



# WOOSTER SAUCE

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## P. G. Wodehouse: The Last of the Great Russians

by Charles Gould

*Editor's note: In 1991, at The Wodehouse Society's convention in New York City, the noted Wodehouse scholar Charles Gould wowed the masses with his talk on 'P. G. Wodehouse: The Last of the Great Russians'. His topic for the 2007 convention in Providence was 'The Discretions of Archie', but this, he admitted, was slightly misleading, as he had chosen to devote the majority of the time available to a reprise of his New York talk. The full text of 'The Discretions of Archie' was printed in the Spring 2009 issue of Plum Lines. This is an edited version under the original talk's title.*

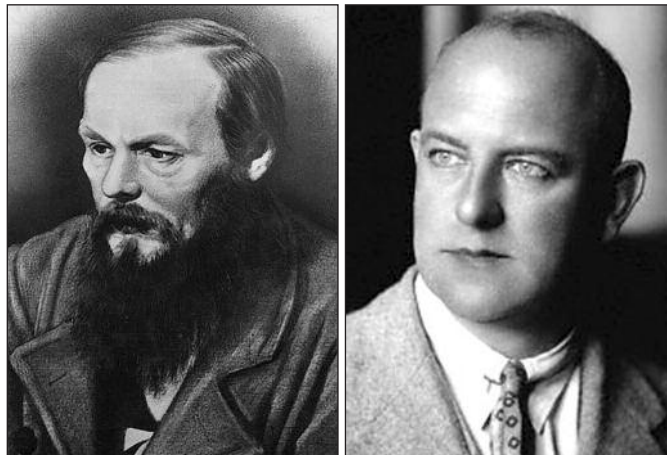
Of course, it goes without saying that I, a teacher of English literature and composition, don't know enough about the Great Russians to buy a tram ticket in Omsk. I know even less about the not-so-great Russians. But I am here to tell you this: Wodehouse wrote one novel so sociological in its overtones, undertones, and half-tones, so bad-tempered and bleak in plot, character, and setting, that a copy of it – a book beneath the bough of *The Cherry Orchard*, with or without the proverbial jug of wine – puts him in the mainstream of the Sorry-to-Intrude-but-Grandfather-Has-Just-Hanged-Himself-in-the-Barn-Again school of fiction. That novel is *If I Were You*.

Now, actually, it should come as no surprise that so highly derivative and prolific a writer as P. G. Wodehouse should have at least once fallen beneath the sombre, powerful Russian influence. He himself acknowledged it, in the preface to *The Heart of a Goof*, as early as 1926:

The thoughtful reader, comparing this book with *The Clicking of Cuthbert*, will, no doubt, be struck by the poignant depth of feeling which pervades the present volume like the scent of muddy shoes in a locker-

room; and it may be that he will conclude that, like so many English writers, I have fallen under the spell of the great Russians.

Disingenuously disclaiming this, he goes on to say that "It is, of course, true that my style owes much to Dostoevsky", and even four years earlier, in 'The Clicking of Cuthbert', we have objective testimony to the darker side of Wodehouse's literary achievement:



*Birds of a Feather? Dostoevsky and Wodehouse in gloomy mode, as all great Russians tend to be.*

Vladimir Brusiloff proceeded to sum up. "No novelists any good except me. Sovietski – yah! Nastikoff – bah! I spit me of zem all. No novelists anywhere any good except me. P. G. Wodehouse and Tolstoi not bad. Not good, but not bad. No novelists any good except me."

Vladimir Brusiloff, you remember, "specialized in grey studies of hopeless misery, where nothing happened till page three hundred and eighty, when the moujik decided to commit suicide", and his acceptance of Wodehouse as "not bad" is not to be lightly dismissed. Less than a decade later, Wodehouse fulfilled the promise that Brusiloff evidently saw in

him, with *If I Were You*, a grey study of hopeless misery in which nothing really happens at all.

Let's look first at the plot, and then glance at character, setting, and style. The plot is old and tired, cold and hard like a picnic egg. David A. Jasen, who is to Wodehouse what Alexander Worpel (not to mention Audubon) was to birds, tells us in the Bibliography that it was derived from Anstey's *Vice-Versa*, and Wodehouse and Bolton then turned it into a play entitled *Who's Who?* But we had already seen its germ – and so had Wodehouse – in the *Menaechmi* of Plautus (60 B.C.). (Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* owes something to it, and so does his *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and so does the Rodgers and Hart musical *The Boys from Syracuse*.) This plot has gone round the block a number of times. Wodehouse got hold of it somehow. Mr. Wetherby, the lawyer in *If I Were You*, reminds us that

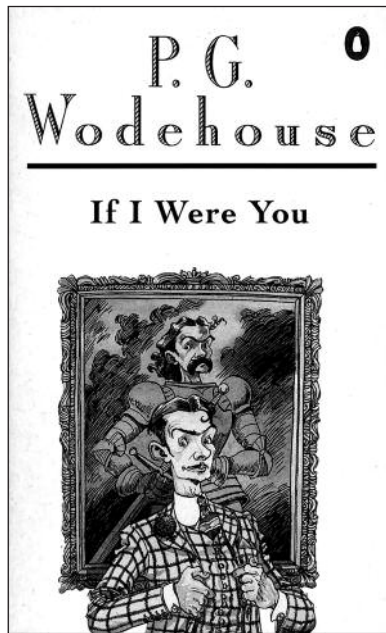
. . . this changing of one baby for another of greater rank has been the basis of a hundred *Family Herald* novelettes, and is such a stock situation that the late W.S. Gilbert satirized it in his poem, 'The Baby's Vengeance'.

Gilbert even used it in *HMS Pinafore* and *The Gondoliers*, and a little bit in *The Pirates of Penzance*. As Dr. Robert Hall has pointed out, the novel has a "very serious" three-act structure; and, unlike most of the plots over which Wodehouse took such pains, this one must have practically written itself, leaving him time to study the sad effects on his characters of guilt, misery, and unsweetened gin.

It's hard to believe that this bad-tempered, virtually plotless story is the immediate predecessor to *Hot Water*, one of Wodehouse's most light-hearted, extravagantly and skilfully plotted, and funniest novels; but it is, and Mr. Jasen records that Wodehouse was working on them simultaneously, or at least had started *Hot Water* as *If I Were You* neared completion.

The two stories do, however, share one plot strand: rejected, like the Earl of Droitwich, for his decent impulses, by Lady Beatrice Bracken, a snob and a manipulator like Violet Waddington, Packy Franklin in *Hot Water* discovers that he is engaged to the wrong girl and falls in love with Jane Opal, the American girl of his dreams. But while the same thing happens, plot, character, style, and tone are all markedly different. By the time he got through *Hot Water* (having scrapped, according to Herbert Warren Wind, 30,000 words),

Wodehouse had thankfully worked the Russians out of his system.



Years ago, Barry Phelps remarked that there is only one truly bitchy woman in Wodehouse: the Princess von und zu Dwornitzchek, the wicked stepmother in *Summer Moonshine*; but she is nothing to Violet Waddington in *If I Were You*, who even Wodehouse says was "a girl nobody seemed to like much". Ma Price is "that awful old woman", a "yowling old nuisance" who gives Lady Lydia Bassinger "the creeps". There is no language like that in any other Wodehouse novel I can think of. Lady Beatrice Bracken, Florence Craye, and other snobbish and quasi-intellectual girls who want to mould their young men are allowed in character to mock themselves, as are Nannie Bruce in *Cocktail Time* and Nurse Wilks in 'Portrait

of a Disciplinarian', both old nuisances if ever there was one but never identified as such by Wodehouse. Even Slingsby the butler in *If Were You* has a darker aura, grotesquely conscious of his situation in a way that a Beach or a Silversmith would never be, without making himself funny as Wodehouse allows Binstead and Spink to do. His level of repartee is to call Syd an "impudent young 'ound" and to tell Ma Price, when she says that she fears bad luck because she broke a mirror that morning, that she shouldn't have looked in it. These characters are humorous in the literal sense: they are governed by overgrowths of humours, of inner complexions, most of them choleric, or bilious; they are laughable indeed, but they are not really very funny. "She's a garrulous old fool," said Sir Herbert shortly, 'and in her present condition goodness knows what she might say to the servants'" is the dialogue not of the sunny and effervescent Wodehouse that we hear behind Bertie's description of Aunt Agatha as wearing barbed wire next the skin, or behind Mr. Gedge's thought that before marrying him his wife might have been a lion tamer, but of the sunny and effervescent Wodehouse with Dostoyevsky on his mind.

A glance through Richard Usborne's *Wodehouse Nuggets*, a concordance of Wodehouse nifties, turns up only five from *If I Were You*, a surprisingly small number from a novel of the decade that produced *Very Good, Jeeves*, *Big Money*, *Heavy Weather*, and *The Code of the Woosters*, to name but a few that Mr. Usborne richly mines – indeed, astonishingly small, until we remember the unaccountable but unmistakable debt Wodehouse was working off to his eastern predecessors; and even they are macabre, grey, and atypically grotesque – the rainy Sunday in St. Petersburg as opposed to the Shropshire sunshine:

We just happened to be sitting in a cemetery and I asked her how she would like to see my name on her tombstone.

Slingsby loomed in the doorway like a dignified cloudbank.

She went out into the park to look for rabbits. Never seen one before. Not running about, that is, with all its insides in it.

The bottle had the subtly grim look of champagne which has been bought at a public house.

The horse kicked me. Three times in the same place. Blimey, if I sat now, I'd leave a hoof-print.

Each of these nuggets is a little tarnished, as from exposure to an evening with Raskolnikov or one of the Sisters Karamazov.

For Wodehouse in *If I Were You* is writing in an uncharacteristic mood, coming perilously close to purveying what as a writer he normally avoided: a *message*, namely, that there is something to class distinctions after all, and that we, like Syd Price and his dreadful mother, forget that to our own distress.

What there was in the private life of the man to render his imagination susceptible to the powerful impression of his great Russian forebears, I must leave to Wodehouse's biographers to discover and disclose; but of that powerful impression there can be no serious critical doubt whatever, as, in conclusion, examination of just a couple of passages will prove.

Let us first read the conclusion of Chapter 23 of *If I Were You*, in which Ma Price, confronted by Sir Herbert, Lady Lydia, the butler Slingsby, and the lawyer Mr. Wetherby, decides that she will not, after all, sign the paper stating that her son Syd Price is not, after all, the rightful Earl of Droitwich.

Ma Price rose and approached the desk. It stood by the window, and through the window, as she advanced, her eyes fell on the pleasant lawns and shrubberies without. And suddenly, as if riveted by some sinister sight, they glared intently. She had picked up the pen. She now threw it from her with a clatter.

"Coo!" she cried.

Sir Herbert jumped.

"What the devil is it now?" he demanded irritably.

Ma Price turned and faced them resolutely. The sight she

had just seen had brought it home to her that she had been all wrong in her diagnosis of the black cat. It had been sent to warn her – yes, but to warn her against signing the paper. Otherwise, why, as her fingers clutched the pen, should this other portent have been presented, as if for good measure?

"I'm not going to sign!"

"What?"

"I'm not!"

"Why not?" cried Lady Lydia.

Ma Price pointed dramatically at the window.

"I just seen a magpie!" she said.

We turn now, by way of comparison, to a passage near the end of Book 9, Chapter VII, of *The Brothers Karamazov*, by Fyodor Dostoyevsky:

Mitya got up and went to the window. The rain lashed against the little greenish panes of the window. He could see the muddy road just below the window, and further away, in the rainy mist, a row of poor, black, dismal huts, looking even blacker and poorer in the rain. Mitya thought of Phoebus the golden-haired, and how he had meant to shoot himself at his first ray. "Perhaps it would be even better on a morning like this," he thought with a smile, and suddenly, flinging his hand downwards, he turned to his torturers.

It's all right there, isn't it? In both passages, we see a character in possession of a secret, confronted by lawyers and other authoritarian people, who, getting up to look through a window – in a symbolic act of gaining new perception – sees in an image of nature an omen which, in controverting a previous antithetical omen, leads to a change of heart which in turn results in a *peripeteia*, a reversal in fortune and plot. Mitya's

dismal huts and rainy mist are Ma Price's magpie, her black cat an inversion of his shining Apollo.

Dostoyevsky's masterpiece was published in 1880, the year before Wodehouse was born; but we need not engage, airily or glibly, the bootless or fruitless quest of proving that Wodehouse was familiar with it – though it's evident, undoubtedly, that he was. It is sufficient to recognize that betwixt the points of these mighty opposites, these two giants of our 20th-century literary heritage, between Mitya and Ma Price, there fall even mightier archetypes . . . the window, the magpie, and the mist, upon which literature is made.



Charles Gould in Providence, 2007  
(Photo by Barbara Combs)



## Society News

### **For Those with Hidden Depths**

Members who come to Society meetings at the Arts Club know that as well as a warm welcome, they will enjoy entertainment of a very high order. Those lucky enough to have been there can think back over the last year to stellar performances from Simon Brett, Jonathan Cecil, Murray Hedgcock, and Stephen Pound MP. But this recent dazzling line-up has made us think . . . This Society is, after all, run for its members and by its members. So shouldn't members also be playing a part in entertaining their colleagues?

In the Society's earlier days, members often provided the cabaret at meetings, and we discovered some remarkable talents and skills among our flock. There were solo readings, dramatised readings, papers presented on subjects like 'Sex in Wodehouse', and occasionally an enjoyable song – a rich variety is what we're driving at. And it would be nice to get back to that 'family entertainment' feel once in a while, if only to keep our feet on the ground, and so not exhaust the Society's forbearing friends and patrons.

So how about it? Do you have a secret skill or a special subject? If you do, and you would like to share it with other members, do please get in touch.

### **About Your Christmas Bonus**

Long-standing members will know that the Christmas *Wooster Sauce* contains a bonus collectible item, most recently a serialisation of *The Swoop*. Even longer-standing members will recall the same arrangement with consecutive episodes of *Kid Brady*. They may also recall the moment in December 2007 when, in desperation, we killed the Kid off because of the increasingly difficult problems entailed in posting different instalments to different members every year, a process that left some of our Committee members with a strange, rather haunted

look. We completed the collection for anyone who wanted it, but noted that since we had already started serialising *The Swoop*, "we will run into this problem again in a few years . . . we will face that when we have to, but in the meantime your committee is thinking hard about alternatives."

Well, we have, we have, and we have. The problem arose again, we faced it, and we decided what to do: *The Swoop* will be swept away, and the Christmas bonus will hereafter be a special *By The Way*. There are several different types of content planned for these, the common theme being that they will be written by Wodehouse himself.

But what of those collecting *The Swoop*, you ask? Naturally, we have made arrangements:

1. Members who have received *Swoop* instalments 3 or 4 will automatically receive the rest of the series (7 instalments altogether), free of charge, with the September issue of *Wooster Sauce*.
2. Members who have received *Swoop* instalments 1 or 2 and wish to complete their collection can do so at a cost of £5, by pre-ordering by 31 July 2010. See below.
3. Members who would like a complete set (7) of *The Swoop* may purchase one, or even more if stocks last, at £10 the set. Again, these should be pre-ordered, so we can predict the print requirements.

We're sorry about having to do this, but, well, there it is, don't you know. Long live the new *By The Way*!

## **Seventh Formal London Dinner in October**

by Tim Andrew

The Society's seventh formal dinner is to be held on Thursday, 28 October 2010. It will once again be held at The Honourable Society of Gray's Inn, London WC1. Dinner will be 7.00 p.m. for 7.30; dress code is black tie.

We have been lucky to be offered very generous sponsorship, which means we will be able to restrict the cost to £90 per head. For this, those who attend will enjoy a champagne reception; a splendid four-course dinner, including wine; and the customary brilliant after-dinner entertainment. (In sharp contrast to banks and insurance companies of my recent ken, I confidently assert that past performance *is* a reliable guide to future returns in respect of our entertainment at the dinner.) And all this in the stunning surroundings of the Gray's Inn Hall in the company of many of our patrons.

Further details of how to apply and application forms will be included with the June edition of *Wooster Sauce*. Members who attended previous dinners will be aware how quickly the places were all booked. Gray's Inn Hall has a capacity of about 120 diners. Places will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. It is therefore strongly recommended that members apply for tickets by return when they receive the form. As usual, some places will be kept in reserve until mid-August for overseas members who will not be able to return the form as quickly as UK residents.

# Ian Carmichael, 1920–2010

*An Appreciation by Norman Murphy*

Although I knew that Ian Carmichael, who was one of the Society's first patrons, was getting on in years, his death on 5 February came as quite a shock. I had enjoyed watching him in the 1950s in the Boulting brothers' *Private's Progress* and *I'm All Right Jack*, and I particularly admired his performance in Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*. He went on to play in a series of similar enjoyable film comedies, but I and other Wodehouseans will always remember him for *The World of Wooster*, the series in which he played Bertie Wooster against Dennis Price's Jeeves.

His career was a long one. His first appearance had been in Kapek's *RUR* back in 1939 at the People's Palace, Mile End, in London, and his last was in the ITV series *The Royal* in 2009 – 70 years later! After service in the war and reaching the rank of major, he returned to the stage and began to hone and develop his technique as a light comedian. As one obituary said: "Few comedians knew how to look more comically humanly afraid."

While his films were popular, it was the 20 TV episodes he played as Bertie from 1965 to 1967 that made him a household name. As Fry and Laurie were to do 25 years later, the series introduced many British viewers to Wodehouse, and Carmichael made the most of his trick of displaying what one critic called "silent, facial panic".

Two criticisms still persist of his performance: first, he repeated the error, heretical to Wodehouse aficionados, of wearing a monocle; second, he was too old for the part. This was certainly true, but while there had been many actors before the war who could act dude parts, Carmichael was one of the very few left who could carry it off. He had to portray, as one critic said, "a diffident, awkward, often put-upon unfailingly courteous and well-intentioned" young man. And he did just that.

After *The World of Wooster* series, he was equally successful in playing Lord Peter Wimsey in a series of Dorothy L. Sayers stories, and he later returned to Wodehouse, playing Gally Threepwood to Richard Vernon's Lord Emsworth on radio from 1985 to 1992. He also recorded a three-hour abridgement of *Summer Lightning* for the BBC Radio Collection in 1988.

I only met him once, when Tony Ring and I went down to Emsworth to see him unveil the blue plaque on Threepwood, the house where Wodehouse had lived early in the last century. He made a splendid speech and said how much he had enjoyed playing Bertie on TV and Gally on radio. He made the point – somewhat ruefully, I think – that although he had played hundreds of parts, he reckoned that he would be remembered for three of them – *I'm All Right Jack*, Bertie Wooster, and the Lord Peter Wimsey series.

Well, perhaps he was right and perhaps he wasn't the perfect Bertie Wooster, but he was the man who first played Bertie on television, and I reckon he made a darned good job of it. I think I speak for many when I say I remember him kindly and I miss him.



*Purists may dislike the monocle, but Ian Carmichael, will always be remembered as the first to play Bertie Wooster on television.*

## Everyman Landmark

Congratulations to Everyman, who are achieving a landmark this summer with the publication of *A Prefect's Uncle* and *A Pelican at Blandings* – respectively, the 69th and 70th Wodehouse volumes in their uniform hardback series of the largest collected edition of the Master's works. Each newly typeset book in the series has gone back to the original first UK edition and has corrected various mistakes and corruptions that have crept into other editions over the years.

Everyman's 69th and 70th titles will be concurrently published by Overlook Press in the USA. Look for further information on the celebration of this important event in our next issue.

## Celebration Time

Congratulations are also in order for two of our fellow Wodehouse Societies. On 27 March The Drones Club of Belgium will be commemorating its 20th anniversary with a special dinner at Schoonhoven Castle, to which members of the UK Society were invited. We fully expect it will be a jolly good binge.

This year also marks the 30th anniversary of The Wodehouse Society, the U.S. group founded by Bill Blood and Franklin Axe in 1980. TWS held advance celebrations of this great event at its convention in St. Paul last year. The most recent issue of its journal, *Plum Lines*, includes Len Lawson's convention talk about the Society's founding and early years – well worth reading.

# Cats and More Cats at the Arts Club

by Paul Kent

The fur certainly flew at the Society's meeting at the Arts Club on 16 February. A large tortoiseshell cat was hurled from an upstairs window. Having survived the ordeal, it was subsequently hit by an airborne banana. A second cat was sat upon. A third was trampled underfoot. A Pekingese was concussed. And to cap it all, yet another cat (a dead one this time) was also defenestrated.

Now, The P G Wodehouse Society (as far as I'm aware) is not a sanctuary for those who have taken a dislike to our four-legged friends. So before you reach for the telephone and dial the RSPCA, it might be an idea to point out that these cat-tossings were all part of Jonathan Cecil's masterly reading of 'Goodbye to All Cats', a Wodehouse short story taken from the volume *Young Men in Spats*, which formed the centrepiece of the evening.

Jonathan is, of course, well-known to Wodehouse fans the world over as one of the foremost interpreters of the Master's oeuvre; in fact, on the night of the meeting, he had just returned from the BBC Audiobooks studio in Bath, having completed his 37th unabridged Wodehouse recording, *Mr Mulliner Speaking*. As he stepped forward into the small pool of light offered by a standard lamp, the bumper audience (over 60 members were present) gave him the warmest possible reception. Having noted that he was "as vain as the next actor", Jonathan confessed that he seldom listened to his own recordings, branding one of his earliest as "a brilliant cure for insomnia". This example of his characteristic modesty is actually an outrageous self-libel, as he proved immediately with a pitch-perfect rendition of Gally Threepwood in a short vignette from *Summer Lightning*. (Gally, incidentally, enters the Blandings saga by tripping over a spaniel.) Jonathan's comic timing came to the fore as he recounted the story of

Buffy Struggles's early death, brought on, Gally implies, by his switch from brandy to tea after attending a temperance lecture. Within the year, the unfortunate Buffy is no more, run over by a hansom-cab while crossing Piccadilly – conclusive proof, in Gally's rather skewed world view, that abstinence is the root of all human misery.

And then we came to the cat atrocities – and it is here that Jonathan needed every ounce of his considerable experience. Readers of audiobooks are largely unsung, I suspect because they routinely



do such an excellent job they make it sound easy. But when you consider they are faced with the problem of recording in



The inimitable Jonathan Cecil (above and below left)

a confined, soundproof studio with no audience reaction, props, make-up, CGI, or even the use of their own limbs to help bring the words off the page, you begin to appreciate quite how talented they are. Jonathan tackled ten different character voices in the course of the story, ranging from dotty aunts to young men and women to my personal favourite, Sir Mortimer Prenderby. Exclamations such as "It's raining cats!" and "Dahlia! Who's that ugly feller?" were delivered in a throaty baritone that resembled a foghorn with the croup. Simply brilliant – and rewarded with loud guffaws from the audience.

Pausing only to deliver his third extract (a hilariously bad poem on the subject of shooting gnus by Charlotte Mulliner from 'Unpleasantness at Bloodleigh Court'), Jonathan concluded his catalogue of animal cruelty to loud applause and, for his pains, was presented with copies of Norman Murphy's *A Wodehouse Handbook* and *Three Wodehouse Walks*.

Another splendid, well-attended evening. And there's no getting away from those felines – the Society's next meeting on 6 July will feature a performance of a piece entitled 'Plum, Shakespeare, and the Cat Chap' . . .

"Do you know," said a thoughtful Bean, "I'll bet that if all the girls Freddie Widgeon has loved and lost were placed end to end – not that I suppose one could do it – they would reach halfway down Piccadilly."

"Further than that," said the Egg. "Some of them were pretty tall. . . ."

(From 'Goodbye to All Cats', 1934)



# Profile of a Patron

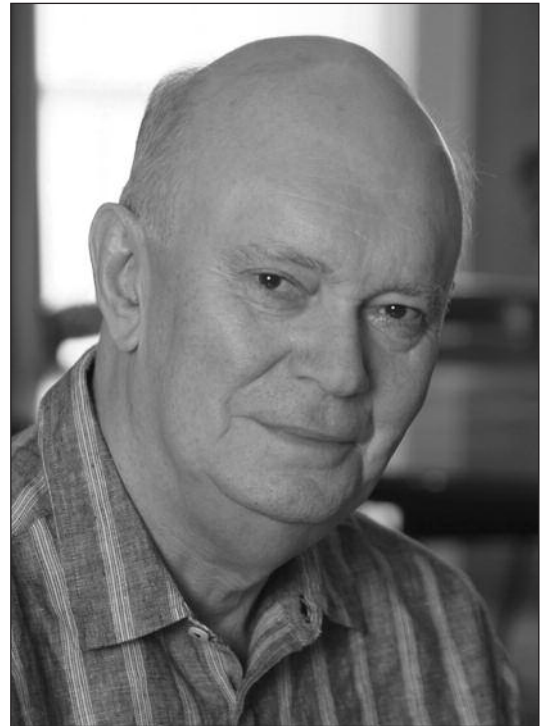
## Sir Alan Ayckbourn

Alan Ayckbourn started writing in an amateur sort of way at the age of nine and professionally at the age of 20. Since then he has written 74 full-length plays, all professionally produced, many of them in the West End and in far-flung countries all over the world.

It wasn't till he was 36, though, that he collaborated with Andrew Lloyd Webber on his first musical, *Jeeves*, attempting to write both book and lyrics for the very first time. The show's book was loosely based on *The Code of the Woosters* and by the time it opened at Her Majesty's Theatre had become considerably looser. The production was universally derided and dismissed by critics and public alike, and the composers and cast were lucky to escape with their lives. Only Plum survived, unsullied and unscathed, having sensibly had nothing whatsoever to do with it all.

Twenty-one years later, the composer and lyricist chanced their arms again with *By Jeeves*, a revised version with a virtually new score, new lyrics, and a new book (which wasn't loosely based on anything much). It was directed by Alan in his home theatre, the newly opened Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough. This new show was considerably scaled-down from the over-ambitious original, in the round with a much smaller cast and band and a stage set consisting of a cardboard box and a ladder. The sound of critics' feet scampering up the M1 scenting fresh blood caused the press night of this 1996 revival to be filled with abnormal tension. Disappointingly (for the critics at least), both the authors and the company achieved a modest popular success with their new scaled-down version, and the piece went on to enjoy a West End run plus a brief spell, a year or so later, on Broadway.

Plum's reputation throughout all this remained undimmed and his escutcheon mercifully unblotted.



## Letters to the Editor

### From Carolyn de la Plain

I enjoyed the latest *Wooster Sauce* but was mildly surprised to see that no-one seemed to have picked up on the fact that, in the June issue, the only typo (certainly the only one I spotted) was a Missing Word in the article on Printer's Error (penultimate paragraph), which I thought very neat! Was it deliberate?

*With a sheepish smile, the Editor admits:* Er – um – no, not deliberate at all. Just one of those laughable mistakes that we editors like to blame on others . . .

### From Norman Dodson

Recently I endeavored to order *The Folio Anthology of Humour*, prefaced by PGW, from Folio. Unfortunately, I confused this book with one of a similar title, *The Folio Book of Humorous Anecdotes*; and searched the Folio site for *The Folio Anthology of Humerous Anecdotes*. The search response was "Did you mean the Folio Anthology of Humerus Anecdotes?" I clicked yes and received the response: "Sorry, no books found matching your search terms." I haven't searched the science and natural history Folio section and they do not appear to have an orthopaedic section. Seems the PGW spell is at work everywhere. I would ask you to note that I have resisted any temptation to refer to funny bones or there being no 'arm in it.

### From Nick Mason

Your groundbreaking revelation that two University Challenge contestants representing St John's College Oxford bore names a bit like Wodehouse and fairly like Townend ('One of Those Odd Coincidences', Little Nuggets, December 2009) becomes even more amazing when one realises that the programme was transmitted only 31 days before PGW's birthday, and that the two contestants' college is rather less than a half-mile walk from Corpus Christi, where PGW's brother Armine studied for his degree. It really is, as the saying goes, a fairly small world.

### From Peter Gooday

Martin Stratford argues for awarding Mr Wodehouse a posthumous Crime Writers' Association's Diamond Dagger award with great lucidity and persuasiveness [*Wooster Sauce*, December 2009]. Surely it is impossible to put a contrary case and immediate action is indicated.

But what would life be without Friends at Court? The fast-track solution must undoubtedly lie with The P G Wodehouse Society's own Simon Brett – he of the 'Crime in Rhyme' entertainment at a recent meeting. Simon is, of course, a past Chair of the Crime Writer's Association; need I say more? QED and over to you, Simon.

# Wodehouse and Dorothy L. Sayers: A Mutual Admiration Society

*In which Kenneth Clevenger sets out how, in many ways,  
P. G. Wodehouse and Dorothy L. Sayers were kindred  
literary spirits with much in common*

As an avid reader and one who appreciated the arduous work of crafting clever characters, clear, strong images, and tight plots, P. G. Wodehouse found Dorothy L. Sayers's mystery novels a pleasure to read. Certainly, Sayers was entertained by the world of Bertie and Jeeves. Her greatest creation, Lord Peter Wimsey and his man, Bunter, were her own invention, but they owe a substantial creative debt to Bertie and Jeeves.

Sayers's lasting public fame is due to her dozen detective novels featuring Wimsey, and thus the close connection to Wodehouse. In *Dorothy Leigh Sayers: Her Life and Soul*, Barbara Reynolds, a Dante scholar, friend of Sayers, and exceptionally well-informed biographer, writes: "Some of Lord Peter's mannerisms are also deliberately evocative of P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster. She used them because they entertained her."

An earlier biography, *Dorothy L. Sayers*, by James Brabazon, notes the same connection, describing Wimsey thusly: "But being a modern silly-ass (in 1921), who does he take his cue from but Bertie Wooster? – who must of course be accompanied by his Jeeves, now transmogrified into Bunter." Brabazon then notes the development of Wimsey: "The most noticeable change is that gradually through the course of the novels, Wimsey drops the pose of the monocled silly-ass Dorothy borrowed from P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster."

This change, or rather character development, is elsewhere described by another biographer, Ralph E. Hone in *Dorothy L. Sayers: A Literary Biography*, less flatteringly: "Fortunately for the reader, the P. G. Wodehouse strain gradually waned."

P. D. James, the celebrated modern detective novelist, in a foreword to the Sayers biography by Brabazon, says this "change from the Wooster-like

monocled, man-about-town" of the first Wimsey novel to the character as seen in Sayers's final, completed Wimsey novel, "is less a development than a metamorphosis." Baroness James, as she is, thus quantifies, but graciously refrains from qualifying, Wimsey's debt to Wodehouse. I note that her own autobiographical work, *Time to be in Earnest*, suggests that Baroness James is very appreciative of Wodehouse's writing herself.

Bunter, too, is scrutinised as a character in debt to Wodehouse. In an introduction to a 1972 collection of Sayers short stories featuring Wimsey, James Sandoe notes that "the quietly splendid Bunter" is "obviously related to Jeeves." Returning to the Hone biography of Sayers, that author concedes that "[t]here is an inevitable Jeeves-like quality in Bunter." In *Such a Strange Lady*, Janet Hitchman concludes that "Bunter could have been inspired by Wodehouse's Jeeves, but only insofar as the master/man relationship is concerned." And to cast a final, even less faint aspersion, Alzina Stone Dole in *Maker and Craftsman: The Story of Dorothy L. Sayers*, writes that Wimsey is "Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster . . . and has a valet, Bunter, who is superior to Jeeves in personality and poise."

Strong language, I know, but being Wodehouseans we must graciously allow for the odd dissenting voice. "*De gustibus non est disputandum*," as Jeeves would no doubt faintly murmur.

Sayers's debt to, and admiration of, Wodehouse's writing is clear, and she generously acknowledged it in her own work. In *Unnatural Death*, published in 1927, she wrote of Wimsey: "His jaw slackened, giving his long narrow face a faintly foolish and hesitant look, reminiscent of the heroes of Mr. P. G. Wodehouse." In 1930 we find two references to Wodehouse. The first is from *The Documents in the Case*, a unique non-Lord Peter Wimsey mystery novel. The relevant passage is: "'Hello Lathon!' I said, and added nervously, 'hullo-ullo-ullo!' like something by P. G. Wodehouse."

And later in 1930, in *Strong Poison*, Lord Peter says: "Do you never overlook anything, Bunter?" The valet replies: "I endeavour to give satisfaction, my



Dorothy L. Sayers (1893–1957)



lord.” To which Wimsey says: “Well then, don’t talk like Jeeves.” In her 1933 novel *Murder Must Advertise*, Sayers has Wimsey described by another character as “a cross between Ralph Lynn and Bertie Wooster”. Lynn was a well-known actor of the period; in 1934 he commissioned Wodehouse to write a play for him to star in called *The Inside Stand*, based on the novel *Hot Water*.

There is one final tribute from Sayers to Wodehouse. In an unfinished draft of *Thrones, Dominations*, a novel probably penned in 1936–38, later completed by Jill Paton Walsh and published in 1998, Sayers wrote of a village girl newly employed as a ladies’ maid by the Wimsey household in London: “. . . now here she was in Audley Square accompanied by a whole library of manuals on etiquette and the complete works of Mr. P. G. Wodehouse, whom, not without justice, she took seriously as an infallible guide to high life above and below stairs.”

Wodehouse, ever the gentleman, returned the compliments. In 1932, in the Mulliner short story ‘Strychnine in the Soup’, he wrote: “I will pass lightly over the period of Cyril’s wooing. Suffice it to say that his progress was rapid. From the moment he told Amelia that he had once met Dorothy Sayers, he never looked back.” In Plum’s 1935 short story ‘Trouble Down at Tudsleigh’, Freddie Widgeon “continued to muse on this mystery of the child Prudence. He wondered what Sherlock Holmes would have made of it, or Lord Peter Wimsey, for that matter.”

In *Louder and Funnier*, in the section on ‘Thrillers’, Wodehouse wrote humorously but disparagingly about thriller writers, but he added: “Of course, there are exceptions. Dorothy Sayers is good.” Sayers greatly preferred being identified as Dorothy L. Sayers, though Wodehouse may not have known of her preference. But he clearly knew her. In *Such a Strange Lady*, Hitchman refers to an “exhilarating” occasion when Wodehouse was a guest of Sayers at a Detection Club dinner.

It is no surprise that each of these popular and successful authors admired the work of the other. Sayers’s superb command of English, her wit and allusiveness, bolstered by a solid classical grounding and deep knowledge of literature, were bound to gain Plum’s enjoyment and praise. In turn, Sayers’s Wodehouse references reflect both her admiration for his work and her acknowledgement of his contribution to literature.

# My First Wodehouse Experience

by Martin Stratford



I first started reading P G Wodehouse when I was about 14 as a result of watching the BBC *World of Wooster* TV series in the mid-1960s. I bought the Penguin paperbacks that accompanied the series (I still have many of them today), and I was hooked. The Blandings TV series followed, and my paperback collection grew until I realised that I would want to reread the stories (many times). I needed more hard-wearing editions and so started on my hardback collection. The Sixties was a purple period for Wodehouse on TV. There was also the Ukridge series and a one-off comedy half-hour programme which adapted ‘Uncle Fred Flits By’ (I think with Wilfred Hyde-White in the title role). Since this is probably the greatest comic short story ever written, it would be wonderful if it still existed and was made available.

Getting hooked on the Master’s work had an added personal bonus. My stepmother had died not long before I started reading him, and becoming immersed in Wodehouse’s world helped immeasurably in coping with that. Since my father also started reading PGW at the same time I did, it gave us a shared interest as we swapped books, often quoting sections to each other from the current book we were reading and discussing the plots and characters.

I have to confess that when I reread the Jeeves and Bertie books now, I visualise Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie in the roles, together with the stellar ensemble cast who supported them so magnificently. Even so, I shall always be grateful to the BBC series in the Sixties for introducing me to the works of Wodehouse and for all the immense enjoyment the books have given me over the years.

It just shows, what any member of Parliament will tell you, that if you want real oratory, the preliminary noggin is essential. Unless pie-eyed, you cannot hope to grip.

(From *Right Ho, Jeeves*, 1934)

## Plum Pie Revisited

Readers will recall that December's *Wooster Sauce* featured Heywood Hill's successful Plum Pie exhibition. It was one of those events when everything seemed to work out splendidly, with the bookstore's staff, Society members, and right-minded newspapers all working together for the good of the show. The exhibition had the extra bonus of attracting new members to the Society, and as a result our November and February meetings were crowded to the rafters.

Among the enjoyable aspects of the exhibition overlooked in the December issue were two competitions. The more cerebral of these was a Wodehouse quiz interspersed with some tricky questions on PGW's works and characters as well as on the exhibition itself. One question asked how many steps there were down to Heywood Hill's basement, which depended on whether you counted in the two steps on the turn of the top landing. The quiz could be obtained through Heywood Hill's website, but it certainly helped to be at the shop! The eventual victor was Mr Terry Jones (pictured above, left, with Heywood Hill's Jeffrey Kerr), who won a complete set of the Everyman edition of Wodehouse books (66 titles at that time).



Another competition, 'Plum Idol', took place on Heywood Hill's website, where visitors were invited to vote for 'the most popular P G Wodehouse quote'. There was a selection of 10, delivered by various celebrities including Stephen Fry, the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, and Henry Blofeld (whose delivery, said Norman Murphy, was "intoned with the fruity gravitas of a '92 port being carefully decanted"). The winner of the competition was Stanley Johnson (Boris's father), who gave us: "As for Gussie Fink-Nottle, many an experienced undertaker would have been deceived by his appearance and started embalming him on sight."

This competition was accompanied by an invitation to website visitors to submit their own favourite PGW quotations. The end result was gratifying as hundreds submitted quotes, which can still be viewed online at <http://bit.ly/6fSJ4A>. As it is the Editor's prerogative to be subjective about such things, herewith are two of my own favourites to end this report:

Gussie, a glutton for punishment, looked at himself in the mirror.

She fitted into my biggest arm-chair as if it had been built around her by someone who knew they were wearing arm-chairs tight about the hips that season.

## Profile of a Committee Member

### *James Jarrett*

Jamie Jarrett was born in Sussex and went on to gain a good degree at the University of Sheffield. His working life has focused on information technology, primarily for Hewlett-Packard, where he held a number of senior European-level roles. This included the set-up and management of the technical, user, and customer support in more than 25 countries for the then largest implementation of SAP of its kind worldwide. He also has much experience in project, programme, and portfolio management and in optimising resource management for large organisations.

Coming from a family laced with scientists, artists, and medics, it is not surprising that Jamie's interests are fairly wide-ranging. Apart, of course, from a love of the work of P G Wodehouse, his other interests include books in general, art, timepieces, architecture, and walking. He lives in a small village in Wiltshire amongst a clutch of villages with Wodehouseanesque names and not so far from Blandings (Sudeley) and the home of the Deverill sisters.

Jamie says he is "by no means an expert on Wodehouse", but since he was a teenager he has very much enjoyed reading PGW's work. He cannot remember which PGW book he first read, but is sure that it was a Jeeves and Wooster story lent to him by a friend. His favourites are the Blandings novels. Jamie joined the Society's committee as Website Editor in 2008. He and our technical guru Chris Reece developed a new website for the Society, which was launched in November 2009. Be sure to check it out ([www.pgwohousesociety.org.uk](http://www.pgwohousesociety.org.uk)) – and Jamie welcomes contributions!



# Somebody Else's Wodehouse Walk

by Norman Murphy

Late last year Christine Hewitt noted that the London Walks organization was advertising a Wodehouse Walk (entitled 'What Ho, Jeeves! The London of P G Wodehouse') to take place on January 10th. This came as something of a shock. Was there some brilliant expert out there we had never heard of? Had a member of the Society bought a copy of my *Three Wodehouse Walks* and decided to cash in? The imagination boggled, but clearly this was an event worth attending.

On a freezing Sunday morning, therefore, Elin and I joined a small group at the top of Park Lane. Hilary and Robert Bruce were there together with Society member John Davis and five or six young people. Our guide, Richard Burnip, introduced himself and made it clear this was a basic introduction to Wodehouse. He told us the sort of books Wodehouse wrote and how he had used many settings, and said that we were going to look at some of the sites in Mayfair where many of the Bertie Wooster stories were set. (I should add that, during the walk, he twice referred in glowing terms to *In Search of Blandings*.)

For those who did not know much about Wodehouse, Richard described Wodehouse's family background, his parents' absence in Hong Kong, his schooling at Dulwich, and his early career. Richard led us first to Dunraven Street, where a blue plaque marks the house where Wodehouse had lived when it was Norfolk Street. He told us how Wodehouse had drawn it as Lord Emsworth's London residence and adroitly introduced the matter of fearsome aunts in Wodehouse by recounting Ronnie Fish and Sue Brown's encounter with Lady Constance here. He also told us of Sue Brown's role as one of the many impostors without whom Blandings never seemed complete. He was clearly an enthusiast – a big plus for him.

We then walked across Grosvenor Square, which Wodehouse had used often in his stories, and Richard quoted Claire Fenwick, who had longed to live there in *Uneasy Money*. We called at 23 Gilbert Street, where

Wodehouse lived in 1924, and then made our way to the Connaught Hotel, which Richard suggested was, with Claridge's, a good candidate for Barribault's. Round the corner of Mount Street, he pointed out where Berkeley Mansions, Bertie Wooster's address in the later novels, had stood till a few years ago, and he pointed out 38 Berkeley Square, where Wodehouse had once stayed and wrote about it to Leonora. (This was a new one on me. Must check!) He then led us down Hay's Mews.

Although it was a tremendous struggle, Elin can confirm that I kept very quiet throughout the walk and made only one or two comments. I found this reticence particularly difficult as we looked down Hay's Mews, where Richard quite properly mentioned Aunt Dahlia's house at 47 Charles Street (where Wodehouse worked with Ian Hay) but made no mention of 'Halsey Court' or the 'Junior Ganymede'.



*A cheerful and unsuspecting Richard Burnip describes what once was Berkeley Mansions (behind him) while Norman lends a critical ear.*

Richard regretted he had been unable to identify Bertie's flat in Berkeley Street (!) and took us to Dover Street and the site of the old Bath Club – as he said, a major source of the Drones Club. (No mention of Buck's Club, however.) Thence we walked to Vine Street, where Richard pointed out the site of the police station where young men in Wodehouse met their just deserts after celebrating Boat Race Night too vigorously.

The walk finished here, and Hilary, Robert, and Elin revealed their identities and mine as well. Richard took this very well, though I think he was slightly taken aback when John Davis showed him a copy of *Three Wodehouse Walks*.

It was a fascinating morning seeing Wodehouse's Mayfair from another perspective, but I am now on the horns of a dilemma. Should I send Richard a copy of *Three Wodehouse Walks*? Or will he buy it himself? As Society Remembrancer, should I attend all his future walks to see that he does not stray too far from the paths of righteousness? But can I count on the Society Treasurer to refund the fee required for each walk? It is all very difficult.

Freddie experienced the sort of abysmal soul-sadness which afflicts one of Tolstoi's Russian peasants when, after putting in a heavy day's work strangling his father, beating his wife, and dropping the baby into the city reservoir, he turns to the cupboard, only to find the vodka bottle empty.

(From *Jill the Reckless*, 1920)



# Dark Doings at Roville

## *Did Canon Blenkinsop Write the Jeeves Stories?*

by Philip Johnson

Without access to metropolitan libraries and collections and lacking the impressive knowledge of other enthusiasts, it is difficult for the amateur Wodehouse fan to voice an uneasiness that has been with him (i.e. me) since first reading ‘Aunt Agatha Speaks Her Mind’ (1923). However, I shall attempt it.

In that story, Aline Hemmingway exclaims to her brother:

“Oh Sydney!” said the girl. “Doesn’t Mr Wooster remind you of Canon Blenkinsop, who came to Chipley to preach last Easter?”

On the face of it, this is merely a confidence trickster trying to lend verisimilitude to her story and to create a ‘closeness’ with Bertie, her next victim. If it had always remained in the Wodehouse canon, I would have thought no more about it, but . . .

In the omnibus volume *The World of Jeeves* (1967), Canon Blenkinsop has been cut out and the story significantly changed. Why is this? In 1967, Aline Hemmingway gives nothing away. Her words are not part of the plot or necessary in any way. Why then, put them in in 1923, and why are they omitted in 1967?

I suggest the reason is that Canon Blenkinsop was Bertie. I refer, of course, to Bertie’s command of biblical quotations and his Scripture Knowledge prize, frequently mentioned by Wodehouse, as well as the facial resemblance, referred to in this story. I further suggest that PGW was colluding with Canon Blenkinsop in linking his name to a good story and thereby, in a double bluff, protecting the reverend gentleman. Wodehouse had many clerical connections, including four clergyman uncles, and I believe he put his name to stories written by Blenkinsop, a cleric who loved writing them but whose hobby did not fit with a career in the church – a career which did not then encourage levity but rather the opposite. Remember Sydney Smith’s rueful remark that “he rose by his gravity, I fell by my levity”.

It is clear that Blenkinsop eventually realised that he had no alternative but to abandon Bertie and let Wodehouse take over. With the acknowledgement to him in this story, first published in April 1922, Wodehouse

takes over with a barely-perceptible change of style, moving away from the ‘dear old pals’ and Knuts phraseology to the post-war Bertie we know so well. But it would have been unlike Wodehouse (a man who loved detective stories) not to have left some indication of the real origin of Bertie.

Does Canon Blenkinsop write from memories of his wild youth before he saw the light? Had he himself been a prototype Bertie? Can Chipley in the Glen be identified? In what diocese should we look for him? We may never be able to answer these queries because this story is all we have. I am on dangerous ground here, but is it too much to suggest that we have collusion here between Wodehouse and Blenkinsop, who both have something to lose and something to gain?

Could it have been George Grossmith Jnr? No. This was another red herring artfully drawn across our path to hide the truth. Bertie’s code, his quotations, his amours, his aim always to be *sans peur et sans reproche* are those of an Edwardian clergyman, not those of an actor, however skilful.

*Editorial comment:* While reluctant to become involved in Mr Johnson’s startling theory, your Editor felt justified in putting her editorial staff to work. They point out that *Not George Washington* deals with a young writer who persuades three people to let him use their names for articles he writes, and one of these was a clergyman. They also inform me that the book was based on fact. Wodehouse was indeed then writing articles using other people’s names: Westbrook, Townend, N A Knox and C T Overy – and Overy was ordained in 1910. They further inform me that, perhaps out of gratitude as Mr Johnson suggests, Wodehouse brings in three of these names into his stories: Westbrook and Knox in *Mike* and Townend in ‘Ladies and Gentleman v. Players’.

Recalling the unseemly uproar on the Week With Wodehouse when the subject under debate was who would have made the best wife for Bertie, the Editor is reluctant to ask for readers’ comments but feels she should do so. Darwinism versus Creationism has nothing on this.

### ***Carry On, Chautauqua!***

On 24 February 2010, the *Jamestown Post-Journal* reported that in 2009, the Chautauqua-Cattaraugus Library service had set a record of 6,263 checkouts for the number of digital audiobooks circulated in one year. The top four titles were: *The Bonesetter’s Daughter* by Amy Tan; *First to Die* by James Patterson; *The Associate* by John Grisham – and *Carry On, Jeeves* by P G Wodehouse.

Society member LAURA LOEHR informs us that this area in western New York is home to the Chautauqua Institution, which offers lectures, performances, and classes every summer, focused on a different theme each week. One of the hotels there, the Spencer, “has all the rooms named after different authors. And yes, one of the rooms is the P. G. Wodehouse Room.” It is facts such as these that reassure us there is hope for small-town America!

# The Wodehouse Orchids

by Jim Durrant  
*McBean's Orchids*

Back in 1998, I wrote a small article for *Wooster Sauce* regarding an orchid connection to P. G. Wodehouse. For those who missed this article or have forgotten such a momentous jotting, I will give a quick 'resume'.

In 1991 I made a hybrid cross of two fantastic Cymbidium orchids, bucking the trend to make big, round, continental-shape flowers. I was aiming for an old-fashioned-looking English style of flower. The first cross to be registered was named 'Christmas Cheer' and the second cross was named 'Loch Leven'. To differentiate between plants of the same cross, we use a varietal name – e.g., your surname could be 'Smith', but to be able to recall one of your children separately, you give them a Christian name, i.e. George, Cyril, or Polly, but they are all 'Smith'!

Thus, I ended up with *Christmas Cheer* 'Aunt Dahlia', a gushing big pink flower; *Loch Leven* 'Bertie Wooster', a light-copper, vacant-looking flower; and

*Loch Leven* 'Jeeves', a steady bronze colour. More than 25 plants were named in this manner, trying to match the name of the character with the flower, many being exhibited at the Royal Horticultural Society Halls in Westminster over the years.

Taking this theme one stage further, after asking family members' permission, I named the cross of Red Beauty and Vieux Rose, P. G. Wodehouse. The best was given the variety 'Blandings' – a big, pink flower, still used in exhibitions, which has itself been used in breeding many new seedlings. The only drawback of my naming policy is that it has led to some unlikely breeding between 'Jeeves' and 'Aunt Dahlia' and some others I'm too ashamed to mention.

I still use some familiar names when breeding 'Odontoglossum' orchids, and if you look carefully at our Chelsea Flower Show exhibit this year, you may see someone from Blandings Castle making an appearance.

Most of the named varieties still exist as I keep a library of old crosses on the nursery, just in case I need to reuse them in my breeding programme. Every now and then, an old friend reappears on a bench in full and splendid flower, and it gives me a glow of satisfaction and a reminder of a chapter in orchid breeding.

How do you value these plants? Normally we price a plant according to its overall appearance or how rare the plant is, but in this case should I value the plant according to its social status? Surely Aunt Dahlia should be more valuable than, say, Esmond Haddock?

It's all been great fun, and let's face it – no one else can say "I'm just going to the greenhouse to water Gussie Fink-Nottle!"

*Note: Seedlings of P. G. Wodehouse in various shades of pink are available for £30 plus P&P. For more information, contact Jim at sales@mcbeansorchids.co.uk. Visit McBean's Orchids website at <http://bit.ly/b7qNaZ>.*



*The Loch Leven 'Bingo Little'. To see more of McBean's Wodehouse orchids in full colour, visit the Society's website.*

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## Nine Wodehousean Clerihews

The Butler Beach  
Would like to reach  
His feet so killing  
But the stomach ain't willing  
– Jonathan Radgick

If PGW calls him "Percy"  
He will be treated without mercy.  
Pilbeam and Belper, sleuth and toff  
Had thin moustaches to top it off.  
– Peter Thompson

Bertie's Uncle could be droll,  
Though only when fed by Anatole  
Poachers with tricks up their sleeves  
Ultimately had to deal with Jeeves  
– Ailyn Hertzbach

Jeeves mocks  
The purple socks  
Which in the lift  
Emerge: an elevating gift  
– Charles Gould

Miss Madeline Basset  
Had many a heart-warming asset  
For Providence had not chosen  
From among those frozen.  
– Lennart Anderson

When Stilton Cheesewright says Ho!  
Bertie knows he has to go  
Into durance vile.  
But only for a short while.  
– Norman Murphy

Little Algernon  
Made a hole in one,  
Using wristy follow-through  
With his beach spade Number 2  
– Erik Backer

The Empress of Blandings  
Ranks top of the standings  
It's a victory well earned  
Where fat pigs are concerned  
– Geoff Millward

Ukridge, Stanley Featherstonehaugh,  
Was full of plans for  
Making a mint.  
But always ended up skint.  
– James Linwood

# On the Care of the Pig

*A Presentation Given by Professor Tom Molitor at  
'A Little Wodehouse on the Prairie', June 2010*

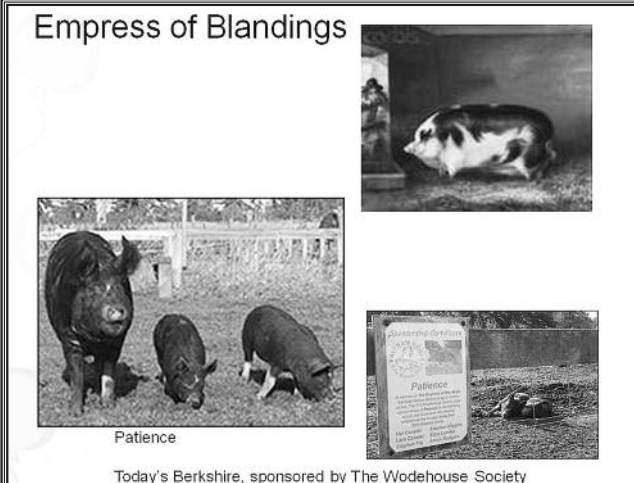
**T**he Editor explains: As Tim Andrew reported for *Wooster Sauce* (September 2009), the highlight of talks at The Wodehouse Society's convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, last June had to be Professor Tom Molitor's 'On the Care of the Pig'. The problem with sharing this particular presentation with our readers is that it was more of a game than a talk. Professor Molitor introduced himself as chairman of the Veterinary Population Medicine Department at the University of Minnesota's College of Veterinary Medicine – and somebody who had not really read a lot of Wodehouse. But he had done his homework and, having learned what he needed to know about all things Empress of Blandings, he explained what we in the audience had to do.

The members of said audience were sitting at rows of tables, and at the end of each table was an electronic voting device. On the screen, we were given multiple-choice questions; the folks at each table were to confer and agree on an answer, which was recorded electronically. Professor Molitor (hereafter called Tom) then revealed the correct answer, which was sometimes followed by considerable debate as those of us who were, perhaps, a bit more knowledgeable in the Wodehouse department than he was took issue with some of his answers. It turned into a very lively interactive presentation, and in the end all audience members were winners because, as Tim noted, it had been brilliant, enjoyable, and hysterically funny.

Because there was no set talk but plenty of ad-libbing, it is impossible to provide an accurate transcript of the proceedings. But herewith are the questions put to us along with some additional informative slides that Tom provided.

**F**or those members of the UK Society who were in the audience, Tom did and did not get off to a good start with this slide:

Empress of Blandings



Patience

Today's Berkshire, sponsored by The Wodehouse Society

Can you spot the error? It's in the smaller print at the bottom of the slide. But we will forgive the good professor for not knowing there is a difference between The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), which *does* sponsor Patience, and The Wodehouse Society, which does not.

This was followed by our first question:

Questions #1

Should the Empress of Blandings be appropriately referred to as a **SOW**?

- A. Yes, she is a female pig
- B. No, a pig-OK, but "sow" not appropriate
- C. No, not even a *sus scrofa*
- D. I don't know, I don't care, I'm just here for the fine conversation

Keep track of your correct answers

After answers were recorded, Tom introduced us to some pig terminology, which included 'sow', 'gilt', 'barrow', 'boar', 'neonatal pig', 'piglet', 'nursery', and 'grow-finish'. We will save you the trouble of looking up these words by letting you know that, because the Empress has not had a litter, she is a gilt.

So far, so educational. Then came question 2:

The Empress of Blandings

**Q2. Has won the following awards:**

- A. Silver medalist at the "Fat Pigs" class at the local Shropshire Agricultural Show
- B. Pignapped multiple times
- C. Ribbon winner at "best of show"
- D. A&B
- E. None of the above

The answer, according to Tom, was *D* since pignapping the Empress was an award for the pignappers. Needless to say, the room erupted with a certain amount of righteous indignation, and in the end Tom gamely accepted *A* as an answer as well.

**Q**uestions 3 and 4 were relatively easy for avowed Wodehouse fans:



3. Pigs can be housed at all the following *except*:
- A meadow with a house
  - A bathroom
  - A caravan
  - A two-seater
  - An empty cottage
- (According to *Thirty Postulates for the Relaxed Reading of P. G. Wodehouse* by Richard Osborne)

The answer, of course, is *A*, and if you're left befuddled, then you need to bone up on the Blandings stories!

4. Which of the following statements are not true regarding the nutritional requirements of a pig?
- A pig must consume not less than 57,800 calories a day.
  - A pig cannot skip a meal or she becomes a 'spent force'.
  - One of the favourite foods of the pig is potatoes.
  - A pig can subsist by eating grasses.

The answer, according to both Tom Molitor and Augustus Whiffle (*On the Care of the Pig*) is *D*. Tom followed this with a slide quoting Whiffle's 'Ideal Dietary Requirements', which included the information that "If the pig does not consume at least 57,000 calories, it becomes a 'spent force'."

Question 5 sparked more debate:

5. The Empress or her friend the Queen of Matchingham has consumed all of the following *except*:
- A 'well-filled flask of scotch'
  - Tea and crumpets
  - Six bottles of Slimmo
  - Galahad's book

Though the official answer is *B*, many in the audience were convinced that the Empress would certainly have accepted tea and crumpets had they been offered to her. Others took exception to the Queen of Matchingham being called the Empress's friend when they are no more than rivals, but this was probably nit-pigging. With regard to *A*, Tom's next slide provided enlightenment:

**Accidental additions**

- Book: Cause for calling the vet
- Scotch
  - Reflections on pigs and alcohol
    - G. Sauber: "Any sow showing nervousness, especially around farrowing, give a shot of whiskey or a beer."
    - T. Molitor: "The pig is the only animal that voluntarily consumes alcohol to level of intoxication."
- Slimmo (diet tonic)

Our pig education was expanded with the final two questions:

6. Causes for the Empress's nervousness include all of the following *except*:
- Dangling food such as potatoes
  - Not being able to find truffles in the meadow
  - Loss of the pigman and his special call
  - Exiting the sty into the meadow

The correct (and obvious) answer is *B*, though it was informative to learn that truffles have a smell similar to the male pig pheromone and therefore do attract female pigs – but the Empress never made it near a truffle, so we'll never know if they might have made her nervous.

7. Why do pigs have rings in their noses?  
(According to *P. G. Wodehouse; extra credit*)
- To prevent rooting in the mud
  - To facilitate pignapping
  - To present a more sophisticated appearance
  - To differentiate domesticated from wild pigs

As Wodehouse himself tells us, the ring is there expressly for pignapping purposes, so *B* is the correct answer.

After quoting from Lewis Carroll's 'The Walrus and the Carpenter' and reflecting that maybe pigs *do* have wings, Tom asked us to rate our answers according to the following scorecard:

- 5–7 correct: You are an *expert* in both pigs and P. G. Wodehouse.
- 3–4 correct: You know *something* about Wodehouse, need some work on pigs.
- 0–2 correct: Registration is available for 'piggy class' to be held at the University of Minnesota. You need to enrol.

Happily, most in the audience scored high, though there may have been a bit of nobbling. Tom concluded his talk with a final slide that summed up what had been an enjoyable and highly educational presentation, winning him thunderous applause:

**Take-home message: All I need to know about life, I learned from a pig!!!**

- Live high on the hog
- Wallow in mud, not in self pity
- If life gives you slop, then pig out
- The sty's the limit
- Always keep a little something in the piggybank
- Don't hog the conversation
- Oink, wallow and be merry
- Don't squeal on your friends
- Think pig and you'll go far
- Go "wee-wee" all the way home

## Little Nuggets

### ***The Allure of Police Helmets***

Commenting on the behaviour of undergraduates on special occasions as depicted by Wodehouse, the *Times Archive Blog* of November 5, 2009, reproduced an article about Bonfire Night 1908, reporting that nine Oxford undergraduates had been arrested. “It was stated that a defendant hit the constable once on the head and once on the helmet with a stick. The defendant said he had no intention to hurt the constable but only wanted to knock his helmet off.”

### ***The Queen and Jeeves***

In *The Independent* of November 19, Matthew Norman made some trenchant comparisons between the Queen, who, while reading “vacuous drivel” in the Queen’s Speech, “seemed to pause for about 0.07 seconds and raise her left eyebrow 1/16th of an inch”; and Jeeves, who frequently did something similar. Mr Norman pointed out that though diametric opposites, “the one being technically subservient but ruling the roost, and the other nominally boss but entirely powerless”, they are both “older and far wiser than the person who effectively pays their wages, but are never permitted to say so”.

### ***A Fine Notion***

During a House of Lords debate on the Proceeds of Crime Act on December 6, Lord Onslow said: “The agencies are on to a slice of the money seized. The only time I have heard of such a thing before was when Bertie Wooster commented that Sir Roderick Glossop had had a slice of the fines that he imposed in the magistrates’ court.” It was, of course, Sir Watkyn Bassett, not Sir Roderick, but all the same fitting. (Thanks to EDWARD CAZALET.)

### ***Doyle Was Not Wodehouse***

The Winter 2009 issue of the *Sherlock Holmes Journal* included an article on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s ventures into theatre. David Timson described how Doyle and J M Barrie attempted a libretto for a light opera piece but soon found it more difficult than expected: “Barrie knew as much about music as Doyle did, which was virtually nothing. You needed to be a W S Gilbert or a P G Wodehouse to write snappy lyrics, and the two collaborators were out of their depth.” (Thanks to STEPHEN PAYNE.)

### ***Where’s That From?***

On the Radio 4 programme *Quote . . . Unquote* of 15 February, contestants were asked to quote something they wished they had said. David Nobbs quoted PGW: “The bank manager approached like a wall of fog.” JUNE ARNOLD, who sent this reference, commented, “I don’t know where that comes from, but I’m sure you do.” Well, the Editor must confess she is, um, a bit fogged, as is her resident expert. If one of our perspicacious members knows the source of this quote, please share your wisdom with us!

### ***Wodehouse Hits a Nerve***

A *Daily News & Analysis* online article on what makes a book truly funny devotes attention to the works of PGW, “the undisputed monarch of the descriptive sentence”, according to Vinayak Varma. He notes that “the real magic of [Wodehouse’s] writing is in imagery so unpredictable, and yet to appropriate . . . that the effect on one’s ulnar nerve is instantaneous”. (See <http://bit.ly/2mV3Ud>)

## Sports News

### **From *The Guardian*, October 11**

Rob Smyth’s report of a World Cup football qualifier began strangely: “Hello. To steal a line from Wodehouse, permutations are like 74-man orgies: at first they are excitingly challenging and rewardingly mind-blowing, but soon you realise you haven’t got a clue what’s going on, are stabbing hopelessly in the dark, and WANT YOUR MUMMY.”

*Editor’s comment: It’s such a shame that Rob Smyth didn’t mention which member of the Wodehouse family is reputed to have said this.*

### **From *The Sun Herald* (Sydney),**

**November 15** (from Barry Chapman)

A piece on the dangers of Rugby football began with a quote from PGW, who claimed it was “a game I can’t claim to understand in all its niceties. . . . I know that the main scheme is to work the ball down the field somehow and deposit it over the line at the other end and that, in order to squelch this programme, each side is allowed to put in a certain amount of assault and battery and do things to its fellow man which, if done elsewhere, would result in 14 days without the option, coupled with some strong remarks from the Bench.” (Spoken by Bertie Wooster in ‘The Ordeal of Young Tuppy’.)

### **From *The Independent*, November 23**

On the hirsuteness of current sportsmen, specifically in Scotland-Australian rugby, Robin Scott-Ellot wrote: “Murrayfield can rarely have witnessed so many wispy moustaches as sported by the Australians on Saturday. To a man, give or take the odd prop, they managed to look like Stilton Cheesewright, who once struggled manfully to match Bertie Wooster’s dashing ‘tache and so save his engagement to Florence Craye.”

### **From BBC News’s website, December 20**

A description of play during the fourth day of the first cricket test between England and South Africa referred to an incident when a batsman mis-hit a ball from English bowler Graham Onions just over a fielder’s head. The report continued: “Agony for Onions, which sounds like a P G Wodehouse novel.”

### **From *The Financial Times*, January 2**

Golf author Tom Cox described playing a round of golf at Wodehouse’s old club, Addington, and peppered his report with references to and quotations from the Wodehouse golf stories.

### **From *The Independent*, February 6**

Chris Hewett’s A-Z guide to the Six Nations Rugby tournament included under the entry for ‘L’ the 1914 English International Cyril Lowe, and referred to Wodehouse’s poem about him, sympathising with the fact that he never seemed to receive a pass.

# When Grandmama Fell Off the Boat: The Best of Harry Graham

Reviewed by Tony Ring

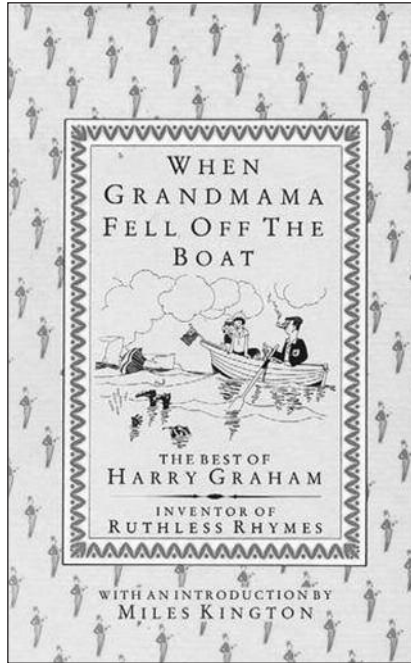
Reviews of books with no direct link to Wodehouse are rightly unusual in *Wooster Sauce*, but it is perhaps reasonable to draw members' attention to this new edition of a collection (first published in 1986) of verse written between about 1899 and 1935.

Its creator, Harry Graham (1874–1936), was perhaps the first of a series of poets to try to burst the smug complacency of the establishment with a series of short verses (*Ruthless Rhymes*) which, by their unexpected twists, created a frisson of alarm for the reader. These early verses, seemingly imitated by Hilaire Belloc in his *Cautionary Verses* a few years later, may even have been the forerunners of such later work as Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes* (1982). His *Times* obituary of 1936 compared him to Edward Lear, W S Gilbert, and Lewis Carroll.

This collection, published by Sheldrake Press in 2009, provides a total of 74 examples of Graham's work, from 13 books of poems. Some are as short as four lines, while others have well over 100, and there are many different rhyming patterns. Many of the rhymes are unexpected or ingenious, a talent Wodehouse also showed both in the hundred or so verses which he wrote in the first decade of the 1900s and in his later lyrics for the stage. Another similarity with Wodehouse's verse (though on the evidence of this collection, Wodehouse started earlier) is that quite a lot of Graham's was written to comment, usually ironically, on a news paragraph in the press.

Wodehouse may certainly have taken some ideas from Graham. Unfortunately, one which we would dearly like to point to is not included in the collection! Entitled 'Poetical Economy', it features the clipped words for which Wodehouse became renowned, usually in the language of Bertie Wooster. One verse of the poem reads:

When I've a syllable *de trop*,  
I cut it off, without apol.:  
This verbal sacrifice, I know,  
May irritate the schol.;  
But all must praise my dev'lish cunn.  
Who realise that Time is Mon.



This poem appeared in Graham's *Departmental Ditties* in 1909 – which may well be before Wodehouse first used the technique.

Like Wodehouse, Graham was very active and successful in both musical comedies and the straight theatre. Strangely, they do not seem to have actually worked together. Graham had notable success as a lyric writer for musical comedies in the 1920s, including a show called *The Blue Mazurka*, but although Wodehouse did mention possibly becoming involved in that show, there is no record of him ever having

done so. Graham's biggest hit in London's straight theatre was *By Candlelight*, an adaptation from Siegfried Geyer, which ran for 477 performances at the Prince of Wales Theatre from 1928. Despite this success, Gilbert Miller, who had bought the US rights as a vehicle for Leslie Howard and Gertrude Lawrence (the latter's first non-musical comedy part on Broadway), asked Wodehouse to make a new adaptation for the New York production. Partly because it was staged during the early part of the American depression of 1929–30, his *Candlelight* was less successful, but it still ran for well over 100 performances.

Members who appreciate the *Poet's Corner* feature in *Wooster Sauce* should also enjoy this book – though they should note that the postal discount journal *Bibliophile* had already reduced its cover price of £9.95 to £6.00 in its January 2010 edition.

*Editorial comment: James Hogg wrote about two possible ideas which Wodehouse may have 'borrowed' from Graham in articles in Wooster Sauce numbers 16 and 17 (December 2000 and March 2001), respectively as a source for the name 'Anatole' and the nature of the Drones Club (Graham's equivalent being 'the Celibates').*

## Emsworth Museum Re-opens

The Emsworth Museum (located on North Street in Emsworth, Hampshire) will be re-opening on 11 April following its winter break. In addition to exhibits on historic Emsworth, the Museum has an excellent display about Wodehouse, who lived at 'Threepwood' on what is now Record Road. The Museum will be open Saturdays and Bank Holidays from 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., Sundays from 2.30 to 4.30 p.m., and on Fridays in August from 2.30 to 4.30 p.m. For further information, visit the Museum's website at <http://www.emsworthmuseum.co.uk/>.



# Wodehouse on the Boards

Remarkably, as this issue of *Wooster Sauce* was being prepared, word arrived of not one but *two* productions of the Wodehouse & Bolton play *Come On, Jeeves*. The first was staged by the Barnes Charity Players from February 23 to 27; the second, directed by Society member John Turnbull, was produced at the Geoffrey Whitworth Theatre in Crayford, Kent, March 13–20. Look for reviews of both productions in June's *Wooster Sauce*.

Over in the States, the theatre department of Hunter College is putting on a different sort of production. *Food Play* is about food and eating in literature, and The Wodehouse Society (US) was invited to suggest the best food-related scene in Wodehouse. After much debate, they recommended 'Jeeves and the Old School Chum', in which there is much discussion of food, not to mention Bingo's horrified discovery of a champagne-soaked luncheon basket. At time of going to press, it was not known whether TWS's suggestion would be used in *Food Play*, but if you're in New York City on May 6, 7, or 8, then you may want to check out this intriguing production at the Loewe Theatre (68th Street between Park and Lexington). For further information, call the box office at 212-772-4448.

In Chicago, the City Lit Theatre is staging *Oh, Boy!* as the concluding production of its 30th Anniversary Season. This is the landmark 1917 musical with book by Wodehouse and Bolton, lyrics by Wodehouse, and music by Jerome Kern – the first and most popular of their collaborations. *Oh, Boy!* was one of the earliest musicals to incorporate songs into the action, making it a pioneer of the modern musical. Its plot is quintessential Wodehouse, involving a young man who has to hide his bride from the aunt who controls his money – and also conceal from his bride the woman who has unexpectedly appeared in his bedroom. Songs include the wonderful 'Till the Clouds Roll By'. The show runs from May 21 to June 27. For tickets and more information, contact City Lit's box office at (001) 773-293-3682, or visit their website at <http://www.citylit.org>. Look for a review in the September issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

Two theatre reviews follow. *Anything Goes* ran from November 21, 2009, to February 13, 2010, at the Court Theatre in Christchurch, New Zealand. The second review covers a new original play based on Wodehouse's works, this one entitled *Jeeves in Bloom*, by Margaret Raether, which ran from January 27 to February 28 in Oakbrook, Illinois. Many thanks to our two reviewers!

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## *Anything Goes*

Reviewed by Josie Charlotte Jackson



A rare treat for New Zealand's P. G. Wodehouse fans was the Christchurch Court Theatre's production of *Anything Goes*. This musical comedy first opened on Broadway in 1934, with songs by Cole Porter and a book by Wodehouse and Guy Bolton. Before opening night it had already had two other names (first *Crazy Week* and then *Hard to Get*), and afterwards it was endlessly edited, added to, trimmed, and altered for stage and film. Fortunately, over 70 years later, enough has remained of the Wodehouse magic to keep the script exuberantly light-hearted, with multiple cases of false identity, numerous one-liners, and the perfect Happy Ending. *Anything Goes* has a slightly confused identity, and this is fitting, as in many ways it is a show *about* confused identity. And no one can portray confused identity quite as brilliantly as Wodehouse.

*Anything Goes* takes place on a luxury cruise liner. Hope Harcourt (Hannah Wheeler) is sailing from America to England with her fiancé, Lord Evelyn Oakleigh (Jonathan Martin). Also on board are gangsters; Wall Street tycoons; terrifying mothers; Hope's true love, Billy Crocket (Roy Snow); and Reno Sweeney (Jude Gibson), the big-hearted Evangelical preacher who loves Billy. Jude Gibson as Reno was perhaps this production's greatest feature: as a wisecracking New Yorker, Wodehouse-style, and as the singer of 'You're the Top', 'I Get A Kick Out of You', and the show's title song, Gibson gave a performance Ethel Merman would have envied. She was ably

supported by the excellent Roy Snow (their duets were a delight) and Steven Ray (undoubtedly one of the show's highlights as gangster Moonface Martin). Jonathan Martin (as the archetypal silly-ass, Lord Evelyn) and Amy Straker (as the ditzy Erma) also turned in splendid performances. Music and costumes were superb, and the ensemble – as those familiar with past musicals at the Court Theatre will be aware – were a joy to watch and hear. *Anything Goes* contains a delightful mix of chaos and escapism, together with a gem of a Porter song per scene, and a gem of a Wodehouse line per minute. The end result was a wonderfully uplifting, fun-filled evening. Plum would've been *thrilled*.

# Jeeves in Bloom

Reviewed by Daniel Love Glazer

On January 28 I saw a preview performance of *Jeeves in Bloom*, presented by First Folio Theatre in Oak Brook, Illinois. The show was billed as being “By Margaret Raether, based on the characters of P. G. Wodehouse”. Two years ago, First Folio presented *Jeeves Intervenes*, also by Margaret Raether but based on the story ‘Jeeves and the Hard-Boiled Egg’. Each of these shows is a pastiche, using familiar Wodehouse characters, situations, and dialogue, but put together differently from any one Wodehouse story.

Bertie has just returned from Cannes, where he was in the company of Aunt Dahlia and Madeline Bassett. Gussie Fink-Nottle has fallen in love with Madeline Bassett, from whose dog’s paw he has extracted a thorn. With a series of telegrams, Dahlia summons Bertie to Brinkley Court. Bertie brings Gussie (and, of course, Jeeves) to Brinkley Court, where Madeline is staying. While at Cannes, Aunt Dahlia lost the money her husband Tom gave her to pay the printer of *Milady’s Boudoir*. She wants Bertie to steal her diamonds and pawn them so she can pay the printer. Tom fears burglars and patrols at night with his shotgun.

Gussie is too shy to voice his love. At Jeeves’s suggestion, Bertie plays Cyrano de Bergerac for the mute Gussie from the bushes, telling Madeline of his great love. Alas, Madeline discovers the ruse and concludes it is Bertie who loves her. She will marry him and devote her life to making him happy.

Meanwhile, Bertie somehow loses or damages – it isn’t quite clear – Anatole’s manuscript of his recipes that he hopes to publish. Anatole resigns. (This seems strained. Why not the standard Wodehouse ploy of depressed souls – Gussie, Bertie, and Dahlia could qualify as such, and maybe Tom upset by an income tax bill – refusing to eat?) Tom banishes Bertie from Brinkley Court.

In the end, thanks to Jeeves, Madeline is disentangled from Bertie and engaged to Gussie, Anatole’s manuscript is restored, and Anatole resumes his post. One loose end is that Dahlia never gets the



Jim McCance as Jeeves, Christian Gray as Bertie Wooster, and Kevin McKillip as Gussie Fink-Nottle in *Jeeves in Bloom*.

money she needs to pay the printer. This is a lapse that Wodehouse would never have countenanced.

Christian Gray and Jim McCance reprised their roles of Bertie and Jeeves from two years ago. Gray was adequate but cannot compare to Hugh Laurie or City Lit’s Mark Richard. McCance was very good and avoided the trace of condescension to Bertie that slightly marred his previous performance. The star of the evening was Kevin McKillip, a perfect embodiment of Gussie Fink-Nottle who lit up the stage. If he doesn’t win a Jeff Award (Chicago’s version of Broadway’s Tonys) for best supporting actor, an injustice will have been done. The other actors were fine. James Learning deserves special mention for superbly and seamlessly sustaining the dual roles of Tom Travers and Chef Anatole. But for the program, one would not have suspected that one actor played both parts.

The audience, nearly filling the 125-seat theatre, was enthusiastic, and rightfully so. Despite my quibbles, the production, which included snatches of recorded 1920s jazz, was excellent.

## It’s Puzzling

We often see references to Wodehouse in puzzles and quizzes in the U.K., but it is not often that they pop up in America. Society member SHARON JOHNSON, from Albuquerque, New Mexico, sent along a page from the *Dell Crossword Special* of March 2009 in which the clue for 86 Across was ‘P.G. Wodehouse novel’ (four letters). The answer was *Mike* – surely not one of the better-known PGW works in the United States. Bravo, Dell!

Wodehouse also makes it into puzzles Down Under, as Dr BARRY CHAPMAN has informed us. In the Sydney *Morning Herald* ‘Omega’ crossword puzzle for December 7, 2009, the clue for 1 Down was “Wooster of Wodehouse fame (6)” – no need to provide the answer to our educated readers in this case!

And speaking of puzzles, the answers to MARK SMITH’s crossword puzzle, which appeared in the December *Wooster Sauce*, can be found on page 25 of this issue. There will be another crossword from Mike in June. Meanwhile, there’s an enjoyable acrostic from June Arnold on page 23.

# Results of Our Christmas Competition

In December's *Wooster Sauce*, we challenged readers to come up with Wodehouse words or expressions (other than personal names or place-names) that are the most difficult to pronounce for UK English speakers. Only two competitors rose to the challenge, but what fun they provided in doing so! It was a close-run competition. Here, with kudos to them both, are the results.

PETER THOMPSON agreed with Tony Ring that 'Ouled Nail' presents particular problems, and he even cited one example (of several) from Wodehouse: ". . . he wriggled like an Ouled Nail dancer in the throes of colic" (*Nothing Serious*). "Is 'Ouled' pronounced 'ooled' as in 'drooled'?" Peter asked. Good question!

Another puzzler concerned Lady Alcester in 'The Go-Getter': "Is it pronounced 'Al-Cester or Orlster? Or something else?'"

Finally, Peter wondered about 'Chamois' (" . . . like a Chamois in the Alps leaping from crag to crag") – "Is that 'sham-moi', part shampoo and part French me? Over to the Oracle for answers."

STEVE GRIFFITHS wrote: "The word I have great difficulty pronouncing correctly is *embonpoint*, meaning of a somewhat portly silhouette. Now, I do not take on the facial expressions or the body language that signals an Englishman is about to speak French. I do speak it of a sort. The trouble is, when I am reading PGW, the accent in my mind is distinctly British, somewhere between Bertie and Gussie. Words like *embonpoint* have a habit of creeping up unannounced in such a way that I have already said emm-bonn-poynt before realising my error. Then comes the task of unscrambling the nasalities to arrive at somewhere between omm-bung-pwang and emm-barn-g-pwung. Maybe a French Society member could help?"

Aside from pronunciation issues, your Editor wondered where in Wodehouse this word has appeared, and Steve could not rest until he had answered that question. He uncovered it first in 'Rough-Hew Them How We Will' (*The Man Upstairs and Other Stories*): "No conscientious judge of character could have denied that Paul had hit the bull's eye. Bredin was a pig. He looked like a pig; he ate like a pig; he grunted like a pig. He had the lavish embonpoint of a pig. Also a porcine soul."

Steve also found that PGW had used the word when writing of *The World of Jeeves* omnibus edition: "Placed upon the waistline and jerked up and down each morning, it will reduce embonpoint and strengthen the abdominal muscles."

Tony Ring informed me that an article entitled 'On Reducing the Embonpoint', by Pelham Grenville, appeared in *Vanity Fair* in December 1916, but he couldn't think of where else in the canon the word appeared. Given Steve's success in finding some rather obscure quotations, I think he deserves extra points – or should I say embonpoints?

# Two Audio Book Reviews

by Tony Ring

One of the interesting challenges for the reader of *Summer Moonshine* is the task of representing four female characters with very different personalities and characteristics, alongside the five major and several minor male members of the cast. To a reader of Jonathan Cecil's experience, the female lead, Imogen Abbott, known to all as Jane, is a piece of cake – a fairly typical, feisty Wodehouse popsy who is successively stubborn in defence of her infatuation for the wrong man, self-sacrificing because she thinks he needs her, and a woman relieved rather than scorned when it becomes clear that he doesn't.

Neither is Alice (Lady Abbott) very demanding. She has a small role in the proceedings, but her real interest to the reader stems from the history of Wodehouse's feelings for the woman on whom she was based. (See the article on the next page to understand this enigmatic comment!) The Princess von und zu Dwornitzchek (a name with which Jonathan wrestles manfully and successfully on dozens of occasions) is one of those few unpleasant Wodehouse characters who like to make life miserable for anybody they can draw into their clutches. We are left in no doubt that she is not a bundle of fun.

The fourth female character, Prudence Whittaker, is Sir Buckstone Abbott's secretary, who at the start of the book finds her engagement to Tubby Vanringham broken because of her sensitivity to potential embarrassment, which leads to an inevitable misunderstanding. The words Wodehouse uses to introduce her first speech ("Mistah Vanringham") are:

**Vocabulary Lesson:** A recent issue of *The New York Review of Books* (4 March 2010) contains an essay by Chris Patten in which he refers to "the Jeevesism of Britain". DEAN MILLER writes: "Presumably this describes an intellectual superiority over someone (the "young fathead" American, perhaps?) and would seem to elevate a Wodehouse character beyond the comic and on to the sociopolitical and even to the mythic. The pages of *Hansard* may be sprinkled with quotes from the Master used as bludgeons against a "Woosterish" (or "Fink-Nottlesque"?) opponent, but Patten's usage looks like a first to me."



. . . she spoke in a cold, crisp voice which sounded in the drowsy stillness like ice tinkling in a pitcher: . . .

# Alice in Wonder-land

by Tony Ring

And that is exactly what we get from Jonathan, followed by an exchange of dialogue between the two which is somehow disconcerting. This results in one taking against Prudence from the start, and the fact that she only makes intermittent appearances means that it takes most of the book to get over the shock of her voice and realise that in fact she has some very positive qualities. The listener who is unfamiliar with the novel might get quite a surprise at the outcome.

A recent abridged recording of *Right Ho, Jeeves* by Martin Jarvis will be much more familiar to listeners. CSA Word have continued their policy of providing long abridgements, so the four CDs last about five hours in total, and listening to it is a very rewarding experience. Jarvis brings out the humour in narrative, plot, and dialogue in his own inimitable fashion, and as I was listening to the recording during the pre-Christmas snow and ice, I thought of a neighbour who took seven and a half hours to get home by car from Beaconsfield, a total of ten miles, due to abandoned cars on a long, steep hill. If he had only had a copy of this audiobook, I thought, it wouldn't have seemed half so long. Unless he had worn out his car battery, of course.

*Summer Moonshine*, BBC Audiobooks  
ISBN 978-1-4056-8322-7

(7 hrs, 44 mins)

[www.audiobookscollection.com](http://www.audiobookscollection.com)

Or contact The Audiobook Collection

FREEPOST (BA1686/1)

Bath BA1 3QZ

(Tel: 01225 443400)

*Pigs Have Wings*, CSA Word

ISBN 978-1906147402 (5 hrs)

[www.csaword.co.uk](http://www.csaword.co.uk)

Only an iron will could have saved him from accumulating excess weight in large quantities, and he had not an iron will. Day by day in every way he got fatter and fatter.

(From *Pigs Have Wings*, 1952)

While listening to the unabridged recording of the 1936 novel *Summer Moonshine* (see adjacent review), I remembered that Lady Abbott, the ex-chorus girl who had started life as Alice 'Toots' Bulpitt, seemed to be based on Alice Dovey, and wondered how best to summarise the arguments. If you ask, "Who is Alice Dovey?", I direct you to two sources: chapter 6 of Robert McCrum's *Wodehouse: A Life*, where Wodehouse reports that on his return to New York in 1914 (a few months before he first met Ethel), actresses Alice Dovey and Louise Kelly "welcomed me with open



arms. I have got over my little trouble with the first-named and we are the best of friends. She's too devoted to Hamilton King for me to form a wedge and break up the combination, and I gracefully retire"; and Norman Murphy's *A Wodehouse Handbook*, vols. 1 (chapter 38) and 2.

Alice Dovey, who was English, had a principal role in the successful musical *The Pink Lady*, which had played at the New Amsterdam Theatre in New York for over 300 performances in 1911, and she accompanied the show to London in 1912, where (as Murphy demonstrates) Wodehouse certainly met her. There has been speculation as to whether she was the inspiration for the character Peggy Norton in 'In Alcalá', a short story published in the American *People's* magazine in November 1911 and in the following month in *London*, but this would of necessity depend on whether he had managed to make and develop her acquaintance during the New York run – by no means a certainty as he was only in New York a relatively short time in 1911 – from mid-April to (probably) June.

No additional information is readily forthcoming about either Hamilton King or Louise Kelly, although when, after appearing in four more shows with differing success, Alice Dovey took a leading role at the Princess Theatre in December 1915 with *Very Good, Eddie*, one of the male leads was Jack E Hazzard, whom she married the following year (and after which she does not seem to have returned to the stage). Poor Mr King seems to have been expendable, after all.

In *Summer Moonshine*, we learn in chapter 10 that 25 years earlier Alice Bulpitt had been in the chorus of the musical comedy *The Pink Lady*: "They brought the New York company over to London and Buck went to see it and fell in love with mother at first sight and sent a note round asking her to supper and mother went . . . and about a week later they got married." Though the existence of Mr King presumably prevented this happy ending in Plum's case, Plum evidently retained affection for Alice Dovey over the years. I will not believe that it was mere coincidence that he paid her such a public, but subtle, tribute in the first novel he wrote after Jack Hazzard's death in 1935.

# The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

## Five Years Is Practically Half a Decade, Part 2

The 50th anniversary of Wodehouse's first appearance in the *Saturday Evening Post* was marked by an essay from him entitled 'Fifty Years is Practically Half a Century'. Last time's column was my 40th, thereby completing ten years of *The Bibliographic Corner*. Long-standing Society members with long memories may recall that Part 1 of this article appeared in March 2005 when I reviewed my first five years' output of 20 columns. I will use this column to cast a retrospective eye over my latest 20 columns. This may alert newer members of the Society to what they have missed, and may even add to the Society's coffers by leading to a run on back issues.

The June and September 2005 columns considered the serialisation of Wodehouse novels in magazines: *The Saturday Evening Post* was the magazine which published most serialisations, while the *Star Weekly* of Toronto was the second most prolific.

The December 2005 column had a seasonal flavour, examining four of Wodehouse's nonfiction articles about Christmas, one of which (from *The Captain* in December 1903) was also reprinted in that issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

The next Corner was the first to have a musical flavour, detailing the appearances of songs from the show *Leave It to Jane* in sheet music, on LPs and CDs, and in films.

The centenary of *Love Among the Chickens* was dealt with in the June 2006 column, featuring photographs of the illustrated boards of the UK and US first editions, and of the dustwrapper of the revised UK edition of 1921. The following Corner also dealt with the same title, discussing such arcane matters as the first Colonial Edition (number 676 in George Bell and Sons' Indian and Colonial Library), and the price shown on the dustwrapper of the UK third issue of 1921 (2/6 rather than the 3/6 stated in the *Addendum to McIlvaine*).

The December 2006 issue of *Wooster Sauce* marked the Society's tenth anniversary, with illustrations appearing in colour. This greatly enhanced the illustrations in that issue's Corner, which showed three of the different dustwrappers that had appeared on the various Jenkins editions of *The Coming of Bill*.

There was a musical flavour again in the next column, which dealt with the final Wodehouse-Bolton-

Kern musical, *Sitting Pretty*. Unfortunately, the title of the column was disfigured as *The Bibliographic Corner*, which resulted in the June and September 2007 Corners (under the title of 'Printer's Error') reviewing misprints and errors in various editions of Wodehouse's work.

December 2007 saw the start of a three-part series of Corners, examining the 11 books by other authors to which Wodehouse contributed introductions, prefaces, or forewords.

The September 2008 column unusually dealt with a book concerning Wodehouse, rather than a book by Wodehouse: Jan Piggott's newly published and magisterial *Dulwich College: A History 1616–2008*, containing 47 pages with references to Wodehouse.

The next Corner examined the relationship between *The Little Nugget* and the story from which it developed, *The Eighteen-Carat Kid*, and contained an illustration of the rare front cover of *Munsey's* magazine for August 1913, which contained the first publication of *The Little Nugget*.

The March 2009 column dealt with *Piccadilly Jim* and contained illustrations of the three different dustwrappers that had appeared on the various Jenkins editions.

June 2009 was the 50th issue of *Wooster Sauce*, leading the Editor to prompt your author to summarise the new books by, about, or featuring Wodehouse

which had been reviewed in the first 49 issues of the journal. As that Corner ran to nearly double its usual length as a result, I would like to record my thanks to Elin, "without whose never-failing sympathy and encouragement" that Corner "would have been finished in half the time".

Finally, the two most recent Corners marked the centenary of Wodehouse's *Mike*, first published in book form on 15 September 1909, and traced the publishing history of the title in its various forms over its first hundred years.

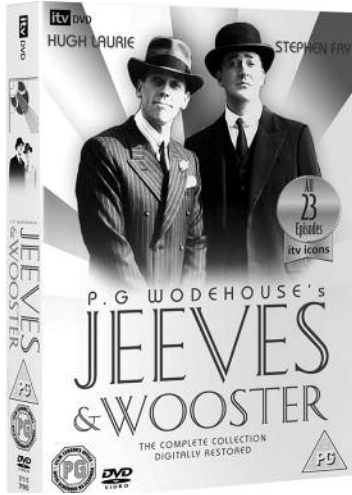
*Editor's Note: Back issues of most editions of Wooster Sauce and By The Way are available from the Membership Secretary. Please check availability before sending cheques.*

In chapter 7 of *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* (A77a) from 1954, Bertie Wooster says, "I don't suppose I have ever come closer in my life to saying 'Viola'". This was corrected to 'Voila' in later editions.

*From 'Printer's Error, Part 2', Wooster Sauce, September 2007*

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

*From 'Printer's Error, Part 1', Wooster Sauce, June 2007*



## A DVD Worth Competing For

Ian Carmichael may have been the first Bertie Wooster on TV (see page 5), but who can forget Hugh Laurie in the ITV series of 1990–93, not to mention Stephen Fry as Jeeves? Recently, as part of its Icon range, ITV produced a DVD of *Jeeves & Wooster*, with all 23 episodes digitally restored, at a list price of £49.99 (though it may be purchased at a reduced cost on Amazon). Now ITV have generously given the Society a complimentary DVD of this complete edition. It will be used as a prize for the Clerihew Challenge, which has been running in *Wooster Sauce* since 2008. The Committee will review all verses received since the Challenge began, including those not yet published, and will award the *Jeeves & Wooster* DVD to the writer of what we deem to be the Best Wodehouse Clerihew. The winner will be announced in the December issue of *Wooster Sauce*, so there is still time to enter – just send your clerihews to the Editor by September 30, 2010. Good luck to all clerihew writers!

## The Words of Wodehouse

by June Arnold

Solve the clues in the top grid, and then transfer the letters from there to the bottom grid. Reading down column A in the top grid will give you the title of a Wodehouse novel; the bottom grid is something said by a character in that novel (who is also an answer to one of the clues). Answers will be published in the June *Wooster Sauce*.

Clues:

- 1 Harold \_\_\_\_\_, curate at Market Snodsbury (6) / Settee (5)
- 2 Use a syringe (6) / Reject or defy (5)
- 3 The town where PGW was born (9) / 'The \_\_\_ and the Pendulum', story by Edgar Allan Poe (3)
- 4 *Sam the \_\_\_\_\_*, novel by PGW (6) / Life force (3)
- 5 Old Mother \_\_\_\_\_ (7) / \_\_\_\_\_ of the dog, antidote to a hangover (4)
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ McAllister, gardener in *Something Fresh* (5) / An injury (5)
- 7 The saint of the day PGW died (9) / As well (3)
- 8 Lord \_\_\_\_\_, brother of Lady Hermione Wedge (8) / Small pellets of ice (4)
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ Bassett, a magistrate (6) / A sunken fence bordering a garden (2-2)
- 10 An Asian country (5) / \_\_\_\_\_ Melba, a dessert
- 11 \_\_\_\_\_ Boyd, character in *Uneasy Money* (5) / A sword used for wrapping? (4)
- 12 Easily taken in or tricked (8)
- 13 \_\_\_\_\_ *Pacific*, musical (5) / *Moby Dick*, e.g. (5)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1							■						■
2													
3										■			
4							■				■		
5								■					
6						■						■	
7										■			
8									■				
9							■						■
10						■							
11											■		
12										■			
13							■						

9E	13B	6D	■	3G	8F	■	10A	■	5C	2D	7B	1H	4I	■	11G	12E	6J	4C	7G	11A	3A
13I	■	1A	5K	6C	■	3C	1C	■	11C	5A	12H	■	9D	4J	13D	1K	8H	7D	10B	■	■
8E	2H	■	5E	■	3F	4B	1F	2B	8L	13A	9H	10H	5G	■	7A	3L	12C	11J	9B	■	■
10D	7E	■	8D	9J	1B	4H	10K	■	6G	13K	■	5I	6A	4D	■	2C	1J	8C	11D	■	■
13H	3B	7H	12A	■	2K	3K	■	6H	11B	5L	■	1L	8K	9C	4A	■	13G	2J	5B	12D	3E
1D	8A	7I	10G	■	2E	9I	3D	8B	■	10I	4F	6K	■	9A	5J	11I	2F	■	■	■	■
8G	2A	12G	8M	■	3M	8J	1E	■	10J	2I	11H	6I	3I	6E	■	5F	1I	13J	7C	4E	10C
5D	11E	■	12F	13C	2L	■	9F	7L	7F	■	9K	6B	■	10E	12B	7K	13E	7M	3H	■	■



## Poet's Corner

### Exposed

(The School Board of New Brunswick, New Jersey, has excluded the teaching of botany in schools on "account of the polygamous habits of flowers")

I used to love each flower that grows,  
Collect each kind of blossom;  
I plucked the buttercup and rose  
Whene'er I came across 'em:  
I gathered nosegays left and right,  
Whenever I could spot any;  
Putting it briefly, I was quite  
A perfect whale at botany.

If ever Chloe seemed to shun  
My manifest devotion,  
I'd send her flowers by the ton,  
As proof of my emotion:  
I gave her bouquets every day,  
I meant no impropriety  
It really never struck me they  
Weren't fit for her society.

But now I scorn their scents and hues;  
My confidence it shatters  
To learn how shaky are their views  
On matrimonial matters;  
However much they please the eye  
With superficial prettiness,  
To me their charm is cancelled by  
Their shameless Salt-Lake-City-ness.

Henceforward our curriculums  
We ought to start revising:  
Our babes must take to dates and sums  
In lieu of botanising.  
A flower's ways, as I have shown,  
All thinkers, who examine, hate:  
The subject must be left alone,  
It cannot but contaminate.

(From *Books of Today and Books of Tomorrow*,  
July 1904)

## Is It Time for a Book of Wodehouse Verse?

Recently Society member PAUL TUBB, himself a poet, wrote expressing his dream of seeing a book of Wodehouse's light verse. A short collection of Wodehouse poems, *The Parrot and Other Poems*, was published by Hutchinson in 1988, but this was just a limited selection of PGW's enormous output, and unfortunately it did not sell well. But much has changed since then, and as the regular *Poet's Corner* feature in *Wooster Sauce* has demonstrated, there are hundreds of Wodehouse poetic gems, many not seen since they were first published nearly a century ago.

Maybe the time has come to realise not only Paul's dream but that of many Wodehouse fans. With sufficient encouragement, the Wodehouse Estate might be persuaded to support the publication of a new, more comprehensive collection of Our Hero's best verse – and that encouragement should come from Society members.

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## Wodehouse Tributes?

**CHARLES GOULD writes:** In 'Rumpole and the Christmas Break' (*A Rumpole Christmas*, Viking, 2009), the murder victim is Honoria Glossop, Professor of Comparative Religion at William Morris University in East London. The story appeared in *The Strand* and in *Woman's Weekly* in 2004, so this may not be news. Is this Sir John's unique joke, or do other PGW characters or names appear elsewhere in fiction?

*The Editor replies:* This book was also discussed on PGWnet in December. At that time, Charles Stone-Tolcher pointed out that there is also an Archie Prosser in the book, and Ian Michaud wrote: "I've often wondered if the name of the Molloy clan of minor league thugs, whose misdemeanours enabled Horace to keep Hilda well supplied with Vim, was John Mortimer's tribute to Dolly and Soapy." Mortimer, of course, was an avid Wodehouse fan, so it is perhaps not surprising that he would pay tribute to his fellow author this way.

Aside from these examples, I'm as certain as I can be that Wodehouse names do turn up in other works of fiction, but who are they? Do readers have more examples of PGW character names appearing in other authors' books? If so, please send them to the Editor!

## A Passing Reference

PETER READ brought our attention to *The Knave of Spades* (2009), by Alan Titchmarsh, who frequently expresses his admiration for Wodehouse in books and articles. This book has no less than three Wodehouse references in it, including the following:

The storytellers I admire most are those who have lightness of touch and who can weave a spell. P. G. Wodehouse is a favourite and I escape to Blandings Castle whenever I can. His writing simply reeks of enjoyment – his own as well as that of his reader, which seems to me how it should be.

# Passing References

**From *God Is Not Great*, by Christopher Hitchens (2007)** // PETER O'NEIL forwarded two Wodehouse references from this book criticizing religion: (1) "I used to love this exercise, and even to excel at it so that (like Bertie Wooster) I frequently passed 'top' in scripture class." / (2) "The mirthless cretins of jihad have probably not read enough to know of the Empress of Blandings, and of the Earl of Emsworth's infinitely renewable delight in the splendid pages of the incomparable author Mr. Whiffle, *The Care of the Pig*."

**From *The Dancing Floor*, by John Buchan (2007)** BARRY CHAPMAN has pointed out that Robin Hardy's introduction to Polygon's 2007 reissue of this book makes reference to Wodehouse characters in the context of "a gentleman's career prospects" – and not in a very kind way. After noting that Wodehouse "has little to tell us of Bertie Wooster's antecedents", Hardy goes on to imagine Bertie's forebears and then comments:

Young Bertie Wooster had many unearned thousands in the funds. He had his man Jeeves and his club Drones. Work was as foreign to him as a badly cut suit. His greatest trials came from his Aunt Agatham she 'who breakfasted on broken glass and wore barbed wire next to the skin'. It took Bertie's man Jeeves (not a gentlemen, but a gentleman's gentleman), with his brilliant strategems, to defeat her.

**From *The Saltmarsh Murders*, by Gladys Mitchell (1932; republished in 1984)** // CHRISTINE DRAYCOTT was delighted to find a contemporary Wodehouse reference in this book by an author who was once popular herself. In the story, the two 'detectives' – Mrs. Bradley, an eccentric visitor to the Manor

## Answers to A Wodehouse Crossword by Mark Smith (December 2009)

1	F	I	N	E	3	A	U	5	G	U	S	T	U	7	S					
	U		E		8	D	N		N		I		O							
9	L	E	V	E	R	E	D		10	L	O	C	K	S						
	L		E		O		O		I		K		O							
11	M	O	R	O	N		12	N	O	T	T	L	E							
	O				E		E							13	T					
14	O	D		15	D	E	S	T		16	O		17	D	E	S	S	A		
	N		I						18	C		A						K		
		19	P	S	M		20	I	T	H		21	H	A		22	S	T	E	
23	F		C		R			E				L		P				P		
24	I	C	E	N	I			25	A	R	I	Z	O	N	A					
	N		R		S			T		A		D								
26	K	I	N	S	H	A	S	A								27	N	E	W	T

# Wodehouse Whimsy 5



The fifth drawing submitted by Siân Jones shows the classic Wodehouse characters of Psmith, Jellicoe, and Mike. This is the last of the drawings that Siân sent, though we hope we'll see more!

House, and the Curate of Saltmarsh Parish, Revd. Noel Wells, who narrates the tale – are discussing where a missing person's body might be hidden. When Mrs. Bradley notes that she had aimed to distract attention from where the actual search should be made,

"And where is that?" I asked. "Oh, of course, the sea shore."

"No," replied Mrs. Bradley. "Use your bean – if any!"

I gasped. The woman read Wodehouse. There was hope for her salvation, I felt. Well, perhaps that thought is a little risqué for a wearer of the cloth. Anyway, I regarded her with a new respect. No woman could be completely bats who could not only read but appositely quote our greatest living author.

**From *The Sound of No Hands Clapping*, by Toby Young (2006)** // NIRAV SHAH submitted an extract from this memoir in which Toby Young reads Wodehouse's *Service with a Smile* to his baby daughter. His wife notes he has chosen a book that he happens to be reading himself, and he muses:

She had a point, but luckily Sasha gave every indication that she was actually enjoying herself. 'Goo,' she said when I told her about Lord Emsworth's prize-winning pig. Clearly, my ten-month-old daughter was an excellent judge of literary merit. For a second, I began to fantasise that Sasha might grow up to be a writer, just like her old dad. Who knows, in forty years' time she, too, might be reading P. G. Wodehouse to her baby as an excuse not to start work.

# Recent Press Comment

## From *The Sunday Telegraph*, October 25

Reported that The Duchess of Cornwall had succeeded the late Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother as Patron of The P G Wodehouse Society of the Netherlands.

## From *The Times*, October 31

Salman Rushdie's introduction to the newly reprinted *The Paris Review Interviews*, as reproduced in the *Times* Books Section, includes a paragraph on Wodehouse.

## From *Cambridge News*, November 13

In an interview, Tom Sharpe confirmed that Wodehouse and Evelyn Waugh were great influences, though his approach to writing a novel ("I just launch myself in – boing") was in complete contrast to that of Wodehouse, who "did 400 page of notes on ideas".

## From *The Times*, November 14

The 'Literary Quiz' included the question "Who was a member of the Junior Ganymede in Curzon Street?"

## From *The Scottish Sun*, November 14

An accountant who sent a bill to a friend whom he was helping obtain a divorce was described in court, where he was suing for payment, as "a Bertie Wooster". The Sheriff said in judgement "[The defendant] was unaware that she was going to be sent a bill. She thought he was helping her as a friend." [This comment does not really explain the relevance of Bertie Wooster!]

## From BBC Radio 4, November 16

(from Alexander Dainty)

The afternoon 'Open Book' programme focused on book dedications, among which was included PGW's famous dedication to his daughter Leonora in *The Heart of a Goof*.

## From *Sky News*, November 17

A list of Britain's top 50 'Unsung Heroes', drawn up to mark the 15th anniversary of the National Lottery, included Jeeves.

## From [www.pr.com](http://www.pr.com) (website), November 16

Edward Stripe, an Australian tailor, launched an 'Ask Our Butler' service to provide a forum in which to deal with customer queries. The managing director used a quotation from *My Man Jeeves* to emphasise the continuing importance of such assistance: "Jeeves lugged my purple socks out of the drawer as if he were a vegetarian fishing a caterpillar out of his salad."

## From *The Guardian*, November 21

Michael Moorcock revealed that he had been invited to write a new Doctor Who novel. He mentioned that while distracted from work recently because of a foot injury, he had reread many authors he had enjoyed "as a kid", including Wodehouse, and went on to point out that even Wodehouse had written a funny futuristic story early in his career – *The Swoop*.

## From *Beat*, November 26

In an interview, Robert Hudson was asked which three fictional characters he would like to have with him if he were stranded on a desert island. He replied, "George Bevan and Maud Marshmoreton, the protagonists of *A Damsel in Distress*, the Wodehouse novel I am adapting for the stage, are romantic but sensible, understated, funny and cool. Also Wodehouse's Uncle Fred."

## From *The Independent*, November 30

Commenting on a report from Sweden that getting angry with your boss can be good for your heart, D J Taylor recalled Psmith's solution to the problem of disciplining the boss in *Psmith in the City* – to pursue him through his leisure hours and heckle him at a public meeting.

## From *The Spectator*, December 5 (from Edward Cazalet)

In a review of recent gardening books, Mary Keen noted: "One forgets that what P. G. Wodehouse called 'flarze' are not really enough to temp non-gardeners out of doors." (See 'Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend'.)

## From *The Evening Standard*, December 10

(from Carolyn de la Plain)

David Sexton, reviewing Marcus Scriven's *Splendour & Squalor: The Disgrace and Disintegration of Three Aristocratic Dynasties*, started by referring to "The fantasy version . . . supplied by P. G. Wodehouse. The misadventures of The Earl of Emsworth and his rascally brother the Hon Galahad Threepwood are so endearing that they make aristocracy itself seem a captivating notion." He then pointed out that reality can be less enchanting.

## From *The Daily Telegraph*, December 11

(from Carolyn de la Plain)

Mentioned that in response to customer demand, Vision Express are to restart selling monocles, "last in fashion during the era of P. G. Wodehouse".

## From *The Daily Telegraph*, December 14

(from Carolyn De la Plain)

Melanie McDonough wrote of a women's group called 'Present Sense', which advocates recycling Christmas presents for eco-friendly purposes. She then referred to the PGW essay (the first version of which, from 1915, was reproduced in *Wooster Sauce* No 20, December 2001) in which he wrote of the smoking cap which he had received on several occasions before sending it away for the final time to Australia.

## From *Luton Today*, December 24

Ran an article about the achievements of 16-year-old Kirstie Summers of Luton, who has written five novels which she has made available through a website. She said that her favourite authors were Charles Dickens and P G Wodehouse.

## From BBC Radio 4, December 29

A laudable decision to have Julian Rhind-Tutt read 'Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit' backfired as the excessive cuts caused by the decision to restrict the reading to 15 minutes drew the life-blood from the story, and left a shell that could almost have been written by anyone.

## From *The Times*, January 1, 2010

(from Keith Alsop and Pauline Grant)

An obituary of barrister Robert Wright noted that he "enjoyed reading, particularly military history, but if things became really tiring and troublesome, out came P. G. Wodehouse".

## From *The Independent*, January 3

In an interview, Garrison Keillor mentioned that Wodehouse has been a bit of a role model for him: "I am



working in humour and comedy and this is a field in which clearly people don't last very well into old age. It really is a young person's sport; I can't think of many [except Wodehouse] who sustained it into late life. . . . Wodehouse offers hope to somebody such as myself. He created a fictitious old England of dotty aristocrats and country houses and wily servants and men's clubs that probably never existed and by the time he was writing those books had completely vanished. It wouldn't have been possible for Wodehouse to write all his Jeeves stories if he had actually been living in the UK. He could only have written these living out on Long Island as he was, because it was all in his head."

**From *The New York Times*, January 3**

Ben Zimmer wrote about grammatical back-formation in the context of a discussion in the Supreme Court of the USA. Justice Antonin Scalia would not permit the use of the word *choate* as an opposite of *inchoate*, apparently continuing: "'It's like grunted,' noting that some people mistakenly think that the opposite of disgruntled is 'grunted'." (Note: Mr Scalia was one of three Supreme Court justices who came to the Heywood Hill exhibition last autumn.)

**From *The Times of India*, January 4**

An article on snoring starts by referring to the Wodehouse character, unable to sleep because of the snoring in the next room, who grabs a cake of soap intending to ram it down the snorer's throat and is horrified to see that the person sleeping is the girl he loves. His love faces extinction until he realises that the snoring actually comes from her bulldog. (It continues with the Anthony Burgess comment that when you laugh the world laughs with you; when you snore, you snore alone.)

**From *openthemagazine.com* (website), January 4**

Sandipan Deb revealed that his abandonment some years past of the works of Wodehouse ceased when he bought a copy of *Mulliner Nights* at an airport bookshop, and "no two-hour air journey has ever seemed shorter".

**From *Publishers Weekly*, January 4**

Martin Jarvis's reading for CSA Word of *Right Ho, Jeeves* was included in the journal's list of the best of the 350 audiobooks reviewed during 2009.

**From *The Times*, January 9**

Philip Howard's 'Literary Quiz' included the question "Whose way of expressing an emotion was generally to twitch an eyebrow?"

**From *The Daily Telegraph*, January 11**

A letter from B Jones reported the gift for Christmas of the "entertaining little book" *The Wit and Wisdom of P G Wodehouse*, and drew attention to one of the quotations therein: "Why do you want a political career? Have you ever been in the House of Commons and taken a good look at the inmates? As weird a gaggle of freaks and sub-humans as was ever collected in one spot."

**From *The Times*, January 11** (from Pauline Grant)

In an article on Mumbai, Stanley Stewart wrote about his encounter with a Dr Nataraji, "a man of many enthusiasms. We had already chatted at length about ornithology, P G Wodehouse, the P&O shipping line and the cover drives of cricketer Sachin Tendulkar" – quite a good mix!

**From the *Times Literary Supplement*, January 15**

(from Barry Chapman)

Page 14 of the *TLS* carried a picture of PGW standing with Sir Herbert Grierson, the subject of the article in which the photo appears. The caption notes it was taken on the day in June 1939 when Wodehouse received his honorary degree at Oxford University.

**From *The Daily Telegraph*, January 19** (from E. Cazalet)

After a series of letters concerning the nature and purpose of spats, Roland Lambton quoted PGW's comment that by wearing new and impeccable spats he was able to disarm the sniffiest butler.

**From *The Times*, January 25** (from Edward Cazalet)

'The last word', quotation of the day, on the 'Daily Universal Register' page was: "Many a fellow who looks like a dominant male and has himself photographed smoking a pipe curls up like carbon paper when confronted by an aunt." (From *The Mating Season*)

**From *The Mail on Sunday*, January 31**

(from John Hodgson and Murray Hedgcock)

Disclosed, from newly released government papers, that in 1939 there was a bizarre suggestion that the Government and the BBC should combat Nazi propaganda broadcasts by Lord Haw-Haw by getting Wodehouse to broadcast immediately afterwards, mimicking him and correcting the misinformation he had delivered.

**From many papers, February 6 onwards**

Obituaries and tributes to Ian Carmichael appeared in many papers. (See also page 5).

**From *BBC1 News at Ten* (London), February 12**

In a report of disturbances at a party in Mayfair organised through Facebook, the reporter mentioned that P G Wodehouse had lived in the next street (Dunraven Street; formerly Norfolk Street). (It may be assumed that she had noted the commemorative Blue Plaque.)

**From *Kingston Guardian* (online), February 18**

An advance report of the Barnes Charity Players' upcoming production of *Come On, Jeeves* (see p.18) mentioned that the production "received an enthusiastic response from the P G Wodehouse Society".

**From *The Daily Telegraph*, February 18**

(from Carolyn de la Plain)

Jasper Rees described the return of *Yes, Prime Minister* (then onstage at the Chichester Festival), noting: "The comedy of *Yes, Minister* resided in an age-old inversion beloved of comedic writers from Molière to Wodehouse, in which the servant is cleverer than the master."

**From *Vanity Fair*, March**

The editor, Graydon Carter, wrote about his love for audiobooks, especially the Wodehouse and *William* recordings of our Patron Martin Jarvis, "a man thought by many to be the Olivier of book readers". He explained that for years he had been trying to get his columnist and fellow Wodehouse fan Christopher Hitchens to give audiobooks a try, and in a separate article Hitchens explained how his conversion came about. Carter arranged for him to listen, *inter alia*, to Jarvis's abridged *Right Ho, Jeeves*, which represented the acid test as far as Hitchens was concerned, and the reader met with his delighted approval.

# Future Events for Your Diary

## March 27, 2010 Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Norman Murphy resumes his classic Wodehouse Walks! Start time is 10 a.m.

## April 11, 2010 Emsworth Museum Re-opens

The Emsworth Museum is re-opening after its winter break. See page 17 for further details.

## May 21 – June 27, 2010 *Oh, Boy!* in Chicago

The City Lit Theatre in Chicago is staging the classic Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern musical *Oh, Boy!* See page 18.

## May 22, 2010 Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Norman will lead another walk around Wodehouse's London. (See March 27 for more information.)

## June 18, 2010 Gold Bats vs. The Dulwich Dusters

Our annual match at Dulwich College, with tea. *Please note that tickets are required for the tea.* Applications are enclosed with this issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

## June 20, 2010 Gold Bats vs. Sherlock Holmes Society

We will face the Sherlockians at West Wycombe. *Please note change of date for this event!*

## July 4 & 21, 2010 Additional Cricket Fixtures

Contact Bob Miller for details of these matches.

## July 6, 2010 Society Meeting

We will meet from 6 p.m. at the Arts Club, 40 Dover Street. A very special entertainment is planned by Society member Paul Kent; details will be in the June issue. Prior to the meeting, Norman Murphy will conduct an abbreviated Wodehouse Walk.

## August 8, 2010 Gold Bats v Kirby Strollers

This annual charity match will take place in the grounds of Audley End House, near Saffron Walden; start time is 1 p.m.

## September 11, 2010 Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Norman will lead another walk around Wodehouse's London. (See March 27 for more information.)

## October 28, 2010 Dinner at Gray's Inn

The Society's biannual formal dinner will again be held at Gray's Inn, London. (See page 4.)

## November 16, 2010 Society Meeting

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

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