



WOOSTER SAUCE

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Who Was Emily Wodehouse?

asks James Hogg

In Samuel Johnson's tercentenary year (2009), I thought I would re-read his Abyssinian fable *Rasselas*. On opening it, I realised I'd forgotten that my 1817 edition is inscribed 'Emily Wodehouse April 12th 1820', and that within the pages is a pale and fragile pressed flower, very likely placed there by Emily herself.

I remember years ago wondering who Emily was, but concluding that it would be too much trouble to find out. However, now that it's possible for computer users to research such things without stirring from their desks, it was the work of a moment to set about it.

The internet is a wonderful source of information, but an imperfect one. It contains mistakes. So I don't guarantee my analysis is correct in every detail, and if anyone has a better answer to the question 'Who was Emily Wodehouse?' I would be delighted to hear it.

My first port of call was the 1841 census, which its many fans will know is a bit light on information (the later ones are better). There I found an Emily Wodehouse living or staying in Hertford St., Mayfair. With her was the curiously named Arundle (*sic*) Wodehouse, presumably her husband and described under 'Profession' as 'Cl:', short for clergyman. The head of the household was not, however, the Rev. A.W., but a Mary Proctor, aged 80, who had six servants.

The 1851 census was more revealing. The 59-year-old Emily Woodhouse (*sic*) was now at Bergh Apton, in the Wodehouse county of Norfolk, with her birthplace recorded as Langley Park, about five miles

away. Though she is listed as 'married' (rather than 'widow' like others on the page) there is no mention of the Rev. Arundle Wodehouse. Perhaps he was staying elsewhere, though I can't find him. Four servants are the only other occupants of the house. But under 'Rank' Emily is described as 'Honble. Mrs Ormine (*sic*) Woodhouse'.

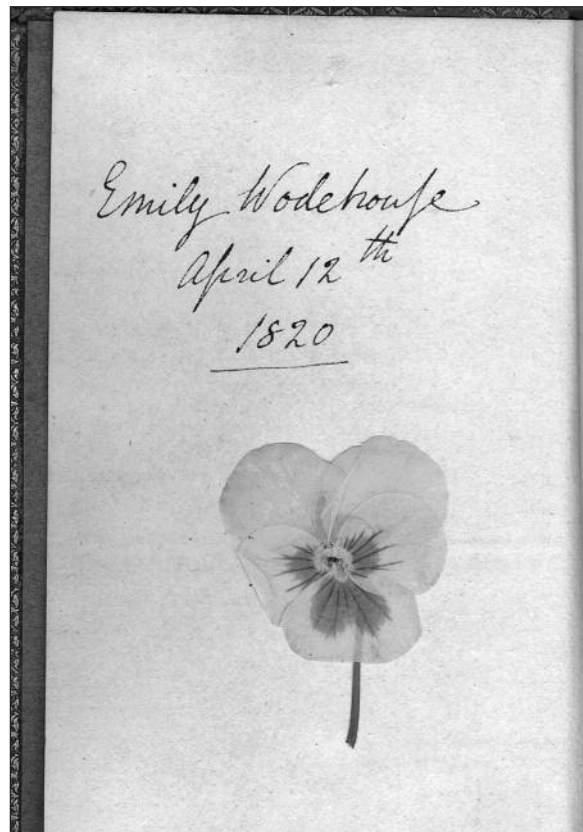
The census clerks clearly had a tough time getting a handle on the man we are beginning to recognize as

the Rev. and Hon. Armine Wodehouse (Armine being a family name). We can perhaps forgive them Woodhouse for Wodehouse, and Ormine for Armine, but to contrive Arundle out of Armine is a transcriber's pig's ear of the first order.

The next stop was the website of the Mormon Church – nothing to do with the Rev. Armine Wodehouse's religious calling (now that *would* be a story), but merely a delve into the International Genealogical Index (the IGI), kindly provided free of charge by the Mormons, who have transcribed the parish registers of the United Kingdom. There one can discover that Armine 'Woodhouse' (yet again) was

born at Kimberley, Norfolk, in 1776, the son of John 'Woodhouse' and Sophia Berkeley. John was the first Lord Wodehouse, hence Armine's entitlement to the prefix 'Hon'.

The IGI also lists Armine's marriage in 1815 to the subject of this quest, Emily Beauchamp (in reality Beauchamp-Proctor). It seems that in this case Emily was a pet name for Amelia (George II's daughter



Princess Amelia was usually called Princess Emily), and that her father was Sir Thomas Beauchamp-Proctor, 2nd Baronet, of Langley Park. Quite why the Beauchamp-Proctors decided to metamorphose at some point into the Proctor-Beauchamps mercifully needn't detain us here, though that's what they did. The Mary Proctor of Hertford St., Mayfair, with whom Emily was staying on the night of the 1841 census, was probably her aunt (there has to be one somewhere in the story).

I'm indebted to Norman Murphy for discovering from his copy of *Burke's Peerage* that the Rev. Armine Wodehouse died in 1853 and that the couple had no children. The 1871 census finds Emily living in Bath, with servants who have been with her for at least 20 years. That, along with the pressed flower in her copy of *Rasselas*, is the nearest we get to knowing what sort of person she was: kindly and loyal, perhaps, with literary and artistic tastes. There's evidence that she belonged to that band of insubordinates who don't feel themselves to be on oath when giving their particulars to nosey-parkers: she was still resolutely describing herself to the census officials as married rather than widowed. Soon after that, in 1874, she died aged 82.

So what relation was Emily Wodehouse to PGW? I yield to anyone in my mastery of cousinship, but I believe her husband Armine was his first cousin twice removed. Was it worth the effort to know that? I leave you to judge, but it kept me off the streets for a while.

An Appeal for Help

P G Wodehouse to Eric Beardsworth George

Sophie Ratcliffe is making good progress with her edition of the letters of P G Wodehouse, which should now be published in 2011. She is, however, missing a small part of a crucial, early letter. Photocopies of this letter exist in various archives, but they have been incompletely photocopied, and one edge of the letter has been cut off, obscuring certain words. Sophie is therefore anxious to contact the owner of the original to see if he or she would be kind enough to supply a full copy of the letter.

The missing letter, dated 'Sept. 1899' and written from 'Old House. Stableford. Salop', is part of a group of correspondence from Wodehouse to Eric Beardsworth George. The opening reads:

Jeames, friend of me boyhood, & companion of me youthful years, list, I prithee. Your letter was very welcome & prompt. I have not answered it before because I have been wurking! That scholarship at Horiul, Jeames me lad, is a certainty. I am a genius.

The letter was sold at Sothebys, New York, as part of a lot of four letters. The catalog number was NY7151, and the date was Friday, 26 June 1998.

Six Canny Clerihews

The clock is ticking! Our Clerihew Competition – the prize for which is a DVD of the complete episodes of *Jeeves & Wooster*, donated by ITV – ends on 30 September, so if you haven't submitted one yet, now is the time. There is no limit to the number of poems that can be submitted; we'll continue publishing until we jolly well run out of them. Thanks to all who have sent us clerihews, including the following (see also page 3).

The cook Anatole
Keeps his eye on the ball:
When dinner guests fast like the dickens
He turns so mad as some wet chickens.
– Fr. Rob Bovendeaard

Frederick, 5th Earl of Ickenham,
For Pongo, proximity will sicken him.
His coming to London just fills him with dread,
But the rest of us love his Uncle Fred.
– Peter Thompson

Bertie and Emsworth often shook
When they got a certain look
From, respectively, aunts or sisters,
Expecting ailments, bruises, or blisters.
– Allyn Hertzbach

The Threepwoods, Clarence and Freddie
Were always ready
To show they were amiably boneheaded.
But the females of that species were very much dreaded.
– James Linwood

Whenever Bertram Wooster, Esq.
Acquired another appalling attire,
Jeeves, who in the first place would not have let him choose it,
Made him lose it.
– Lennart Andersson

Mortimer, known as Legs,
Needed to be taken down several pegs.
But before the fair Miss Bracket he could ravish,
Some hornets saw him off, to the satisfaction of Angus McTavish.
– Simon Gordon Clark

A spasm of Napoleonic energy seized Sam. He dropped silently to the floor and concealed himself under the desk. Napoleon was always doing that sort of thing.

(From *The Girl on the Boat*, 1922)

Society News

November AGM & Meeting: Change of Location

We regret to inform members that the Arts Club is no longer able to accommodate the Society's meetings. The AGM and meeting of 16 November will therefore be held upstairs at The George, 213 Strand, WC2R 1AP; the nearest Tube station is Temple. After an entertaining AGM, Society member Geoff Hales will talk to us about 'Servants in Wodehouse'. Do come and join in the fun –

The Newbury Show

At the Royal County of Berkshire Show on September 18 & 19, the Society is once again sponsoring the prize for the Berkshire Pig Champion of Champions. Judging will start at 9 a.m. on Sunday the 19th. It's always worth attending to see our Chairman's skill in draping a sash onto a sometimes reluctant pig – she gets better every year. Society members who attend can then spend the rest of the day enjoying the show. See you there!

A Non-Murphy Walk

In our March issue, 'Somebody Else's Wodehouse Walk' told us of Richard Burnip, who conducts walking tours of the city for London Walks (see www.walks.com). Richard will be leading another Wodehouse-themed walk on Sunday, 3 October, and Society members are being offered a discounted rate of £6 (the usual price is £8). Should you wish to join this terrific walk, then be at exit 2 (Park Lane east side) of Marble Arch Underground station by 2.30 p.m. There is no need to reserve a place – just show up, pay your oof, and enjoy.

The Perfect Present

Society membership has always made the perfect Christmas – or birthday – gift for friends and relations of a Wodehousean disposition. As if the multiple benefits of membership were not enough, the Society also makes a valuable and rather sensible seasonal offer – between December and March, just £20 buys an extended year's membership that carries the new member through to the following May.

Though an excellent present, the gift of membership has hitherto rather lacked the presentational oomph of a ribbon-swathed bijou. But no longer! For the Society has improved the 'giftyness' of membership with a really nice gift card that can be presented on the day with appropriate ceremony. The card is personalised to both giver and receiver and on the front, an archive photograph of Plum delivers the message loud and clear.

To give a gift membership, just complete an application form in the name of the recipient and send it, with your details, oof, and a note that it's a gift membership, to the Membership Secretary, whose details are on the back page of *Wooster Sauce*. She'll do the rest.

Of course, anniversaries are not the only reason to join – if you know anybody who might like to join up, direct them to our website for information on how to do so (www.pgwodehousesociety.org.uk), or have them contact our Membership Secretary.

The Society is always keen to welcome new members – we've grown to almost 1,200 now, having received a big boost in membership following the terrific Wodehouse exhibition last year at Heywood Hill – and the more the merrier is very much our motto.

Follow Wodehouse to Emsworth

PG Wodehouse lived in the delightful Hampshire town of Emsworth for 10 years (1904–14). He used local names, places, and experiences in his work extensively and stayed close to the friends he made there for the rest of his life. The charming Emsworth Museum has an area dedicated to Wodehouse and his work, and our friends there have always given Wodehousean visitors a warm welcome.

Now, to celebrate what would have been his 130th birthday in 2011, the Brookfield Hotel, Emsworth, is planning a weekend devoted to Wodehouse. Trips into and around the town, talks, entertainment, and a gala dinner in 1920s dress are all being planned, with the weekend styled as a Drones Club outing, so fun and jollity are very definitely on the agenda.

The Drones would never have allowed ladies on the premises, but of course the Brookfield very much welcomes them – the organisers say they are invoking the spirit of the club rather than the strict rules. Equally, the dress code for the gala aims to create the ambience of the 1920s, reflecting the era rather than being a fancy dress event.

The dates are 28–30 October 2011; details of the weekend are still being planned,

Four More Canny Clerihews

Pauline Stoker:
What a joker!
Bertie saw her wiggling toes,
But I saw nothing more of those.
– Charles Gould

Aunt Julia was baffled
To find her pekes snaffled,
Having no knowledge
Of Ukridge's dog college.
– Jonathan Bacchus

The Angler's Rest
Purveys only the best
Wines, spirits and ales
And Mulliner tales.
– Geoff Millward

When the amours of Bingo Little
Made him feel brittle,
He always useter
Consult Bertie Wooster.
– Norman Murphy

We Remember Sir Simon Hornby



Sir Simon and Lady Hornby

David Cazalet writes: Simon Hornby, who died on 17 July aged 75, was married to Sheran Hornby, granddaughter of P G Wodehouse. A PGW devotee and a founder member and patron of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), he adored the songs of the great musical era and got to know PGW well through numerous visits to Long Island with Sheran.

Simon was a highly successful businessman – which included being Chairman of WH Smith – a lover of music and a visionary designer of celebrated gardens. He also proved himself to be a lively innovator during his seven-year stint as President of the Royal Horticultural Society. His Jeevesian grasp of Latin names for plants was balanced equally by an ability to make, at the drop of a hat, an exotic soufflé or a sauce Béarnaise, either of which would have given even the great Anatole a run for his money. In private, he was no mean entertainer, being a superb raconteur, enjoying to the full singing Gershwin and Kern favourites with Sheran's opera singer nephew Hal Cazalet, and always happy to perform his own hilarious solo music-hall turn.

Simon's knowledge of the arts was exceptional, and he had a formidable and scholarly knowledge of the art and history of Venice. An Englishman of the old school, he was as happy and inspired talking to those, led by his devoted Sheran, who cared for him during his recent severe illness as he was dealing with the many disparate characters who sat on the breathtakingly wide range of public boards and charities of which he was either the Chairman or President. He was much loved by many from all walks of life who knew and worked with him, always finding time to give kind and thoughtful advice, which, invariably, was delivered with humour and insight. His family, his friends, and the Society will miss him greatly.

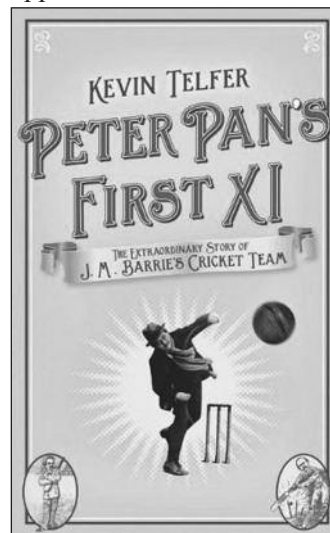
Peter Pan's First XI A Review by Robert Bruce

When the first edition of John Wisden's *Cricketers' Almanack* hit the unsuspecting streets in 1864, its staff had to pad it with a History of China to fill the space. *Peter Pan's First XI*, by Kevin Telfer, has a flavour of that. The glories of the occasional cricket team which J M Barrie funded, organised, and exulted in, are surrounded by a dense text full of all manner of other stuff. But don't let this put you off. You can fillet the cricket, rejoice at the appearances of Plum, and then work your way through all the extraneous social history of the period. It is a joyous short book struggling to find its way out of an over-egged but still enjoyable life and times of Barrie.

The Allahakbarries, mistakenly named after something Barrie thought African, played in the Cotswolds, Surrey, and Kensington Gardens through a flowering of witty young men. Jerome K Jerome, A A Milne, P G Wodehouse, and sundry others packed their evening dress, caught the train, had a fine dinner the evening before, and then played cricket, which in Barrie's case was, frankly, far from good. A *Punch* cartoonist depicted a crate of ducks dispatched on the Cotswolds train to accompany the team and their batting misfortunes. "Don't practice on an opponent's ground before the match begins. This can only give them confidence" was one piece of advice Barrie chronicled in the series of booklets he had privately printed for his players. Pen portraits of the players appeared. Of himself he wrote: "An incomparable

Captain. The life and soul of his side. A treat to see him tossing the penny. Once took a wicket."

The 21-year-old P G Wodehouse played his first game with Barrie during a May heat wave in 1903 and top-scored with 41 amongst a stellar line-up with Conan Doyle, (whom Barrie described as: "Grand Bowler. Knows a batsman's weakness by the colour of mud on his shoes"), AEW Mason, and



E W Hornung. From then on he was an occasional player in these occasional games. But the real mystery is why, with Plum flitting in and out of agreeable and entertaining social cricketing before the First World War, so little of this turned up in his fiction. What better plot line than a cricket team turning up for the annual game at Blandings Castle? The scope for mayhem would have been immense.

The fishy glitter in his eye intensified. He looked like a halibut which has just been asked by another halibut to lend it a couple of quid until next Wednesday.

(From 'The Word in Season', 1940)

Plum, Shakespeare, and the Cat Chap

Or, How a Packed Room Was Thoroughly Entertained

The start of Society evenings resembles driving on a motorway. At one moment, there is not a vehicle in sight; ten seconds later, there are hundreds of cars inching along bumper to bumper. At 6.23 p.m. on 6 July at the Arts Club, the room where we gather had a dozen or so members looking over their shoulders and wondering if they had got the date wrong. By 6.25, what seemed like a hundred members had squeezed through the doors and were fighting for places. Prudent and far-sighted, they had restored their tissues in the bar and then given themselves enough time to secure another drink to bring in with them.

As our Chairman called the gathering to order, there ensued a battle for seats, and many ended up on the floor (from necessity, not insobriety), while others were content to stand to enjoy the proceedings. Hilary began with the Parish Notices, which included news of a reading of *Summer Lightning* on BBC Radio 4 (see page 18); reports of the Gold Bats matches at Dulwich and West Wycombe (see page 6); notification of the Newbury Show in September, where the Society sponsors the prize for the Berkshire Champion of Champions; and a reminder to get in our applications for the Society's dinner in October. She then introduced the impresario for the evening's entertainment, Society member Paul Kent.

For his presentation of 'Plum, Shakespeare and the Cat Chap' Paul acted as narrator. He was aided and abetted by three terrific actors – John Voce, Peter Wear, and Society Patron Lucy Tregear – who played both Wodehouse characters and some well-known historical figures to demonstrate the strong influence of Shakespeare on Wodehouse's works, starting with the poor cat i' in the adage. The 'cat chap', of course, refers to Macbeth – at least, that was how Bertie referred to him in *The Code of the Woosters*.

After Paul had noted how often Shakespearean quotes pop up in Wodehouse, our talented foursome got into the meat of their entertainment – an adaptation of 'An Outline of Shakespeare' from *Louder and Funnier*. This was Wodehouse's take on the whole Bacon-Shakespeare debate, only in this version, William fixes up Bacon's proposed play in Schnellenhamer style: "We'll have the King poison the wine and Laertes poison the sword and then Laertes plugs Hamlet with the sword and drops it and Hamlet picks it up in mistake for his own and plugs Laertes, and then the Queen drinks the wine and Hamlet sticks the King with the poisoned sword. Then you'll have something." When Bacon wonders if this is just a little improbable, Shakespeare coolly points out, "It's what the public wants."

The argument continues until Bacon finally leaves to "take a couple of aspirins and try to forget". Wodehouse



Our entertainers – from left to right: Peter Wear (who played Wodehouse and Jeeves), John Voce (Bertie and Shakespeare), Paul Kent (author, Bacon and Narrator), and Lucy Tregear (Agent, Antigonus, and Burbage)

himself enters to give us to give us his assessment of how Shakespeare worked, and he notes that "there are passages in Shakespeare to which I would have been quite pleased to put my name". (No doubt Willy would have returned the compliment.) His observations lead, perhaps inevitably, to the famous Shakespearean stage direction PGW loved to quote: "Exit, pursued by a bear." Wodehouse suggests another way of handling it, as enacted by Bertie and Jeeves – with Bertie beating Roger Bannister's time in the mile by six seconds.

It was wonderful entertainment, loudly enjoyed by all present. Afterward, the conviviality carried on for some time, as it always does at our meetings. Now we have the dinner at Gray's Inn in October and the next Society meeting to look forward to in November (see page 3). Bliss, happiness, joy – forsooth!

A Welcome Gift

At our July meeting, Paul, John, Lucy, and Peter were rewarded for their highly enjoyable entertainment with bottles of Jeeves, a Pimms-like drink just right for the summer.

With a timing worthy of Jeeves himself, Society member BRIAN CORBETT sent the Editor this photo of the elixir in question. What can we say? The response is obvious:

"Thank you, Jeeves!"



There's No Justice, Jeeves

But the Gold Bats Deserve a Gold Star

It sometimes seems that the gods are toying with us, and this was certainly true in June, when the Gold Bats found themselves playing two matches in three days, performing at their best but not getting the victories they deserved. We all realise these things are sent to try us, but it was a little hard.

On Friday, 18 June, we assembled to play our annual match against the Dulwich Dusters, and the spectators who came along to watch were, as always, impressed by the superb condition of the College cricket field. Equally as always, we were struck by the athleticism of the Dusters (the College's staff team), whose average age seemed to be a good 20 years younger than the Gold Bats. Special mention must be made here of Colin Niven, a Society member who also happens to be a very distinguished Old Alleynian and had last played on this ground 50 years ago!

This year, the Gold Bats went in first, and it became clear they were on a roll. The figures for Richard Heard (26), Christopher Read (27), C. Sutherby (33), and A. Hill (33) speak for themselves, while Colin Niven, last man in, celebrated his quinquagenary return with 5, which included a beautifully struck 4. When the Gold Bats had scored a splendid 163, it was time for tea.

The ladies of the Society always make a special effort for the Dulwich match tea, and this year was no exception. But the euphoria induced by good food waned when the weather decided to change after only one over of the Dulwich Dusters' innings. The rain came down and kept on coming, which left the teams with only the consolation of being able to come in and have some more tea. The miserable words 'Rain stopped play' provided the sad epitaph to a splendid Gold Bats performance.



*The Gold Bats and umpires at West Wycombe on 20 June
(Photo by Stephen Fullom)*

Forty-eight hours later, we assembled at the incredibly picturesque West Wycombe ground for our annual match against The Sherlock Holmes Society of London. In the past, these games have been marked by such phenomena as a Sherlock Holmesian demonstrating his skill on a penny-farthing bicycle, the swooping of red kites, and the close interest in the proceedings shown by the horses in the adjoining paddock. This year, the players were distracted by the small bird that decided his morning could not be better spent than in circling the outfield, never more than a foot above the ground, at a speed of 60 miles an hour. This could be extremely disconcerting when trying to keep an eye on a cricket ball travelling at the same height and speed. The rivalry between the teams was clear from the start, with Gold Bats saying the bird was a swallow while the Sherlock Holmes captain maintained it was a swift.

This is always an enjoyable occasion, and it was even more enjoyable this year because, clearly inspired by their performance of two days before, the Gold Bats went in first and started hitting the ball all over the ground. Oliver Wise, who had taken the precaution of getting some batting practice in that well-known centre of cricket, Croatia, led the way with a splendid 59 before retiring, while the Hills, A. and J., scored 45 and 33, respectively. The rest of the team, including umpire Murray Hedgcock's granddaughter – down in the scorebook as 'Miss Georgia' – did their best to follow their example. The result was that the Gold Bats declared after lunch for a superb 212 for 7.

Lunches at this particular event are notable for the varied assortment of liquid consumed on an equally varied assortment of picnic tables, picnic rugs, or plain old-fashioned laps. This lunch was made even more notable when Nicholas Utechin handed out copies of *Wycombe Wonders*, his delightful 30-page booklet setting out the history of



Some of the spectators enjoying the match, pre-rain, at the Dulwich College pavilion on 18 June



Umpire Murray Hedgcock presents the prize to Man of the Match George Gross of the Sherlockians

a superb 114 to give the Sherlockians a victory by two wickets as they scored 215 for 8. At the Man of the Match Award ceremony afterward, Murray Hedgcock named candidates for the title and, having explained how the runners-up had fallen by the wayside – especially the candidate who had correctly, but injudiciously, pointed out a slight legal error in his adjudications – he had no hesitation in naming George Gross as the winner of this year’s award, *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes*, presented by Bob Miller.

So the Gold Bats again performed superbly but again were denied victory. Perhaps the gods will be kinder to us next year.

the matches between the two sides that had begun 10 years before. As a further surprise, certain deserving persons were given a copy of *Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and Devon: A Complete Tour Guide and Companion*.

By this time, the weather had changed from cool and cloudy to bright sunshine, and the Sherlock Holmes team took full advantage of it, though Bob Miller’s bowling earned him two fine LBWs, difficult to get under the 1895 rules. But the fourth man in, George Gross, justified his Eton Ramblers sweater by hitting a



Nicholas Utechin and Team Captains Peter Horrocks and Bob Miller with Nicholas’s booklet Wycombe Wonders

The Editor thanks her better half (even three-quarters) for writing at least nine-tenths of this report.

The Gold Bats Charity Match at Audley End

The annual charity cricket match between the Gold Bats, representing The P G Wodehouse Society, and the Kirby Strollers was, as usual, a close-run thing but for the first time the laurels were festooned about the heads of the Strollers, captained by fellow Wodehousean and *Times* journalist Patrick Kidd.

The fixture, in its fourth year, was played on 8 August at the beautiful Audley End House, which has a moat lurking temptingly on one side of the ground, although the ball took only one dunking this year. The Strollers acted in true Corinthian spirit: one player pulled out ill in the morning, another failed to reach the ground after being dumped by his now ex-girlfriend on the M11, two had dodgy knees and one dislocated a finger warming up.

Chris and Simon Jackson, whose late father, Mike, was a stalwart of the Gold Bats, opened for the Society and laid a solid base for a testing total of 169 for 6 that was aided by Mark Wilcox making 27. But despite the Gold Bats’ skipper, Bob Miller, taking two wickets, the Strollers batted all the way down what was left of their team and won by six wickets with ten minutes of the game left. A collection raised £400 for the Trinity Hospice and the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society.

To read Patrick Kidd’s blog about this match, go to <http://bit.ly/a8N7lc>.

And in Other Gold Bats News . . .

Word has reached the Editor’s Desk of two other Gold Bats matches this summer. On 11 July, our mighty team played the Charterhouse Intellectuals at Charterhouse School. Charterhouse batted first, scoring 184 runs in 32 overs, with the captain, Julian Hill (usually a Gold Bats player), scoring 29 before retiring not out. In reply, Oliver Wise made a good start for the Gold Bats, scoring 30 before retiring. The Gold Bats managed to achieve 169 by the time last over was called. Bob Miller was last man in, scoring a very fast 18 not out.

On 18 July, in a match of which the Editor was not previously aware, the Gold Bats faced The Mount at Alleyn Court School. This day, the Bats amassed a total of 204 runs for 5 wickets in 42 overs, with opening batsmen Sutherby and Bull scoring 46 and 72, respectively. The Mount scored 134 for 6 wickets by the time last over was called. Top scorers were Jackson (appropriately named) with 25 and T. Hair, not out 40. Clay bowled well for the Gold Bats, taking 4 wickets for 47 runs.

Thanks to Stephen Fullom for providing these valuable statistics. Stephen also advises us that we must remember the words of Sir Neville Cardus: “There ought to be some other means of reckoning quality in this the best and loveliest of games; the scoreboard is an ass.”

Plum in the Suburbs, Part 2

by Murray Hedgcock

This is the second and final part of the paper Murray presented at the Society's February 2009 meeting.

We know right from the start that Bertie Wooster is distinctly not a creature of the suburbs: he belongs to Mayfair and St. James's and stately homes, to New York and the Riviera. For Bertie, the suburbs are a vague expanse through which you pass en route to a more significant world – or where you perhaps, greatly daring, make a once-in-a-lifetime visit.

I have been able to identify in all the Wooster stories just four instances of Bertie being sighted in suburbia – and two of these references are to St. John's Wood, which it might be argued is not really a suburb. In the short story 'Clustering Round Young Bingo' (1925), he makes a couple of excursions to the St. John's Wood home of Bingo Little, but in 'The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy' (1924) he goes as far as Wembley, persuaded to see the British Empire Exhibition.

One more mention comes in 'The Spot of Art' (1930), when Bertie retreats to Paris to avoid a spot of unpleasantness before deciding it is time to return to London: "I hopped on a passing aeroplane, and a couple of hours later was bowling through Croydon on my way to the centre of things."

And if you spread the net a little wider to take in Bingo Little, he meets the girl of his dreams at a subscription dance at Camberwell, having bought a ticket from Jeeves in aid of charity.

Very Good Jeeves (1930) takes us to East Dulwich, definitely a rung or so below Valley Fields in the social pecking order. Bertie's Uncle George – Lord Yaxley – contemplates matrimony with a waitress: Miss Rhoda Platt of Wistaria Lodge, Kitchener Road. Bertie is startled – "My God – the proletariat!" – but Jeeves respectfully amends this: "The lower middle classes, Sir."

Aunt Agatha will have none of it, and Bertie is despatched with a blank cheque to buy off the girl. "I pressed the front door-bell and a rather grubby-looking maid let me in and showed me down a passage and into a room with pink paper on the walls, a piano in the corner, and a lot of photographs on the mantelpiece." Here again, even the lower middle classes run to a servant – however grubby. And it ends happily as Uncle George is reunited with Mrs Wilberforce, the widow who was his sweetheart in other days.

East Dulwich also provides a retreat for Freddie Widgeon in 'The Fat of the Land' (1959) being pursued by his bookie, and "lying low in East Dulwich, disguised in a beard by Clarkson". He is sought also by the Drones millionaire, Oofy Prosser, who wishes to pull a swift one on the gormless Freddie over the club Fat Uncle contest:

"Oofy prowled to and fro in the streets, hoping for the best, but East Dulwich held its secret well."

Do the suburbs hold their secrets well? It's an interesting thought.

We make one other significant suburban excursion in *Ukridge* (1924) – 'No Wedding Bells For Him' – when Ukridge and Corky become entangled with a Clapham family. Ukridge promises to bring his aunt round for Sunday supper, the family admiring her books. He responds to Corky's shock: "Do you realise that a family like that has cold beef, baked potatoes, pickles, salad, blanc-mange and some sort of cheese every Sunday after Divine Service? There are moments in a man's life, laddie, when a spot of cold beef with blanc-mange to follow means more than words can tell."

Plum was a great walker, and one of his excursions may well have been to Barnes, because he uses Ye White Hart, not far from Barnes Bridge Station, as the setting for one of the Ukridge enterprises. You may know it – a big, end-of-the-19th-century building at the bottom of White Hart Lane (the Barnes version, not the Spurs one), just across the road from the home of Sir Tim Rice. According to Norman Murphy, Ye White Hart is one of only four watering holes mentioned in Wodehouse still found in the London of 2005 – the others being The Coal Hole, The Cheshire Cheese, and The Victoria.

We enter Ye White Hart in *Ukridge* – the story, 'The Debut of Battling Billson' – explaining how this pub is the setting for training sessions for Billson. He has been persuaded to quit his job as a trimmer on board the SS *Hyacinth* and take to the ring. Ukridge's chronicler, James Corcoran, visits Ye White Hart to see him spar, but we learn nothing of Barnes.

It is in *A Few Quick Ones* (1959) that Wodehouse returns to Barnes and Ye White Hart. The story 'Oofy, Freddie and the Beef Trust' tells how Jas Waterbury, that shadowy acquaintance of Freddie Widgeon, persuades Oofy Prosser, always keen on making even more money, to back a wrestling series.

For no doubt good reasons, the pub is still at Barnes but is now the White Stag. Prosser is much impressed with the poundage of Porky Jupp and Plug Boshier, feeling that "if you could have boiled them down for tallow, you would have had enough ha'penny dips to light the homes of all the residents of Barnes for about a year and a quarter". That's a lot of ha'penny dips, as Barnes had about 40,000 residents in those days . . .

Something Fishy (1957) takes us back to Peacehaven, Mulberry Grove, Valley Fields, one of three investment properties owned by Augustus Keggs, late butler to various Wodehousean characters. This was written nearly 20 years since PGW last personally visited Dulwich, but his memories remain most pleasant. He tells of a

resident, Major Flood-Smith, who in the course of a letter once alluded to the area as “a fragrant oasis”:

[T]he Major was dead right. He had rung the bell, hit the nail on the head and put the thing in a nutshell.

Where other suburbs go in for multiple stores and roller-skating rinks and Splendide Cinemas, Valley Fields specialises in trees and grass and flowers. More seeds are planted there each Spring, more lawnmowers pushed, more garden-rollers borrowed and more patent mixtures for squirting greenfly purchased than in any other community on the Surrey side of the River Thames.

Lord Uffenham, staying at Castlewood, Mulberry Grove, has as housekeeper his niece, Jane Benedick, who in due course falls for hero Bill Hollister. Suburban protocol is a little hard to determine. When Lord Uffenham invites Bill Hollister to dinner, he advises: “Seven o’clock. Don’t dress.” Norman Murphy suggests formal dining in the suburbs would have required not white tie and tails, as in society, but black tie with dinner jacket, so in this case, Bill Hollister would wear merely a lounge suit, with a quiet tie.

Complications come in *Something Fishy* when the unspeakable Percy Pilbeam is hired to purloin a contract promising to pay Keggs a hundred thousand dollars over a tontine. Pilbeam slips Keggs a Mickey Finn – things can get quite nasty in suburbia – and pinches the contract. All is resolved when the intimidating muscles of Keggs’s relation, Battling Billson, are brought to bear on the situation.

One Wodehouse title rings a suburban bell – *Sam in the Suburbs*, published in 1925. This was the US edition; curiously, it was published in Britain as *Sam the Sudden*. It is truly the most suburban of the novels, 19 of the 29 chapters being primarily about life in that fragrant oasis.

The essential girl in the plot is Kay Derrick, based at San Rafael in Valley Fields.

The days are long past when it was considered rather a dashing adventure to journey to Valley Fields. Two hundred years ago, when highwaymen roved West Kensington and snipe were shot in Regent Street, this pleasant suburb in the Postal Division SE22 was a

remote spot to which jaded bucks and beaux would rise when they wanted to get really close to Nature. But now you may reach it not only by omnibus but by train, and even by tram.

Hero Sam Shotter meets Kay and rents the adjoining house from Messrs Matters & Cornelius, House Agents. Sam is assailed by the American crooks Soapy and Dolly Molloy, who have learned that two million dollars in bearer securities, the proceeds of a robbery by a friend who has just died, has been stashed in Mon Repos. After much confusion, the bad guys are vanquished, Kay falls into Sam’s arms, and they agree they will marry and live in happy poverty.

“It will be much more fun being awfully hard up and watching the pennies and going out to the Palais de Danse at Hammersmith on Saturday nights,” says Kay – displaying an intriguing knowledge of the modes of suburbia.

The key to Plum’s awareness of the suburbs is that it is the setting rather than its people who matter. And just as Wodehouse himself was only a temporary resident of the suburbs, when at Dulwich, but could never live there in adult life, his characters of any quality or initiative will never live there.

No major Wodehouse characters live permanently in such a setting. It is the suburbs themselves, rather than their residents, which matter.



Sam Shotter and Kay Derrick lived in adjoining houses, similar to these in Dulwich, known to Wodehouseans as ‘Valley Fields’.

And you realise that while he much enjoyed those happy Dulwich days, which were schooldays rather than those of a householder resident, Wodehouse had virtually no adult experience of the suburban life.

One of the very few confirmed accounts of a Wodehouse trek south of the river is in Robert McCrum’s *Wodehouse – A Life*. Robert records that in 1924 Plum attended a séance at the Kingston home of H. Dennis Bradley, author

of *Towards the Stars*, “a popular guide to contemporary spiritualism”. He went to other séances there in 1925, among the very few instances of his suburban ventures, apart from visits to his old school.

So there it is – the suburbs may not have been right for Plum’s permanent residence, or for that of any major Wodehouse character. But they provide a temporary setting, and an artificial stage, for some of the most delightful episodes in Wodehouse. And we who live in London suburbia are surely entitled to feel justly proud that he chose to immortalise our world in such memorable fashion.

My First Wodehouse Experience

by David Lilley

In 1978 my wife Anne and I accepted an invitation from an old school friend to join his family at a holiday let in a small fishing village in West Wales: a delightful prospect in all respects. The only blight to our anticipation was the perceived likelihood of the somewhat moist weather conditions associated with a typical Welsh August. What should I take to read for when it rains, I asked myself?

I tottered off to the local public library and spotted an innocent-looking hardback, minus its dust cover, from the publishing house of Herbert Jenkins and with the semi-familiar title of *The Inimitable Jeeves*. “Oh yes,” thought I, “P G Wodehouse. Wasn’t Jeeves the subject of that TV series a few years back, with those perfect comic actors, Dennis Price and Ian Carmichael? Oh yes, and that hilarious portrayal of a very loud and gusty aunt by another favourite actress – Eleanor Summerfield?”

The fortnight in Wales turned out, against all predictions, to be one of wall-to-wall sunshine, but still with hours to spare, lazing on the beach, our children playing in the middle distance, and a nice little pub for the regular restoring of the tissues. But that wasn’t the main attraction. By the time I reached ‘Pearls Mean Tears’, I was hooked. ‘The Great Sermon Handicap’ transformed me into an instant addict, and by ‘The Purity of the Turf’ the pattern of my life was altered forever.

Predictably, I got through this, to me, now legendary book in three days and then, of course, the crisis! Those readers not experienced in such things can have little real empathy with that awful desolate, bleak feeling that accompanies the withdrawal symptoms of the newly addicted.

It became a vital necessity for me to disrupt all other holiday arrangements by insisting on an immediate 50-mile round trip into Cardigan, where I found one of those delightful little bookshops which have become so

increasingly rare in today’s online commercial environment. “Got any P G Wodehouse?” I asked. “I can’t find any on your shelves.” “Hold on a minute,” was the reply. “I may have something out the back.” A minute or so of anxious waiting, which seemed a lifetime, and this paragon of the retail trade returned with two paperbacks (Coronet editions, I recall): *Thank You, Jeeves* and *Joy in the Morning*.



You will gather the rest. All three books were finished easily within the fortnight, with only brief interludes for beach ball, fishing in rock pools, and the downing of a fair quantity of good Welsh beer to interrupt otherwise constant pleasure in the company of Pauline and old Pop Stoker, Sir Roderick Glossop, Uncle Percy and Stilton Cheesewright, et al. The only disappointment? At that stage in my development, I had not yet encountered Aunt Dahlia.

Thirty years later, with around 70 of Plum’s masterpieces read and re-read over and over again, and in fact with around 20 still to go, the dog-eared paperbacks have been systematically replaced (but never destroyed) with the superb Everyman editions. To this day I still return to

Plum around every fourth book among the avid reading habits of retirement – and always when on holiday.

And my personal favourites? I love the Mulliner stories. To me they are the epitome of Plum’s mastery of comic farce but, as I suspect is the case with many other aficionados, the book first read remains the favourite. I have to say, though, that for sheer pleasure, and the sort of thing that makes for embarrassing failure to stifle a chortle in a crowded railway carriage, ‘Police Persecution’ is the ultimate! “In addition to smelling of mice and mould, the particular segment of sacking on which some two minutes later I was reclining had a marked aroma of by-the-day gardener: and there was a moment when I had to ask myself if the mixture wasn’t a shade too rich.”

A Wodehouse Acrostics Book

If you have been enjoying the acrostics that June Arnold has given us over the past two years – see, for example, page 21 of this issue – then have we got good news for you! This autumn, June will be publishing a book of acrostics, all devoted to Wodehouse. The challenge of solving June’s puzzles is made all the more enjoyable by the delight of uncovering favourite PGW quotes, so this will be a must-have book.

I



Letters to the Editor

Reactions, Questions, and Thoughts from Our Readers

From Lynn Vesley-Gross

I enjoyed the latest *Wooster Sauce* (June 2010), and after the usual manner of the typical member of the human race, instead of writing to express enthusiasm and appreciation for all 28 pages, which I should, I write to pick at the Bravo item on page 12. The date of 14 February was PGW's birthday? Oops. The antithesis, rather, sadly. I acknowledge what I'm pointing out is that you let one thing through of 50,000 you review and we appreciate them all. Probably 47 others before me have mentioned the minor matter anyhow.

The Editor replies: Amazingly, no other readers wrote in to point out this dashed silly blunder. My apologies to all.

From Jan Barnes

I much enjoyed Murray Hedgcock's article entitled 'Plum in the Suburbs' in the June 2010 journal, but may I point out one slight error? In *Bill the Conqueror*, Bill is indeed lurking in the garden of Holly House, hoping to catch a glimpse of Flick Sheridan and is on hand to retain the parcel containing some priceless books. The books, however, belong to Bill's uncle, Mr Paradene, who is stopping at Holly House as a guest of the owner. All, of course, ends well, with Bill returning the books to his uncle, whose gratitude knows no bounds (pages 310–11).

From Lucienne Thomas

Mark Smith's very enjoyable piece (June 2010, p.12) may give me the opportunity to rehabilitate – a tiny little bit – Ukridge, that 'Man of Wrath', even though I don't approve of him any more than does his Aunt Julia. If 'roop', the 'mysterious ailment', means 'hoarseness' (it doesn't figure in standard French and English Harraps), it

could be 'patois' for a variety of laryngitis – a very real illness responsible for the premature demise of otherwise healthy chickens. A friend of mine used to nurse them back to health and old age by means of herbal tea inhalations.

From Lennart Andersson

Regarding my article on Swedish exercises (*Wooster Sauce*, June 2010), I received an appreciative comment and a couple of questions about Dr Pembrey's essay, referred to in the article, from Tony Butler at St Andrews University. This led me to check my source material, and lo and behold, Pembrey's essay was published in England not in 1924 but in 1919 – the very year PGW started his 'daily dozen' exercises. (The year 1924 was when the Swedish periodical presented the essay to its Swedish readers.) Did PGW read the essay in 1919 and therefore stopped practicing S.e. right away? It seems too good a story to be ignored.

From Mark Taha

Your 'Plum's Politicians' supplement (*By The Way*, June 2010) reminded me of *Private Eye's* 10th anniversary book, in which Richard Ingrams described ex-Prime Minister Sir Alex Douglas-Home as "this half-witted earl who looked and behaved like something out of P.G. Wodehouse". And Ingrams a Wodehousian, too!

From Nick Townend

In connection with the hunt for the presumed quote "The bank manager approached like a wall of fog", I wonder if this is a mis-remembrance of "Slingsby approached like a dignified cloud bank"? Unfortunately, I cannot trace the latter quote either, so may also be guilty of mis-remembering!

More on Wooster Street

The item on Wooster Street, New York City, in June's *Wooster Sauce* prompted two members to write, including Dutch member LEONARD BEUGER. Leonard informs us that he "just happened to pass through there a few weeks ago, on which occasion my wife took this picture of me, pointing at the street-sign. Wooster Street runs from Bleecker Street to Canal Street. Murphy describes it as 'scruffy and squalid' in 1990. It is a little better now, and along Wooster Street, near Bleecker Street, one can see a large sculpture by Picasso, identical to the one in Rotterdam."

Meanwhile, with regard to Norman Murphy's theory that Wodehouse derived Bertie Wooster's surname while living in the neighbourhood of Wooster Street in New York, NICK TOWNEND writes: "The rear cover of the dustwrapper on McIlvaine contains an interesting letter, dated 20 May 1962, from Wodehouse to a Mr Wooster, with the following sentences: 'I can't remember how I got the name Wooster. I think it may have been from a serial in the old *Captain*, where one of the characters was called Worcester. The odd thing is that the Bertie W. character started out as Reggie Pepper, and I don't know why I changed the name.'"

Nick adds: "I have not (yet) been able to trace such a serial in *The Captain*, but Volume 4 (October 1900—March 1901) did contain a short story called 'After Worcester Fight' by Fred Swainson, the author of *Acton's Feud*, the school story which inspired Wodehouse to start writing school stories himself (see Usborne, *Wodehouse at Work to the End*, pp53–54)." Stay tuned for the next exciting instalment of this saga!



Leonard Beuger

My First Wodehouse Experience

by Simon Bond

Towards the end of 2009, I was diagnosed with cancer. Surgery and chemotherapy followed in short order, and I spent most of the winter in bed, extremely ill and surviving on a diet of dry cream crackers and goat's milk. In addition to feeling terrible physically, I went through a terrible time emotionally as I passed through all the usual stages – denial, fear, anger (though I never quite got to grips with acceptance). With what amounted to a Sword of Damocles hanging over my head, I was finding it impossible to “look at the positives”

even though I was getting the best of care. To tell you the truth, good humour was a little bit thin on the ground.

And then my fiancée gave me a copy of *Thank You, Jeeves*.

Now, strictly speaking, this was not my first Wodehouse experience; I had read the odd thing before



and found it – well, okay. But given the tight spot I now found myself in, the penny dropped, in a big way. It would be stretching things to say that Jeeves and Bertie got me through my treatment; at times I barely had the energy to read. But I laughed. I smiled. I felt the warm glow of impeccable jokes, perfect prose, and downright silliness. And given where I was at that moment, that amounted to something like a miracle.

And now? The treatment is over, my prognosis is good, my hair has grown back, I've read *The Mating*

Season, and I am about to start on *The Code of the Woosters*. And for my recent birthday – a birthday I'd almost given up hope of ever seeing – my beautiful, wonderful fiancée gave me the gift of membership of The P G Wodehouse Society. I don't know how much it cost. But in a crazy way, it felt priceless.

A Members' Debate

A little more than 10 years ago, members of the Society were polled to pick their favourite Wodehouse stories and novels, choices that were subsequently printed in *What Ho! The Best of P. G. Wodehouse* (Hutchinson, 2000). But this did not end the perpetual debate among Wodehouseans as to what constitutes Our Hero's finest work. In the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, Peter Thompson resurrected the debate by questioning the choice of MARTIN STRATFORD, who gamely replied as follows:

I refer to Peter Thompson's letter in the June 2010 issue of *WS* responding to my earlier comment en passant (if that's the phrase I want) that 'Uncle Fred Flits By' is probably the greatest comic short story of all time and putting forward as his own candidate 'Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend'.

The (delightful) problem of picking your favourite PGW short story is, of course, that there are so dashed many of them. As soon as you pick one, you think, "Just a minute, what about . . . ?" (e.g., what about 'The Great Sermon Handicap', and is 'Crime Wave at Blandings' a short story or should it be scratched from the race as a novella?).

I suspect that the debate could rage like an exchange of telegraphic communication between Bertie and Aunt Dahlia. In the spirit of Wodehousean camaraderie, I am more than

happy to meet Peter halfway and offer him an honourable draw. After all, the only real winners are the readers.

A friendly and dashed reasonable response, I suggest. And I would probably have left the matter rest there had not another reader, DOUG SUMMERS, entered the fray:

Mr Peter Thompson suggests that 'Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend' is to be preferred to 'Uncle Fred Flits By' as the "greatest comic short story ever written". He bases this on careful ratiocination in a pub in Victoria. Whilst public houses in Victoria cannot be expected to supply refreshment of the quality of G. Ovens' home brew in the Emsworth Arms, I fear that whatever Mr Thompson consumed has led him to a serious lapse of memory. Whilst both the above-mentioned stories can be read with pleasure by anyone, it has never been in doubt that the palm goes to 'Anselm Gets His Chance'.

And there you have it – a line drawn in the sand. As Martin noted in a separate message, "I suspect Jeeves would say that in the end the choice depends upon the psychology of the individual!" Indeed it does – and given the catholic and eclectic taste of our many members, we can't possibly pass up this opportunity to invite further opinions. What is *your* choice for Wodehouse's greatest short story? Write in and let us know!

– The Editor

The Nature and Development of the Impostor in the Works of P. G. Wodehouse

Part 1

by Elliott Milstein

This is an edited version of the talk Elliott presented at The Wodehouse Society convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, on 13 June 2009.

Wodehouse makes being an impostor seem so easy, but having been one myself, I can assure you that it requires nerves of steel.

In an introduction to the 1970 Mayflower paperback edition of *Something Fresh*, Wodehouse writes:

The one thing that might be considered to militate against the peace of life at Blandings was the constant incursion of impostors. Blandings had impostors the way other houses have mice. I have recorded so far the activities of six of them, and no doubt more to come.

Ring and Jaggard, in their wonderful *Millenium Concordance*, come up with a list of Blandings impostors which numbers a staggering 19 names. One wonders why Wodehouse only comes up with six. We must assume that his definition of an impostor differs substantially from Ring and Jaggard's.

I would aver that the narrowest definition of an impostor is someone who presents himself as another real or extant person. With that definition, let's see who we come up with.

Well, first, of course, is Psmith, who, in *Leave It to Psmith*, comes to the castle as the Canadian poet Ralston McTodd. Next would be Sue Brown, arriving as the American heiress Myra Schoonmaker in *Summer Lightning*. Uncle Fred shows up in the springtime as the nerve specialist Sir Roderick Glossop. And finally, Sam Bagshott arrives as Augustus Whipple (yes, Whipple, not Whiffle, that famed pig specialist having undergone one of those weird Wodehouse name changes in *Galahad at Blandings*). That's a count of only four. We could possibly add Eddie Cootes, who also shows up as McTodd, but, though he fits the definition, it is unlikely Wodehouse was thinking about him; and even if he was, that would still be only five. Who is missing?

Could Wodehouse have been thinking of Bill Lister? Bill is listed twice in the *Concordance*, once as Messmore Breamworthy and once as Landseer. Both are real people, but there is a little difficulty here. Freddie Threepwood suggests the name Messmore Breamworthy, but Mr Breamworthy is a Vice President at Donaldson's Dog Joy, not an artist, so Bill is just borrowing his name. (Also, as Messmore Breamworthy, Bill puts up at the Emsworth Arms and only visits to paint the pig – so technically he is not an impostor “at Blandings Castle”.)

Now, unlike Breamworthy, Landseer is actually invited to stay at the Castle, and it is not Bill's fault that he is tossed out after a mere 15 minutes. And Landseer was also a real person – and an artist. But while Gally did lead Emsworth to believe that Bill was Sir Edwin Landseer, he changed his story when confronted with Hermione's knowledge that Sir Edwin had long since handed in his dinner pail (1873), so it is questionable whether this qualifies as the type of “pure” imposture needed to reach Wodehouse's count of six. (Interestingly, the *Concordance* does not enumerate Bill's haunting the grounds as a gardener – complete with Fruity Biffen's beard. I think we have to consider this an act of imposture.)



The real Landseer

Wodehouse wrote this introduction right after he finished *A Pelican at Blandings*, which includes Vanessa Polk, whom Gally specifically identifies as an impostor:

“. . . the Polk wench . . . It turns out she's an impostor. It's an odd thing about Blandings Castle, it seems to attract impostors as catnip does cats. They make a bee line for the place. When two or three impostors are gathered together, it's only a question of time before they are saying 'Let's all go round to Blandings', and along they come. It shakes one. I've sometimes asked myself if Connie is really Connie.”

But as Vanessa Polk is not impersonating a real person, this means Wodehouse's definition is somewhat more liberal than the one I gave earlier. If, however, we adopt a looser definition, then we should admit not just Ms Polk and the Blister but also Pongo and Polly Pott as Glossop's secretary Basil and daughter Gwendolyn, respectively, and several more, in which case we are soon up to Ring and Jaggard's number of 19, and possibly more.

We must face the fact that Wodehouse was probably just plucking a number out of the air, and with Ring and Jaggard we are much closer to the mark. But even that list is not, I think, entirely accurate.

Ring and Jaggard omitted Bill Lister's stint as a gardener, but my biggest issue with them comes in *Something Fresh*. It is odd to me that they list Joan Valentine but not Ashe Marson. True, Ashe does not take

a false name and Joan does, but others in their list use their own names like John Halliday and Vanessa Polk. Remember that Ashe is pretending to be a valet so he may steal back Mr Peters's scarab, whereas Joan was a real lady's maid, so which is the greater imposture?

Besides, we must list Ashe as an impostor because Wodehouse calls him one in the book. Ashe, assembling with the rest of the staff and feeling completely out of place, concludes, "He himself, he felt, had impostor stamped in large characters all over him."

The point of all this is not to show up errors in the *Millenium Concordance* because we understand and sympathize. Deciding what exactly is an act of imposture and what isn't can be difficult.

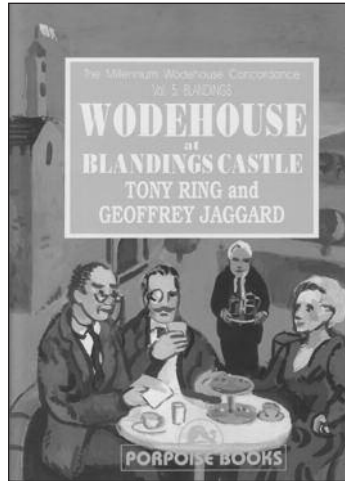
Personally, I reject merely giving a false name as a form of imposture. Surely Oliver Sipperly had no intention of passing himself off as the founder of the Red Army when he gave the name Leon Trotsky in the Boshier Street Police Court. And there is Ukridge, who is never an impostor but always gives a false name as an ordinary business precaution

I think that in Wodehouse, imposture must include one of three motives, two of which are his two great motives for everything: Love and Money. Generally, those who affect imposture for Love are heroes while those who deceive for monetary gain are villains, but this rule is not hard and fast. Psmith comes to Blandings in pursuit of Eve Halliday, but also to steal Lady Constance's necklace; Uncle Fred comes to help Polly Pott, but also with the intent of extracting money. But neither Psmith nor Uncle Fred can be considered in quite the same league as, say, Dolly and Soapy Molloy, whom we meet in *Money For Nothing*, infiltrating Rudge Hall doing their brother-and-sister routine.

What separates Uncle Fred and Psmith from such disreputable characters is that their motives do not include *personal* gain. They are impostors for a third Wodehouse motive – in the words of Joan Valentine (and others), "the fun of it". Psmith pretended to be Ralston McTodd because he enjoyed being mistaken for a poet. He had not yet formed his plan to follow Eve Halliday to Blandings.

With such motives, it is no wonder that imposture is integral to so many of Wodehouse's stories. But the impostor motif did not spring Athena-like from his head. We see elements of it in early stories, such as 'The Man Upstairs', 'Bill the Bloodhound', and 'Extricating Young Gussie'.

A Gentleman of Leisure (1910) is a novel underrated by many, but I think it is the first quintessential Wodehouse novel. David Jasen points out that this is the first story to be set in a stately home in Shropshire and to feature an amiable but dimwitted peer, a tycoon, a formidable aunt, a pretty but foolish girl, and



Dare we question Ring and Jaggard's facts and figures?

a butler. Jasen leaves out the underworld motif, first introduced here and used to great effect later in *The Prince and Betty*; *Psmith Journalist*; *The Little Nugget*; and later, in an increasingly more comic vein, *Big Money*; *Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin*; and on and on.

In addition to the standard Wodehouse touches, we have two very nice, though not fully developed, impostors. Jimmy Pitt is caught breaking into the police chief's home on a bet. In order to pull off the situation, he pretends to be a master cracksman. Unfortunately, this is how he is remembered by the characters with whom he deals that evening. This is a sort of quasi-imposture because the reason for

the deception is not germane to the plot, but merely there to force the situation. The book does, however, contain a real impostor called Hargate, who has insinuated himself into the castle with the object of cleaning up on billiards. *A Gentleman of Leisure*, a seminal work, is weak in a lot of ways, and the impostor motif is not as fully exploited as Wodehouse will achieve later.

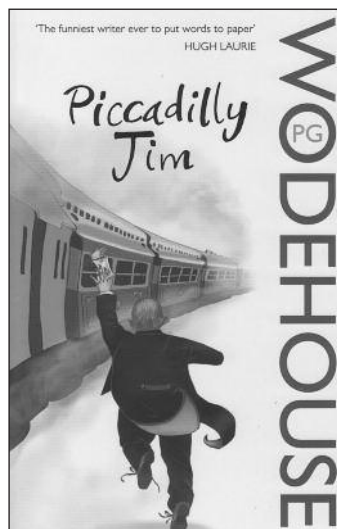
In *The Little Nugget*, Wodehouse introduces White, a butler who turns out to be Smooth Sam Fisher, one of many trying to abduct Ogden Ford. Wodehouse uses this form of deception again in *Uneasy Money*, but this time it is the hero who hides his identity to insinuate himself in someone else's home. His motives are only tangentially connected to Love, Money, or Fun, but they are benign, to help individuals whom he has quite inadvertently relieved of their inheritance.

Given how singularly rife with impostors the Blandings saga will become, it is fitting that the first Blandings story, *Something Fresh*, is also the first Wodehouse novel in which the imposture is germane to the plot. But it is in 1917, with *Piccadilly Jim*, that the

impostor truly comes into his own. Here, not only is the imposture germane to the plot, it is the plot itself. Jimmy Crocker decides to go to America and, en route, falls in love with Ann Chester. Before he can reveal his name, he discovers that she hates him (though she does not recognize him). So he gives her a false name.

In America, she talks him into impersonating himself, so that he is Jimmy Crocker impersonating Algernon Bayliss, impersonating Jimmy Crocker. Ensnared in his aunt's house, he finds his father there impersonating a butler. He

also meets Lord Wisbeach, who turns out to be not Lord Wisbeach but another impostor, but Jimmy is unable to unmask him without unmasking himself. Here we have the three motives again: Jimmy doing his bit for love, his



The impostor motif arrives

old man butting for the fun of it (or the love of baseball), and the ersatz Wisbeach on site to pull a job.

It is several years before Wodehouse returns to using impostors again, in *Leave It to Psmith*, which has three impostors, or four if you include Susan the housemaid, who is really a detective.

By this time Wodehouse has become particularly keen on imposture, and even Bertie and Jeeves take their turns at it. Bertie has to fill in as Sippy in ‘Without the Option’, and *The Mating Season* has him going to Deverill Hall as Gussie Fink-Nottle, while Gussie shows up later as Bertie. Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright also fills in, acting as Bertie’s valet. In the later stories, even Jeeves impersonates Inspector Witherspoon of Scotland Yard in *Stiff Upper Lip*, Jeeves and Bertie’s accountant in *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen*, while Sir Roderick Glossop unbends enough to impersonate a butler in *Jeeves in the Offing*.

I have always been fond of *Money in the Bank*’s impostor motif. I don’t think Chimp Twist qualifies as an impostor, simply because he uses the nom d’affaires J. Sheringham Adair. But here we have the unusual twist where the owner of the country house, Lord Uffenham, acts as his own butler, Cakebread. It is, however, Jeff Miller who is the real star when he shows up impersonating J. Sheringham Adair, very much in the Psmith mold. In fact, he uses almost exactly the same argument in excusing his imposture that Psmith does. Psmith, wooing Eve, says, “All you have against me is the fact that I am not Ralston McTodd. Think how comparatively few people are Ralston McTodd.” Jeff, in explaining why Mrs Cork did not throw him out in learning of his imposture says, “A fair-minded, clear thinking woman, she realizes what a venial offence it is not to be J. Sheringham Adair. As she pointed out, she is not J. Sheringham Adair herself, nor are many of her best friends.”

In Part 2 of this paper, to be published in December, Elliott discusses Wodehouse’s greatest impostor story and also discloses his own experience as an impetuous impostor. For his full paper, see Plum Lines, Winter 2009.

Wooster’s Knowledge

A leader in the *Daily Telegraph* of 10 August described *University Challenge* presenter Jeremy Paxman’s chagrin over how ignorant modern students are regarding the Bible. “Today,” said the *Telegraph*, “any team would benefit from the presence of Bertie Wooster, proud holder of the Scripture Knowledge prize from his prep school. On the other hand, he’d seldom get the starter for 10.” (Thanks to ALEX CONNOLLY; for more on *University Challenge*, see page 18.)

Boat Race Blues

A Complaint from Martin Harper

Sir/Madam,

I write in the strongest possible terms to register my complaint at the severe lack of policeman’s helmets at this year’s annual Oxford Cambridge boat race!

As a relative newcomer to the world of P G Wodehouse, I have read avidly of Bertie Wooster’s exploits, particularly those on the evening of the annual aquatic battle. So, having put myself outside a splendid lunch, I sauntered along the banks of the Thames, basking in the spring sunshine, to watch the race and get ready for the main event of the festivities – ‘de-bonneting’ policeman of their helmets.

Over the previous six months I had been perfecting my technique. Not for me Bingo Little’s schoolboy error of simply ‘grabbing the helmet and pulling back’. As experienced ‘helmet removers’ will know, this has the distinct disadvantage of bringing the policeman with it, and what is one to do with a policeman once you have him? No, I was ready to give the ‘forward shove, before the upward lift’, thus removing the strap from the vicinity of the chin.

Imagine my disappointment, therefore, in discovering that for an event at which a reasonable smattering of police wearing helmets should be expected, I could only see TWO! In fairness to our boys in blue, I should explain that there were plenty of police around, just not enough wearing the correct cranial couture. Perhaps in the future their location could be signposted. To make matters worse, although this brace of bobbies had bothered to wear the correct headwear, they resolutely refused to enter into the spirit of the occasion, by declining to face the other way so as to give a fellow a sporting chance – a great letdown.

I realise that having their head gear removed is not one of the primary reasons for which they draw their monthly stipend; however, I was given to understand that policemen accepted this tradition as part of the rich fabric of our island life. I can only comment that if this state of affairs continues, next year ‘helmet pinchers’ may have to resort to waiting until a policeman removes his helmet before pinching it! This technique, although favoured by Stinker Pinker, is to be strongly disapproved of by right-minded individuals everywhere, being tantamount to ‘shooting a sitting bird’.

In conclusion, if anyone holds sway with the local guardians of law and order, perhaps they could leave their copy of *Wooster Sauce* open with this article in their general vicinity, and perhaps next year those bobbies in attendance at this important event in our social calendar will have their upper decks correctly attired!

Yours faithfully,

Martin ‘Ephraim Gadsby’ Harper



Oh, Boy at City Lit in Chicago

by Dean Miller

On Sunday, June 20, a posse of about a dozen members of the Chicago Accident Syndicate (along with Tony and Elaine Ring, Ministers Plenipotentiary and Travelling Thesaurus of Knowledge from the UK's Wodehousians) descended on the City Lit Theater to witness a masterly staging of the P G Wodehouse, Guy Bolton & Jerome Kern musical from 1917, *Oh, Boy* (sans the usual exclamation mark). They joined a largish crowd (in this smallish venue), and all hands were richly rewarded, with sharp dialogue, tuneful song, and vigorous dance that worked perfectly in the 21st century.

The City Lit company has a reputation for doing Wodehouse up brown: in past years it has adapted and offered *Pigs Have Wings*, *Uncle Fred Flits By*, and several Jeeves and Wooster romps (such as *Thank You, Jeeves*, *Cocktail Time*, and *Jeeves and the Mating Season*), and they have presented the Wodehouse adaptation of Ferenc Molnar's *The Play's the Thing*. In other word, City Lit knows its onions – and its newts. One thing to remember about *Oh, Boy!* is that this musical was a genuine original, with the musical numbers, for the first time, integrated into the plot – and moreover, the plot, however convoluted, actually made sense. (Plum, at one point, had five musicals, with his book and lyrics, playing on Broadway at one time.)

As for that plot: the scene is Long Island, New York. George Budd (Sean Knight) has eloped with Lou Ellen Carter (Harmony France), but their bridal night is not to be, for they need permission to legally wed not only from the senior Carters but from George's grim and censorious Quaker aunt, Penelope Budd. George's pal Jim Marvin (Adam Pasen) is on hand – the kind of a pal who invites *his* pals (the sextet of Boys and Girls) over to *your* digs to have a party ('Let's Make a Night of It'). So George and Lou Ellen are sundered hearts ('The Letter'). Enter, armed, Jacky Samson (Jennifer Grubb) through George's flat's window, a Theda Bara type who has just clocked a policeman in the noggin. Jacky now becomes rather the pivot of the plot, for she has to play the part of George's wife to escape the nearsighted and excitable Constable



Jacky Samson (played by Jennifer T Grubb) trips the light fantastic with Jim Marvoin (played by Adam Pasen).

(Both photos this page by Johnny Knight)

Sims (Brian-Mark Conover, using an accent that may be Long Island Latvian) and then to somehow impersonate the Quaker Aunt, until the real article shows up. Jacky looks about as Quaker as the late Emperor Haile Selassie, but no matter. Naturally she and the raffish Jim are attracted to one another ('A Pal Like You' and, in due course, 'Nesting Time in Flatbush'). There are appearances by the senior Carters; Mme. C. (Rosalind Hurwitz) is well-corseted and imperious. She, as mothers will, suspects George's moral character. Judge Calder (Kingsley Day) is top-hatted and much put-upon but (as 'Toodles') has been known to bust out from time to time. There is also a not-quite-competent Cockney butler, Briggs (Alex Shotts).

In the midst of all of this puff-pastry angst, the Boys and Girls (equipped with names like Rhoda Byke, Phelan Fyne, Olaf Lauder, and Hugo Chaseit) shake a sprightly hoof. They also warble most merrily, conveying the sense (with numbers like 'A Little Bit of Ribbon', 'Rolled Into One', and 'Words Are Not Needed') that all will yet be hunky-dory – just wait 'Till the Clouds Roll By' (probably the best-known number from the show, together with the glorious 'The Land Where the Good Songs Go'). There are any number of juicy moments, some involving costume (Jim sports a suit that is of incandescent coloration; Jacky appears in a fetching pair of blue pajamas – pyjamas – that actually belonged to



Lou Ellen Carter (Harmony France) tells George Budd (Sean Knight) to back off until he has adequately explained the succession of pretty girls coming out of his bedroom, at least one wearing Lou Ellen's blue pyjamas from her wedding trousseau.

Lou Ellen's trousseau). And no review of this gem could avoid mentioning the extraordinary three-minute drunk scene that ensues when the abstemious Quaker Aunt Penelope Budd (Patti Roeder) gets outside of a brace of sinister-looking Bronx Cocktails too rapidly.

The musical accompaniment, as the plot rolls on, is expertly provided by Kingsley Day on piano and Anthony Parsons on clarinet and flute.

Now, staging this musical firework involved a two-year slog, as we were told by director Terry McCabe. Dark hours of heartbreak and spells of deep frustration were not uncommon. Copies of the original script were available, with dialogue, but with cheerful interpolations such as "Insert number here" – rather less than helpful, what? Finding sheet music for *Oh, Boy!*'s songs took time, research, and much effort; some songs were jettisoned along the way.

The bad news is that this production is unique, and it cannot be replicated or even recorded – rights and legal permissions stand too grimly in the way. The good news is that a rare and glorious piece of Plumiana (with Bolton and Kern as Plum's stalwart allies) has been on the stage, and it, in brief, is a pippin. Could there be more efforts in musical archaeology like this? Why not?

In sum: *Oh, Boy*, says this reviewer, is the alligator's adam's-apple. Here Plum and Colleagues, almost a hundred years ago, addressed the musical and, as it were, knocked it out of the park – I mean, hit it for six.



Editor's note: The Chicago Accident Syndicate is a chapter of The Wodehouse Society (US). Dean mentions the presence of Tony and Elaine Ring among those who went to the performance of *Oh, Boy* on 20 June. As guests of the Syndicate, they were in Chicago for only a few days, but during that time Tony took the city by storm, giving a talk at the Caxton Club on 17 June (see Tina Woelke's review) and also participating in a 'talkback' session following the show on the 20th. In the talkback, Tony joined City Lit's artistic director Terry McCabe, musical director Kingsley Day, and some cast members in discussing Wodehouse and *Oh, Boy!* (as the title should be), and answering questions from the audience. It is safe to say that he and Elaine left Chicago a better-informed and therefore happier place.

Tony Ring at the Caxton Club

by Tina Woelke

On June 17, while in Chicago to attend a rare production of *Oh, Boy*, Tony Ring detoured briefly to address members of the Caxton Club – a society of distinguished bibliophiles, many of a collecting bent – about his vast Wodehouse archive. The presentation went over like gangbusters.

Tony related how he became hooked on Plum as a youth, when an uncle gave him a Wodehouse novel as a gift. He went on to write and edit books about Plum, compile the authoritative *Millennium Concordance*, and collect more than 10,000 Wodehouse-related items. Tony displayed slides of samples from his collection, including sheet music; playbills; rare magazine stories; photos; and ephemera, including a theatrical sketch with Plum's doodled matchstick cricket players and a scorecard from an Actors vs. Authors match (pitting Plum, E. W. Hornung, and Arthur Conan Doyle against C. Aubrey Smith and others). Other items included handwritten notes; typed draft pages with amendments by PGW; illustrations from various editions; and a June 1, 1941, issue of *The Tost Times* (put together while Plum was interned by the Germans in Upper Silesia). Tony unravelled the labyrinthine history of *The Prince and Betty*, *A Prince For Hire*, and *Psmith, Journalist*; and he shared Plum's hilarious letter to Arnold Bennett about his struggle to get "festive s" (a clipped "festive season") past the proofreaders of 'Jeeves and the Yuletide Spirit'.

It was an enthralling display of knowledge and materials, to which the Caxtonians responded with great enthusiasm (rendering the US Wodehouse Society's Chicago Accident Syndicate claque redundant). In appreciation for the talk, the Caxtonians presented Tony with a book on Robert Hunter Middleton, signed by all the attendees at the function. Our greatest "Thank you" to Tony Ring for his splendid presentation – and to whoever has the job of dusting that wondrous collection, we say: "Courage, Comrade!"



Tony Ring (centre) onstage during the talkback following the performance of *Oh, Boy* on 20 June. (Photo by Kathy Lewis)

Wodehouse on the BBC

This summer saw numerous programmes on BBC radio and television in which Wodehouse figured, for which we can only say: Bravo!

July 2 (and again on July 4): Dulwich was the subject for David Cannadine on his Radio 4 programme *A Point of View*. He began with an laudatory discussion of the Dulwich Picture Gallery but quickly moved on to compare and contrast Dulwich College's two best-known alumni, P G Wodehouse and Raymond Chandler. Cannadine noted that "thanks to their formative years at Dulwich, Chandler and Wodehouse played with the English language in ways that were sometimes very alike, especially in their use of metaphors and similes, which were vivid and unexpected, yet also completely apt and unforgettable". To read the complete text of Cannadine's broadcast, go to <http://bbc.in/c2YJIs>. (Thanks to IAN ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR, USCHI KNIEPER, and KAREN SHOTTING)

July 4 and 11 (repeated on July 10 and 17): The BBC struck gold again with Martin Jarvis's two-part adaptation of *Summer Lightning*. Our multitalented patron both wrote (as Archie Scottney) and directed the production, which featured a dazzling cast: Charles Dance as Gally, Patricia Hodge as Lady Constance, Tim Pigott-Smith as Beach, Matt Lucas as Percy Pilbeam, Samuel West as Hugo Carmody, and Martin himself as Lord Emsworth. Ian Ogilvy provided the narrative voice of P G Wodehouse. The verdict from those Wodehouseans who heard it was that this was a superb adaptation, superbly performed. Particularly outstanding was Matt Lucas (of *Little Britain* fame), who played Pilbeam at his oiliest. We eagerly look forward to the next Jarvis audio production, as they keep getting better and better!

August 1: The castaway on Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs* was the comedy writer, producer, and presenter Jimmy Mulville, who chose songs that were mostly sad and reflective. However, his book selection was *The Complete Works of P G Wodehouse* because "I do want to hear laughter on the island" and Wodehouse is the sort of writer who "can take me into

the world of Blandings Castle and Jeeves and Wooster and make me laugh out loud in a public place". (Thanks to BOB MILLER)

August 16: Turning to television, BBC Two's *University Challenge* included some bonus questions on the subject of pigs, one of which was: "In the novels of P G Wodehouse, Lord Emsworth's prize-winning sow The Empress of Blandings is a remarkably plump specimen of which breed of pig?"

Alas, the brains of Christ's College, Cambridge, agonized over it until finally, er, plumping for Gloucester Old Spot. Cambridge alumnus Stephen Fry must have been groaning. (Thanks to ALEX CONNOLLY and NIRAV SHAH)

Later that same evening, BBC Four broadcast the first instalment in a three-part series entitled *In Their Own Words: British Novelists*, with extracts of interviews from the BBC's archives. The first part, 'Among the Ruins', focused on the time between the two World Wars and included parts of interviews with E M Forster, Virginia Woolf, Robert Graves, Evelyn Waugh, Jean Rhys, and others. Naturally, they did not

overlook Our Hero. The section on Wodehouse began with clips from the Ian Carmichael–Dennis Price series *The World of Wooster* and the information that PGW wrote about "a carefree world where the worst that can be expected is a visit from a relative". There were shots of Plum working at his typewriter and sections of an interview conducted at Remsenburg in the 1960s. Wodehouse noted that his characters "were certainly true to life at that time" (between the wars) and, when asked about the lack of sex in his novels, admitted that it wouldn't "fit in with my stuff". He explained his detailed method of writing – "like doing a crossword puzzle" – and his need to have a complete scenario prepared in advance because "I have to know exactly where I'm going before I start a novel". The clip ended with shots of him exercising, in fine shape for a man in his 80s. For those Wodehouseans who have not previously seen or heard him before, it was a real treat to catch this glimpse of him in archive footage.



Plum and feline friend at Remsenburg

Bingo sat down and wrote a story about a little girl called Gwendoline and her cat Tibby. The idea being, of course, to publish it in *Wee Tots* and clean up.

It was no easy task. Until he started on it, he had no notion of what blood, sweat and tears are demanded from the poor sap who takes a pop at the life literary, and a new admiration for Mrs Bingo awoke in him. Mrs Bingo, he knew, did her three thousand words a day without ricking a muscle, and to complete this Tibby number, though it ran to about fifteen hundred, took him over a week, during which period he on several occasions as near as a toucher went off his onion.

(From 'The Word in Season', 1940)

Poet's Corner

A Bridge Tragedy

Men say that I'm in clover;
They envy me my lot.
No sickness bowls me over,
Dyspepsia plagues me not.
No money cares pursue me,
My income grows apace,
Yet sad am I, and gloomy –
I trumped my Hester's ace.

Ah, give me ink and pen; I
Will sketch that direful scene.
The Major cut a ten, I
A three, Miss Jones a queen.
My Hester drew a seven.
We thus sat face to face,
Which seemed to me like
heaven
Until I trumped her ace.

We played. I started finely:
The hand I held was good.
My Hester smiled divinely;
Seraphic was her mood,
Benign each lovely feature,
Until I fell from grace.
Lost miserable creature –
I trumped her only ace!

How did I come to play so?
Did madness sap my brain?
Yes, I'm inclined to say so.
How else can I explain?
My joy was all too fleeting:
It lasted but a space.
And then – my heart stopped
beating –
I saw I'd trumped her ace!

The Major chuckled grimly
(How can such brutes exist?)
I saw the table dimly,
As through an inky mist:
No words that I could utter
Had met the awful case.
With incoherent mutter,
I gathered up that ace.

Alas! My peerless Hester,
They won the 'game and rub'.
When, later, I addressed her
I met an icy snub.
I left – as she requested.
A blot upon the race,
Her attitude suggested,
Was he who trumped an ace.

She freed me from my fetters –
That's how *she* put the thing;
She gave me back my letters,
My presents, and the ring.
She could not 'love and honour'
A man so wholly base
As to put a trump upon her
Best card – her only ace.

So now my life is blighted,
I've drained the bitter cup;
With passion unrequited
My soul is eaten up.
As bride I hoped to claim her,
But now my fond embrace
She scorns. And who can blame
her? –
I trumped her only ace.



From Pearson's,
July 1905

Banjolele Business

Despite all the millions of words written over the years about topics arising from the Wodehouse oeuvre, we can still find that when one story comes to the fore, another is not far behind. Chris Reece, the Society's hardworking website administrator, spotted the following paragraph in the *Guardian* on July 19:

Troubadour Nigel Burch, applying to renew his busker's licence, was recently told that banjos and ukuleles were no longer considered acceptable busking instruments. When he pointed out that he plays the banjolele, this hybrid instrument was quickly added to the unacceptable list.

At the same time, the internet auction site eBay had an authentic



The banjolele seen on eBay

banjolele for sale. The description, headed 'Banjo ukulele', informed us: "The banjolele is a four-stringed musical instrument with a small banjo-type body and a fretted ukulele neck. 'Banjolele' is a generic nickname given to the instrument, which was derived from the 'banjulele-banjo', introduced by Alvin D. Keech in 1917. The instrument achieved its greatest popularity in the 1920s and '30s, and combines the small scale, tuning, and playing style of a ukulele with the construction and distinctive tone of a banjo, hence the name."

Following further information about the banjolele's association with British comedian George Formby and rock musicians Brian May and George Harrison, the eBay description concluded: "In P. G. Wodehouse's novel *Thank You, Jeeves*, valet Jeeves is driven to resign over his employer Bertie Wooster's decision to take up the banjolele."

The auction (which ended on July 21) was successful, attracting 15 bids from 7 different bidders, and realising a final price of £88.50.

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

“A Certain Learned Usborne”

The author who is generally considered to have written about Wodehouse first, most, and best is the late, great Richard Usborne (16 May 1910 to 21 March 2006). This column attempts to present a summary of his Wodehouse-related writings published in book form.

Usborne’s first book about Wodehouse was *Wodehouse at Work*, published in 1961 by Herbert Jenkins, Wodehouse’s own publisher. The front of the dustwrapper has the famous Low sketch of Wodehouse which had first appeared in *The New Statesman* on 23 December 1933. The book contained chapters on each of the major series in Wodehouse’s fiction. Wodehouse had agreed to Usborne’s proposal to write a study of his work on the strength of having read, and liked, Usborne’s *Clubland Heroes* (1953), subtitled ‘A nostalgic study of some recurrent characters in the romantic fiction of Dornford Yates, John Buchan and Sapper’. Wodehouse was pleased with *Wodehouse at Work*, although this did not stop him from referring to Usborne, in an interview with Alistair Cooke, as “a certain learned Usborne” (*The Guardian*, 13 October 1961).

The success of *Wodehouse at Work* established Usborne as the leading authority on Wodehouse, and further books followed. *Wodehouse at Work* was revised after Wodehouse’s death and appeared as *Wodehouse at Work to the End* in 1976, published by Barrie and Jenkins. The front of the dustwrapper now featured a photograph of an elderly Wodehouse at his typewriter.

Usborne prepared Wodehouse’s last, unfinished novel, *Sunset at Blandings*, for publication in 1977 (Chatto & Windus), selecting notes from Wodehouse’s manuscript to illustrate the development of the unfinished section, and contributing appendices on the topography of Blandings Castle and the trains between Paddington and Market Blandings.

In 1981, to celebrate Wodehouse’s centenary, Usborne produced *A Wodehouse Companion* (Elm Tree Books), with a front cover taken from a 1951 *Punch* illustration. The main elements of the book are brief summaries of ‘92 Books’ and ‘64 Memorable People and a Memorable Pig’. In truth, the reader is slightly short-changed: there are summaries of only 91 books, as, for some reason, no summary of *Meet Mr Mulliner* is included.

In 1988 the story summaries from *A Wodehouse Companion* were combined with *Wodehouse at Work to the End* and published in paperback as *The Penguin Wodehouse Companion*. The front cover again featured the Low sketch of Wodehouse. The earlier omission of a summary of *Meet Mr Mulliner* was rectified at this point.

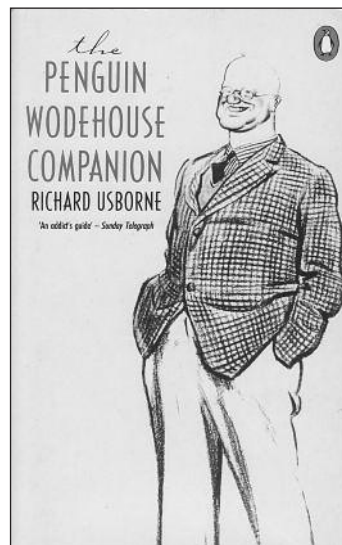
In 1991 Usborne produced *After Hours with P. G. Wodehouse* (Hutchinson), with a dustwrapper containing a line drawing of Wodehouse at his typewriter. This was a collection of essays and talks on various topics. Some had previously appeared in magazines such as *Blackwood’s* and *Encounter*. Some had appeared as chapters in other books, such as Thelma Cazalet-Keir’s *Homage to Wodehouse* (Barrie & Jenkins, 1973) and James Heineman and Donald Bensen’s *P. G. Wodehouse: A Centenary Celebration 1881–1981* (Pierpoint Morgan Library and Oxford University Press, 1981). And one (*Dr Sir Pelham Wodehouse, Old Boy*) had appeared in 1978 as the inaugural title in the Heineman series of monographs on Wodehouse.

Two other talks by Usborne were later also brought to book in the Heineman monographs. The second of the series, *PG Wodehouse 1881–1981* (1981) contained ‘A Very Private Man’, while the fourth, *Three Talks and a Few Words at a Festive Occasion in 1982* (1983) contained ‘Some Recent Wodehouse Scholarship’.

Like Wodehouse himself, Usborne was not averse to recycling good material, and in 2002 there appeared *Plum Sauce: A P G Wodehouse Companion*, published in paperback by Ebury Books (although a hardback edition was published in the US by the Overlook Press). This contained much the same material as *The Penguin Wodehouse Companion* (albeit in much abbreviated form in some instances), but with some extra material as well (e.g. the ‘Memorable People’ reappear). Interestingly, the summary for *Meet Mr Mulliner* is completely different from that which had appeared in *The Penguin Wodehouse Companion*, from which one can infer that Ebury Books had not referred to that title when compiling *Plum Sauce*.

In addition to studies of Wodehouse, Usborne also edited two collections of Wodehouse’s writing. *Vintage Wodehouse* (Barrie & Jenkins, 1977) contains extracts ranging in length from a paragraph to whole chapters from novels and complete short stories. *Wodehouse Nuggets* (Hutchinson, 1983) contains much shorter extracts, as one may have deduced from the title.

As already noted, and as demonstrated by the variety of works published on Wodehouse, Usborne was the leading authority on Wodehouse’s work. This was reflected in James Heineman’s 1989 dedication of the six-volume *The Great Sermon Handicap* (in multiple languages) “to Richard Usborne who has generously unlocked more knowledge about the writings of P. G. Wodehouse than we ever knew existed”.



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, which will give you an extract from a Wodehouse novel. Reading down Column A will give you the main character from that novel. Answers will be published in the December *Wooster Sauce*. (See page 10 for news of June’s new book!)

Clues:

- 1 Aunt Dahlia’s temperamental French chef (7) / ‘Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s ass’ is the _____ Commandment (5)
- 2 *The _____ China*, musical by PGW and Bolton (4,2) / The _____ Amendment, part of the Bill of Rights
- 3 Mr _____ is an aged estate agent with a long, white beard in *Sam the Sudden* (9)
- 4 Reginald ‘Kipper’ _____, friend of Bertie Wooster (7) _____ *Ho, Jeeves*, title of a BBC Radio 4 series (4) /
- 5 Asian country (5)
A garden boundary (5)
- 6 Art dealer in *The Man Upstairs* (also name of famous sculptor) (7) / Recorded in writing (5)
- 7 _____ *Jeeves*, a novel by PGW (2,3) / A molar (5)
- 8 Situated on the other side (8)
- 9 George _____, character in *The Small Bachelor* (5) / Cereal ground for flour (5)
- 10 Lady Julia _____, character in *Summer Lightning* (4) / Hate (6)
- 11 Not present (6) / Nutrition (4)
- 12 Lady Florence _____, sister of Lord Emsworth, appears in *Sunset at Blandings* (7) / Keats, for example (4)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1													
2													
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11													
12													

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

Answers to A Wodehouse Crossword
by Mark Smith (June 2010)

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------|------------------|
| <i>Across</i> | | <i>Down</i> |
| 7 Jerome | 21 Agatha | 1 peso |
| 8 Jeeves | 22 entree | 2 somnambulists |
| 9 town | | 3 beached |
| 10 Christie | | 4 fjord |
| 11 shimmer | | 5 season tickets |
| 13 India | | 6 deciding |
| 15 issue | | 12 Hastings |
| 16 Ukridge | | 14 skirted |
| 18 minister | | 17 atlas |
| 19 Kern | | 20 reed |

I’ll Have a Pint of PGW

Because their home phone number is in the Yellow Pages book for the Society, Tony and Elaine Ring get a lot of cold calling from all sorts of organisations who believe that The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) needs more services than the Church of England. Usually it is a request to speak to the manager in charge of IT, or promotion, or stationary, or similar. Recently, however, a conversation went like this:

“864848.”
 “Is that the P G Wodehouse?”
 “It is.”
 “Is it a pub?”

Recent Press Comment

From *Woman's Hour*, Radio 4, May 28

(from Alexander Dainty)

In a discussion on combating stress, the comedy writer Jan Etherington said that, in addition to sitting in the garden with a glass of wine, her primary way to escape stress is to read Wodehouse, particularly the account of Gussie Fink-Nottle presenting prizes at Market Snodsbury Grammar School.

From *The Times*, June 1

In an article about her new appointment as the paper's chief theatre critic, Libby Purves wrote:

You can't get it right every time. Nobody ever has. . . . Some echo P G Wodehouse's line: 'Has anybody ever seen a dramatic critic in the daytime? Of course not. They come out after dark, up to no good.'

From *National Post (Canada)*, June 4

An article about Alfie Shrubbs, the long-distance runner known as the 'Little Wonder' – who set seven long-distance records in a single day in 1904 – notes that both Arthur Conan Doyle and P G Wodehouse immortalized Shrubbs in print.

From *Daily Telegraph*, June 5

(from Larissa Saxby-Bridger)

In an interview, restaurateur Giorgio Locatelli mentioned that the last book he had read was *Right Ho, Jeeves*.

From *Wall Street Journal*, June 5

Sportswriter John Paul admitted he sometimes gets so involved in his golf game that he begins to resemble "the crank about whom P.G. Wodehouse wrote: 'The least thing upset him on the links. He missed short putts because of the uproar of butterflies in the adjoining meadows.'"

From *Daily Telegraph*, June 16

In an extensive obituary of Angus Thuermer, journalist, considerable space was given to the interview he had with Wodehouse in the prison camp at Tost.

From *The Sydney Morning Herald*, June 17

(from Barry Chapman)

Also carried an obituary of Angus Thuermer, focusing on his interview of Wodehouse in December 1940.

From *The Times of India*, June 17

Reported that Bollywood actor Ekta Kapoor was given an entire collection of her favourite Wodehouse series for her birthday by her younger brother. "Expensive gifts don't make my sister happy," he said. "Thoughtful ones do."

From *Variety*, June 21

Announced that there will be a Broadway revival of *Anything Goes* from February 2011, directed by Kathleen Marshall, and it will be a big ensemble piece, not a scaled-down revival.

From *The Times*, June 22

One of many papers to publish an obituary of Lord Quinton, one of the Society's patrons.

From *BBC Radio 4*, June 28

(from Christine Hewitt and Jo Jacobius)

Commenting on England's ignominious exit from the football World Cup, Lynne Truss summed up England's performance against Germany thus: "To borrow from the great P. G. Wodehouse, Germany went through us yesterday like a bullet through a cream puff."

From *Coventry Telegraph*, June 30

Carried a feature article about Warwickshire cricketer Percy Jeeves, mentioning his PGW connection.

From *Radio Times*, July 3–9

Radio pick-of-the-week was the first instalment of *Summer Lightning*, broadcast on Sundays July 4 and 11 (see also p.18).

From *Radio Times*, July 3–9 (from Melvyn Haggarty)

In a separate article (in the same issue) about the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, Barry Norman wrote that Hugh Grant came across as a sort of Bertie Wooster, but with a measurable IQ. He added that the writer, Richard Curtis, had clearly been influenced "as all good comedy writers should be by the immortal P G Wodehouse and, like Wodehouse, deals with a world of his own invention as he showed, not just here, but later, with *Notting Hill* and *Love Actually*".

From *The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 11

(From Tim Richards)

An article on the Australian elections showed there was one candidate worth voting for: "Linda Beattie, who will contest Mackellar, was keen to lay out her campaign. 'I want to get P.G. Wodehouse on the English curriculum. That will be my contribution to the education revolution. What ho!'"

From *The Times*, July 14

Commenting on an article about behind-closed-doors discussions immediately after the general election, one correspondent criticised Nick Clegg on two specific matters: before "modifying a phrase of P G Wodehouse, I would argue that if politicians were dominoes, Mr Clegg would be the double blank".

From *The Island (Sri Lanka)*, July 14

Carried a retrospective about the enduring attraction of Wodehouse's writing.

From *The Daily Telegraph*, July 20

(from Leila Deakin and Alan Wood)

An obituary of Col. Michael Cobb, the oldest student to be awarded a PhD by Cambridge University (in 2008, aged 91) pointed out that his topic, *The Railways of Great Britain: A Historical Atlas*, had evolved from a request to contribute an analysis of railway information in the Blandings books to PGW's posthumous final novel, *Sunset at Blandings*.

From *The Times of India*, July 28

Reported from Bangalore that the British Library had a new collection of 150 audiobooks on display, including some of Wodehouse, which would be available for loan after August 14.

From *Quote . . . Unquote*, Radio 4, July 26

Actor and writer Miles Jupp, correctly identifying a quotation as referring to Jeeves, said he loved the Jeeves and Wooster series and the characters appearing in it. He added that Gussie Fink-Nottle never forgave Bertie Wooster for winning the Scripture Knowledge prize.

From *Test Match Special*, Radio 4, July 30

In describing the appearance of umpire Dr A L Hill, Society Patron Henry Blofeld said that there was something Wodehousean about him as “he stands there as Stilton Cheesewright would have stood – unmoved”.

From *Flavorwire* (a US website), August 4

(from Susan Collicott)

Included Rupert Psmith in a list of Literature’s 10 Best-Dressed Characters.

From *The Times*, August 7

A question on the topic of ‘Pick-me-ups’ in Philip Howard’s *Literary Quiz* was: “Who mixes Worcester (Wooster?) Sauce, raw egg and red pepper, pray?”

From *The Sunday Telegraph*, August 9

A review of the Goring Hotel in London said, “There is something very P G Wodehouse about The Goring, and the afternoon tea and croquet reinforces that image.”

From *Daily Telegraph*, August 14

(From Alex Connolly)

A preview of the BBC Four TV series *In Their Own Words* (see p.18) describes Wodehouse as “sunny and crumpled as he explains that that before the First World War he knew people ‘by the score’ like his comic creations Jeeves and Wooster”.

From *Idaho Mountain Express and Guide*, August 13

An interview with the American actor John Lithgow focused on his one-man show *Stories by Heart*, featuring his superb telling of ‘Uncle Fred Flits By’.

From *Express.co.uk*, August 15

Actor Robert Daws picked *Right Ho, Jeeves* as one of his ‘Six Best Books’, noting that Wodehouse “effortlessly created two of the finest comedy characters in literature in Bertie Wooster and Jeeves”.

From *The Guardian*, August 17

Lucy Mangan deplored ITV’s current failure to produce a television series as good as *Jeeves & Wooster* (1990–93), which she praised for its look, cast, and near-success in achieving Wodehouse’s “perfection”.

From *The Times*, August 17

Commenting on the US PGA Championship, during which one player was penalised for a technical breach of the rules, Patrick Kidd noted the similarity to ‘The Long Hole’, in which, after playing 2,205 strokes and having an easy putt, one of the players was disqualified for asking a child which club he would use.

The Word Around the Clubs

Wodehouse in the 21st Century

LYNN VESLEY-GROSS tells us: “In the director’s cut remake of the adventure game *Broken Sword*, created by game designer Charles Cecil of Revolution Software and playable on the iPad, a character explains he learned English by listening to tapes given him by an uncle: “‘Jeeves and Wooster, Gussie Fink-Nottle, Aunt Agatha, what-ho!’ he exclaims. Then he calls people ‘Old Bean’ and signs off, ‘toodle-pip’.” Lynn wonders if this is the first occurrence of a Wodehouse reference in an electronic game. Has any member heard of others?

The Magdalen Crew

In the Crewian Oration at Oxford’s annual Encaenia in June, there was a moment when the Public Orator paused to reflect on the fact that four Cabinet ministers in the current Government are Magdalen men. He went on: “Anxiety may be furrowing the brow of yet another Magdalen man, Mr Bertie Wooster; you may recall that when his Aunt Agatha tried to make him secretary to a cabinet minister, he shinned down a drainpipe and fled to the south of France. Jeeves will be advising him to give the next gaudy a miss in baulk.” (For the full text, see <http://bit.ly/cmrSkY>; thanks to THEA CRAPPER.)

How Elementary Is It?

As a new BBC series featuring Sherlock Holmes arrived this summer, there was a brief spate of references in the press to the well-known phrase “Elementary, my dear Watson”. ALEXANDER DAINY tells us that in the *Radio Times* of 24–30 July, an article announcing the series noted that “it is now thought . . . the first use of this phrase is actually in P.G. Wodehouse’s *Psmith Journalist* (1915). It’s certainly not uttered by Holmes.”

According to NICK TOWNEND, the journalist Oliver Kamm went one better in his column ‘The Pedant’ for *The Times* on 13 July. Kamm correctly attributed the words to Psmith in *Psmith Journalist* and identified it by its 1909 publication in *The Captain* rather than by the British book publication of 1915. Nick adds: “Sadly, he rather spoiled the effect of his erudition by calling *The Captain* ‘an American magazine!’”

This is all well and good, but it implies that Wodehouse himself coined the phrase. So let us set the record straight. As Norman Murphy tells us in *A Wodehouse Handbook*, Doyle did not write it, and Wodehouse was certainly the first to quote it *in print*. But it was the American actor William Gillette who first popularised “Elementary, my dear Watson” in the play he adapted from Doyle’s stories. According to Norman, “It received a new lease of life in the first Holmes talking film *Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1929). Clive Brook spoke it as the last line and confirmed the opinion of millions that, if Doyle didn’t write it, he should have.”

Future Events for Your Diary

September 18–19, 2010 Newbury Show

The Royal County of Berkshire Show takes place at the Newbury Showground, Berkshire. Judging for the Berkshire Pig Champion of Champions, sponsored by the Society, will be held at 9 a.m. on Sunday the 19th. Come along and have a good time. For further information, see <http://www.newburyshow.co.uk/>.

October 3, 2010 London Walks: P G Wodehouse

London Walks is running another Wodehouse-themed walk, conducted by Richard Burnip, and a special price is being offered to Society members. No need to book a place – just be at exit 2 (Park Lane east side) of Marble Arch Underground station at 2.30 p.m. See page 3 for further details.

October 28, 2010 Dinner at Gray's Inn

No more places are available for the Society's biennial formal dinner at Gray's Inn, London. The December issue of *Wooster Sauce* will have a full report of the fun.

November 16, 2010 Society Meeting and AGM

Our meeting, complete with AGM, will take place at The George, 213 Strand, starting at 6 p.m. *Please note this new location*; details below and on page 3.

February 15, 2011 Society Meeting

We will meet from 6 p.m. at a location (and with a speaker) to be announced in the next *Wooster Sauce*.

July 12, 2011 Society Meeting

The location and speaker for our summer meeting will be published in a future *Wooster Sauce*.

October 13–16, 2011 The Wodehouse Society Convention, Dearborn, Michigan

Advance notice of our American cousins' biennial gathering, this time to be held in Dearborn, Michigan.

October 28–30, 2011 Follow Wodehouse to Emsworth

The Brookfield Hotel in Emsworth is planning a special event in Emsworth to commemorate the 130th anniversary of Wodehouse's birth. See page 3 for details, and look for updates in future issues of *Wooster Sauce*.

November 1, 2011 Society Meeting and AGM

The location and speaker for our autumn meeting will be published nearer the time.

Stop the Presses: Late word has been received that we cannot hold any more Society meetings at the Arts Club (see page 3). Therefore, our meeting on 16 November will be at The George, London WC2R 1AP. The speaker will be Geoff Hales, who will tell us about 'Servants in Wodehouse'.

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