to the quick – calls for his shaving things.

"You mean, sir?"

"And shave off my moustache."

There was a moment's silence. I could see the fellow was deeply moved.

"Thank you very much indeed, sir," he said, in a low voice.

Editor's note: It is truly rare to read of Jeeves expressing emotion, but even that paragon among men is human. What other instances are there in the canon? Please send in more examples of Jeeves's emotional moments – if they exist.

From Eric Coulton, Denbighshire

I've enjoyed Plum's writings for more years than I care to remember – ever since I asked a friend in the sixth form what on earth was that book he was reading with the odd title. (It was *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*.) And whilst I wouldn't consider myself in any way, shape, or form an expert, I've read most of his works more than once and a number of the Jeeves/Wooster series several times. Which just goes to show that there's always something new waiting to be noticed!

It has long been my habit to keep a dog-eared Wodehouse paperback in the glove compartment of my car for use in such circumstances as motorway snarl-ups or dentists' waiting rooms, and enjoying a few such quiet moments recently with *Stiff Upper Lip Jeeves*, a little phrase towards the end of Chapter 11 leapt out at me: "No sir. Indeed I do not know what the term signifies."

Could this really be Jeeves speaking? That omniscient gentleman's gentleman declaring ignorance? The situation was a discussion between Bertie and Jeeves regarding Major Plank's prowess at Rugby football, and Jeeves, being asked by Bertie if he (Jeeves) was a prop forward, gave that astonishing reply.

So my question is this: What else (if anything) does Jeeves not know? Can anybody give other recorded instances of ignorance? Are his feet, after all we thought to the contrary, of clay? Comments to the Editor ASAP. My world is disintegrating!

The Case of the Hopping Apostrophe

by Lennart Andersson

As a relatively new member of the Society (no. 2123, actually), I would like to invite readers to muse on this question: Why does the apostrophe in the Angler's Rest appear in two different places, and on two occasions not at all? Today we mostly find the apostrophe situated as in the preceding sentence, but in other cases the denomination of the pub is 'The Anglers' Rest'.

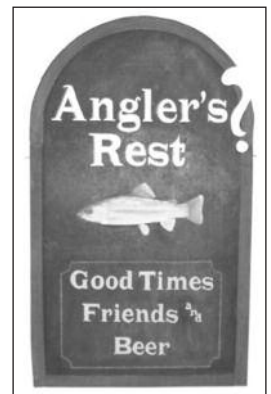
I scanned (if that is the word I am looking for) my Herbert Jenkins books (which I started to buy in the late 1940s) meticulously to assemble some facts and can now present the following statistics based on the 38 short stories where the pub name is mentioned:

- The Anglers' Rest – so called in 25 stories
- The Angler's Rest – so called in 11 stories
- The Anglers Rest – so called in 2 stories

Perhaps another reader can advise whether I am correct or not in maintaining that in PGW's Mulliner stories composed before 1935, he called the pub the Anglers' Rest, but after 1935 he changed his mind and called it the Angler's Rest – but why? The two cases where the apostrophe was not included in the name seem to have occurred during a sort of transitional process in *Young Men in Spats* (1936).

As I see it, a sign outside a pub with that sort of text equates to the 'Do Not Disturb' sign on your hotel room door to prevent the cleaning personnel from entering – or maybe PGW was just making use of author's/ authors' licence?

Editor's note: The two missing apostrophes were probably just typographical errors, but what of those hopping apostrophes? Any theories, anybody?



This sign (without the question mark) advertises Lennart's very own Angler's Rest – the basement of his summerhouse. Lennart notes that this is "much to the annoyance of my wife, who wants the space for more down-to-earth purposes".

"Cats are not dogs!"

There is only one place where you can hear good things like that thrown off quite casually in the general run of conversation, and that is the bar-parlour of the Angler's Rest. It was there, as we sat grouped about the fire, that a thoughtful Pint of Bitter made the statement just recorded.

(From 'The Story of Webster', 1932)

Who Are *Your* Favourites?

by Jeff Coates

Do you remember when you first started reading P G Wodehouse? After you had read a few books and you started to become familiar with the different stories, you noticed that characters appeared whom you had met before. Some of these characters even had the effrontery to appear in unfamiliar territory, in stories where they should not have been, and once you worked this out, then you had that ‘Eureka!’ moment. You realized that these books weren’t isolated instances of fun but that they formed part of a complete world, created by Wodehouse, where people and places overlap, and characters appear and reappear.

I’m sure that we all have our favourite characters, and I can remember hoping that Roderick Spode would appear every time I picked up a new Jeeves novel. I always felt happy when Dolly and Soapy appeared and loved reading about Psmith or Gally Threepwood.

So who are our favourites? The book *What Ho!* in 2000 told us which were our favourite novels and short stories, but who and what are our other Wodehouse favourites? If you are interested in finding out, then all you need do is let me know your choices for the following:

1. Favourite leading male character
2. Favourite leading female character
3. Favourite supporting male character
4. Favourite supporting female character
5. Favourite child character
6. Favourite scoundrel or irritant
7. Favourite song written by PGW
8. Favourite play/musical written by PGW
9. Favourite genre
10. Favourite poem by PGW
11. Character with whom you would most like to have to dinner
12. Character you would most like to romance

Email your answers to , or write to me at . I will compile the results for publication later. It’s only a bit of fun, and nobody will draw any conclusions if you tell me that you secretly fantasize about Aunt Agatha.

Two Festivals Not to Miss

This autumn there are two opportunities for Wodehouseans to hobnob with other book lovers and bask in tributes to The Master. The **Havant Literary Festival** takes place September 25–28 in Havant, Hampshire. On September 27, Tony Ring will be giving a talk on ‘The Art of Wodehouse’. The works of Wodehouse and other writers with Havant links will be discussed and celebrated at the festival.

Less than a month later, you can trek to the city where Wodehouse was born and take part in the **Guildford Book Festival**, which runs October 16–25. The festival’s launch took place on June 28 with the Guildford Big Read, which celebrated the works of P G Wodehouse by giving away hundreds of the new books published by Arrow. Author Simon Brett, now a Society Patron (see page 5), emceed the fun and games, including singing and pig racing, and the actress Prunella Scales put in a guest appearance. The Society was also present in the persons of Hilary Bruce and Norman and Elin Murphy, who saw to it that information on the Society was distributed to all and sundry. It was a smashing start to what promises to be an enjoyable book festival, which will include Simon Brett and Tony Ring among many other illustrious speakers.



Celebrated author and new Society Patron Simon Brett prepares to cut the cake at the Guildford Big Read on June 28. He joins Tony Ring and other speakers at the Guildford Book Festival, October 16–25, 2008.

(Photo by Hilary Bruce)

What a Combo

Kate Andrew writes: As I was browsing through my daughter’s copy of *Vanity Fair* and reading the Proust questionnaire at the back, I noticed a comment from Bette Midler that her ‘favorite’ writers are Nabokov and PGW – an interesting combination!

Society News

Of Meeting Venues, AGMs, and Wodehouse Walks

Good news for all members! For the foreseeable future, the Arts Club at 40 Dover Street, London, will be the home of the Society's thrice-yearly meetings. As usual, the final meeting of the year (on November 18) will include our AGM, though we always try to get through the business as quickly as possible in order to enjoy the pleasure. And in November that pleasure will include our speaker and new Patron, Nigel Rees of *Quote . . . Unquote* fame. Do plan on joining the fun!

As also noted in Future Events on page 28, another abbreviated Wodehouse Walk is planned prior to the meeting, thanks to the July Walk having been such a rousing success. All are welcome, especially those who have not previously been on a Walk; the start time is 5 p.m.

A Golf Tournament in 2009?

Plans are afoot – we hope – for a Society golf tournament next year, probably in July. If you are interested in playing or would like to be involved, please contact

Challenging Our Members' IQ

As a pastime, the Irish IQ Test is hard to beat. Remember it? The piece of paper with 'Please turn over' written on both sides?

Members who received renewal forms with the last issue might have been reminded of it when, as

requested, they attempted to transcribe their membership number from the address label onto the form, for search though they might, they sought in vain. The number wasn't on the envelope – or anywhere else for that matter – because the Chairman forgot to mention to label HQ that the numbers should be printed there.

The Chairman apologises, but claims in her defence that she does have Irish blood.

Simon Brett – Patron

Following his participation in the Society's first real tennis match (see page 20), the well-known author and sitcom writer Simon Brett has enthusiastically agreed to become a Patron of our Society. Simon also showed up at the recent Guildford Big Read and will be a speaker at the Guildford Book Festival in October (see page 4). A Patron Profile will make its appearance in *Wooster Sauce* in due course.

James Jarrett – Website Editor

More good news! After a prolonged search, during which your Committee was beginning to tear its collective hair out at the roots, a volunteer for the position of Website Editor finally stepped forward. James Jarrett – we call him Jamie – also joins the Committee and has already been immersing himself in the task of updating and redesigning the website, working closely with Chris Reece, to whom we are deeply indebted for his continued technical magic. Be sure to check out Jamie's changes and lively new content at www.pgwodehousesociety.org.uk.

A Recently Discovered Wodehouse Story!

From America, **John Dawson** reports the exciting discovery of a hitherto unknown early Wodehouse short story published in the *Washington Herald* newspaper's *Literary Magazine* of 27 February 1910. Entitled 'Providence and the Butler', it is an archetypal Wodehouse story featuring the 12th Earl of Drexdale, owner of Drexdale Castle; his cunning butler Keeling; and his lordship's son Lionel, who has come involved with a girl bareback circus rider. Unfortunately, only one page of the magazine has been scanned into the Library of Congress's newspaper digitization site (see <http://tinyurl.com/6cvov6>).

Mr Dawson believes this is "the earliest PGW story of an earl with an ancient family castle, a gruff, comical earl, a conniving butler, and a son engaged to a disreputable young woman. These elements, of course are contained in any number of later Wodehouse stories

and books." He wonders if the story was ever published in England, perhaps under another title, and says the next step is for someone to contact the Library of Congress to see if the remainder of the story can be found.

This discovery raises many questions. Wodehouse's early stories were often redrafted and developed later, and an American version of 'The Good Angel' featuring Keggs, not Keeling, as the cunning butler who provides the happy ending, appeared in the *American Cosmopolitan*, also in February 1910. In *Piccadilly Jim*, the Crockers take Lord Drexdale's house in London but, subject to further investigation, the trail seems to stop there. We can only hope that some local Wodehousean will dive into the Library of Congress soon, find the remainder of this lost treasure, and put us out of our misery.

My First Wodehouse Experience

by Steve Griffiths

It all began when I received a posting to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for three years back in the mid-1980s. I was allocated married quarters in Stanmore, North London, and therefore faced a daily commute of about an hour each morning and evening on the Jubilee Line.

Before I took up this appointment, a wise old egg at my current job told me that, faced with two hours of ‘dead’ time every working day, I could either hate every second of it and be miserable for three years, or I could put it to maximum use by reading all those classic books I had always meant to read but had never had the time.

I took this advice to heart and was soon engrossed in the likes of *War and Peace*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and *The Old Curiosity Shop* as Wembley Park, Finchley Road, and the rest passed by unnoticed. All well and good, but these were dark, tormented, stress-filled worlds. What I lacked in my daily journeys was something light-hearted to offset the rigours of MOD toil.

Then came enlightenment. A fellow inmate of MOD suggested one day that I try a P G Wodehouse novel. I had, of course, heard of PGW, but I’d never read any of his work. Just north of MOD up Charing Cross Road is a tiny side alley called Cecil Court that I knew had antiquarian bookshops. I went there next day and happened to buy a Herbert Jenkins edition of *The Code of the Woosters*. The rest, as they say, is history.

My fellow commuters must have thought me mad when I laughed out loud on many occasions as the story unwound, not least my favourite episode as Bertie confronts Bartholomew in the middle of the

night. I was hooked, and the next months saw me haunt all the bookshops up Charing Cross Road as I bought every PGW book I could find. I took the sensible route of quantity rather than quality. Why buy one first edition when the same outlay could get me 20 or more delights of a more plebeian nature?

I saw that the canon contained over 100 novels, plays, biographies, autobiographies, compilations, ‘World of...’ series and so on. Rather than cherry-pick

my way through them, I decided at an early stage to read them in the chronological order of when they were written. That way, I saw the development of characters; the growing maturity and skill of the author; the influence, muted but definitely there, of WWI and WWII, and of Hollywood; and the development of the modern world in its cars, aircraft, dress, and social mores.

Then came further enlightenment when my daughter, knowing my love of PGW’s world, bought me a year’s subscription to The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) as a

birthday present. Now I could happily access something hitherto unknown to me, namely, the research and background material published by PGW experts.

Unfortunately, current work and living in Lincoln has meant I have never been able to get time off to attend any of the Society dinners, walks, or other outings. But I have followed everything with avid interest and can say that membership of the Society has totally enriched my PGW experience.

I now own almost all the works bar those that are just too rare. I have read every one through twice. Time, I think, to reach for *The Pothunters* again!



A Clerihew Challenge

Recently **Allyn Hertzbach** was inspired to try his hand at writing more than two dozen clever clerihews centred on Wodehouse characters. Lack of space prevents us from printing the whole lot, but here are a couple to tickle the funny bone. This could start a trend – would any other readers care to dash off a clerihew or two? The best ones, and more by Allyn, will be published in future issues of *Wooster Sauce*.

Bertram Wooster,
No barnyard rooster,
Sees gloom and doom
In the role of groom.

Uncle Fred, a courteous gent
Loves to pay a compliment
To pretty girls who need a shove
Along the rocky path of love.

Clerihews by Allyn Hertzbach, 2008

Profile of a Patron

Lara Cazalet

Lara was born in London and is the step-great-granddaughter of the great man himself, a fact of which she is inordinately proud. She went to school in Dorset and then attended the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts for three years. Her first job as an actress was in the ITV award-winning prison series of *Bad Girls*, where she remained as an inmate for two series. She then went on to appear in many other TV series, including *Kavanagh QC*, *Waking the Dead*, *Judge John Deed*, *As Time Goes By*, *The Bill*, and *Hustle*. Most recently she was a cast member of *New Street Law*, in which she played Annie Quick and finally got to be on the right side of the law – thus catching a glimpse of her father’s life as a barrister!

Lara’s films include *The Only Boy for Me* (2006), *Half Broken Things* (2007), and *Lady Godiva* (2008), and she has appeared in two award-winning short films: *Cut*, directed by

Damien Rea, and *EMR*, directed by James Erskine and Danny McCullough. Her theatre credits include *42nd Street* (playing Peggy Sawyer) at the Edinburgh Festival, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Helena) at the Oxford Shakespeare Festival, and *Secret Rapture* (Rhonda) at the Chichester Festival.

Lara is a very keen dancer and has been much influenced by her father Edward’s tap dancing. She often sings with her brother Hal and can be heard singing ‘Bill’ on the CD *The Land Where the Good Songs Go*. (In fact, there are many Wodehouseans who firmly believe Lara is the only singer who can do justice to ‘Bill’.) She has also been an integral part of the entertainment at several Society dinners.

Lara wants members to know that she is deeply grateful for the enormous support the Society has given her over the years, and she is thrilled to become one of our Patrons.

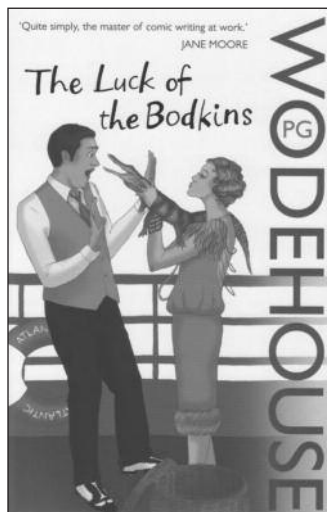


Lara in performance during the 2006 Society dinner (Photo by Ginni Beard)

Arrow Books at a Discount

Arrow Books’ release of its new line of PGW paperbacks has been a success, with 33 titles released to date; see the March 2008 *Wooster Sauce*, page 13, for a complete list of titles being published this year. You can also visit Arrow’s user-friendly website for information – and to obtain these attractive books at a discount available only to Society members.

All you need is a password, but – keep this under your hat – a different one is required for each set of titles (18 released in April and 13 in August; 11 more titles [including two omnibuses] will be published in early October).



One of the August titles

Old Home Week!

Masha Lebedeva reports that the Old Home Week in Moscow, 10–16 August, was a great success. With Wodehouseans from as far afield as the USA, The Netherlands, and France, and Russian members from as far as Ulyanovsk on the Volga, the small but happy group had a topping time. Jelle Otten was the Oldest Member, and 13-year-old Venedikt from Moscow was the youngest. They all admired the Kremlin, the Moscow Metro, and (from a river boat) Moscow itself. They visited a palace of Catherine the Great; inspected Chaliapin’s mansion and Tolstoy’s more modest establishment; and learned more about Chekhov and Lermontov. In between times, they exercised their skills at a mini-golf tournament. Throughout, there were superb group dinners with splendid feasts of reason and flows of soul. The Old Home Week showed that Wodehouse gatherings in a ‘non-Wodehouse’ country can be a success, says Masha, and “The Russian Wodehouse Society is proud to show the way.” See the next edition of *Wooster Sauce* for a full report by Jelle Otten.

Wodehouse and God

by Wendell Verrill

This is an abbreviated version of the talk that Wendell, a Roman Catholic priest – and therefore somebody who knows what he's talking about! – delivered at the Divine Providence convention of The Wodehouse Society in October 2007. The full version of this paper can be read in Plum Lines, Winter 2007.

I stand before you convicted of being in the wrong place at the wrong time – namely, at the home of David and Elizabeth Landman, where a theme for the 2007 convention was being discussed. Bud Swanson looked at me, the only clergyman in the room, and said, “How about Divine Providence?” And, only seconds later, someone said, “And Wendell can give a talk on Wodehouse and God.”

“Blast and damn their eyes!” I thought to myself while smiling sweetly. “This is going to be the shortest talk on record since every indication is that Plum was at best an agnostic.” But here we are. According to Norman Murphy and others, three of Wodehouse's four clergyman uncles did spend time in general proximity to the budding author. Thus, he would have had an inside track on the factors that are characteristic of a clergyman's life such as untangling squabbles between the altos and sopranos in the parish choir.

Norman says it was from his uncles that Plum would have picked up references to the practice of having too many orphreys on one's chasuble. I never knew what an orphrey was until I came across the word in Wodehouse, but there are a lot of these strange words in liturgical life. Until a few years ago, I firmly believed that things like narthexes and ambos, for example, were found exclusively in Anglican churches. Then a new assistant priest was assigned to me, and one of his first initiatives was to post a memo that “The Book of Gospels will be held high in procession and placed on the ambo.” Not one soul in the parish, including the pastor, knew what an ambo was. It gave rise to a certain amount of creative kidding as we gathered for Mass – “Yeah, well, put *this* on your ambo” threatened to become a battle cry in our sacristy. The ambo is, in fact, the pulpit from which the gospel is proclaimed.

Wodehouse probably wouldn't have picked up a lot of Scripture at his dinner table chats with the uncles, but he would have heard it every Sunday, perhaps several times every Sunday. Norman, Tony Ring, and others are right on target when they point out the literary rhythm and beauty of the King James Bible. That and the Book of Common Prayer were loaded with rhythmic beauty which a good ear like Plum's would pick up in a heartbeat.

And pick those rhythms up he did. There is a website maintained by a Benedictine monk who modestly omits his name but which Elin Woodger tells me is Father Rob Bovendeaard from France. The site,

Biblia Wodehousiana (<http://wodehouse-bible.com>), codifies all the references to Scripture in 92 of Plum's books. (For some reason he omits *The Purloined Paperweight* of 1967, which gives me the vapours because that is where the character J. Wendell Stickney resides. My claim to fame is that he is named after me because I had written to Mr Wodehouse in 1966 and he wrote back. Of course, I lost his letter.)

Anyway, this website is enormous; the index alone runs to 27 pages. In many of his books, Wodehouse will have 30 or 40 allusions to Scripture; *Cocktail Time* takes the prize with 52. There are 655 pages of quotes and references in the Biblia Wodehousiana and running down just a few of the pages reminds us of the incredible memory of this man who heard or read

them from childhood through college. But did he hear them as theology or literature? Or both?

That brings us, finally, to the question: “Wodehouse and God? How about it?”

Harking back to our theme, Divine Providence, we read the following lines in *Big Money*. The subject is Godfrey Edward Winstanley Brent, Lord Biskerton, informally known to his friends as “the Biscuit.”

From his earliest years the Biscuit had nourished an unwavering conviction that Providence was saving up something particularly juicy in the way of rewards for him and that it was only a question of time before it came across and delivered the goods. He based this belief on the fact that he had always tried to be a reasonably bonhomous



Rev. Wendell Verrill in Providence

sort of bird and was one who, like Abou Ben Adhem, loved his fellow men. Abou had clicked, and Lord Biskerton expected to click. But not in his most sanguine moments, not even after a Bump Supper at Oxford or the celebration of somebody's birthday at the Drones, had he ever expected to click on this colossal scale. It just showed that, when Providence knew it had got hold of a good man, the sky was the limit.

So here we have a man well versed in scripture and theology, seeming to acknowledge a higher power. Tony Ring and Barry Day in their book *In His Own Words* observe that there wasn't a lot of sex or religious moralizing in Wodehouse's school stories. His early stories reflect a personal code, indicative of a young man's developing personal code of conduct which – and this is my observation – surely was helped along by the many sermons, hymns, and life stories provided by the Church of England. Like today's young people, I'm sure the young ones of those days were just as interested in shucking off the old and forging the brave new code for the new century without realizing how much of a debt they owed to Cranmer, Gutenberg, and good old King James.

And then there is P. G. Wodehouse, who knows his way around the Church of England, Sacred Scripture, and the theatre and lively night life of London and New York. Wodehouse seems to have left behind the faith of the first two and the practice of the last. We have a man living in a world saturated with sex, booze, chorus girls, and baggy-pants comics, yet his plots are the cleanest stuff we will ever read! A man steeped in Christian practice and theology but who seems to not have been much interested as an adult. What's up?

Ring and Day have hit on something in their book *In His Own Words*. Halfway through his stint at the bank in 1901, Wodehouse contracted mumps and went off to his parents' house in Shropshire to suffer through them (the mumps, not his parents). He says he wrote 19 short stories in three weeks, "all of which, I regret to say, editors were compelled to decline owing to lack of space. The editors regretted it too. They said so." He claimed that he just wasn't yet a very good writer. Ring and Day then make this trenchant little observation:

Three weeks' intensive practice may or may not have helped his style but it may well have affected his future content. Mumps is one of the most undermining illnesses that can plague an adult male and it almost certainly left Wodehouse sterile and possibly impotent. Several of his biographers have speculated that this fact alone may account for the

asexuality of his subsequent characters and storylines.

In effect, Wodehouse may well have been, to all intents and purposes, a eunuch! And if there is anything I know something about, it is the care and feeding of eunuchs, being that I am, at least theoretically, one of those eunuchs of which Jesus speaks in the Gospel of Matthew.

At this point, I reached for my Bible, the New American version, and found that the word *eunuch* is not used. The King James version uses the word, as does the Jerusalem Bible, but the most popular Catholic translation in the United States omits the word altogether. It substitutes the term *incapable of marriage*, which is pretty high-handed. So, the hell with the New American translation.

Here's the Jerusalem Bible version – Jesus is speaking: "There are eunuchs born that way from their mother's womb, there are eunuchs made so by men and there are eunuchs who have made themselves that way for the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can." (Matt. 19:12)

You'll notice there is no mention of mumps or any other illness creating the condition, but if that is the case with Wodehouse, then I would say he overcame that obstacle quite handily. "Incapable of marriage," indeed! From 1914 to his death in 1975, he had an idyllic union with Ethel, a marriage which observers of the time would have pronounced doomed from the start. A reclusive writer and a twice-married chorus girl; a careful husband of royalties married to a spendthrift and lover of casinos. Not likely to succeed at all! Throw in the fact that they had separate bedrooms practically from the start and one wonders how this curious ménage could survive for 66 years!

But I wander from my topic. If there's one thing I know, it is eunuchry – that is to say, the eunuchdom of unmarried males. My clergy buddies and I fall into that last category mentioned by Jesus: eunuchs who have made themselves that way for the kingdom of heaven.

Yes, it is true we walked into this emasculating state with free will and our eyes open. You wanted to be a priest, you gave up sex. That was the deal. We heard that our sacrifice would make us nobler, altruistic servants of the Lord and we lapped it up like mother's milk.

This was our legacy – our history. It might well be summed up by the words Pope Gregory the Great is supposed to have written: "Sexual pleasure can never be without sin." Sometime in the 20th century, this little gem was pointed out to theologians, and the opinion came forth that it was a forgery.

Well, let's try *this* response from Gregory in answer to a question about priests who are already married when they are ordained. Gregory says, "They

should love their wives as if they were sisters, and beware of them as if they were enemies.” And this is from the one they call “the Great,” mind you!

In the 20th century it dawned on many priests and nuns that we were, in essence, cheap labour, and that celibacy was not necessarily an essential part of the mission. The 1960s and '70s saw thousands of defections, and from the '80s on, vocations dropped off to a tenth of what they were 40 years before. Listen to the hierarchy, and the life of a eunuch is some kind of pinnacle. Listen to a few eunuchs, and you might hear a different story.

The only thing good about being a eunuch was that we were taught to sublimate our base urges and channel them into other creative and altruistic goals. I would say Wodehouse certainly did this admirably.

Could it be that his enforced eunuch state caused him, like Job, to be resigned to his fate? Are we the beneficiaries of a sublimated baser nature channelled into a world before the Fall, a world of perfect English summer afternoons, birds and bees doing their stuff and peace reigning throughout?

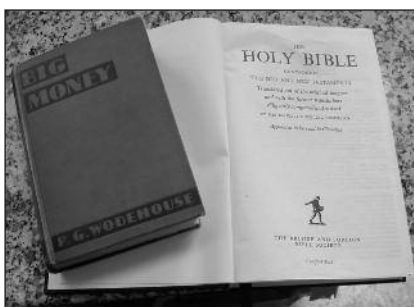
I toyed with the idea that Plum's agnosticism came from his unhappiness with his eunuch state, but it seems unlikely that anyone with as sanguine a disposition as Plum would hold a grudge for any length of time. So he probably accepted whatever fate was visited upon him and ran with it. Okay! So he wasn't mad at God. But was that because he didn't believe in God?

Wodehouse avoided conflict or confrontation. He could see both sides of anything, and this caused him trouble more than once. I wanted to find something that would testify to Plum's belief in God, but I am forced to acknowledge that we have here a man whose worldview was so mild and good-natured that if he did believe in an afterlife, he probably wouldn't object if someone challenged him on it. He had some interest in spiritualism, but toward the end of his life, the operative quote was, “I'm an agnostic. My attitude has always been, we'll have to wait and see.”

Let me finish with a quote from Owen Dudley Edwards: “When Wodehouse died, I asked a Carmelite friend of mine to remember him at Mass. He replied, ‘Well, I will, since you ask me. But in the case of someone who brought such joy to so many people in the course of his life, do you think it is necessary?’”

St. Paul in Corinthians reflects on the three greatest virtues with these words: “There remain these three, faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these is love.” P. G. Wodehouse was a man whose whole life reflected hope and love. In spite of his stated agnosticism – or perhaps as a result of it – I believe he was a person of faith as well.

I believe that it is Plum's inherent goodness, his love of his fellow men, which comes through his writings and makes us better, more noble people for reading them. It's not just the laughs we seek, it's the goodness contained in the pages. Is goodness Godliness? Well, we'll just have to wait and see.



Thrown to the Wolves

Following on Masha Lebedeva's research regarding a painting Wodehouse had seen of children being thrown to wolves to save others (June 2008), **Jamie Jarrett** points out that fear of wolves has been expressed in tales and fables in many countries over the centuries but became especially associated with Russia because of its harsh winters and large wild wolf population. In 1878 Robert Browning published his poem 'Ivan Ivanovitch', in which a Russian mother has her three children snatched out of the sleigh by wolves. Ivan Ivanovitch then executes her for not protecting them. Jamie writes: “Wodehouse was an avid reader of poetry at a young age and almost certainly would have come across this poem. Many of Browning's earlier poems are thought to be inspired by his walks in Dulwich Woods. As PGW went to Dulwich College, Browning's poems would definitely have been part of his syllabus there.”

Wodehouse and Doyle

Michael Kershaw has written from Lancashire to raise an interesting point. In the Bibliographic Corner, 'A Wodehouse Introduction, Preface, or Foreword, Part 3' (June 2008), Nick Townend mentioned that Wodehouse had written an introduction to an American reprint of one of the Sherlock Holmes long stories. “For reasons perhaps best known to the American publisher,” wrote Nick, “it was published under *The Sign of the (sic) Four* (E139).”

Although Doyle himself calls it *The Sign of Four*, Michael comments that perhaps the American publisher was right. ‘The Four’ were the group who were the essence of the story, and Michael suggests that the English shorter version was deliberately chosen by Doyle's UK publishers because it was snappier and caught the eye. He points out that the definite article in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* is clearly superfluous and would only be correct if the work was autobiographical. He concludes by adapting Oscar Wilde's dictum: “To misplace one definite article, Mr Doyle, may be regarded a misfortune; to misplace two looks like carelessness.”

Michael suggests the question might provide a useful topic of conversation for a rain interval in the next match between the Gold Bats and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London.

The Versatile Justine Johnstone

by Gus Caywood

You're too well-educated, said Marion Davies to Justine Johnstone. Marion was presumably thinking of Justine's Emma Willard prep school pedigree, Class of 1914. She didn't know the half of it.

The quote is from Guy and Plum's *Bring On the Girls*. They devote Chapter 5 to the impact of Justine and Marion, top Ziegfeld Follies beauties, on the cast and production team of *Oh, Boy!*, the biggest of the Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern Princess Theatre hits. Decidedly mixed, that impact. But Guy and Plum don't give many details about Justine herself, other than that, according to them, she was the daughter of a Norwegian sea captain and had a low, Ethel Barrymore voice. She had "that touch of aloofness, that faintly haughty carriage that seem to characterize the beauties claiming Viking ancestry". Marion Davies called Justine "too well-educated" when Justine saw right through the name Polly Andrews, the part for which she was being cast in *Oh, Boy!*: "Is that a play on polyandrous?"

(Guy and Plum's account leaves out Guy's prior acquaintance with Justine. See the *Sun* (New York), January 1916: "Guy Bolton has given a diamond ring and part of his share of *Very Good Eddie* to Justine Johnstone.")

Justine was "America's loveliest woman," in the opinion of competent judges of her time, including the artists Harrison Fisher, Henry Hutt, and Penrhyn Stanlaws. After *Oh, Boy!* she moved on to star in the aptly named 1917 Shubert revue *Over the Top*, which featured, among other things, "fifty pretty Justine Johnstone girls" and, as the finale, "The Justine Johnstone Rag". The *New York Times* review of *Over the Top* also gave brief notice to a new act making its Broadway debut in the show: "Fred and Adele Astaire dance with a grace that almost equals their agility."



Justine Johnstone as Polly in *Oh, Boy!*

Then it was on to Hollywood for a half-dozen or so silent movies. Justine and her husband, film producer Walter



Wanger, also fit in a sojourn in London, where they socialized with Plum. Then Justine returned to Broadway for *Hush Money* in 1926. *Time* magazine said: "It may be stated without reserve that Miss Johnstone is the most beautiful blond leading woman in the land. She is not the best actress, but she is easily good enough for this inconspicuous little crook play."

And then Justine called it a career and turned to something a little different. You guessed it: cutting-edge medical research.

Walter's prominent New York doctor, Samuel Hirshfeld, got enough of an inkling of Justine's untapped scientific talent to urge her to enrol in science courses at Columbia University. There she continued to impress and was recruited as research assistant for Hirshfeld and his colleague Harold Thomas Hyman in their medical investigations.

In 1931, Hirshfeld, Hyman, and Justine, with Justine carrying a labouring oar, published a groundbreaking report on the effects of speed of injection or transfusion on patients, demonstrating the need to avoid "speed shock" from introducing drugs into the bloodstream too quickly. The upshot was the modern intravenous-drip method of drug delivery which has been standard ever since. This technique was promptly applied, in turn, to achieve an historic advance in the treatment of syphilis. In other projects, Justine made significant contributions in fields such as cryogenic cancer therapy and the treatment of electric shock victims.

Justine and Walter Wanger moved back to Hollywood in 1933 and were divorced in 1938 (legal grounds: Walter was "abrupt, surly and discourteous"). One source reports that they had two sons, Justin and Oliver. Justine was continuing her scientific studies in California when, according to a 1946 magazine article, she met and married a young doctor and "vanished from the Hollywood scene". She led a low-profile life from then until she died in Santa Monica in 1982, age 87.

Mam'zelle Milliard in Distress

by Tony Ring

The 1919 novel *A Damsel in Distress* has been the subject of a greater range of dramatic adaptations than any other Wodehouse novel. In theatrical terms it is best known as a 1937 musical film starring Fred Astaire, with music and lyrics by the Gershwins. It was also adapted for the straight theatre by Wodehouse and Ian Hay, enjoying a run of 234 performances at the New Theatre in London in 1928, and a musical version, *A Foggy Day*, was produced at Niagara-on-the-Lake in successive summers in 1998 and 1999.

So it is easy to overlook its first incarnation, as a silent movie produced by Pathé Exchange and released in the United States in October 1919. The stars were June Caprice (who has the most amazing eyes), Creighton Hale, and William H. Thompson, and according to Brian Taves, there is no copy of the film either in the Library of Congress collection or, to the best of his knowledge, anywhere else in the world.

Several filmmakers were involved in multiple Wodehouse cinema productions in the early silent years. *A Damsel in Distress* was produced, directed, and adapted by Albert Capellani, whose first film, using the same stars, was *Oh, Boy!*



With this background, then, it was both a surprise and a temptation when, last autumn, an auction appeared on eBay for a film entitled *Mam'zelle Milliard*, offered as a 'Pathé Baby' and dated 1920. (This seems slightly inaccurate as the Pathé Baby system was only introduced in late 1922, the 1923 catalogue reaches number 640, and these reels are numbered 739; therefore it is reasonable to assume it was produced in 1924.) Why was it a surprise? Well, the 'Scénariste' is named as P G Wodehouse (*Roman*), and when one looks at the cast list we find June Caprice as Maud Marsh, Creighton Hale as George Bevan, William H. Thompson as John W. Marsh, and Charlotte Granville as Mrs Caroline Byng. So it is perfectly clear that not only is it a version of *A Damsel in Distress* but that it is also based on the silent Pathé movie.

What is a 'Pathé Baby'? In simple terms, this series was a form of early home movie cut down to a 9.5mm frame width, and significantly edited from the original film. The diameter of each reel is only 50mm, and each runs for no more than three minutes, considerably shorter than the full-size Pathé reels.

Some clever technical techniques were utilised to maximise the use of space. All silent movies require 'Intertitles' on which necessary text appears; in this case there were several letters tracing correspondence between the parties, which explain the plot development to the viewer. On silent films produced for the big screen, this frame would be duplicated many times, giving the viewer several seconds to read the text. But with the Baby, space was too precious, so each frame representing an intertitle was notched. This meant it would catch in the projector and have to be released by the projectionist, who would use his or her judgement as to how much time the audience needed to read the text.

Another complication was that this was a French production, and the language of all the intertitles is French, thereby making it more difficult to grasp immediately the full detail of, for example, the reproduced correspondence. Yet another was the absence of the second of six reels (which would be the one in which Maud hid in George's taxi), which rather spoils the plot for the uninitiated and reduces the film's running time to under a quarter of an hour.

Nevertheless, I was not the only mug to bid for the reels, though I am pleased to report that I won the auction and a few days later was the delighted recipient of these five rather battered reels. The next job was to investigate whether they could be recorded onto a DVD so that what remained of the film could actually be seen. And by a stroke of luck, the third person I spoke to said that when time permitted he would be able to do exactly what I wanted. As the intertitle frames were notched, to render the text visible on a DVD he had to reproduce duplicate frames so that each would be visible for several seconds, and this, ironically, was quite an expensive part of the process.

So in the middle of January my precious films were entrusted to the post going to a delightful-sounding gentleman in Ealing. On my return from holiday in mid-February, I only had to wait three days for the chance to see this edited early silent movie, rendered in French from a Wodehouse novel.

I cannot pretend that this recording, which lasts for just under a quarter of an hour, is anything other

than a curiosity, but as far as I know, nobody has been aware until now of the existence of any Wodehouse-related films in Pathé Baby format. Brian Taves has not been able to trace any, and an attempt to explore the Pathé Baby catalogue online did not find the title listed. In any event, if it was the habit to provide not only a French title but one which bore no relevance to the original title or the names of the characters, it is not surprising that one has not shown up before.



but the quality of the décor shows up equivalent settings in other films of the period, and suggests this was quite a lavish production. June Caprice is a sheer delight in the Maud character and lights up the screen with her smile. The rest of the cast embrace elements of their source material, but it is a shame that the second reel is missing.”

One clue to the mystery of the French title may be found in June Caprice’s private life. She married Harry F Maillarde, a director of several of the films she appeared in – and the male lead in at least one early film was Harry S Hilliard!

Eddie Grabham, the Society’s film expert in the UK, has seen the DVD and comments that “as a historical curiosity it is quite fascinating. Not only do we experience the early photographic process which tended to lack grey tones, giving it a true period feel,

Society Meeting in Dover Street

As the search for a new home for our meetings continued, the Arts Club in Dover Street, London, was the venue when about 40–50 Society members gathered on July 8. Prior to the meeting, eight members had also gone on an abbreviated Wodehouse Walk through Mayfair with the Remembrancer, making the Arts Club a perfect stopping point. It was perfect in other ways as well – a convenient location, comfortable surroundings, and just down the street from the fictional Drones Club. (Fortunately, it has since been arranged that the Arts Club will be our meeting place for the foreseeable future.)

After an hour or so of convivial sluicing, Chairman Hilary Bruce called the meeting to order for Parish Notices. These included some joyful tidings: a website editor has been found at last! Jamie Jarrett has already assumed his new responsibilities, and consequently members will see some major changes taking place on the website. Our search for a new treasurer has also turned up a couple of tantalizing possibilities, so it seems Alan Wood can breathe a little bit easier.

Also in the Good News column is the acquisition of two new Patrons, Nigel Rees and Simon Brett. The latter had attended (on June 7) a real tennis match at Hatfield House in which our cricket team, the Gold Bats – playing real tennis, I must point out – lost to the Brigands. (If you don’t know what real tennis is, see Paul Rush’s report on page 19.) When playing their proper game, however, the Gold Bats fared somewhat better; see our cricket reports on pages 1 and 14–15.

After announcing future events (see page 28), Hilary introduced our guest speaker: PGW biographer David Jasen in a return appearance. This time around, David impressed us with an account of Wodehouse’s career in the theatre: Plum wrote 33 musicals, 18 straight plays, and the lyrics to more than 200 songs. His lyrics, according to David, cannot be surpassed by other lyricists, and the years 1917–27 can be considered the ‘Wodehouse Decade’. After recapping Wodehouse’s career, David noted the influence of Plum’s theatrical work on his books, and vice versa. With regard to Wodehouse’s adaptations of Ferenc Molnár’s work, most famous being *The Play’s the Thing*, David said, “Plum should have been made an honorary Hungarian.” For all of Wodehouse’s light-hearted humour his theatre work was tremendously important to him, and “he was very serious about this aspect of his career”. It was a fascinating talk that, as Hilary noted, provided “terrific insight” into Wodehouse’s work in the theatre. The meeting over, we continued to sluice and chatter for some time before finally drifting homewards – or staggering in some cases.



Ever-informative David Jasen

Cricket, Cricket –

The Gold Bats v. the Dulwich Dusters

Friday, 20 June

Reported by Ian Alexander-Sinclair

What more suitable setting could there be for the Gold Bats to show what they were capable of than the Dulwich College pitch, with Charles Barry's palatial buildings to the east and the Clump to the north opposite the imposing 1934 pavilion. The Gold Bats' Bob Miller won the toss and elected to bat. Under the lightest sprinkling of rain, the Dulwich Dusters took the field, revealing an undeniably younger team and a secret weapon, Clare Malloch, making her debut at the game.

Oliver Wise set the tone with a 4 to square leg off the second ball, and by the end of the second over, 18 runs were on the board. The openers had reached 34 when Mark Wilcox was caught and bowled. Tricky underarm bowling now slowed the run rate, and shortly after Wise retired, Richard Heard was well caught by John Carroll off Malloch. Then Phil Mellon, after a sprightly 12, fell victim to the Malloch underarm. Soon Julian Hill retired, following a masterly innings, his final shot a fine 4 off Casson. Mike Savage was stumped first ball but – amid some confusion, and in what briefly appeared a classic Grace moment – was permitted to continue. At 103 from 17, the score was boosted by 14 off the next over, including overthrows. With Miller and Savage not out, the Gold Bats achieved a respectable 127 for 4, with two retired, helped by 27 extras.

It was time for that high point of all amateur cricket matches – tea. Elaine, Hilary, and Elin produced a wonderful array of sandwiches, cakes, and strawberries and cream which almost defeated the 22 players and numerous hungry spectators. Concentration on devouring this, surrounded by oak panels displaying the names of past Dulwich players, including Wodehouse himself (1899–1900), A.E.R. Gilligan (1911–14), later to captain England, and Trevor Bailey (1938–40), delayed the realisation that rain had set in outside. Soon the covers were out, and for the first time in this fixture's history, play sadly had to be abandoned. The effect on the Gold Bats' opening bowlers, Robert Bruce and Paul Rush, had to be left to the imagination. By way of small consolation, the bar promptly opened, and the excellent view from the pavilion balcony could be enjoyed. By seven o'clock the rain had vanished.



The action near the Clump (Photo by Tony Ring)

Those Plucky Sherlockians Try Once Again

Sunday, 22 June

Recorded by Murray Hedgcock

You have to hand it to those pertinacious Sherlockians. Year after year, we thump them at our annual match in the charming setting of West Wycombe – or if in kindly mood, allow them an honourable draw. And 12 months later, back they come, seeking to salvage the fading honour of poor old Holmes by recording a rare victory.

So yet again on June 22, we tried conclusions on a gusty but dry day. The opposition once more had come up with a young, rangy pace bowler in Alex Edmundson, the sort to make our more rusty members feel slightly uneasy. But your umpire struck the first blow. Apparently not fully briefed on the Laws

(Photos by Tony Ring)



applicable to 1895, under whose conditions we play, Alex was horrified to be told that the front-foot No-ball law did not apply, and he had to ground his back foot behind the bowling cease.

“How can anyone bowl that way?” he inquired anxiously. The answer was simple: “All cricketers did it for something like a hundred years,” he was firmly informed. To his credit, he gritted his teeth – and managed.

The Gold Bats went in first. Mark Wilcox and Julian Hill left early, but Andy Chapman made a cultured 35, and the score mounted steadily. The attack was – almost literally – crippled when the Sherlockians' Jonathan Lewis twisted his feet and crashed to the ground in pain, necessitating an ambulance to take him to

And More Cricket!

Stoke Mandeville Hospital. The burly Chris Read had obviously left a distinct impression in earlier games, and as he came to the crease, the mutterings could be heard – “He’s a hitter.” Chris hit just 16 this time, before suffering the indignity of going lbw to the Sherlockians’ skipper Peter Horrocks, bowling lobs (the underarm deliveries required of at least one bowler on either side).

Peter grabbed a second wicket when he had Paul Rush nicely taken off a skier at midwicket by the substitute fielder – theoretically the Bats’ 12th man! This was my 12-year-old granddaughter Georgia Isaac, whose role as replacement for the injured Lewis had kindly been approved by Captain Bob Miller, and who hugely enjoyed her day.

Bob declared at 139 for 7, leaving a victory target of a run a minute, but the Sherlockians were soon in trouble as the skipper took two quick wickets. Damaged but brave, Jonathan Lewis limped out on



his return from hospital, his runner complicating the game a little as batsmen, umpires, and fielders struggled to make sure the right man was doing the right thing in the right place at the right time.

Wickets fell steadily – Chris Read grabbed three – but the Sherlockians were building a potentially winning score when a poor call by his partner, and an inspired return from the deep, saw Alex Edmondson run out for a hard-hitting 30. The batting side more or less shut up shop from that point. Despite noisy barracking from teammates who felt the pair could push the score along, Captain Peter and Andrew Levison played out time, to finish 16 runs short of victory, with 3 wickets in hand. The game was declared a draw.

A good day indeed – and have we ever had anything but?

The Gold Bats Season Summarised by Stephen Fullom



The Gold Bats began the season in June with their annual match at Dulwich College against the Dulwich Dusters. Batting first, the Gold Bats had scored 127 for 4 wickets before the tea interval, but while the players were digging in to the sumptuous tea provided by the ladies of The P G Wodehouse Society, a heavy downpour of rain occurred. Although the sky soon cleared, the groundsman decided that the match could not continue, and for the first time on record the match had to be abandoned.

We had a brighter day at the West Wycombe ground for the match against the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. The Gold Bats scored 139 for 7 wickets, while the Sherlockians managed only 124 for 7 wickets – a draw.

In July we played the Charterhouse Beaks & Intellectuals on the fine school grounds. Charterhouse scored 90 for 8 wickets, and the Gold Bats replied with 91 for 7, Archie Hill scoring 26. Our team was ably assisted by 11-year-old George Lewis, grandson of PBH May.

In August we played the Hollywood Golden Oldies, who were touring the UK for the first time. Our side on this occasion was captained by Mike Griffith, the ex-Sussex player and a godson of PGW. The Golden Oldies are an offshoot of the Hollywood Cricket Club, of which Wodehouse was a founder member. Hollywood were all out for 89 runs. The Gold Bats knocked off the runs for the loss of only 3 wickets.

The last match of the season was played in the grounds of Audley End House. The delightful setting inspired our batsmen in scoring 158 runs for the loss of 7 wickets. Savage and Walker both retired, having scored 25 runs according to the rules. The Kirby Strollers in reply were all out for 69 runs, Walker taking 3 wickets for only 7 runs. The Kirby Strollers, who are a Freemason side, were able to raise a significant sum for charity from this match.

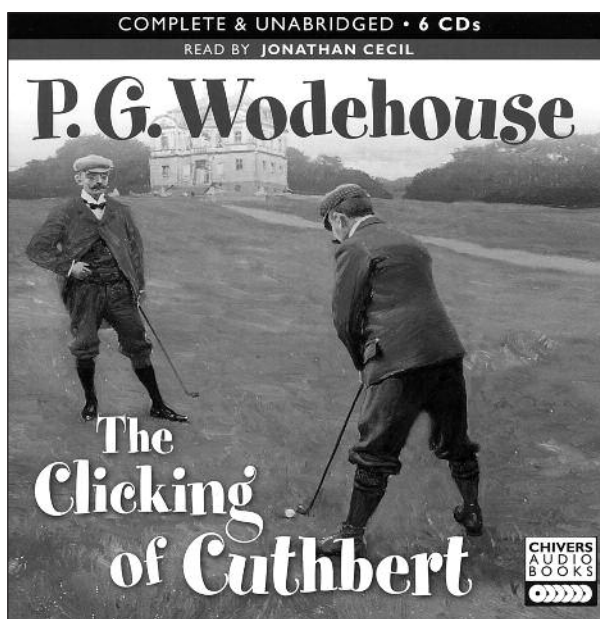
In July, several members of the Gold Bats teamed up with the Siegfried Sassoon Society to form the George Sherston’s XI to play Matfield in the annual Flower Show Match. Matfield scored 165 for 8 wickets. In reply, the George Sherston side scored 168 for the loss of 2 wickets. Edmund Blunden’s grandson and namesake opened the batting and scored 49 runs. Fellow opener Andrew Chapman was inspired by the occasion to score 79 not out.

Two Splendid Audio Books

A Review by Tony Ring

Editor's note: Tony sent this review quite a while ago, but space did not allow printing it until now. The two audio books are thus already a year old – though still well worth listening to, of course!

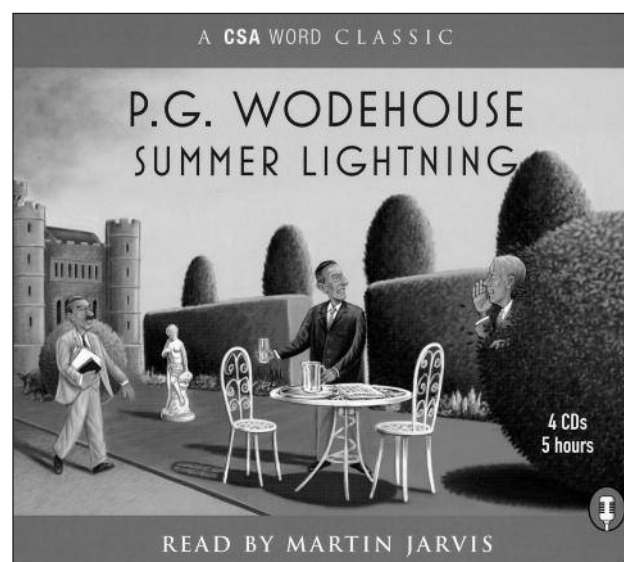
The *Clicking of Cuthbert* is the first of the two golf collections which Jonathan Cecil has recorded, although he has narrated two Oldest Member stories in *A Few Quick Ones*. I listened to the recordings shortly after hearing Masha Lebedeva take the part of Vladimir Brusiloff in the live readings during the Week With Wodehouse, and at the American Society Convention. So I can say with confidence that Jonathan fairly represented one of the most startling of the minor characters in Wodehouse's oeuvre and, that challenge out of the way, he settled down to give his usual streamlined performance. If you enjoy the golf stories, and live 20 miles or so from your regular course, this is just what you need to listen to in the car to prepare you for your weekly match!



The second audio book recently published is another in the series of abridged recordings by CSA Telltapes. I understand that *Summer Lightning*, read by Martin Jarvis, was to be followed by *Heavy Weather* in June 2008 and *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* in the autumn.

Because most professional readers read at more or less the same pace, it can be instructive to compare the running times of abridged recordings to determine the extent of the abridgement. As a marker, the Chivers Audio unabridged recording of *Summer Lightning* (read by John Wells) lasted 7 hours, 22 minutes. An

abridged reading by Ian Carmichael for BBC Enterprises in 1988 took just three hours. The four CDs of the new CSA production run for five hours, providing a considerably more comprehensive text than the BBC version.



So one can have confidence that this will be a sound abridgement. Many members, I hope, will have heard Martin Jarvis read Wodehouse stories, either during the Week With Wodehouse or on Radio 4 on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve, when the two Jeeves stories he recorded live at Cheltenham Literary Festival last year were broadcast. They will know that he can be utterly trusted to deliver Wodehouse's lines in such a way that you can envisage all the characters, old and young, male and female.

And this recording contains a gem, a cameo of the reader's art. When he reads out the letter which the disreputable Baxter had written to Sue Brown (masquerading as Miss Schoonmaker) claiming his tumble from the library window to have been an accident, the reader knows instinctively that Baxter would be much happier as a spin-doctor in today's public life, passing off falsehoods with the cheery insouciance of a budding politician. You might almost be tempted to check the internet to see whether he had already been adopted for a parliamentary constituency!

Both recordings, in their different styles, are thoroughly recommended.

The Clicking of Cuthbert; BBC Audiobooks; 01225 878000; www.bbcaudiobooks.com/libraries

Summer Lightning; CSA Telltapes Ltd; 020 8871 0712; www.csaword.co.uk

Profile of a Committee Member

Alan Wood

Sharing his alphabetical disadvantage with Wodehouse and showing early signs of bean-counting, Alan came late to the great writer. He joined the then-excellent Highams Park Library, junior section, as soon as he was able and, being issued with two tickets, worked his way from Aesop, skirting Enid Blyton, to Percy Westerman, via W E Johns and Arthur Ransome. Having persuaded his father to lend him one of his adult section tickets, Alan went on to adventures from John Buchan and Leslie Charteris. Spending some time with Richmal Crompton, then strangely shelved as adult reading, he gradually worked through to PGW, where he has since remained, except for excursions into the world of James Thurber, A P Herbert, A G Street, and Fred Speakman (a former teacher at his school).



It was not until the very late 1960s that Alan started to buy copies of the Master. One lunchtime,

visiting Foyles in the days when it was an exciting bookshop, he found that they stocked everything by Plum from *Full Moon* and even two or three pre-war editions – some at the original issue price. It took two visits. After that, Foyles became a regular stop on visits to London, along with bookshops throughout East Anglia, where he was working at the time.

In 1998 Alan discovered the Society and quickly joined. When Nick Townend stepped down from being the Treasurer in 2003, Alan was approached to take over from him. Flattered and rather honoured, he agreed and has been in office ever since, though at the time of writing there were strong hints of impending desertion from his post. Alan enjoys taking part in Society

activities from cricket matches to last year's Week With Wodehouse. In his spare time he is still involved with bean-counting and responding to the demands the Inland Revenue makes of several of his friends.

Bertie's Uncles George: The Final Word

If the headline is giving you a sense of *déjà vu*, well, no wonder. In our December 2007 issue, **Charles Gould** mused on just how many uncles named George Bertie Wooster had and concluded that there was “no sich a person” as Uncle George Travers. This was followed in the June 2008 issue by a response from **John Fletcher** (Wooster family genealogist), who gently disputed Charles's research into the matter, suggested a copy of *Burke's Peerage* might help, and noted that “Uncle George Wooster and Uncle Tom Travers” were one and the same.

As was to be expected, John's article elicited a response from Charles, which was sent on to John, who replied via your Editor, who was now feeling like a spectator at a vigorous tennis match. I will therefore summarise the discussion and thereafter banish the players from centre court.

Both arguments seem to hinge on two versions of ‘Clustering Round Young Bingo’, one appearing in *Carry On, Jeeves* and one in the *Jeeves Omnibus*. Charles lobbs the first ball: “Uncle George and Uncle Tom *both* appear in *both* versions. . . . Moreover, Uncle George is indisputably a Wooster, the brother of Agatha and Dahlia, while Uncle Tom Travers is . . .

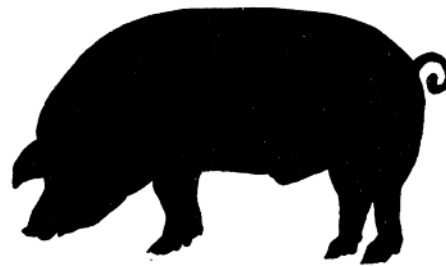
well, a Travers, and the *husband* of Dahlia. . . . Mr Fletcher *meant* to say: ‘Uncle George *Travers* and Uncle George *Wooster* were one and the same’, even though PGW himself got it wrong once – thus proving again what Ogden Nash said of Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes: ‘Great minds forget alike.’”

There was more said on the issue of Pop Stoker and how many daughters he had, but that gets away from the Uncle George issue, to which John returned in his response. Lobbing the ball back, he suggested that Charles consult the *Millennium Wodehouse Concordance*, vol. 6 (*Wodehouse in Woostershire*), specifically referencing pages 132–33, It's All Relative: Wooster; 260–61, Uncle Henry – Did Bertie have one or two?; 261–62, Uncle James – Did Bertie have one or two?; 262–63, Uncle Percy – Did Bertie have one or two?; and 274–75, Who was Lord Yaxley?

This, of course, does not help those readers who do not have the *Concordance* on their shelves (and why don't they?), but perhaps they can borrow a copy at the library. For myself as umpire, I'm calling it a draw. The two players may now withdraw to the Emsworth Arms and sort it all out over a couple of mugs of G. Ovens's home-brewed beer.

Stealing Will Self's Pig

by Julian Gough



Editor's note: The popular Irish novelist Julian Gough is a dedicated Wodehousean without peer; as this article demonstrates. Earlier this year, he was in contention for the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize but lost to Will Self under decidedly suspicious circumstances. This prompted him to take the action he describes below – and to videotape himself committing his crime, of which he hopes Wodehouse would approve. The video can be viewed on Julian's blog site at <http://tinyurl.com/58ck7g>.

It is not often an author is driven by circumstances to steal another author's pig, but recent scandalous events forced my hand.

Some of you will recall my glee when I was short-listed for the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize a few weeks ago, alongside such old and new stars as Alan Bennett, Will Self, Garrison Keillor and Joe Dunthorne.

A noble prize, previously won by books such as *Vernon God Little*, and *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*, the winner is showered in champagne and given a pig at the Hay-on-Wye literary festival in Wales, just over the border from England. (You don't get to keep the pig, but they name it after your book, and take your photo with it, to the great amusement of future generations.)

You can imagine then my dismay when I discovered, shortly afterwards, buried in the small print of the Hay-on-Wye festival programme, the odd phrase "*Will Self, winner of the 2008 Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize.*" Winner? WINNER?!?!?!?

As the festival program had gone to print before the short list was announced, this meant that the prize committee had picked the winner before they had announced, or perhaps even picked, the short list. It was a stitch-up. But worse, I had been denied my rightful month of anticipation, tingling, hiccups and giddy excitement.

Also I'd put serious money on Alan Bennett to win. His *The Uncommon Reader* is a little masterpiece. Something had to be done.

I thought long and hard. The prize is named after that comic god, P. G. Wodehouse, inventor of Jeeves and Wooster. What, I thought would Wodehouse have done, faced with such provocation? Sat in his room and written another comic novel, probably. That's how he reacted to everything, including World War II. As I was already sitting in a room writing a comic novel this wasn't much help. Action was called for, dash it. So I asked myself, what would P. G. Wodehouse's greatest creation Bertie Wooster do, nobly backed by

the genius of his manservant Jeeves?

And the answer came to me as in a vision – as though the ghost of Wodehouse himself whispered in my ear – he would steal the pig.

For if there is one constant in the work of P. G. Wodehouse, from *Pigs Have Wings* to 'Pig-Hoo-o-o-o-ey!', it is that God put pigs on this good green earth to be kidnapped. Not a chapter goes by without somebody chloroforming Lord Emsworth's favourite sow, The Empress of Blandings.

And thus I made my way to the Welsh borders and, with the assistance of my trusty gentleman's gentleman, Jeeves (not his real name, but he would like to remain anonymous for some reason), I stole Will Self's pig.

I sent the organisers this, ah, pignapping video, containing my ransom demands. Tense negotiations continued up until the last minute. They, understandably, did not wish to give the prize to the man who had stolen their pig. I offered, as a very reasonable compromise, to deliver the pig to Alan Bennett's door in London if they would re-award the prize to him. They balked – Will Self was in the program – his angry fans, denied, might rampage, torching tents, incinerating Gore Vidal in his invalid chair . . . The intervention of a bishop almost led to a compromise candidate (Joe Dunthorne), but we ran out of time.

This, of course, left them one pig short for the prize ceremony. And thus it was that, as you may have read in the *Guardian* and *Bookseller* over the weekend, Will Self was not awarded his pig. I was wondering how they would get over this, and so I attended the ceremony in disguise. The organisers, rather anticlimactically, pretended an outbreak of pig disease had kept the pig away, and they showed a video of a pig instead.

And so the situation rests. The pig is in a safe place, and receiving the best of care. For now.

It is to be hoped that the organisers of the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize will give in to my very reasonable demands and re-award the Wodehouse Prize to Alan Bennett. Otherwise, I'm afraid they will get their pig back sausage by sausage.

Harsh, I know, but when you mess with the affections of six comic novelists, somebody's going to get hurt.

Posted on Tuesday, May 27, 2008; reprinted with the kind permission of Julian Gough.

The Nodders versus The Brigands

Reported by Paul Rush

On June 7, members of the Gold Bats, captained by Jonathan Fisher, played real tennis against the Brigands, a peripatetic team run by Richard Williams; both captains are long-standing Society members. The match was played at Hatfield House.

There is no doubt that Plum was aware of the game of real tennis; there was, after all, a court at Fairlawne, his stepdaughter Leonora's home. However, no references to it appear in his writings.

Real tennis is played like lawn tennis over a net but in an unconventional indoor court resembling the monastic cloisters where it is believed to have originated. Like squash, the walls come into play and the strategy involved resembles chess. The game is played with a wooden racket and handmade balls, which are harder and heavier than the more familiar lawn tennis balls.

It was with some trepidation that I set foot on the court – my first experience of real tennis. The club professional was excellent, giving me a basic grounding in the 45 minutes available. I was then thrown into my first game. Elsewhere this has been described as “friendly and competitive”. To be involved was ultimately a fun albeit confusing experience punctuated by phrases like “chase more than a yard, worse than the last gallery” and unexpected (to me at least) changes of end. My thanks



The gang at Hatfield House (photo from Hilary Bruce)

to Tony Ring for his patience, advice, and guidance throughout.

The Brigands having been duly declared the overall victors by six games to one, the teams shared an evening meal, the highlight of which was a witty speech from Simon Brett. Simon twice delighted the Society members present – first, by accepting an invitation to become a Patron; and second, inadvertently giving your team its name by quoting from the short story ‘The Nodders of Hollywood’.

Thanks must go to Jonathan and Liz Fisher for all their hard work in organising the event. The Nodders will be back . . .

Wodehouse on the Boards

Productions of Wodehouse shows seem to have slowed at the moment, but the Durham Dramatic Society will be performing *Come On, Jeeves* at the Durham City Theatre (Ireland), November 23–29. For tickets, phone 0191 3847641, or go to the website at <http://www.durham-city-theatre.fsnet.co.uk/>.

Over in New York, Musicals Tonight! have announced their 2008–2009 season, which will include *The Cabaret Girl*, the 1922 musical by Wodehouse and Jerome Kern; for more information, see <http://www.musicalstonight.org/>. The plot of the show, which will be making its New York debut, is described as follows: “The producers of *The All-Night*

Follies act as cupids and try to bring together an ordinary working girl and her high-born ‘intended’ against the wishes of her family – and succeed.” If you plan to see this production, please send a review to the Editor.

Though knowledge of this production came too late to include in the June issue, it is worth noting that the Ottawa Fringe Festival in June included a show called *Wooster Sauce*, produced by By the Book Productions and described as “fringe veteran John D.Huston’s take on Bertie and Jeeves”. If any of our Canadian members happened to catch this show, please let us know how it was!

John Lithgow Flits By

by David McDonough

In March 2007, Symphony Space in New York City presented *A Celebration of P. G. Wodehouse*. The highlight of the evening was a reading of ‘Uncle Fred Flits By’ by the eminent John Lithgow, one of Broadway’s most prominent actors; he has won two Tonys, most recently for *Sweet Smell of Success*, has been nominated twice for an Oscar, and won three Emmys for his TV role on *Third Rock from the Sun*. Emboldened by his success last year, Mr Lithgow returned to New York this spring with *Stories by Heart* at Lincoln Center’s Mitzi E. Newhouse Theatre. A few Wodehouseans, Amy Plofker and I among them, were privileged to be present at the April 27 performance.

Seated onstage in a comfortable chair, Mr Lithgow began by reminiscing about his grandmother, Ida Lithgow, who entertained her grandchildren with the poetry of her youth. As proof, Mr Lithgow offered up the Oliver Wendell Holmes saga of ‘The Deacon’s Ride, or the Wonderful One-Horse Shay’. In Mr Lithgow’s hands, it breathed new life, and I vowed that I would willingly spend the whole evening listening to him recite poetry. But there was a bigger treat in store.

The Lithgows led a somewhat nomadic existence when young John was growing up; his father, Arthur Lithgow, was an actor, director, and theater producer. Sometimes there was money in the bank, and many times there was not. But there were always stories. With the children surrounding him, Arthur Lithgow would pull out *Tellers of Tales*, an anthology edited by W. Somerset Maugham, and as John remembered it, he

and his siblings would clamor for ‘the funny one’. That, of course, was ‘Uncle Fred Flits By’.

Many years later, Arthur Lithgow was seriously ill. One night his son began to read ‘Uncle Fred Flits By’ aloud. Halfway through, he heard a sound that hadn’t reach his ears in some time, and that he thought he might never hear again. His father was laughing. Arthur Lithgow began to rally, and lived another two years.

When I say that John Lithgow read the story at Lincoln Center, I lie. He has committed the story to memory. Whether on his feet, ringing the front doorbell of The Cedars, or seated on the chair with a disdainful expression as he impersonated the woman Connie, or back on his feet again in the role of Pongo impersonating a vet, tapping his teeth with a pencil and trying to smell of idoform, diving behind an imaginary settee in full Pink Chap mode, or giving a superb imitation of a parrot looking offensive, Mr Lithgow delivered an energetic, hilarious, and true-to-its-source telling of the tale.

At press time, there were no known plans to take this show to other venues, or to record it. We can always hope, however, and we can earnestly entreat Mr. Lithgow: never stop reading stories. And always read the funny one.



Funny man Lithgow

Tales of Two Society Patrons

Boris Johnson made two oblique references to well-known Wodehouse subjects on television in August. On the 20th, in the recorded BBC1 programme *Who Do You Think You Are?*, he mentioned that while at school he had won a prize for scripture knowledge; and on the 22nd, in a live interview on the News from Beijing, he suggested, tongue-in-cheek, that a suitable mascot for the London Olympics in 2012 would be a great-crested newt.

Sister (and author) Rachel Johnson got in on the act in the ‘They’re reading . . .’ column of the *Times Book Section* on July 12 by naming *Right Ho, Jeeves* as the book she was currently re-reading.

For 27 years the National Film Theatre has held an annual showing of old cricket films from its archive. Traditionally it opens with a bit of audience participation. A packed house watches what is believed to be the oldest bit of cricket film in existence: a minute’s worth of the great English batsman Prince Ranjitsinhji practising in

the nets just before the first Test match in Sydney in 1897. There is, of course, no sound. So each year a distinguished member of the audience is asked to step forward and, with a bat and a rounded piece of wood, attempt to synchronise the sound of bat on ball with the silent shots of Ranji in the film. The identity of the surrogate batsman is kept secret each year. So imagine one Wodehousean’s surprise and pride when this year **Murray Hedgcock**, author of *Wodehouse at the Wicket* and good Australian egg, was summoned to his place on the stage. Robert Bruce reports that “his timing of the appropriate thwack was perfection and resulted in tumultuous applause”.

And Ian Jackson writes that cricinfo.com have just included a review of *Wodehouse at the Wicket* as part of a series on the better sort of cricket book (see <http://tinyurl.com/6ku8yt>). Says Ian: “I saw a copy for sale for £25 earlier this year and I think the book is one of the few profitable investments I have made.”

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

Jan Piggott's History of Dulwich College

Jan Piggott is uniquely qualified to write the history of Dulwich College. He joined the staff at Dulwich in 1972; was Head of English for 10 years from 1980; was Keeper of the Archives from 1995 until 2006; and has published on Dulwich's two most famous old boys, contributing essays on Wodehouse's school days and school stories in *Wodehouse Goes to School* in 1997 and producing *Shackleton, the Antarctic and Endurance* in 2000.

Quite simply, Jan has written the definitive history of Dulwich College. Touchingly, he dedicates the book to Alleynians, past, present and future, and in memory of three men who had a profound impact on Dulwich, two of whom will be known to Wodehouseans. William Duff Gibbon (1880–1955) was in the first XV for four years, being captain for the last two. He fought in the Boer War, took a degree at Oxford, and then taught at Dulwich from 1904 to 1922, with a break for the First World War, when he was mentioned in despatches four times and awarded the DSO and MC. In a letter to Richard Osborne, Wodehouse wrote, "If only I could have got Scotty Gibbon, the greatest captain of football ever seen at Dulwich, to see eye to eye with me, I should have been in the football fifteen as early as 1897" (*Wodehouse at Work to the End*, 1976, p50).

McCulloch Christison (1880–1972), another of Wodehouse's contemporaries, was the longest-serving College Governor, Secretary of the Alleyn Club from 1906 for 61 years, and Treasurer of the Old Alleynian Football Club for 59 years. He also compiled the college War Record for each world war. By 1932, *Windsor Magazine* was describing him as "the world's keenest man on his old school". Wodehouseans will know him as "Slacker", referred to in many of Wodehouse's letters to Bill Townend.

The history's 12 chapters take us from Edward Alleyn and the college's foundation in 1616 through to the present day. Three of the chapters are by hands other than Jan's: Allan Ronald writes on the Eighteenth Century, Graham Able on the International Schools, and Terry Walsh on Games and Sports.

But what of Wodehouse himself? The book contains 47 pages with PGW references. The 56-page chapter on A H Gilkes as headmaster (1885–1914)

contains a wealth of material on PGW's time at Dulwich and a five-page section on Wodehouse alone. New information is revealed which has never previously been published. In 1901 Wodehouse spoke, by special invitation, at the Debating Society. Later in the year he was a guest at a dinner of the Society, and *The Alleynian* records that he "delighted the company with selections out of his large repertoire of comic songs". In 1929 he contributed a humorous article on Shakespeare to *The Alleynian*.

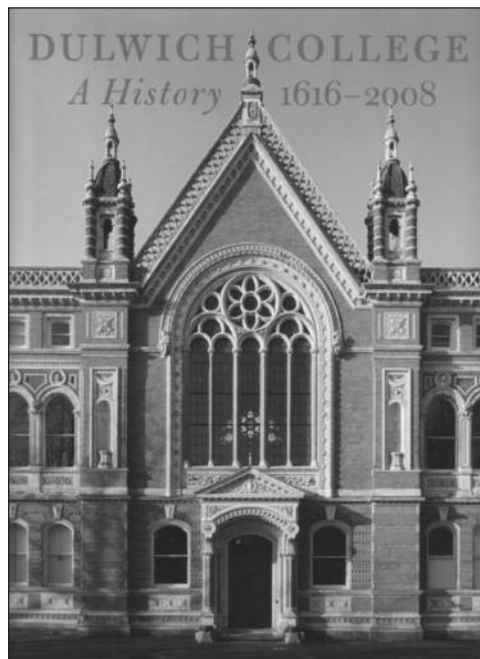
There are also three photographs of Wodehouse, one of which, with Gilkes and the prefects in 1900, has, I believe, never been published before; three drawings from *The Captain* illustrating his stories; and a reproduction of Wodehouse's own hand-written entry in his house book of his First XI season for 1899.

Unsurprisingly, given the range of the history, a few minor errors intrude. Wodehouse is credited with "already publishing contributions to Public School and sporting magazines as a Sixth-Former" (p219); in fact, he only had one such contribution published ("Some Aspects of Game-Captaincy", *Public School Magazine*, Feb 1900). He is also credited, by 1909, with "almost 50 short stories based on his years at Dulwich, and a collection, *Tales of St. Austin's*" (p220); Wodehouse wrote a total of

37 short school stories (12 in *Tales of St. Austin's* and 25 in *Tales of Wrykyn and Elsewhere*). D H Moore (1871–1948) is described as "the eldest brother" of four, yet the same paragraph reveals that one of his brothers was born in 1870 (p223). Modestly, Jan permits himself to appear in the text only four times, but he does not record one of these appearances (p324) in the Index. For Wodehouseans, the most notable slip is in the description of the prize-giving in *Right Ho, Jeeves* "where Bertie Wooster gives the prizes" (p218).

But none of these minor slips detract from one's enjoyment of this tour de force, this magnum opus, this ne plus ultra. Jan Piggott deserves our thanks and congratulations for an outstanding book.

Copies of the 400-page book are available for £24 from Dulwich College (www.dulwich.org.uk/shop or 020 8299 9222). See also page 23 for a related report.



The Political P. G. Wodehouse

by Bengt Malmberg

Editor's note: This is a condensed version of an article Bengt wrote (in Swedish) for Jeeves, the Yearbook of the Swedish Wodehouse Society.

In most biographies, P. G. Wodehouse is portrayed as naïve, politically ignorant, and uninterested in mundane matters, which would partly explain the big mistake of his life when he gave talks on the German radio. He has been compared with Lord Emsworth, described in *Something Fresh* (1915):

Other people worried about all sorts of things – strikes, wars, suffragettes, diminishing birth rates, the growing materialism of the age, and a score of similar objects. Worrying indeed, seemed to be the twentieth century's speciality. Lord Emsworth never worried.

I believe this is incorrect, and I hope to show that he was well aware of what was going on in the world.

Wodehouse's Early Writings

Toward the end of 1903, Wodehouse was asked to write daily poems for the *Daily Express*, commenting on the current political controversy. He wrote at least 19 of the 51 poems which appeared on the front page of that paper, attacking Joseph Chamberlain's policy of dropping the idea of free trade and encouraging trade with the colonies by imposing a tariff on imports from Britain's competitors. This would mean that food prices would rise; Wodehouse expressed his view through a parrot who ended every poem with "Your food will cost you more".

One of my favourites among Wodehouse's political poems is 'The Phalanx' from 1906. England had a coalition ministry under Campbell-Bannerman, in which ministers with different political views tried to cooperate. Among these were Herbert Asquith, Winston Churchill, Edward Grey, H. J. Gladstone, and David Lloyd George. One verse gives a flavour:

If Winston Churchill thought the same
As Asquith, Burns or Grey;
If Asquith, too, affairs could view
In Herbert Gladstone's way;
And if Lloyd George could be suppressed,
We'd then do better far.
We are a happy Cabinet.
We are! We are!! We are!!!

In *The Globe By The Way Book*, Wodehouse commented on the Kaiser's strengthening the German Navy and the reasons he gave for doing so: "The

German Emperor says his Navy is wanted to watch Switzerland (Oct. 1908)." "The German Emperor says his Navy is wanted to protect Germany from invasion by Persia (Nov.1908)."

Another political talking-point, the growth of Socialism, is reflected in the words of Psmith in *Mike* (1909): "I've just become a Socialist. It's a great scheme. You ought to be one. You work for the equal distribution of property, and start by collaring all you can and sitting on it."

Between the Wars

During these years, the ideology of dictatorship became increasingly influential, and Wodehouse ridiculed them accordingly. In 'The Clicking of Cuthbert', Vladimir Brusiloff summarises the situation in Russia: "Three of his principal creditors had perished in the last massacre of the bourgeoisie . . ." And later: "You know that is our great national sport, trying to assassinate Lenin with rewolwers."

Wodehouse spent most of the inter-war years in the United States and United Kingdom, two nations who paid little attention to German rearmament until 1937, when it was nearly too late. Appeasement determined Britain's conduct almost up to the annexation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Wodehouse held the same opinion as the leading politicians in England (except Churchill), but he became the victim of a government in 1941 who were eager to find a scapegoat.

In 'Buried Treasure' (1936), we have the heated discussion at the Angler's Rest on Hitler's moustache: he has to let it grow or cut it off – there are no other options. And two years later, the English Fascist leader Oswald Mosley and his Blackshirts are held up for ridicule as Roderick Spode and his Black Shorts.

On September 4, 1937, Wodehouse wrote to Bill Townend: "What a hell of a mess the world has got into. . . . I mean, this Japan business, for instance. My idea is that Italy and Germany said to Japan, 'Hey! You start trouble in the East and do something to make England mad. Then they will take their Mediterranean fleet over to Shanghai, and then we'll do a quick jump on their neck while they have no ships on this side.' I'll bet they're sick we haven't fallen for that."

However, Wodehouse shared the view widely held in England that a war was out of the question. In a letter to Townend (April 23, 1939), he wrote: "Do you know, a feeling is gradually stealing over me that the world has never been farther from war than it is at present. . . . I think if Hitler really thought there was a chance of a war, he would have nervous prostration. . . ."

Anyway, no war in our lifetime is my feeling . . . (I shall look very silly if war starts on Sunday, after Hitler's speech !)"

The war started, and Wodehouse wrote to Townend (October 3, 1939): "Didn't you think that was a fine speech of Churchill's on the wireless? Just what was needed, I thought. I can't help feeling that we're being a bit too gentlemanly. Someone ought to get up in Parliament and call Hitler a swine."

The 'phoney war' was going on when Wodehouse wrote two pieces for *Punch* in which he made fun of Hitler and his strategy ('The Big Push' and 'Shock Dogs') and, since he did not suspect any serious threat to France and England, he followed the advice of the Foreign Office and stayed in Le Touquet.

In *Homage to P. G. Wodehouse* (1973), Auberon Waugh makes an important point: "The political world does not take kindly to alternative perceptions of its own importance. Politicians may be prepared to countenance subversive political jokes, but the deeper subversion of totally non-political jokes is something

they can neither comprehend nor forgive. It is no accident that of all twentieth-century English writers, Wodehouse is the one they have chosen, in their time, to persecute most bitterly." He goes on to say that Wodehouse's influence politically is his sense of the ridiculous: "By teaching us that the best jokes completely ignore everything in which men of authority try to interest us, Mr. Wodehouse has kept the torch of freedom burning in England more surely than any avowedly political writer could ever have done."

I agree with Mr. Waugh on the political impact of Wodehouse on British society and thinking. If you look at society and its problems through the glass of humour, you take a different view of men and women of influence, political or economic; of pomposity and selfishness. And that strengthens the dignity of the common people and thereby of democracy. So I conclude, with Auberon Waugh and others, that there is a political aspect to Wodehouse which remains important.

Launch of Jan Piggott's Dulwich College History

by Nick Townend

The invitation to the launch party at Dulwich College on 11 June promised "brief speeches, surprise appearances and sundry events"; the 250 Old Alleynians (OAs) and other guests were not disappointed. After Graham Able, the Master of Dulwich, welcomed us, Lord George of St Tudy (previously Eddie George, governor of the Bank of England) introduced Jan Piggott.

Jan felt the College had been brave in asking him to write the history since, as an English teacher, his career had been spent in the world of fiction. He admitted to a blind spot on sports and to a hero worship of two Dulwich headmasters, A H Gilkes and his son Christopher Gilkes. He spoke of "the very great Victorian and Edwardian generation" and hoped that the examples of such OAs as Shackleton, Wodehouse, and Chandler and those who had served in the two world wars would provide inspiration for today's boys. He commended the exhibition in the Wodehouse Library to us, demonstrating Dulwich over the years.

Jan included Wodehouse's feelings on his "expulsion from Eden": Sir Edward Cazalet read the section from *Psmith in the City* where Mike sits sadly in the College cricket field. Then Edward Alleyn, the school's founder, (Director of Drama Peter Jolly in period costume), delivered an extract from his 1604 speech to James I. This

was followed by a lusty rendition of a school song, *Pueri Alleynienses*. The formal proceedings closed to great applause as Jan and his wife were presented with a bouquet of flowers and a framed photograph of the College by two very young Alleynians.

The delightful exhibition in the Library contained fascinating items, including an Old Alleynian tobacco pouch and an example of the famous "white blazer", awarded to boys who were not only in both the first XI and first XV but were also prominent in a "minor sport" such as boxing, fives, squash or shooting; Trevor Bailey was one of the few awarded this. Wodehousean items included photographs of Percy Jeeves; of Edward Cazalet opening the Wodehouse Library in 1981; a score book recording Wodehouse taking 15 wickets in 1900 for the Classical Remove vs the Modern VI; and Wodehouse's Account Book (open at the entry when he "chucked the [bank], and started out on my wild lone as a freelance").

Jan revealed that the "introduction of idiotic records and paperwork" had prompted his retirement as Head of English – an intriguing statement from someone who then became Keeper of Archives and writer of a magnificent history, both of which presumably relied heavily on records and paperwork.



Wodehouseans at Dulwich (l-r): Norman Murphy, Margaret Slythe, Robert Bruce, Christine Hewitt, Edward Cazalet, Hilary Bruce, Jan Piggott, Elin Murphy, and Murray Hedgcock. Nick was immersed in the exhibition. (Photo courtesy Dulwich College)

Wodehouse and Bustards

On 29 February this year at Wigmore Hall, the Maggini String Quartet premiered a new work, 'The Bustard', written by Ronald Corp and specially commissioned by Society member **Peter Lobbenberg**. Following the concert, which was held to support a project aimed at reintroducing Great Bustards into the UK, Peter's assistant, **Carolyn de la Plain**, was rereading *Something Fishy* and to her delight discovered that Wodehouse was, as Peter puts it, "as sound on Great Bustards as he was on Pokes!" The relevant passage is found in chapter 13:



How much more circumspectly, he was thinking, the Great Bustard would have comported itself in similar circumstances. The Great Bustard, as he had recently learned from his *Wonders Of The Bird World*, when entertaining for a female bustard does not shout proposals of marriage over the telephone. It ruffles its back feathers, inflates its chest and buries its whiskers in it, thus showing tact and leading up to the thing gracefully. And he was about to pass these nature notes on to Bill, when the latter spoke.

Peter conducted further research and discovered that "PGW would have known about the Great Bustard as long ago as 1931 (what a good memory he must have had to put it in *Something Fishy* a quarter of a century later): he wrote the introduction to Will Cuppy's *How to Tell Your Friends from the Apes*, which has a whole two-page chapter on the GB."

Drama Trails

This summer ITV3 presented a 10-part series entitled *Drama Trails*, which explored intriguing connections between classic British TV programs. In the episode broadcast on 9 July, the actor Robert Daws, who played Tuppy Glossop in the *Jeeves and Wooster* series, visited Buck's Club in Dover Street, London, where his host was one Tony Ring (a familiar name to our members). Though Mr Daws incorrectly called it *the* Buck's Club, it was an enjoyable segment, replete with clips from the series and engaging talk about the importance of Buck's (and thus the Drones) to young men in Wodehouse's time. Tony and Mr Daws ended up in the bar at Buck's, where, Tony informed us, the Buck's Fizz was invented. He also related the information that Wodehouse gave the barman at the Drones the same name as the barman at Buck's – McGarry (a discovery made by Norman Murphy, one of the many that led him to identify Buck's as the major source for the Drones Club).

Poet's Corner

The Art of Conversation

We used until the other day
To talk on every kind of topic,
The latest book, the freshest play,
The newest movement philanthropic:
We sometimes probed – it served our need –
Some politician's last oration –
Those were sufficient fuel to feed
A desultory conversation.

But now we try another plan
(I question if it's an improvement):
A weather dictum shows a man
Beyond the pale, not in the movement.
We don't discuss the latest play,
Such trivial talk no longer pleases:
Our table-tattle turns today
Exclusively upon diseases.

Entrancing theme! He never fails
To shine in well-bred conversations,
Who thrills the company with tales
Of interesting amputations.
Or woos them from a state of dumps
With apt, exhilarating humour
About the lighter side of mumps
The inner quaintness of a tumour.

And yet, I own it with a sigh,
Though, mark you, I am not complaining
I pass each dish untasted by,
My hunger curiously waning.
And when the ladies rise, I find,
Feeling exceptionally odd, I
May possibly have fed the mind
But not by any means the body.

From *Daily Chronicle*, 21 January 1904

(In response to a report that conversation at Society dinner tables was said to deal exclusively with diseases and cures.)

A Wodehouse Gem

It was that gracious hour of a summer afternoon, midway between luncheon and tea, when Nature seems to unbutton its waiscoat and put its feet up.

From *Summer Lightning*, 1929
(submitted by Peter D. O'Neill)

Plummy Acrostic

by June Arnold

Solve the clues in the top grid, then transfer the letters from there to the bottom grid; this will give you an extract from a PGW novel. Reading down column A in the top grid will give you the name of the novel. Answers will be provided in the December issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

Clues:

- 1 Claire _____, actress engaged to Lord Dawlish in *Uneasy Money* (7) / Astonished (6)
- 2 Stanley Featherstonehaugh _____, said to be PGW's favourite character (7) / Things you look through on your computer? (7)
- 3 Fanny _____, formerly a juggler and wife of Joe in *Barmy in Wonderland* (6) / Tremble with cold (6) / Sir Roderick Glossop was afraid of these animals (4)
- 4 _____ *Is Just a Bowl of Cherries* (song) (4) / Talk quietly (7) / Severe weather (5)
- 5 Waitress courted by Jeeves (5) / Affronts (7) / Uttered (4)
- 6 Jane _____, fiancée of Frederick Mulliner (8) / Military strongholds (5)
- 7 Little _____ Annie (6) / Totleigh _____, home of Sir Watkin Bassett (6)
- 8 Relationship of Freddie Threepwood to Constance Keeble (6) / Fear (5)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
1																		
2																		
3																		
4																		
5																		
6																		
7																		
8																		

6B	5G	2C	1N		8B	3D	4I	7J	2M	6L	3Q	7D						
8D	1E	5A	3H	1M	3A	4C		6E	5P	2E		4P	7F	1F	8J			
2I	6K	1C		7E		5H	4H	3M	7M	6H		7C	8I	3J	1L	2G		
6J	7A	4L		8C	2A	4R	6D	1G	4B	5K	3R		1I	2K	8H			
3C	2J	6N		4J	5Q	2F		5B	4N		1D	3L		2B	3F	7I	4F	
3I	6F	8L		7H	2N	6C	3O	4D		5C	1B	8E	6G					
1K	8F	3E	4Q	5R	7K	2L		6M	4G	5J		5M	2D	5E	3K	3B	7B	
1J	5D	5L	3P	4A		5I	6A	7L		1A	8K	4O	8A	4K	2O	5O		

Answers to Plummy Acrostic, June issue

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Bodkins / winner / Peter | 5. Over / father / France |
| 2. innocent / Aunts | 6. nuthatch / failed |
| 3. Galahad / putter | 7. Episode / hound |
| 4. Mating / Animal / wine | 8. Young / din / lover |

Quote: And so in due course in the blue and apricot twilight of a perfect May evening, Ann Moon arrived in England with a hopeful heart and ten trunks.
Novel: *Big Money*

Passing References

The Guardian, May 25

Reported that Will Self won the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse prize for comic fiction with *The Butt*. *The Times* followed up the story on May 29 and 30 with reports of alleged sharp practice in the competition, for Self's victory had been announced before the short list of books under consideration! (See also p.18)

Herald Sun [Melbourne],

May 28 (and various other Australian media sources)

Referred to a claim in a Senate Committee that a "travelling assistant to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd" was his manservant. ". . . here we have Jeeves . . . travelling round the country laying out the clothes of the Prime Minister in the morning." [After the Secretary of State said it was offensive to refer to the person as a butler, another Senator pointed out that Jeeves was a valet, not a butler.]

Saga Magazine, June (from Alexander Dainty)

Keith Waterhouse wrote that the kinds of friendships he tries to avoid are those which "carry a sense of obligation – like Stanley Featherstonehaugh Utridge, P G Wodehouse's cadging anti-hero, who imposes on his long-suffering friend Corky to borrow his dress suits, sleep in his bed, or sell his cuff-links to get himself out of a spot of bother".

BooksOnBoard, June 9

Reported that Wodehouse was third in the 'Classics eBook Bestsellers' list for June, behind Jane Austen and Conan Doyle.

The Oregonian, June 29

Writing about surreptitiously scanning other people's bookshelves, Brian Doyle referred to "a host who had every single book ever written by P G Wodehouse, which is a scary number".

The Times Summer Books Special, July 5

Numerous personalities listed their suggested summer reading. Three chose Wodehouse books: Martin Jarvis with *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* ('Laughs'), Frank Cottrell Boyce with *Blandings Castle and Elsewhere* (Children's), and Joanne Harris with *The Inimitable Jeeves* ('Treats'). And in the same issue, Philip Howard's *Literary Quiz* asked, "Who dropped himself in the minestrone through his self-imposed persona of

preux chevalier?" The answer was just "Bertie, of course".

The Times Body & Soul, July 5

Diehard vegetarian Mansel Fletcher wrote about giving up vegetarianism in April, and explained: 'I did start to think about eating meat again last summer, inspired by Bertie Wooster's enthusiasm for steak-and-

kidney pie in a P G Wodehouse novel.'

Glasgow Herald, July 11 (from Melvyn Haggarty)

Ran a letter referring to Colin Montgomerie's self-important behaviour during the recent Scottish Open Golf championship, which reminded the writer of PGW's "The least thing upset him on the links. He missed short putts because of the uproar of the butterflies in the adjoining meadows." *The Scotsman* used the same quotation in relation to Ernie Els (though in a slightly

different context) on July 10.

Radio 3 Night Waves, July 15 (from Larissa Saxby-Bridger)

A debate on the merits of the 'stiff upper lip' was introduced by a mention of *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*.

The Telegraph (India), July 22

Reported that the Cambridge School, near Hazra, was organising a literary festival for its students in which they competed to write the best literary reviews on books borrowed from the school library. Apparently the number of borrowers rose by 60%, with Wodehouse and Agatha Christie "by far the most popular authors".

The Daily Telegraph, August 4

Jan Etherington took Keith Simpson (Conservative Party's foreign affairs spokesman) to task for circulating a book list of recommended summer reading, which she described as more like holiday homework. When her daughter thrust a Dostoevsky into her hand-luggage as she was leaving for the Maldives, she reached page 2 before swapping it for a Wodehouse.

The Times, August 18

Patrick Kidd commented that Surrey CCC members were, if not actually disgruntled, far from being grunted, in his report of a rare victory for the county.

The following writers and others mentioned Wodehouse as a favourite writer or influence:

Nick Harkaway (John Le Carré's son) & debut novelist: *Observer*, May 25 and *Front Row*, June 4 (heard by Alexander Dainty)

Kate Baty: 'Reader Chart' in *Sunday Times*, June 7

Terry Pratchett: 'Latest Biography' in *The Guardian*, June 12

Tom Harris (Transport Minister): *Times*, June 27

Barry McGuigan: *Somerfield Magazine*, June

Philip Reeve: *Financial Times*, June 30

James Hamilton-Paterson: *Metro*, July 15 (from Melvyn Haggarty)

Barry Cryer: *Scottish Daily Express* ('My Six Best Books'), July 26 (from Melvyn Haggarty)

In the Press and in Books

From *Quotable New York* (2001)

(sent by Charles Gould)

On page 19, the Wodehouse contribution to this volume (compiled and edited by Gregg Stebben) is taken from ‘The Aunt and the Sluggard’: “New York’s a small place when it comes to the part of it that wakes up just as the rest is going to bed.”

From *Balfour: The Last Grandee* (2007)

(sent by Michael Wilmot)

R.J.Q. Adams’s biography of Balfour includes the following on page 116: “Feasts of July 1889 and 1890 (of The Souls) were held at the celebrated Bachelor’s Club, often said to prefigure P.G. Wodehouse’s uproarious Drones Club.” (Though as any reader of Norman Murphy knows, while the Bachelors’ does play in a role in the creation of the Drones Club, the primary source was Buck’s Club.)

From *The Portable Curmudgeon* (1987)

(sent by Charles Gould)

The Wodehouse quote in this collection (compiled and edited by Jon Winokur) can be found on page 142: “The fascination of shooting as a sport depends almost wholly on whether you are at the right or wrong end of a gun.”

From *The Suit: A Machiavellian Approach to Men’s Style* (2006) (sent by Steven Shaw)

In chapter 19, ‘Of the Difference Between Formality and Dandification’, Nicholas Antongiavanni writes:

That these two principles are in tension was taught covertly by Wodehouse, who represented formality in the character of Jeeves and dandification in Bertie Wooster. There is hardly a story about them in which Bertie’s enthusiasm for some adventurous garment does not run afoul of Jeeves’s stern sense of propriety. To show two sartorial knowledgeable gentlemen continually disputing the virtue of various clothing means nothing other than a man needs to know how to use both principles; and the one without the other is not elegant.

Then at the end of the same chapter:

Therefore, a man cannot follow the predilections of Jeeves, lest he end up looking like an undertaker, nor can he in all things imitate Wooster without coming off like a riverboat gambler; but he should take from Jeeves as much formality as the occasion requires, and from Wooster as much dandification as it allows.

From *The Importance of Living* (1937)

(sent by Charles Gould)

In this tome by Lin Yutang, the following crops up on pages 78 & 79:

As humor necessarily goes with good sense and the reasonable spirit, plus some exceptionally subtle powers of the mind in detecting inconsistencies and follies and bad logic, and as this is the highest form of human intelligence, we may be sure that each nation will thus be represented at the conference by its sanest and soundest mind. Let Shaw represent Ireland, Stephen Leacock represent Canada; G.K. Chesterton is dead, but P.G. Wodehouse or Aldous Huxley may represent England.

Quite a Recommendation

Book reviews and reading suggestions come in all forms, and **Eric Coulton** has noted one of the most unusual ones. In the *Daily Telegraph* of May 3, 2008, eight of the paper’s top writers picked five “works that would never have won the Booker, but nevertheless won a place in their hearts”. Sam Leith’s first choice was *Damon Runyon on Broadway*; he described Runyon as “the Wodehouse of Prohibition-era New York”. Included among Andrew McKie’s choices was *The Code of the Woosters*; McKie had this to say about it: “A searing indictment of Mosleyite fascism (‘Heil Spode’). Includes a useful guide to Dutch silverware and lingerie.”

A Note from the Editor

With this issue, we are revising our long-running ‘Press Comments’ feature to include PGW references spotted by readers in books as well. If you see a quote by or reference to PGW in a book, please send it along to Elin Murphy (address on the back page).

Meanwhile, your Editor has come to the conclusion that “It is never difficult to distinguish between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine” has to be the most quoted PGW line of all time; it crops up in the press repeatedly. In the *Daily Telegraph* of May 27, 2008, Professor Steve Jones used the line to conclude an article on what we decide about others by looking at their facial expressions: “Nobody denies that a Scotsman with a grievance can easily be distinguished from a ray of sunshine – but somehow I doubt that we are ready to pick out a punter with inside knowledge from the smug expression on his face.” (My thanks to the reader who sent this in, and apologies for failing to make note of his or her name. The expression on my face right now is one of shamefaced chagrin.)

Future Events for Your Diary

September 25–28, 2008 Havant Literary Festival

This new festival in Havant, Hampshire, will feature Wodehouse among other authors, and Tony Ring will be giving a talk on Saturday, September 27.

October 16–25, 2008 Guildford Book Festival

A full programme is in store for this annual festival. .

October 23, 2008 Society Formal Dinner

By the time you read this, all places are probably booked for our biennial dinner at Gray's Inn – but there may be hope. To see if seats are still available, contact k.

November 18, 2008 Society Meeting, AGM, Wodehouse Walk

As noted on page 5, the Society will be meeting at the Arts Club until further notice; the address is 40 Dover Street, London, and the nearest Underground station

is Green Park. We gather from 6 p.m. Prior to hearing from our speaker, radio presenter and author Nigel Rees, we will hold our Annual General Meeting, always a lively affair.

Norman Murphy will conduct another abbreviated Wodehouse Walk prior to the meeting; .

February 17, 2009 Society Meeting

Venue: the Arts Club, from 6 p.m. Speaker TBA.

June 12–14, 2009 TWS Biennial Convention

Preliminary notification of The Wodehouse Society's next convention, to be held in Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA.

July 7, 2009 Society Meeting

Venue: the Arts Club, from 6 p.m. Speaker TBA.

October 13, 2009 Society Meeting

Venue: the Arts Club, from 6 p.m. Speaker TBA.

CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 1 | Hollywood Comes to England | 15 | The Gold Bats Season |
| 2 | Letters to the Editor | 16 | Two Splendid Audio Books (review) |
| 3 | The Case of the Hopping Apostrophe | 17 | Profile of a Committee Member: Alan Wood |
| 4 | Who Are <i>Your</i> Favourites? (survey) | 17 | Bertie's Uncles George: The Final Word |
| 4 | Two Festivals Not to Miss | 18 | Stealing Will Self's Pig |
| 5 | Society News | 19 | The Noddors v. The Brigands |
| 5 | A Recently Discovered Wodehouse Story! | 19 | Wodehouse on the Boards |
| 6 | My First Wodehouse Experience | 20 | John Lithgow Flits By |
| 6 | A Clerihew Challenge | 20 | Tales of Two Society Patrons |
| 7 | Profile of a Patron: Lara Cazalet | 21 | The Bibliographic Corner: Jan Piggott's History of Dulwich College |
| 7 | Arrow Books at a Discount | 22 | The Political P. G. Wodehouse |
| 7 | Old Home Week! | 23 | Launch of Jan Piggott's Dulwich College History |
| 8 | Wodehouse and God | 24 | Wodehouse and Bustards |
| 10 | Thrown to the Wolves | 24 | Drama Trails |
| 10 | Wodehouse and Doyle | 24 | Poet's Corner: <i>The Art of Conversation</i> |
| 11 | The Versatile Justine Johnson | 25 | Plummy Acrostic |
| 12 | Mam'zelle Milliard in Distress | 26 | Passing References (Press and Books) |
| 13 | Society Meeting in Dover Street | 28 | Future Events for Your Diary |
| 14 | Gold Bats v. the Dulwich Dusters | | |
| 14 | Those Plucky Sherlockians Try Once Again | | |