



WOOSTER SAUCE

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Just Another Day in London

by Hilary Bruce

Saturday, May 30th, and the day dawned bright and Searly. Somewhat earlier, in fact, than the hour at which we chairmen really flourish, but we were due in Mayfair, to put out the welcome mat for an Empress.

It all started at a meeting about Plum Pie, Heywood Hill's forthcoming Wodehouse exhibition, when publicity ideas were solicited. "I could get you a pig," said a voice, brightening proceedings perceptibly. Too late, I realised the voice had been mine and shortly afterwards, the response came by telephone: "Could you *really* get a pig?"

Luckily, I could. That sort of request is meat and drink to our friends at the Berkshire Pig Breeders Club, whose championship the Society sponsors under our Back the Berkshire initiative. Just two phone calls secured a pig-in-principle; two more established that setting a live pig loose in Mayfair was unlikely to attract Constable Oates's censure; so just the Walking Licence remained. Yes, truly, a Walking Licence. Which presented no difficulty, once Christine Coe, our pig expert, discovered that the Animal Licensing official was a huge Wodehouse fan. What are the chances, eh?

At 7.30 a.m. Curzon Street does not usually bustle, but outside Heywood Hill it was positively congested: two photographers; booksellers in mufti; assorted hangers-on, including self and consort, as well as David Cazalet, Wodehouse's great-grandson; and a farm trailer on a yellow line. Chris Coe – members will recall her witty explanation of the finer points of pig breeding and showing at a Society meeting a while ago – had risen substantially earlier even than the Chairman to chauffeur Gloria the Berkshire sow from Warwickshire to London, but showed no sign of it as she tempted our model, now dubbed the Empress of Mayfair, from the comfort of her trailer. A nice bit of apple did the trick.

The thing about kerbs is that they don't exist to any great extent in Warwickshire fields. Gloria was rightly suspicious and refused point-blank to step up



*Stephen Fry does not look as though Constable Potter is about to serve a summons on him for moving pigs without a permit.
(Photo by Chairman's Consort)*

onto the pavement. And so she made her stately way down the middle of the road towards the zebra crossing on the corner. At every step there were smells so captivating that she seemed not to notice the traffic. Most drivers affected little interest, although we noted exceptions – the cabbie who loudly advised "I'm not having *her* in the back of my cab" and the striking number of garbage trucks on the streets at that early hour, every one of which hove to alongside Gloria as, to a man, the operatives photographed the scene on their mobiles.

A note on navigation might be useful. Perhaps you've wondered how pigs are steered? There are no reins, there is no lead; the accoutrements of the pig handler are a pig board – a sort of giant portable blinker tactically deployed by the handler; a light cane for gentle tapping; and, in extremis, pig nuts. (For the avoidance of doubt, these are a food item enjoyed by pigs.)

Gloria lingered long at the zebra crossing – its aroma seemed to surpass even that of the white line – and during this interlude the scene was further enhanced by the arrival of a tall, lissom chap, one Stephen Fry. Devoted Heywood Hill customer though he is, were they testing his loyalty too far by getting him to turn up at eight o'clock on Saturday morning to play second fiddle to a pig? He certainly seemed perfectly content, and of course his arrival did wonders for our box office – the binmen drove round the block for another go with their phones, and now tourists were arriving, their sightseeing off to a splendid start with one of the most improbable sights Mayfair had ever offered. Perhaps they thought this sort of thing happens the whole time.



Gloria poses for photographer Tommo as Stephen and Chairman Hilary look on (Photo by Chairman's Consort)

Meanwhile, Gloria and Stephen were outside the shop and getting on like a couple of sailors on shore leave, posing on the steps and by the railings, strolling down the street – and by now it wasn't just the tourists and binmen whose interest was piqued. Three separate police cars drove past; you could see the precise moment they spotted a loose pig in the road and took the foot off the accelerator. And you could see the precise moment they decided it wasn't worth the paperwork and put the foot back on the gas. The Chairman was having conniption fits about being arrested in the

Society's name, but we were perfectly legal – we had our Walking Licence and, unbelievably, that's all you need to set several hundredweight of live pig loose in Piccadilly.

Our delightful photographer Tommo seemed to be enjoying himself thoroughly – the assignment doubtless made a pleasant change from the chore of snapping international fashion models for glossy magazines – and he and Gloria quickly established a rapport as she learned to 'make love to the camera', a trick all the best models have.

We had been warned that with luck we might retain Gloria's interest for half an hour – though it might be as little as half a minute – and she would clearly signal the end of proceedings. But a long hour after we'd begun, Gloria was still posing winsomely while the human model and the hangers-on had drooped perceptibly. And so, at half-past nine, we closed down the cabaret. Gloria retired to her trailer and thence to Warwickshire where, apparently, she put on considerable dog with the other pigs in her field. Our forbearing human model left, Twittering about the proceedings, our friends at Heywood Hill tidied up the street and opened for business, and the Chairman's Consort took the Chairman off for a rather tactless bacon roll. Peace reigned once more in the refined surroundings of Curzon Street . . .



Gloria, Stephen, and Hilary relax with David Cazalet outside Heywood Hill (Photo by Chairman's Consort)

Between Empress of Blandings and these two human beings who ministered to her comfort there was a sharp contrast in physique. Lord Emsworth was tall and thin and scraggy, Pirbright tall and thin and scraggier. The Empress, on the other hand, could have passed in a dim light for a captive balloon, fully inflated and about to make its trial trip. The modern craze for slimming had found no votary in her. She liked her meals large and regular, and had never done a reducing exercise in her life. Watching her now as she tucked into a hash of bran, acorns, potatoes, linseed, and swill, the ninth Earl of Emsworth felt his heart leap up in much the same way as that of the poet Wordsworth used to do when he beheld a rainbow in the sky.

"What a picture, Pirbright!" he said reverently.
"Ur, m'lord."

(From *Heavy Weather*, 1933)

Society News

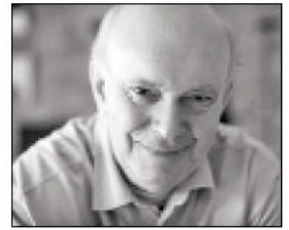
Next Meeting, AGM, and Wodehouse Walks

Members are reminded that our next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 13 October, at the Arts Club, 40 Dover Street, London, from 6 p.m. The evening will include our annual AGM, always a lot of fun, and our featured speaker is Stephen Pelham Pound, MP. Don't miss it!

And if you're coming to London for the meeting, be sure to schedule a little time beforehand to visit Plum Pie, the special Wodehouse Exhibition at Heywood Hill bookshop in Curzon Street (only a few blocks from the Arts Club). Note that Norman Murphy will be giving Wodehouse Walks through Bertie Wooster's Mayfair every Wednesday afternoon during the time of the exhibition. In addition, he will conduct an abbreviated Walk prior to the October meeting; the walk will last approximately one hour, and it is free.

A New Patron: Sir Alan Ayckbourn

The Society's distinguished list of patrons recently became even more distinguished when the well-known playwright and avid Wodehouse fan Sir Alan Ayckbourn CBE consented to join their number. The author of 73 full-length plays, he is both amazingly prolific and exceptionally popular. Look for a profile of Sir Alan in a future issue of *Wooster Sauce*.



Congratulations to Shashi Tharoor MP

It is with great pleasure that we announce a Plummie has been elected to Parliament – the Indian Parliament, that is. This spring our patron, Shashi Tharoor – who wowed us at the Society's dinner in Gray's Inn last October – won election to the Lok Sabha (the lower house) as a member of the Indian National Congress. We wish Shashi all the best in his latest endeavour!

Wodehousean, Wodehusian, or Wodehousian?

by James Hogg

Pace Nicholas Aldridge [see *Wooster Sauce*, March 2009, p.15], I don't think there's much to be said for Wodehusian, just because old boys of Charterhouse are Carthusians. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the latter words have an etymology deriving from the Carthusian order, whose original foundation was at Chatrouse in France. Charterhouse School was first located in a former Carthusian monastery in London and took its name from it. Thus the '-house' in Charterhouse is not cognate with the '-house' in Wodehouse, and there's no reason to use Carthusian as a model for Wodehusian.

I am an advocate of Wodehousian, rather than Wodehousean. The relevant Latinate word from which the English word is drawn is Wodehousianus. As a classicist himself, PGW would surely expect the derivative from his name to end with '-ian'.

Confusingly, the alternative suffix '-ean' is sometimes correct in English – 'European' is an example. But its derivation from the Latin word *Europaeus* makes it a different case. In English the diphthong 'ae' becomes abbreviated to 'e'. This is of course sounded, while the 'e' at the end of Wodehouse is silent. Unlike the silent one, the sounded 'e' has an irresistible claim to be included in the English version of the word, and thus European is correct rather than Europian. Likewise Jacobean from Jacobaeus.

So my rule of thumb is that in names with a silent final 'e', the extension should end in '-ian', e.g. Shakespearian, Georgian (has anyone seen it spelt Georgean?), and of course Wodehousian. Only those with a sounded 'e' justify the suffix '-ean'. In Greek

derivations the same rule applies as in Latin ones. Since the 'e' in Thucydides is pronounced 'ee', the correct extension is Thucydean.

But in English there are always annoying irregularities which blow a hole in neatly constructed rules. I'd better mention a couple in case someone uses them to overturn my theory. 'Antipodean' is a good example. The singular of Antipodes in English is Antipode, to rhyme with code, and that is the stem of Antipodean. The *OED* says: "Antipodean is irregular from Antipode-s + -ian, perhaps after European, but not analogous, a better form being the obsolete antipodian. Antipodes was formerly quite regularly three syllables, antipod(e)s."

So it should really be Antipodian, but Antipodean has to be accepted because it's too firmly established to do otherwise. The same applies to 'Aristotelian'. The philosopher's name in Greek was Aristoteles (the second 'e' pronounced 'ee') and therefore, as with his compatriot Thucydides, the extension should have the suffix '-ean'. Perversely, that is ignored and again we have to accept a flawed usage that is too entrenched to be corrected.

However, all in all I think a rule which works well except for the odd anomaly is a reasonable prescription to follow. I fondly, but not too confidently, hope that all contributors will in future think and write of themselves as Wodehousians.

The Editor replies: Officially, the Society's preferred spelling is '-ean', which is used in letters, documents – and, until recently, Wooster Sauce. However, I feel that whatever spelling contributors choose to use is what will appear in print. De gustibus non est disputandum.

A Little Wodehouse on the Prairie

The Wodehouse Society Convention, June 12–14, St Paul, Minnesota

Robert Bruce reports on the overall experience

It did not bode well. Having arrived in St Paul several days early for the TWS convention, the UK Chairman was unhappy. The local blot, the *Pioneer Press*, of which more later, announced that those three days had been the coldest June days since a particular date. The Chairman recognised this as the year she had been born and, to her, that seemed quite a long time ago. This was not the blissful Little Wodehouse on the Prairie that she had been anticipating, and she was swiftly transforming from Aunt Dahlia into Aunt Agatha.

But then the day dawned. The sun rose high in the sky, possibly as high as an elephant's eye. St Paul began to fill up with fellow Wodehouseans and, frankly, you could begin to equate your Scottish author with a ray of sunshine. The 15th convention of The Wodehouse Society (celebrating its 30th year of existence) was truly under way.



They don't make them like this any more!

On Friday the early birds made off very early and were marched about marshes watching herons and eagles. Others were more circumspect and breakfasted at Mickey's Diner, which claims to have been open 24 hours a day since its inception in 1937. Certainly they took us seriously, as one Committee member found as he returned for the second day running for the old sunnyside up and blueberry pancakes. "Hello England" came the shouted greeting.

Next up were visits to the terrific exhibit of magazines full of Wodehouse stories which TWS President Kris Fowler had curated at the library of the University of Minnesota. Some very fine Ronald Searle illustrations were noted. Then it was a dash back to the hotel to dust off the whites for the Great Cricket Experience. Lord's is all very well, but playing on the banks of the Mississippi ranks pretty high. And at Lord's you would never see, twice, a ball propelled between the stumps without disturbing the woodwork at all. The demon bowlers, Shamim 'Pongo' Mohammed and Tad Boehmer, proved the aces at this arcane, if

accidental, art. And all players were happy to find that, like Canterbury back home in Kent, there was a large tree within the playing area. Boundaries were struck onto its trunk.

That evening we browsed and sluiced with élan, and we learned that intrepid investigators amongst Dutch Wodehouseans had unearthed a copy of St Paul's local paper, the afore-mentioned *Pioneer Press*, for Sunday, 10 October 1926, when it had serialised 'First Aid For Dora'. It was duly presented to TWS President Kris Fowler. We were then roused out of our seats by opera singer Maria Jette, with Dan Chouinard on piano, presenting a programme of 'The Merest Tip of The Wodehousian Lyrical Iceberg'. From 'Put Me In My Little Cell' through to 'Bill', the audience roared its approval. The performance of 'Bill' was, as all performances of 'Bill' always are, reckoned to be the finest ever. It was all celebrated through to the early hours.

Saturday's Riveting Talks (see Tim Andrew's separate report) ranged from great scholarship – Elliott Milstein on imposters in Wodehouse and Norman Murphy on horse-racing and betting how long bishops would continue wearing gaiters in the great heat of one Lambeth conference (this latter topic featured some pretty racy slides, if bishops strapped up in leather were your thing) – to talks on pigs (packed with amazing facts) and a celebration, almost entirely invention, of the connections between Plum and St Paul's favourite son, F Scott Fitzgerald. One letter, purporting to be from Scott to Plum, concluded that you never have any problems distinguishing a Scotsman from a ray of sunshine, "and you can quote me on that".

The evening saw us slipping down the mighty Mississippi with a cool mint julep to hand as the Convention Dinner and Fancy Dress extravaganza took to a riverboat. Ken Clevenger, being dressed in plus fours and clutching a putter to which was attached a positive uproar of butterflies, won much acclaim. Tad Boehmer,



Tamaki Morimura hands out buttercups to Marilyn MacGregor (as Lord Emsworth's Girl Friend) and Norman Murphy (as himself).

as the best young man in spats, won a pair of spats. And Tamaki Morimura, celebrating Ukridge and Buttercup Day, handed out yellow paper flowers to all and sundry. It was late by the time the boat pulled back to the dock and the jazz band played their last number.

Sunday morning saw the traditional farewell brunch, a performance of extracts from *The Code of*

the *Woosters*, and a spirited account by UK Chairman Hilary Bruce of her recent exploits at dawn in Mayfair involving a pig on the loose and Stephen Fry (see p.1). Then there was hardly time to swap breakfast garb for the loud weskit and brown derby as we headed off to Canterbury Park for the races. Celebrating their tenth anniversary as a TWS chapter, the Northwodes had arranged for the second race to be 'The Northwodes Goodwood Derby'. We were all photographed in the winners' enclosure, which proved to be a bit of a miscalculation as the obvious horse for a Wodehousean punt, 'Songanddancelady', failed to come home with our cash on her nose. But a joyous afternoon was had. And that, frankly, summed up the whole event. It was not just joy in the morning. It was joy all the way through.



Riveting speaker (and past TWS President) Len Lawson with Ouled Nail Dancer (and PGWSUK Membership Secretary) Christine Hewitt (Photo by Barbara Combs)

Tim Andrew reports on the Riveting Talks

Well, no complaints about the day's title: there were talks aplenty and their description as 'riveting' wasn't going to have me rushing out to the American equivalent of the Trading Standards Office afterwards. It always beats me how TWS convention organisers – dependent as they are on volunteers – get a balanced programme on the Saturday, with a variety of themes, degrees of seriousness, and styles of delivery; the literary society equivalent of the Kegley-Bassingtons must be a constant lurking danger. Yet they did it again in heaping measure, as Boko Fittleworth might have said.

There was, of course, the ever-popular business meeting, put in the traditional postprandial slot, during which the Black Spot of TWS presidency was passed with acclaim to Gary Hall, the current editor of *Plum Lines*. We were also treated to an exposition of the attractions of Detroit as the next convention venue by Elliott Millstein. There were those of us who experienced a touch of déjà vu at this and boggled at his recklessness, since it seems barely yesterday that the same chap was extolling the virtues of Toronto, and whilst finding yourself organising one TWS convention might be construed as bad luck, volunteering for two definitely ranks as carelessness.



Newly elected TWS President Gary Hall with his proud consort, Linda Adam Hall

The rest was a terrific mixture of the serious and the funny, the academic and the whimsical. Len Lawson fascinated us with the story of the Society's earliest days, celebrating the role of Bill Blood, but also telling us of the first 'gathering' – followed by the second and third 'International Conventions' in October 1983 and 1985, respectively (24 members attended the latter). Using horse-racing and gambling as his theme, Norman Murphy once again demonstrated that PGW wrote about the real world: "He just made it funnier" – except, it

seems, when it came to the names of racehorses, which were nearly all invented (but still funny). Faith Sullivan told us of how she had written a book in which the protagonist lived through the 20th century, discovering PGW in 1907 and returning to him and contemporary publications throughout her life. Mike Eckman drew parallels between Wodehouse and Max Shulman. Finally, before lunch, Elliott Millstein discussed 'The Nature and the Development of the Impostor in the Works of P G Wodehouse', which culminated in a confession of his own imposture and what it felt like.

After lunch and the business meeting, Brian Taves told us more about PGW and Hollywood, illustrated by fascinating clips, one of which revealed David Niven as a natural Uncle Fred flitting by. Dick Heymann confessed that he had offered to give a talk on the connections between PGW and F Scott Fitzgerald, one of St Paul's famous sons, on the assumption that he could make it all up, and then discovered to his consternation that they had met, that there might actually be connections, and that serious research was called for. Fortunately, that research revealed the connection to be slight at best; he could relax and resort to his imagination.

Finally, we were treated to a skit by the Chicago chapter, or 'Accident Syndicate' as they prefer to be known, which was based on a scenario that involved Bertie being sent to Lake Wobegon by Aunt Dahlia to check something for *Milady's Boudoir*.

Oh, and one other thing. Every time I go to the TWS Convention, I come away bowled over by something completely unexpected among the talks: cow creamers in Philadelphia, a fictitious Mr Wilberfloss who developed a real life of his own in Washington, D.C., to the point of being offered a credit card, and a certain priest in Providence spring to mind. Often they are the least promising on first glance at the schedule. So, brilliant and enjoyable as all the above was, this time the highlight for me was Thomas Molitor on 'The Care of the Pig'. Whilst you hope that at a literary convention an eminent professor in veterinary population medicine and authority on swine herd biosecurity is going to keep it clean and not get too technical, you do wonder quite what you are going to get. Well, what we got was a quiz testing our knowledge of the care of pigs in the works of PGW, complete with audience participation through voting 'clickers'. It was hysterical.

All, in all, another lovely day, with lots of laughter and serious insights laced with quotations from the Great Man's works.

Brett's Crime in Rhyme? Sublime!

by Norman Murphy

Editor's note: The Society meeting on July 7 was a rip-roaring success, despite downpours of rain and hail that caused the Wodehouse Walk before it to be cancelled for the first time ever. The Arts Club was packed, the sluicing most enjoyable, and before we knew it, Chairman Hilary Bruce was delivering the Parish Notices and then introducing the evening's speaker, renowned author and Society patron Simon Brett (pictured). In a departure from the norm at our meetings, Simon chose not to speak on Wodehouse but instead entertained us with an original piece, effectively a play in verse, entitled 'A Crime in Rhyme' (published by Frith House in 2000 and available on Amazon and Abebooks), complete with a variety of voices for the different characters. Given the cheers at the end, it would be safe to say that his performance went over with a bang. After the meeting, your editor was challenged by her predecessor to write up a report of the evening in verse. Your editor is no fool, however, and the task was assigned to her long-suffering spouse, who points out that the following tribute to Simon's genius was written "under strong protest".



Normally there isn't time
to try and write reports in rhyme
But a tide in the affairs of man,
leads us to wonder if we can
eschew our normal style – and worse –
express ourselves in doggerel verse.

At the Arts Club that night, we heard Hilary tell us
that members not present were sure to be jealous,
since the speaker she had managed to get
was our polymath patron, Simon Brett.
As we read in a recent *Wooster Sauce*,
Simon, whose books we all knew, of course,
had begun his career in a Santa's grotto –
"I've got to start somewhere" was always his
motto.

He said, "I've written a little play.
I'll read it now, don't go away."
And with this intro, brief and terse,
he acted the whole darn thing – in verse!

It was all the thrillers you've ever read
on holiday or sick in bed.
In a country house in nineteen twenty,
with butlers, servants, peace and plenty,
the detective, clever Lord De Vere,
brought Peter Wimsey very near.
It was clear he had no need to borrow
the little grey cells of Hercule Poirot.

A crusty old colonel, used to magistrates' benches,
distrusted all strangers, especially Frenchies.
"If it's murder that's done, just look for a foreigner.
It's always the way, there's no need for the
coroner."
A harmless young duke, a true Bertie Wooster,

stammered just as Ian Carmichael useter,
while his fiancée, the sweet Lady Polly,
was awf'ly nice and awf'ly jolly –
just right for the part, a positive asset,
with a voice like that of Miss Madeline Bassett.
And to give us a suspect a little bit fancier,
we had Count Volensky, international financier.
When the dowager came on, Simon gave us, thank
 heavens,
the unmistakable "A haaand bag!" of Dame Edith
 Evans.
In a tribute to Prince Charles we thought *very* nice,
the duke's house and spouse became 'hice' and
 'spice'.

Simon drew on Christie, and Carter Dickson
and showed how easy it was to play tricks on
the plots of Innes and Conan Doyle
and made sure the hero had a foil,
in this case an awestruck local cop,
a sergeant with not too much up top.

The plot was good, more clues were found,
suspicion circled round and round.
We were led to the solution, subtly and gently
in a manner befitting the late E.C. Bentley.
And in a denouement even subtler,
the murderer was *not* the butler.

These lines are not written in imitation,
just a simple tribute of admiration.
Please don't view them with thoughts too
 sardonical;
I'm a strong admirer of William McGonagall.
If you wonder why in verse that I sing,
you can blame our editor, plus Tony Ring.

A Dutch Pilgrimage to Plum's England

by Jelle Otten

The Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society first planned to make a trip to Wodehousean England in the early Eighties, but for reasons nobody knows, the plans were never carried out. In the meantime, some Dutch Society members participated in the Wodehouse trips organized by Norman Murphy in 1989, 2000, and 2007. The enthusiastic reports about these trips stimulated the present Board of the Dutch Society to organize a trip to Wodehousean England in 2009 on their own.

On Friday, May 15, a group of 19 Dutch Wodehouse fans travelled by coach from The Netherlands to Eynsham Hall in Witney, near Oxford. Crossing the English Channel from Calais to Dover, we enjoyed the view of the white cliffs of Dover, approaching the English coast. First we visited P. G. Wodehouse's birthplace in Guildford, then we went to Eynsham Hall, which surprised us because it seemed so much like Blandings Castle. On Saturday the 16th we visited David New's Berkshire Pig Breeder's Farm in Black Bourton, Oxfordshire. David has a herd of beautiful Berkshire pigs, and he talked about them very

enthusiastically. In the afternoon the group travelled by fast train from Oxford to London Paddington in order to get to the Green Park Underground station, where Norman Murphy was already waiting to take us on a *double* Wodehouse Walk, viz. through Bertie Wooster's

Mayfair and through Galahad Threepwood's Bohemian London as well. Halfway through the walk, Elin Woodger Murphy joined our group, and at the end we restored the tissues in The Bell and Compass, in the centre of London.

On Sunday our coach took us to Hanley Castle, Upton-upon-Severn and Sudeley Castle, all of them important Wodehouse sites in Worcestershire and

Gloucestershire. On Monday the 18th the group paid a visit to 'Valley Fields' and Dulwich College. Mark O'Neill of Dulwich College gave us an absolutely delicious lunch. Calista Lucy, Keeper of the Archives, and Robert Weaver, Keeper of the Fellows' Library, guided us around Dulwich College and showed us the Wodehouse Museum. Finally, on Tuesday, May 19, we said farewell to Wodehousean England.



Members of the Dutch Society with Norman

Profile of a Committee Member

Paul Rush

Paul Rush earns his daily crust as a police inspector based in Norwich, where he also lives. This Spring saw him celebrate 20 years (man and boy, as he would say) in the constabulary.

Paul joined the Society after seeing its inaugural meeting reported in a national newspaper. His first meeting was the Society's second, and he has been something of an 'ever present' since; he thinks he has missed only two or three of the thrice-yearly meetings. He has represented the Society at cricket, playing against the Dulwich College and Sherlock Holmes teams regularly, though he claims this is with more enthusiasm than talent. He also took part in the Society's first venture into real tennis, reporting on that event for *Wooster Sauce* last year. He has contributed several articles to the journal and is particularly proud of the account he wrote of his Wodehousean encounter with an errant swan in 2007.

Invited to join the Society's committee in 2002, Paul has never held an officer's post but likes to think he has played some small part in the behind-the-scenes work that helps to make the Society such a success.

Paul remembers reading Wodehouse for first time as a teenager and was immediately enthralled by "Mr. Wodehouse's idyllic world" (to quote Evelyn Waugh). He would never claim to be an expert on PGW or his work, regarding himself simply as a fan of the writing. He is especially fond of the Jeeves stories, with the Blandings series coming a close second in his affections. If he was pushed to name his favourite book, he would probably opt for *The Mating Season*. He would willingly discuss the pros and cons of this choice with other members at the next Society meeting.



At the Society dinner in 2006
(Photo by Ginni Beard)

Done Down by the Dusters

*Peter Read reports on the Gold Bats match
against the Dulwich Dusters on June 19*

The acme of recent Gold Bats success against the Dulwich Dusters, a Dulwich College staff cricket team, came in 2007 with an honourable tied match, closely followed by the 2008 draw, when rain stopped play. However in 2009, with the opposition only being able to muster three players at the opening, our team strode onto the pitch with confidence, and when Lee Barford caught and bowled the opener in his first over, omens looked good.



The Gold Bats team at West Wycombe, minus some of the players from the Dulwich match (Photo by Tony Ring)

Sadly, they were mistaken, and soon the remainder of the Dusters team arrived and began scoring freely, several retiring on the maximum 25 runs allowed under arcane PGW rules. Two dropped catches sadly underlined the disparity in skills, but when Oliver Wise arrived to deliver the two obligatory underarm overs (I refer the more technically minded readers to the September 2005 *Wooster Sauce* where the rules are set out), were our fortunes about to change? His varied technique, comprising a mixture of full tosses and rolling the ball along the ground, certainly mesmerised the batsmen until a six over the pavilion aimed straight at Tony Ring's magnificent blue Jaguar, parked carefully behind the changing rooms – tragedy averted a near miss.

Shortly afterwards an historic first occurred when two ladies arrived at the crease, and Gold Bats chivalry was put to the test. Sadly, the Plum standard was lowered as Jenny Thomas in her first match ever was caught out on her second ball. Claire Malloch in her second PGW match steadied the game, but triggered complaints from the pavilion when Dusters started coaching her from the boundary. Bob Miller, stylish as ever in his new role as umpire, ignored the barracking, but justice prevailed as a nameless member of our team ran her out. This ended the innings, with a massive total of 155 on the scoreboard, just five wickets having been taken.

Gamesmanship again reared its head as Elaine Ring, Hilary Bruce, and Elin Murphy set out to undermine the Dusters with groaning tables of magnificent refreshment, but sadly even this did not carry the day.

Opener Chris Sothby set a good standard with a boundary off his first ball, but he was then clean bowled on his next. Other early order players fell. A stroke from one of our team saw a fielder engage in a knockabout with umpire Murray Hedgecock (how could we lose, having provided both umpires?) in his enthusiasm to take the ball, but it headed straight for two visiting PGWS members, Sandra and Raquel from Essex. Fortunately, their lives were saved when Chris Read stopped the ball as it headed for the pavilion, but Chris paid for his chivalry as, although he became top scorer with 20 runs, he was bowled LBW by an underarm ball from Claire Malloch.

Wickets continued to fall, but the change bowlers were clearly weary and Gold Bats hearts rose as it looked as if 'wide' might become top scorer. And so the score rose steadily to 99 for 9, a last wicket stand creating another false hope. However, this was not enough and Oliver eventually succumbed with the scoreboard recording 114 runs from the team. Reports of the after-match sociability are lost.

With apologies to our American readers who may need a translation.

In other cricket news . . . While lack of space precludes your editor from being able to report on this summer's other Gold Bats matches, our annual charity match against the Kirby Strollers at Audley End on August 9 deserves special mention. In the game, which Patrick Kidd reported in his *Times Online* blog of August 11 (picked up by the *Saffron Walden Reporter*), ex-Arsenal footballer Ray Parlour was bowled first ball, given not out under Gold Bats playing conditions, and went on to score 24. By the time stumps was called at 6 p.m. and players and observers had adjourned to the Queens Head in Littlebury, £762 had been raised for Sue Ryder Care and Guide Dogs for the Blind. The match was played in memory of longtime Gold Bat Mike Jackson, and Bob Miller is still accepting contributions in his memory. For details, see Patrick's tribute to Mike on page 15.

The Strange Case of the Disappearing Nephews

Tony Ring reports on the Gold Bats Match against the Sherlock Holmes Society on June 28

The signs were ominous even before the start of the game at West Wycombe. The much-used cliché concerning the perceived age of policemen gained yet another outing when mutterings were heard that “Sherlock Holmes teams grow younger every year”, and for once such sentiments were not misplaced. The three members of the team who were to score virtually all their runs, and take nearly all the Gold Bats wickets, had a combined age of less than the individual ages of more than half the members of our side.

The first ball of the match did nothing to ease our fears, as Mark Wilcox sought in vain to take advantage of the special rule that a batsman cannot be out first ball, being dropped off a skier. Next ball, Andrew Chapman – newly-elected Assistant Treasurer of The P G Wodehouse Society – went one better, being comprehensively bowled before joyfully claiming, like any well-advised squatter, his right to remain. Matters



Opening batsmen Andrew Chapman and Mark Wilcox

moved serenely on until lunchtime, taken with the Gold Bats in a reasonably strong position at 107 for 3, Chapman still there and batting with considerable panache.

During the lunch interval, the local population of red kites, always such

delightful visitors, treated us to plenty of aerobatic close-ups, swooping down to see if we were really true. After lunch, the drama on the field started



A beautiful day at West Wycombe, near the St Lawrence Church and Dashwood Museum

immediately. Andrew Chapman, weighed down with responsibility and pie, soon succumbed for a superb 53, and the innings disintegrated to 136 all out, a target always likely to be within the sights of the trio of energetic Sherlock Holmes youngsters, who had taken seven Gold Bats wickets between them, the Gross figures of 4 for 6 being the best.

When the third Sherlock wicket fell at 50, with the dismissed batsmen having

scored 0, 0 (due to a brilliant slip catch by – yes – Chapman) and 2 respectively, opinions as to our prospects were mixed. The opening batsman, E Hamille, was joined by his brother, R, and together they produced the best batting seen in any of our annual matches, hurrying the score along to 126 before E fell for 76. Young Gross helped R (36 not out) to reach the winning target, and as if in requiem a red kite landed on the pitch. Kites are carrion-eaters, and it seemed as though it was expecting to feed well on the remains of the humiliated Gold Bats.



It transpires that E and R, university students and regular cricketers, are nephews of the Sherlock Holmes Society’s Chairman. Our own Chairman and her nephews, who have played in past years (the nephews, not the Chairman), were conspicuous by their absence. Were they forcibly kept away by Professor Moriarty? We may need to appoint Adrian Mulliner, Detective, to solve the mystery before next year’s match.

(All photos by Tony Ring)

“We aren’t beaten yet,” he said, in his solid way. Kennedy’s chief characteristics were solidity, and an infinite capacity for taking pains. Nothing seemed to tire or discourage him. He kept pegging away till he arrived. The ordinary person, for instance, would have considered the jam-pot, on which he was then engaged, an empty jam-pot. Kennedy saw that there was still a strawberry (or it may have been a section of a strawberry) at the extreme end, and he meant to have that coy vegetable if he had to squeeze the pot to get at it. To take another instance, all the afternoon of the previous day he had bowled patiently at Fenn while the latter lifted every other ball into space. He had been taken off three times, and at every fresh attack he had plodded on doggedly, until at last, as he had expected, the batsman had misjudged a straight one, and he had bowled him all over his wicket. Kennedy generally managed to get there sooner or later.

(From The Head of Kay’s, 1905)

Where Did the Real Jeeves Come From?

The Rev. Simon Parkinson is a Wodehouse devotee who lives in Dewsbury, Yorkshire, which means he is naturally interested in Percy Jeeves (1888–1916), the Yorkshire-born cricketer whose name Wodehouse borrowed for Bertie’s manservant. Since the sources he looked up all indicated that Percy Jeeves was born in Earlsheaton, just over a mile from Dewsbury, Mr Parkinson decided to find out exactly where. There was always the chance of the house still being there, waiting to be photographed. After chasing several dead ends, Mr Parkinson tried the Dewsbury Registry Office, where the relevant birth certificate showed that Earlsheaton, *east* of Dewsbury, had nothing to do with the case. Percy Jeeves was born on March 5, 1888, at Commonsides, Soothill Nether, a mile *north* of Dewsbury, a very different matter. And by one of those happy coincidences that characterise Wodehouse research, young Percy was born in Mr Parkinson’s old parish, the splendidly named Hanging Heaton. As someone I know says often, never believe anything until you check it yourself. Our thanks to Mr Parkinson for doing just that.

My First Wodehouse Experience

by Peter Thompson



When asked by the editor to contribute a few words on this topic, as a newcomer to *Wooster Sauce* I wondered whether I should advise her that such a memory for me was metaphorically in sepia, or should I let her discover the fact that we are talking mid-1950s as a sudden shock to the system, rather in the manner of “one who picking daisies on the railway, has just caught the down express in the small of the back”. Plus we have to supply a photograph! I proffer mine to demonstrate what you can look like if you do not eat your greens or go to bed early.

So when was my entry into the World of Wodehouse? I was just in my teens. The ‘Top Twenty’ was calculated on the sale of sheet music, not records; ‘How Much is That Doggie in the Window?’ was a big hit; and *Mrs Dale’s Diary* on the radio was the nearest we got to a soap. Life could not get much sweeter than that. But for my bedside table, I wanted to find a new author to give me as much

pleasure in adolescence as I had enjoyed at an earlier age from Just William, Jennings, Billy Bunter, Bunkle, Biggles, and Bulldog Drummond. I wanted something different from the books recommended by the English teacher, as any 13/14-year-old will, and not the type of books thought appropriate by the intelligent and kindly neighbour who gave me *Stalky & Co* (Lord Snooty and his pals in novel form) or the one who recommended Dornford Yates (period arrogance).

My mother it was who introduced me to PGW at the local Pinner library, which had a plentiful supply, unlike many libraries in the mid ’50s which still maintained a prejudice against him. In Pinner, PGW was on the bookshelves, but not for long once I had my ‘Eureka’ moment. I could not get enough of him, and fortunately not only did the Pinner library come up with the goods, but the school library did surprisingly likewise.

My first Wodehouse, I believe, was *Summer Lightning*, but if it was not, it was certainly another Blandings novel, and one book followed another, devoured with relish and such immediate pleasure that over the intervening years there are few of his novels that I have not read many times over. Like so many readers, I just love his use of language, whether in simile or metaphor or just in narrative explanation. It flows from the page, although it was polished and refined many a time in the creative process. Genius is often 90% perspiration and 10% inspiration, but however it was done I am so eternally grateful that it was.

If now I was allowed only one sphere of PGW novels, it would have to be back where it all started at Blandings, with Clarence pottering and lovingly tending to the most pilfered porker in fact or fiction, with Gally treating us all to his tales of the Gaiety Theatre and Beach to tales of his stomach lining, and imposters by the score putting one over albeit temporarily on the Blandings security network of Lady Constance and the super Efficient Baxter.

Permitted one novel only on a desert island? Give me *Leave it to Psmith*, the perfect combination.

The world of Wodehouse is a world in which to lose yourself for hours of totally selfish pleasure.

Announcing the Publication of *Three Wodehouse Walks* by N.T.P. Murphy

For more than a quarter of a century, Norman Murphy – former Society Chairman and current Remembrancer – has been conducting Wodehouse Walks around London, giving pleasure to hundreds of Wodehouseans eager to know the answers to questions such as “Where did Bertie Wooster live?” and “Was there really a Junior Ganymede Club?” The original Walk – covering Bertie Wooster’s West End – was soon joined by a jaunt around ‘Valley Fields’ (the Dulwich of Wodehouse’s time), and for the Week With Wodehouse in 2007, Norman created a new Walk taking us through the London of Gally Threepwood and Stanley Featherstonehaugh Utridge.

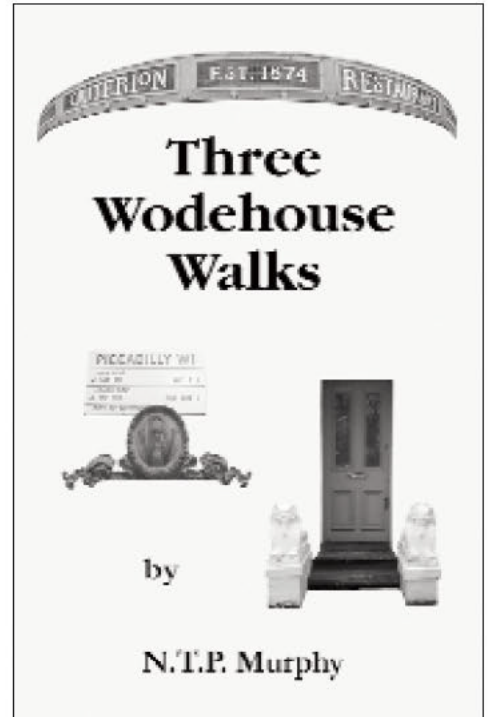
Two years ago, muttering about a bad hip, Norman announced he would no longer be giving Wodehouse Walks, and the Society began to investigate ways to make them available to our members. Yet in spite of his threats to quit, Norman has continued to conduct Walks on an occasional basis, including abbreviated Walks through Mayfair prior to Society meetings. Nonetheless, many members, whether they have been on the Walks or not, have been clamouring to see them captured in print, and so – at last! – a book has been produced. In *Three Wodehouse Walks* Norman takes us along all three routes, with commentary that includes not only stories about the houses and locations that Wodehouse used in his books but also some wonderful anecdotes about little-known historical landmarks in London.

Three Wodehouse Walks has been published to coincide with Plum Pie, Heywood Hill’s special exhibition on Wodehouse, and because of that, it is initially available *only* from Heywood Hill at a reduced price of £8, from 21 September to 16 October. The normal list price thereafter will be £10, so be sure to get your copy from Heywood Hill *now* (see ordering information below).

When Plum Pie has closed, from 17 October onwards, *Three Wodehouse Walks* will also be available directly from Norman at a special price of £8 plus P&P for *Society members only*. This offer will only be good until Christmas Eve; thereafter, Norman, too, will be selling the book at the normal list price of £10, plus P&P. An order form will be included in the December issue of *Wooster Sauce*, but for those members who live outside the United Kingdom, will want copies in time for Christmas, and will need ordering information,

But why wait? Heywood Hill has *Three Wodehouse Walks* now and will happily take your order. So get it now – and while you’re at it, don’t miss Plum Pie. Happy Walking!

***Three Wodehouse Walks* (Bertie Wooster’s West End / The London of Gally Threepwood and Stanley Utridge / Valley Fields: A Wodehouse Walk in Dulwich); ISBN 978-0-9554209-3-1; 94 pages, illustrated. List Price £10.**



A Wodehousean Lyric of a Different Sort

Barry Day, author of *The Lyrics of P.G. Wodehouse*, informs us that the 1938 Warner Bros. film *Cowboy from Brooklyn* includes a song with music by Richard Whiting and lyric by Johnny Mercer entitled ‘I’ve Got a Heartful of Music’. It consists of a single verse and refrain, and the verse reads:

Jeeves, get out my Sunday suit,	Pardon me for singing, Jeeves,
Lay out my Sunday Style,	But words are rather weak
And pardon me while	And I am much too happy
I put on my Sunday smile.	Just to speak.

It might, of course, be relevant that the two films *Thank You, Jeeves* and *Step Lively, Jeeves* had been produced in 1936 and 1937 (though by Twentieth-Century Fox).

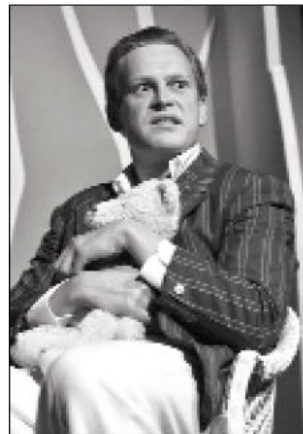
Summer Lightning in Keswick

Reviewed by Paddy Briggs

This year the Theatre by the Lake in Keswick celebrates its 10th anniversary, and over these 10 years your reviewer has been fortunate to see all of its main summer repertory productions. It is an exceptional theatre both in its lovely location by Derwent Water and in the sheer quality of performance. There are rarely household name stars in these productions, but if anyone wants living proof of the depth of talent in the British professional theatre, they only have to go to Keswick. This year the same cast members appear in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Chorus of Disapproval*, and *Summer Lightning* – Shakespeare, Ayckbourn, and Wodehouse – not a bad sampler of creative writing, English-style.

The stage adaptation of *Summer Lightning* by the versatile Giles Havergal dates back to 1992, when it was, slightly improbably, first performed at the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre. It was new to me, and as a confirmed Wodehousian since my teenage years in the 1960s, I was both excited and slightly anxious that this version of Plum's masterpiece would be sufficiently true to the original. I was especially concerned that the book's undoubted star, Empress of Blandings, would not suffer too much from stage fright and that she would be able to shake off any inappropriate gibes at her rotundity from ignorant members of the audience. In fact the welfare of the Empress is properly taken care of, for her appearances are fleeting and we only see her ears and the hint of a snout – but there is plenty of grunting from time to time. The Empress was understandably distressed when one of the cast tactlessly mentioned "apple sauce" towards the end – but she recovered in time to take a discreet curtain call. Members of our august Society need have no fears about the production either – it is scrupulously true to Plum's original. Indeed, other than the excision of the Efficient Baxter (a decision of which Lord Emsworth would no doubt have heartily approved), the plot and the characters are unchanged from the novel.

The dialogue is pure Wodehouse, and there is also a clever device whereby the main characters add narrative links to describe themselves, their thoughts, or the action. All of this seemed unadulterated PGW – the adapter has cleverly produced a play in which it is the words and whimsy of the Master which shine through. The audience took a few minutes to get in the mood – the first big laugh came for Galahad's "Buffy Struggles" story – Buffy was "dead inside the year" after giving up alcohol for tea – "run over by a hansom cab". From time to time



the characters burst into song, mostly standards of the period, and this seems quite natural because the play never takes itself too seriously, but it is also never a send-up – there is no mockery of the Wodehouse oeuvre. The singing, dancing, and colourful set combine at times to give an "end of the pier" feel to the production which, with most of us in holiday mood, seemed appropriate. The action shifts effortlessly between Blandings and London and, for me, the scene in Mario's was the high spot of the evening with Ronnie's ill-directed assault on the oleaginous Pilbeam being played out hilariously in slow motion.

The cast were all very good, with Richard Galazka's Ronnie and Andrew Whitehead's very camp Pilbeam particularly notable. I also greatly enjoyed John Webb's fine Lord Emsworth – and his appearance right at the end as Wodehouse himself to express his "modest hope" that "the story will be considered worthy of inclusion in the list of the Hundred Best Books Called Summer Lightning". The play, and this production of it, will certainly feature in the hundred best plays of the same name.



The talented cast (l r): Simeon Truby (Beach), Katie Hayes (Millicent Threepwood), John Webb (Lord Emsworth), Ben Ingles (Hugo Carmody), Eliza Hunt (Lady Constance), Richard Galazka (Ronnie Fish), Peter Macqueen (Gally Threepwood), Ella Vale (Sue Brown), Andrew Whitehead (Percy Pilbeam).

Above, Hugo makes a date to dance while Pilbeam schemes, and a jealous Ronnie broods with a companion.

(Photographs by Keith Pattison)

Summer Lightning is in repertory at the Theatre by the Lake in Keswick until November 6 (see p.24 for details).

The Word Around the Clubs

BBC Radio Plays

Peter Read writes that the BBC is about to release a complete collection of *Jeeves and Wooster* radio plays starring Michael Hordern as Jeeves and our own Richard Briers as Bertie Wooster. The boxed set includes *The Code of the Woosters*; *The Inimitable Jeeves*; *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*; *Joy in the Morning*; *Right Ho, Jeeves*; and *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*. The collection will be released on October 7 at a price of £57.99 and can be pre-ordered through the BBC's website bbcshop.com.

Bollinger Everyman Winner

This year's winner of the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for comic writing has gone to Geoff Dyer, author of *Jeff in Venice, Death in Varanasi*, published by Pantheon.

Pigs in the News Times Three

(1) An editorial in the August 15 *Guardian* on the role of pigs in the present fashion for home farming sang their praises as intelligent and responsive, good at football and racing. "A DIY store," it added, "is proposing to stock pig arcs, the name now given to the bijou residence where the Empress of Blandings once lived." The editorial concluded, "To dwell on their less noble qualities is to fail to appreciate the 'wonderful, magical animals' that Homer Simpson in Springfield as well as Lord Emsworth at Blandings Castle came to love."

(2) In March a BBC News report described how "a former Royal Marine commando put his military training to use as police were called to deal with a large black pig running amok in a Kent seaside town." It seems somebody had let six-month-old Pepper loose, and a merry chase ensued that ultimately resulted in the former commando (now a PC) cornering it in an alley. Pepper stayed the night at the police station before returning home, no worse for the wear.

(3) Several members spotted this in a *Times Online* article of September 24, 2008: "In Australia pigs really can fly – and they have to do it four times a day in front of an audience of hundreds." The Royal Melbourne Show, an agricultural fair, features not only pig racing but pig diving. "The performing pigs last only one season in the troupe, although the royal show makes no official mention of their fate. With names such as Ham Bone, Bacon Bone and Miss Porky Chop, their final destination might not be too difficult to guess."

A Letter to the Editor

by Alan Hall

I do agree with the comments of Tim Andrew (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2009) that Wodehouse adaptations on the screen invariably disappoint when compared to the original writings. However, I fear I must take exception with him if he really thinks the Fry/Laurie *Jeeves and Wooster* series comes close to the originals. He obviously hasn't studied the psychology of the individual.

Whilst I much enjoy this series – the casting of the supporting characters was superb – the late Clive Exton did make Stephen Fry say some most un-Jeevesian remarks and sometimes behave completely out of character. The ship-board scene in, I believe, the final episode where Jeeves escorts his young master over the side is pure 'apple sauce'.

It does sometimes seem that Mr Exton was writing more with Stephen Fry in mind than Jeeves. Why on earth, in 'Jeeves Gives His Notice', change the banjo for a trombone? Plum knew that the banjo was a humorous instrument; there is a legion of jokes about the banjo but I can't think of one about the staid and sober trombone.

Of all the screen versions of Wodehouse that I have seen, the one that comes nearest to the spirit of the originals, to my mind, is the splendid *Wodehouse Playhouse* series featuring John Alderton and Pauline Collins. Of course, this is a very subjective matter as we all have our own mental images of the characters Plum created. One man's Jeeves is another man's Dennis Price.

Priests, Parishes, and Placenames

Murray Hedgcock writes: I derive much entertainment from monitoring the regular 'Appointments in the Clergy' recorded in the *Daily Telegraph*, bringing happy reminders of The Great Sermon Handicap and other clerical detail in Wodehouse. On June 24 the appointments included:

The Rev. David Pickering, assistant curate Hornchurch Holy Cross (Diocese of Chelmsford) to be priest-in-charge Fyfield with Tubney and Kingston Bagpuize (Oxford).

The Rev. Paula Robinson, rector, Calvary Episcopal Church, Columbia (Missouri, Episcopal Church) to be priest-in-charge Healaugh with Wighill, Bilbrough and Askham Richard; priest-in-charge Long Marston; priest-in-charge Rufforth with Moor Monkton and Hessay; and priest-in-charge Tockwith and Bilton with Bickerton (York).

The Rev. Jennifer Seggar, ordained local minister, Bildeston with Wattisham and Lindsey; Whatfield with Semer, Nedging and Naughton (St. Edmunds and Ipswich) to be assistant curate Sudbury and Chilton (same diocese).

(This is a splendid example of England's wonderful placenames, in which Wodehouse took such joy. –Ed.)

Two Books on Wodehouse: Reviews

Basham on Wodehouse

Reviewed by Norman Murphy

Tom Smith's *Basham on Wodehouse* is a pleasant addition to the collections of essays and articles on Wodehouse in my library. His book is short (145 pages), comprising two theatrical reviews and eight essays, and I read several of them before in Wodehouse journals, but I am glad he has published them. He raises some interesting points, has a lightness of touch that makes him easy to read, and three of his essays are new – to me, at least. And, while two of these deal with the well-worn topic of the Berlin broadcasts, they include new material from the FBI and British Foreign Office.

Tom's essay on *The Swoop* brilliantly describes the invasion scare that swept the country from c.1895 and the consequent creation of the Territorial Army, the Boy Scouts, and similar organizations, some of which I had never heard of (Lord Rodney's Cadets and the Lads' Drill Association). He makes the important point, also new to me, that the idea of public service by the young was so strong that, within six years of its foundation, the Boy Scouts had enrolled over a third of all boys in the United Kingdom.

His piece on Army officers in Wodehouse's stories is good and displays a very good understanding of their place in the British social scene. It is followed by an article that I find absolutely fascinating. 'P. G. Wodehouse: Master Spy' appeared in *Plum Lines* in 2002 and recounts how the FBI thought that the manuscripts of *Joy in the Morning* and *Money in the Bank* that Wodehouse sent to America might contain secret messages! They came to the conclusion that the manuscripts didn't, but they did find out that the Germans had thought exactly the same thing. This is astonishing enough, but then we learn that J. Edgar Hoover decided that *Piccadilly Jim* was used by the Russians as a code book and set out to try and prove it! I have delved into some dark archives myself and I am very impressed. Either freedom of information means much more in America than it does over here, or Tom Smith has friends in very high places.

The essay 'Jeeves and Servant Leadership' is interesting, as are the theatrical reviews of *Over the Moon* and *The Play IS the Thing* at Seattle, but I suppose most readers will be interested in the two final essays, which deal with the Berlin broadcasts. They do nothing to detract from Wodehouse's basic innocence in the matter but do throw an interesting light on the political infighting behind the broadcasts. They are not

Basham on
Wodehouse

THOMAS SMITH

written to amuse – they are scholarly papers that provide hitherto little-known information on the matter from an impressively wide range of sources.

Tom Smith has put a lot of work into these essays, and it shows – in the best sense. It is satisfying to see him supporting his statements with footnotes from a most impressive array of sources, and I have to say again that I am glad he decided to publish. And for my money 'P. G. Wodehouse: Master Spy' is a sidelight on Wodehouse work that I still find almost unbelievable.

Basham on Wodehouse by Thomas Smith is available on Amazon.com for US\$15.99 plus shipping.

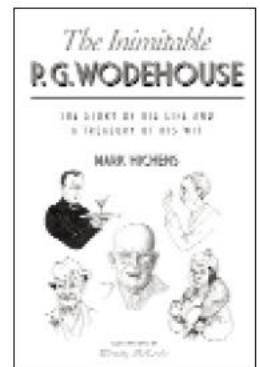
The Inimitable P G Wodehouse

Reviewed by Tony Ring

Perhaps the most important chapter in this short book about Wodehouse's life and work is the preface, for it is here that one finds the author's rationale for its publication. Mark Hichens states that his objective has been (in part) to seek out passages in Wodehouse's fiction with autobiographical implications and fit them into the Wodehouse story. Within these limitations he has done a good job, but he has been highly selective in his approach.

My first question on reading the substantive text was: "For whom was it written?" It is lucid, easy to read, and succinct (with less than 150 pages of text, a small page format, and set in Garamond 14 pt type, it needs to be!) – but is there a class of reader to whom it says anything important? I have been unable to imagine one. The book seems to integrate the author's impressions on reading a selection of Wodehouse's fiction with ideas from some of the earlier biographies (he states clearly that he has not made use of "newly discovered material", raising a suspicion that the principal text was first drafted some years ago), and the Wodehouse pseudo-autobiographical works, *Performing Flea* and *Over Seventy*. Most of the connections he seeks to draw between fictional episodes and Wodehouse's own life are self-evident or have been written about before – and there is much that is not covered.

Moreover, some of his statements just do not ring true. "His family had no particular connection with Dulwich . . ." he writes in the first chapter, failing to appreciate that Plum went to Dulwich College simply because he had visited his brother Armine there and



liked it. In fact, the author does not (as far as I can tell – a serious failing of the book is that there is no index) mention any of Plum’s three brothers in the entire book – it is as though he is unaware of their existence.

The book has other important omissions. The lack of an index makes it impossible to check, but on first reading I found no mention of the golf stories, the Mulliner stories, or the Drones Club stories, all important strands of his work. It was Wodehouse’s own prowess at golf (or lack of it) that enabled him to write more than 30 stories acknowledged to be amongst the best of golf fiction. Right within the scope of the book’s purpose, one might think. His work in the straight theatre is dismissed, wrongly, as “never successful”. Discussion of the importance to his fiction of his work in the theatre as a whole is restricted to a few paragraphs about *A Damsel in Distress*; and although there is a short chapter about his time in Hollywood, there is no attempt to draw links between that and the fiction he based on it.

The second part of the book consists of almost 300 entertaining quotations from Wodehouse’s fiction – but without a single reference to their sources. Surely one purpose of such extensive extracts is to encourage the reader to read the relevant story or chapter to understand and enjoy the context.

So to return to my question – for whom is the book written? Wodehouse aficionados will not find anything new in it, despite the hopes expressed in the preface. It is obviously not written for a student – the lack of an index and the lack of sources for quotations would make this a quite unusable book. Neither can the author specifically be trying to encourage new readers to the oeuvre. Apart from the highly selective range of books referred to in the text, his appendix entitled ‘The Books of P G Wodehouse’ lists fewer than half Wodehouse’s output, does not even include all the Jeeves and Wooster and Blandings stories, and for some eccentric reason omits every book published after about 1951!

The book was written with much affection to record for posterity the personal enjoyment Mark Hichens evidently gets from Wodehouse’s writings, rather than as a commercial venture. Wodehouse once expressed the sentiment that he sometimes believed books should be published in an edition of one for the author to read and reread with pride. Maybe the rationale for this book has a hidden agenda.

The Inimitable P G Wodehouse, by Mark Hichens, is published by the Book Guild and sells for £12.99 plus P&P through their website, www.bookguild.co.uk; by phone from Vine House, 01825 767396; or on Amazon.co.uk.

Mike Jackson, RIP

by Patrick Kidd

Editor’s note: Patrick published the following tribute to Gold Bats player Mike Jackson, who died on 26 June, in his Times Online blog of July 1, 2009, and it is reprinted here with his kind permission. Our team’s annual charity match at Audley End in August was played in Mike’s memory, with half of the proceeds going to Mike’s favourite charity, Sue Ryder Care St John’s. Any Society member who would like to make a contribution in Mike’s name can make the cheque out to Sue Ryder Care and send it to Bob Miller, One Old School Field, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 7HU.

The King of Pop was not the only Michael Jackson to pass away last week. Sad news reached me today that Mike Jackson, No 3 bat for the PG Wodehouse Society cricket team, lost his battle with lung cancer last Friday.

Regular readers will recall that I often play for and against the Wodehouse Soc, whose cricket team are called the Gold Bats after a 1904 novel by Wodehouse. Mike was a valuable member of the team, a fine batsman and talented footballer in his youth and a lovely man to have in the dressing room.

It helped that he could play cricket as well as anyone in the team, but Mike would have been in every XI regardless of talent because of his name. When Bob Miller, the Gold Bats captain, first met Mike, he was astonished to discover that he shared a name with one of Wodehouse’s most famous characters, who made his debut in literature precisely a century ago.

Mike Jackson is the sidekick of Psmith, the monocle-wearing dandy, and one of the illustrious Jackson brothers, who are trained by a cricket pro called Saunders during their school holidays and go on to play county cricket. Mike, the youngest, is unable to go to Cambridge – and thence to the England team? – because of a collapse in the family finances, so he has to take a job in a bank. In one memorable story, he bunks off work to go and play at Lord’s because his brother’s team is a man short. How could his namesake not be an automatic selection for the Gold Bats?

He had been ill for some time but although he did not feel strong enough to play in last year’s charity match at Audley End between the Gold Bats and my Kirby Strollers side, Mike still came to umpire the fixture. I remember the last thing he said to me was after I took three wickets in that match: “What’s happened to your game? You were hopeless last time I saw you bowl.” Some days you get lucky; some days, alas, you receive the finger from the eternal umpire. Mike will be much missed.

Jeevesville, USA

by Frank Devine

Born in New Zealand, Frank Devine moved to Australia at 17 and became a well-known and respected journalist, editor of The Australian, and cricket enthusiast. Sadly, he died of cancer on July 3, 2009, age 77. A longer version of this article appeared in June 2007 in Quadrant, an Australian monthly journal; this is printed with Quadrant's kind permission.

Unable to suppress the smart-arse which lurks within me, I experienced a sense of triumph recently when I became convinced that I had discovered the true source of P. G. Wodehouse's inspiration.

Though Wodehouse's present-day readers may be a coterie, his longevity and transcultural appeal are unique. The life of the farceur is short. Once-popular contemporary comic novelists, such as A. A. Milne, Denis Mackail, and Jerome K. Jerome, have vanished virtually without a trace. Ben Travers, famous for his Aldwych Theatre farces, is pretty much forgotten. Only W. S. Gilbert, whom Wodehouse acknowledged as an exemplary influence, matches the creator of Lord Emsworth in lasting appeal, and he had some very good music to boost him.

When I happily resumed association with Wodehouse this year [2007], I became conscious fairly soon of something not quite right about his characters, as beautifully as they fitted his narrative. Yet it was improbable that a writer as gifted as Wodehouse could inaccurately represent the inhabitants of a milieu to which he had contributed so much in the way of structural design.

Suddenly I was struck by a revelation which, in an instant, put me a step ahead of literary critics such as George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh.

"His picture of English society," Orwell wrote in a 1946 essay, "[was] formed before 1914. It was a naïve, traditional and, at bottom, admiring picture. His books are aimed not, obviously, at a highbrow audience but at an audience educated along traditional lines. The period was really the Edwardian age, and Bertie Wooster, if he ever existed, was killed around 1915."

Waugh, in his turn, rejected Orwell's timeline as balderdash. "Mr Wodehouse's characters," he wrote in 1961, "are not, as has been fatuously suggested, survivals of the Edwardian age. They are creations of pure fancy. . . . All, whatever the delinquencies attributed to them, exist in a pristine paradisaic innocence.

"For Mr Wodehouse there has been no fall of Man: no 'aboriginal calamity'. . . . The gardens of Blandings Castle are that original garden from which we are all exiled."

Orwell's portrayal of Wodehouse as Edwardian has lost favour with most critics, who tend to accept the Waugh interpretation. However, Waugh's theory of the parthenogenetic origin of Wodehouse's characters strikes me as sentimental and his exposition of it uncharacteristically arch. He, ahead of most, would have known that humour cannot exist in a paradisaic vacuum.

I began to sense a familiarity with Wodehouse's world that was out of proportion to my slight knowledge of the ways of the British upper classes and, for that matter of Edwardian England, to which watching *Upstairs, Downstairs* had made the most substantial contribution. From whence this familiarity? *Et voila*, as the saying goes. Wodehouse's settings were not English at all and his characters didn't feel quite right because they weren't English, either. They were American, a milieu with which I am familiar.



Frank Devine (photo by Matt Turner/NewsPix)

At its lightest level, the Wodehouse oeuvre is a spin-off from genial American stereotypes of England and the English – except for the lively, self-reliant young heroines, and one leading character to whom I will come later, who are authentically American. The stereotypes survive today, expressed through the popularity with American moviegoers of Hugh Grant, playing Wodehousian silly asses but with sex appeal, and the cult status of Basil Fawlty, darker than Bertie Wooster but clearly heir to the crazed Duke of Dunstable.

What a discovery! The Wodehouse *dramatis personae* with hardly a true Brit among them! Regrettable that Orwell and Waugh hadn't survived to squirm over their failure to see what I had seen.

Unfortunately, like most of my intellectual discoveries, this one turned out to have been discovered already. Wodehouse blew the secret himself in a 1951 letter to his friend, Denis Mackail, writing:

It's perfectly all right for [Orwell] or any other critic to say that my stuff is . . . out of date. I know it is. But why try to drive it home by saying that my out-of-touchness with English life is due to the fact that I did not set foot in England for sixteen years before 1939?

If only these blighters would realise that I started writing about Bertie Wooster and comic earls because I was in America and couldn't write American stories and the only English characters the American public would read about were exaggerated dudes. It's as simple as that.

Although his biographer, Frances Donaldson, considered Wodehouse an unreliable source of information about himself, I've no doubt he told it as it was to Mackail about the genesis of his comic masterpieces. However, I am not convinced that it was "as simple as that" or, at any rate, that it remained as simple as that.

I owe a debt to Murray Hedgcock, a distinguished Australian expatriate journalist and prominent member of the U.K. Wodehouse Society, for directing me to evidence of Wodehouse's role in entrenching and strengthening the American stereotype of class-ridden English society. From official documents made public in 2002, the BBC broadcast the revelation that Wodehouse had been proposed as a Companion of Honour in 1967 but that the British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Patrick Deane, had opposed it, partly on the grounds of controversial but innocuous broadcasts Wodehouse had made while an internee in Germany but also because "the award of this high honour would give currency to a Bertie Wooster image of the British character which we are doing our best to eradicate".

Later, in 1971, when Wodehouse was being considered for a knighthood, eventually conferred in 1975, the Foreign Office again stood in the way, on the grounds that Wodehouse, having become an American citizen, would only be entitled to honours for some service to British interests. An official, unable to suppress the prat within, minuted the opinion that "the fact that Mr Wodehouse writes in English can scarcely be held to constitute services to this country".

That Westminster mandarins attributed to frivolous works of fiction such power to give the wrong impression is remarkable. It indicates a suspicion on their part that Wodehouse's work had been infiltrated by some alien, un-English cultural influence. Sir Humphrey was, as usual, right on the ball.

One shouldn't make too much of Wodehouse's notorious inability to get straight the timetables of trains running between Paddington and Market Blandings, but there is a solid case to be made for his laying the foundations of Blandings Castle in Shropshire and then carrying the plans with him to America, where he finished construction, in stages – with departure times from Paddington increasingly irrelevant. Wodehouse spent by far the greater part of his adult life outside England, including the last 25 years on 17 wooded acres identified by Herbert Wind in a *New Yorker* profile as "Blandings Castle, Long Island".

Wodehouse became enormously rich in America, which he visited for the first time in 1904, earning as much as \$50,000 from the *Saturday Evening Post*, writing lyrics for Jerome Kern's songs in a succession of

Broadway musical hits and getting more than \$100,000 a year from Hollywood for doing practically nothing. His American residences, suites in grand hotels, and a penthouse on Park Avenue were all Blandings Castle as a work in progress. Waugh would have been on the ball with Sir Humphrey had he presented this American Blandings as a paradise from which the British landed gentry were specifically exiled.

Those sceptical about the un-Englishness of Blandings should take note of this passage in a 1930 letter from Wodehouse to Mackail:

I sometimes don't get out of the garden for three or four days at a time. . . . My days follow each other in a regular procession. I get up, swim, breakfast, work till two, swim again, work till seven and the day is over. . . . It's really rather jolly. We go out very little.

This is the preferred routine of Lord Emsworth (gardening and tending his Empress of Blandings) – but Wodehouse was writing from Beverly Hills.

It is inconceivable that somebody as gifted and intelligent as Wodehouse, spending so much time in America, would not have moved through the superficiality of American stereotypes to see class-ridden English society as bizarre, inefficient, and intrinsically undesirable. Too good-humoured for satire, Wodehouse employed robust burlesque to describe the anomaly of British class distinction in the 20th century. I'm not convinced by assertions (by Orwell among others) that Wodehouse viewed the England he left behind with unqualified admiration and affection. Did his potty peers and pampered Drones need to be quite as moronic as he made them out to be? For his literary purposes, yes.

Jeeves is Wodehouse's quintessential non-English character, preposterous in his guise as an English valet, as phony, in fact, as the many impostors at Blandings. No English lower-class autodidact could have equipped himself with the range of literary references with which Jeeves swamps Bertie. No English gentleman's gentleman would blend so much dumb insolence with bossiness towards his master. Jeeves's arrogance in keeping Bertie in the dark about most key plot developments is not the behaviour of an English lackey. Not to mention his letting Bertie go unattended to Cannes because he, Jeeves, did not want to miss Ascot. Or his Machiavellian manoeuvre of sending Bertie on a purposeless 30-kilometre, night-time bicycle ride (*Right Ho, Jeeves*) so that, in his absence, Jeeves could calm a variety of house party feuds by focusing everybody's hatred on his employer.

I asked myself: what category of downtrodden but subversive American Wodehouse was likely to have observed during his expatriate years, low of status no matter what their array of skills, often in forced subservience to people vastly inferior in energy and intelligence?

As a stereotype and imposter, I suppose Jeeves passes muster as an Englishman, but when it comes to soul, Jeeves is clearly a black American.

Puns in Wodehouse

This past spring, a discussion on PGWnet began when a member quoted a recent *New York Times* article on puns in which the writer called Wodehouse “the 20th century’s finest humorist” but also said Our Hero didn’t use puns. “Did he?” was the question, and of course that inspired a slew of responses from the v. knowledgeable online Wodehouseans. Almost at once somebody offered “Way down upon the soigné river” (*The Mating Season* and *Ring for Jeeves*), almost certainly original Wodehouse. This prompted a response from another PGWnetter pointing out that Plum put his puns into the mouths of his characters, “and some of them are really, really staggeringly awful” – with the ‘soigné’ example being among the worst.

Some of the other examples people mentioned were well-known jokes of Wodehouse’s day. When Lord Ickenham says his wife has gone to the West Indies and Bill Oakshott says “Jamaica?”, the reply “No, she went of her own accord” has whiskers on it. And while the Bigger/Mrs Bigger/Miss Bigger questions and answers are amusing, are they really puns or merely wordplay games? The Wembley/Thursday joke Bertie tells so badly at Deverill Hall was the text of a famous comic postcard of the 1920s, while the ‘Rushin’ ballet’ crack in Catsmeat’s Pat and Mike cross-talk act was Wodehouse’s memory of dozens of music-hall cross-talk acts exactly like it.

Another PGWnetter quoted a more subtle pun playing on the words *Peke* and *pique* in ‘Portrait of a Disciplinarian’, prompting somebody else to recall a possible variation in which, he thought, Wodehouse said something about the stout Cortez being “silent, upon a Peke in Darien” (a deliberate pun on Keats’s poem, which, as we know, Plum quoted and misquoted frequently). This variation, however, could not be tracked down.

Society member **Kris Fowler** suggested a passage from *Money in the Bank*, “when Jeff and Anne are discussing whether the diamonds will be found and thus whether she’ll have a ‘dot’, as the French call a

dowry, and Jeff says, sure, he’d like to have ‘some dot’. I think this is a lovely pun, but our own Elsie Bean (who knows) tells me that the French word, which I had assumed followed the same pronunciation rules as ‘mot’, instead rhymes with ‘culotte’, which would spoil it. It’s possible there was no pun intended here, but I suspect there was and that PGW had made the same mistake I did.”

But it was late in the exchange when one PGWnetter finally quoted what is, perhaps, Wodehouse’s best pun in the splendid exchange between Madeline Bassett and Bertie:

“You know your Shelley, Bertie.”

“Oh, am I?”

By pure coincidence, the PGWnet discussion occurred not long after your editor received a contribution from **Alan Dean**, who pointed out how subtly Wodehouse used puns and quoted from ‘Jeeves and the Greasy Bird’ when Bertie seeks Jeeves’ advice:

Jeeves: “I understand you perfectly, sir. You would prefer to name the protagonists A and B.”

Bertie: “Now until quite recently B was engaged to —”

Jeeves: “Shall we call him C, sir?”

Bertie: “Caesar’s as good a name as any, I suppose.”

As another example, when Jeeves is telling Bertie that the word *Eulalie* will make Spode wilt, Alan points out that Wodehouse resisted the temptation to give us ‘Eulalie, Sir’ but gives us the correct ‘Eulalie Soeurs’.

How many puns are there in Wodehouse? How many are really his? Are puns good or bad? And, before we dismiss them out of hand, note that Henry W. Fowler in his magisterial *Modern English Usage* wrote: “Puns are good, bad, & indifferent, & only those who lack the wit to make them are unaware of the fact.” So, what do readers think?

Spotted in Dulwich

Larissa Saxby-Bridger writes: Prior to the Society’s cricket match at Dulwich College (*see p.8*), my children and I were having luncheon at Pizza Express in Dulwich Village (a building with a very interesting history where I used to work). Whilst seated at our table, I glanced at the walls and noticed painted pictorials, one of a cricket bat and ball and, on another wall, the name P G Wodehouse and a spiffing school tie. At least I assume it is a school tie – I am sure the Society’s experts will know! I thought this was absolutely marvellous, and my daughter Liberty took a photograph of the picturesque tribute on my mobile phone. In all, there are four names that appear with pictorial tributes on the same wall, including Bob Monkhouse with a joke book.



Teaching P. G. Wodehouse

by Rebecca A. Brown

I encountered P. G. Wodehouse for the first time in June 2008 when my copy of *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: The Twentieth Century and Beyond* arrived. As I was planning my fall 20th-century British literature class, I flipped through the text and was stopped on page 200 by a striking black-and-white illustration of a bald, smiling P. G. Wodehouse. Suddenly, I remembered an Edwardian and interwar literary study that referred to Wodehouse in a footnote, dismissing Wodehouse's comical works due to their mainstream appeal in the 1920s and 1930s. I decided to give Wodehouse the chance that the critic denied him. By the time I finished 'Honeysuckle Cottage' (the story the anthology included), I was enchanted by Wodehouse's ghost story, wherein the detective writer, James Rodman, is haunted by a 'miasma of sentimentalism' at the country cottage he inherits from his dead aunt (the fictional romance writer, Leila Pinckney). I was especially impressed by Wodehouse's commentary on country life and city life, as well as his stylistic shifts from detective fiction ("Silently, like a panther, he made one quick step to the desk, noiselessly opened a drawer, drew out his automatic") to overly-sentimental romance ("On the mat stood the most beautiful girl he had ever beheld. A veritable child of Faerie"). I was convinced I must use the story in my 20th-century British literature class.

My first opportunity to teach Wodehouse at a university in San Antonio, Texas, was memorable. The class tackled the story after a disheartening hour and a half devoted to Virginia Woolf. They were so stupefied into near-apathy by her stream-of-consciousness writing in 'Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street' that I suggested that we turn to Wodehouse. Instantly, all 21 students smiled, and one shouted, "I love this story! It's so funny!" I asked them to formulate answers to three brief questions about 'Honeysuckle Cottage', then we would have a class discussion. Two questions concerned humor while the third question considered the connection between the setting of Wodehouse's story and the setting in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, which we had read earlier.

The answers to the third question ranged from superficial ("both stories take place in the English countryside") to extremely thoughtful ("Grahame seems to idealize the countryside while Wodehouse exposes it in a hilarious manner. This is not the countryside of

Edwardian house parties; rather it's a mildly frightening place that subsists on urban nostalgia"). One student even mentioned Wodehouse's hilarious repetition of "the apple-cheeked housekeeper", which painted the country cottage as a "rosy, happy place" and mocked anonymous housekeepers throughout British literature. Two lines that provoked much laughter occur after James dives into the river to save Rose's obnoxious dog Toto from drowning. Wodehouse writes, "'Yes, you are brave – brave,' the girl whispered." James responds, "I am wet – wet." James's mockery of Rose's response elicited much appreciation from the class.

Students also drew attention to Colonel Carteret's inability and unwillingness to remember James's name ("I may call you George?" "No, John, my boy") as a source of humour. However, the most appealing part of the story was near the end, when Wodehouse subverts the happy romance story conclusion: "Then, together, man and dog passed silently into the sunset" sent several students into fits of giggles.

That evening taught me that Wodehouse's humor not only operates in complex, thought-provoking ways, but that his unique genre bending and blending makes his work a wonderful counterpoint to high modernists such as Virginia Woolf.

Wodehouse enables students to appreciate the diversity of 20th-century British literature. At the end of the semester, several of my undergraduates discussed 'Honeysuckle Cottage' in their final papers. One student, Priscilla De Los Santos, astutely noted that much of Wodehouse's appeal to contemporary readers may be his ability to "send [the message] . . . that it is fine to not only laugh at yourself in certain situation, but also to let loose and relax even though things may not be going the way you envisioned".

Wodehouse will always have a place within my 20th-century British literature classes in the future, and I hope to improve my ability to teach his works. In the meantime, I must admit that it is precisely for the reason Priscilla mentions that I have embarked upon my own reading of Wodehouse's works. Most recently, *Leave It to Psmith* has been a welcome diversion; the novel has enabled me to laugh at the residents of Blandings Castle, missing flower pots, bad poets, and myself.

Editor's note: A longer version of this article appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of Plum Lines.



Life Down and Up the (Literary) Rankings

by Murray Hedgcock

The cognoscenti will be well aware that Amazon, in its helpful fashion, advises the sales ranking of each of the squillions of books it offers the world. This no doubt is cheering for such as J. K. Rowling, but it can be a touch depressing for those of us who count as the tail-end Charlies of the book world.

Back in the 20th Century (1997, to get it right) I edited *Wodehouse at the Wicket*, seeking to set out Plum's involvement in the Summer Game, as player, watcher, writer and all-around good-egg cricket lover all his life. "Edited" is a slight misnomer: in fact, I wrote a long introductory study of Plum's relationship with cricket and recommended to Hutchinson certain of his own writings as the vital constituent of the book.

W at the W appeared in due course, and Amazon sold first new copies, and then used ones when it went out of print. I think at one stage my sales ranking was something beyond the million: the latest record puts it at No. 980,889.

Wondering vaguely whose labour of love might languish at No. 980,890 (in fact I have found a Wodehouse-related book beyond 3 million), I turned to AddAll, the dealer site which tells me where to buy the odd book cheaper than at Amazon. This was slightly cheering, recording *W at the W* on offer at anything from £47.50 here in Britain, to £250 – a clearly misguided/perceptive American dealer.

Then, Calloo! Callay! – comes the dawn.

Recently Cricinfo, the wide-ranging website dealing with the game, listed the Top 45 Books on Cricket. (There is no indication why 45 is the golden number, as

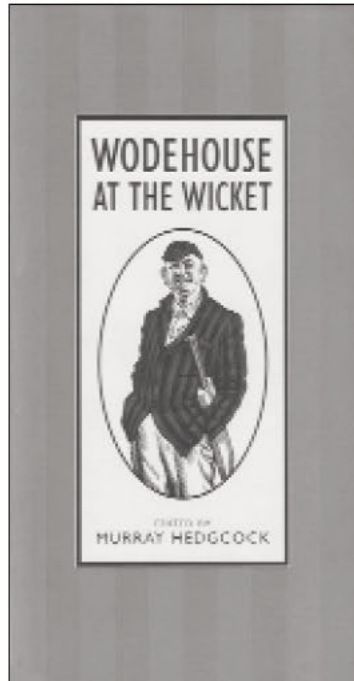
distinct from Best Ten or other more logical figure.) The list was compiled from votes by "a jury of eminent cricket writers who each submitted their list of essential cricket books". They included Britons, Australians, Indians and even an American.

And there it is: *Wodehouse at the Wicket*, at No. 42, sandwiched between Neville Cardus (wow!) with *Australian Summer* and the American Marxist Mike Marqusee's *Anyone But England*. An explanatory study by Bangalore-based Suresh Menon comments: "*Wodehouse at the Wicket* is the only work of fiction here. And with Martin Johnson's *Can't Bat, Can't Bowl, Can't Field*, one of only two that can be filed under humour."

Well – I accept the PGW content to be splendid fiction, but wish to point out that my introductory essay was the product of assiduous research, penned with a scrupulous adherence to facts. Still, we authors (editors) will happily put up with such slight misunderstandings in return for status. When the definitive *Padwick's Bibliography of Cricket* was updated in 1982, it listed more than 10,000 books on the game – and there have been many hundreds more that have appeared since then.

Just think - *Wodehouse at the Wicket* is the 42nd best book written on cricket. Wowie! Oh – and thanks, Plum, for the help.

Footnote: Which book was voted best? The classic *Beyond a Boundary*, by the West Indian nationalist C.L.R. James, whose theme was: "What do they know of cricket, who only cricket know?"



Currently at No. 980,889 in Amazon's sales rankings

Wodehousean Clerihews I

I have always fancied Miss Peavey
Both 'poet' and 'crook' on her C.V.
Blandings? She had to leave forthwith.
The necklace? She had to 'Leave it to Psmith'
– Peter Thompson

Jeeves
Invariably achieves.
Successfully disposing of Alpine hats,
Mess jackets, moustaches and Etonian spats.
– James Linwood

Pelham Grenville said to Edmund Clerihew
I am glad that our parents knew
How to name us,
Making us praenominally famous.
– Lennart Andersson

The efficient Baxter
When Lady Constance saw him taxed her
Patience lots
About the flying flower pots.
– Charles Gould

Reginald Jeeves
Firmly believes
That in matters of attire
His knowledge is higher.
– Paul H. Tubb

Old Pop Bassett, keen J.P.
Disliked intensely Wooster, B.
A recidivist and a nasty schemer
Planning to steal his fine cow creamer.
– John Durston

Wodehouse Whimsy 3



Third in our series of drawings from *Siân Jones* of Cornwall is her idea of a perplexed Freddie Threepwood (“Well, I mean to say, don’t you know . . .”).

Wodehousean Clerihews 2

The valet Jeeves
His magic weaves
By dint of fish
In every dish.

- Jonathan Radgick

Stinker Pinker brought Spode to book
With a superb right hook.
He should have stayed calm
And recited the 23rd Psalm.

- Norman Murphy

Reginald Jeeves
Sincerely believes
That Spinoza’s profound
Whilst Nietzsche’s unsound

- Geoff Millward

Poet’s Corner

Ubique

Phyllis Dare, Phyllis Dare, though of course I’m aware,
That your figure’s divine and your beauty is rare;
At your photograph though I am willing to stare
For hours (in fact, all the time I can spare);
Though the world’s admiration I own that I share
For the size of your eyes and the shade of your hair; –
Yet somehow I feel (you won’t think me a bear?)
That just now you’re a trifle too much in the air.

When I travel by train (having first paid my fare),
I open my paper, and lo! you are there.
“Some Recent Events in my Life” by Miss Dare’,
“How I Feel when I’m Singing a Song” by Miss Dare’,
“How I Study a Part in a Play” by Miss Dare’,
Stop Press News, “What I Use for my Teeth” by Miss Dare’,
“Should Peers Marry Gibson Girls?” Chat with Miss Dare’,
“Shall I ever play Lady Macbeth?” by Miss Dare’,
“Should Soulful Expressions be taxed?” by Miss Dare.’

Miss Dare,
Take Care!

Would you drive a respectable man to despair?
Would you have him gesticulate wildly, and swear?
His diminishing locks would you lead him to tear,
Phyllis Dare?

I repeat you are sweet. But, oh! list to my prayer –
Take a rest for a space, and recede from the glare
Of the popular search-light; and let the fierce blare
Of the trumpet die down for a little, Miss Dare.
Your doings crowd out the last popular scare.
The Springboks, the Kaiser, C.-B., the Lord Mayor,
Can’t get themselves noticed while you’re in the air.

Is it fair,
Phyllis Dare?

From *Books of Today and Books of Tomorrow*, November 1906

Phyllis Dare (1890–1975) was an enormously popular singer and comedy actress who appeared in pantomime and variety as well as in such successes as *The Belle of Mayfair* and *The Arcadians*. She continued to appear on the stage until after the Second World War. Both she and her equally famous sister Zena appeared in shows for which Wodehouse wrote the book or lyrics. Phyllis was in *Kissing Time* (1919) and Zena Dare appeared in *Sergeant Brue* (1904), *The Beauty of Bath* (1906), and *The Gay Gordons* (1907). (Thanks to Norman Murphy for this footnote taken from *The Parrot and Other Poems*.)

She was the sort of girl, so familiar a feature of the English countryside, who goes about in brogue shoes and tweeds and meddles vigorously in the lives of the villagers, sprucing up their manners and morals till you wonder that something in the nature of a popular uprising does not take place.

(From *Spring Fever*, 1948)

The Words of Wodehouse

by June Arnold

Solve the clues in the top grid, then transfer the letters from there to the bottom grid. Reading down column A in the top grid will give you the name of a Wodehouse character; the bottom grid will give you a description of that character. Answers to this acrostic can be found at the bottom of page 31.

Clues:

- 1 Parsloe-Parsloe, Lord E's neighbour and rival (7) / Great or intense (7)
- 2 , villain in *Piccadilly Jim* (4.8) / Fish related to the cod (4)
- 3 PGW-Jerome Kern musical (2.3) / A statue by Rodin, The (7) / Indicates a maiden name (3)
- 4 Damon , author of *Guys and Dolls* (6) / Female relative (6) / Sandra , 1950s film star (3)
- 5 Lyricist who worked on *Oh, Kay* (3.8) / Candid (5)
- 6 Bertie relative who owned *Milady's Boudoir* (4.6) / The Empress of Blandings's feet (6)
- 7 Bertie's term for formal evening dress (4.3.4) / Chewy sweet (6)
- 8 *Indiscretions of* , PGW novel (6) / American girl in *Big Money* (3.4)
- 9 *It to Psmith*, PGW novel (5) / Hung in the air like a bird (7) / Resonance in music (4)
- 10 The name of the dog in *Barmy in Wonderland* (5) / Felt curious (8)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
1																			
2																			
3																			
4																			
5																			
6																			
7																			
8																			
9																			
10																			

2L	1C	5F		7G	8A	6M	2P		3C	9B	6F	4B	7M	1G		8K	2J	10J	4L	
5H	9J	3M		6H	7B	2B	5Q		10C	8E	3K	1I		6A						
2G	9L	4M	7D	6Q	5K	1K		4E	7O		8L	2A	10N		3J	5J	9A	3P		
5C		6C	1M	5N	9I	3D	10B	7J		8D	4I	6S	9O							
4Q	3O	2K	10H	6B	8I	6L	2I	1F	7I	10I	5D		9G	7Q	8B		3A	4C		
6O	7K	9E		10G	7E	4D		3G	1E		2D	10D	8N	9R						
4H	5A	1D	2N	6P		3H	5O	9D	1O		2H	10K	8F	4F						
7R	1J	8C	7C	5G	2Q	9M		5M	9P	6R		2E	7N	8J	4O	3Q	10L	6I	9Q	1A
5I	6G	3L	10A	4K	5E	2C		6D	9H		6N	7P	7H	10M	1B		3B	4P	4A	9C
6E	5B	3E		1N	6J	9K	4J	2F	7F	3I		8M	1L		8H	5P		2O	7A	10E

Quiz Time

In the November 2008 edition of *Reader's Digest* (recently purloined from his doctor's surgery), **Alexander Dainty** saw the following question by Stephen Fry: What is the connection to *Right Ho Jeeves*? (1) British Prime Minister from 1743–1754 / (2) British Prime Minister from 1763–1765. The answers are: (1) Henry Pelham / (2) George Grenville. These make up Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, who wrote *Right Ho Jeeves*.

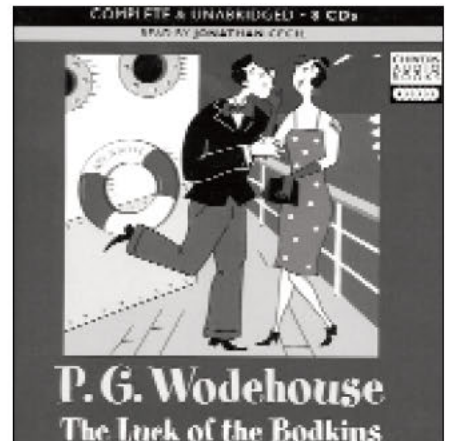
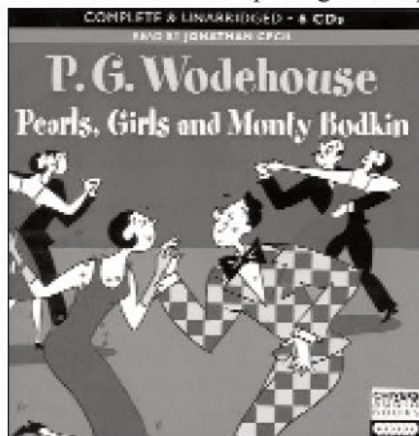
Cecil, Jarvis, and Listening Pleasure

A Review by Tony Ring

Jonathan Cecil has recorded so much Wodehouse for Chivers/BBC Audiobooks that the titles still available are much reduced in number. But he has found two featuring both Monty Bodkin and Ivor Llewellyn, in *The Luck of the Bodkins* and *Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin*, and both were published in 2008. Now we await the news that Jonathan has recorded *Bachelors Anonymous*, the book with Ivor Llewellyn's final appearance

There are three matters of pronunciation which thrust themselves into the consciousness. First, in *The Luck*, the invented word 'undeliable' (put into the steward Peasemarch's mouth by Wodehouse as an approximation of 'indelible') was pronounced as 'un-delly-able' rather than the way in which I have always imagined it, 'undy-liable', rhyming with the established 'undeniable'. I wonder whether this was Jonathan's attempt to stress Peasemarch's mistaken vocabulary.

Secondly, in *Pearls*, Jonathan had to cope with the phrase "one of those tea shoppes which are such a feature of the west end of London". He handled the matter superbly, reflecting Wodehouse's deliberate use of the spelling of 'shoppes', with all its inbuilt implications, with the pronunciation 'shoppies'.

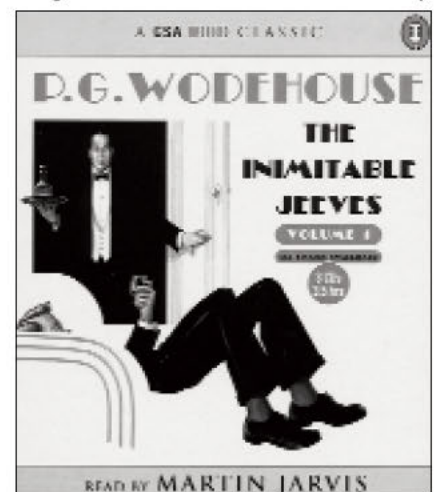


My third comment is more complicated. Both these books feature several American characters. The constant need to change between British and American accents in rapid dialogue seems to me to be an even more difficult problem for the artist than those of evolving authentic American accents on the one hand, and finding ways of distinguishing the different characters for the listener on the other. Jonathan has always managed to maintain the listener's confidence by evolving subtle differences for the members of the cast, and in these recordings he valiantly manages the challenge of switching.

There is one voice he has created which seems incongruous to me. Dolly Molloy, the brains behind the criminal trio of Soapy, Dolly, and Chimp Twist, is presented with a lisp. To my mind, it makes her sound weak and almost pathetic at times, an impression I am sure Jonathan was not meaning to convey. In a way, it reminded me of an earlier recording for Chivers by the late John Wells, who imposed a similar speech defect on Millicent Threepwood. It didn't sound right there, either. The only character whose presentation with a lisp I can think of that works superbly is Violet Elizabeth Bott, in Martin Jarvis's recordings of the *William* stories, where this vocal characteristic is not only appropriate but necessary.

Which brings me to the third audiobook in this review – the first part of an unabridged *The Inimitable Jeeves* read by Martin Jarvis for CSA Word. More recently known for his series of abridged Wodehouse recordings, often of the Blandings novels, Martin here faces a different set of challenges. Compared to a novel, a book of short stories has more characters, which multiplies the difficulties. Some characters reappear on occasion throughout the book (such as Bingo Little and Lord Bittlesham), which requires the concentration appropriate to recording a novel, but the sheer volume of one-off characters in a volume of short stories offers a daunting challenge for both artist and listener. I am sure CSA decided to split their recording into two publications in order to retain their normal three-CD format, but it has the additional benefit for both reader and listener of offering some relief for presentation of characters who only appear in one half of the book.

Having said that, this recording is as enjoyable and easy to listen to as the others in the CSA series, the voice for Jeeves being immediately recognisable to those of us who saw or heard Martin Jarvis in the American stage production, video, or CD of *By Jeeves*. I look forward to the second part of *The Inimitable Jeeves* with my favourite Jeeves and Wooster story ('The Great Sermon Handicap') when it is released next year.



The Luck of the Bodkins, BBC Audiobooks ISBN 978-1-4056-8316-6

Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin, BBC Audiobooks ISBN 978-1-4056-8317-3

The Inimitable Jeeves, Volume 1, CSA Word ISBN 978-1906147372;

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

Another Century for *Mike*, Part 1

Most readers will know of Wodehouse's brilliant schoolboy cricketer, Mike Jackson. But perhaps not all will realise that he has recently achieved another century. *Mike* was first published on 15 September 1909, so this edition of *Wooster Sauce* marks the book's centenary.

Mike is in reality a combination of two separate stories, *Jackson Junior* and *The Lost Lambs*, which appeared in *The Captain* from April to September 1907 (McIlvaine, D77.35-40) and from April to September 1908 (D77.41-46), respectively. Your correspondent, having inexplicably taken his eye off the ball back in 2007 and 2008, did not mark the centenaries of those magazine appearances in these columns. In fact, Mike Jackson's first appearance in print seems to have occurred as early as June 1904, in the story 'Jackson's Extra', published in *Royal Magazine* (D126.2) and set at Wrykyn, which features an outstanding cricketer identified only as Jackson.

Mike is Wodehouse's best-known school story, the one that has gone through most editions, and is typically also his most highly regarded school story. For Alec Waugh "the best cricketing school story ever written is PG Wodehouse's *Mike*". George Orwell claimed that it "must be one of the best 'light' school stories in English" ('In Defence of PG Wodehouse', *The Windmill*, 2, 1945).

Wodehouse himself regarded it fondly, too. In a letter of 29 December 1948, written to a Mr Risk, Wodehouse writes, "The list [you enclosed] does not include my very early boys' books, published by A and C Black, 4 Soho Square, London. These were *The Pothunters*, *The Gold Bat*, [*Tales of*] *St. Austin's*, *The Head of Kay's*, *The White Feather* and *Mike*. Do try to get hold of *Mike*, if you can. I wrote it in 1908, and I'll swear that I have never written anything as good since! It is in this book that Psmith makes his appearance as a boy at school."

Normally when Wodehouse claims that one of his stories is his best, it is in response to a fan who has obviously promoted it as such, with Wodehouse usually writing a variation of "I am so glad you liked such-and-such-a-book; it is my favourite too". What is interesting about Wodehouse's advocacy of *Mike* here is that it is unprompted, and therefore probably heartfelt.

The first edition of *Mike* was published by A & C Black on 15 September 1909 (A12a) and printed by Ballantyne & Co Ltd. It is a weighty, well-produced

book, the 340 pages leading to a book two inches thick. For many people, the boards of *Mike* are the finest of any Wodehouse novel. The book is bound in olive-green cloth, with the front cover and spine illustrations in white, black, and red. On the front cover, the title is lettered in olive green with the author's name in black; on the spine, the title and publisher's name are in gold, with the author's name lettered in black. The book contains 12 illustrations by TMR Whitwell, who had copiously illustrated the original serialisations in *The Captain*. The front-cover illustration is based on the plate opposite page 84 ("Don't laugh, you grinning ape" being

Mike's well-chosen words to his head of house on being run-out by him for 17 when thoroughly set in a house match). The spine illustration is based on the plate opposite page 228 and shows Adair ("Why did you say you didn't play cricket?" he asked"). Interestingly, but almost certainly incorrectly, the two illustrations give the impression that both Wrykyn's and Sedleigh's school colours are red and white.

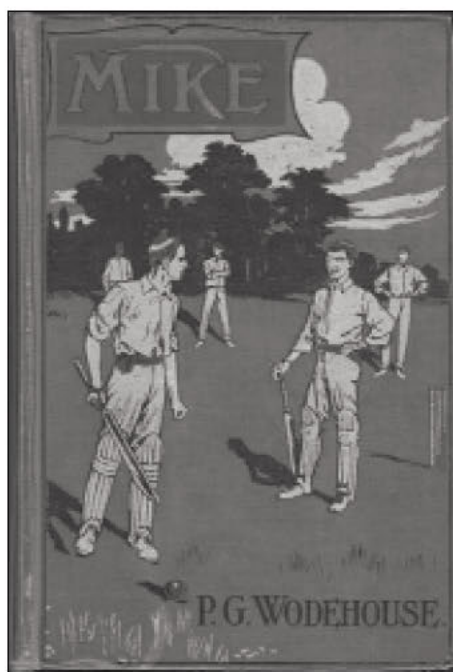
The second edition was published in 1910 (A12a2). The date was given on the title page (but not on the copyright page), and it was issued with an eight-page advertising supplement (entitled "Beautiful Books for Young People", with the latest Wodehouse book advertised being *Psmith in the City*, which was

published on 23 September 1910), but it was otherwise the same as the first edition (although some dealers describe the gold lettering on the spine as yellow).

The third edition followed in 1916 (A12a3), with green or gold lettering of the title and publisher's name on the spine. The date 1916 was given on the title page, and the copyright page was updated to mention the 1910 and 1916 reprints. All editions to this point were printed by Ballantyne & Co.

The next edition, in 1919 (A12a4), was printed by Billing and Sons. Once again, the date on the title page and the publishing history on the copyright page were updated. This edition had green lettering of the title and publisher's name on the spine. The failure to use gold lettering is reflective of the fact that overall this was a noticeably cheaper production than the earlier editions, no doubt due to post-war shortages of materials.

Having taken a whole column to get through the first ten years of *Mike*'s publishing history, we will pick up the pace somewhat in the second part of this article, when we will cover the remaining 90 years.



Wodehouse on the Boards

John Lithgow's *Stories by Heart*

In the September 2008 issue of *Wooster Sauce*, there was a review of the American actor John Lithgow's performance of 'Uncle Fred Flits By' in New York City. Recently we learned that Mr Lithgow will reprise his performance in London at the National Theatre on October 19 and 26. His *Stories by Heart* will include not only Wodehouse's classic Uncle Fred tale but also Ring Lardner's story 'Haircut'. With tickets costing just £10, this promises to be a treat not to be missed! For further information, see <http://bit.ly/hbSOp>, or call the National Theatre's box office at 020 7452 3000.

Summer Lightning in Keswick

If you live in the Lake District or are planning a visit there soon, then be sure to go see *Summer Lightning* at Theatre by the Lake in Keswick. In addition to Paddy Briggs, who reviews it on page 12, several members have reported thoroughly enjoying both the adaptation of Wodehouse's novel and the company's performance, and other newspaper reviews have given it a thumbs-up (see Press Comment, June 12). *Summer Lightning* plays in Keswick through November 6. For tickets and further information, call 017687 74411, or go to www.theatrebythelake.co.uk.

Drat, We Missed It

In July and August a theatre company called Just Good Friends, based in Carmarthen, West Wales, performed *By Jeeves*, first at several locations in Wales and then at the Edinburgh Fringe. Also seen at the Edinburgh Fringe: a production of *By Jeeves* put on by the Green Show Company and performances of *Anything Goes* at the Edinburgh Playhouse. Though we received word of these performances too late for publication in the June issue of *Wooster Sauce*, if any of our members saw it and would like to comment on the performance, do write in!

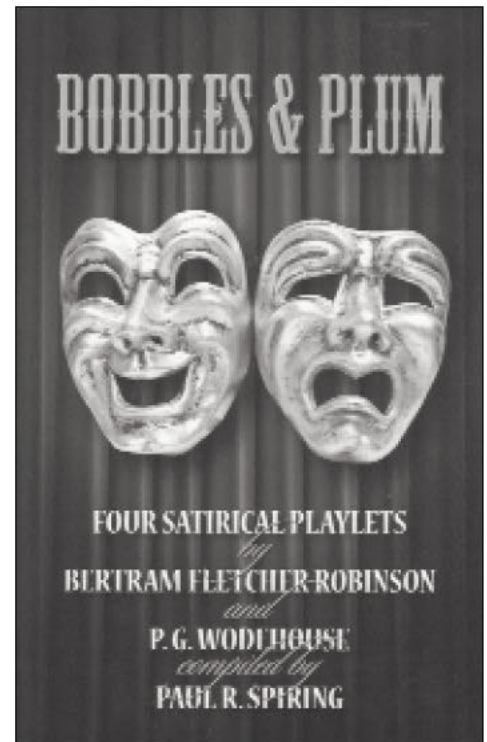
Anything Goes in Indiana

For those living in Indiana (USA) or planning to go there, the Wabash Area Community Theater is putting on a production of *Anything Goes* on October 9–11 at the Ford Theater Stage. For more information, call WACT at 260-563-7880.

Oh, Boy! at City Lit in 2010

The City Lit Theatre in Chicago, USA, recently announced that they will conclude their 30th Anniversary Season with a production of the Wodehouse-Bolton-Kern classic *Oh, Boy!* on May 21–June 27, 2010. Further details will be published in a future *Wooster Sauce*.

A New Book for Wodehouse Fans



At Christmas 1903, 1904, 1905, and 1906, P G Wodehouse wrote four satirical playlets in collaboration with his fellow writer Bertram Fletcher Robinson ('Bobbles'). The playlets, which appeared in the *Daily Express*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The World*, were satires on topics of the time, ranging from Joseph Chamberlain's Imperial Tariff policy to the London County Council and Suffragettes. They have now been republished by Paul Spiring in *Bobbles & Plum*, which includes a foreword by Society Chairman Hilary Bruce, an introduction by Norman Murphy and Tony Ring, copious explanatory notes, appendices, and illustrations. *Bobbles & Plum* (108 pages) is published by MX Publishing and can be purchased through their website (www.mxpublishing.co.uk) or through Amazon. The list price is £9.99.

Description: Her dark beauty made her look like a serpent of old Nile. A nervous host, encountering her on the way to dine, might have been excused for wondering whether to offer her a dry martini or an asp.

- 10. tulip / wondered
- 9. *Leave* / hovered / tone
- 8. Archie / Ann Moon
- 7. soup and fish / toffee
- 6. Aunt Dahlia / trotters

Answers to The Words of Wodehouse (p. 22):

- 1. Gregory / extreme
- 2. Lord Wisbeach / hake
- 3. Oh, Boy / Thinker / nee
- 4. Runyon / mother / Dee
- 5. Ira Gershwin / frank
- Character: Gloria Salt

Recent Press Comment

From *The Herald*, May 8

Writing about the Italian Open Golf Championship from Turin, Douglas Lowe reported that all was gloom and despondency for Colin Montgomerie as, shoulders slumped, he scanned an appreciative gallery of just over a hundred. It was one of those mornings, Lowe added, when “he was liable, in the great P G Wodehouse phrase, to be distracted by the uproar of the butterflies”.

From *The Daily Telegraph*, May 15

(from Carolyn de la Plain)

A letter from Dr Stevens published on a page of letters about MPs’ expenses quoted Lord Ickenham in *Cocktail Time* from 1958: “Have you ever been in the House of Commons and taken a good square look at the inmates? As weird a gaggle of freaks and sub-humans as was ever collected in one spot. I wouldn’t mix with them for any money you could offer me.” Dr Stevens then asked what he would say now.

From *The Daily Telegraph*, May 20 (from Alan Hall)

An obituary of the author Alan Hackney mentioned his contributions to *Punch* and noted that “A fellow contributor, PG Wodehouse, told the editor that young Hackney’s columns were one of the best reasons to buy the magazine”.

From *Desert Island Discs*, Radio 4, May 22

(from Bob Miller)

The actor Peter Sallis selected the collected works of P G Wodehouse as his favourite book, saying he would like to take “the whole lot” to the island.

From *The Daily Telegraph*, May 22

In an article scorning the prospects for the BNP in the spring elections, Jasper Gerrard wrote, “We British have a far cleverer weapon than outrage to deploy against the BNP, the smart bomb all demagogues fear: laughter. It is why P G Wodehouse depicted Spode, his Oswald Mosley caricature, as a closet lingerie salesman.”

From *DNA Sunday [Mumbai]*, May 24 (from N V Bhat)

Carried an article about the Blithe Spirits, a Wodehouse fan club in Mumbai.

From *East Fife Mail*, May 27 (from Iain Anderson)

An item in a supplement on East Neuk, Scotland, says that the name Anstruther probably derives from a Scots phrase meaning ‘little stream’ and notes there is a character called Mr Anstruther in a Wodehouse novel (actually a short story – ‘Jeeves and the Love That Purifies’).

From *Western Daily Press*, June 1

(from Alexander Dainty)

Expressing disdain at the sight of men in shorts during the summer, Helen Reid used as supporting evidence the fact that Wodehouse had “invented a fascist organization known as the Black Shorts, led by Roderick Spode. Say no more.”

From *The Daily Star (New York)*, June 6

Writer Sam Pollak wrote an article ‘The worst thing we can do in life is to give up’ after rereading a Wodehouse book and realising “I’m a hack” and wanting to give up writing for ever. “He’s so good. Every word is the exact perfect word. Every nuance is amazing.”

From *The Mail on Sunday*, June 14 (from John Hodgson)

In his review of a new book on Marcus Aurelius, Society patron Boris Johnson recalled how often the Roman emperor was quoted by admirers, but noted Bertie Wooster’s reaction to Jeeves’s quoting MA in *The Mating Season*: “He said that, did he?” “Yes, sir.” “Well, you can tell him from me he’s an ass.”

From *The Stage*, June 16

Reviewed *Summer Lightning* at Keswick (see page 12) with such complimentary phrases as “Outstanding in its theatrical complexity, extravagance and downright silliness”, “Surely one of the funniest productions to be seen anywhere” and “Mighty congratulations to all concerned”.

From *Country Life*, June 17 (from Jamie Jarrett)

An article on the late Lord Savile’s home in Yorkshire quoted an obituary that had described Savile as “in some respects one of the last of the P. G. Wodehouse landed-gentry characters to inhabit the 21st century . . . charmingly eccentric and every inch a gentleman”.

From *Pioneer Press (Minnesota)*, June 18

Carried an article about The Wodehouse Society convention held at St Paul (see pp.4-5).

From *The Times*, June 19

Quoted from Lord Byron “Like the measles, love is most dangerous when it comes late in life”. (This sentiment has been applied by Wodehouse to boyhood, in *Uneasy Money*, ch17, and golf in ‘A Mixed Threesome’.)

From *Daily Mail*, June 22

In an interview, actress Kate O’Mara said that her cure for depression was listening to J S Bach and reading Wodehouse: “This got me through the break-up of my second marriage. The great thing about Wodehouse is that his books are full of romantic problems and yet so hilarious that it puts things into perspective.”

From *Times Online*, June 24

Alice Fordham, a journalist working from Baghdad, wrote, “I have been allowing myself a nightly Fry and Laurie adaptation of *Jeeves and Wooster* which is also quite the tonic. Without wishing to be a vile colonialist, one does notice cultural differences here, and a dose of exaggerated Britishness is somehow soothing.”

From *The Mail on Sunday*, June 27

(from John Hodgson and Stephen Payne)

Commenting on the proposal that London Underground drivers will be reading quotations from gloomy writers, Quentin Letts suggested if tube bosses had any gumption, they would instead provide the drivers with “a book I recently bought, *The Wit and Wisdom of P G Wodehouse*”, with quotations such as “‘Yes,’ said Millicent, rather in the tone of voice which Schopenhauer would have used when announcing the discovery of a caterpillar in his salad.”

From *The Times*, June 27

Oliver Kamm wrote about the need for rules for the use of language, and quoted Wodehouse as an early influence: “Wodehouse wrote such pearls as Bertie Wooster’s observation of the mood of Bingo Little. ‘The brow was

furrowed, the eye lacked that hearty sparkle, and the general bearing and demeanour were those of a body discovered after several days in water.’ Read Wodehouse and you understand the difference between imagery and cliché.”

From *The Times*, June 27

Christina Hardyment enthusiastically recommended the *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* audiobook read by Martin Jarvis (reviewed in *Wooster Sauce*, June 2009).

From *Sunday Times*, June 28

Karen Robinson coincidentally expressed similar enthusiasm in her collection of ‘perfect holiday listening’ for Jarvis’s recording of *The Inimitable Jeeves* (see p.23).

From *The Times*, July 4

Philip Howard’s *Literary Quiz* included the question “Whose uncles included two Georges, two Percys, a Reginald and a Clive?” The answer is Bertie Wooster.

From *The Observer*, July 5

A list of ‘The 50 best summer reads ever’ included PGW’s *French Leave*. (The compiler added that if you couldn’t find this out-of-print book, Jeeves and Wooster will provide welcome holiday companions instead.)

From *Quote . . . Unquote*, Radio 4, July 6

The panel was unable to identify Kipling as the originator of PGW’s “A woman is only a woman, but a frothing pint is a drink”. (The Kipling version had been “. . . but a good cigar is a smoke”.)

From *Daily Mail*, July 10 (from Stephen Payne)

An item regarding a concert promoter being sued by the Aberdeen Football Club for damage paraphrases Wodehouse – “it’s never difficult to distinguish between an Aberdonian with a grievance and a ray of sunshine.”

From *Daily Telegraph Review*, July 11 (from Alan Hall)

A review of Elinor Lipman’s *The Family Man* asks plaintively, “Where is the PG Wodehouse of our time?”

From *The Times*, July 11

Philip Howard’s *Literary Quiz* included the question “Bertie suspected that she had boxed for the University and compared her laugh to squadrons of cavalry charging over tin bridges”. The answer is Honoria Glossop.

From *Liverpool Daily Post*, July 11

Crime writer John Connolly named Wodehouse as one of the non-crime-fiction authors whom he enjoys reading: “There’s that joy and those firecrackers in his language.”

From *The National Newspaper (Abu Dhabi)*, July 18

Ahmed Rizvi watched his first rugby match and was reminded of PGW’s comment that the sport includes certain actions which, if done elsewhere, would result in 14 days in prison and some stern words from the bench.

From *The Daily Telegraph*, July 19

(from Larissa Saxby-Bridger)

In an article on the varied nature of proposals of marriage, Nigel Farndale suggested that careful planning was unusual for Englishmen, more typical being the Bertie Wooster method of becoming engaged by accident or out of politeness.

From *The Observer*, July 19

Robert McCrum pointed out that from J M Barrie to Harold Pinter, cricket has had a close relationship with literature,

and included Wodehouse alongside Samuel Beckett, Conan Doyle, and others in the list.

From *The Independent*, July 20

Reporting on a dispute between golfers Colin Montgomerie and Sandy Lyle, Dermot Gilleece commented that “In his inimitable way, Wodehouse could see into a golfer’s soul like few others of his craft. His famous observation that ‘in no other walk of life does the cloven hoof so quickly display itself’ highlighted his understanding of the frailties which the game exposes in its practitioners.”

From *Newsweek*, July 20

Malcolm Jones described the late Frank McCourt as “one of the greatest men I’ve ever interviewed”. In his long article he quoted FM as saying, “We had nothing, no television, no radio, nothing to get in the way. We read by the streetlight at the top of the lane, and we acted out the stories. [My brother] Malachy and I would do P G Wodehouse, still do. But otherwise there was no secondhand material.”

From *Saudi Gazette*, July 22

In an article about the evolution of 20/20 cricket, the reporter wrote about one aspect: “It is, as Jeeves would have said, ‘a happy concatenation of circumstances’.”

From *The Guardian*, July 26

Arts and media correspondent Vanessa Thorpe wrote about the launch of the book *Bobbles and Plum* (see page 25) at Calders bookshop the previous day.

From *Pakistan Observer*, July 30

Khalid Saleem wrote an article about the perception that the constant company of horses leaves an indelible mark on the individual. His theme was to widen the idea to other species, and quoted Wodehouse’s “He looked more like a parrot than most parrots do”.

From *The [San Francisco] Examiner*, July 31

In an interview, folk singer Jesse Winchester said, “My favourite writer is P G Wodehouse. He once said ‘Other people get down in the dirt of life and talk about difficult things, but I don’t do that. There’s no sex in my stories, no death and war.’ And I identify with him on that point. If you start to talk about topical things, your song becomes dated.”

From *The Times*, August 1

Philip Howard’s *Literary Quiz* included the question “Who is Alpine Joe?” The answer is Bertie Wooster.

From *The Financial Times*, August 8

In an interview, Adam Thirlwell (whose 2008 book *Miss Herbert* won a Somerset Maugham award) included Wodehouse as one of a dozen or so literary influences, also including James Joyce, Henry James, and Gertrude Stein.

From www.independent.ie, August 15

The *Irish Independent* Lifetime Reads collection of 20 books includes *Jeeves in the Offing*, a “hilarious book by one of the greatest comic writers ever”.

From *The Times*, August 8

Philip Howard’s *Literary Quiz* included: “Wodehouse was born here. Lewis Carroll was buried here. Malory thought it was Astolat. Where?” The answer is Guildford.

From *The Times*, August 21 (from John Hodgson)

A leader on famous people who never earned a university degree included Wodehouse among many others.

Future Events for Your Diary

June 5 – November 6, 2009 *Summer Lightning*

Theatre by the Lake in Keswick, Cumbria, is putting on a terrific production of *Summer Lightning*, adapted by Giles Havergal. (See pp.12 and 25 for more info.)

September 21–October 16, 2009

Plum Pie at Heywood Hill

Visit Heywood Hill, located at 10 Curzon Street, London, for a special exhibition on Wodehouse. See p.1 for a related story.

October 13, 2009 Society Meeting and AGM

We will meet at the Arts Club, 40 Dover Street, from 6 p.m. After the AGM has concluded, our speaker for the evening will be Stephen Pound MP. Prior to the meeting, Norman Murphy will conduct another abbreviated Wodehouse Walk; see p.3 for details.

October 19 and 26, 2009 John Lithgow in *Stories By Heart* at the National Theatre

John Lithgow will give two performances of his acclaimed *Stories By Heart*, one of which is 'Uncle Fred Flits By', for which he has received rave reviews. See p.25 for details.

February 16, 2010 Society Meeting

We will meet from 6 p.m. at the Arts Club, 40 Dover Street; speaker to be announced.

June 18, 2010 Gold Bats vs. The Dulwich Dusters

Provisional date for our annual match at Dulwich College with an excellent tea provided.

June 27, 2010 Gold Bats vs. The Sherlock Holmes Society

Again, the provisional date for our annual game against the Sherlockians.

July 6, 2010 Society Meeting

We will meet from 6 p.m. at the Arts Club, 40 Dover Street; speaker to be announced.

October 28, 2010 Dinner at Gray's Inn

Preliminary notice of the Society's biannual formal dinner, which will again be held at Gray's Inn, London.

November 16, 2010 Society Meeting

We will meet from 6 p.m. at the Arts Club; speaker to be announced.

As for Gussie Fink-Nottle, many an experienced undertaker would have been deceived by his appearance and started embalming him on sight.

(From *Right Ho, Jeeves*, 1934)

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