



# WOOSTER SAUCE

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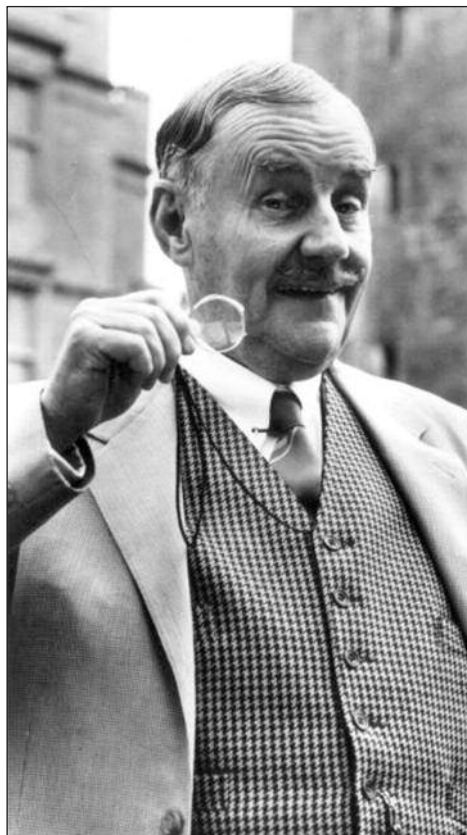
## Richard Briers: An Appreciation

Along with, I suspect, many other Wodehouseans, I thought I knew Richard Briers. Not well, you understand, but I had made the initial approach to him to become our president, we got on well together, and I reckoned I could have given a outline of his career at the drop of a hat. It was not until I began the sad task of writing this appreciation that I realised how little I knew of him. While every newspaper referred to his Tom Good in *The Good Life*, certainly the series for which he was best known and which is still being shown around the world today, there was much, much more to him than that.

Richard was born on January 14, 1934. He spent his boyhood in Raynes Park, adjoining Wimbledon, and left school at 16 to become a filing clerk in the Strand. He did his National Service in the RAF, doing the same boring work at Northwood in north London, but was lucky enough to meet the actor Brian Murphy (*George and Mildred*), who encouraged him to take up amateur dramatics, though some sources attribute this to his father's cousin, the comedian Terry-Thomas.

After the RAF, he applied for and achieved a place at RADA from 1954 to 1956 in company with Albert Finney and Peter O'Toole, and won a silver medal while there. His rapid speech in his portrayal of Hamlet led the critic W. A. Darlington to say that he played it "like a demented typewriter", but Richard didn't mind: "Until then, I could just see failure staring me in the face. Now there was a glimmer of hope." His success at RADA won him

a place with the Liverpool Repertory Company, where he met Ann Davies, an actress working there as stage manager. According to one source, he borrowed £5 from his mother, bought an engagement ring, and married her within six months. They went on to have two daughters, Lucy and Kate.



Richard Briers as Gally Threepwood in the 1995 BBC TV movie *Heavy Weather*.

He said later: "My first professional part was as a botanist who was mad about getting rare plants from America, and I've been playing fanatics on and off ever since." As *The Guardian* pointed out, after Liverpool "he was never out of work". That is quite a statement; of how many actors can that be said?

Richard's career was so long and varied that it has been very difficult to work out what he was doing and in what medium. Looking through the obituaries in the national Press, I became slightly confused at the differences between them. Not surprisingly, they all made much of his best-known television shows (*Marriage Lines*, *Brothers In Law*, *The Good Life*, *Ever Decreasing Circles*, *Monarch of the Glen*). There was continual mention of his work in the theatre over the years, but the Press gave such different accounts of this aspect, I realized I had to look it up myself. And, after spending two days looking through every reference source I could find, I am sure my information is not complete. When he appeared in Noel Coward's *Present Laughter* (1965), Coward said: "You're a great farceur because you never, ever hang about." Coward was right; no one could ever accuse

Richard of hanging about. There may have been other actors as busy as he was, but I think it unlikely.

In 1958, two years after he had left RADA, he made his first film, *Girls at Sea*, a remake of Ian Hay's *The Middle Watch*.

It was only a small part, but the cast included Michael Hordern, Ronald Shiner, Fabia Drake, Lionel Jeffries, Warren Mitchell, and Daniel Massey. The year 1959 saw his first appearance in the West End in *Gilt and Gingerbread*, starring John Clements and Kay Hammond, and also saw him make two TV appearances in *Tales from Dickens*, playing Mr Winkle.



A very young Briers

The following year, he was in the West End again in *Double York* as well as *It's in the Bag*, and he appeared in the film comedy *Bottoms Up*, while on TV he played in *The Kite* by Somerset Maugham. 1961 was equally busy with the films *The Girl on the Boat*, playing Eustace Hignett; *Murder She Said* and *A Matter of WHO* (Terry-Thomas and Honor Blackman); six parts in various TV shows; and the first of the TV comedy series with which he will always be is popularly associated, *Marriage Lines* (1961–66), in which he played the lead with Prunella Scales.

While he will be best remembered as Tom Good in the thirty episodes of *The Good Life* (1975–78), many think Richard was far better as Tom Good's antithesis, the unsympathetic obsessive but touching Martin Bryce in *Ever Decreasing Circles* (1984–89). It is reported Richard said it was his favourite sitcom role.

As I went through the long, long list of Richard's work, I was struck by its variety: *Jackanory*, *Watership Down*, *Roobarb and Custard*; commercial voiceovers ("It paid the mortgage"); 23 films (including one with Raquel Welch); radio (as Bertie Wooster with Michael Horden as Jeeves 1973–81); his stage appearances in plays by Feydeau, Shaw, Ibsen, Chekhov, Ionesco, Noel Coward, and Alan Ayckbourn. And then his later work with Kenneth Branagh in six Shakespeare plays, again demonstrating his mastery of his craft as he played Malvolio, Bardolph, and Polonius. And I was very glad I saw him in *London Assurance* (2010) as the bumbling Adolphus Spanker when he bumbled to perfection. A man of many parts.

His talents went beyond acting. I learned to my surprise that Richard loved looking at churches (as

I do). If you look him up in the British Library catalogue, you will see 76 entries under his name, and the first is his book *English Country Churches* (1989). I wish I had been able to talk to him on that topic.

How did we get Richard to become our president? Well, probably the main reason for that comes from Richard himself:

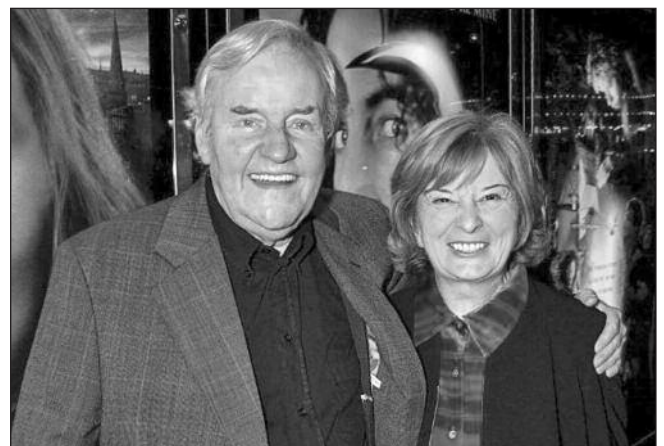
As any actor will tell you – if he's honest, that is – a successful play or film depends not on the actors but on a good script. Without a good script you are lost, and although playing Eustace Hignett in *The Girl on the Boat* in 1961 was tremendous fun, the words were definitely not Wodehouse, though the basic plot was his. Later on, the great radio director David Hatch gathered a First Eleven cast together to record *Joy in the Morning*, *Right Ho, Jeeves* and *Stiff Upper Lip*, *Jeeves* for the BBC. The cast included Michael Hordern as Jeeves and I was Bertie. . . . As Simon Callow once said, it is only when you hear Wodehouse spoken aloud that you realize what a brilliant master of language he was.

Then in 1995 I was lucky enough to play Gally Threepwood in *Heavy Weather* – and that was a cinch. Wodehouse always treated the characters in his novels as though they were actors on stage and, playing that part, I knew from Wodehouse's writing exactly how Gally felt and how he should act and react. As I said, a cinch.

I don't normally undertake commitments outside acting, but when I was asked to become president of the newly-formed P G Wodehouse Society (UK) in 1997, I felt I couldn't refuse. And I'm glad I didn't.

And we were very glad, too. We knew we were lucky when he agreed to join us, we tried not to impose on him too much – and he was happy to do whatever we asked of him. Richard Briers did us proud, and we were proud to have him as our president.

– Norman Murphy



Richard with his wife of 56 years, Ann Davies

# Society News

## **Subscriptions 1: Annual Renewal Time**

While this edition of *Wooster Sauce* was at the printers, our membership year came to an end and the new one began. This, therefore, is the issue in which members who renew electronically or by cheque receive a renewal reminder. We try hard not to send reminders to members who have already paid, but because of the tight timing this year, we are almost certain to chivvy a few people who don't deserve to be chivvied. So, if you're one of those people, please ignore the reminder and accept our apologies.

Of course, if you haven't yet paid, please *don't* ignore the reminder, and send us your renewal now!

## **Subscriptions 2: Standing Orders**

Meanwhile, we'll be watching the arrival of standing order payments with interest. Lots of members have updated their standing orders to £22, and those should all go through smoothly. But our records show that quite a few individuals have not upgraded. It is likely that around 200 people will be paying too little; we will be asking them for the balance of their sub and a replacement standing order form as soon as possible. If you are one of these people, please do your best to regularise your membership quickly – this problem creates a huge amount of work for our very small team. Thank you.

## **Cricket, Cricket, and More Cricket**

If all goes well, and the heavens allow, this month will see the Gold Bats playing against their traditional rivals, the Dulwich Dusters and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. The first match, at Dulwich College on June 14, begins at around 4.30 pm; the second will take place on June 23 at West Wycombe Cricket Club, starting sometime around 11 am. If you are attending the Dulwich match, you need to have tickets to partake of the tea. Application forms were sent with the March issue of *Wooster Sauce*; if you've lost yours, get in touch with the Editor (contact details on page 24). If you will be joining us at West Wycombe, be sure to bring along a picnic lunch. Other matches in which members of the Gold Bats will be playing are listed in Future Events on page 24.

But that's not all! It was exactly 100 years ago when Wodehouse spotted a cricketer named Percy Jeeves playing in a match at Cheltenham – so it is fitting that the Gloucestershire County Cricket Club has joined forces with The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) to mark the occasion. This will be in the form of a Jeeves Centenary Brunch, with guest speaker Murray Hedgcock. For full details, including information on how to join the celebration, just turn the page!

## **Future Society Meetings**

Our last meeting in February, featuring Wodehouse Bingo, was an unqualified success; see Graeme Davidson's report on page 5 if you don't believe us. Even more entertainment is in store at the Open Mic Night on July 9. This will see a number of Society members stepping up to the microphone to share their favourite short passage from Wodehouse; the more daring (and talented) among us may even attempt a song. If you are not taking part, at least come along and applaud!

As for our October meeting, word is that we will have a special speaker on the subject of 'Adapting Wodehouse for Radio and TV' – and the difficulties thereof. Given the response to the recent *Blandings* series, this could lead to some interesting discussion on the night, so be sure to join us. All meetings take place upstairs at The George, starting from 6 pm.

## **Cost of Back Issues**

At a recent meeting of the Society's Committee, it was decided to raise our fees for posting back issues of *Wooster Sauce* and *By The Way*. Society members should be advised that these charges are now as follows:

For *Wooster Sauce*: £3 per copy to UK residents; £3.50 per copy to Europe; £4 to all other overseas addresses.

For *By The Way*: Free of charge when sent with *Wooster Sauce*; postage charged if sent alone.

Requests for prices and availability should be sent to our Membership Secretary, whose contact details are on the back of every *Wooster Sauce*.

## **Final Wodehouse Walks**

Our venerable Remembrancer, Norman Murphy, has announced that he will cease giving regularly scheduled Wodehouse Walks at the end of this year – and this time he means it! Norman will have turned 80 by the time this *Wooster Sauce* reaches mail-boxes, and he has confided in the Editor that he is feeling perhaps a little bit weary – and who wouldn't after 33 years and goodness knows how many miles of walking around London? Thus, his final two Walks will be held on July 13 and September 14, and if you want to join one of them, you'd better act fast to reserve a spot.

# Jeeves Centenary at Cheltenham



The cricket grounds at Cheltenham College, where the annual festival is held.

Think of Wodehouse, and you think of Jeeves. Everyone does. Jeeves is undoubtedly Wodehouse’s best-known character, and on pages 12 and 13 of this issue, Murray Hedgcock tells us how, a century ago, Plum was inspired to name literature’s most famous gentleman’s personal gentleman after a county cricketer he saw playing at Cheltenham.

Thus, in this Centenary year, we were extremely pleased to learn from the organisers of the Cheltenham Cricket Festival that they were as anxious as the Society is to mark this seminal moment. Gloucestershire County



Percy Jeeves.  
Wodehouse saw him play at Cheltenham in 1913.

Cricket Club has generously offered to host a brunch – the Jeeves Centenary Brunch – on Wednesday, July 17, 2013, during the Cheltenham Cricket Festival. The brunch will take place in a private marquee at the handsome Cheltenham College Ground – the very ground where Wodehouse spotted Jeeves’s potential – and precedes the first day’s play in a match between Gloucestershire and Worcestershire.

HM Lord-Lieutenant of Gloucestershire Dame Janet Trotter DBE – herself a keen Wodehouse enthusiast – has kindly agreed to join us, and the Society’s own Murray Hedgcock will talk to us about the importance of names in cricket, how Plum came to choose the name of Jeeves for his latest character, and much else besides. Murray is a very entertaining speaker, a frequent contributor to *Wooster Sauce*, editor of the excellent *Wodehouse at the Wicket* (now out in paperback, incidentally), and a Patron of our Society. Your Chairman and various PGW Society members will be there too, of course, joining the Chairman of Gloucestershire’s organising committee and Gloucestershire CCC members in marking this important centenary. If you can manage it, do please come; it should be a most interesting and entertaining event in a lovely location, and with some good cricket to follow.

The ticket application form enclosed with this *Wooster Sauce* gives fuller details. If you would like to join the celebration, we recommend that you apply quickly as we anticipate there will be quite a demand for places.

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## It’s Easy to Get Confused

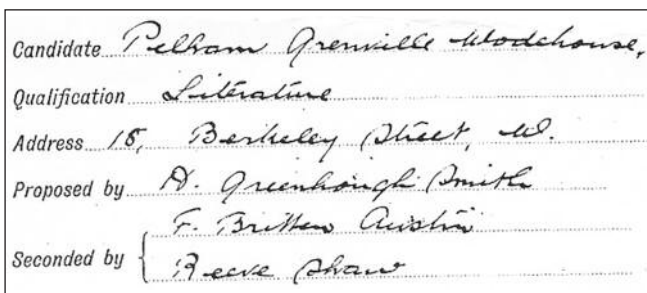
For years, when conducting his Wodehouse Walks, Norman Murphy’s first stop would always be 15 Berkeley Street, which he had identified 20 years ago as the address Wodehouse used for Bertie Wooster’s domicile at Crichton Mansions, Berkeley Street (‘Sir Roderick Comes to Lunch’). His source? A page from the Savage Club’s Candidates’ Book, dated 2nd February 1922: this shows Wodehouse’s election to the Savage,

when he and Ethel were living on Berkeley Street. Norman’s only problem at the time he discovered the page was the number (see the picture) – is that 15 or 18?

After much deliberating and consultation with innumerable others, Norman settled on 15, and from then on it was there that he directed Wodehouseans, not only in his Wodehouse Walks but also in *A Wodehouse Handbook* and *Three Wodehouse Walks*.

Until, that is, he received a message from ANANTH KAITHARAM, alerting fellow Plummies to a Wodehouse letter that was up for auction on eBay. The letter, dated November 7, 1921, was typewritten and had Wodehouse’s address at the top. There was no longer any doubt – it was, in fact, 18 Berkeley Street.

So the first stop on the Wodehouse Walk is now a few yards further along on Berkeley Street. Well, we can’t always get it right, can we?



# Bingo Night

by Graeme W I Davidson

The Society's latest Meeting was held on February 19 at The George, on the Strand. Society Chairman Hilary Bruce presided over the early part of the proceedings, going through the parish notices and then making a special presentation to the Society's 3,000th member – that is, the 3,000th person to join the Society since our founding in 1997. This was Christopher Keeling, who accepted a copy of *A Man of Means* to mark the occasion.



*Chairman Hilary Bruce congratulates Christopher Keeling on becoming the 3,000th member of the Society.*

Hilary then announced that the remainder of the evening was to be devoted to a little bingo entertainment. I misheard this as “a Little, Bingo entertainment” and, naturally, readied myself for a spirited reading by Bingo Little of a few well-chosen pieces from *Wee Tots* or perhaps even a gritty dramatisation of Bingo's magnum opus, *Tibby's Wonderful Adventure*. But, as Paul Kent, the Committee Member running this part of the night's proceedings, told us, we were in fact going to play a game called Wodehouse Bingo.

Paul explained it was a variant on the parlour game of ‘bingo’ or ‘housey housey’, the key element to the variant being that, instead of numbers being selected randomly from some drum or the like and then ticked off against various numbers allocated to players, we were to divide ourselves into teams. Each team would choose 12 numbers from between 1 and 25, and then – and this is where it got tricky – we would be asked Wodehouse-related questions with a numeric answer, and that answer, after being subjected to some arithmetic treatment we had to work out ourselves, was checked by us against our 12 numbers to see if it matched one of them and could therefore get ticked off, victory going to the team who first claimed to have ticked off all 12 of their numbers.

The only thing that was going to get ticked off, I thought, was myself, having rather fondly thought that I had bade farewell to the horrors of maths on leaving school. The whole thing, I thought, was going to go distinctly pear-shaped. Wodehouse enthusiasts are word people, not numbers people. Whole thing was going to be a grim farrago, I mused. Well, that's where I erred.

Paul – who I thought, despite his breezily confident manner and description of the game as incredibly simple, had devised a game worthy of confection by Ukridge, so full of holes was it that it made a Swiss cheese look wind- and water-tight, and I half-expected him to address folk as ‘Old Horse’ and

exhort them each to bounce up to him a ten bob note to help defray the necessary admin costs – had actually come up with a splendid bit of amusement.

The game was neither easy nor simple, though. As you can imagine, people might get the knowledge bit right but stumble over the arithmetic, and, even if they got both elements right, they might then discover that the answer wasn't among their 12 numbers. No small wonder that no cry was heard of “House! House!” or “Housey! Housey!” or, perhaps more appropriately in the circumstances, “Hice! Hice!” or “Hicey! Hicey!”, neither “Hice” nor “Hicey” being, despite the louse/lice and mouse/mice singular/plural template, the plural of “House” and “Housey”, but rather reflecting a diction oddity of those frequently inhabiting a Wodehouse story or a country hicc. Nor indeed was there heard a cry of (as I had planned had my fearfully brainy team won) “Blandings! Blandings!”

As it turned out, one team did reach 12 ticked-off numbers ahead of the others, but it seems they had been too diffident, weakly-voiced, or understandably uncertain as to the rules, and no cry by them of their success was consequently made or heard.

The eventual winning team (one of several who nearly reached 12 ticking-offs) comprised Graham Johnston, Laurence Ogram, Patricia O'Sullivan, and Elin Murphy. They won by answering a tie-breaker, set by Norman Murphy, about the number of trans-



*Bingo players conferring – or not.*

atlantic crossings Wodehouse had made by ocean liner. The answer, particularly in the context of the difficulty of transatlantic travel in the early 20th century when Wodehouse was criss-crossing the Atlantic, was a startlingly vast number, and made David Frost, even in his hey-days of zipping back and forth on Concorde, look positively housebound

As ever, an excellent Wodehouse night!

# A Glimpse of the Past

by Elin Murphy

It's a funny old world this, when an email from south London, England, arrives in the inbox of The Wodehouse Society's membership secretary, Ian Michaud, in Vancouver, Canada, and then is bounced back over to north London, all within a day. The message from Marina Gask concerned her grandfather, who had been interned with Wodehouse at Tost: "I thought you might be interested in speaking to my mother, who is now 80. She is very keen to recount her father's memories of the internment camp and of Mr Wodehouse."

Interested? You bet we were! Before long, Norman and I had contacted Marina's mother, Jeanne Gask, and on February 25 we toddled off to visit her. We arrived to find a table covered with photographs and scrapbooks filled with letters and memorabilia, as well as a petite, white-haired, and charming hostess keen to tell us about her father, Tom Sarginson.

That Wodehouse knew Mrs. Gask's father is not in doubt, for he gets three mentions in *Performing Flea* (in the chapter 'Huy Day by Day'; his name is misspelled as Sarginsson). The third occurs when Wodehouse describes meals at Tost:

At supper two loaves of brunette bread were deposited on each of the tables and divided up among the nine men who sat there. And when I say divided, I mean divided. There was none

of that casual business of saying "Help yourself, George; and pass it along". At my table Tom Sarginson got out his slide rule and started measuring, and the rest of us watched him like hawks to see that his hand didn't slip.

Tom Sarginson, who had served in the Royal Air Corps during World War I, had been working as chief electrical engineer for an English textiles firm in Calais when the Germans invaded, and he was captured in Calais. Once settled in at Tost, he wrote detailed letters to his wife in which he described life in the camp—though Wodehouse gets only one brief mention: "In the mess room, P.J. [*sic*] Wodehouse and I feed together." The letters provide much illumination into what life was like for the internees in the former insane asylum that housed them, though they are perhaps more sober in tone than PGW's own lighthearted account.

Sarginson was heavily involved in many of the camp's activities, including crafts making and the construction of a dam and a swimming pool. He was part of the Red Cross Committee and was also on the Entertainment Committee. Mrs. Gask showed us numerous photos of remarkably complex stage sets and internee actors in elaborate costumes, evidence that their lives as prisoners were very different from those of military detainees. Nonetheless, their isolation from loved ones, as well as the inevitable

difficulties of being crammed in with so many other men, made for a rather depressing existence. Those who coped best were men with a military or boarding-school background. (This helps explain why Wodehouse managed so well during the months he was interned.)

According to Mrs. Gask, though disheartened at being separated from his family, her father was determined not to let circumstances get him down. He threw himself into camp life and also studied, receiving a Certificate of Proficiency in English from the University of Cambridge in 1942; he matriculated



In this photo of the internees at Tost, P G Wodehouse is standing in the back row, far left; Tom Sarginson is seated on the far right, front row.

(Photo courtesy of Jeanne Gask)



Jeanne Gask with sketches of her parents drawn by the artist Bir at the 1937 Paris exhibition.

in 1943. All the same, he worried endlessly about his wife (also a British citizen) and three daughters (Jeanne was the youngest), still living in German-occupied France. Though they had more liberty than he did, food and other essential items were scarce, and in many ways life was harder for them than it was for him. His letters (written in pencil in exceptionally neat handwriting) often express his longing to help them: “I wish I could send you tea, milk, and soap,” he wrote in one missive.

After four years, Sarginson was released and sent first to a camp in France, then to Sweden. He returned to England in September 1944; his wife and daughters joined him there shortly after Christmas. Having lost several years as an internee during World War II, and as a prisoner of war during World War I, he had mood swings for the rest of his life. Meanwhile, his daughter Jeanne grew up with a French accent, a result of living in France for her first 12 years. Having kept and treasured the scrapbooks of his letters from Tost for a long time, she is now incorporating them with photos and other memorabilia, and hopes to find a home for them in a library or museum. She has also written a book describing her and her family’s experiences in France while her father was interned.

Norman and I are most grateful to Mrs. Gask for allowing us a fascinating glimpse into such a significant period of her father’s life. As a bonus, we also got a glimpse of an equally significant period in Wodehouse’s life.

*This article has also been published in the Summer 2013 issue of Plum Lines.*

The internee’s social life centres in his dormitory, and it is essential, accordingly, that he gets into the right one. I cannot imagine a more delightful one than mine—Number 309, the Pride of the Ilag. Presided over by George Travers and his lieutenant Sam Mayo, and containing such rare souls as Arthur Grant, Sandy Youl, George Pickard, Smyth, Czarny, Tom Sarginsson, Max Enke, Charlie Webb, Mackenzie, . . .

(From *Performing Flea*, 1953)

## Wodehouse in Exile

On March 25, the television station BBC Four aired an original drama entitled *Wodehouse in Exile* (previously called *An Innocent Abroad*). Scripted by Nigel Williams and starring Tim Pigott-Smith as Plum and Zoë Wanamaker as Ethel, this 75-minute programme presented a well-balanced view of Wodehouse’s capture by the Germans, internment at Tost, early release, and notorious radio broadcasts from Berlin. It also touched on the furious reaction against Wodehouse in England and the investigation carried out by Major Cussen, which ultimately exonerated Wodehouse of any wrongdoing. The drama posited that a fellow internee, released at the same time as Wodehouse and one of those who persuaded him to do the talks, was actually a German double agent, and it was for this reason that Cussen’s exoneration was suppressed for so many years.



Tim Pigott-Smith and Zoë Wanamaker as Plum and Ethel Wodehouse

Critical and Wodehousean reaction to the programme was positive, with Pigott-Smith and Wanamaker earning well-deserved praise for their performances. Pigott-Smith managed to look very much like Plum, and he brilliantly conveyed the naïveté of a man who simply wanted to entertain his fellow internees and reassure his American fans that he was well. Wanamaker, meanwhile, was spot-on as Ethel, brutally but lovingly excoriating her husband for his foolishness. Nigel Williams’s script was equally superb, being both sympathetic towards and critical of an apolitical Wodehouse who was perhaps too easily manipulated by his captors.

The media applauded the drama. Clive James of the *Daily Telegraph* summed the reaction up well when he wrote: “We quite saw how such a brilliant man got sucked in, but we couldn’t help thinking that he should have been a touch smarter.” Exactly so, but as Ethel said to Plum at one point: “You can never resist it – the chance to amuse.”

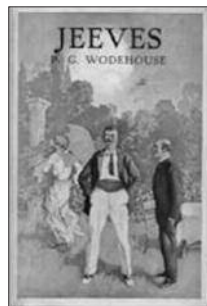
– Elin Murphy

# Picturing Jeeves

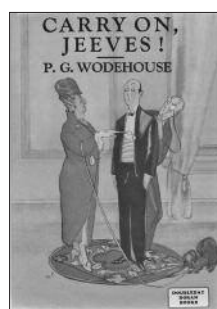
by John Graham

*This is an edited version of the paper that John presented at The Wodehouse Society convention in Dearborn, Michigan, in October 2011. A fuller version can be read in Plum Lines, Spring 2012.*

Let's begin with a quiz. Who illustrated the dust jackets of these editions of *The Inimitable Jeeves* (or *Jeeves*, as the book was titled in the US)?



The book is arguably Wodehouse's most famous; it is the one the New York Public Library selected for its Books of the 20th Century exhibit. But, I repeat, who were the artists? Or, consider these early jackets from *Carry On, Jeeves*:



The artwork is better, but I suspect you don't know who drew these either. But that's okay, because neither do I. My point is simply this: unlike, say, Sherlock Holmes or Winnie the Pooh, who were regularly depicted by Sidney Paget and E. H. Shepard, respectively, Bertie Wooster and Jeeves have never been closely tied to the work of any one illustrator.

Perhaps this is because Plum wrote so much and was published in so many places. Over the years hundreds of artists have drawn his characters for magazines, books, dust jackets, paperbacks, audiobook covers, posters, advertising, comic books, and even Japanese mangas. In his heyday, he was able to keep busy dozens of artists on both sides of the Atlantic; the *Strand* magazine alone employed 27 different artists to illustrate the over 200 stories he published there. Yet no one emerged as the definitive Wodehouse illustrator. Nevertheless, along the way a number of good artists produced drawings inspired by Wodehouse that are worth revisiting. In this paper, my primary focus will be on artists who pictured the world of Bertie and Jeeves.

With books, the most obvious place to find artwork is the dust jacket. It is clear from his letters that Wodehouse did not hold a particularly high opinion of the jackets issued by his main British publisher, Herbert Jenkins. Writing to his friend Bill Townend in 1945, Plum says: "It is nice to feel that the Jenkins people want me . . . it is only their jackets that jar one, and I suppose you are apt to get a pretty foul jacket from any popular publisher. I sometimes wish I were one of those dignified birds whose books came out in grey wrappers with the title and author's name on them and nothing else. God may have forgiven Herbert Jenkins Ltd for the jacket of *Meet Mr. Mulliner*, but I never shall."

The only dust jacket we know that Wodehouse particularly liked was the one Faber and Faber produced for *Louder and Funnier* (right). The artwork is by Rex Whistler, who was both a muralist and book illustrator. His best known mural can still be seen in the restaurant at London's Tate Gallery; his dust jackets were famous for their old-fashioned style and ornate baroque borders.



As you know, the earliest Jeeves stories appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* in the US. If we count 1915's 'Extricating Young Gussie' as part of the official canon, then the first artist to illustrate a Jeeves story was Martin Justice. Justice sketched Bertie (Mannering-Phipps) and his Aunt Agatha, but did not draw Jeeves – hardly surprising since Jeeves barely enters the story.

The credit for the first picture of Jeeves and of Bertie Wooster goes to Tony Sarg, who illustrated both 'Leave It to Jeeves' and 'The Aunt and the Sluggard' for the *Post* in 1916. Sarg's Bertie is quite old and rather pudgy; his Jeeves is tall, thin and dignified.



Of course, one has to remember that at this early stage, Sarg had little by way of character description to build on; Bertie tells us "Jeeves is a tallish man, with one of those dark, shrewd faces" but he says



little about himself, other than admitting: “I’m a bit short on brain myself; the old bean would appear to have been constructed more for ornament than for use, don’t you know.”

Over in the UK, the first six Jeeves stories appeared in the *Strand* between January 1916 and August 1918. All six were illustrated by Alfred Leete, who had drawn the now-iconic pointing image of Lord Kitchener which adorns the WWI British recruiting poster ‘Your Country Needs You’. Here is Leete’s very first drawing of Jeeves and an early look at Bertie:

Leete always pictures Jeeves with a military bearing and prominent forehead. The latter characteristic probably stems from a line in ‘Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest’: on hearing that Lady



Malvern’s son, Wilmot, has landed in prison, Bertie says: “A chappie has to be a lot broader about the forehead than I am to handle a jolt like this.” Needless to say, Jeeves can handle the jolt and has the forehead to prove it.

The best that can be said about Leete’s Bertie is that he is not chubby, but he is too old for my taste. Leete illustrated only six Jeeves stories, but drew 21 Wodehouse stories in all, including two Reggie Peppers and *The Man of Means*. But he is notable for another reason: although the work is uncredited, I think it is pretty clear Leete drew the dust jacket art for the first full-length Jeeves book, *My Man Jeeves*, in 1919. Even though he died in 1933, Penguin borrowed the upper left-hand corner of a poster Leete had done for the London Underground in the 1920s for their 1990s paperback reprint of *The Code of the Woosters*. As such, I think we can credit Leete with having the longest career of any Wodehouse illustrator.

Back in the US, the *Post* switched illustrators for their next three Jeeves stories. The new artist was Henry Raleigh, who for many years had depicted the ultimate in fashionable society for Maxwell House Coffee ads. Compared with his predecessors, Raleigh gives us a much younger Bertie; his Jeeves shows the proper feudal spirit, but what I always notice about Raleigh’s Jeeves is something else. In ‘Jeeves and the Hard-Boiled Egg’, Bertie’s pal Bicky, staring at Jeeves in awe, asks:

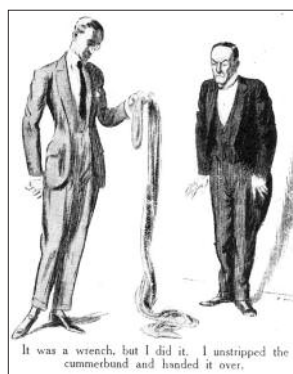
“Have you ever noticed his head, Bertie old man? It sort of sticks out at the back.” As you can see, this is a line Raleigh really took to heart, or should I say to head.



In December 1921 the *Strand* began a new series of 11 short stories which in book form would become *The Inimitable Jeeves*. In the US these stories were published not in the *Post* but in *Cosmopolitan*. Both these latter chose new artists, and to my mind, neither chose all that wisely.

Let’s begin with *Cosmopolitan*. The artist was Thornton Drake Skidmore, or T. D. Skidmore as he signed his work. His artwork is technically competent, but to my mind his drawings lack humour. There is one interesting story about him. In a letter to Bill Townend concerning ‘Ukridge’s Dog College’, which had just appeared in *Cosmopolitan*, Wodehouse remembered: “I had to rush that story in the most horrible way. I had about five days to deliver it and got it all wrong, and had to write about 20,000 words before I got it set. And then . . . I found that the artist [Skidmore] had illustrated a scene which was not in the final version, and I had to add a new one by telephone.” And so in the book version of the story, Ukridge rather bizarrely says he is dragging a dead cat; happily, in the *Cosmopolitan* version the cat is very much alive, and leading the way. Thank you, T. D. Skidmore!

Back over the pond again, the *Strand* had selected A. Wallis Mills to illustrate the new Jeeves stories. He would stay with the magazine for a total of 34 Wodehouse stories, 14 of which feature Jeeves; as such, he holds the record for having drawn the most Jeeves short stories of any artist. The best that can be said for his drawings is that they show humour, unlike those of Skidmore. He was not averse to having Jeeves show emotion, whether reacting with horror to Bingo Little’s shrubbery or, below, with disdain to Bertie’s new cummerbund.



Overall, Mills’s take on both Bertie and Jeeves is credible; what disappoints is that his drawings are often so small in size and scope. For whatever reason, the *Strand* never seemed to give Mills much space or attention.

After a nearly four-year hiatus from the *Post*, Wodehouse returned there in 1923 with *Leave It to Psmith*, illustrated by May Wilson Preston, the only female artist of note to draw Wodehouse. Preston had studied art with James Whistler in Paris. Her appearances in the *Post* and elsewhere were extensive: although she never drew a Jeeves story, her Wodehouse credits include the magazine illustrations and dust jacket art for five novels.

The 11 stories destined for *Very Good, Jeeves* were split between two magazines: Wallace Morgan illustrated three for *Liberty*; James Montgomery Flagg drew eight for *Cosmopolitan*. Morgan probably illustrated more Wodehouse stories and in more magazines than any other artist, over a 38-year career

from ‘The Matrimonial Sweepstakes’ in the February 1910 issue of *Cosmopolitan* to *Full Moon* in *Liberty* in November 1947. He appeared less interested in producing detailed character sketches than in picturing the overall scene; often with just a few strokes, he could capture the absurdity or good nature of the situation. One of my favourite sketches is from *The Code of the Woosters*:



Note Jeeves’s stiff upper lip and Bertie’s insouciance as Aunt Dahlia lets heave the Infant Samuel at Prayer.

James Montgomery Flagg’s first Wodehouse assignment was ‘The Man Upstairs’, which appeared in the March 1910 issue of *Cosmopolitan*. His last appearance there was ‘Trouble Down at Tudsleigh’ in May 1939. Over the years, his work also appeared in *Liberty* and *Redbook*, where he drew ‘Uncle Fred Flits By’ in 1935. It might be said that Flagg was born to draw Wodehouse. After all, he was born in upstate New York in the town called Pelham Manor. He was raised in New York City, and lived with gusto. He epitomized the concept of the handsome, bohemian artist, surrounded by beautiful models and Hollywood actors. He turned out many posters for WWI, including the iconic ‘I Want You’ Uncle Sam poster, said to be a self-portrait. Remember Alfred Leete? It is remarkable that the two most famous war recruiting posters of all time were done by Wodehouse illustrators.

Unlike Morgan, Flagg was less interested in recreating entire scenes than he was in giving us close-up snapshots of individual characters. His Jeeves is often pictured with a wry smile; as with Uncle Sam, Flagg’s Jeeves is probably a self-portrait. I don’t think Flagg was ever really comfortable drawing Bertie. Early artists like Tony Sarg and Alfred Leete might be excused for drawing an older Bertie, as they had little character description to go on; but, by the late 1920s, it is pretty clear that Bertie is tall, thin, and in his mid- to late 20s. Here is how Flagg portrays him (right).

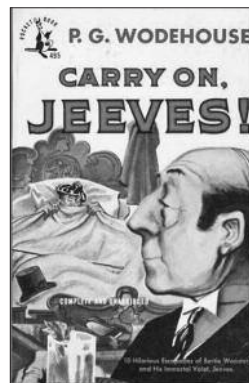


After 1930, Wodehouse started writing novels, but *Strand Magazine* would publish only one of these – *Thank You, Jeeves*. The illustrator was Gilbert Wilkinson, the last important *Strand* artist to draw Wodehouse. The opening picture depicts Bertie with orange-red hair. I find it hard to believe Jeeves would work for an employer with red hair, after having advised Bertie in ‘Jeeves and the Yuletide Spirit’ that “red hair is dangerous”.

After World War II, fiction readers turned increasingly from magazines to paperbacks, and this was certainly true of Wodehouse readers. Paperbacks had become popular in the 1930s, largely through the efforts of Penguin. In the early days, the budget imprint carried no cover illustrations, but American paperbacks did. It is probable that more readers have seen this picture of Jeeves (right) on the cover of the collection that bears his name than any other – according to Plum’s own account, there were 24 printings of this Pocket Books edition, selling 1.75 million copies.



The artist was Isadore N. Steinberg, a Jewish immigrant born in Odessa, Russia. Steinberg’s vision is Jeeves the omniscient or omnipotent; by way of contrast, for Louis Glanzman, the artist of the 1948 paperback of *Carry On Jeeves* (left), it is Jeeves the avuncular.



By the way, I am pleased to tell you that Lou Glanzman is still alive and well and living in New Jersey. Twelve years ago he drew the poster for the Philadelphia convention of The Wodehouse Society. This convention’s poster is based on the dust jacket design for *Much Obligated, Jeeves*, which the cartoonist, architectural historian and stage designer Osbert Lancaster drew in honour of Plum’s 90th birthday in 1971. Lancaster illustrated eight Wodehouse dust jackets in all, as well as the cover for C. Northgate Parkinson’s rather silly Jeeves biography.

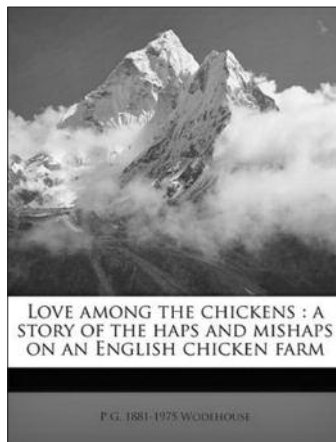
Eventually Penguin did bring artwork to their front covers. In the 1950s their artist of choice was Geoffrey Salter. By the 1960s and ’70s, when I finally got around to reading Wodehouse, it was Ionicus, whose real name was Joshua Armitage. Salter’s style was simple but humorous, Ionicus’s colourful and more elaborate, but his covers tend to get mixed reviews from Wodehousesians. It is generally

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agreed that the best thing he did was the first-edition dust jacket for *Sunset at Blandings* (bottom previous page).

Since Plum's death, publishers have continued to keep his books in print, with new paperback and hardback editions creating opportunities for a new generation of artists. But my candidate for the worst Wodehouse cover in recent years goes to this print-on-demand paperback of *Love Among the Chickens*, apparently set in the Himalayas.



To conclude, a picture may not be worth a thousand words, particularly when the words are Wodehouse's, but if the picture is faithful to the text and amusing – like the best of Henry Raleigh or Wallace Morgan – then it can only add to the reader's enjoyment. But until somebody finally does publish an illustrated Wodehouse, there is no reason why you can't get started on your own. Thanks to the internet and to eBay, it is relatively easy these days to collect Wodehouse magazine appearances.

Be careful, though: once you get started, it's hard to stop.

## Gentleman's Gentleman

by G. K. Chesterton

*In 1932, G. K. Chesterton read a Jeeves story in Strand Magazine, illustrated by an English artist. Having seen the same story in an American magazine, illustrated by an American artist, he was prompted to write a piece about it, of which the following is an extract. This was published in GK's Weekly, 24 December 1932, and it seems to be a highly appropriate companion piece to John Graham's article. Thanks to ALAN CARTER for submitting this.*

Because the [*Strand*] artist, like the author, was an Englishman, he knew at once what the real relations of Jeeves and Wooster were. The American illustrator had no notion that such wild monsters could exist in the world; and I don't blame him. He read the story and learned that this guy Wooster wanted to put on rather vivid clothes, and this guy Jeeves had the sense to dissuade him. So he drew Wooster as a grinning booby in loud checks with his hat on one side. He made him a comic idiot; in so doing he made him a cad, and Mr Bertie Wooster was not a cad.

But the fact that this ghastly and gibbering half-wit was undoubtedly a gentleman is even less vital than the fact that the stern and controlling servant is undoubtedly a servant. And the American illustrator has not the most shadowy notion of there being such a thing as a servant. He takes the lowering leather-visaged Jeeves, with his cold disapproval and his crushing obedience, and turns him into a lively little elderly man, with brisk grey hair and a bright smile, looking rather like an old Irish journalist always hovering between a drink and a wink. When he remonstrates about the loud checks, he lifts his hand with a natural oratorical gesture and smiles frankly. He is addressing a Fellow Citizen. Let anyone who knows Britannia and all her Butlers, let anyone who likes or dislikes the Island of the Gentlemen, imagine Mr Jeeves lifting a finger and wagging it at his master!

## Forty Years On: Moor Park 1973

In May 1973, my wife Charlotte gave me a superb birthday present. She had seen somewhere an announcement that Moor Park, an adult education college in Farnham, Surrey, was to have a weekend seminar on P. G. Wodehouse and had booked me in. And I am very, very glad she did.

As far as I know, it was the first Wodehouse 'convention' in the UK, and the resident tutor for the weekend was Richard Osborne. That was all I needed. Dick Osborne, as I later earned the right to call him, had already written *Wodehouse at Work* (1961) and *Clubland Heroes* (1953), and I admired him enormously. Many know his *Wodehouse at Work*, but *Clubland Heroes* started a trend, though Dick was so modest he never really believed it.

For those who don't know it, Moor Park was where Jonathan Swift met his beloved Stella. The seminar, which was as good as I had ever hoped, began with the reading of a long letter from PGW himself, then aged 91. Dick Osborne was kind and avuncular. Christopher Maclehose, then head of Barrie & Jenkins, had met Wodehouse and was happy to recount stories about him. The rest of us were all enthusiastic Wodehouseans, including an Australian journalist named Murray Hedgcock (whatever happened to him?). There were talks, there were recordings of PGW musicals, and there were heated discussions – especially over the location of Blandings. Indeed, so heated that I had to be very firm indeed with one lady, who claimed Blandings lay west of the River Severn. Well, really!

I gave a talk on the real Pink 'Uns and Pelicans, with the words "SPEAK SLOWLY" at the top of each page of my script. Afterwards, Dick Osborne came up to me and said: "Good talk that. Send it to *Blackwood's*." I thought he was just being kind; *Blackwood's* was a very upmarket literary magazine, but he meant it. The magazine took it – and they paid me thirty quid. My literary career had begun.

Forty years ago. It seems just like yesterday.

– Norman Murphy

# Reginald Jeeves we know – but just who was Percy Jeeves?

*Murray Hedgcock supplies some answers*

It is 100 years in August since P. G. Wodehouse, visiting his parents at Cheltenham, took a break from writing to spend a day at the cricket festival played in the picturesque grounds of Cheltenham College. The cricket week was – and continues to be – a highlight of the spa town's year. First held in 1878, it benefits from its splendid setting in the grounds of the college, whose magnificent chapel forms an inspiring backdrop.

It was in 1913 that Plum saw the home county, Gloucestershire, defeat Warwickshire by a crushing 247 runs in the match played on August 14/15/16 – but his eye was caught by a visiting bowler. And when, a couple of years later, he needed a name for a man-servant soon to become one of his most splendid creations, he remembered, and chose – 'Jeeves'.

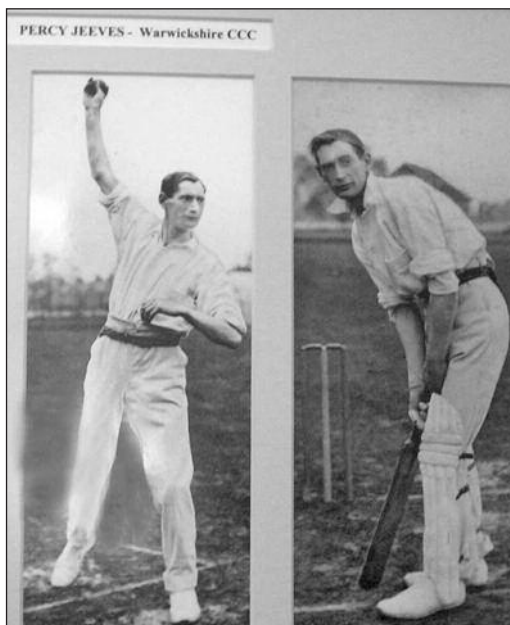
Percy Jeeves, a 25-year-old Yorkshireman in his first season of county championship cricket, was one of many players whose promise was to be cut short by World War I. On July 22, 1916, Jeeves, serving with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, was killed on the Somme.

Ten months earlier, on September 18, 1915, Reginald Jeeves, surely the most famous gentleman's personal gentleman the world has known, made his debut – along with his master, Bertie Wooster – in a *Saturday Evening Post* short story, 'Extricating Young Gussie'.

This leaves one to wonder: had Jeeves the soldier died a year or more earlier, and Plum had learned of this, would the literary Jeeves have been born? Or might PGW have felt this to be insensitive, and turned to an alternative name?

The curious point about PGW's adoption of the name Jeeves was that the promising young all-rounder did virtually nothing in that Festival game. He bowled 17 wicket-less overs in Gloucestershire's first innings, conceding 43 runs. He did slightly better in the second innings, taking one wicket for 12 runs off seven overs, and picking up two catches. With the bat, he made one and nought. The only century of the game was scored by the home county's Alfred Dipper (who might well have inspired an author: consider the potential of 'My man Dipper').

But Jeeves had already done enough in his first season to attract much attention and earn forecasts of



a considerable future. He had begun 1913 quietly but soon found his feet, eventually topping the Warwickshire bowling averages, paying out just 20 runs for each wicket. He had been required to spend two years qualifying for his new county before playing in the championship, but in 1912 he had taken the field for Warwickshire for the first time, against the touring Australians. This was the season of the experimental three-way tournament in which Australia and South Africa, then the only other Test-playing nations, visited England for a series almost completely ruined by appalling

weather.

Jeeves's first-class debut was hardly auspicious. At no. 8, he was run out for one and got a second innings duck; he bowled two wicket-less overs in the first innings, but picked up two wickets in the second. Against South Africa, batting Seven, he made 9 and 15; in a rain-affected match, he bowled only four overs, for a single wicket.

But Jeeves's impact in his first full season was underlined by the authoritative periodical *Cricketer*, which featured in its issue of November 15, 1913, 'A Chat With Percy Jeeves' – one of a series of interviews with leading players of the day. This was conducted by Sydney Santall, a Warwickshire teammate, who began his report: "Few cricketers of late years have met with such remarkable success in their first season in first-class cricket." He explained:

Jeeves has a nice run-up to the wicket, a very loose arm, and a beautiful body swing, and makes the ball go away very quickly with his arm. His batting is of the forcing type, and although not by any means a big man, he hits the ball tremendously hard. Good judges consider that, given good health, Jeeves may well gain the highest honours on the cricket field.

In the interview, Jeeves said that he was born at Earlsheaton, near Dewsbury. His family moved to Goole in 1901, and at 15 he gained a place in the local club first 11:

"I was very keen on the game, so when my employer at Goole told me I was getting too old for

the work he could find me to do (*there is no explanation as to what this was*), I thought I would try to earn my living at cricket. In 1909 I answered an advertisement for a professional at Hawes, and to my great surprise, I got the job.

“Mr H. Arden Crallan, the Hawes captain, recommended me to Yorkshire and went with me to Harrogate when I was tried. But I was evidently not much thought of, as I heard nothing further.

“I qualified for Warwickshire in rather a curious way. Mr Ryder, the secretary to Warwickshire, was spending holidays in Wensleydale in 1910, and while playing golf was introduced to Mr Crallan. The conversation turned to cricket, and my captain strongly recommended me. The result was that I was offered an engagement on the ground staff at Edgbaston for 1911, and gladly accepted it.”

Jeeves said he was “very keen indeed” on football, playing for Stirchley Co-operatives in the Birmingham Wednesday League. “Aston Villa asked me to play for their Reserves, but I have no wish to take to the game professionally, as I think playing the two games would be too much for me. First-class cricket entails a heavy strain on the system, and one has to keep wonderfully fit to be successful.”

The impact made by the young Yorkshireman was graphically recorded by *Wisden*, not normally given to rhapsodising about newcomers. It said of Jeeves:

His first season in the eleven was nothing short of a triumph. He came out first in bowling with 106 wickets, and scored 765 runs with an average of 20. This allround record suggests tremendous possibilities in the near future.

Jeeves is a good, punishing bat, but it is as a bowler that the Warwickshire people expect most of him. On the fast side of medium-pace, he has a very easy action, and when fresh, he makes the ball come off the ground with plenty of life.

Unaccustomed to three-day matches, he was, perhaps, asked to do a little too much, bowling 780 overs. Whatever may be in store for him, he was, beyond all question, one of the best of the young cricketers discovered in 1913.

Jeeves’s promise was recognised in 1914 when he appeared in the Gentlemen v. Players match at The Oval, on July 9/10/11. The amateurs included C. B. Fry, Plum Warner, and the legendary hitter Gilbert Jessop, while the professionals were headed by Jack Hobbs (who made the only century of the match – 156 in the second innings) and Frank Woolley. The Players won by 241 runs, Jeeves taking the first three second innings wickets, to finish with four for 44. *Wisden* praised his “splendid bowling”.

Seventeen days later, Austria-Hungary fired the first shots of “the Great War” – and within weeks, Percy Jeeves exchanged flannels for khaki.

How Jeeves had left Yorkshire for Warwickshire, to be noticed by PGW, was set out in 1995 by Rowland Ryder in his book *Cricket Calling* – differing slightly from the version given by Jeeves himself to

*Cricket*. In the chapter titled “The Unplayable Jeeves”, he wrote:

In the late Summer of 1910 my father, then Warwickshire secretary, was on a walking holiday in his native Yorkshire. On the lovely Hawes ground, he saw a young cricketer whose effortless grace as a bowler told something of his potential. At the end of the innings, my father said to him, ‘How would you like to play for Warwickshire?’ That was how the Jeeves saga began. . . .

It was expected that he would develop into a bowler of world class. Percy Jeeves became engaged to Annie Austin, younger sister of George Austin, the Warwickshire scorer. When war broke out, Jeeves joined the Warwickshire Regiment, and was killed in the battle of the Somme on July 22, 1916. Annie Austin, who lived into her eighties, never married.

In 1967 Ryder, a schoolmaster, adapted *The Code of the Woosters* as a play for his school, and he wondered increasingly about the Jeeves link.

I wrote to Wodehouse, asking if he had named Jeeves of the Junior Ganymede after Percy Jeeves of the Warwickshire CC. Back came the reply from Remseburg:

“Yes, you are quite right. It must have been in 1913 that I paid a visit to my parents at Cheltenham, and went to see Warwickshire play Gloucestershire on the College ground. I suppose Jeeves’s bowling must have impressed me, for I remembered him in 1916 (*sic*) when I was in New York and started the Jeeves and Bertie saga, and it was just the name I wanted. I always thought until lately that he was playing for Gloucestershire – I remember admiring his action very much.”

Ryder sent Plum a Warwickshire CCC tie – and was pleased to see it being worn in an *Observer* colour magazine interview for Plum’s 90th birthday. A special Jeeves-Wodehouse display is now housed in the county club museum at Edgbaston.

*Wisden* for 1916, in its long and deeply moving list of ‘Deaths in the War’, including many young men barely out of their school elevens, recorded of Jeeves that England “lost a cricketer of whom very high hopes had been entertained. . . . Mr P. F. Warner was greatly impressed [with his bowling for the Players] and predicted that Jeeves would be an England bowler in the near future. . . . Jeeves was a right-handed bowler on the quick side of medium pace, and with an easy action, came off the ground with plenty of spin. He was very popular among his brother players.” His playing record was just 50 first-class matches, with a batting average of 16 and a highest score of 86 not out, while he took 199 wickets at 20 runs each.

And, of course, Jeeves lives in literary history for giving his name to the most celebrated gentleman’s personal gentleman the world has known.

*Editor’s note: Murray will be speaking on PGW & Percy Jeeves at the Cheltenham Cricket Festival on July 17.*

# *The Human Boy* and P. G. Wodehouse

## Part Two

by Nick Townend

The second part of this article will conclude our review of the similarities between Eden Phillpotts's *The Human Boy* and Wodehouse's writings.

The headmaster ("the doctor") in *The Human Boy* has four daughters. In the story 'Corkey Minimus', we learn that "Beatrice was absolutely engaged to Morris, for he told his sister so in the holidays, and his sister told Morris minor (sic), and he told me the next term. Morris was the head of the school, and he had her photograph fixed into a foreign nut which he wore on his watch-chain. But when he left, and she found out he was gone into a Bank at £80 a year, she dropped him like a spider." Here, the undesirability of having to work in a bank is emphasised to Wodehouse even before he had to suffer the actual experience himself. As we all know, Mike went into a bank at £54 a year (as did Wyatt, until he was rescued by Mike's father) – as Osborne said, "the durance vile that was waiting for even the starriest school athlete" (*Wodehouse at Work*, p. 61).

The head's youngest daughter is called Milly, and members of the lower school compete for her affections. She is perhaps the forerunner of 10-year-old Marjorie Merevale, for whom Welch runs to fetch the doctor in the middle of the night in 'Welch's Mile Record', and 12-year-old Dorothy, the head's niece whom Charteris rescues from rural hooligans in 'The Manoeuvres of Charteris'.

Two juniors at Dunston's, Bray and Corkey, gradually fall out with each other. "First, there was the Old Testament prize, which was the only thing Bray had the ghost of a chance of getting. But Corkey beat him by twenty-three marks; and Bray said afterwards that Corkey had cribbed a lot of stuff about Joshua, and Corkey said he hadn't, and even declared he knew as much about Joshua as Bray, and a bit over" ('Corkey Minimus'). In another story, one boy receives a half-sovereign from a clergyman-grandfather because "the previous term Morrart had got a prize for Scripture history" ('Morrart's Half-Sov.'). Another boy has "a remarkably swagger knowledge of the Scriptures" and is "a demon on Religious Knowledge" ('The Piebald Rat').

Does all this remind you of Bertie Wooster and his much-vaunted prize for Scripture knowledge? As Gussie Fink-Nottle said at the Market Snodsbury prize-giving, "Bertie Wooster won the Scripture-knowledge prize at a kids' school we were at together, and you know what he's like. But, of course, Bertie frankly cheated. He succeeded in scrounging that Scripture-knowledge trophy over the heads of better men by means of some of the rawest and most brazen

swindling methods ever witnessed even at a school where such things were common. If that man's pockets, as he entered the examination-room, were not stuffed to bursting point with lists of the kings of Judah . . ." (*Right Ho, Jeeves*, chap. 17).

There is also a natural history society at Dunston's: "It was all the result of old Briggs asking the Doctor if he might 'instil the lads with a wholesome fondness for natural history' . . . the Doctor said it was an admirable notion, and would very probably keep some boys out of mischief on half-holidays. It also kept some boys out of bounds on half-holidays; and after a time I think the Doctor was pretty savage with old Briggs, and wished he'd stuck to his regular work . . . ; because, when one or two of the chaps really got keen about natural history, and even chucked cricket for butterflies and beetles, others, who didn't care a straw about it, pretended they did to gain their own ends" ('The Piebald Rat'). The boys' enthusiasm eventually leads to an epidemic of keeping pets in the classroom desks.

This is reminiscent of Mike and Psmith's exploits at Sedleigh, where the boys join the fossil-hunters to roam the countryside out of bounds. Osborne noticed the similarity of this with the bug-hunters in *Stalky & Co* (*Wodehouse at Work*, p. 58), but it may also owe something to this incident in *The Human Boy*. In any case, in this period in the public schools there was only "a limited number of extra-curricular activities available. . . . For much of the nineteenth century these were restricted to a debating society for senior boys, a natural history society or an archaeological society and a concert club" (JA Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, 1981, chap. 5, s II, emphasis added).

There is also one incident at Dunston's which seems to resemble an incident in Wodehouse's own life. One story is called 'Browne, Bradwell and Me' and is narrated by Watson Minor (hence the rather idiosyncratic spelling). It features a character called Bradwell. "Bradwell drew almost as well as pictures in books, and he used to illustrate the Latin grammar for his speshall chums. There's a part of the Latin grammar called Syntax, which I haven't come to yet myself, but it has rather rummy things in it with both the Latin and English of them. And Bradwell used to draw these things; and he drew two in my grammar out of pure kindness to me. One was 'Balbus is crowning the boy's head with a garland'; and the other was, 'A snake appeared to Sulla while sacrificing'; and you never saw anything better. They were done on the marjin in ink, and the snake

appearing to Sulla was about the queerest and best thing ever seen in a Latin grammar.” Inevitably, the book and the offending drawings are detected by Watson’s form master.

Does this remind you of an incident from Wodehouse’s own school days, as told by Osborne: “Wodehouse had a schoolboy habit of decorating, or, as masters would say, defacing his form text-books with tiny match-stick human figures, page after page. In the Sixth one day Headmaster Gilkes, six foot four inches and with a long white beard, asked Wodehouse to lend him his Euripides. Gilkes handed the book back, saying with a shudder: ‘No, thank you. This book has got a man in it!’ This, William Townend tells me, made Wodehouse laugh for about a year” (*Wodehouse at Work*, p. 39).

That this was a significant incident in Wodehouse’s Sixth form is indicated by it reappearing in Gilkes’s final report on Wodehouse, as quoted in *The Daily Mail* on 12 July 1939: “He has the most distorted ideas about wit and humour; he draws over his books and examination papers in the most distressing way and writes foolish rhymes in other people’s books.”

Now, of course I am not suggesting that no schoolboy had ever drawn in a school book before Phillpotts’s character did so, but it is at least possible that it influenced Wodehouse to some extent. *The Human Boy* was published in 1899, after the stories had previously been published in *The Idler* magazine, and Wodehouse was in the Sixth at Dulwich from September 1898 to July 1900 (Tony Ring, *Wodehouse Goes to School*, 1997, p. xxi), so the timing is possible. Norman Murphy has discovered much of the fact behind the Wodehouse fiction; I claim a modest first here in discovering some of the fiction behind the Wodehouse fact!

There is another incident in ‘Browne, Bradwell and Me’ which seems to have been part of the inspiration for a plot device in two of Wodehouse’s school stories. Browne, a young master, and Bradwell, the goal-keeper of the School XI, are in competition for the affections of Mabel, one of the Head’s daughters. Browne writes a poem, ‘To Mabel’, which is found by Watson Minor, Bradwell’s fag. Watson shows it to Bradwell, who copies it and sends it to Mabel as if it is his own work. Browne also sends his verses to Mabel. Mabel thinks that they have both cribbed the verses from a genuine poet, and discards both suitors in disgust.

This is highly reminiscent of ‘The Prize Poem’ in *Tales of St Austin’s*. Reynolds of the Remove writes verses for Smith, of the Sixth, to enter in the compulsory Sixth form poetry competition, the subject of which is The College. Reynolds loses his first two drafts, one of which is found by Montgomery of the Sixth, and the other of which is



found by Evans, a fag, who passes it on to Morrison of the Sixth, his fag-master. Jan Piggott (*Wodehouse Goes to School*, p. xl) informs us: “In June 1899 the Rajah of Bhaunaqur visited the College and gave ten guineas as a prize for a competition for each boy in the College to enter a poem on the subject of the College.” If the visiting Rajah was part of the inspiration behind ‘The Prize Poem’, I think *The Human Boy* was also a part.

Cribbing in compulsory poetry competitions reappears in *A Prefect’s Uncle* (I say “reappears” because although *A Prefect’s Uncle* was first published in September 1903, before *Tales of St Austin’s* in November 1903, the short story ‘The Prize Poem’ had first appeared in *The Public School Magazine* in July 1901). As was the case in *The Human Boy*, it involves a pupil cribbing a master’s poem and giving it to another pupil, for the latter to attempt to pass it off as his own. Pringle of the Remove offers to compose a poem for Lorimer of the Upper Fifth, because “[a] certain Indian potentate, the Rajah of Seltzerpore, had paid a visit to the school some years back, and had left behind him on his departure certain monies in the local bank, which were to be devoted to providing the Upper Fifth with an annual prize for the best poem on a subject to be selected by the Headmaster” (chap. 4).

Pringle finds a poem on the death of Dido, the set subject, in a book called *The Dark Horse*. Not having time to compose an original poem, he copies this verbatim and passes it to Lorimer, who submits it. It initially wins the prize for Lorimer. However, it transpires that *The Dark Horse* had been written under a pseudonym by Mr Lawrie, a master at the school, so the substitution and cribbing of Lorimer and Pringle is detected.

In this article I hope I have shown that Wodehouse read and enjoyed *The Human Boy*, and that elements of it resurfaced, either subconsciously or consciously, in his own writings. Obviously, it is conceivable that some of the similarities identified (e.g. breaking bounds and poaching, shooting at cats, scripture knowledge) could have arisen because both authors were writing in the same genre, which itself reflected contemporary reality. However, other similarities (e.g. Steggle, Merevale/Merivale, cribbing at poetry) are so close that it is hard to avoid the conclusion that they are deliberate nods by Wodehouse to Phillpotts, which in turn makes it less likely that the other similarities identified occurred merely by chance. As time goes on and we become more distant from the contemporary literature with which Wodehouse’s first readers were familiar, articles such as these can help to ensure that we obtain the fullest possible appreciation of Wodehouse’s writings, in the same way that his original readers would have done.

## Poet's Corner

### Missed!

The sun in the heavens was beaming,  
The breeze bore an odour of hay,  
My flannels were spotless and gleaming,  
My heart was unclouded and gay;  
The ladies, all gaily apparelled,  
Sat round looking on at the match,  
In the tree-tops the dicky-birds carolled,  
All was peace – till I bungled that catch.

My attention the magic of summer  
Had lured from the game – which was wrong.  
The bee (that inveterate hummer)  
Was droning its favourite song.  
I was tenderly dreaming of Clara  
(On her not a girl is a patch).  
When, ah, horror! There soared through the air a  
Decidedly possible catch.

I heard in a stupor the bowler  
Emit a self-satisfied "Ah!"  
The small boys who sat on the roller  
Set up an expectant "Hurrah!"  
The batsman with grief from the wicket  
Himself had begun to detach –  
And I uttered a groan and turned sick. It  
Was over. I'd buttered the catch.

Oh, ne'er, if I live to a million,  
Shall I feel such a terrible pang.  
From the seats in the far-off pavilion  
A loud yell of ecstasy rang.  
By the handful my hair (which is auburn)  
I tore with a wrench from my thatch,  
And my heart was seared deep with a raw burn  
At the thought that I'd fozzled that catch.

Ah, the bowler's low querulous mutter  
Points loud, unforgettable scoff!  
Oh, give me my driver and putter!  
Henceforward my game shall be golf.  
If I'm asked to play cricket hereafter,  
I am wholly determined to scratch.  
Life's devoid of all pleasure and laughter;  
I bungled the easiest catch.

From *Pearson's*, August 1908

## Letters to the Editor

### From Christopher Bellew

In a letter in December's *Wooster Sauce*, Robert Bruce drew attention to parallels between the plot of *The Marriage of Figaro* and the goings-on at Blandings. When I saw Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, I wondered if the character Ptolemy might have been the inspiration for a Wodehouse character. With a running time of 4 hours, 35 minutes there was plenty of time for such reflections.

### From Mike Rush

The following paragraph comes from an Open University text in a course that I think was called '20th Century Literature'; the sub-heading was 'Englishness'. The text under consideration was 'Indian Summer of an Uncle':

The idea that servant may be far more than equal to master is an old one in comedy; Beaumarchais' "Figaro" is a famous example. That said, suppose Jeeves and Wooster were male and female. What sort of relationship would we call it? Father-daughter? Hardly. Brother-sister? No, they do not have origins and childhood in common. Mother and son? Here, surely, we are on to something. We can imagine the whole canon translated into the terms of either of these two relationships, if Bertie becomes the headstrong, vulnerable son or husband and Jeeves the wise wife or mother who knows best. As we know, always, in the end it is Jeeves, mother-like, wife-like, who sorts things out.

PGW as written by Rosie M Banks?

### From Karen Shotting

I found Nick Townend's article on *A Gentleman of Leisure* (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2013) quite interesting. This book was a recent reading selection for the Los Angeles chapter of The Wodehouse Society, and because I have way too much time on my hands, I did a side-by-side comparison of *The Intrusion of Jimmy* (the Nook version, which I assume is from the Project Gutenberg 1910 version) and *A Gentleman of Leisure* (I have a 1978 Barrie & Jenkins reprint of the 1921 edition). Nick notes that MacIlvaine says that the 1920 edition is abridged. Based on my 1921 version, I have to say that MacIlvaine must be right. I was mostly looking for the US vs. English differences (e.g., "molasses" vs. "treacle"; "pills" vs. "billiards"), but there were a lot of other differences that I did not expect – entire paragraphs omitted in a lot of places. If later versions of *AGOL* were abridged, that would certainly explain things. It had me puzzling a bit. Another mystery solved by reading *Wooster Sauce*.

## Avonturen van Ukridge: One of the Best Books of 2012

Early 2012 saw the first commercial publication of a Wodehouse book in a Dutch translation since 1986: *Avonturen van Ukridge*, published by Uitgeverij Ijzer ('Iron'). This book consists of eight Ukridge stories not previously translated into Dutch. **LEONARD BEUGER** did the translation, which received media coverage from a number of Dutch newspapers and radio stations. Late in the year, one of the radio reviewers, Arie Storm, proposed *Avonturen van Ukridge* as one of his three nominations for 'Best Book of the Year'.



# My First Wodehouse Experience

by Ellie King

About five years ago I read Stephen Fry's autobiography *Moab Is my Washpot*, in which he mentions his love for P. G. Wodehouse. I had never heard of Wodehouse before, but was intrigued, especially after hearing that his books were supposed to be very funny.

On my next visit to Waterstones, I picked up a copy of *Thank You, Jeeves* – chosen because it was the first Jeeves novel Wodehouse wrote, and I assumed it would help if I read them in the correct order.

I remember devouring it with unmitigated delight and gusto – and being gobsmacked, absolutely flabbergasted by the fact that I had never even heard of this author before! How was it possible that I had gone through 21 years of life – school, college, university – with no one ever having said to me, “Do you know Wodehouse? He's marvellous, here have a copy”? But for Mr Fry's recommendation, I might have gone the rest of my life without ever having read any of Plum's books – a thought that still sends shivers up the spine even now.

As well as being furious that I had missed out on so many years of Wodehouse, I was also suddenly filled with a bizarrely evangelical zeal similar to that seen in

many street preachers. I quite seriously considered buying several copies of Wodehouse and handing them out to strangers in the town centre – “Have you heard about Wodehouse? Have you experienced his mastery of prose, the beauty of his language, the glorious comedy of his plots? Read one of his books today and BE SAVED from a lifetime of dullness and boredom!” I was frighteningly keen to tell everyone I knew (and even people I didn't know) how wonderful Wodehouse was, and this has in no way diminished; in fact, if anything the desire to “spread the word” has probably increased! I give copies to people on the slimmest of pretexts – Secret Santas, thank-you presents, birthdays, here-read-this-you-look-like-you-need-it. Any excuse will do.

I still have a fair few of the books left to read, and I am now carefully hoarding them, rather like a starving man in a desert with only a box of luxury chocolates for nourishment. The temptation to devour them all in one sitting is definitely there, but the flavours are so much sweeter and richer if one is prepared to make them last. And of course, even when they have all been read, there will still be many, many re-readings!




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## More Letters to the Editor

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### From Alexander Dainty

On Sunday 21st April Radio 4 presented its weekly programme ‘Gardeners Question’ Time from Ickenham (Middlesex). I listened to the programme in its entirety in case the Earl of Ickenham asked a question. Unfortunately, despite my attentiveness, the Earl did not come forward to ask a question.

### From Dafydd Morris

I have all the Everyman Wodehouse Editions, and was interested reading the report on them in the last edition of *Wooster Sauce* (#65). Although the remaining unpublished books might be considered “scarce and limited in length” (in David Lilley's words), I'm hopeful that they will be published, as the Everyman dust jacket proclaims that: “*The Everyman Wodehouse will eventually contain all the novels and stories edited and reset*”.

Of the remaining unpublished books, this would include: *William Tell Told Again*, *Tales of Wrykyn and Elsewhere*, *Not George Washington*, *The Luck Stone*, *The Swoop*, *The Prince and Betty*, *A Man of Means*, and *Sunset at Blandings*. (There are also the three Reggie Pepper stories not included in *My Man Jeeves*, and ‘Another Christmas Carol’ from *The Mulliner Omnibus*.) The fact that these are rather obscure is all the more reason to publish them I would have thought. There are countless editions of *Carry On*, *Jeeves* or *Summer Lightning* available, but where can you find the British version of *The Prince and Betty*?

Everyman is already the longest uniform series of Wodehouse books, so it would be a shame to stop now.

## Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize

As this edition of *Wooster Sauce* neared press time, word was received that the novelist Howard Jacobson had won this year's Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize at the Hay Festival. It was the second win for Jacobson, who first took the prize in 2000 for *The Mighty Walzer* and this year grabs the brass ring for *Zoo Time*. As usual, the author will receive a case of Bollinger, a complete set of Everyman Wodehouse books, and the honour of having a Gloucestershire Old Spot pig named after his book.



# Wodehouse on the Boards

*This spring our cup ranneth over with three spiffing theatre productions on both sides of the Atlantic. Herewith the reviews.*

## *Carry On, Jeeves*

Common Ground Theatre, Lincoln, March 14–16

Reviewed by Steve Griffiths

With the exception of the un-produced *Betting on Bertie* – itself a musical adaptation of *Come On, Jeeves* – P G Wodehouse never wrote a play about Jeeves and Wooster. Yes, there have been two TV series starring Dennis Price and Ian Carmichael in the mid-1960s and Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie in the early 1990s. And yes, there have been some independent dramatisations of the stories, but nowhere – at least in the UK – could one find a full-blooded play written for the theatre about our two heroes. Until now, that is.

Jez Ashberry, chairman of the Lincoln-based Common Ground Theatre Company, decided he wanted to redress this deficiency. This was no easy task because first he had to seek permission from the Wodehouse Estate to use original material from which to write the play. This was initially refused, but happily Jez's persistence was rewarded when eventually the Estate approved a script he sent them.

With so extensive a choice of J-W stories to choose from, Jez alighted principally on just two. The first half of the play (running to almost 90 minutes) he based on 'Jeeves Takes Charge', all about Bertie purloining his Uncle Willoughby's scandalous memoirs. Aficionados will know that this first appeared in the UK as a short story in *Strand Magazine* in 1923 and was later included in *Carry On, Jeeves* (1925). The second half (running to a slim 50 minutes) focused on 'Jeeves and the Yuletide Spirit', first published in *Strand Magazine* in 1927 and later incorporated into *Very Good, Jeeves* (1930). This story features the puncturing of hot-water bottles.

I attended the play's World Premiere – the opening night on 14 March 2013 at the Drill Hall in Lincoln. Now, fellow Wodehousians, prepare for a shock; indeed, make sure you are safely seated with a good restorative before reading further. Jeeves, played

superbly by Graham Turner, was depicted with a moustache! Not only that, but in the opening scene with Bertie, played with equally commendable spirit by Jason Hippisley, waking up after a night out with the boys, he was dressed not in night attire of a suitably becoming pattern, but with his upper torso covered in nothing but a vest! Then, thought I, probably most of the audience had no notion of the reality of Plum's creations and took everything at face value, if you will excuse the intended pun.

I therefore spent the rest of the play ignoring all prejudicial notions of what ought to have been, focussing instead on what was before me. And what a treat it was!

Jez crafted an outstanding theatrical presentation of two very well-known stories. Some of the dialogue from the books he took almost verbatim and placed in the mouths of two actors who certainly knew their stuff. But dialogue alone could not hope to recreate the

felicity of PGW's writing. Much of the charm of the written stories comes from Bertie's descriptive asides of events, utterances of his thoughts, wonderful turns of phrase, and use of unconventional abbreviations. All these Jez managed to include in the play by having Bertie talk directly to the audience, taking us into his confidence to garner our support and sympathy and to allow us to enjoy PGW's brilliant use of the English language. Indeed, like the dialogue, many of these asides were lifted straight from the books. Jez recognised that he could never hope to improve on the master's words, so instead he used them in all their glory.

Of all the supporting cast, perhaps Irene North's Aunt Agatha took the biscuit. This was a grand performance in magisterial Lady Bracknell fashion. Not far behind, Michael Church was a very believable Sir Roderick Glossop, duly affronted when coming face to face with cats in Bertie's flat and



equally upset to discover in the second half that Bertie had just punctured his hot-water bottle. All the other actors brought excellent period realism in their accents, their costumes, their mannerisms, and their treatment of Bertie as one would a doormat. The 1920s music played during the scene changes served to reinforce the setting of the play.

How would I sum up the play? I suspect Wodehouse purists are still in shock at the thought of Jeeves with a moustache. But let us reflect for a moment on the purpose of this play. The playwright's

intention was to fill a gap in the works of P G Wodehouse. He could have chosen any number of the Jeeves/Wooster stories. I felt the two he chose were exactly right to depict the relationship between the two main characters, the well-to-do world that these characters moved in, the demands placed on Bertie by unsympathetic aunts and unthinking cousins and acquaintances, and the magnificent English that made it all possible. This play has opened the world of PGW to a new generation of theatre-goers and it deserves our deepest thanks and praise.

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## *Leave It to Jane*

Musicals Tonight!, Lion Theatre, New York City, April 16–28

Reviewed by John Graham

In 1917, that annus mirabilis for Wodehouse the lyricist, our man Plum had five shows running on Broadway: *Have a Heart*; *Oh, Boy!*; *Leave It to Jane*; *The Riviera Girl*; and *Miss 1917*. In all five cases, he shared the credit for the book with Guy Bolton, but Plum alone wrote all the lyrics. Jerome Kern wrote the music (or some of it in case of *The Riviera Girl* and *Miss 1917*).

*Leave It to Jane* was conceived by the trio as a Princess Theatre musical, but because *Oh, Boy!* was proving to be such a hit at the 299-seat Princess Theatre (running for 475 shows), the producers (Ray Comstock and William Elliot) were forced to open *Jane* at the much larger 1,096-seat Longacre Theatre on August 28; it played for 167 performances. (By my arithmetic, if both shows sold out every performance, more theatregoers saw *Leave It to Jane* than *Oh, Boy!*, which is often considered to be Wodehouse-Bolton-Kern's most successful show.)

Another sign of *Leave It to Jane*'s popularity is that it was successfully revived in 1959 and ran for 928 performances at the Sheridan Square Playhouse in New York's Greenwich Village. There is a cast recording of this revival that shares a CD with *Oh, Kay!* (Stet/DRG Records, CD number 15017). It is out of print, but copies surface frequently on eBay.

Musicals Tonight!, the not-for-profit New York theatre company on West 42nd Street, revived *Leave It to Jane* this spring. In prior years, this hard-working company has given us productions of *The Beauty Prize*; *Cabaret Girl*; *Have a Heart*; *Oh, Lady! Lady!*; and (last year) *Sitting Pretty*. This year they gave 18 performances of *Jane*.

I saw an early-run evening show on April 17, accompanied by Wodehouse's first biographer, David Jasen, who still fondly remembers the 1959 revival. David told me he saw it at least four times and considers it his favorite Wodehouse-Kern show. This was my first time seeing *Jane*. I sincerely hope it will not be my last.

Bolton and Wodehouse's story is based on a 1904 play, *The College Widow*, by the American humorist George Ade, about two small Midwestern colleges (Atwater and Bingham) competing on the (American) football field on Thanksgiving Day. The action takes place at Atwater, where Jane Witherspoon, daughter of the college's president, has charmed Billy Bolton, star football player and son of a wealthy Bingham alumnus, into playing for Atwater. The show features a fairly large cast of characters, with three female principals (Jane, Bessie, and Flora) and half a dozen or more males, most notably Stub Talmadge, who is in love with golfing enthusiast Bessie but still trying to shake off his ex-landlady's daughter Flora. That's about as much of the story as you need to know. If you have seen any of dozens of campus comedies from the 1930s or '40s, you can guess the rest. But, this is 1917, after all: Plum and Guy (assisted by George Ade) got there long before Hollywood did.

Musicals Tonight! always present their shows without scenery, but dress their young and talented cast in period costume. Actors carry the script on stage in notebooks, but in the case of *Leave It to Jane*, most actors appeared to have memorized their lines well. I am glad to report that the cast were uniformly strong and pleasing singers. They did real credit to



Kern's memorable tunes and Plum's clever words. Particularly strong were the three female principals: Sarah Ziegler as a lovely and alluring Jane, Chelsea Barker as a sporting Bessie, and Kari Grunberg as conniving Flora. It is Flora who gets to sing and dance one of Plum's funniest and most memorable songs, 'Cleopatterer'.

Among the male leads, Carter Lynch as Billy had the required muscles and pretty face to make you believe he was every girl's favorite. Thom Caska, as Stub, probably spent more time on stage than anyone else, and carried the part well. Perhaps the best actor was

Jackson Eather as Bub, the young country bumpkin who falls in love with every girl on campus. He, Stub, and Flora sing 'Sir Galahad', well known to devoted listeners of Hal Cazalet and Sylvia McNair's CD.

At the intermission, I asked David (who had been laughing almost nonstop throughout the first act) if he was enjoying the show. He said he thought it lacked 'sufficient pep', the essential ingredient of any campus comedy. I agreed it could have been brighter in spots, but we faulted the director, not the cast. By the end of the slightly shorter and peppier second act, even David seemed pleased.

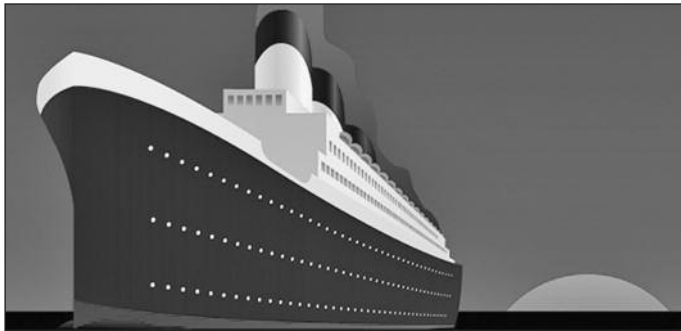
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## *Anything Goes*

Marlow Theatre, Canterbury, April 30–May 4

Reviewed by Charles Franklyn

The musical *Anything Goes* has had a chequered history, and this production was based on the 1987 revival by Beaumont. The original 1934 book by P. G. Wodehouse and Guy Bolton – which was set on board an ocean liner – involved a bomb threat, a shipwreck and hi-jinks on a desert island. Sadly, a disastrous fire on a passenger liner, shortly before the planned premiere, led to many fatalities, so the original producer decided that the story needed an



urgent rewrite. Wodehouse and Bolton were in England and could not make the changes, so the director, Howard Lindsay, wrote a new book with many significant revisions. I wonder how much of Wodehouse's work remained?

Subsequent versions have all involved romantic escapades on board the SS *America* travelling across the Atlantic to England. Billy Crocker is desperately in love with an heiress, Hope Harcourt, who also happens to be on board travelling with her English aristocrat fiancé to be married in England. Other

colourful characters include a stockbroker; a gangster, Moonface Martin, and his moll; and an evangelist turned nightclub singer, Reno Sweeney. After a chaotic and farcical story everything, of course, ends happily.

Maybe the story isn't what is important in this show, because Cole Porter provided a score with one thrilling number after another. It was fascinating to hear the famous tunes in the context of the musical for which they were written.

The Canterbury Operatic Society were certainly ambitious in choosing this show as their annual presentation, and they managed to negotiate the story with considerable élan. Much of the success was due to the skilled direction of Stephen Cresswell, who marshalled his large forces with skill; the uncredited designer for a stylish and flexible setting; Natalie Blackwell, the choreographer, who drilled her forces into performing with precision and energy; and Steven Wassell, who directed the excellent and clearly professional band.

It was, however, the huge cast who were cheered by the large audience on the final night. Their energy, stagecraft, and ability to put over the songs were extraordinary. All the principals were thoroughly watchable; in particular, the diminutive and charismatic Angela Gallone as Reno Sweeney gave a performance to be remembered for a long time.

This production of *Anything Goes* was of professional quality and could easily hold its own in the West End.

I took my place among the standees at the back of the concert hall. I devoted my time to studying the faces of my neighbours, hoping to detect in them some traces of ruth and pity and what is known as kind indulgence. But not a glimmer. Like all rustic standees, these were stern, implacable men, utterly incapable of taking the broad, charitable view and realising that a fellow who comes on a platform and starts reciting about Christopher Robin going hoppity-hoppity-hop (or, alternatively, saying his prayers) does not do so from sheer wantonness but because he is a helpless victim of circumstances beyond his control. I was gazing with considerable apprehension at a particularly dangerous specimen on my left, a pleasure-seeker with hair-oil on his head and those mobile lips to which the raspberry springs automatically.

(From *The Mating Season*, 1949)

# The Bibliographic Corner by Nick Townend

## “From the Penny Dreadful”:

### British Boys’ Periodicals and P. G. Wodehouse

All fans of Wodehouse’s school stories will be interested to learn of the publication on 12 April 2013 of Robert J. Kirkpatrick’s *From the Penny Dreadful to the Ha’Penny Dreadfuller: A Bibliographic History of the Boys’ Periodical in Britain 1762–1950*, published by the British Library in a print run of 500. The book is a fantastic way of appreciating Wodehouse’s school story contributions to *The Public School Magazine*, *The Captain*, *Chums*, and *The Boys’ Friend* within the wider historical context of boys’ periodicals.

Robert J. Kirkpatrick is singularly well-qualified to write such a book, having been a dealer in boys’ school stories for some 25 years and having also written three books on the subject, namely *Bullies, Beaks and Flannelled Fools: an Annotated Bibliography of Boys’ School Fiction 1742–2000* (2001); *Victorian Boys’ School Stories in Books and Periodicals* (2001); and *The Encyclopaedia of Boys’ School Stories* (2000), the latter containing a three-page entry on Wodehouse.

The 576 pages of Robert’s new book officially weigh in at a splendid 1.66 kg and tell the full history of the British boys’ periodical, from its origins in the second half of the 18th century to its decline after the Second World War. The history of boys’ periodicals begins with educational and religious magazines, and continues through the “penny bloods” of the 1830s to 1870s, the “penny dreadfuls” of the 1860s onwards, the more respectable periodicals such as the *Boy’s Own Paper* and *Chums*, and the story papers of the first half of the 20th century, before television reigned supreme. There are 16 pages of colour plates and almost 100 black-and-white illustrations in the text, together with 78 pages of checklists covering boys’ periodicals alphabetically and chronologically, and a comprehensive bibliography for those wishing to explore the subject, or aspects of it, in more depth.

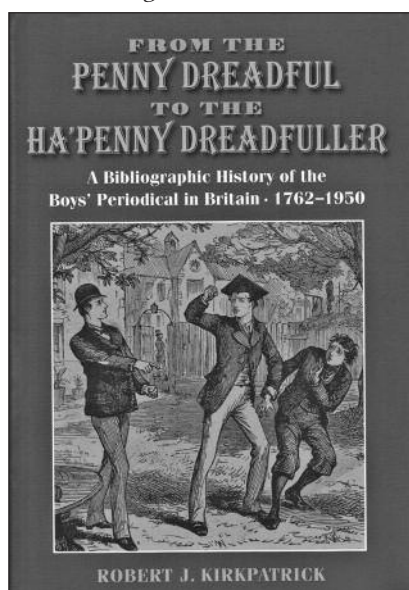
The first mention of Wodehouse arrives on p298, in the six pages covering *Chums*, in the course of which several interesting points emerge: Samuel Walkey, the author of *Rogues of the “Fiery Cross”* (of which Wodehouse was a big fan: see The Bibliographic Corner, *Wooster Sauce*, June 2012, p20) was, like Wodehouse, a former bank clerk; the Boy Scouts came in for a fair amount of ridicule; and there were six invasion-scare stories written by Frank H. Shaw in *Chums* between 1908 and 1914 (cf. *The Swoop*).

The chapter most relevant to Wodehouse is “Top of the Form – Public School Periodicals, George Newnes and the *Captain*”. Two pages are devoted to *The Public School Magazine*, including an illustration of the cover of the first issue. There are five pages on George Newnes and *The Captain*, described by Kirkpatrick as “arguably, in terms of quality, the best boys’ story paper ever published, and a publication which was so well-received, and became so popular, that it is still remembered today”. Wodehouse is duly noted as “the most famous” of the many authors who contributed school stories to the magazine, and some of his contributions to other Newnes publications such as *Tit-Bits* and the *Strand* are also mentioned. There is also a colour plate featuring the cover of the first issue of *The Captain*, featuring its iconic figure in cap, blazer and sports shorts.

One of the other Newnes publications covered is *C.B. Fry’s Magazine*, which, according to Kirkpatrick, included at least one contribution by Wodehouse; if this is correct, the contribution is omitted by both *McIlvaine* and the *Addendum to McIlvaine*. I suspect Kirkpatrick may have been misled by a letter from Wodehouse dated 1 June 1905 in which he states that he wrote *Love Among the Chickens* “with a view to publication in *C.B. Fry’s Magazine*, but the editor cannot use it” (David Jasen, *P. G. Wodehouse: A Portrait of a Master*, 1975, p38).

Later chapters mention Wodehouse’s contributions to the *London Magazine*, apparently “the biggest selling popular monthly of the Edwardian era” (hands up if you thought that honour belonged to the *Strand*); *The Boys’ Friend*; and *Pearson’s*.

Robert Kirkpatrick has written a fascinating book, and is illuminating on the subject of what boys were reading over the course of nearly two centuries. It enables one to appreciate Wodehouse’s position in that market, by understanding what had come before him and what was in the market at the time that he was writing.



# Recent Press Comment

## **Guardian Crossword Blogs**

Since the last edition of *Wooster Sauce*, Alan Connor, the creator of the 'Guardian Crosswords Blog', has posted a series of six quizzes seeking solutions to cryptic crossword clues mentioned by Lord Uffenhham in *Something Fishy* for which none appeared in the book and for which no letter counts were supplied, which adds to the complexity! (See <http://bit.ly/10NwD0n>.) The questions appeared on February 21; March 7, 14, & 28; and April 18 & 25, in which suggested answers from respondents to earlier questions were discussed.

## **Daily Telegraph, January 26**

(from Carolyn De La Plain)

The new BBC TV series *Blandings* made an early appearance in a crossword as the answer to clue 2 across in the General Knowledge crossword: 'Comedy drama series starring Timothy Spall and Jennifer Saunders based on stories by P G Wodehouse (9).'

## **Leicestershire Mercury, February 19**

The *Mercury's* former business editor, and current Society member, John Stone was interviewed regarding the late Richard Briers. John spoke with affection about Richard's presidency of our Society as well as his various Wodehousean roles. Sir Edward Cazalet also commented, noting that "The society could not have bettered Richard as a president".

## **Daily Telegraph, February 23**

(from Murray Hedgcock)

Alan Titchmarsh looked back at reading Enid Blyton, and noted: "Noddy is exactly the same age as I am, but in literary terms I have moved on. I now prefer P G Wodehouse and Patrick Leigh Fermor, John Fowles and Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Alan Bennett."

## **BBC News, Belfast, February 25**

Reported on the death of the pig which had played the Empress of Blandings in the recent TV series from a massive heart attack. It also commented that the pig playing the Queen of Matchingham had surprised everyone involved with the series by producing ten piglets during the filming period.

## **Lincolnshire Echo, February 26**

Reported on the genesis of the play *Carry On, Jeeves*, written by Jez Ashberry for the local Common-Ground Theatre Company, which was staged March 14-16. Ashberry wrote the play because "I've always

loved the Jeeves and Wooster stories and I was really disappointed to find there was no play available for theatre companies to perform." (See review on page 18.)

## **The Cricketer, March** (from Murray Hedgcock)

This issue had a special article on PGW, linked to the point that the current MCC President, Mike Griffith, is Wodehouse's godson – and, of course, is named for Mike Jackson. Written by Society member Patrick

Kidd of *The Times*, who has played for the Gold Bats, it includes references to Plum's love of cricket and the commemorative matches between the Gold Bats and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London.

## **Daily Telegraph (Review section), March 2**

In an interview, the French crime writer Fred Vargas revealed that she is "a great admirer of P G Wodehouse – she had a cat, recently deceased, called Bertram, as in *Wooster* – and she quotes some of her favourite Wodehouseisms in sonorous French".

## **Harper's magazine, March 9**

(from Tom Smith)

This issue included a review of *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters* by Pico Iyer. There was also a review of an animated US series called *Archer*, whose writers appear to be Wodehouseans. Tom Smith writes: "Archer's valet, Woodhouse, is apparently the anti-Jeeves. Woodhouse 'occasionally gets thrown off the balcony of Archer's Manhattan penthouse – "Because how hard is it to poach a goddamn

egg properly?'" There is also a reference to a character named Reggie Thisleton."

## **Sydney Morning Herald, March 9**

Tim Richards, who was on the Society's Weekend in Norfolk in 2012, wrote an article, 'Retracing Wodehouse's War', describing his visit to what used to be Tost prison camp. (He also published a report of this visit in the March 2013 edition of *Wooster Sauce*.)

## **Wisden India, March 9**

The website carried an article by Charlie Campbell about a tour of India undertaken by the newly reformed Authors cricket team, opening with a reminder that Wodehouse had played at Lord's for its earlier incarnation. (See <http://bit.ly/10Nx9eO>.)

## **The Republican, March 11 & 12** (from Alvin Cohen)

For two successive days, Phillip Adler's bridge

## **Wodehouse in Exile**

The BBC4 television programme about the wartime years (for review, see page 7) generated a significant volume of press comment, in the form of previews, reviews, and interviews with the two principal stars, Tim Pigott-Smith and Zoë Wanamaker.

Clive James described the programme in the *Daily Telegraph* of April 9 as "one of the best documentary dramas I have seen in years", and commended the use of "authentic details to reinforce a great, sad story". *The Times* critic Andrew Billen gave it five stars on March 26 and referred to it as a "delectable drama". Nick Clark in *The Independent* quoted script-writer Nigel Williams as saying, "A hell of a lot of people still get this story wrong. I wanted to say: 'Can we stop this? It just isn't true.'" Member MARK TAYLOR wrote in to mention a comment from Zoë Wanamaker in *TV Choice* of March 23: "I'd never read Wodehouse before, but I've started and he's great."

column began with Wodehouse quotations, one featuring Aunt Dahlia and the other Jeeves.

**Washington Post and other US papers, March 14** (from Charles Gould and Alvin Cohen)

An article by George Will on how the art of writing is dying out made reference to his admiration for Wodehouse's craft. Will cited the opening sentence of *Leave It to Psmith* as a particularly fine example.

**Wall Street Journal, March 14** (from Beth Carroll)

In a review of *A Prince Among Stones*, by Robert Loewenstein, Andrew Stuttaford wrote: "If Jeeves had ever written a memoir of his time with Bertie Wooster, it would have been discreet, faintly disapproving, quietly affectionate and just a tiny bit dull. Step forward Prince Rupert zu Loewenstein-Wertheim-Freudenburg, a Jeeves of sorts to the Rolling Stones for close to four decades."

**Daily Telegraph, March 22** (from Alan Hall)

Matthew Norman wondered whether the 14-year-old golfing prodigy from China, Guan Tianlang, a competitor in the US Masters, has left it too late and would be better suited to the role of The Oldest Member, consoling his younger acquaintances about their hooks and slices from the comfort of the clubhouse armchair.

**The Western Sun, March 23**

An article by Gloria Russell in tribute to Plum included a rather nice historic quotation: "Mr Wodehouse's own fertility is apparently inexhaustible but he is beginning to exhaust the superlatives of his critics."

**The Times, March 27 & 30 and April 3** (from several members)

A series of letters concerned Wodehouse valedictions, the latter two commenting on the original omission of 'tinkerty-tonk' and when it appeared in the oeuvre.

**New York Review, April 4** (from Peter Cannon)

Carried an extensive and favourable review by Geoffrey Wheatcroft of Sophie Ratcliffe's book *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*, opening the article with a note of a link between George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh, apart from the well-known appreciation of PGW's work by both authors.

**Desert Island Discs, Radio 4, April 5** (from several members)

The distinguished lawyer (and Society member) Sir Sydney Kentridge chose *The Jeeves Omnibus* as his book for the desert island.

## *Jeeves and the Wedding Bells*

The announcement that Sebastian Faulks had been commissioned by the Wodehouse Estate to write a book featuring Jeeves and Wooster drew a great deal of press comment, which will no doubt continue until the book's projected publication date in November. Faulks himself was quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* of April 12 as saying, as part of the Cityread Festival at the British Library in April, "It is exceptionally difficult. It's like trying to produce a five course dinner entirely out of egg whites, yet making it really sustaining and different from course to course. It's very, very difficult but its good fun." The same report notes that he added that if he failed, he would at least be able to say that Wodehouse "is the master, go back and read him", encouraging a new generation of readers to pick up his books. An article in *The Times* on March 8 carried quotations from both Hilary Bruce and Tony Ring about the initial mixed reaction of Wodehouse fans, with Robert McCrum succinctly summarising the views of one group when he wrote: "It's like asking a Christian to come up with a fifth Gospel."

*The Times* carried an apology in its next issue, on March 9, for referring to Hilary Bruce as 'he'.

**The Guardian, April 5** (from Terry Taylor)

In an interview, Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts said that one of his hobbies is book collecting – Agatha Christie, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, and "Wodehouse: everything he wrote".

**The Imaginative Conservative, April 9**

This website carried a long article by Thomas Behr about reading Wodehouse in a 'Reading for Fun and Freedom' series.

**Daily Telegraph, April 9**

Writing about the hit fantasy series *Game of Thrones*, remarked that Lady Olenna Tyrell, the character played by Diana Rigg, had her roots in Wodehouse: "Dress her in whatever pseudo-medieval robes you like, she's still, quite plainly, Bertie Wooster's Aunt Dahlia."

**Monadnock Ledger-Transcript, April 11**

Elaine Holden described her first literary exposure to a pig – the Empress of Blandings – and recommended *Pigs Have Wings* as the first Wodehouse novel to be read. "Then read the rest of his works, which are just as funny."

**Wall Street Journal, April 12** (from Robert Bruce)

Featured an article on the recently published 150th anniversary edition of *Wisden*, which includes articles by Society patron Murray

Hedgcock and member Patrick Kidd. The picture accompanying the article shows Murray's *Wodehouse at the Wicket* alongside *Wisden*. To see the article, go to <http://on.wsj.com/12gqU60>.

**University Challenge, BBC Two, April 19** (from Christopher Bellew)

In a semi-final match, the team from University College London were asked to name Lord Emsworth's pig; the team captain replied: "Duchess of Blandings." As Christopher notes, they were lucky to get through to the final.

**Sunday Times, April 28**

Used the headline 'Jobs Galore in Mayfair, Jeeves' to introduce an article reporting on the employment book in Mayfair – resulting in 90% of house owners in the area and 80% of apartment owners employing their own domestic staff.

# Future Events for Your Diary

## June 14, 2013 Gold Bats vs. Dulwich Dusters

This annual match will start around 4.30 p.m.; tickets are needed for the tea. See page 3.

## June 23, 2013 Gold Bats vs. Sherlock Holmes Society

The fun begins at the West Wycombe Cricket Club around 11 a.m. and lasts through the day. See page 3.

## June 30, 2013 Cricket in Thorpe Bay

Members of the Gold Bats will play against the Mount Cricket Club at Alleyn Court School, Thorpe Bay, starting at 2 p.m.

## July 9, 2013 Society Meeting

It's Open Mic Night! We now have several volunteers who will take their turn at the microphone to share a favourite passage from Wodehouse. We start from 6 p.m. at The George, 213 Strand, in London.

## July 13, 2013 Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

This will be Norman's penultimate Walk before retiring from duty after 33 years; see page 3.

## July 17, 2013 Jeeves Centenary Brunch

At the Cheltenham Cricket Festival, we'll be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the time PGW saw Percy Jeeves play cricket. See page 4 for details.

## July 28, 2013 Gold Bats vs. Patrick Kidd XI

The annual charity match; this year it's the Tony Bull Memorial Game. The location is Audley End House, near Saffron Walden; start time is 1 p.m.

## September 14, 2013 Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Your final chance to join Norman on a walk around Wodehouse's London. See July 13 for details.

## September 21-22, 2012 Royal County of Berkshire Show / Berkshire Champion of Champions

The Society has sponsored the Berkshire Champion of Champions competition at the Newbury Show since 2005. On Sunday the 22nd, Chairman Hilary Bruce will again face the challenge of draping the Society's sash across the greased back of the winning pig. Join us at the pig show ring around 9 a.m., then stay the rest of the day and enjoy the show.

## October 18-20, 2013 TWS Convention in Chicago

The Wodehouse Society's 17th biennial convention will be held at the Union League Club in Chicago, Illinois.

## October 29, 2013 Society Meeting and AGM

Another rollicking good time at The George, complete with an AGM – who could ask for anything more?

"When you do that flat-footed Black Bottom step with the sort of wiggly twiggle at the end, I feel as if I were eating plovers' eggs in a new dress to the accompaniment of heavenly music."

(From 'Came the Dawn', 1927)

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