



WOOSTER SAUCE

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Plum at the Polo Grounds

by Patrick Carroll

In his admirable life of Wodehouse, Robert McCrum observes that “In old age, he had become a devoted baseball fan”. While loath to contradict, or even slightly amend, the words of the Master’s definitive biographer – especially as he was kind enough to include my name among his acknowledgements – I suggest the evidence indicates that Wodehouse’s devotion to the American National Pastime developed much earlier, very probably during his initial 1904 and 1909 visits to New York.

I was set to think again on the subject by the appearance in the December 2010 *By The Way* newsletter of ‘The Old Cricketer’s Story’. It was apparent to me that this *jeu d’esprit* of the young Wodehouse was almost certainly influenced by his acquaintance with Ernest L. Thayer’s light-hearted verse opus ‘Casey at the Bat’. Wodehouse was, of course, throughout his life a sportsman, engaged by any and all games and athletic pursuits. He was also addicted to most forms of theatrical entertainment – the plays of Chekhov, Ibsen, and Strindberg perhaps excepted. He once said that his own mentality was perfectly attuned to Music Hall.

Thayer’s epic was first performed as a recitation by DeWolf Hopper in 1889 at New York’s Wallack’s Theater. Hopper, a leading vaudevillian and comic actor of the period, went on (by his own account) to perform this popular piece over 10,000 times. Considering his sporting and theatrical interests, Wodehouse must have been familiar with it. Comparing the two pieces, it is apparent that Wodehouse was – unsurprisingly for so nimble a song lyricist – the more accomplished light versifier,

although both contain one or two bits of scansion that walks a tightrope between the daring and the dodgy.

“There is that about baseball which arouses enthusiasm and the partisan spirit in the unlikeliest bosoms. It is almost impossible for a man to live in America and not be gripped by the game.” Like Archie Moffam, whose indiscretions inform the loosely connected stories of the 1921 book, *Wodehouse*, by the time he had settled in New York, had become not only a baseball fan but also an ardent supporter of the city’s National League stalwarts, the New York Giants. From the late 19th century and



The old Polo Grounds as Wodehouse would have known it

into the 1920s, the Giants, under their feisty and combative manager, John McGraw, were the team to beat in the National League, competing in nine of 20 World Series between 1905 and 1924. The Giants’ home field, which Wodehouse certainly knew well, was the Polo Grounds, first used for baseball in 1880 and long since demolished but then located on Manhattan’s Upper West Side at 155th Street and Eighth Avenue.

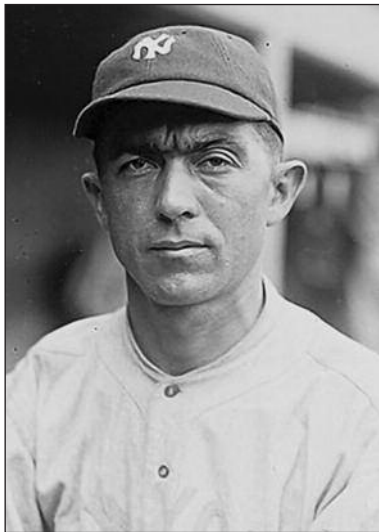
The book that offers most evidence of Wodehouse’s enthusiasm for baseball is *Piccadilly Jim* (1917). In its opening chapter, Peter Pett is described as “a baseball fan of no lukewarm order [who] had an admiration for the Napoleonic gifts of Mr. McGraw which would have gratified that gentleman had he known of it”. In the same book, Mr. Pett’s brother-in-law, Bingley Crocker – unwillingly resident in London – is found suffering pangs of homesickness exacerbated by his longings for the Polo Grounds, combined with his bewilderment when exposed to cricket. His reaction

to the English summer game is similar to that of Groucho Marx, who, after an hour's play at Lord's, remarked, "Great game. When does it start?" Both men would have concurred with Bernard Shaw's observation that "The English, not being a spiritual people, invented cricket in order to give themselves some conception of eternity."

Rather dazed by the butler Bayliss's jargon-filled explication of the cricket match both had witnessed the previous day, Mr. Crocker is further appalled when, following his own spirited demonstration of the diamond game – using a bread roll and various bits of tableware for illustration – Bayliss explains that the game is known in England as rounders and is played by children with a soft ball and a racket.

Throughout *Piccadilly Jim* the Polo Grounds is evoked as a kind of Garden of Eden to which – like the Peri outside the gates of Paradise – Mr. Pett, Mr. Crocker, and even Jimmy Crocker long to return.

Three real-life major league players of the era are named in *Piccadilly Jim*. One is Frank 'Home Run' Baker, who at that time did not play for the Giants but rather for the New York American League team initially known as the Highlanders and later as the Yankees. (The Yankees of the period before the arrival of Babe Ruth in 1920 were notably mediocre, and it is unsurprising that Wodehouse found the Giants the more attractive team to root for.) Another is the Giants' star pitcher, Christy Mathewson, referred to as Matty when the brothers-in-law meet. Mr. Pett, under the impression that Mr. Crocker is a butler, is surprised when the supposed major-domo eagerly asks for news of the Giants' progress in the National League pennant race (see boxed quote).



Frank 'Home Run' Baker

A third player mentioned is the Giant second baseman, Larry Doyle, said to have hit home runs on two consecutive days. The long-serving (1905–41) National League umpire Bill Klem is referred to as "one swell robber".

Two chapters of *Indiscretions of Archie* describe the hero's farcical encounter with a supposed Giants left-handed pitcher, Looney Biddle. Looney Biddle is a made-up character, but I suspect that the inspiration for him was an actual star hurler of the early 20th century, Rube Waddell. Waddell did not play for the Giants but rather for the American League's Philadelphia Athletics. He was a dominant pitcher for the team during the first decade of the 20th century, recording five consecutive 20-win

seasons and leading the American League in strikeouts for six years from 1902 through 1907. Crucially, as a model for Looney Biddle, Waddell was as renowned for his wild eccentricities as he was for his pitcher prowess.

Robert McCrum notes that in later life Wodehouse "enjoyed following the inept exploits of the newly formed New York Mets". Him and me both – although in my case I'm not sure 'enjoyed' is the right word. Having been a fanatical supporter of the Giants' arch rival Brooklyn Dodgers, I'd had no New York National League team to support since the departure in 1957 of both the Giants and Dodgers to California. Like Wodehouse I rooted for the Mets from their inception in 1962 and still bear the psychological scars to prove it.

Also according to Robert McCrum, Wodehouse wrote about American sports. I still have a letter from Wodehouse written to my father when he was an editor at *Sports Illustrated* magazine. My father had become professionally acquainted with Wodehouse – whom he usually referred to as "PeeGee" – in the late 1940s when he was a fiction editor at *Collier's Magazine*. The letter was in reply to one from my father asking if Wodehouse might do a piece for the magazine. Wodehouse said he would happily consider it and that the next time he was in the city he would touch my old man for lunch. I don't know what, if anything, came of this correspondence, although it has always struck me that, unlike the half-dozen or so letters that he wrote to my mother (also a lifelong Wodehouse fan), which were always addressed Dear Mrs. Carroll and signed P. G. Wodehouse, the one to my father was addressed Dear Joe and signed Plum. Whatever the game or occasion, Wodehouse always knew the rules and played by them.

"Who's leading in the pennant race?" said this strange butler in a feverish whisper.

It was a question, coming from such a source, which in another than Mr Pett might well have provoked a blank stare of amazement. Such, however, is the almost superhuman intelligence and quickness of mind engendered by the study of America's national game, that he answered without the slightest hesitation:

"Giants!"

"Wow!" said the butler.

.....

"No signs of them slumping?" inquired the butler.

"No; but you never can tell. It's early yet. I've seen those boys lead the league till the end of August and then be nosed out."

"True enough," said the butler sadly.

"Matty's in shape."

"He is? The old arm working well?"

"Like a machine. He shut out the Cubs the day before I sailed."

"Fine!"

(From *Piccadilly Jim*, 1917)

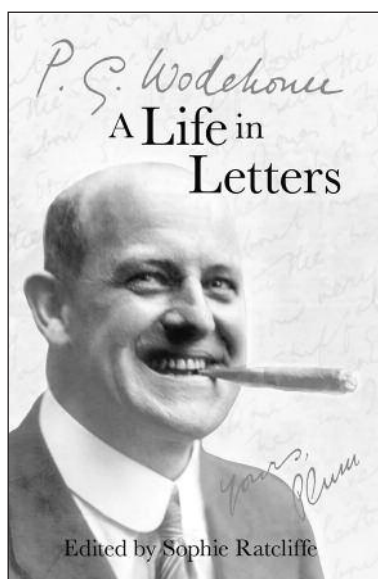
A Memorable Book Launch

The evening of October 31 saw the launch of the long-awaited *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*, edited by Sophie Ratcliffe. Those of us lucky enough to be invited to the occasion at Heywood Hill in Curzon Street had a splendid time, and the place was soon packed with people talking at the tops of their voices while holding a glass in one hand and the 602-page book with the other. Just about everybody there had been connected with the project in one way or another, including Sophie's husband, Andrew, and some undergraduates who had helped Sophie on the donkey-work of sorting and indexing the enormous number of documents involved in the project. There was Nigel Wodehouse (a great-nephew) and his wife, Celia; all the Cazalets; HRH The Duke of Kent; various leading lights from The P G Wodehouse Society; Henry Blofeld; Wodehouse biographer Robert McCrum; and countless others.

Perhaps the most unusual personage present was a very, very young lady who appeared to sleep peacefully throughout – Sophie's daughter, Otilie, who had arrived six weeks previously in a dead heat with the final proofs of the book. Sophie herself sat at a table in the corner signing copies and accepting congratulations on both the book and her new daughter; she looked remarkably well for someone who had spent the last few months worrying as to which would come first.



Woman of the hour Sophie Ratcliffe with Robert McCrum



Edward Cazalet opened the proceedings by telling us about how the idea had started when Robert McCrum's biography had come out, the search for the right editor, and the decision to choose Sophie. Robert followed Edward and made the point wryly that he was pretty certain that Sophie had acquired and examined much more original material than he had. He just hoped her discoveries didn't contradict too much of what he had written.

Then Sophie told us how the project had grown and grown as more and more letters had turned up. She emphasised how heartened she had

been when she asked for volunteers at Oxford to help with the basic spadework and was amazed by the numbers of undergraduates who volunteered. She made the point that she was just the editor of the letters and stressed how the book could not have come out without the help she had received from so many people. She received a well-earned round of applause, though it might have been even louder if some of us had not remembered the importance of not waking up young Otilie.

A delightful evening to launch a splendid book. We hope young Otilie enjoyed it; everybody else did.



Among the luminaries present (l-r): Elaine Ring, Robert Bruce, Celia Wodehouse, Nigel Wodehouse, and Tony Ring

Note: Harry Mount's review of *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters* will be published in the March 2012 *Wooster Sauce*.

Your Modern Bertie: Earlier this year Bollinger sponsored a competition entitled 'Who's Your Modern Bertie'? Contestants were asked to describe whom they consider to be "the living embodiment of Bertie Wooster", with the wittiest entry entitling the winner to a signed copy of every book on the shortlist for this year's Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize, as well as a bottle of Bollinger Grande Année. The website competition saw London Mayor Boris Johnson, Prince Harry, Richard Branson, Hugh Grant, Jude Law, and Stephen Fry all nominated as modern Berties. But the winner was Kushla Pope, who nominated "My son Charlie. He's eccentric to the point of odd! He's only 12 yet he loves to wear a full suit, a tie, a battered old top hat and, if I'd let him, a bloody monocle! What have I spawned?!" (Go to <http://bit.ly/igb6fl> to view all the competition entries.)

A Wodehouse Weekend at Emsworth

by Ellie King

On Friday the 28th October a small but enthusiastic group of PGW Society members descended on the small town of Emsworth for two days of instructive talks, delicious meals, and high-quality entertainment – all, of course, on a Wodehousean theme – at the Brookfield hotel.

The jollity began on Friday evening when we were treated to an excellent dinner – I say “treated”, but in fact we were required to work for it, not only by having to read out some of Wodehouse’s finest quotes during the meal but also straining the brain with quizzes and such later on. Some of these questions were devilishly fiendish and led to much groaning and head-scratching – the fact that the cerebral processes had been dulled by digestion did not help! The quiz designers did take pity on us eventually, and with several hefty hints we were able to name all ten of Lord Emsworth’s sisters, but it was a Herculean task, particularly once Constance and Julia had been mentioned!

The next morning we were given a fascinating talk by Norman Murphy and then a second by Linda Newell (who is head of the Emsworth Museum). Norman then led some of us on a walk into the town, pointing out sites of interest along the way, such as Emsworth School, where Wodehouse stayed with his friend Herbert Westbrook when he first moved to the area; and Threepwood, the house where Wodehouse lived during the rest of his time at Emsworth. Our destination was the Emsworth Museum, on arrival at which we were invited to peruse the informative displays – one of which was an exhibition centred on Wodehouse and his time in Emsworth – and then cluster round to listen to another talk, this one given by Tony Ring. Following this, we were then invited to accompany Linda Newell on a guided tour of Emsworth. Several Society members also seized the opportunity that afternoon to make raids on the local



Some of the revelers at the banquet on Saturday night

second-hand bookstore, which had completely sold out of Wodehouse titles by about 4 p.m.!

Dinner at the hotel that evening was a sumptuous affair, and we were entertained by a first-class performance of ‘Trouble Down at Tudsleigh’, featuring the hapless Freddie Widgeon and his attempts to woo the latest object of his affections with Tennyson and boat trips. Our hero was admirably portrayed by Tony Ring; Freddie’s rival was played with great aplomb by Norman Murphy and an excellent false moustache; and the girl April and her younger sister, Prudence, were performed by Elin Murphy and Christine Hewitt. The ending was greeted with rapturous applause, which was very well deserved – especially as two of the actors were also the ones who had organised the whole weekend *and* some of them were still recovering from the effects of transatlantic travel after returning from the American Convention just a few days previously!

Naturally, the six-course dinner plus entertainment meant that it was a rather late night, so I for one was thankful that brunch the next day started at the civilised hour of 10 a.m. – which is, of course, precisely the time that Bertie Wooster would



The intrepid walkers outside the Brookfield Hotel before setting off into Emsworth

have been sipping his morning cup of tea, as was observed by one astute member. A leisurely meal was followed by the prize-giving for the various quizzes and competitions, which was largely dominated by those brainy and forward-thinking souls who had clearly partaken of the fish course on Friday evening! (*For more about the competitions, winners, and prizes, see page 19.*) After this we all went our separate ways.

I feel I can safely say that a merry time was had by all and would like to offer congratulations and thanks to both the organisers and the Brookfield Hotel for a thoroughly enjoyable weekend.

A Brief AGM and an Enjoyable Talk

by Jonathan Hopson

This year's AGM happened to fall on All Saints' Day (or 'Hallowmas' to those in the know), an appropriate occasion to gather in the autumnal twilight, remembering things past and pondering those to come. The meeting was held once again in the upstairs room of The George, situated on the Strand in that part of London's legal district where lawyers once rubbed shoulders in snugs and saloon bars with the hacks of old Fleet Street.

Our Chairman, Hilary Bruce, streamlined proceedings, incorporating the individual contributions of committee members into a monologue delivered briskly with her customary good humour. She took note of some Firsts – our first new member as the result of a Kindle advert, our Youngest (10-year old) Member, and (less happily) the impending increase to subscription fees. She then reviewed highlights of the previous year – notably the biennial dinner and the performances of Messrs Rumsey, Hales, and Kent at our regular meetings. Farewells were made to website editor Jamie Jarrett, treasurer Andrew Chapman, and database manager Daryl Lloyd. Jeremy Neville and David Lindsay were welcomed as treasurer and database manager, respectively. Hilary concluded with thanks to members for their support and remarked on the gratifyingly large turnout of new faces. Andrew Chapman then presented his last accounts as treasurer, and several officers were elected and re-elected; there was no Any Other Business. From the back of the room, where I was strategically placed like a Wooster at a prize-giving, could be overheard a murmured consensus of approval that the whole affair was "mercifully brief".

Parish notices began with a toast to the memory of Patrons Jonathan Cecil and Iain Sproat (see pages 8-9). The imminent publication of *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters* was announced, and we were assured that plans are well-advanced for next year's Society weekend in Norfolk. Elin Murphy promoted the US Society's Historical Marker Project to commemorate Wodehouse's residence in Remsenburg, with the sale

of Norman Murphy's informative *Guide to Wodehouse's New York City and Long Island* offered as a fund-raising booster (see page 14).

Paul Kent then introduced our speaker, Marcus Berkmann, a prolific journalist chiefly known as film critic of the *Oldie*, pop music critic of the *Spectator*, and assembler of the 'Dumb Britain' column in *Private Eye*. As an author he has specialised in exploring the obsessive psyche of the middle-aged male, notably cricketers in *Rain Men*, ageing cricketers in *Zimmer Men*, quizzers in *Brain Men*, and shed dwellers in the forthcoming *Shed of One's Own: Midlife without the Crisis*.



Marcus Berkmann

Marcus spoke of discovering Wodehouse on a boyhood camping expedition to Hertfordshire in 1974. In retrospect, *Very Good, Jeeves* was a rich dish for starters, but Wodehouse, like smoking, proved addictive after initial perseverance. I recognised a contemporary as he discussed the joys and occasional frustrations of collecting the Penguin editions of the 1970s, distinguished by the delightful Ionic illustrations on the front covers and Evelyn Waugh's sonorous encomium reprinted on the back. I would

happily dwell further on such matters, but that would be to write another sort of article.

Marcus concluded that Wodehouse enjoys a rare staying power among comic novelists and provides the reader with a reliable tonic, a literary form of Buck-U-Uppo. As an example, he turned to *The Old Reliable*, which is the latest milestone in his systematic rereading of the oeuvre. Though a non-vintage work (awarded *beta plus* at best), it still proves full of good things, as demonstrated in his reading of selected passages from the opening chapter. These display Wodehouse's delicate use of overwriting and manipulation of cliché to create an apparently effortless flow of humour, all the more remarkable in a book considered to be his 69th work and published in his 70th year.

In all it was an enjoyable talk and another delightful Society evening.

Phipps did not laugh, for laughter is not permitted to English butlers by the rules of their Guild, but he allowed his lips to twitch slightly and gazed at this noble woman with something approaching adoration, an emotion he had never expected to feel for a member of the jury which three years before had sent him up the river for what the Press of New York was unanimous as describing as a well-earned sentence.

(From *The Old Reliable*, 1951)

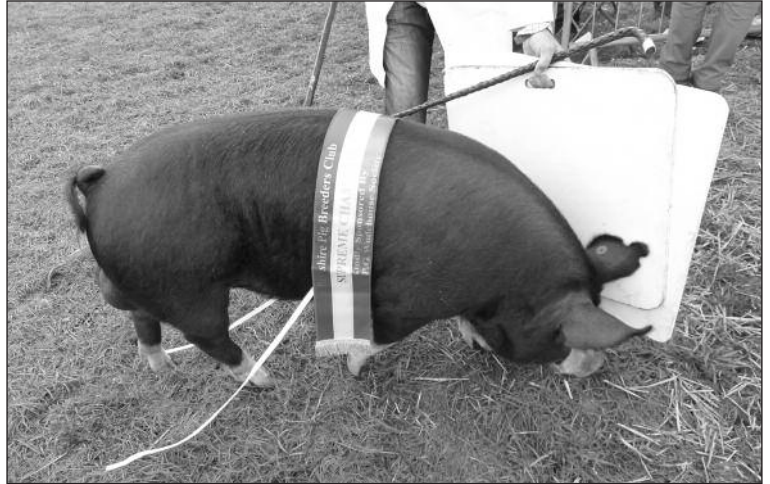
A Not-So-Rainy Day in Newbury

Hilary Bruce reports on the prize-giving at the Royal County of Berkshire Show, September 18

The forecasts were for rain, and the Chairman's thoughts had been on footwear; conditions in the pig ring are rarely ideal, and rain and pigs conspire to create a treacherous footing. But the sun shone optimistically, and with every minute that passed, it dried the ring just that little bit more – enough for the Chairman to retain her footing, and thus her dignity, as she presented prizes at the Royal County of Berkshire Show in Newbury.

The Society has sponsored the prize for the Berkshire Pig Breeders Club Champion of Champions competition since 2005, when we launched our Back the Berkshire campaign to help secure the future of the breed (embodied in the shapely form of the Empress of Blandings). Berkshires are on the Rare Breeds Survival Trust's 'At Risk' Register; Back the Berkshire aims to help breeders maintain viable numbers of breeding herds. Counter-intuitively, eating Berkshire pork is the best way to achieve that, because it makes the breed more economically viable. The Society coined a phrase to describe this conundrum: The Emsworth Paradox.

It took the judge, Mr David Welsh, a long time to make his decision, but who could blame him, with 16 pigs, each already a champion and each scrubbed, coiffed, oiled, and with their best trotters forward. Commentator Nicky Hunkin kept the crowd amused during the long deliberations; not only does he know his pigs, but he knows his Wodehouse, too – even, in his youth, playing a Drone in a theatre production. Eventually Mr Welsh made his choice, and the Chairman advanced on the winner. Suzi Westron –



The Champion: Neville, adorned with the Society's sash, shows off his prizewinning form. Note the silver-topped cane used as a handling stick.

owner and handler of the winning boar, Choller Namatjira, aka Neville (above), was clearly overjoyed. Suzi was fairly new to breeding and showing, and this was her first successful season. Neville, a gorgeous young boar, was about to get his reward: a huge rosette, a silver frame for his portrait, and, crucially, the sash.

This last is the test of the prize-giver's skill, and ground conditions play a crucial role. The sash, prominently badged with the Society's name, is placed across the pig's shoulders and, theoretically, tied underneath. Even the placing can be problematic – a young boar that does not wish to wear a sissy satin sash can put on a surprising turn of speed, and little can be done to stop him. You can double this if the presenter prefers not to come into contact with the pig oil these champions use to beautify themselves. As with the footwear, a person's wardrobe can come to grief after even brief contact with an oiled pig, however prizewinning.

But this year the presenter was in luck – Neville knew the form and stood still and proud as the sash was lobbed over the shoulders; unseen hands secured the tapes, and he looked every inch the champion.

A style point of which both Bertie and Jeeves would approve: the cane which Suzi uses as part of her pig's steering gear is an 1890s silver-handled cane, made from a monkey-puzzle tree.

Sue Fildes had forecast that if anyone beat 'her girl', it would be Neville – and thus her Dittisham Lady 70 was awarded Reserve Champion. Whereupon the two pigs, nonchalant in their success, toddled back to their sties for a nice lie-down, the better to preserve their youthful good looks.



The Chairman with Sue Fildes and Dittisham Lady 70

Society News

Change of Date for Next Meeting

Due to a concatenation of circumstances, please note that the date of the Society's next meeting has been changed from February 21 to **February 28, 2012**. We will start as usual from 6 p.m. in the upstairs room at The George, 213 Strand. Our entertainment impresario, Paul Kent, promises us a special evening: a dramatization drawn from the first part of *Over Seventy*. See you then!

A Nifty Weekend in Norfolk

We are pleased to announce that, such has been the interest in a Wodehousean excursion to Norfolk, plans are now firmly set for the trip to take place during the weekend of May 25–27, 2012. Sites to be visited include Kimberley Hall, Norwich Cathedral, and Hunstanton Hall, and there are some surprises in store as well. Places are limited, so if you wish to take part in what is sure to be a fun-filled weekend, then waste no time in filling out and returning your application form, which is enclosed along with full details on a separate flyer in this issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

A-Wodehouse Walking We Will Go

Good news for those who like their Wodehouse with a spot of exercise – both Norman Murphy and Richard Burnip have scheduled walks in the coming months. Richard conducts his excursions as part of London Walks, which normally charges a fee of £8, but Society members, students, and seniors over age 65 get a discount and need pay only £6. Richard's next walk will take place on January 8; Norman's walks (which are free) will be on April 14, July 28, and September 8. See page 28 for further details of all walks.

A Mass Emailing Adventure

September saw the Society's first-ever mass emailing, to alert members to the September 2nd screening of the TV programme *Wogan on Wodehouse*. We knew members wouldn't want to miss the programme, but we didn't know whether they would welcome our email reminding them. Happily, it received an overwhelmingly positive response, and so we plan to do it again. Obviously we'll only email people when something really interesting is about to happen, and in particular when it happens at short notice.

However, one of the snags we hit was that we don't have everyone's current email address. So, if yours has changed since you joined the Society, or if nothing's changed but you didn't get an email, or if you never told us your address in the first place – well, just let us know by emailing info@pgwodehousesociety.org.uk. We look forward to hearing from you!

Thanks to AudioGO

Earlier this year, AudioGO, producer of the BBC audiobooks, donated a large number of their Wodehouse audiobooks, read by the late Jonathan Cecil, to the Society for use as prizes. Indeed, winners of the *Wooster Sauce* Mastermind Quiz have received these delightful audiobooks as a reward for their exceptional braininess, as have quiz participants on our website. We are tremendously indebted to AudioGO for their generosity, and all members are encouraged to visit their website at www.audiogo.co.uk to see and perhaps purchase not only their long list of Wodehouse audiobooks but a fabulously wide selection of other books on tape as well.

Mea Maxima Culpa

Those of us who write, edit, or proofread for our living know only too well that no matter how carefully one goes over something before it's printed, a typo or bloomer will inevitably make its insidious way onto the page. In the case of the September editions of *Wooster Sauce* and *By The Way*, your editor fell asleep at the wheel badly.

First there was the fact that I failed to change the issue number and date on *By The Way*, which means we now have separate issues bearing the number 44 and the date June 2011. For those who collect these gems, please note that if the headline is 'Wodehouse's Bishops', it should be number 45, September 2011.

Turning to September's *Wooster Sauce*, we find three major bloomers. On page 9, a letter from Dr Dilip Joshi refers to "brother and sister Tommy Beresford and Tuppence Cowley" – in fact, they were husband and wife. But Dilip is not to blame for this boo-boo – it is entirely the fault of your editor, who, for reasons too dreary to explain, appended the description seen in poor, blameless Dilip's letter.

On page 12, we note in the first paragraph of Cyril Hershon's article on 'Neville Cardus and PGW' the mention of Wilkie *Baird*. This should have been *Bard*, as Cyril had originally written it. Here your editor relied a little too heavily on the insistence of a certain proofreader (who shall remain nameless) that the spelling was *unquestionably* Baird and failed to double-check it.

Finally, there was the lollapalooza on page 13, where, in the item regarding James McCall's "All-time amateur XI", I described the great poet and author Siegfried Sassoon as a hairdresser. (That was, of course, Vidal, who as far as I know never played cricket.) All I can say is: Oops.

My sincerest apologies to Tony Ring (author/editor of *By The Way*), Dilip Joshi, and Cyril Hershon, and my thanks to all those who wrote to point out these errors. I have been trying to overcome my ashamed blushes since September, and promise to eat more fish from now on.

– Elin Murphy

We Remember

Jonathan Cecil, 1939–2011

The actor, writer, and Society patron Jonathan Cecil died from pneumonia on 22 September at the age of 72 after having suffered considerably from emphysema, and as a result we have lost one of the great interpreters of P. G. Wodehouse's novels and short stories. Jonathan recorded more than 40 audiobooks and has left us magnificent evocations of the idyllic world created by Wodehouse with the charm and eccentricity of such characters as Jeeves and Wooster, Aunts Agatha and Dahlia, Ukridge, Mr Mulliner, and Clarence, 9th Earl of Emsworth.

Literature and humour were in Jonathan's blood. His father, Lord David Cecil, was Goldsmiths' Professor of English at Oxford University, and his grandfather was the 4th Marquess of Salisbury. In spite of his aristocratic background, Jonathan's treatment of other people was in no way superior or patronising; he was the kindest, most thoughtful, sensitive, and considerate person one could meet. In the *Guardian* obituary, Jonathan's Oxford contemporary Michael Billington recalled how as student actors they performed in productions of *Coriolanus*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and *The Birds*, and how among Jonathan's close student actor and director friends were Ken Loach, Dennis Potter, and Roger Smith.

After graduating from New College with a degree in modern languages, Jonathan studied at the London Academy of Dramatic Art. It soon became clear that his theatrical genius was for comedy. In a rich and varied 40-year acting career, he excelled in Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, Chekhov, Shaw, Wedekind, modern drama by Peter Barnes, Peter Ustinov, and Julian Mitchell, as well as pantomime and review. In pantomime Jonathan could play the dame and display his mastery of Victorian music hall techniques. In *Cowardy Custard* at the Mermaid Theatre in 1972, I first saw and heard Jonathan; he met his future wife, Anna Sharkey, in the show. Their marriage was exceptionally happy and supportive.

Jonathan was a brilliant storyteller, and his anecdotes about comics and entertainers such as Jimmy Edwards, Frankie Howerd, and Peter Ustinov had a spellbinding, unrehearsed magic, generous and full of love for the theatre and people with whom he worked in it. Had they heard Jonathan's anecdotes, their subjects would probably have also split their sides with laughter. As the author of articles in the

Times Literary Supplement, the *Evening Standard*, and the *London Review of Books*, Jonathan displayed wisdom, depth, compassion, humour, concern, and generosity.

Whenever Jonathan and I met at P G Wodehouse Society meetings, I always felt that my evening had been enriched from contact with a person whose sense of humour and breadth of understanding I know I shall never forget.

– David Heycock

The Society was fortunate to have such a loyal Patron as Jonathan Cecil, who contributed a number of articles to *Wooster Sauce* – see, for instance, his pieces in June 2005 and June 2009, both of which described aspects of his audiobook work. Recordings of his Wodehouse titles (first for audiotape, latterly for CD) amounted to the equivalent of more than 12 days of unbroken storytelling and were of a uniformly high quality. As long ago as 1996, an American critic had written: "If they are not playing these tapes in Heaven, I don't want to go there."

Jonathan also entertained us at the Society's London evening meetings with readings of his favourite short Wodehouse pieces such as the short story 'Goodbye to All Cats' and the essay 'Thrillers'.

Jonathan's connection with Wodehouse dates back to long before the Society was established in 1997. Among his TV appearances were his role in 1967 as Pongo Twistleton to Wilfred Hyde White's Uncle Fred in 'Uncle Fred Flits By'; and the unusual role of an Eton-and-Balliol gorilla in 'Monkey Business', one of the Mulliner stories set in Hollywood which was adapted for *Wodehouse Playhouse* in the 1970s. On radio he played all the 'second juveniles' – for example, Bingo Little, Gussie Fink-Nottle, and Boko Fittleworth – in the long-running BBC Radio series *What Ho, Jeeves*, together with appearances in *Drones Club*, *Oldest Member*, and *Blandings* broadcasts. To round out his Wodehousean credentials, he appeared as Lord Tidmouth in *Good Morning Bill* in 1987 at Leatherhead's Thorndike Theatre and Richmond's Theatre-on-the-Green.

We will all miss Jonathan very much, and send Anna the Society's deepest sympathies. We can confidently assure her that to lovers of Wodehouse, the huge legacy of his recordings will offer some comfort for many years to come.

– Tony Ring



We Remember

Iain Sproat, 1938–2011

The basic details of Iain Sproat's life are that he was born on 8 November 1938, died on 29 September 2011, and had sat as a Conservative MP for Aberdeen South and for Harwich. Iain loved his time in the House of Commons, which was, in many ways, tragically short. He became a junior minister, and for a time when he was out of the House he was an adviser to Margaret Thatcher. There is little doubt that if Iain had been returned by the electors of Harwich, he would, in due course, have become a Cabinet Minister. That would almost certainly have been the country's gain, but for a number of societies, businesses, friends, social organisations and local organisations it would have been their loss.

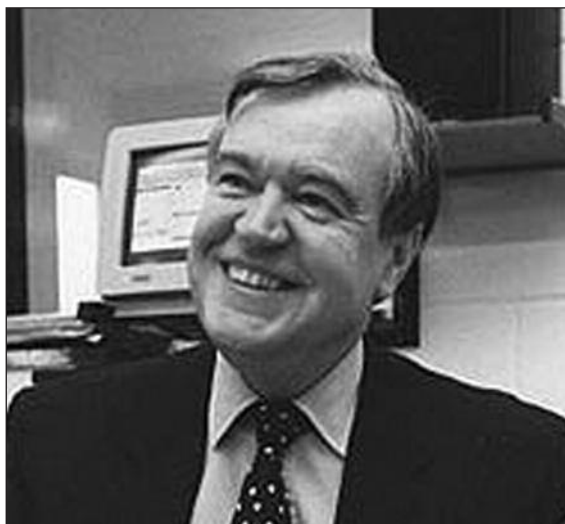
Iain was born at Dollar, Clackmannanshire; went to Winchester, then on to the University of Aix-En-Provence; and then on to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he read English. Thereafter he wrote for a number of newspapers and other publications before becoming an MP. He spent much time in far-flung places, building up a large network of acquaintances and flourishing as a businessman. All of this is well known, but there are three areas that I wish to concentrate on.

The first was sport. From 1980 to 1993, Iain published *Cricketeer's Who's Who*, which rapidly became an invaluable source of reference to anybody who loved the game. His knowledge of rugby union (and rugby league) was equally compendious. He not only wrote about sport, he was also very much 'hands on' and had been promoted by John Major in July 1995 to Minister of State and Minister for Sport. Iain was passionate that all youngsters should have the opportunity to become involved in sport, and the idea that was put about in the 1990s that sport was inherently harmful, because there were winners and losers, was complete anathema to him.

To many the greatest of Iain's achievements was his publication of the works of Pushkin in English. In 1987 he set up an editorial board of 15 international scholars and recruited 100 translators who were persuaded by Iain to provide their services

for free. Nonetheless, he still put a six-figure sum into the work of translation, and at the bicentenary of Pushkin's birth in 1999 he prepared the first five volumes, with the remaining volumes appearing throughout the rest of Iain's life. It was an extraordinary achievement and one for which he will always deserve to be remembered.

It is, however, the third area that brought Iain and myself together, and it will not surprise readers of this journal to know that it was a shared love of the works of P G Wodehouse. Iain was not, in fact, the founder of the Drones Club but attended the first dinner, and I met him at the second dinner. Thereafter we must have met at the dinners on nearly 40 occasions. These have throughout been wonderfully convivial affairs made particularly convivial by the presence of people like Iain, whose breadth of knowledge spread so far beyond the works of P G Wodehouse but who was always ready with an apt



quote when one was required from the Master.

To me, however, a measure of Iain's greatness was his writing and publication of a slim volume, *Wodehouse at War*. He was fascinated by the Berlin broadcasts, had read Malcolm Muggeridge's report on Wodehouse, and had read George Orwell's defence of Wodehouse when Wodehouse was still perceived by many to have acted in a traitorous manner. I commend to you the purchase and reading of Iain's book, which is a tour de force.

Iain was a marvellous, funny, and enormously informative friend. The only certainty that I had at the time of his death was that I only knew a small amount of what he had done and what he had achieved during the course of his life. One of the things that he had achieved was marriage to Judith Kernot, which was, in many ways, his greatest achievement. Since Christmas 2004 Iain had been suffering from multiple myeloma (bone marrow cancer), and with the assistance of Judith he still managed to live a very full and active life. He was a wonderful friend to me, a great friend to the Drones, and a huge supporter as well as Patron of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK).

– Christopher Makey

The wrong against Wodehouse was fostered by one Government department in 1941, and for some 35 years after the end of the Second World War other Government departments were instrumental in concealing facts which would have revealed that a wrong had been done.

(From *Wodehouse at War*, by Iain Sproat, 1981)

Another Visit from the Cicadas

by Tony Ring

About every 13 years, periodical cicadas make their presence felt over wide swathes of the USA, and earlier this year a large part of the eastern side of the country was covered in swarms of these controversial creatures. They appear in the same place with unremitting regularity – here every 13 years, there every 17; they congregate in swarms, and the males sing loudly, creating a deafening sound; in the intervening period, they have been juveniles underground: “strange alien-looking things that have no wings, and very rudimentary legs that are good for crawling but nothing else”; when ready to emerge, they climb up the nearest tree, moult, and litter the foliage with their old brown casings; and as adults, they live for just three or four weeks.

You may well wonder what relevance cicadas have to Wodehouse. The link is the release of another ‘new’ historic file from MI5 or another government department about Wodehouse’s wartime experiences, which seems to occur about every ten years – at which point a number of commentators react in almost exactly the same way as cicadas.

One should say at once, of course, that a handful of experienced heads (who have perhaps seen not one but two previous outbreaks) approach the subject thoughtfully and responsibly. Robert McCrum, Wodehouse’s best biographer, is rightly the champion of this minority – and in his article in the *Observer* of 28 August he made some telling observations, of which perhaps the most concise was this sentence:

Once again, the new “Wodehouse files” (actually just a few pages of dodgy Berlin gossip) provide an opportunity to hash over the “infamous” Nazi broadcasts and some long discredited accusations of “treachery” and “collaboration”.

McCrums pointed to the conclusions which he had drawn in his 2004 biography *Wodehouse: A Life*, in which he had agreed with MI5’s view:

. . . that he had behaved stupidly and that, yes, some of his decisions were questionable. But there were no grounds for prosecution. None. This conclusion was widely accepted and generally recognised to be right and just.

Much of the most aggressive reporting (invariably by men, and almost deafening to those who have seen and heard it all before) seems to have been written by journalists who may not have started their professional careers at the time of the previous outbreak, and now see an opportunity to shed their skins. The lack of research by these newcomers implies that they have no legs or wings to help them go out and find the longstanding factual sources.

Their emergence certainly litters some newspapers with old brown droppings. And after three or four weeks, when the monthlies have had their opportunity, they die away, leaving their eggs to turn into the trainee journalists of a decade hence.

For the last 65 years there has always been an outside possibility – by now infinitesimal – that new information of an explosive nature would be found which might genuinely challenge this view. But the saddest part of the recent outbreak was that many journalists merely latched onto one or two well-rehearsed points from the report of an interview with Werner Plack, a German whom Wodehouse had met whilst in Hollywood several years earlier, and misinterpreted their contextual relevance – i.e., they failed to undertake any research into the underlying facts.

For example, had they taken even the simplest step of accessing the Society’s website, they could have immediately seen a link to *Wartime Controversy* and realised from paragraph 15 that the cash sum of 250 marks (about £20) received from Plack in respect of the broadcasts – which Wodehouse had mentioned to Major Cussen during his interview with MI5 and which was referred to in Cussen’s report – was not a new matter now disclosed for the first time. It had been in the public domain since 1980, when Iain Sproat was researching his *Wodehouse at War*. The probable explanation is that it was reimbursement of travelling expenses to be given to Wodehouse’s hosts in the German countryside, who had driven him to Berlin to make some of the recordings.

And had they read paragraphs 22–25, they would have realised that the Wodehouses were not put up in luxury hotels at the expense of the German government, an old chestnut which reappeared in some papers this time round, but had financed their own hotel bills in Berlin and Paris.

There is no merit in summarising all the other misconceptions and misunderstandings, whether deliberate or born from professional incompetence, of which there were many, which appeared in the press this August alongside a number of more balanced and generally factually accurate analyses.

The Society is most grateful to the many members who sent in copies of various press reports, with or without adding their own points of view, and to those who contacted the national press by letter to express their distaste for the worst excesses. But experience has shown that, like the cicadas, these outbreaks will return in a few years’ time; they will flare up for a few weeks, causing short-term consternation; some will leave old brown droppings amongst the dying foliage of their perpetrators’ putative careers; and for the rest of us life will get back to normal.



Letters to the Editor

From Dr B. L. Chapman

With regard to your article 'Did He or Didn't He?' (September 2011), you ask if P. G. Wodehouse himself penned the quoted letter commencing "My Dear Old Soul" and "If it wasn't Wodehouse, who was it? And why?" My answer to the first question is: no. The (admittedly nebulous) reason is that – its superficial plausibility notwithstanding – it nevertheless "just does not feel right". And who was it? If and until more definite evidence becomes available, it has to remain that most prolific of writers: Anon.

From Sushmita Sen Gupta

Re. the letter written to the *New York Tribune* in 1920, the answer is obvious to me. It was written, as it says, by Bertie Wooster. We all know he existed, walked this earth in his spats. In fact, he looked a bit like that actor . . . Hugh something.

From Trevor Gadsby

Terry Wogan's hour on Wodehouse was indeed a joy. One of his themes, namely, Wodehouse's broadcasts from Berlin during the war, made me think. He suggested Wodehouse probably had no idea what effect his broadcasts would have on people in Britain. Conversely, of course, few of his enemies in Britain would have known what it was like to be a prisoner in the Nazi Germany of Hitler and Himmler. The S.S. and Gestapo had ways of making their prisoners cooperate, and I think Wodehouse might have known that. Should he give those cheerful little talks, or refuse, and risk extermination in a concentration camp? What would those British critics have done in his place?

From Barry Lane

Regarding *Wogan on Wodehouse*, I believe Calista Lucy [the Dulwich College archivist, who was interviewed on the programme] was misinformed. A surviving contemporary and I agree there was no anti-PGW feeling at Dulwich during the war. In fact, when Yours Truly arrived in 1945, almost all the books in the School Library were by Plum and no cane in sight!

From Renee Wellman

As regards 'Handkerchief Etiquette' from America, it is all a ridiculous moot point – Jeeves, of course, being correct that a gentleman does not need his initials on his garments. Neither does anyone else. You all must realise surely that "Americans are impervious to adjustment" and have an unnatural attachment to monograms. Bath towels, garments, car number plates – to be expected in a classless society desperate to create one. Such issues are best ignored, as Gielgud's character as a don in a *Morse* episode succinctly put it.

One felt immediately on seeing Lady Constance that there stood the daughter of a hundred earls, just as when confronted with Lord Emsworth one had the impression that one had encountered the son of a hundred tramp cyclists.

(From *A Pelican at Blandings*, 1969)

Mastermind Quiz #3:

The Mulliner Stories

by David Buckle

This time we'll draw the three winners of AudioGO audiobooks (read by Jonathan Cecil) at random from all correct answers received. Please submit your answers by January 30 to Elin Murphy: via post to 9 Winton Avenue, London N11 2AS; or via email to editor@pgwodehousesociety.org.uk.

1. Mr Mulliner is a regular patron of the Angler's Rest. What is his preferred drink?
2. Who is the 'courteous and efficient' barmaid of the Angler's Rest?
3. Mr Mulliner claims to have more than 20 nephews. How many are called George?
4. Which of Mr Mulliner's brothers invented 'Raven Gypsy Face Cream', 'The Snow of the Mountains Lotion' and 'Mulliner's Ease-o'?
5. What is the name of the cat left in Lancelot Mulliner's care when, on becoming a bishop, the Dean of Bolsover has to leave England for West Africa?
6. Which of Mr Mulliner's nieces by marriage is the authoress of *Parted Ways* and *Rue for Remembrance*?
7. What musical instrument does painter Ignatius Mulliner play?
8. At which country's embassy did Eustace Mulliner work?
9. Lancelot Mulliner becomes a writer after having turned down the chance of employment for which pickle tycoon?
10. Which of Mr Mulliner's nephews was particularly adept at impersonating a hen laying an egg?

Results of the September Quiz

Congratulations to Nick Townend, Stephen Griffiths, and Brian Porter, who were the first three to submit correct answers for the September quiz and therefore won Audio GO tapes. Kudos as well to the runners-up: Barry Chapman, Alan Hall, Charles Crummey, and Hans Schrijvers.

Answers to the September quiz:

1. The Oldest Member
2. 'The Wrecking Crew'
3. Rodney goes back to writing poetry
4. 16 miles
5. 'Legs' Mortimer
6. A wolfhound
7. Hildebrand
8. Vincent Jopp
9. Cataloguing his collection of vases
10. 'The Magic Plus Fours'

An American Birthday Party

Norman Murphy reports on The Wodehouse Society's 16th Biennial Convention, October 13–16

Every American Society convention has its own special 'feel'. At Providence in 2007, it was the enormous houses of Rhode Island where millionaires flocked in the 'Gilded Age' of the 1890s; in St Paul in 2009, it was the 'middle America' (from a British point of view) of Charles Schulz (Snoopy) and the Mississippi River just down the road. This time, in Dearborn, Michigan, it was automobile America with memories of Henry Ford all around us.

Elin and I arrived on Thursday night, later than we had planned, but immediately found ourselves going through the same delightful routine of greeting old friends and resuming conversations broken off two years ago. For those readers not familiar with Dearborn, it is alongside Detroit and where Henry Ford was born. It is, in essence, a Henry Ford heritage site with the Ford Motor Company's headquarters and The Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. This may not sound too exciting, but the latter two attractions are well worth a visit.

Friday saw more Wodehouseans arriving, and those who had arrived early enough went off on a tour of nearby Detroit, the Ford Museum, or Greenfield Village. The afternoon should have seen the traditional game of cricket, but 'rain stopped play' and an indoor bowling competition was held instead. Under the critical eye of Tony Ring and Robert Bruce, some 33 members tried their hand at hitting three stumps with a soft rubber ball. To a Brit I suppose our up-and-over straight arm is natural, but it certainly isn't to Americans. Another cultural divide, I suppose.

Meanwhile, in the main reception area, there was the table where you booked in and got your goodies bag, plus a rummage stall to raise funds for the Convention Reserve Fund, with an astonishing variety of goodies, including Wodehousean beer labels produced by Tom Young, who also produces home-brewed beer – though they weren't allowed to sell that. A third table was raising funds for the Wodehouse Memorial Marker (commemoration plaque) to be erected near the graveyard where

Wodehouse and Ethel are buried in Remsenberg. The home-made plum jam sold well here, as did Bob Rains's book on legal anomalies and the brand new *Guide to Wodehouse's New York and Long Island* written by Norman Murphy and Amy Plofker, with all profits being donated to the cause. (See more about this on page 14.)

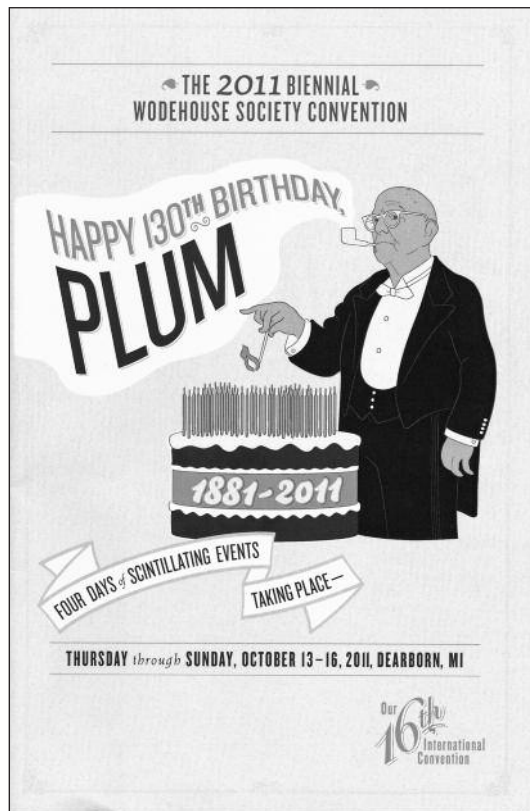
In the evening, two coaches took us to Greektown in Detroit, where most of us had dinner enlivened by Greek waiters shouting 'Opla' at the tops of their voices when igniting some dish and watching the flames shoot up to the ceiling. There was wild talk of visiting a casino afterwards, but according to most accounts, the cigarette smoke was so bad that few people made it past the front lobby.

On Saturday we enjoyed a series of talks or performances from a variety of people on a variety of Wodehouse subjects. The speakers included Paul Abrinko, Tony Ring, John Graham, Elliott Milstein, Maria Jette & Dan Chouinard, Elin Woodger (Murphy), Curtis Armstrong, Tom Smith, and

yours truly. I skilfully evaded my responsibilities by giving a 10-minute talk followed by two skits which I had presented at the New York convention 20 years before. As the Hands Across the Seas Touring Company, Elin, Hilary and Robert Bruce, Tim Andrew, myself, and Ed Ratcliffe (typecast as Lord Emsworth; he had played the same role 20 years ago) wowed our audience. One comment overheard was: "I've never seen anything like that before." (I'm still worrying over that one.)

The banquet, always a convention highlight, was on Saturday evening – not so coincidentally, Wodehouse's 130th birthday. It was no surprise, then, that the room was brilliantly decorated, complete with balloons, and on each table were souvenir champagne glasses marking the occasion.

A tradition at these banquets is that many people dress up as Wodehouse characters, book titles, or even objects mentioned in Wodehouse. It sounds silly, but in fact enormous wit and ingenuity is employed. This year, John Graham appeared dressed



up as Lord Ickenham's great sponge Joyeuse; Tamaki Morimura won a prize as Gussy Fink-Nottle dressed as Mephistopheles (red tights, red horns, red tail); Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen represented 'The Great Hat Mystery'; and Kris Fowler and her sister appeared as the two Trent sisters in *French Leave*, and changed costumes (lady/lady's maid) so often during the evening that your correspondent was beginning to think that Californian Merlot was a good deal stronger than he had thought.

The youngest (16 years old) Wodehousean attending won an award as the rose which Lady Celia gave to Mervyn Keene in *Mervyn Keene, Clubman*. Now, that is subtle. Winners of



*The Hands Across the Sea Touring Company perform (minus Hilary Bruce)
(Photo by Barbara Combs)*



*Andrea Jacobsen & Bob Rains as
'The Amazing Hat Mystery'
(Photo by Barbara Combs)*

the three quizzes received prizes, as did the winners of the cricket competition (for Best Bowler, Spirit of Cricket, and Best and Most Stylishly Dressed Cricketer).

On Sunday we assembled for the splendid traditional brunch and then watched the NEWTS (New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society) perform a splendid skit which had us in stitches. I will not attempt to describe it fully here, but in essence it was set during the days of Prohibition. A young Mulliner relative (John Fahey) saved the Pickering Motor Company run by Dudley Pickering (Elin) from ruin and ensured that a Pickering daughter's wedding could go ahead by discovering that alcohol – and especially champagne – was an effective motor car fuel, thereby thwarting Elliot Ness (Elliott Milstein), who jumped out of a wedding cake (the highlight of the show) to arrest all present until shown the fuel-alcohol waiver signed by J. Edgar Hoover. You had to be there to appreciate it.

And then it was time for sad goodbyes all round, many thanks to Elliott and the Pickerings for a splendid convention, and a fixed resolve to meet again in Chicago in two years' time.

Wodehousean Beer Labels

As Norman mentions in his convention report, among the items for sale on the rummage table in Dearborn were beer labels designed by Tom Young – or Young Thos, as he is known on PGWnet. About a year ago, Tom got it into his head that he'd like to try his hand at brewing beer, and this naturally meant that he had to have a name – and a label – for it. After consulting his fellow denizens on PGWnet, one of whom provided a jolly nice picture of a Berkshire pig for him, he designed the label you see here. The applause was such that he immediately began brewing more beer and designing more labels, including the Anglers' Rest Special Bitter, Drones Club Batch No. 3, and Market Snodsbury's Midland Mild, among others. Clever Tom even designed a label for Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo. To see all his wonderful labels, go to <http://youngthoslabels.blogspot.com/>.



"I hardly expected so sensible a suggestion from you, Reginald," she said. "It is a very good plan. It shows that you really have a definite substratum of intelligence; and it is all the more deplorable that you should idle your way through the world as you do, when you might be performing some really useful work."

That was Florence all over. Even when she patted you on the head she did it with her knuckles.

(From 'Disentangling Old Percy', 1912; thanks to PETER COURTNEY-GREEN)

This May Interest You . . .

Announcements About All Sorts of Delightful Things

A New CD of Wodehouse Songs



At the recent Wodehouse Society convention in Dearborn, Michigan, Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard created a sensation with their renditions of several PGW songs, including the ever-popular ‘Cleopatter’ and ‘If Ever I Lost You’. What good news, then, that they have put together an entire CD of Wodehouse lyrical gems – 18 terrific songs performed with appropriate wit and style. Among the rarer songs heard on the CD is ‘Two to Tooting’, for which previously only the lyrics had been known, but clever Maria tracked down the music for it, as explained in her copious CD notes. A flyer detailing how you can order this wonderful set of songs – the first to be issued since Hal Cazalet and Sylvia McNair recorded *The Land Where the Good Songs Go* several years ago – is enclosed with this issue of *Wooster Sauce*. This will make a perfect Christmas gift, so waste no time and order your CD today!

A Helpful New Guide for Wodehouse Fans

In the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, we informed readers of a project instigated by The Wodehouse Society (USA) to install a marker at Remsenburg, Long Island, New York, to commemorate Wodehouse’s long residence and burial there. In conjunction with that project, Norman Murphy, with the help of Amy Plofker, created a special booklet, which was introduced at the recent TWS convention in Dearborn, Michigan, and is now being made available to all Wodehouseans.

Norman originally sketched out a guide to the PGW sites in New York City several years ago and sent his ideas to Amy, a member of TWS’s New York chapter, the Broadway Special. Amy conducted further local research and added to Norman’s notes, but the project lay dormant until earlier this year, when Norman updated and revised the manuscript. After adding a section on Long Island, he then donated the work to TWS for fund-raising purposes; the proceeds from the sale of the 36-page guide will benefit the Remsenburg Historical Marker Fund.

A Guide to P. G. Wodehouse’s New York City and Long Island



by
Norman Murphy
with
Amy Plofker

An Imminent New Work from Tony Ring

Tony Ring has told the Editor that he has virtually completed the text for a reference book on Wodehouse’s involvement with the non-musical (‘straight’) theatre – and he promises the disclosure of a lot of new information.

The book is divided into two parts – the first providing a number of extracts from Wodehouse’s journalistic writings about the straight theatre and an opinion on how his achievements as a playwright will be viewed in the long term; examining in detail the surprising impact that the existence of censorship had on two of his plays in particular and more generally on the work of some of his contemporary writers of comedy drama; and, using his own feelings and frustrations as expressed in correspondence, following his progress as he tried desperately to bring two post-World War II plays to the stage in the very different conditions which then prevailed.

The second part looks in detail at Wodehouse’s career in the straight theatre which, had he not been such a successful fiction writer and lyricist, would itself have been regarded as pretty successful. Almost always writing in collaboration (with, for example, George S. Kaufman), he had 10 plays on London’s West End stage and five on Broadway – and a total of 20 different plays performed somewhere in the UK or USA. With the exception of three for which so far no script has been traced, the book summarises the

plots, provides a concordance of the characters in the cast, and offers examples of dialogue from each play. Details of opening-night casts, extracts from contemporary reviews, and a selection of the dates and venues for later productions are also given.

A further 10 unperformed plays for which the scripts exist, including some which seem never to have been mentioned previously in any studies of Wodehouse’s life or work, are analysed in a similar manner, and shorter notes are provided in respect of eight projects which were either never completed or, if completed, were unperformed with no script now available. The book closes with shorter notes about adaptations of Wodehouse’s work (especially posthumous productions) with which he had no involvement; touches briefly on some of the productions in translation, such as German, Swedish and Dutch; and refers to a dramatic adaptation in French of a novel that still has not been dramatised in English.

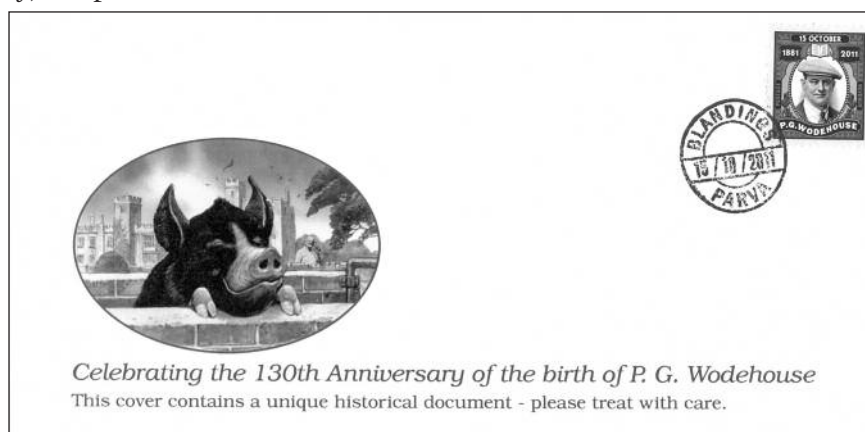
Tony’s plan is to have the book published by about September 2012. Recognising that it is unlikely to achieve overwhelming commercial success, he is investigating the options for private publication, one aspect of which is the length of the initial print run. He has asked me to let you know that any members of the Society who register an interest in the book before 31 March 2012 will be offered the chance to buy a copy at a reduced price.

How to Get a Unique Wodehouse Stamp

In more news from our American cousins, earlier this year The Wodehouse Society, with the approval of the Wodehouse Estate, commissioned a commemorative envelope and stamp to celebrate Wodehouse’s 130th birthday. The spectacular result can be seen in the accompanying illustration. The envelope and stamp were designed by British artist Bernard Pearson, who is based in Wincanton, Somerset. Bernard is perhaps best known for his sculptures associated with the books of Sir Terry Pratchett, but he has also worked with other organisations, such as The Kipling Society, on special projects including first-day covers such as this. The Wodehouse ‘Cinderella’ (the term for stamps not issued by a postal authority) is already highly coveted in the philatelic world.

But the stamp is really only half the story. Inside the envelope is a very special enclosure: a faithful reproduction of some recently discovered pages from Galahad Threepwood’s *Reminiscences*. Truly an appropriate gift for Plum’s 130th birthday!

Only 600 of these envelopes were created, and most were sent to members of The Wodehouse Society in the Autumn 2011 issue of *Plum Lines* (TWS’s quarterly journal).



My First Wodehouse Experience

by Mathias Balbi

My first exposure to P. G. Wodehouse can be described as *dazzling*, a revelation of the great British author so widely loved by readers in nearly every single corner of this world. I can't say the year in which it happened, because my memory is of a deeply agreeable and totally new reading experience. However, the title of the novel was unforgettable and marked by destiny: *Summer Lightning* (*Lampi d'estate*, in the excellent Italian translation).

The Wodehousean 'light', for me, has continued ever since I read this particular title, and it still illuminates and reflects those qualities that every PGW admirer knows and that I learned to enjoy over the years.

It all started with Hugo Carmody — hidden in the hitherto silent laurel bush — whispering "Psst" to Beach, who believes him a "nymph of the woods" or some such thing. This first discovery of PGW's irresistible wit was also my introduction, as a reader, to Blandings Castle, basking in the sweet British sunshine.

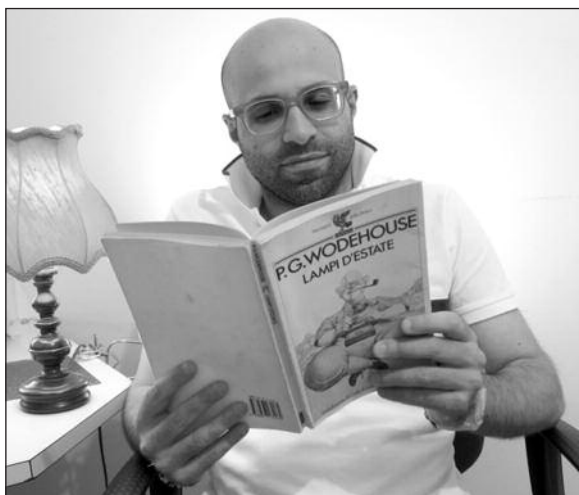
That first exposure had an added bonus for me: the particular Italian edition of *Summer Lightning* I bought (a second-hand, marvelously patinated Guanda copy, published 1989) included a wonderful preface by the Italian writers Carlo Fruttero and Franco Lucentini (both admirers and skilful

translators of many Anglo-Saxon authors). Their preface was a splendid eulogy of the great British humorist, who was, in their view, too long underrated or overlooked by critical opinion. Wodehouse's "idyllic world", as Evelyn Waugh described it, was a literary ideal, shared by Fruttero and Lucentini. In their opinion, the precious secret which permits that world to survive and remain apart from harsh reality is, simply, *style*.

So, what was it about *Summer Lightning*? I would like to try to describe that wonderful, relaxing, and often exciting sensation of discovering a new poetic world; however, words cannot easily permit it.

I have to conclude, therefore, by referring to the above-mentioned Italian

preface and the brilliant Wodehousean reprimand of the Stockholm Academy's judges for their views on his *ostica* (tricky) vision of humanity, which led them to refuse the Nobel Prize to such an artist as PGW. That fiery defence was a wonderful lesson about the then little known (to me) Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, and it was an inspiring invitation to further rewarding reading. I can say that I have accepted that invitation ever since, and as a Wodehouse disciple, I have found his works filled with enjoyment and many bright flashes of "lightning".



Sporting News

The Guardian, August 26 (from Nirav Shah)
In an interview, the former footballer Pat Nevin said Wodehouse was his favourite author, "for the pure love of the English language".

Sydney Morning Herald, August 30
A report of a brawl in Melbourne between two rugby league players, which continued after they had been sent off the field, opened with Wodehouse's comment about the sport: "Rugby football," Wodehouse wrote in 1930, "is a game [where] each side is allowed to put in a certain amount of assault and battery and do things to its fellow man which, if done elsewhere, would result in 14 days without the option, coupled with some strong remarks from the bench."

The Guardian, September 14
Writing about cricket's seventh County Championship, Paul Weaver noted that left-arm bowler Chris Metters "could be Warwickshire's next Percy Jeeves, the inspiration for P G Wodehouse's best known creation."

Rugby World, September (from Simonette Corradino)
An article described an incident involving the England team as "an absurd episode that could have come straight from the pen of P G Wodehouse".

The Times, September 26 (from June Arnold and others)
Member Patrick Kidd took the opportunity to make a Wodehousean reference in his report on the Solheim Cup – a Ladies' Team Golf Tournament between Europe and the United States. The US held a significant advantage until one of their best players, Paula Creamer, fell to a crushing defeat, by 6 and 5. "Not since *The Code of the Woosters*," Patrick wrote, "has a plot depended so much on the fortunes of a Creamer." She had been undefeated until then, and Europe went on to win the Cup by 15-13.

The Guardian, October 11
Frank Keating commented on an earlier lament in the paper concerning the lack of classy and stylish fiction about rugby, and pointed to the story 'The Ordeal of Young Tuppy' in *Very Good, Jeeves*.

Wodehouse and the Liturgy

by Adrian Vincent

As well as being a member of the Society, I am also an elected member of the Church of England's General Synod – the Church's equivalent of Parliament. At our July meeting we debated two draft Eucharistic Prayers, which the Liturgical Commission had written for use in Primary Schools. One of the prayers includes the following:

You give us this great and beautiful earth,
to discover and to cherish.
You give us the starry sky above,
. . . You give us the fish in the sea,
the birds of the air,

In the debate, the Reverend Thomas Seville delivered the following speech:

[T]here is the problem about the use of the phrase 'starry sky'; to my ears it sounds patronising....It reminds me of that story of Mr Gussie Fink-Nottle . . . that newt fancier from

Lincolnshire. You may recall that he was asked to give the prizes at the Market Snodsbury prize-giving, and his two friends, trying to give him support in the courtship stakes – Bertie Wooster and Jeeves – both laced his lunchtime orange juice. And the effects deserve to be known, because I think it is analogous to the effects of patronising children:

"Yes," said Gussie, "it's a beautiful world. The sky is blue, the birds are singing, there is optimism everywhere. . . . I should like you boys, . . . to give three cheers for this beautiful world. All together now."

. . . Beware of Gussie . . . we need to be particularly wary of this kind of patronising language in the prayers we use with children.

I am sure that readers will be reassured to know that PGW is helping to improve the drafting of new Church of England liturgical texts.

Profile of a Committee Member

Lesley Tapson

Lesley Tapson discovered P G Wodehouse in the bottom corner of the wall furthest away from the door in Willerby Library, East Yorks, in 1972. She had, in fact, been looking for John Wyndham, he being the flavour of the month amongst her peers, but someone got there first, shelves had been plundered, and not a *Kraken Wakes* or *Day of the Triffids* was to be had. Near the Wyndham-free gap she spotted *Young Men in Spats* (a hardback to boot – how things have changed!), idly picked up said tome, and never looked back.

Sitting in the garden on a warm summer's day, her father asked what on earth had got into her as she spluttered and laughed her way through the adventures of Freddie Widgeon et al. At the point in 'Good-bye to All Cats' at which Sir Mortimer Prenderby utters the immortal line "Who threw that cat?" a coughing fit came upon her and tears of laughter poured down her face. Just thinking about that afternoon still makes her smile. Her father also remembers it with affection!

Lesley's fondness for and appreciation of Wodehouse have grown over the years. After that fateful day she would cycle to the library and put in requests for

a book from the catalogue every other week. By the time she was 16 she had read just about every book he had written, and she continues to find so much to enjoy in their re-reading. *Sam the Sudden* goes on holiday with her just about every year.



Lesley developed an interest in collecting Wodehouse first editions and has also started collecting foreign language editions, driving travel companions mad by insisting on spending at least one morning in any foreign city trawling bookshops for a copy of a Wodehouse classic, though it must be said some of the subtler nuances of, for example, *Wielce Zobowiazany*, *Jeeves* (the Polish version of *Much Obligated, Jeeves*) are lost on her.

Lesley is a practising barrister and joint Head of Field Court Chambers. She was elected to that position two days after her election to the PGW Society committee. It's difficult to say which made her feel

more perky!

After a day of dealing often with the worst in people, a dip into PGW's world is strangely comforting. His wonderful use of words and his plotting are second to none. John Wyndham? Who he?

Further Details Will Be Provided

by Tony Ring

4 – A Bigger Business Than You Suspected

As mentioned at the end of the previous article in this series, there were two post-war stories which became ‘Mulliner’ narratives late in life. The first was ‘Big Business’, which had originally appeared in the American *Colliers* magazine for 13 December 1952, quickly followed by the UK’s *Lilliput* in March 1953.

The magazine version, which was almost identical in each of the two countries, had been written as a straight story, without the ‘Mulliner’ frame which it acquired later. As a result, there are significant differences between the book and magazine versions, partly in relation to the identity of the cast of characters, and partly due to the way the story is told.

For example, the pronunciation of the title of the song ‘Ol’ (or Old) Man River’, sung in triumph by Reggie Watson-Watson in the magazine version, was the subject of a dispute between a Small Bass and a Light Lager at the Anglers’ Rest in the book version. This provided Mr Mulliner with the excuse to tell the tale, using Reginald Mulliner, his late brother’s son, as the principal character. Still a Reggie, but of a different ilk.

Secondly, Wodehouse was more constrained for space in the magazine version, and he did not explain in any detail how Reggie Watson-Watson learned about his inheritance of £20,000, merely starting the story:

When young Reggie Watson-Watson, last of the long line of Watson-Watsons of Lower Smattering on the Wissel, in the county of Worcestershire, inherited twenty thousand pounds from a distant relative in Australia . . .

By the end of the first paragraph, not only did Amanda Biffen, the girl he loved, know about his good fortune, but so did her uncle Jasper, also a Biffen.

By contrast, when the story was told by Mr Mulliner in the 1959 collection *A Few Quick Ones*, there is a first page with the usual preliminary

conversation between his acolytes at the Anglers’ Rest, followed by a page and a half explaining in leisurely style

- a how Reginald Mulliner heard from a firm of solicitors, Watson, Watson, Watson, Watson and Watson, of Lincolns Inn Fields (at least the Watson motif was retained!), that he could hear something to his advantage;
- b how he travelled to London and learned that he had inherited £50,000 (note the impact of inflation between 1952 and 1959) from a deceased cousin in the Argentine (even the country changed);
- c how he telephoned Amanda Biffen; and
- d how she spoke to her uncle and guardian, Sir Jasper Todd.

Both versions agree that the action is to take place at Lower Smattering-on-the-Wissel, though only the book version hyphenates the name. The choice of location is of interest. Mr Mulliner had previously told of the adventures there of his poet nephew Mordred, who (in ‘The Fiery Wooing of Mordred’ in *Young Men in Spats*) had been in love with Annabelle Sprockett-Sprockett, daughter of the impecunious owner of Smattering Hall.

There were the usual range of minor differences of which perhaps only one is worth mentioning. The evil Jasper Biffen had retired to a magnificent neo-Gothic, stockbroker-Tudor-style mansion named Dunrobin, whereas the equally unpleasant Sir Jasper Todd lived in the vast Tudor residence known as Wissel Hall.

And we should not overlook the fact that the story reveals the Christian name of the Rt Hon the Lord Knubble of Knopp, whose name is familiar from offstage mentions in the earlier Mulliner stories ‘The Story of Cedric’, ‘The Smile That Wins’, and ‘Open House’, and in the golf story ‘Feet of Clay’. In ‘Big Business’ we learn for the first time that his name is Percy.

Timeless Wodehouse: An article by Lance Morrow in the June 2010 issue of *Smithsonian* focuses on ‘The Timeless Wisdom of Kenko’ makes a delightful connection to Wodehouse. (Kenko was a 14th-century Japanese essayist.) Morrow writes: “A person’s sense of balance depends upon the inner ear: it is to the inner ear that such writers speak. Sometimes I get the effect by taking a dip in the Bertie Wooster stories of P. G. Wodehouse, who wrote such wonderful sentences as this description of a solemn young clergyman: ‘He had the face of a sheep with a secret sorrow.’ Wodehouse, too, would eventually live in exile (both geographical and psychological) in a cottage on Long Island, remote from his native England. He composed a Bertie Wooster Neverland – the Oz of the twit. The Wizard, more or less, was the butler Jeeves. . . . Wodehouse, Kenko, Dante and Montaigne make an improbable quartet. They come as friendly aliens to comfort the inner ear, and to relieve one’s sense, which is strong these days, of being isolated.” The full article can be read at <http://bit.ly/j10oVs>. (Thanks to BETH CARROLL and LAURA LOEHR)

Quizzes, Poetry, and Lots of Fun

In her report on the Wodehouse weekend in Emsworth (page 4), Ellie King offhandedly refers to “various quizzes and competitions” – and modestly fails to mention that she was one of the weekend’s lucky (and very brainy) winners of those contests. Participants in ‘Follow Wodehouse to Emsworth’ were challenged in several ways. For starters, after dinner on the Friday night, their grey matter was put to the test with a ‘pub quiz’ divided into three sections, with successively harder questions. This was won by Ellie herself – clearly a Wodehousean to the core – followed by Jonathan Hopson and Graham Johnson in joint second place, and Simon Gordon-Clark a close third.

Our Emsworth fun-seekers were also set a quiz in which, given the names of 35 well-known names in show business, they had to determine which of those stars had performed Wodehouse’s work on stage – a particularly difficult task! The applause-deserving winner of this brain-teaser was Jonathan Hopson; Ann Pembroke took second place, while Simon Gordon-Clark and Ellie King shared joint third. (Hmm, do we see a pattern forming here?)

But what proved to be the most fun of all during the weekend was discovering what dashed talented and creative poets we had in the group. For the biggest challenge of the weekend was to submit limericks and clerihews with a Wodehouse theme – and the response was nothing short of delightful. In the clerihew competition, the winners were: (1) Elisabeth Hoffman; (2) Jonathan Hopson; and (3) Simon Gordon-Clark. Meanwhile, the limerick champs were: (1) Mora Morley-Pegge; (2) Graham Johnson; and (3) Ellie King. Congratulations to these brilliant poets, whose entries are presented herewith – and congratulations to all who entered the competitions and won prizes, which included Everyman Wodehouse books and AudioGo Wodehouse audiobooks.

Clerihews

Mr Augustus Fink-Nottle
 Looked deep in the whisky bottle
 Whereupon he broke every rule
 Of Market Snodsbury’s Grammar School!
 – Elisabeth Hoffman (First Prize)

Sebastian Beach
 Has a distinctive manner of speech.
 It is a feat most laudable
 To sound like ‘tawny port made audible’.
 – Jonathan Hopson (Second Prize)

The blue-stocking Florence Craye
 Was a menace in every possible way
 Her qualities as a fiancée were open to query
 When she told Bertie to read *Types of Ethical Theory*.
 – Simon Gordon-Clark (Third Prize)

Limericks

At Dulwich the team of Gold Bats
 Took a fancy for playing in spats.
 An uproar arose,
 They turned on a hose,
 And they finished the game as drowned rats.
 – Mora Morley-Pegge (First Prize)

When scraping a living, Old Horse,
 Subterfuge is my major resource.
 If accused of a scam,
 I exclaim, “‘pon my Sam,
 You are spouting pure apple sauce.”
 – Graham Johnson (Second Prize)

There was a young man named Bertie
 Who with ladies was often quite flirty.
 To some girls he proposed
 But they all were vetoed
 By Jeeves, who got awfully shirty.
 – Ellie King (Third Prize)

A Release from Imprisonment

The works of P G Wodehouse have long been cited as having therapeutic value (see, for example, the entry for November 11 in Recent Press Comment, page 27). For many, the world he created provides a welcome escape from both physical and mental torment – and it appears he is also sought after by those who are imprisoned.

On October 15, in an interview with Andrew Harding on *From Our Own Correspondent* (BBC News Africa), Burma’s best-loved comedian, Zargana, newly released from jail, explained how his guards had told him one morning that he was a free man and could leave immediately, but that they were keeping his books. These had been provided by his sister-in-law, who had been allowed an occasional visit. “I liked the P G Wodehouse best,” he said. “*Joy in the Morning* – Jeeves, Wooster, and the fearsome Aunt Agatha. It’s difficult to understand, but I’ve read it three times at least. And I used it as a pillow too.”

In *The Guardian* of November 12 were several letters to the editor sent in response to an article by Sophie Ratcliffe. One letter referred to prisoners who found solace in Wodehouse’s books, including Zargana and the Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka. The writer suggested: “Prison librarians should clearly respond to evidence of the popularity of Wodehouse among those whose freedom of movement is circumscribed.”

(Thanks to ALEXANDER DAINTY and MIKE SWADDLING for sending these items.)

The Word Around the Clubs

Of Etiquette and Prose

In the *Financial Times* of October 8, responding to readers' queries, Sir David Tang was asked to comment on the rules for taking one's own food to a buffet dinner, specifically an Idaho jacket potato of apparently exceptional quality baked by the writer's own chef. Sir David replied:

If I were your host, I would certainly be peeved that you should bring food to my party. I notice that you use the word 'chef' when I think you mean 'cook'. Chefs are professional people working in restaurants; someone serving domestically is known as a cook. The only exception is if you were P G Wodehouse writing about Mr Tom Travers, whose severe indigestion is only alleviated by Anatole, his highly skilled but temperamental 'French chef', who was generally regarded as 'God's gift to the gastric juices'. But you are not P G Wodehouse.

PS I also noticed that your question is rather long and replete with flowery and contrived prose. But as you are not P G Wodehouse, you should keep your question short and concise.

It Pays to Read Wodehouse

A recent edition of *Antiques Roadshow* (filmed at Charlecote Park and broadcast on September 25) demonstrated the value of being a Wodehouse reader. A gentleman brought in a collection of cow-creamers,

which had started when he had asked his doctor for advice about his insomnia. The doctor had suggested that he read something light, and he chose *The Code of the Woosters*, with, of course, its iconic plot based around the theft of the silver cow-creamer. (The book was cited in the *Radio Times* highlight blurb about the show before it aired.) The *Antiques Roadshow* expert valued the collection (none of which was made from silver) at up to £3–4,000 individually, and said that the part of the collection on show would have a value in excess of £10,000. (Thanks to CAROLINE FRANKLYN and TONY RING.)

The Best Song

From Iran – a country where Wodehouse is virtually unknown – comes word of a collection of stories that includes 'Jeeves and the Impending Doom' and 'Jeeves and the Song of Songs'. The collection takes its title from the latter story, which has been translated into Persian by Babak Vahedi as 'The Best Song'. It is unclear from the report received whether only these two stories are in the collection, or whether the entire book is a translation *Very Good Jeeves* (in which both stories appear). Either way, sweetness and light are clearly making inroads in Iran – a trend we would like to see continue.

Wodehouse on the Boards

Autumn 2011 has seen a spate of Wodehouse theatre productions, particularly on the western side of the Atlantic. Below is an extract from a review by John Moore of a play put on in Fort Worth, Texas, in September, while on page 21, Tony Ring reviews a recent U.K. production of *The Play's the Thing*. This delightful farce was also performed at the Segal Centre for Performing Arts in Montreal, Canada, on October 30–November 20; while theatre-goers in San Francisco, California, had the pleasure of seeing *Oh, Kay!* at the 42nd Street Moon Theatre on November 2–20. If any of our members happened to attend either of the latter two productions, please send a review!

At present there are no upcoming U.K. productions of Wodehouse plays or musicals that we know of. In the U.S., the big news concerns a production of the final Bolton, Wodehouse, & Kern collaboration, *Sitting Pretty*, which is being staged by Musicals Tonight! at the Lion Theatre, 410 West 42nd Street, New York City, from April 17 to 29, 2012. Tickets cost \$29 and may be booked through Telecharge (<http://bit.ly/dvJsEU>), or telephone 001-800-212-239-6200. For more information, go to <http://bit.ly/uHI0QM>.

* * * * *

Jeeves in the Morning

by John Moore

(Extracted from a review for *Plum Lines*)

This was our third trip in five years to Stage West to see a Jeeves play, the other two being *The Code of the Woosters* and *Thank You, Jeeves*, and all three adapted by

Mark Richards. Previous shows had been at the Community Arts Center, but now Stage West is back in a real theatre with a real stage.

And they made good use of it. *Jeeves in the Morning* was an excellent adaptation of the novel and my personal favourite of the three plays. In Richards's adaptations, Bertie breaks the fourth wall and speaks directly to the audience. This allows the play to keep Wodehouse's marvellous constructions and turns of phrase. Chuck Huber played Bertie, and while we all enjoyed his performance, the consensus among our group was that he portrayed our favourite man-about-town as more 'swishy' than we conceived him.

Jeff McGee played Stilton Cheesewright, and Sherry Hopkins played Florence Craye, each with the right amount of intimidation – you could understand Bertie's desire to avoid getting between these two. Mikaela Krantz stole the hearts of the male audience as Nobby, and Andrew Gentry, in his first appearance at Stage West, was totally convincing as the annoying Edwin. Mark Shum, who had previously played Gussie Fink-Nottle in *The Code of the Woosters*, returned as Boko.

And, of course, there was Jeeves. Veteran actor Jim Covault returned to play Jeeves for the third time. I loved his performance. Some of us prefer a younger, more Stephen Fryish Jeeves, but my taste runs to an older, more stolid, Arthur Treacherish sort of Jeeves, the type played by Covault, greeting every crisis with a quote from the bard and a sagacious eyebrow raised beneath his bowler hat.

The Play Certainly Was Just the Thing

A Review by Tony Ring

Since *The Play's the Thing* was staged at the Oxford Playhouse in May 1986, there has only been one production in the UK of which I am aware, in 1992. If the quality of the production at the Claus Moser Theatre in Oxford (running November 1–5) is anything to go by, it has not deserved such a long absence.

ElevenOne Theatre is a young company, formed romantically by Mike and Helen Taylor in 2008. Helen herself acted for many years, during which she developed an impressive range of contacts, so that she is able to call on a number of trained actors. More than half the cast of seven have appeared in previous ElevenOne productions, and when actors are comfortable and enjoying themselves onstage, the first hurdle for a successful comedy has been overcome. Mike was responsible for the stage setting (which not only had to look good but also had to survive a daily trauma of dismantling). A friend, Vince Haig, provided the publicity and design support.

The Claus Moser Theatre at Wadham College is also used as a lecture theatre, conference venue – and badminton court! Hence the need to dismantle the set every night and arrange for the nine-tier seating to be magically hidden away before the shuttlecocks and rackets reappear.

Mike and Helen have long been Wodehouse fans, but the play they chose was not one which has an equivalent in his fiction. Adapted from Ferenc Molnár's Hungarian original, it has twice had enormous success on Broadway but has been less successful in London. The story (based on a real incident involving Molnár and his wife) concerns the agony of a young composer (Albert Adam, played by Will Fournier) when he, in company with two playwrights with whom he has just completed a new operetta, overhears his fiancée, Ilona Szabo (Monica Nash), apparently making love to the roué Almady (Dominic Bullock), an aging actor who had known her years previously. Sandor Turai (Phillip Cotterill) devises a way to convince Albert that they had been doing no more than rehearsing a love scene from a play, which involves Turai in sitting up for the

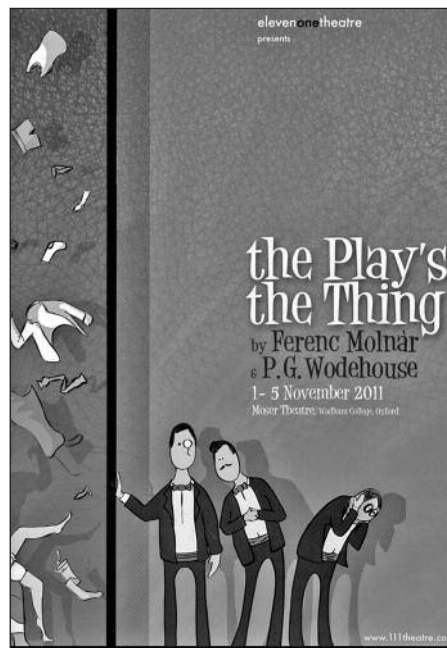
remainder of the night actually writing a scene to incorporate the overheard exchanges.

There are three characters slightly less critical to the plot, though essentially it is an ensemble play with enough red meat for all. Mansky (Alistair Nunn) is the second playwright, unaware of Turai's plans and taken in by the whole deception when the plan succeeds. Dwornitschek, the butler (David Guthrie), is less farseeing than Jeeves but offers a simplistic conviction that he is fully mindful of his duties. Director Helen Taylor intuitively – and brilliantly – decided to change the sex of Mell, who is secretary to the offstage Count (the owner of the castle in which the action takes place). Mell does not appear until the second act, but by making the secretary female, and casting Ida Persson in the role, she enabled some superb visual comedy, including interaction with Almady, which would not have been anything like so easy for a male actor in a 1920s play.

Helen Taylor told me how much laughter there had been in the rehearsal room. "The lovely thing about a play like this is that the actors can really allow themselves to be larger than life. This particularly applies to Ilona

and Almady, the two characters in the play who are actors, and fabulously melodramatic ones at that. As long as the characters are grounded in reality and not entirely caricature – otherwise it would be difficult for the audience to warm to them – the actors can let themselves go much more than they could in a more naturalistic style of theatre."

As a result, each cast member stole scenes, which meant that the standard of the production was very high. The play needed to be fast-paced, and was – it came over as far more vibrant and purposeful than the only previous performance I had seen, a professional production in Washington, D.C. The passion the director has for both Wodehouse and the theatre was evidently transmitted to the cast, and it would be wonderful if this team might consider staging one of his other plays in future years. The audience numbers – some nights were sold out – and laughter should have given them confidence to do so.



A certain liveliness was beginning to manifest itself up in the gallery. The raspberry was not actually present, but he seemed to hear the beating of its wings.

(From 'The Masked Troubadour', 1936)

Poet's Corner

The Cynic

When the ladies have departed
And the smoking has begun,
When Robinson has spun his yarn
And Smith worked off his pun –
In short, when conversation
Shows a tendency to drop
I embark upon the narrative
Of Montmorency Plopp.
Of Habakkuk Caligula de Montmorency Plopp.

De Montmorency lived at Penge
At the time of which I speak;
A clerk was he in a merchant's firm
At a pound and a half a week.
His exterior was singular-
Ly pleasing to the eye:
But the bitter drop in the cup of Plopp
Was the fact that he was shy.

He shunned his fellow creatures.
If addressed by any man,
He strove to speak, but gasped for breath,
And paled beneath his tan.
Whenever he was introduced
To any local belle,
He didn't smile, but only felt
Excessively unwell.

His shyness was notorious,
And every would-be wit
Sat up o' nights till shocking hours
Composing jokes on it.
At last, in desperation,
He resolved to make an end,
And went and told his troubles to
A sympathetic friend.

"You're shy?" observed the friend.
Replied Caligula, "Quite true."
"You also wish to cure yourself?"
"Exactly so. I do."
"Young man, become a cynic,
And your lot will change, I vow."
"Precisely," said De Montmorency
Habakkuk; "but how?"

"My stock of conversation
Is but meagre, as you know.
It's principally 'No' and 'Yes'
The weather, 'Ah' and 'Oh!'.
With limitations such as these,

I fancy you'll admit
That if cast for the role of a cynical soul
I should fail to make a hit."

"Not so," replied the sage old man;
"My friend, this self-same meekness,
Which with pardonable error
You at present deem a weakness,
This inability to speak,
Which seems to cause you grief,
Of cynicism's weapons
Is undoubtedly the chief.

"In future, when folks speak to you,
Say neither 'Ah' nor 'Oh',
But simply raise your eyebrows – thus;
Or smile a little – so.
And if, to use a metaphor,
You fail with your first shot
To hit success's bull's-eye,
I'm a Dutchman – which I'm not."

He ceased. Plopp's eyes with fire flashed,
And he said "I understand",
And he grasped his kind adviser
Very warmly by the hand,
"I'll make my way without delay
Directly to the street,
And practise cynicism
Upon every one I meet."

He did; and very shortly
His affairs began to mend,
Within a week his cynic sneer
Left him without a friend.
Men ceased to speak of him as shy
And laugh at him; instead,
They never, never mention him,
But simply cut him dead.

And as for me, when dinner's o'er,
And smoking has begun,
And Robinson has spun his yarn,
And Smith worked off his pun,
And conversation seems to show
A tendency to drop
I embark upon the narrative
Of Montmorency Plopp.
Of Habakkuk Caligula de Montmorency Plopp.

From *Scraps*, 5 December 1902

In my experience there are two kinds of elderly American. One, the stout and horn-rimmed, is matiness itself. He greets you as if you were a favourite son, starts agitating the cocktail shaker before you know where you are, slips a couple into you with a merry laugh, claps you on the back, tells you a dialect story about two Irishmen named Pat and Mike, and, in a word, makes life one grand, sweet song. The other, which runs a good deal to the cold, grey stare and the square jaw, seems to view the English cousins with concern. He is not Elfin. He broods. He says little. He sucks in his breath in a pained way. And every now and again you catch his eye, and it is like colliding with a raw oyster.
(From *Thank You*, Jeeves, 1934)

Cosy Moments

The Other Side of Silence, by Ted Allbeury (1981)

(from Alan Carter)

This spy thriller is a fictional account of the real-life spy Kim Philby, who, as reported in the last issue of *Wooster Sauce* (Recent Press Comment, August 9 entry), was discovered to have read Wodehouse while in exile in Moscow. The second of two passages that mention PGW in the book backs this up:

He stood looking at the books on the shelves. Many of them were in Russian, and most of the English titles were textbooks on Soviet affairs, history and biographies. There were paperback copies of P. G. Wodehouse, a few anthologies of English poetry, . . .

The Dog Who Came in from the Cold, by Alexander McCall Smith (2010) (from Simonette Corradino)

In one passage of this book, two characters discuss a dog, and one comments on its friendliness, leaning down to ask it: "How are you feeling, Freddie, old bean?" His companion reacts:

Tilly smiled at the term 'old bean'. In most circles it was considered archaic, belonging to a Wodehousian world that had long disappeared, but this was not true of MI6, where it was still used extensively (a fact not widely known). It was almost a shibboleth, a password that identified one member of the service to another.

Mama Makes Up Her Mind and Other Dangers of Southern Living, by Bailey White (1994)

(from Beth Carroll)

In the chapter entitled 'Sleep and Prayer', the author describes his family's preparations for a hurricane and then the moments as the storm approaches:

The dog and I plastered ourselves like cardboard cutouts up against a bearing wall in the middle of the house. But my mother, who is not afraid of anything, tottered out to her little bed on the screen porch as usual with the cup of Ovaltine and *Young Men in Spats*, by P. G. Wodehouse. "I'll come in if it gets too bad," she said.

A Wodehouse Crossword

by Mark Smith

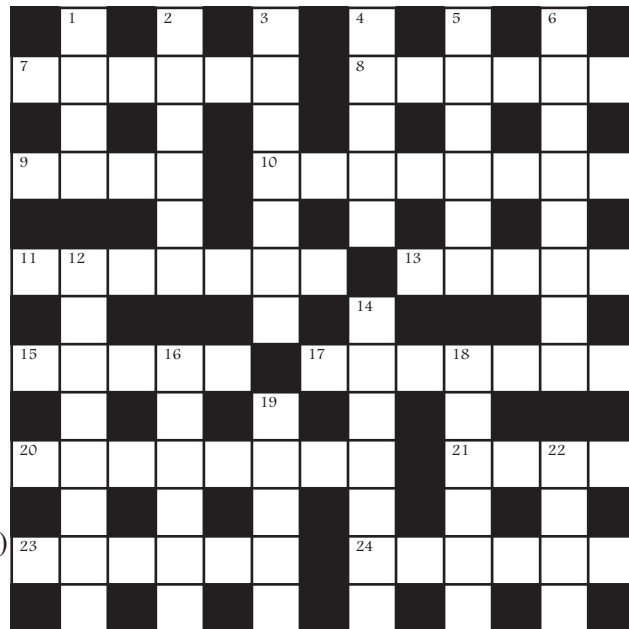
(Answers on page 25.)

Across

- 7 Film showing Room 101 – let it be rewound (6)
- 8 Cheery Abe put in disarray (6)
- 9 Kipling's work sent back with note for Psmith's chum (4)
- 10 Eat posh, getting confused about upper-class drinking establishment (8)
- 11 Senior journalist, after a party, is embarrassed (7)
- 13 On return, Edward shortly to leave the Little Nugget (5)
- 15/18 Not much comes after a game of chance for a Drones Club member (5,6)
- 17 To scream in celebration is extremely unusual, doubly so before tea is prepared (7)
- 20 Roots of extremely mestizo varied, not initially traced (8)
- 21 Mr Travers lacking somewhat, half full of vegetarian food (4)
- 23 Monty's a sharp one! (6)
- 24 Dug out of the soil, i.e. rather more greasy (6)

Down

- 1 King William gives first two couples a bird or a fruit (4)
- 2 Jeeves swaps five for fifty, losing energy while concealing Wooster's first treasures (6)
- 3 Cat less befuddled in places such as Blandings (7)
- 4/14 Sir Roderick's nephew put up with artless shindig in Peak District town (5,7)
- 5 Old Bassett starts to yearn for getting into shape (6)
- 6 Show mater around for Mr Potter-Pirbright (8)



- 12 Bertie's first to get politically radical in seaside resort (8)
- 14 See 4
- 16 Fantastic creature heartless Erik captured in contested strip of territory (6)
- 18 See 15 Across
- 19 Fix conclusion after the morning (5)
- 22 5th Earl of Ickenham finally off forever, Hampshire bound

The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

The Swoop: Part One

The Swoop, Wodehouse's satire on invasion-scare literature, is one of his scarcest titles in first edition: Eileen McIlvaine brackets it with *The Globe By The Way Book* as being "among the rarest Wodehousiana" (*P. G. Wodehouse: A Comprehensive Bibliography*, 1990, p18); Joseph Connolly classifies it as "without doubt [one of] the [five] most scarce titles" (*P. G. Wodehouse: An Illustrated Biography*, 1979, p136); and David Jasen describes it as "probably the most difficult of the Wodehouse stories in book-form to obtain" (*The Swoop! and Other Stories by P. G. Wodehouse*, 1979, xvi).

Wodehouse himself talks about *The Swoop* in *Over Seventy* (1957, p73), describing it as "one of the paper-covered shilling books so prevalent around 1909". He goes on to say, "I wrote the whole twenty-five thousand words of it in five days, and the people who read it, if placed end to end, would have reached from Hyde Park Corner to about the top of Arlington Street [a distance of about three-quarters of a mile; equivalent to 720 people, assuming an average height of 5' 6"]. Was it worth the trouble? Yes, I think so, for I had a great deal of fun writing it."

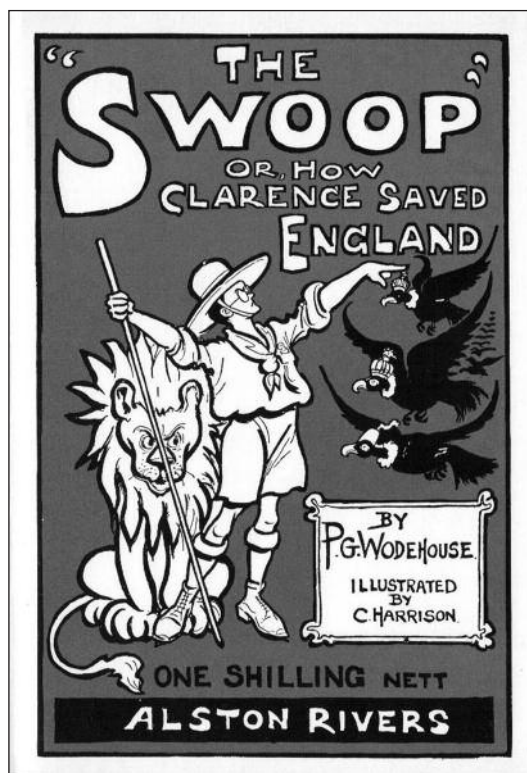
It is plain from the text that Wodehouse did indeed have a great deal of fun writing it, in particular when dealing with its hero, the Boy Scout Clarence Chugwater. The story opens with "Clarence, on this sultry August afternoon, tensely occupied tracking the family cat across the dining-room carpet by its foot-prints. Glancing up for a moment, he caught sight of the other members of the family. Not a single member of that family was practising with the rifle, or drilling, or learning to make bandages. Clarence groaned." As Barry Phelps says, Wodehouse was "writing rapidly for cash rather than art, [with] an exuberant, uninhibited freshness" (*P. G. Wodehouse: Man and Myth*, 1992, pp88–89).

The first edition was published on 16 April 1909 by the firm of Alston Rivers (*McIlvaine*, A11a); the

only other Wodehouse title published by the firm was to be *A Gentleman of Leisure* in November 1910. As Wodehouse states, *The Swoop* was published in paperback format, priced at one shilling, and was designed for sale at railway stations and similar places. It was only 128 pages long and contained

numerous line drawings by C. Harrison. The ephemeral nature of the publication has meant that there are few surviving copies. In many instances, those that have survived have lost their covers, so have been rebound.

The scarcity of the title led to it being included in one of the four collections of rare Wodehouse material edited by David Jasen and published by the Seabury Press in the USA between 1976 and 1980. It was the cornerstone title of the collection entitled *The Swoop! and Other Stories by P. G. Wodehouse* (B20a), published in 1979. The book was published in hardback format, with a dustwrapper, and contained an appreciation by Malcolm Muggeridge and an introduction



by David Jasen.

In 1993 a facsimile edition was published by James H. Heineman Inc., in a print run of only 500 copies. The facsimile edition itself is now very scarce.

Following the expiry of *The Swoop's* copyright in the USA and the explosion of print-on-demand publishing, there are now numerous editions of *The Swoop* available via the internet. Strictly speaking, such titles should not be imported into the UK.

The title has also been serialised in the UK by The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), appearing across seven instalments which were issued between 2006 and 2010 as Christmas gifts to those members who renewed their membership of the Society. The introduction to each instalment claimed that *The Swoop* "has never been republished in the UK". However, the second part of this article will show that claim was not correct, and that there was in fact a serialisation some 40 years previously.

Prince Otto of Saxe-Pfennig went to bed that night, comfortably conscious of a good work well done. He saw his way now clear before him.

But he had made one miscalculation. He had not reckoned with Clarence Chugwater.

(From *The Swoop, or, How Clarence Saved England*, 1909)

Further Advice for the Royal Couple

In our June issue, we provided a selection of Wodehouse quotes on marriage and invited readers to submit more, in honour of the union of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge (aka William and Kate). IAIN ANDERSON wrote that one of his favourites is found in ‘Jeeves and the Impending Doom’, when Bingo Little says:

“Rosie is the dearest girl in the world, but if you were a married man, Bertie, you would be aware that the best of wives is apt to cut up rough if she finds that her husband has dropped six weeks’ housekeeping money on a single race. Isn’t that so, Jeeves?”

“Yes, sir. Women are odd in that respect.”

KAREN SHOTTING offered a number of ideal quotations:

“Garny, old boy,” – sinking his voice to a whisper almost inaudible on the other side of the street – “take my tip. Go and jump off the dock yourself. You’ll feel another man. Give up this bachelor business. It’s a mug’s game. I look on you bachelors as excrescences on the social system. I regard you, old man, purely and simply as a wart. Go and get married, laddie, go and get married.”

(Ukridge in *Love Among the Chickens*)

“I mean,” said Freddie, who felt strongly on this subject, “it’s love that makes the world go round.”

“It isn’t anything of the kind,” said Sir Aylmer. Like so many fine old soldiers, he was inclined to be a little literal-minded. “I never heard such dashed silly nonsense in my life. What makes the world go round is . . . Well, I’ve forgotten at the moment, but it certainly isn’t love. How the deuce could it?”

(From ‘Romance at Droitgate Spa’)

“By coffee-caddie I mean a man – and there is no higher type – whose instinct it is to carry

his wife’s breakfast up to her room on a tray each morning and bill and coo with her as she wades into it. And what the coffee-caddie needs is not a female novelist with a firm chin and flashing eyes, but a jolly little soul who, when he bills, will herself bill like billy-o, and who will be right there with bells on when he starts to coo. The advice I give to every young man starting out to seek a life partner is to find a girl whom he can tickle.”

(Uncle Fred to Pongo on being the coffee-caddie-type husband as opposed to a man of steel and ginger in *Uncle Dynamite*)

“So I got her alone up at the club-house and said, ‘I say, old girl, what about it?’ and she said, ‘What about what?’ and I said, “What about marrying me? Don’t if you don’t want to, of course,’ I said, ‘but I’m bound to say it looks pretty good to me.’ And then she said she loved another – this bloke Spelvin, to wit. A nasty jar, I can tell you, it was. I was just starting off on a round, and it made me hook my putts on every green.”

(William Bates reporting to the Oldest Member on his failed proposal to Jane Packard in ‘Rodney Fails to Qualify’)

Karen considers that last one to be her favourite marriage proposal, though she is fairly certain that Wills did not use the method with Kate.

Finally, Ye Editor was delighted to stumble across this observation from Bill Shannon in *The Old Reliable*:

“What’s wrong with marriage? It’s fine. Why, look at the men who liked it so much that, once started, they couldn’t stop, and just went on marrying everything in sight. Look at Brigham Young. Look at Henry the Eighth. Look at King Solomon. Those boys knew when they were on a good thing.”

Quite right, too!

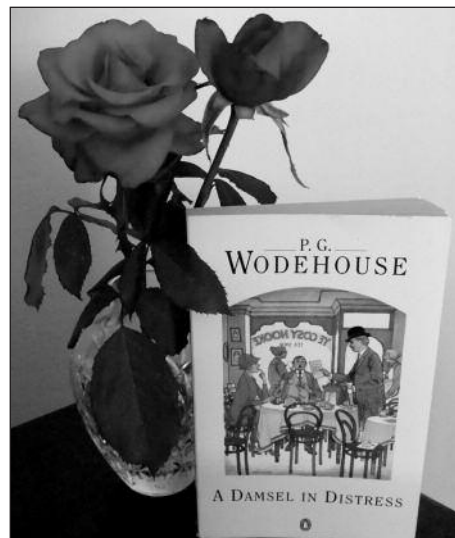
Answers to A Wodehouse Crossword by Mark Smith

Across	Down
7 cinema	1 kiwi
8 upbeat	2 jewels
9 Mike	3 castles
10 taphouse	4 Tuppy
11 abashed	5 oblong
13 Ogden	6 Catsmeat
15 Bingo	12 Brighton
17 ululate	14 Glossop
20 rhizomes	16 gazeke
21 tofu	18 Little
23 Bodkin	19 amend
24 oilier	22 Fred

Still Life with Wodehouse

Earlier this year, Richard Burnip’s article on *A Damsel in Distress* (June 2011) inspired KAREN SHOTTING to take this photo since she had just been reading the book. Karen writes:

“Unlike others, whose thoughts about this early work generally centre on its place in the oeuvre as a Blandings precursor, my first thought is of the opening scenes of Lord Marshmorton among the Belper Castle roses.” As she has also been plagued by thrips, she applauds “Lord Marshmorton’s rigid views regarding their annihilation.”



Recent Press Comment

Journal of Medical Biography, August

(from Barry Chapman)

A short article by P Dakin of London referred to a Dr MacBryan, who ran a private mental home near Cheney Court, home to several Wodehouse aunts in Box, Wiltshire. Mr Dakin provided a short history of Dr MacBryan, who was the model for Sir Roderick Glossop, as noted in Norman Murphy's *Wodehouse Handbook*.

Western Daily Press, August 6 (from Alexander Dainty)

The 'Quotes of the Day' column quoted Stephen Fry: "When we did *Jeeves and Wooster* in the 1980s, Hugh Laurie, who was Bertie, had attended Eton but we still got complaints that his accent was too suburban."

Irish Times, August 8 (from Paul Kerrigan)

An article about an unsuccessful campaign to prevent the closure of a local hospital noted that in driving through the town, "one could not help noticing, as Bertie Wooster might have put it, that the population was rather far from being grunted".

BBC2, August 15 (from Larissa Saxby- Bridger)

During the programme *Wonderstuff*, presenter Jane Moore commented: "I do hope Jeeves has got my gin and tonic ready."

www.dallasfed.org, August 17 (from Vijay Barnabas)

Richard W Fisher, Chairman and CEO of the Dallas Federal Reserve, said in a speech that 'Based on past behaviour of fiscal policy makers, businesses understandably regard the debt ceiling agreement and the political outcome of negotiations between Congress and the president with the suspicion akin to how the British humorist P G Wodehouse regarded his aunts. "It is no use telling me there are bad aunts and good aunts," he wrote. "At the core they are all alike. Sooner or later, out pops the cloven hoof."

www.TheCatholicThing.org, August 19

James Scall wrote a thoughtful article about Wodehouse's use of language, and commented: "In my early years, after discovering him, I used to say that Wodehouse is to be read with a dictionary. But on finishing *Weekend Wodehouse*, I think I was wrong. Wodehouse does stretch one's vocabulary. But it is not the meaning of the words that is novel or unknown. It is their placement." He developed this theme in his article.

Iran Book News Agency, August 21

Announced that a translation of *Very Good, Jeeves* by Persian translator Babal Vahedi is now on sale in Iran. "It is among the greatest comic works in the world; however, the author and characters are not known in Iran," the press release adds.

Daily Mail, August 24

Author Marika Cobbold decided that the book she would take to a desert island would be the *Life at Blandings Omnibus*, preferring it to *Ulysses* or *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* on the basis that, if she were to be alone on a desert island, she might as well live in paradise.

Screen Daily, August 24 (from Murray Hedgcock)

Announced that a film entitled *Wodehouse's War*, based on the real-life experiences of PGW, would be shot in

spring 2012 in Germany, France, and the UK; it is to be directed by Michael Radford.

The Times, August 27 (from Keith Allsop)

Under the subheading 'Red-haired Jezebel', Philip Howard's Literary Quiz included the question: "Who is Roberta Wickham?"

Daily Telegraph, August 27 (from several members)

Michael Deacon interviewed Terry Wogan concerning the forthcoming TV programme *Wogan on Wodehouse*, which paid "homage to the wittiest writer ever".

The Observer, August 28

Robert McCrum wrote probably the best defence of Wodehouse's wartime episode, among several that appeared in the midst of a spate of articles. See page 10.

The Times, August 29 (from several readers)

Clue 14 down in the main crossword was "Head for Bertie's on arrival, then small pile owned by Lord Emsworth. (9)" (The answer was Blandings.)

Numerous papers around the end of August

Most papers carried reports of distinctly varying accuracy about the new 'revelations' concerning the wartime broadcasts (see page 10). Letters in response were also published, including one from member Mark Taha in the *Sunday Telegraph* on September 4.

The Spectator, September 3 (from Christopher Bellew)

Simon Hoggart's column discussed Dulwich alumni P. G. Wodehouse and Raymond Chandler, and mentioned the BBC2 programme *Wogan on Wodehouse*, which he described as a treat for fans.

BBC Worldwide, September 7

During the summer, BBC Entertainment offered viewers in the Nordic region the chance to decide who was 'Britain's Funniest Comedian'. Stephen Fry received over 30% of the votes and, commenting, said: "I cannot tell you how touched I am to have been named a favourite comedian by Nordic viewers of the BBC. It always pleased P G Wodehouse that he was so incredibly popular in Scandinavia, and I know just how he feels."

www.rte.ie, September 15

Published a long and enthusiastic review by Paddy Kehoe of the Arrow reissue of the anthology *What Ho! The Best of P G Wodehouse*, with Stephen Fry's introduction.

Radio Times, September 16 (from Ellie King)

A question in the Eggheads Quiz was: "P G Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster is a member of which fictional club on Dover Street in London? (a) the Winchester Club; (b) the Drones Club; or (c) the Diogenes Club."

Daily Telegraph, September 17

Nicholas Shakespeare's review of Christopher Hitchens's book *Arguably* noted that Hitchens has "used his column in *Vanity Fair* rather as P G Wodehouse's Psmith suborns *Cosy Moments* . . . to conduct reforming crusades". Hitchens has also appropriated Psmith's motto "*Cosy Moments* cannot be muzzled".

The Times, September 19

In the Mind Games Quiz, question 2 asked who first

appeared together in the 1915 story *Extricating Young Gussie*, and offered the controversial answer ‘Jeeves and Bertie Wooster’.

Yorkshire Post, September 21

Carried extracts from a new biography of the late Ian Carmichael, in which the way in which he became involved in the 1960s BBC TV series as Bertie Wooster was described.

The Guardian, September 22

Robert McCrum claimed that “Comedy does not age well”, compared with serious writing. He pointed out that “from the [twentieth] century there is any amount of light comic writing that has not made it through to the present day” and instances W W Jacobs, Michael Arlen, the comic stories of A A Milne and a lot of Noel Coward’s material, which, he says, has “dated badly”. He then adds “P G Wodehouse is an exceedingly rare example of a humorist who seems to remain evergreen – perhaps because he is also a great English stylist.”

The Times, September 24

Published an obituary of the late Society Patron Jonathan Cecil (see page 8).

BBC Radio 4 – Today Programme, October 8

(from Robert Bruce)

Member James Naughtie reported a story that a council had banned a law-abiding citizen from seeking wild blackberries on his local common because it thought he might disturb the rare newt population. Without any explanation, he added: “Gussie Fink-Nottle, where are you now?”

The Guardian, October 8 (from Mike Swaddling)

In response to an article regarding fat men in literature, a letter writer cited Freddie Widgeon’s fat uncle sweepstake and Bertie Wooster’s encounter with the Right Hon A B Filmer, “a tubby little chap who looked as if he had been poured into his clothes and had forgotten to say ‘When!’”

Daily Telegraph, October 8

Probably the best of the obituaries of Society Patron Iain Sproat, who died on September 29 (see page 9.)

BBC Radio 3, October 14 (from Michael Barley)

Presenter Donald Macleod reported that the sister of the Composer of the Week, the Polish Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937), had read Chopin’s letters and P G Wodehouse to him on his deathbed.

The Observer, October 16 (from Jo Jacobius)

Victoria Coren ended an article on vegetarianism with: “I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again: there’ll always be mushrooms on toast and P G Wodehouse.”

New India Express (Hyderabad), October 17

Announced that the third translation by Krishna Mohan into the Telugu language of Wodehouse books (10 of the Mulliner stories) has been published. “They are not literal translations of the original script, but are adapted versions which take into consideration the Indian elements, culture and values.” (The language is spoken by about 75 million people in southern India, according to Wikipedia.)

Daily Telegraph, October 20 (from Carolyn de la Plain)

A parliamentary sketch by Andrew Gimson, concerning Liam Fox’s resignation, made the point: “Liam Fox had

Adam Werritty to help him observe the ministerial code, when he really needed Jeeves.”

USA Today, October 20

Referred to Sir Terry Pratchett as “Enormously popular in the UK, where he is revered as a successor to P G Wodehouse”.

Daily Telegraph, October 27 and 28

(from Carolyn de la Plain)

In articles on successive days about the book *Planet Word*, published to accompany Stephen Fry’s BBC TV series, reference was made to the fact that according to its author, “You only have to look on Twitter to see evidence of the fact that a lot of English words that are used, say, in Shakespeare’s plays or P G Wodehouse novels – both of them avid inventors of new words – are so little used that people don’t even know what they mean.”

The Oldie, November (from Caroline Franklyn)

Included a short obituary of Jonathan Cecil (see page 8), noting that “it was always a relief to spot his Wodehousian features at an overcrowded literary party”.

The National, November 4

An article on John Mortimer’s Rumpole stories began by referencing Wodehouse’s complaint that comedy was tremendously hard work, but the end result in his case, like Mortimer’s, was that no word of Wodehouse’s canon “feels like work”.

The Guardian, November 4

Sophie Ratcliffe, editor of the new book of Wodehouse letters (see page 3), described the variety of PGW’s correspondence and spoke in particular of those letters that were more revealing and intimate.

The Guardian, November 5 (from Caroline Franklyn)

The Review section carried a long review of P. G. Wodehouse: *A Life in Letters*.

Daily Telegraph, November 7

Philip Hensher’s review of P. G. Wodehouse: *A Life in Letters* examined the many complex aspects to PGW’s character as revealed in his letters, such as a near-obsession with money, his naiveté over the wartime episode, and a certain degree of “priggishness”.

Mail Online, November 10

Referring to the new book of Wodehouse letters, Craig Brown described Wodehouse’s ideas for horrific plots that he would pass on to Bill Townsend to write instead.

The Guardian, November 10

With the PGW letters book once again raising the spectre of the wartime episode, Robert McCrum made the point that “it’s the writer or artist’s work that matters”.

The Times, November 11 (from Keith Alsop)

Richard Morrison movingly described the part played by *Right Ho, Jeeves* in his son’s recovery from a series of disabling headaches. Listening to a recording of the book had them both “roaring with laughter. . . . I don’t say the book made him better. But the laughter broke the vice-like grip of pain.”

Daily Telegraph, November 12 (from Sally Knowles)

A letter to the editor claimed the writer’s distant relative had been shocked by Wodehouse’s heavy drinking. A reply from Norman Murphy on November 14 refuted this as PGW had only had two whiskies and soda.

Future Events for Your Diary

January 8, 2012 London Walks Wodehouse Walk

Richard Burnip will lead a Wodehouse-themed walk for London Walks; Society members get a discounted fee of £6. Go to exit 2 (Park Lane east side) of Marble Arch Underground station at 2.30 p.m., and identify yourself as a Society member.

February 28, 2012 Society Meeting

We will meet in the upstairs room of The George from 6 p.m. Our entertainment will be a dramatization from the first part of *Over Seventy*.

April 14, 2012 Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Explore Wodehouse's London with Norman Murphy!

May 25–27, 2012 A Wodehouse Weekend in Norfolk

For details regarding this very special event, see the flyer enclosed with this issue.

June 15, 2012 Gold Bats vs. The Dulwich Dusters

Probable but not-yet-firm date of our annual match.

June 24, 2012 Gold Bats vs. Sherlock Holmes Society

See the March 2012 issue for the firm date of this match.

July 10, 2012 Society Meeting

We will meet in the upstairs room of The George from 6 p.m.; the evening's entertainment TBA.

July 28, 2012 Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Another opportunity to walk around Wodehouse's London with Norman Murphy. See April 14 for details.

September 8, 2012 Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Another opportunity to walk around Wodehouse's London with Norman Murphy. See April 14 for details.

September 15–16, 2012 Royal County of Berkshire Show

The Society sponsors the Berkshire Champion of Champions competition, for which judging takes place on Sunday morning at the show grounds in Newbury. See <http://www.newburyshowground.co.uk/>

November 13, 2012 Society Meeting and AGM

We will meet in the upstairs room of The George, 213 Strand, from 6 p.m.; the AGM will be followed by a speaker (to be announced).

October 25, 2012 Dinner at Gray's Inn

Applications forms and full details regarding the Society's biennial dinner at Gray's Inn will be supplied in the June 2012 edition of *Wooster Sauce*.

I am told by one who knows that hens cannot raise their eyebrows, not having any; but I am prepared to swear that at this moment this hen raised hers. I will go further. She sniffed.

(From *Love Among the Chickens*, 1906)

Contents

1 Plum at the Polo Grounds	16 My First Wodehouse Experience
3 A Memorable Book Launch	16 Sporting News
4 A Wodehouse Weekend at Emsworth	17 Wodehouse and the Liturgy
5 A Brief AGM and an Enjoyable Talk	17 Profile of a Committee Member: Lesley Tapson
6 A Not-So-Rainy Day in Newbury	18 Further Details Will Be Provided – 4
7 Society News	19 Quizzes, Poetry, and a Lot of Fun
7 Mea Maxima Culpa	19 A Release from Imprisonment
8 We Remember: Jonathan Cecil	20 The Word Around the Clubs
9 We Remember: Iain Sproat	20 Wodehouse on the Boards
10 Another Visit from the Cicadas	21 The Play Certainly Was Just the Thing
11 Letters to the Editor	22 Poet's Corner: <i>The Cynic</i>
11 Mastermind Quiz #3: The Mulliner Stories	23 Cosy Moments
11 Results of the September Quiz (with answers)	23 A Wodehouse Crossword by Mark Smith
12 An American Birthday Party	24 Bibliographic Corner: <i>The Swoop</i> , Part One
13 Wodehousean Beer Labels	25 Further Advice for the Royal Couple
14 This May Interest You . . .	26 Recent Press Comment