



# WOOSTER SAUCE

The Quarterly Journal of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

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## Happy Birthday, Bertie and Jeeves!

*Wodehouse's two most famous characters made their debut – one in a very inauspicious way – 100 years ago. How did it all start? Norman Murphy gives his views.*

In the last issue of *Wooster Sauce*, we celebrated the centenary of Blandings first appearing in the *Saturday Evening Post* in June 1915. It seems appropriate now to celebrate the centenary of Bertie and Jeeves, who first appeared in 'Extricating Young Gussie' in the same magazine just three months later, on 18 September 1915, followed by *The Strand Magazine* in England in January 1916. (Whether Bertie's surname was Wooster or Mannering-Phipps is a matter of debate. See *By The Way*, September 2015, and the comments on page 10 of this issue.)

There is no doubt that the Jeeves and Wooster stories are the most popular of Wodehouse's series. Many Wodehouse enthusiasts go nowhere near the golf or Mulliner stories, or the one-off novels, but

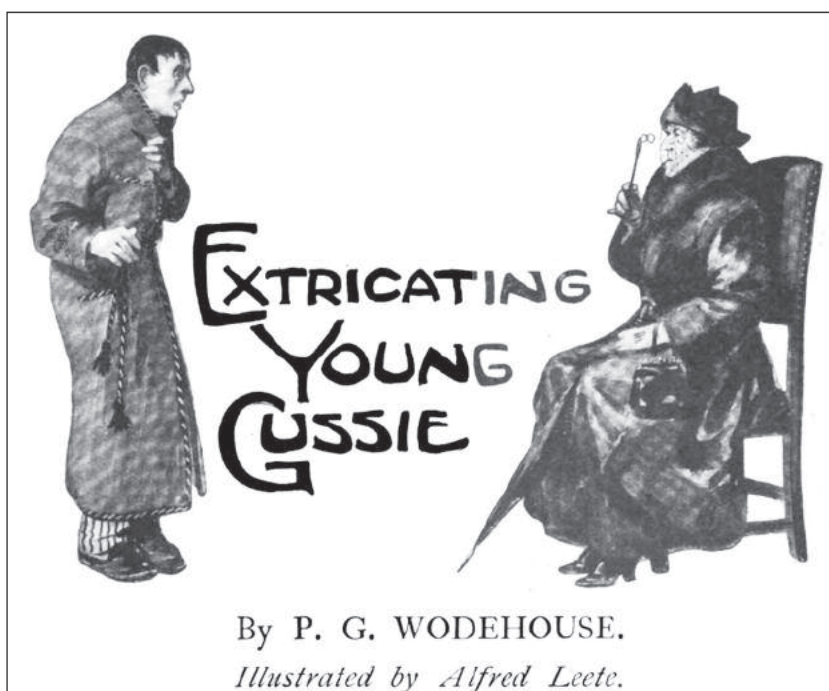
every fan knows Bertie Wooster and Reginald Jeeves. I remember once an impassioned argument between two enthusiasts on the merits of the Blandings stories compared to Bertie and Jeeves, and one phrase stayed with me: "Blandings is an idyllic place, a private world on its own, but Bertie and Jeeves are people you come to love as old friends." I think he was right.

In 'Extricating Young Gussie', Jeeves has just two lines: "Mrs. Gregson to see you, sir." And: "Very good, sir. Which suit will you wear?" This is a pretty dull introduction for a character who was to become a legend, and it gives credence to the theory that the 'trigger' in developing Jeeves was the publication of Harry Leon Wilson's *Ruggles of Red Gap*. In a letter to Richard Usborne in 1965, Wodehouse wrote:

I read *Ruggles* when it first came out in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1914, and it made a great impression upon me and in a way may have been the motivating force behind the creation of Jeeves, for I remember liking it very much but feeling he had got the English valet all wrong.

I felt an English valet would never have been so docile about being handed over to an American in payment of a poker debt. I thought he missed the chap's dignity. I think it was then that the idea of Jeeves came into my mind.

The two lines from 'Extricating Young Gussie' give no indication of what was to come, but Wodehouse was not long in developing Jeeves. 'Leave It to Jeeves' came out only five months later (February 1916), 'The Aunt and The



*Bertie (Mannering Phipps? Wooster?) and Aunt Agatha, as portrayed by Alfred Leete in The Strand Magazine, January 1916*



Sluggard’ two months after that, and ‘Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest’ in December 1916. The series Wodehouse aimed for was well on its way.

We know that Wodehouse remembered the name ‘Jeeves’ from the cricketer he saw playing for Warwickshire against Gloucestershire in August 1913. I suggest he followed the example set by Arthur Conan Doyle, who told him once he liked naming his characters after professional cricketers. And I also think that it was Doyle’s success with Sherlock Holmes that made Wodehouse appreciate the importance of developing characters for a series.

Why was the Bertie/Jeeves partnership such a success? Many have pointed out that the cunning servant has long been a staple character in literature, from Xanthias in Aristophanes’ *The Frogs* through Sancho Panza and Don Quixote to Sam Weller and Mr Pickwick. But there is much more to it than that.

Imagine the Sherlock Holmes stories without Dr Watson to narrate them. Imagine someone other than Archie Goodwin telling us Nero Wolfe’s exploits. And, for many of us, *Ring for Jeeves*, though a good story, just does not have the same impact since we do not hear it from Bertie. As Robert McCrum puts it, Bertie “may be a chump; he may be a ‘perfect ass’, but he is, unwittingly, a narrator of genius. This is the sleight of hand that Wodehouse executes in his Jeeves and Wooster stories – the idiotic scrapes of a ‘vapid wastrel’ transformed into art.” And for those who have not read it, I recommend *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes* by Kristin Thompson, a full-length academic but highly enjoyable examination of Wodehouse’s remarkable skill in his development of master and servant.



Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie as Jeeves and Bertie in the 1990s television series *Jeeves and Wooster*



Jeeves and Bertie, visualised by the illustrator Alfred Leete



Bertie and Jeeves – but especially Jeeves – have become part of our culture. There are mentions of them in the Press almost every day, and they have been portrayed on film, television, and the stage by distinguished actors from David Niven and Arthur Treacher to Ian Carmichael and Dennis Price to Hugh Laurie and Stephen Fry to Stephen Mangan and Matthew Macfadyen.

Today the word ‘Jeeves’ has become part of the language. Among other things, there is the *Jeeves Cocktail Book* (1980); there is the bottle of Jeeves Gin I bought in Crete; there is the Jeeves mixer drink sold by Tesco; there is Jeeves of Belgravia, the dry-cleaning firm; there is the search engine *Ask Jeeves*; and there is the use of his name in advertisements, articles, comics, and more, every day. Would Bertie be jealous? Not a bit of it – he would rejoice in his manservant’s success, as do we all.

So, happy birthday, Bertie and Jeeves! We reckon you will still be around in another hundred years,

## Little Nuggets

### A Brief Encounter

A few months ago, while waiting for his flight at New York’s John F. Kennedy Airport, a gentleman named Colin Fleming was whiling away the time by reading *The Heart of a Goof*. The couple sitting opposite him – she an American, he a Brit – couldn’t help but notice the book and, pleased to spot another Wodehouse fan, initiated a conversation. Colin told them that he and his wife had introduced their eight-year-old daughter to the Fry and Laurie television series, and that he occasionally read Wodehouse to her, believing it to be an excellent way of improving her use of English. In keeping with the occasion,

when Colin left to board his flight, their valedictory “Cheerio!” was met with his concomitant “Toodle-pip!” (Thanks to ROBERT BRUCE for this cheerful tale.)

### Wodehouse at Downton Abbey

PGW fans who watched the penultimate episode of *Downton Abbey* on November 8 may be intrigued by this comment in the review subsequently published in the *Daily Mail*: “Furthermore, Fleet Street has been shaken by the revelation that top agony aunt Cassandra Jones is actually Spratt the butler (a plot twist swiped shamelessly from P G Wodehouse).” Er, um – really? What story was that? All the same, as NICK TOWNEND points out, the fact that Julian Fellowes named one of his characters Bertie Pelham hints strongly that he *must* be a Wodehouse fan.



# Society News

## Meetings and Matches in 2016

As our list of Future Events on page 24 shows, the dates for two of our three Society meetings at the Savoy Tup have been settled. Because of our formal dinner at Gray's Inn in October, our third meeting, at which our AGM is held, will be sometime in November, either the 16th or the 23rd. For further information on our February meeting, see the next item, below.

Dates for our traditional cricket matches have yet to be settled and therefore are not mentioned in Future Events. Traditionally, the Gold Bats game against the Dulwich Dusters is held on the third Friday in June, but this, as well as the date of our match versus the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, has not yet been agreed for 2016. Firm dates for both matches and meetings will be announced in the March issue of *Wooster Sauce*, but members may also monitor the Society's website for updated information.

## Why I Love P G Wodehouse or – Your Impresario Needs You!

At the Society meeting in February, it's your chance to let your fellow members know why you love Wodehouse. Our Entertainment Impresario is looking for about half a dozen volunteers to present five-minute testimonials about why Wodehouse appeals to them. Is it the characters, the humour, the language, the situations, the period? Is it all of the above, or something else? Who is your favourite character? Or book? And why? As long as you can say it in five minutes, we want to hear from you.

So why not stand up and testify? If you're interested in participating, please contact Paul Kent at [redacted]. But even if not, make sure you come to the meeting at the Savoy Tup on Wednesday, 20 February 2016, starting from 6 p.m. – and feel the love.

## Advice to Members on Disposing of Book Collections

The Society sometimes receives enquiries, both from members and non-members, asking for assistance in disposing of collections of Wodehouse books. Earlier this year, the Committee agreed a policy for the Society to pursue in rendering such assistance. This constitutes guidance for members regarding avenues they can explore themselves, whether putting their books up for auction, selling to a second-hand

bookshop, selling online, or simply giving them away. Our guidance also includes practical advice regarding what to look for in a book's condition and the very rare instances when a member of the Society *might* be able to help further. To read the Society's policy, see [www.pgwodehousesociety.org.uk/selling.html](http://www.pgwodehousesociety.org.uk/selling.html), or write to the Editor (contact details on page 24) to have a copy sent to you.

## Calling All South-West Members

In our June issue, we suggested that Society members who wish to meet other like-minded souls in their region should use *Wooster Sauce* to connect with each other. New member David Charles, who lives in Devon, thought this was a jolly good idea. Therefore, if you live in Devon or in a nearby area of the South West, and would like to take part in a regional gathering of Wodehouseans, let David know by writing to him at [david.charles713@yahoo.com](mailto:david.charles713@yahoo.com).

## And Those in the Area of Bath

Another member, Jen Scheppers – known online as Honoria Glossop – is also looking for fellow Society members who might want to organise regional meetings in and around Bath. Should you live out that way and feel inclined to get together with Jen and other Wodehouseans in the area, then let her know of your interest. Write to Jen at [redacted].

## By the Way . . .

In the September issue of *Wooster Sauce*, your Editor did quite a bit of thanking, but there was one important person she unintentionally overlooked. Her gratitude, and that of all right-thinking Society members, also goes to Tony Ring, who has overseen the creation of our supplemental newsletter, *By The Way*, since its very first issue. Even when Elin Murphy took over as *Wooster Sauce* editor in 2007, Tony had issues of *BTW* planned for well into the future. Since then he has selected all new *BTW* topics and often written many of the informational supplements himself. It is also Tony who has found the rare Wodehouse-written material that now constitutes our Christmas editions of the supplement. While Elin oversees the production of *By The Way*, Tony has always been its heart and soul, and he will continue to be so for some time to come. Thank you, Tony!



"And if you think I've got the force of character to come back with a *nolle prosequi* "

"With a what?"

"One of Jeeves's gags. It means roughly 'Nuts to you!' If, I say, you think I'm capable of asserting myself and giving her the bird, you greatly overestimate the Wooster fortitude."

(from *Joy in the Morning*, 1946)

# Why Wodehouse?

by Dorothy Jaroschy

There was a period in my childhood when, if asked by another child why I liked something or someone, I would invariably answer “because.” Childish contrariness, of course, but I also enjoyed the air of mystery, of ideas unspoken, which hung on the open-ended, maddeningly non-forthcoming response.

I cannot apply that word to anything I say or feel regarding the work of P. G. Wodehouse, simply because there is no “because” in that arena. I know exactly why his writing has, and I expect always will have, the unique power to turn up the lights or bring out the sun, to effortlessly banish anything dark which may, from time to time, afflict my soul.

The *New York Herald Tribune*, when reviewing Wodehouse’s *The Return of Jeeves* (*Ring for Jeeves* in the UK), said it all – simply, beautifully, succinctly: “The peculiar charm of Mr. Wodehouse’s writing lies not in his satire, not in the nostalgia evoked for the less complicated world of his earlier work, nor in his intricate and absurd plots. His gift is educated madness, sublime to ridiculous anti-climax and occasional descriptive passages of unexpected lyrical beauty.”

And that gorgeously seductive little passage has driven me to go out as far as is humanly possible on that proverbial limb, yes, even unto hanging on by a single finger dipped in soapy water, to say – unreservedly and unequivocally – “I agree, I agree, I agree.”

Ever since my first unsuspecting encounter with Wodehouse’s ‘dynamic duo’, Jeeves and Wooster, I have been irrevocably and irredeemably hooked. His

miraculous ability to juggle words, his glorious and fearless high-wire act, balancing language and syntax while flying without a net, and his breathtaking manner of always landing on just the right spot, has won him a permanent place in a corner of my soul. He is my talisman, my protector, my bulwark against dark, cloudy days, rush-hour subway trains, dumb emotional decisions, and any and every form of boredom. He is my philosophical and spiritual ‘rabbit’s foot’.

And when I wander through the corridors of the stately mansions which seem to house Bertie’s outlying social circle, strolling among the gardens and shrubbery of Totleigh Towers or Rowcester (pronounced Roaster) Abbey, chasing after disappearing cow creamers or Aunt Dahlia’s pinched pearls, or comforting a homesick racehorse about to make his debut at Epsom Downs, I am carried along on a lovely wave of nonsense begetting more nonsense, before it drops me on a safe and sandy shore. I was going to indulge my fondness for alliteration and say safe and sane and sandy, but that would indeed be stretching the point. Suffice it to say that the shore to which I returned was several shades brighter and whole light years less grim than it had been before I embarked upon my Wodehousean journey.

And throughout it all, I continue to be charmed and unendingly delighted. I would enjoy having tea with Lord and Lady Glossop or a drink with Tubby Frobisher. It would please me to exchange confidences with Brenda Carberry-Pirbright or investigate the sinister Cyril Bassington-Bassington – any day, and twice on Sundays.

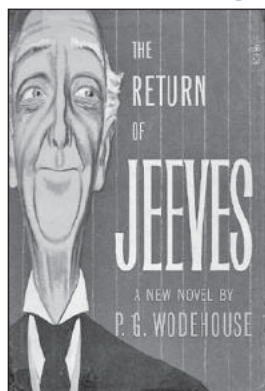
And do I think that it might be fun to live in a world whose emotional centre is set by the temperature of early morning tea or the proper positioning of a black bow tie? You bet I do . . .

cousin, the Queen, a long-time admirer of Wodehouse – is one of our keenest participants in the after-dinner entertainments. We are proud to have him as a Patron.

## More Nuggets

### Duke of Kent Biography

Members will be pleased to hear of the recent publication of a biography of our Patron, HRH The Duke of Kent, written by Celia Lee and John Lee. Published by Seymour Press, it will be of special interest to members because one chapter (in which some of our Committee members assisted the authors) includes a description of the Duke’s involvement with the Society. Those who have attended our biennial formal dinners know that the Duke – like his



### A Suggestion for Audiobook Fans

In the September 2015 issue of *The Oldie*, Patrick Keegan compared the virtues of Martin Jarvis and Jonathan Cecil, considered to be the two best readers of Wodehouse for audiobook. Keegan concluded: “My suggestion is to listen to Jarvis, albeit abridged, and have the book to hand like a libretto. When you have time to go the whole hog, go to Cecil, who drives the novels to their destinations like a solidly ticking-over De Dion-Bouton.” (Thanks to MIKE SWADDLING.)



# Plum's Daily Dozen

by Richard Heard

*Note. Some longtime members may remember that By The Way number 3 (May 1997) described, with illustrations, Wodehouse's 'Daily Dozen' exercises. More than 15 years later, it seems, er, fitting to review those exercises again, thanks to Richard.*

It all started when I was chatting to Mike Savage behind the stumps at the Dulwich cricket match last year. Slowly but surely we have worked out what P. G. Wodehouse was up to in the early mornings! His daily routine was to start the day at 7.30 a.m., do his Daily Dozen exercises, then go to his study and write 1,000 words. (In his younger years he averaged closer to 2,000 words.) He did this seven days a week until his death at the age of 93.

Along with many other young men in the 1890s, PGW was an enthusiast for callisthenics. Years later, he could still touch his toes at the age of 90! In a letter dated 20 January 1971, he said that he had done the 'daily dozen' every day since 1919.

The Daily Dozen were invented by an American named Walter Camp, who lived from 1859 to 1925. He was one of the instigators of American football and an exercise fanatic. His book *The Daily Dozen for Men and Women* was first published in 1921.

Here is Plum's Daily Dozen. The whole routine is supposed to take eight minutes.

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Each of the 12 exercises start from the 'Cross' position. The arms are extended laterally and horizontally, palms down.

1. *Hands*

Arms outstretched, palms facing down, and then you move your arms to your sides without touching your sides. Repeat 10 times.

2. *Hips*

Hands on hips. Rotate hips 5 times one way and 5 times the other way.

3. *Head*

Hands behind your neck, index fingers just touching, and force elbows back in a small movement 10 times.

4. *Grind*

Arms outstretched, palms up. Try and move your shoulder blades together as far as possible. Rotate your arms in small circles, 10 times one way and 10 times the other.

5. *Grate*

Assume cross position. Inhale, raise arms to 45 degrees and lift heels at the same time. Exhale and lower arms and heels. Do this 10 times.



6. *Grasp*

Assume cross position. Link hands behind head. Bend forward from waist as far as possible, and try to make a right angle with your hips. Keep your head up, elbows back, and eyes looking to the front. Repeat 5 times.

7. *Crawl*

Stand with legs apart, arms on hips. Bend forward from the hips and make a swim-crawling motion alternately with one arm after the other. Repeat and count aloud or in the mind to 50. Rest and recover!

8. *Curl*

Assume the cross position. Heels 12 inches apart. Bend your elbows so that your fists come up to your armpits. After a moment extend arms straight forward with palms down. Repeat this 10 times.

9. *Crouch*

Assume the Cross position. Heels 12 inches apart. Bend the knees putting weight on the toes. Lower the body to the heels. Keep the trunk as erect as possible. Repeat this 10 times.

10. *Wave*

Care should be taken that the arms are kept squarely against the ears. The motion should be like waving the mast of a ship, the hips representing the deck, while the trunk, head, and arms up to the top of the hands represent the mast. Move 15 times one way and 15 times the other. This movement, like the others, should not be extreme at first, but gradually increased after a week or so.

11. *Weave*

Assume the Cross position. Swing one arm forward and one arm back alternately and with each swing bend knees and touch the floor with alternate hands. Repeat this 10 times.

12. *Wing*

Raise arms above the head. Swing arms and body forward until arms are raised above back. Repeat 5 times.

## Psmith in Pseattle

### *Lesley Tapson reports on the U.S. Society's Recent Convention*

It is always pleasant when optimistic expectations are met. I flew over to Seattle with high hopes that I would be participating in a slightly eccentric but charming event in the form of The Wodehouse Society biennial convention, and that, happily, is exactly what I experienced.

The setting was the rather lovely Fairmont Olympic Hotel, which formed the perfect backdrop, built, as it was, in the 1920s. The tinkling piano in the lobby provided a suitably classy ambience for the coming together of PGW enthusiasts from all over the United States, Europe, and the Far East. There were some 150 coves there over three days (29 October–1 November).

A few days' sightseeing before the convention got going was marked by the vaguely discombobulating and pretty frequent occurrence of being about 4,000 miles from home but being hailed in the middle of the street or up the Space Needle or on a ferry by fellow attendees. (British delegates included our Head Honcho, Hilary Bruce, and her consort and other members of the Committee who have been attending these events for donkey's years and so knew everybody.)

The event, hosted by the Seattle-based TWS chapter known as the Anglers' Rest, kicked off with a 'dessert buffet' and mingle on Friday night. We were entertained by Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard, who sang and played songs referred to in Wodehouse stories, such as 'Pale Hands I Loved Beside the Shalimar' and 'The Yeoman's Wedding Song' – fab!! There were also competing and very



*Tim Andrew and Lesley Tapson at the Riveting Talks*

different versions of 'Sonny Boy' performed on the one hand by Maria (with audience participation) and on the other by Tom Smith, a convention organiser who acted as the event's emcee. The latter version was certainly sung with gusto and put me in mind of Eric Morecambe's rendition of Grieg's Piano Concerto, if you know what I mean.



*Robert McCrum*

Saturday was spent listening to 'Riveting Talks': an eclectic melange of subjects which ranged from a study of opening paragraphs in Wodehouse to views of Wodehouse in comics to an analysis of the new breed of Wodehouse readers and (I thought) a cracking argument

advanced by our own Elin Woodger Murphy on why PGW was a feminist. Those who spoke – including Wodehouse biographer Robert McCrum – really knew their stuff, and their depth of knowledge was impressive and possibly intimidating. The day was punctuated by a transfer of power from the outgoing President of The Wodehouse Society, Karen Shotting to the new incumbent, Bob Rains. We also were provided with readings by Tony Ring of some of the eleven ghost stories which PGW wrote. Every day is a school day: who knew he had?! No need to reply, those of you who are saying that of course you did and doesn't everyone? The series is called *Mr Punch's Spectral Analyses*.

Following a day of being entertained and educated, the evening was devoted to a reception and dinner. Fancy dress was optional, but a



*Dan Chouinard and Maria Jette in performance*





Masha Lebedeva as Vladimir Brusiloff; Susan Diamond looking glamorous; and Allen Devitt channelling the Dog Bartholomew



Convention organisers Tom Smith and Susan Collicott

significant proportion of those present dolled up; prizes were awarded for (*inter alia*) best person dressed as a dog and best Honoria Glossop (a surprisingly large number of people were dressed as HG in a tennis dress – scary!). Prizes for costumes and quiz winners, as well as a raffle and auction of all things Wodehousean, occupied a chunk of the post-dinner entertainment, with dancing to follow. No bread rolls were lobbed, no policemen’s hats pinched, but despite that admirable restraint it was a fun evening.

Brunch on Sunday included a skit by the NEWTS (the New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society) involving an account of Mortimer Mulliner’s involvement in the creation of Starbucks (he married a woman



Marjanne and Jelle Otten in glorious rig out at the banquet

named Susanna Tabbitha Antoinette Raelinda Bouvier Uckles Chesmire Kennedy Smith). That brought the convention to a close, and sad farewells and promises to meet in two years’ time in Washington, DC, were made.

The organisation of this weekend was clearly a huge amount of work, for which many thanks to those involved. It was a very convivial few days; our American hosts were welcoming and friendly and people generally rubbed along very well indeed.

This was my first experience of a US Wodehouse convention, and I sincerely hope it is not my last. The whole affair was absolutely in keeping with the spirit of the man we love and admire and I had moments of feeling sort of ‘Madeline Bassett-ey’ and gooey (oh dear – perhaps I need some serious help!).



Outgoing and incoming presidents:  
Karen Shotting and Bob Rains

All photos by Barbara Saari Combs unless otherwise noted. For another report of the convention, by Jen Scheppers (pictured right), see the Society’s website. For an article by Robert McCrum, go to <http://bit.ly/212uktd>.



(Left) Brits in attendance included Robert & Hilary Bruce and Tim & Kate Andrew. (Photo by Elin WM)





# P. G. Wodehouse and the Railways of Great Britain

by Patrick S. Cobb

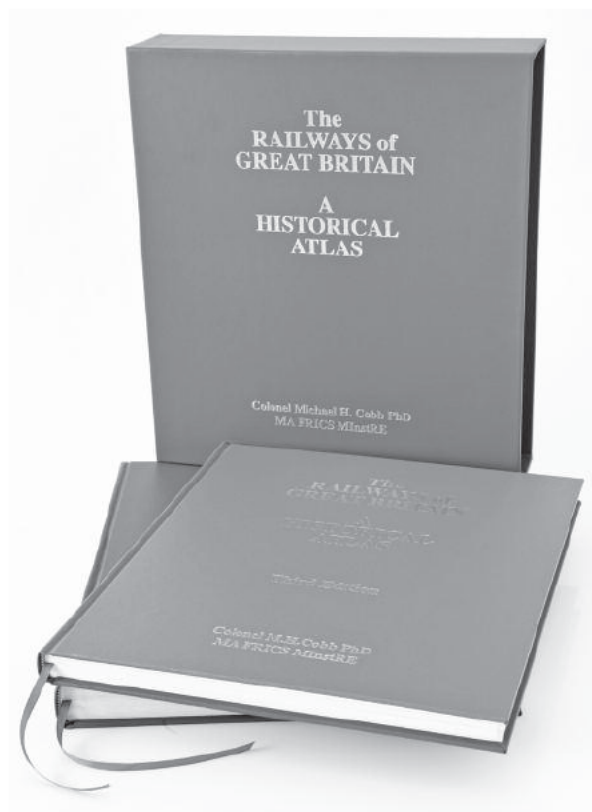
By a curious set of coincidences, my father – Colonel Michael H. Cobb, PhD, MA, FRICS, MInstRE – produced the atlas you see here. He was introduced to Dick Osborne, who was then completing *Sunset at Blandings*, by his great friend and benefactor Sir James Colyer-Fergusson (who gave him a large sum for the atlas costs). Dick asked my father if he would like to ascertain the location of Market Blandings, knowing of his cartographic background and being, like James, a railway fanatic.

My father researched PGW's train times and the geographical descriptions in his various books and produced his thesis for Dick, who published it as an annex to his edition of *Sunset at Blandings*. I have also published this thesis in my new edition of the atlas. My father argued that Market Blandings was Buildwas, in Shropshire.

In the 1970s my father attended a symposium on PGW and read his paper on his research. A well-known publisher, Christopher Maclehose, then at Chatto & Windus, was in the audience. He had published the appendices for *Sunset at Blandings*, and after the reading he said to my father, "Why don't you do this for the whole of the country?" My father's retort was: "It will take all the rest of my lifetime [*he was in his 60s*] and half of my next." Christopher suggested that he might like to research the South Wales lines first as there were a huge number, and indeed some valleys had four separately owned lines. The rest of the country would be a 'doddle'.

My father was persuaded and started this enormous project in 1978. He was given a drawing table, which he placed in his sitting room, and for the next 18 years he carried out the research and hand-drew the data onto sheets of A4-sized tracing paper overlaid onto the OS 1"-to-1m maps. He had travelled on most of the lines before he started, but covered virtually all of them by 1992. (I happened to ring him when I was on the Wokingham loop, and he said it was "one of the few lines on which I have not travelled".)

The printing of the atlas was too costly initially as all the pages had to be chemically engraved onto zinc plates for the lithographic printing presses. Then a method was invented to utilise CD technology, and the CD could be inserted into the new printing presses. The cost came down by 50% overnight! The first edition was published in 2003.



The geography department at Cambridge University used the atlas for population shift studies for five years. When the university dons learned this, they awarded my father a PhD when he was 91, the oldest Cambridge scholar to be so awarded. The two examining professors' papers on the *Atlas* are published in my edition.

It took me four years to bring my edition to fruition, again largely because of the cost. I am grateful to Jeremy Mills (Riley Dunn & Wilson, printers and bookbinders), who worked out a cost plan for me, and to Gordon Wilson, who lent me a large sum.

*The special new edition of The Railways of Great Britain: A Historical Atlas, which includes Colonel Cobb's thesis on the location of Market Blandings, can be ordered through Patrick's website: [www.railwaysofgreatbritain.com](http://www.railwaysofgreatbritain.com).*

**It's More Like a Friendly Discussion:** On September 3 the online edition of the *Irish Times* carried a story about a new book, *Treasured Island*, by Frank Barrett, which is a celebration of the many places in Britain that are immortalised in literature. According to the article, "A ferocious debate has raged for decades on the exact location of P G Wodehouse's Blandings Castle, a fictitious stately home inhabited by the imaginary Lord Emsworth and his prize-winning pig ('the Empress of Blandings')." Well, I don't know about 'ferocious', but it certainly has been lively at times. The full article may be read at [tinyurl.com/pb8wxt8](http://tinyurl.com/pb8wxt8). (Thanks to IAN MICHAUD.)



## Invitation to a Literary Party

Earlier this year, your Editor received an invitation to a literary event of an electronic kind – and it was a treat. Yasmine Gooneratne (pictured), an author and Society member living in Sri Lanka, has published numerous well-received novels and nonfiction books the conventional way, but her latest, *Rannygazoo*, can only be read one way: electronically, in PDF form.



The novel features several characters from her previous book, *The Sweet and Simple Kind*, and serves as an act of homage to a favourite author, as she explains in her introduction:

My main purpose in writing *Rannygazoo* was to say 'Thank You', posthumously, to the late P. G. Wodehouse, an author whose writing has helped me and countless others cope with illness and disability. This book makes no attempt to imitate the style of that master of English prose, but it does adopt as a major theme the Wodehousean belief in the importance of humour to human health and happiness.

Initial response to the novel has been terrific, and Yasmine hopes it will help introduce new readers to Wodehouse. If you are interested in reading it for free (it is only available in a password-protected format), simply write to Yasmine at [ygooneratne@gmail.com](mailto:ygooneratne@gmail.com). She will then send you your invitation and password. Enjoy – you will not be disappointed!

## Good Night, Mr. Wodehouse

Reviewed by Jonathan Bacchus

*Good Night, Mr. Wodehouse* is a novel by Faith Sullivan about life in the small town of Harvester, Minnesota, in the first half of the 20th century. The book's heroine, Nell Stillman, is widowed and left penniless at 24. Subsequently, she secures a teaching job at the local school, loses two close friends when the *Lusitania* is torpedoed, falls in love with a widowed lawyer who goes into politics and dies before he and Nell can marry, receives a mysterious series of poison-pen letters, and dies with a copy of *Jeeves in the Offing* beside her. Meanwhile, Nell's only child, Hillyard ('Hilly'), is bullied at school, takes up long-distance running, enlists in the army when the First World War breaks out, becomes an ambulance driver in France, is decorated for gallantry, and returns home wounded and severely shell-shocked.

Wodehouse is not mentioned until the 24th of the book's 66 chapters, when Nell, intrigued by its title, takes *Love Among the Chickens* down from a shelf in the town's little library and finds Wodehouse "an entirely new experience, delicious, lighter than air." Wodehouse becomes Nell's solace and companion during her many struggles and disappointments. She follows *Love Among the Chickens* with *Psmith in the City*, *Mike*, *A Gentleman of Leisure*, *The Prince and Betty*, *The Man Upstairs*, and *Uneasy Money*:

Nell gave herself up to the story, slipping unresisting into the antic perils of a young, moneyed lord of the realm, caught in a web of complexity only Wodehouse could design. A

Wodehouse plot was a wonder, the solution to each knotty problem leading inevitably to another, knottier problem. And wasn't that always the way?

As well as reading Wodehouse's novels, Nell fantasises about meeting him (and Ethel) in person. After the episode of the Berlin broadcasts, Nell writes Wodehouse a letter of support and appreciation, mentioning that she now has 33 of his books. She is rewarded when Wodehouse replies, enclosing a signed first edition of *Money in the Bank*.

Nell's story is told well enough, and I enjoyed the Wodehouse passages, which rather reminded me of the 'My First Wodehouse Experience' articles published from time to time in *Wooster Sauce*. However, I did not find, as one reviewer did, that *Good Night, Mr. Wodehouse* quite amounted to "a homage to the act of reading itself". And I noticed that some of the books in Nell's Wodehouse collection improbably had British rather than American titles (*Something Fresh* rather than *Something*

*New*; *A Gentleman of Leisure* rather than *The Intrusion of Jimmy*).

I had never heard of Faith Sullivan, who has been "for forty years an ardent fan of P. G. Wodehouse", until I saw the reference to this book in the September *Wooster Sauce*, but she evidently has many loyal devotees. I wonder how many of them, hitherto unfamiliar with Wodehouse's work, will be encouraged to give it a try as a result of reading *Good Night, Mr. Wodehouse*?



# Still Unresolved After Three Months

## *Readers Comment on a Never-ending Debate*

*The September issue of By The Way – ‘Unresolved After a Hundred Years’, in which Tony Ring examined the conundrum surrounding the surname of the Bertie who narrates ‘Extricating Young Gussie’ – prompted letters from three members who felt the need to speculate further.*

It is certainly perplexing to work out the initial relationships of the Mannering-Phipps and Wooster characters in what later became much clearer as the Bertie and Jeeves stories evolved. I suspect that Wodehouse started off with no settled plan, but over time he ‘played it by ear’ and developed the relationships with which we are now so familiar. I have no knowledge of the contents of his letters and unpublished papers from those times, but I imagine they may contain some clues to this development. We have no right to expect him to have it all fully organised in his mind from the very beginning.

This reminds me of music composers who produced multiple less-developed forms, some of them performed in public, of what eventually became perfected compositions. Perhaps in retrospect it would have been easier if Wodehouse had not published these early stories until his developed pattern was established, but of course he had to earn a living and keep his work before the public. Furthermore, as he says somewhere, at first he did not fully realise what he was starting with the Jeeves and Wooster series (or words to that effect).

BARRY CHAPMAN

*Barry was right about Wodehouse’s take on this, as our next letter writer shows.*

I don’t have a proposal of my own, but I do have some evidence to refute Tony’s ‘Aside’ to possible solution (a) [i.e., the Jeeves of ‘Extricating Young Gussie’ could be argued to be a different Jeeves to that of the Jeeves & Wooster stories]. In his introduction to the 1931 *Jeeves Omnibus*, there is a telling section from PGW (page vii) which demonstrates that he regarded Jeeves as the same Jeeves throughout:

I find it curious, now that I have written so much about him, to recall how softly and undramatically Jeeves first entered my little world. Characteristically, he did not thrust himself forward. On that occasion, he spoke just

two lines. That was in a story in a volume entitled *The Man with Two Left Feet*. It was only some time later, when I was going into the strange affair which is related under the title of ‘The Artistic Career of Young Corky’ that the man’s qualities dawned upon me. I still blush to think of the off-hand way I treated him at our first encounter.

NICK TOWNEND

*Our third writer believes he has nailed it.*

Far be it from me to take issue with the formidable trio of Tony Ring, Geoffrey Jaggard, and Richard Osborne, not to mention John Fletcher, but the problem Mr Ring poses is really no problem at all. The identity of Bertie in ‘Extricating Young Gussie’ is susceptible of a ready explanation.

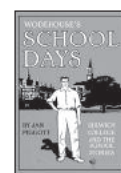
Weigh the facts, sift the evidence. True, the maiden name of Aunt Agatha (Mrs Spenc(s)er Gregson) is Mannering-Phipps, and so must be the married name of her sister-in-law, Gussie’s Aunt Julia, and, of course, the surname of her son and Bertie’s cousin, Gussie. But – and this is the point, or nub – Bertie’s surname doesn’t have to be Mannering-Phipps. It is a false premise that just because Gussie’s surname is Mannering-Phipps, that of his cousin must be, too. I feel sure there are other people in the world like me who have cousins of a different surname, and first cousins at that. Bertie’s surname could be Smith or Brown or St John-Cholmondomey-ffatherstonehaugh. But it isn’t. Though nowhere stated in ‘Extricating Young Gussie’, on the basis of what came later, Bertie’s surname must be understood to be Wooster, and therefore this story marks the first appearance of Bertie Wooster. It is clear to me that his mother – poor lady, unnamed throughout the canon – was a Miss Mannering-Phipps, sister of Agatha, who married a Wooster (also anonymous) and begat Bertram Wilberforce.

It must have been that, when The Master got around to his next story about Bertie, he realised he needed to clear up this matter, lest historians a century later started to get their camiknickers in a twist about it. At this point I feel like the nurse who solved the Amazing Hat Mystery.

NOEL BUSHNELL

*Will the debate continue? Only time will tell.*

**More on Wodehouse’s School Days:** Members who have not yet ordered Dr Jan Piggott’s book *Wodehouse’s School Days* (see the review in the September edition of *Wooster Sauce*, pg 8), and still wish to do so, are advised that, in addition to being available from the Dulwich College store ([shop.dulwich.org.uk](http://shop.dulwich.org.uk)), the book can also be ordered via [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk). Members in the US may also order the book via Amazon’s UK site. The list price is £20, but shipping charges may vary.





# Ho! Ho! But How?

by Karen Shotting

Touching on the delicate subject of Allen Hunter's quest to obtain a number plate with the words 'What Ho!' proudly emblazoned upon it (*Wooster Sauce*, March 2015, p.1): According to his spritely account of the imbroglio, Mr Hunter was up against the regulators' unfamiliarity with Wodehouse, the OED, and Shakespeare, and their apparent all-too-unfortunate familiarity with the second word of the phrase's urban slang usage as a descriptor for a woman of questionable virtue. (I first heard this word used in this way in the mid-1970s, so it's far from new, and other uses of it have flourished unhindered for decades.)

Let us return to that selfsame second word. Not only does 'What ho!' appear with shocking regularity throughout the works of P. G. Wodehouse, but he also uses 'Ho!' as a stand-alone word. (I do hope it's all right to use this word in this respectable publication, and I hope that *Wooster Sauce*, like *Cosy Moments*, will not be muzzled!)

Of course, 'Ho!', as used by the constabulary in Wodehouse, is not spoken in a spirit of cheery bonhomie, like 'What ho!', but it is hardly a word that would bring a blush to the cheek of modesty. It is an unwelcome opening salvo by the helmeted brigade, epitomised by the unspeakable Stilton Cheesewright in *Joy in the Morning*. It is in that novel that Bertie Wooster, in fact, muses on it a bit: "Touching for a moment on this matter of policemen and the word 'Ho.' I have an idea that the first thing they teach the young recruit on joining the Force is how to utter this ejaculation. I've never met a rozzler yet who didn't say it."

It is unfortunate that it was taken out of context in the Case of the Offending Number Plate. One wonders where it all will end.

Where indeed? A salutary lesson can be drawn

by looking at the Case of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, of all things. The OED, 2nd ed., is not shy about the use of 'ho!' – it appears right in the introductory pages (page *v* in 21 of the 22 volumes; it appears a bit later in volume 1, which has more explanatory pages at the beginning). In the dictionary proper, of course, there are numerous entries for 'ho' and some for 'HO' (citing the Bible, Tennyson, Burns, Dickens, and other venerable sources), but let us focus on its appearance on p. *v* – in the pronunciation key for the letter *h*. Interestingly (well, to me, anyway), the '!' is appended, just as I have written it above. No other letter has any sort of punctuation, just *h* and 'ho!'. One is tempted to conclude that the preparer of the key had read Wodehouse; however, one realizes that there is insufficient evidence to support this theory.

Mind the sequel, however. This pronunciation aid has been expurgated, deleted, expunged: the online version of the OED key shows the pronunciation for the letter *h* as 'how' – and I surmise, based on this, that the in-progress third edition of the OED, likewise, will be

free of the offensive 'ho!'.

*Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis* about sums it up, if that's the phrase I want. I'm not particularly sure I want to change with the times, but there it is.

You may be asking yourself why I was reading the pronunciation key to the OED. To which I respond, doesn't everyone? (When not reading Wodehouse, that is.) Seriously though, I was looking for some etymological information, when my eye wandered as it is wont to do when I have a dictionary in my hands. I like ebooks as much as the next person, but give me an actual book printed on paper every time.

**h ... ho! (həʊ)**

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## *Cosy Moments*

*A Village in a Valley*, by Beverley Nichols (1934)  
(from Beth Carroll)

In the foreword to Nichols's book (edition unknown), Bryan Gonnon writes: "I defy anyone not to be amused by chapter one which like much of his work is in the great comic tradition of English writers such as Jane Austen and P. G. Wodehouse."

*Murder on a Midsummer Night*, by Kerry Greenwood (2008) (from Roger Bowen)

In this, the 17th entry in the series of Phryne Fisher mysteries, author Greenwood writes: "As breakdowns

go, James Barton's was not a nervous one. Phryne wondered if he had traumatic symplegia, like that Wodehouse cat Augustus."

*Gardens: Quotations on the Perennial Pleasures of Soil, Seed, and Sun*, compiled by Holly Hughes and Mary Woodin (1994)

(from Beth Carroll)

Found on page 21: "We encountered Aunt Dahlia, who, wearing that hat of hers that looks like one of those baskets you carry fish in, was messing about in the herbaceous border by the tennis lawn." Beth notes that only the author is referenced, and wonders from which PGW book the quote was taken. Do any of our members have ideas?

# *P. G. Wodehouse in the Globe Newspaper*

## *Volume 1 (By the Way, Day by Day)*

## *and Volume 2 (By the Way: 200 Verses)*

*A Review by Nick Townend*

September's *Wooster Sauce* carried a comprehensive report on the publication and content of these volumes. As Norman Murphy rightly concludes in his preface: "John Dawson and the other erudite Wodehouseans who have laboured on this project . . . deserve our praise for their thorough and scholarly approach. Even more, they deserve our thanks for providing us with so much new information on a significant and hitherto unexplored formative period of Wodehouse's remarkable career" (Vol. 1, page x).

The efforts of the Globe Reclamation Project (GRP) have been colossal: 1,400 columns (21,000 paragraphs and 800 poems) retrieved from libraries, transcribed, studied, and appraised, resulting in 4,000 paragraphs and 322 poems being attributed to Wodehouse, of which 1,300 paragraphs and 200 poems have now been published and annotated. So hats off to, and three cheers for, the members of the GRP (John Dawson, Ananth Kaitharam, Ian Michaud, Neil Midkiff, Karen Shotting, Arthur Robinson, and Raja Srinivasan), their two Senior Consultants (Norman Murphy and Tony Ring), and the others who assisted in various ways (Elin Woodger, Murray Hedgcock, Chris Reece, Chris Pennycate, and Elaine Ring).

John Dawson's identification of the structure of the paragraphs as Introduction ("here's something from another paper") / Copy (quotation from the other paper) / Tag (punchline) is insightful, and enables one to deconstruct the paragraphs into their constituent parts. Although Dawson does not mention this, Wodehouse used the same structure again, but on a more extended scale, in his 'Our Man in America' columns for *Punch* in the 1960s (see, for example, the piece about Ernest Crowley in *Plum Pie*, 1966, pp205–06).

But this is a review, not an encomium, so honesty compels me to point out some less-than-perfect elements of the books, whilst remembering Wodehouse's assertion in his preface to *Summer Lightning* that a critic who had made a "nasty remark about my last novel" had "probably by now been eaten by bears", and hoping that I can avoid a similar fate.

Many hands may make light work, but they also lead to some inconsistencies between the two volumes, as the following examples demonstrate.

A minor, but striking, example is the use of a different font for the text between the two volumes. Mercifully, the fonts used on the boards of the two volumes are consistent, so they do not look mismatched next to each other on a shelf.

The descriptions of the attribution of the paragraphs are inconsistent. Tony Ring states: "Each contribution, whether prose paragraph or verse, was . . . subjected to detailed scrutiny by two or more members of the GRP" (Vol. 2, page xvii). Norman Murphy's preface corroborates this: "when a team of researchers . . . collectively agree . . . a paragraph has that indefinable but unmistakable Wodehouse 'touch', . . . I am confident we can accept their findings as conclusive" (Vol. 1, page x). However, it transpires that the paragraph attribution was done solely by John Dawson, who tells us: "The selections in this book are of my choosing. They haven't been evaluated by the GRP's Review Panel or otherwise authenticated, and represent only my attempt to gather the . . . most identifiably Wodehousean work *in my opinion* from the columns" (Vol. 1, page xvii).

The elucidation of Notes of the Day is rather convoluted. They are first mentioned when John Dawson says Wodehouse "didn't mention [to his first biographer] the hundreds of poems and Notes of the Day columns which he wrote for *The Globe*" (Vol. 1, page xv). They reappear when Dawson says that "the decision was made for the Review Panel to proceed in evaluating the 1100+ Notes of the Day columns" (Vol. 1, page xvi). But what exactly are these columns? Some explanation is eventually given by Tony Ring at the start of Volume 2: "Karen Shotting observed that the final item on the immediately adjacent front page column, *Notes of the Day* [sic, i.e. italicised, unlike in Vol. 1], frequently seemed to contain features which were suggestive of Wodehouse's hand" (Vol. 2, page xviii). But it is not until the very end of Volume 2 that we receive a proper explanation: "the second and third [columns of *The Globe's*



front page] were always devoted to *Notes of the Day*”, which typically included “a longish piece . . . on an international issue, followed by one . . . on . . . British politics. Another article on a foreign, social or cultural topic would be followed by contributions . . . on one or more of sport, theatre, literature and other cultural matters” (Vol. 2, p237).

The future plans of the GRP for *Notes of the Day* also appear slightly uncertain. John Dawson talks of “a planned third volume featuring [Wodehouse’s] *Notes of the Day* columns” (Vol. 1, page xxiii), whereas Tony Ring merely says that such a volume will appear “if it is considered justified” (Vol. 2, page xviii).

Frustratingly, there is no index to either volume. So when, for example, John Dawson says Wodehouse “was seldom more incisive or satiric than when dealing with fellow authors in whom he perceived an inflated sense of self-importance, viz., George Bernard Shaw, Marie Corelli, and Hall Caine, his three favorite literary *bêtes noires*” (Vol. 1, page xxi), the lack of an index means it is impossible to see easily when and how Wodehouse mentioned them in his columns.

The order in which the paragraphs appear in Volume 1 is also somewhat frustrating. In line with the *Day by Day* element of the title, the paragraphs appear in day/month order, from 1 January to 31 December. However, underneath each date the paragraphs selected for inclusion are printed in year order; for example, 27 September includes paragraphs from 1902, 1904, 1906 and 1907. This approach (presumably adopted to save space by reducing the number of times each day/month heading appears) means that it is not easy to read the paragraphs straight through in the chronological order in which they were written (i.e. 1902, then 1903, etc.), which would have enabled one to see more readily any development in Wodehouse’s writing over the period from 1902 to 1908.

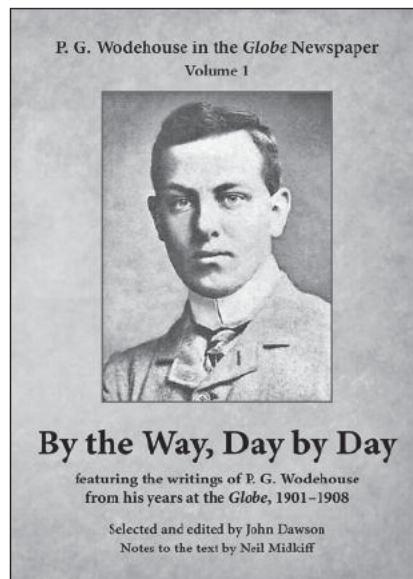
However, overall these reservations are trifling. Buyers of these books will be buying them primarily for the Wodehouse content, and there is

a superabundance of that. The 1,300 paragraphs and 200 poems fill 438 of the 615 pages across the two volumes.

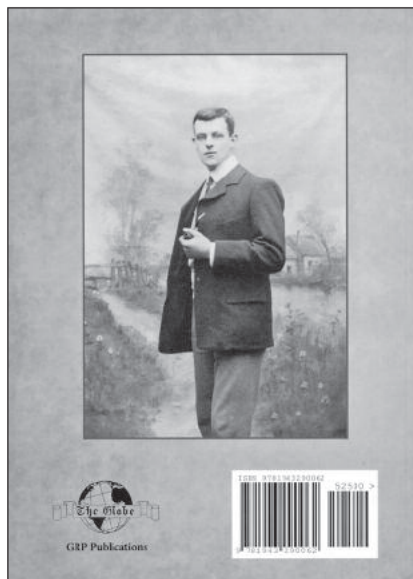
*The Aberdeen Journal’s* contemporary review of the 1908 *The Globe By The Way Book* said: “There is plenty of humour – rather a surfeit of it; but its constant repetition palls. We suspect that to read the book [of 144 pages] through would make one very tired.” The two current volumes provide more than three times the number of pages of the original book. Wodehouse’s own health warning, apropos *The Jeeves Omnibus*, is apposite here: “I would not recommend anyone to attempt to finish this volume at a sitting. Take it easy. Spread it out. Assimilate it little by little.” A wise reader will therefore treat the two volumes either as a *sortes Virgilianae*, to be dipped into for bibliomancy, or as a very large box of chocolates, to be dipped into when one wants a treat. And there are indeed treats aplenty in the two volumes.

Neil Midkiff’s *Notes to the Text* are splendid. He has done a terrific job in identifying the relevant news items from the daily papers which formed the basis of Wodehouse’s paragraphs, and in providing context relating to once topical Edwardian people and issues to help readers to appreciate the humour. I noticed only two instances where his *Notes* are anything less than comprehensive. First (8 August 1903), he fails to attribute a Latin tag (*Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit*; “No mortal is wise at all times”) jokingly mistranslated in school-boy fashion by Wodehouse (as “No mortal man knows the omnibus hours”); in fact, this was one of Pliny the Elder’s gags. Second (31 August 1904), in connection with a poem about a barber entitled ‘Methods of Modern Barbarism’, he fails to mention that the title is derived from Henry Campbell-Bannerman’s 1901 denunciation of the British approach in the Boer War as “methods of barbarism”.

In summary, no serious fan of Wodehouse (and anyone who is a member of a Wodehouse society is, by definition, a serious fan) will want to be without a copy of these two excellent volumes.



*The front and back covers of both volumes feature early photos of PGW that have been restored and colourised by Laiz Kuczynski.*





# Lots of Interest

by Graeme W. I. Davidson

Readers might be interested to hear of two interesting lots which came up for sale this summer at Sotheby's English Literature, History, Children's Books and Illustrations Auction held on 14 July 2015 in London. The lots were the original artwork for illustrations for two very early Wodehouse books.

One lot was four of the original watercolour-and-ink drawings used to illustrate the early Wodehouse book *William Tell Told Again* (Adam and Charles Black, London, 1904). In 1900 Adam and Charles Black commissioned an illustrated book featuring humorous drawings by Philip John Stephen Dadd (1880–1916), nephew of popular writer and artist-illustrator Kate Greenaway, rendered in the lively style of celebrated poster artist John Hassall, perhaps most famous for his 'Skegness is SO bracing' poster, with a text by another writer. Rejecting the initial text, the publishers then asked Wodehouse to supply a light-hearted re-telling of the classic tale, with verses by John Houghton.

The book contained sixteen Dadd illustrations in all. The collection of noted US Wodehouse collector James H. Heineman included twelve of Dadd's sixteen wonderful original watercolour and ink drawings (including the one used for the frontispiece illustration which also appeared in the main body of the book), the other four being held in the possession of Adam and Charles Black, per the explanation given at Paragraph A4 at page 425 of *P. G. Wodehouse: A Comprehensive Bibliography and Checklist* by Elaine McIlvaine, Louise S. Sherby and James H. Heineman (Heineman, 1990). The four watercolours which came up for auction in July are those other four.

Painted in 1900, the Dadd watercolours have been described by Sotheby's as the earliest illustrations to appear in a Wodehouse book, and are, as such, of considerable historical importance, in addition to being very pleasing aesthetically. The four watercolours used for Plates II, IX, XII, and XV in the book sold in the July auction at about twice Sotheby's top estimate, and were acquired by a British Wodehouse collector.

The other Wodehouse illustrations lot in the July auction were eleven items of original artwork by Wodehouse's lifelong friend from his Dulwich College days, William ("Bill") Townend (1881–1961) used to illustrate Wodehouse's early school novel *The*

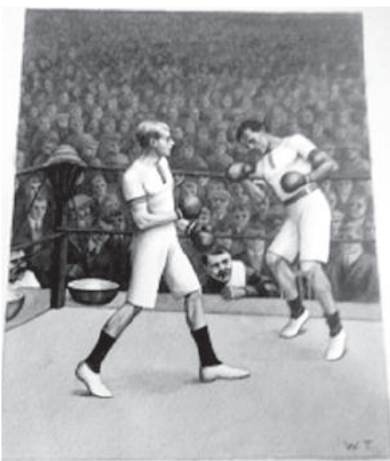
*White Feather* (Adam & Charles Black, London, 1907). In all, *The White Feather* contains twelve Townend illustrations, consisting of the illustration appearing as the frontispiece illustration (and also appearing facing page 94 of the book) and eleven other illustrations.

The artwork sold in the July auction comprises the original ink and monochrome watercolour artwork used for eleven of the twelve illustrations which appear in the book. Not included in the lot was the original artwork for the illustration captioned 'The answer was brief', which appears facing page 190 of the book, the whereabouts of which original artwork seems presently uncertain.

Through Wodehouse's intervention, Townend provided the illustrations for *The White Feather*, although the illustrator for its earlier six-part serialisation in *The Captain* (October 1905–March 1906) was the ever sound T. M. R. Whitwell. Given presumed cost implications of the book using the new Townend illustrations, rather than the Whitwell illustrations from *The Captain* serialisation, it is interesting to speculate on the steps taken in the background to bring about the result whereby Wodehouse's old school chum, Townend, was chosen as illustrator for the book.

The setting for *The White Feather* was Wodehouse's fictional public school Wrykyn, and clearly the times and experiences of Wodehouse and Townend at Dulwich College extensively informed both Wodehouse's writing and Townend's illustration work. According to a letter from Wodehouse to Townend on 6 May 1908 (see Sophie Ratcliffe's *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters* (Hutchinson, London, 2011), page 68), it was on the strength of Townend's illustrations for *The White Feather* that Wodehouse recommended Townend as illustrator for *The Luck Stone*, Wodehouse's *Chums* weekly serial (16 September 1908–20 January 1909).

The eleven Townend watercolours sold in the July auction – again historically important given the early nature of the work and the fact that they constitute a very considerable portion of Townend artwork used to illustrate Wodehouse's writings – were sold, like the Dadd watercolours, at a hammer price in excess of Sotheby's top estimate. They were acquired by the same fortunate Wodehouse collector who purchased the four Dadd watercolours.



One of the Townend illustrations for *The White Feather*



# Celebrations of Wodehouse in the Press

Among the innumerable recent mentions of Wodehouse in the press were comments so admiring and laudatory that we felt they deserved special attention and cries of "Hear, hear!"

For my money, this bloke is the Mozart of words. . . . Like any great writer, his output is not just one thing. It's a satire of the British aristocracy at the turn of the 20th century, a celebration of the lunacy of life and a theatrical jaunt.

Classical pianist Simon Tedeschi in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 6

But, as any Wodehouse aficionado worth his or her salt will tell you, what draws them like a moth to a flame are not only the wonderful assortment of characters but more importantly, the brilliant way the English language is moulded to produce the most magical effect. . . . The prose is simply sublime.

Aparna Narrain, 'What ho! Celebrating 100 years of Bertie, Jeeves and Blandings', in the *Huffington Post, India*, September 15

That is Wodehouse's genius: he allows his readers to believe, for a delightful moment, in a universe which is pure fantasy, gentle, generous and wholly invented. Wodehouse made the world seem nicer than it was, and nicer than it is, and that is not a sin, but a triumph.

Ben McIntyre in *The Times*, September 25

[Regarding Jeeves's brief appearance in 'Extricating Young Gussie', when he "came in with the tea":]

This was one of the rare occasions where he did something as pedestrian as "come" into a room. As every Wodehouse aficionado knows, Jeeves never walks. He materialises or shimmers or floats or glides or slides like a liquid mix of eel and ectoplasm. And when he's serving early morning tea not a minute before the crack of noon his movements are suitably *simpatico*. . . . PGW retained the unruffled

fiction of an Edwardian England preserved in the aspic of Empire and entitlement. In Woosterland it is always spring and there is always time for tea.

'N.M.', 'Jeeves and the Vital Oolong', in *The Economist* (blog), September 18

If I need to laugh, I read P G Wodehouse. . . . These are not stories of great meaning but of great wit. The stories may be the closest thing to pure amusement of anything I have read. P G Wodehouse is not serious enough for a Victorian, but he is too optimistic, genial and kind for our culture. He stands in a hallway between the world that two World Wars destroyed. If you want to know something about Interwar British leadership, read Wodehouse. If you wish to escape a hard day, read Wodehouse. If you like a thoughtful chuckle more than a LOL, then read Wodehouse. Let us praise happy stories and the man who wrote them.

John Mark N. Reynolds, 'Happy Birthday, P G Wodehouse', in *Eidos*, October 16

Immersion in Wodehouse certainly influences your prose style, but more than anything it encourages a certain temperament of modestly anarchic irreverence. . . . Wodehouse transcends analysis. No one has ever used words more cleverly, for more fun, and words are the foundation of civilisation, if not of humanity. If for any period you lived in Wodehouse's pages, you are marked for ever by that good fortune.

Author Greg Sheridan in *The Australian*, October 17

The eternal pleasure of Wodehouse is the absolute lack of crudeness or menace. It is an oasis of innocence, where being pleasant to each other is what matters most. The code of the Woosters is 'never let a pal down'. It should be a guiding mantra for all of us.

Patrick Kidd in *Spear's*, October 28

## An Article's Aftermath

The September issue of *Wooster Sauce* included an article by MARTIN BREIT on the association between Shipley Hall, the estate featured in *Money in the Bank*,

and Degenershausen, the estate in Germany where Wodehouse stayed for a while after his release from internment in 1941. As a result of that association, rhododendrons at Degenershausen were saved from execution, and a tree was to be named 'Wodehouse-Linde'.

MITTELDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG
LOKALES
OBG WOCHENENDE, 26./27. SEPTEMBER 2015 13

### Gehölze für das Amt

**KURIOSSES** Ein Buch des britischen Humoristen P. G. Wodehouse sorgt für Aufklärung in Degenershausen.

VON UWE KRAUS

DEGENERSHAUSEN/MZ. Nun wird das Werk des britischen Humoristen P. G. Wodehouses sogar zum „Fall“ für das Landesdenkmalamt in Halle. Der gebürtige Blankenburger Martin Breit gab kürzlich ein Buch heraus. In dem zeichnet er den Lebensweg dieses „Gentleman der Literatur“ nach.

Vor wenigen Tagen sorgten nun Martin Breit und einer seiner Texte für Schlagzeilen. Die aktuelle September-Ausgabe des britischen Magazins „Wooster Sauce“ berichtet über einen kuriosen Streit. Das Amt wollte eine vor wenigen Jahren

geplante Rhododendron-Hecke im Park von Degenershausen entfernen lassen, weil die historisch nicht belegt sein soll. Doch nun hat ein Blick in die Novelle „Money in the Bank“ von P. G. Wodehouse dafür gesorgt, dass das Amt einen Rückzieher macht. Eine Text-Passage erinnert an die Hecke.

Reinhold Maxtone-Mailler lebt als letzte Nachfahrin des Park-Besitzers heute in Großbritannien. Das

Forsthaus, das heute ein empfehlenswertes Café beherbergt, baute ihr Großvater. Die geborene Baroness von Bodenhausen ging in Wiesbaden zur Schule und verlor mit sechs Jahren ihren Vater, der so prägend für den Park war. Bei einem Besuch vor einigen Jahren erzählte sie, dass er 1937 auf seiner Farm in Afrika erschossen aufgefunden wurde. Vor-se Selbstmord oder wurde er im Auftrag der Nazis erschossen? Mit ihrer Mutter, Baroness Angela von Bodenhausen, lebte Reinhold während des Zweiten Weltkrieges weiter in Degenershausen. Lerne dort den Privatfanalogenen P. G. Wodehouse kennen und erzähle sich noch gut an des-

sen Ratschläge. Tagebuch zu führen empfahl er ihr, was sie bis heute tut. Ihrem Vater Hans-Wilke Freiherr von Bodenhausen-Degener verdankt der Park seinen Stil als englischer Landschaftspark. Er brachte von seinen Reisen, besonders aus England, viele Bäume und Sträucher mit in den Harz.

Ob auch die Rhododendron-Hecke dazu zählt, das kann heute niemand wirklich belegen.

FOTUREAL/ALUT KLINGHOFF

Der Landschaftspark Degenershausen bei Wiesbaden ist bis zum 30. September von 8 bis 19 Uhr und vom 1. Oktober bis zum 31. März von 9 bis 17 Uhr kostenlos für seine Besucher geöffnet.

**P. G. Wodehouse and the Flora of Degenershausen**  
by Martin Breit



Der Artikel von Martin Breit in der September-Ausgabe des britischen Magazins „Wooster Sauce“, in dem der Autor über den kuriosen Streit berichtet.

that his article in *Wooster Sauce* aroused the interest of the local press in Germany, where it was noted that the rhododendrons had "hit the headlines" in England. As seen here, they included a photo of Martin's article as it appeared in *Wooster Sauce*. And so our fame spreads – sort of like rhododendrons.

# The Word Around the Clubs

## *The P. G. Wodehouse New Comic Writer Award*

In September, to celebrate the centenary of the publication of the first Blandings novel, *Something Fresh* (*Something New* in the USA), Random House combined with Chortle: The UK Comedy Guide ([www.chortle.co.uk](http://www.chortle.co.uk)) to launch the P. G. Wodehouse New Comic Writer Award. Guidance to prospective authors was very limited, merely requiring submissions to be uploaded online by the end of that month, and to consist of a comic short story or extract of between 500 and 1,000 words. The judging panel was to include Chortle employees, Random House employees, writer Nina Stibbe, and a representative of the Wodehouse estate. It is understood that between 100 and 150 writers took up the challenge.

Word has it that it was unfortunate that the original brief did not explain in greater detail who Wodehouse was – i.e., the greatest humorous writer of the 20th century. As a result, too many entries ignored the essential elements of humorous writing – subtleties of language, plot, and character – and sought merely to include more ‘iffy’ words per line than Plum achieved in 10,000,000 words of fiction (approximately three). So congratulations are in order to Tony Wilkes, who won the desirable prize of a weekend writing course plus a bundle of Wodehouse books for his story ‘South of the River’, which eschewed iffiness and had an eye-catching twist in the tale which evidently gave it the nod over its rivals.

Perhaps the lesson for Chortle, if they are to rerun the competition in future years, is to require entrants to also provide the names of three Wodehouse stories they have read in the previous twelve months, showing they have some concept of the art form to which they are aspiring.

## *Of Insomnia and Cow Creamers*

Australian member BARRY CHAPMAN wrote regarding a recently viewed 2011 episode of the British television series *Antiques Roadshow*, in which members of the public bring in antiques to be valued by the show’s experts. The venue for this particular programme was Charlecote Park, the ancestral home of the Lucy family, close to Stratford-upon-Avon. A gentleman had brought a large number of ceramic cow creamers. (Barry writes: “Rather nitpickingly, I thought, the expert pointed out that despite being called cow creamers, they were really only milk jugs.”)

The creamers’ owner explained that when he was young he suffered from insomnia, so he went to his GP, who suggested that, on going to bed, he read a relaxing book. When asked which he recommended, the doctor mentioned “a book by P. G. Wodehouse called *The Code of the Woosters*”. The story of the silver cow creamer in that book led the patient to start collecting ones made of china. Those he brought in to the show that day were

estimated by the expert to be worth some thousands of pounds – considerably more than the man had paid for them.

“Not only that,” writes Barry, “but reading *The Code of the Woosters* had cured his insomnia!”

## *An Eight-Year Relapse*

On August 17, BBC Radio 4 Extra broadcast a 2007 episode of *The Write Stuff*, a literary quiz show. LAURENCE OGRAM tells us that on this particular episode, one of the two competing teams comprised Sebastian Faulks and Sabrina Broadbent, who were set the following poser: “The first speaker here is telling the narrator about the alarming behaviour of his brother-in-law. The question is: who wrote the story and who, fairly obviously, is the model for the brother-in-law?”

Laurence reports that it began to sound familiar to him, especially once this quotation was given to the players:

“Do you know where Rodney is at this moment? Up in the nursery, bending over his son Timothy’s cot, gathering material for a poem about the unfortunate little rat when asleep. Some boloney, no doubt, about how he hugs his teddy bear and dreams of angels. Yes, that is what he is doing, writing poetry about Timothy. Horrible whimsical stuff that . . . Well, when I tell you that he refers to him throughout as ‘Timothy Bobbin’, you will appreciate what we are up against.”

Faulks (then in his pre-*Wedding Bells* days) quickly realised that A. A. Milne was the model for the brother-in-law, but only identified the author’s name once the chairman reminded the team that the narrator was the Oldest Member. As a final gesture, Rodney Spelvin’s well-known poem was quoted in full:

Timothy Bobbin has ten little toes.  
He takes them out walking wherever he goes.  
And if Timothy gets a cold in the head,  
His ten little toes stay with him in bed.

It was an episode well worth repeating, at least for Wodehousean listeners!

## *A Not-So-Lady-Like Acrostic*

Thanks to CAROLINE FRANKLYN for sending, earlier this year, a devilish acrostic (‘The Ladygram’) that was printed in the May 29th edition of *The Lady*. The quotation part of the solution proved to be from *Right Ho, Jeeves* (without the punctuation, which made it somewhat difficult to, er, puzzle out, but we got there in the end):

“This little trouble of yours. Jeeves has told me everything.”

He didn’t seem any too braced. It’s always difficult to be sure, of course, when a chap has dug himself in behind a Mephistopheles beard, but I fancy he flushed a trifle.

“We just happened to be sitting in a cemetery, and I asked her how she’d like to see my name on her tombstone.”

(from *If I Were You*, 1931)



# Wodehouse at the Jazz Club?

by James Hogg

Last year, knowing my interest in the Parisian jazz scene after the war, a friend lent me the diary of an American woman called Lesley Ann Nash, published in 1997. Because she managed a fashionable club called Aerobleu, she knew everyone who was anyone in the milieu where jazz and the wider arts overlapped.

Aerobleu was a favourite watering place of eminences like Hemingway, Aly Khan and Rita Hayworth, Humphrey Bogart, Picasso, Jean Cocteau, and Georges Simenon. The music they came to hear was supplied by some of the jazz immortals, including Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli and American stars like Count Basie, Miles Davis, Sidney Bechet, and Charlie Parker. In support were others with picturesque names like Sharkey Bonano and Hot Lips Page, well known to the more dedicated jazz fan.

Sounds too good to be true? Well, yes, that's what I was beginning to wonder as I read on. And yet the seeming authenticity, and a powerful desire on my part to have been there, kept me hooked. That is until the entry for Tuesday, October 13, 1948, which read as follows:

Heavy man in wool sweater leading a yellow dog on leash showed up at noon. I was doing the books. Seemed lost. Kept saying "Jeeves this and Jeeves that." Sad man. We got talking. Name P.G. Wodehouse. Says writes funny novels. Now accused of collaborating with Nazis. I said: "That's not funny."

The wish to believe what I was reading lasted a millisecond, until the absurdity of the passage caused the penny to drop. I don't have to spell out to readers of *Wooster Sauce* why Wodehouse would not have been in Paris in October 1948, never mind the unlikelihood of his wandering into jazz clubs and morosely chatting up the manageress.

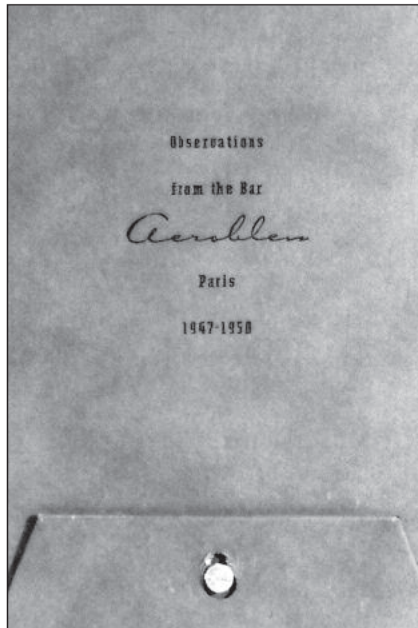
So what was this all about? The title page is headed *Observations from the Bar* and describes the publication as: "A verbatim reproduction of the diary of Leslie Ann Nash during the years 1947–1954 . . ."

No publishing details in sight. There is an afterword by an associate of Nash's family, apparently keeping up the fiction to the end. Well, not quite. On the very last page, in print so small you need a magnifying glass, the publishers come clean with a conventional disclaimer: "*Observations from the Bar* is a work of fiction. Although the author makes occasional references to actual persons, the context and content of those references are entirely fictional." It almost seems designed so the casual buyer, and even the casual reader, will miss it.

One thing, however, is not revealed at all: the writer's name. The copyright for this clever fable is stated to rest with an outfit opaquely named Less Than Seven, Inc. You'd think the almost limitless scope of the internet would shed some light on this mysterious alias, but none that I could find.

The publishers are less retiring and own up to being Chronicle Books of San Francisco. A look at their website reveals that *Observations from the Bar* is out of print (though inevitably Amazon have copies for sale). No doubt Chronicle know the identity of their author, who apparently went on to write the similar-sounding *Martini Diaries*, but are sworn to secrecy. Seems a pity that such an atmospheric piece of make-believe can only be praised through an impenetrable veil of anonymity.

Whether Wodehouse would have been amused by his fictional appearance in a low dive, or perhaps irritated at being portrayed in such gloomy fashion, is one of those questions for chewing over in an idle moment. I think he would have been amused.



## Clerical Headaches

Another in our occasional series in which the remote world of Wodehouse's clergy, each caring for a single – often quaintly-named – parish, is contrasted with the burden on today's incumbents, who must surely need special software so their computer can advise them in which church they should be celebrating what office at any specified time.

### Appointment in the Clergy

The Rev. David Christopher Nicol, rector of Empingham, Edith Weston, Lyndon, Manton, North Luffenham, Pilton, Preston, Ridlington, Whitewell and Wing (Diocese of Peterborough); to be team vicar, Leek and Meerbrook (Diocese of Lichfield).

(From the *Daily Telegraph*, 16 September 2015; thanks to MURRAY HEDGCOCK)

## Poet's Corner

### Prima-Facie Evidence

(Dining at restaurants is said to lead to the "restaurant face", of which there are many varieties.)

Our rules for judging human worth  
Have changed in recent days;  
A reverence for noble birth  
Our minds no longer sways.  
All moral claims we ever shun,  
Nor do we now repeat  
The noble deeds which men have done.  
We ask – Where do they eat?

Concealment now is at an end:  
A dullard can divine  
By casual glances at a friend  
Where he has been to dine.  
Dark secrets to the curious eye  
One's lineaments divulge;  
Don't miss that man who's hurrying by –  
He's got the "Carlton Bulge".

Behind him, you no doubt remark  
A youth with pallid cheek:  
He's probably a city clerk  
On something small a week.  
He has to hoard his modest screw,  
To keep expenses down;  
And on his features you may view  
The "ABC Shop Frown".

And, last, a man all skin and bone,  
His coat a mass of rags;  
'Twould make George Alexander moan  
To see such baggy bags.  
He earns per week what waiters make  
Each evening week by week;  
He lives on cocoa, bread, and cake –  
Observe the "Lockhart Cheek".

Alas! we once could eat our chop,  
And find a subtle joy  
In letting casual statements drop  
Concerning the Savoy.  
But now deception's vain, we feel,  
Well knowing that we wear,  
Too plain for effort to conceal,  
The "Station Buffet Stare".

From *Vanity Fair*, 15 December 1904

We stood for some moments like a couple of  
Trappist monks who have run into each other  
by chance at the dog races.

(from *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, 1954)

## A Letter to the Editor

As the author of his biography, I was delighted to see Edmund Crispin's detective novel *The Moving Toyshop* described as being 'as hilarious as P. G. Wodehouse' in September's *Wooster Sauce*. Indeed, whilst researching the book I found a number of reviews that drew a similar comparison between the two writers. So you will readily understand my dismay when I discovered a letter Crispin (whose real name was Bruce Montgomery) wrote to a friend in 1976, in which he asked, 'Why do I find Wodehouse so unfunny?' It just goes to show what a strange thing taste is. If members of the Society want a crime novel where detection plays second string to humour and a cast of ludicrous characters, they should try Crispin's *The Glimpses of the Moon*.

DR DAVID WHITTLE

## Mastermind Quiz 17: Jeeves and Wooster

by David Buckle

1. In what short story, published in 1915, do Bertie and Jeeves first appear?
2. In 'The Great Sermon Handicap' which guest at Twing Hall runs a book on the length of sermons at different parishes?
3. In 'Comrade Bingo' which left-wing group does Bingo Little join in order to ingratiate himself with Charlotte Corday?
4. In 'Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest', who is the unbidden guest?
5. Who is the owner of the West Highland terrier, McIntosh, who features in 'Episode of the Dog McIntosh'?
6. In 'Jeeves Takes Charge', what does the undergardener at Easeby receive as an unexpected gift from Bertie, via Jeeves?
7. In 'The Artistic Career of Corky', instead of ending up as a portrait painter, what does Bruce 'Corky' Corcoran become?
8. Apart from Bertie Wooster and Jeeves, which young person does Freddie Bullivant enlist in order for him to win the heart of Elizabeth Vickers in 'Fixing It for Freddie'?
9. Oliver Randolph 'Sippy' Sipperley is the editor of which magazine in 'The Inferiority Complex of Old Sippy'?
10. What is unusual about the narration of the story 'Bertie Changes His Mind'?

(Answers on page 21)



# The Word in Season *by Dan Kaszeta*

## *Beazel / Beazle*

I must begin with a word of contrition. My last column, wherein I explored the word ‘dekko’, contained an error: I gave the wrong word in written Hindi as an example. According to Sushmita Sen Gupta, the Hindi word I gave was not ‘dekho’ but ‘hakhoj’, which is meaningless. I apologise for this. My knowledge of Hindi orthography and the Devanagari script in which the Hindi language is written is clearly insufficient, but thanks to Sushmita for letting me know that the correct Hindi for ‘dekho’ is:

देखो

That *mea culpa* out of the way, work must go on. The word I wish to examine this time is ‘beazel’ (or ‘beazle’). We all know a beetle, and some of us, acquainted with army compasses, know of a bezel ring (spelled without an *a*), a component of a compass. But what is a beazel? The meaning of ‘beazel’ is clear from the context in which Wodehouse uses it: it is a casual slang term for a young lady.

I first remember encountering this amusing word in *Hot Water*, where one finds this sentence: “So long as this room continued to be that of a beazel, the man would remain adamant.” Elsewhere in the canon, we hear the voice of Bertie Wooster in *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* when he refers to his well-known allergy as “this Bassett beazel”. We get other sightings of ‘beazel’ in *Jeeves in the Offing* and in *Much Obligated, Jeeves*; the word appears in the Blandings stories, in *Service with a Smile*, and in *Pigs Have Wings*. Astute Wodehouseans will, doubtless, be able to supply additional examples.

Spelling does appear to vary. We find a ‘beazle’ in *Meet Mr. Mulliner*: “I know you’re feeling good and sore just now because that beazle in there

spurned your honest love; but forget it.” In general, though, ‘beazel’ prevails over ‘beazle’. Despite the variation of spelling, the implied definition is the same. It is never used as a term of endearment, and we never get the likes of Gussie Fink-Nottle pining for a dear beazel. But neither is it particularly pejorative: it seems to have the same connotation as ‘dame’ or ‘broad’.

The serious issue is whether or not this is a unique Wodehouse coinage. ‘Beazel’ does not rate in many of the reference books. The encyclopaedic *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (E. Partridge, ed., Routledge 2006) credits it as an arbitrary invention by P. G. Wodehouse. Examples outside of the Wodehouse canon are very rare. In the modern era, Stephen Fry used it in the same sense in *The Hippopotamus*. My own limited research yields no other similar use of the word in the benighted pre-Wodehouse dark ages, and if any reader can point me towards a pre-Wodehouse use of it, I would be grateful.

There *are* pre-Wodehouse uses, but they are all surnames or are clearly a variant spelling of ‘bezel’ – a term for the edge of a cutting tool or an oblique facet of a gemstone. The *English Dialect Dictionary* (J. Wright, English Dialect Society, 1898) gives us ‘to beezle’ as a Somerset variant of ‘to beastle’ – to make dirty or befoul. I fear that both ‘bezel’ and ‘beezle’ are red herrings that shed little light on this. On a hunch, I even delved into a Yiddish-English dictionary (Yiddish being a deep vein of slang terms), but could find no compelling answer there. (Alphabet issues plagued me once again, but I have got to stop using that as an excuse.)

On the weight of Partridge’s *Dictionary*, and in the absence of evidence to the contrary, I believe that Wodehouse may indeed have coined this word.

### *Rosie M. Banks and Margaret Thatcher*

In the October 31st edition of *The Spectator*, journalist and author Charles Moore wrote of *The Inimitable Jeeves* and specifically the story in which Bertie must pretend to be Bingo Little’s new wife, Rosie M. Banks (‘Bingo and the Little Woman’). Bingo tells Bertie to send Lord Bittlesham “an autographed copy of your latest effort with a flattering inscription.” Bertie, puzzled, asks, “What *is* my latest?” and is told it is *The Woman Who Braved All*. In his article, Moore expressed admiration for this title and admitted he wished he had thought of it when thinking of a name for his authorised biography of Margaret Thatcher. But, he ruminated, “Perhaps I could use it as the overarching title for all three volumes.” (Thanks to JO JACOBUS.)

### *A Cosy Moment*

*Amo, Amas, Amat . . . And All That*, by Harry Mount (2008) (from David Anderton)

In this humorous book subtitled ‘How to Become a Latin Lover’, journalist Harry Mount ends one chapter about expanding nouns with this:

Sometimes a noun gets smaller in the accusative. *Iuppiter* – Jupiter – goes: *Juppiter, Jovem, Jovis, Jovi, Jove*. From which you will see that when Bertie Wooster was heard to swear, “By Jove”, he was guilty of a sort of tautology, since Jove (the abative form of the noun) means “By Jupiter” in the first place.

# The Bibliographic Corner *by Nick Townend*

## *Not George Washington*

**N**ot *George Washington*, which Wodehouse co-authored with Herbert Westbrook, is one of the scarcest of Wodehouse's titles to find in first-edition format. It was first published on 18 October 1907 (A9a), and was the only Wodehouse title published by Cassell and Company. Interestingly, Wodehouse's only contribution to *Cassell's Magazine* – the short story 'Personally Conducted' (D79.1) – had appeared in July 1907, and his *The Luck Stone* was to be serialised in *Chums*, also published by Cassell, from 16 September 1908 to 20 January 1909 (D80.1-18).

The first edition is bound in orange-brown cloth with gold lettering. The title appears on both the front cover and the spine, as do the names of the two authors. On both the front cover and the spine (and on the title page), Westbrook's name appears before Wodehouse's; this may be for as simple a reason as giving the authors' names in alphabetical order. The book was dedicated to Ella King-Hall, who in 1912 became Westbrook's wife and Wodehouse's agent.

The first edition was reissued in at least three further states, two of which are given in *McIlvaine*. There are some subtle distinguishing points between the different states.

The first edition had eight small gold circles on the front cover, underneath the title and above the authors' names. At the foot of the spine, the publisher's name is given as "Cassell & Company Limited" (*McIlvaine* erroneously states that it is given as "Cassell and Company Limited"). *McIlvaine* also states "'9-1907' in inside of the stitching on page 96"; however, in the inscribed copy Westbrook presented to his mother (dated 15 October 1907, so three days before the official

publication date) "9-1907" actually appears on page 97, 4cm up from the foot of the page, at the very left hand side of the page, and printed at right angles to the rest of the text on the page.

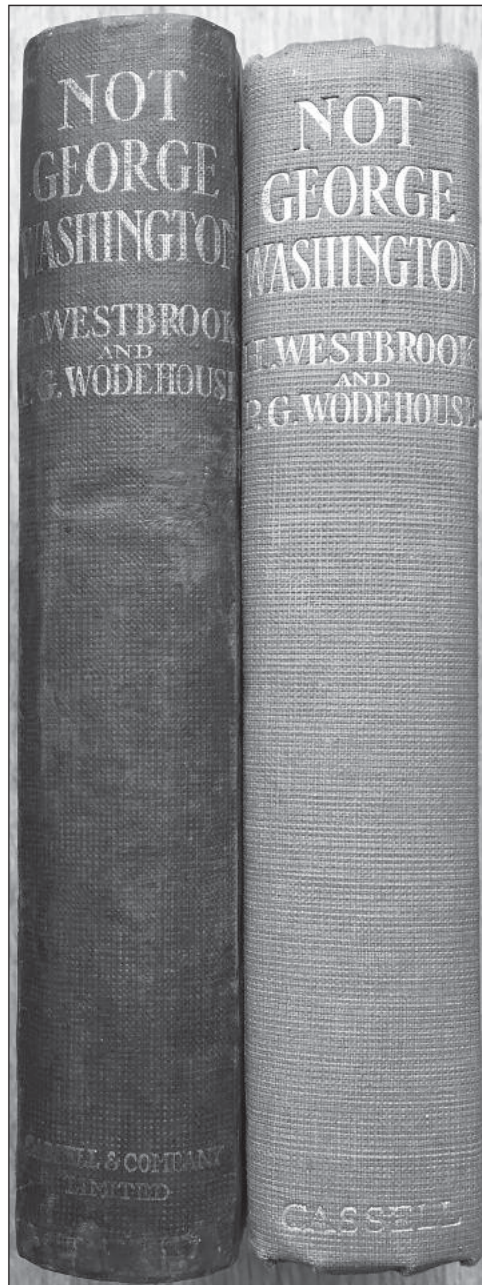
The second state (A9a2) still had the eight gold circles on the front cover, but the publisher's name is given simply as "Cassell" on the spine, and "9-1907", according to *McIlvaine*, is not present on page 96. The book was also marginally smaller than the first edition, with the front board being 1/4 inch smaller in both width and height: whereas the first edition was 5-1/4 x 7-7/8 inches, the second state was 5-1/8 x 7-3/4 inches.

The third state (A9a3) saw the gold circles reduced to seven, with "Cassell" remaining on the spine and "9-1907" being reinstated on page 96. The dimensions of the third state were the same as for the second state.

A further state was also issued, being identical to the third state, other than that "9-1907" appears either on page 177 (lot 22, Michael Carter collection, Christie's, 18 February 2000) or on page 176 (copy in your columnist's possession). This state is omitted by *McIlvaine*.

Given the varying location of "9-1907" (page 96 or page 97 in the first edition, page 176 or page 177 in the fourth state) it may have been a quirk of the printing process as to whether the date stamp appears on one page or the other. As it was

printed so close to the inner edge of the page (in some copies it is only partially visible as the stitching prevents all of it from being seen), it is conceivable that a slight variation of the location of the paper in the printing presses between batches caused it to appear on different pages.



L: first edition; R: fourth state



In respect of the second state, which *McIlvaine* states “lacks ‘9-1907’ on page 96”, your columnist would be pleased to learn from any reader who has a copy of the second state whether the date stamp appears on another page elsewhere in the book.

There were no reprints of *Not George Washington* during Wodehouse’s lifetime, a fate shared with *The Swoop* and *The Globe By the Way Book*. In 1980 Continuum of New York published a new edition, with an introduction by David Jasen. For this edition, the order of the authors’ names was reversed on both the title page and the front cover of the dustwrapper, in order to put Wodehouse’s name first. *McIlvaine* confusingly shows this as another English edition (A9a4), rather than treating it as the first US edition.

It was not until last year that a mass-market edition became available in the UK, when Everyman included the title in its Wodehouse collection. As with the Continuum edition, Wodehouse’s name appeared first on the title page and dustwrapper.

As previously mentioned, *Not George Washington* is one of the scarcest of Wodehouse’s titles to find in first-edition format (Joseph Connolly regards it as one of the five rarest (*P.G. Wodehouse*, 1979, p136)). Auction prices reflect that scarcity, both for the first edition and for the second to fourth states. Since the auction of the James Heineman collection in 1998, your columnist can only trace three copies of the first edition appearing at auction (all prices quoted below include the buyer’s premium). These were the copy in the Heineman collection (which sold for \$6,900, in a lot with the second and third states and two copies of the Continuum edition); a poor condition copy (boards “heavily mottled”, which was something of an understatement) auctioned by Bloomsbury in 2012 (which failed to attract an opening bid of £1,240); and a poor condition copy inscribed by Westbrook to his mother auctioned by Bloomsbury in 2014 (which sold for £2,480). The Heineman copies subsequently reappeared at the auction of the Michael Carter collection in 2000, where the first edition sold for £2,760, and the second and fourth states sold for £1,035 and £1,092 respectively. Henry Blofeld’s extensive collection contained only a fourth state, which achieved £990 on auction in 1994. Two recent sale catalogues issued by Clouds Hill Books included a first edition listed for \$3,750 (Dr Jeremy Thompson collection, 2012) and a third state, with its frontispiece missing, listed for \$1,500 (John Graham collection, 2014). In the words of Richard Osborne, “I understand why it is such a rarity, and why collectors pay very high prices when copies emerge” (*A Wodehouse Companion*, 1981, p21).

## The Wooster Source

by Graeme Davidson

*This is the real Tabasco,  
It's the word from Bertie Wooster,  
The style icon of the parvenus  
And target of bobbies' cries of  
"Let's be havin' you!"s*



At this juncture the small boy’s eye hit me like a bullet and stopped me in my tracks. It was one of those cold, clammy, accusing sort of eyes – the kind that makes you reach up to see if your tie is straight: and he looked at me as if I were some sort of unnecessary product which Cuthbert the Cat had brought in after a ramble among the local ash-cans. He was a stoutish infant with a lot of freckles and a good deal of jam on his face.

“Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!” I said. “What?” There didn’t seem much else to say.

The stripling stared at me in a nasty sort of way through the jam. He may have loved me at first sight, but the impression he gave me was that he didn’t think a lot of me and wasn’t betting much that I would improve a great deal on acquaintance.

(‘Startling Dressiness of a Lift Attendant’,  
*The Inimitable Jeeves*, 1924)

## A Wodehouse Handbook Now Available As an Ebook

As this issue was going to press, we received word that Volume 1 of Norman Murphy’s *A Wodehouse Handbook* has just been released as an ebook, with Volume 2 to follow soon. Volume 1 is now available at a bargain discounted price of just £6.47 from the online retailer Kobo; it can be bought and downloaded at: <http://bit.ly/1jbnkvn>.

## Answers to Mastermind Quiz

(Page 18)

1. ‘Extricating Young Gussie’
2. Rupert Steggles
3. Heralds of the Red Dawn
4. Wilmot, Lord Pershore, son of Lady Malvern
5. Aunt Agatha, then Mrs Spenser Gregson
6. A ‘rather sprightly young check’ suit
7. A comic strip artist
8. Tootles Kegworthy
9. *The Mayfair Gazette*
10. It is narrated by Jeeves, rather than Bertie.

# Recent Press Comment

**Irish Times, June 15** (from Eoin McCann)

A letter to the editor from Michael Kirby read: “Sir, - P G Wodehouse while in Hollywood in the 1930s identified three categories of hanger-on invariably attached to important personages. They were, in descending order of importance, yes-men, second yes-men or vice-yessers and noddors – the latter being strictly forbidden from speaking. So as an election looms . . . why not try to categorise as above the assorted goons crowding around the ‘big enchilada’ and hanging on his and her every word as if their very lives depended upon it.”

**Country Living, August** (from Beth Carroll)

A description of dyer and dressmaker Isabel Knowles noted that she had a range of dresses named after Wodehouse characters, and that she listened to PGW audiobooks as she worked.

**The Telegraph, August 5** (from Jo Jacobius)

In ‘P G Wodehouse: quotes for every occasion’, there were several examples of “little gems of wit and observation”, including, some might say, one of the all-time greats: “Into the face of the young man . . . had crept a look of furtive shame, the shifty, hangdog look which announces that an Englishman is about to talk French.”

**The Times, August 8** (from Keith Alsop)

From the Feedback column: “The best suggestion for dealing with aerated cybertantrums – advise them to take a deep breath, sit in a quiet corner and read a collection of Wodehouse.” (Cybertantrums are not, as I initially thought, a type of flower but an online rant!)

**The Spectator, August 11**

In response to Michael Gove’s suggestion that civil servants take inspiration from Orwell, Waugh, Austen, et al, when writing correspondence, *The Spectator* invited readers to compose a memo. One of the winning entries was to the Ministry of Justice in the style of PGW. The article was headed: ‘Michael Gove’s department should take a few style tips from P G Wodehouse.’

**The Observer, August 16** (from Terry Taylor)

Robert McCrum listed *Joy in the Morning* at number 66 of his top 100 novels, quoting PGW’s observation that “there are two types of writing: one is a sort of musical comedy without music and ignoring real life altogether; the other is going right deep down into real life and not caring a damn”.

**The Daily Telegraph, August 18** (from Dave Anderton)

In the obituary of film and television director Jack Gold, reference was made to his “fondness for high-class source material. . . . [H]e brought works by PGW and others to the screen.”

**A.V. Club, August 22**

In discussing his reading matter during an “almost unbearably hot summer in Portland, Oregon”, William Hughes said that “when you want a book that offers stress-free pleasure, you can’t outdo the works of Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, dedicated master of consequence-free literary delight”.

**The Daily Mail, September 1** (from Terry Taylor)

Harry Mount wrote of Lord Montague of Beaulieu that “by the time of his death yesterday, aged 88, [he] was one of the great pillars of the British Establishment – a peer . . . who could have stepped straight out of the pages of a P G Wodehouse novel”.

**Cooks Illustrated, September/October** (from Beth Carroll)

The editor Christopher Kimball’s experience of rock climbing did not turn out as he had hoped, though it “was supposed to be a Bertie Wooster-type outing”.

**Twin Cities Pioneer Press, September 11**

The author Faith Sullivan (see book review, page 9) admitted to being “madly in love” with a man who was not her husband. He was P G Wodehouse.

**DNA India, September 13**

When asked “Which writer influences you the most?” author Kiran Manral replied, “P G Wodehouse. He is God to me. The principle of ‘all is well that ends well’ is evident in all his books. I love the characters of Jeeves and Bertie Wooster and the 1920s era where there is nothing wrong with the world.” Her all-time favourite ‘comfort’ books included “any book by PGW”.

**Private Eye, September 17** (from several contributors)

The comic strip ‘Dave Snooty and His Pedigree Chums’ featured references to Ask Jeeves

**The Guardian, September 18**

In discussing ‘Cognac’s journey from aristocratic tipple to a hip hop star’, the following exchange between Bertie and Jeeves was quoted: “I say, Jeeves,” I said. “Sir?” “Mix me a stiffish brandy and soda.” “Yes, sir.” “Stiffish, Jeeves. Not too much soda, but splash the brandy about a bit.”

**International New York Times, September 19/20**

(from Leila Deakin)

Interviewed in the ‘By the Book’ column, Sir Salman Rushdie revealed that he kept *The Heart of a Goof* on his nightstand (it “can actually make me care about the game of golf”); quoted Bertie Wooster giving Roderick Spode a ticking-off, believing it to be the greatest anti-Nazi diatribe in English literature; and noted that he had read Wodehouse as a child: “Every child in India in my day was (and probably still is) obsessed by PGW.”

**The Daily Mail, September 20**

(from several contributors).

Reported that PGW’s home in Dunraven Street, which contains the study in which he wrote *Thank You, Jeeves*, had gone on the market for £2.25 million.

**With Great Pleasure, Radio 4, September 25**

(from Hilary Bruce)

The final choice of Jon Finnemore was that of Stephanie Cole reading a speech by Caroline Knapp Shappey, from Finnemore’s fabulous radio sitcom *Cabin Pressure*. The character, he explained, was based entirely on Aunt Dahlia. It’s as plain as a pikestaff, once you know.

**The Hindu, September 26**

Baradwaj Rangan wrote that he had ‘stumbled’ across an issue of *Paris Review* containing an interview with PGW, then 91½. Rangan “perked up at two revelations. One,



when asked if he ever thought about writing anything more serious, Wodehouse replied, 'No. I don't think I am capable of writing anything but the sort of thing I write. I couldn't write a serious book.' Maybe this is what made him so good at what he did, this implicit understanding (and coming to terms with his strengths – very unlike the usual writer . . . nothing about wanting to stretch, given that comedy is rarely taken half as seriously as drama despite being twice as hard to write." The other thing that made Rangan sit up was PGW's estimation of his own work: "When asked whether he had a favourite amongst the books he had written, PGW replied, 'Oh, I'm very fond of a book called *Quick Service* and another called *Sam in the Suburbs*, a very old one. But I like them all. There are very few exceptions.' This is rather unusual in a creator, this utter lack of angst about how this or that could have been different."

**The Oldie, October** (from Mike Swaddling)

In his article about the importance (usually) of an opening sentence that "grabs them by the lapels", Johnny Grimond pointed out that PGW affected to see no need for a crisp start to *A Damsel in Distress*; that book's opening testifies to his masterly command of the English language. (We shall leave our readers to go back and re-read it for themselves.)

**The Times, October 1** (from Leila Deakin)

Under the heading 'Knotty Problem', the letters page concluded with the following from Tony Phillips: "Sir, The definitive position on ties (letters, Sept 29 and 30) is provided by P G Wodehouse. In *Very Good, Jeeves*, Bertie Wooster cries: 'What do ties matter, Jeeves, at a time like this?' He receives the reply: 'There is no time, sir, at which ties do not matter.'"

**The Times, October 3** (from Leila Deakin)

David Sanderson wrote that Frederick Forsyth revealed he had escaped an interrogation by the Stasi when he was arrested in East Germany by pretending to be a bumbling fool. Forsyth said, "I had an act that I call Bertie Wooster. A little dim, hapless, helpless, really quite harmless fool with a British passport. That is exactly what 90 per cent of Europeans want. They do not mind at all if we pretend to be fools."

**The Times, October 12** (from Leila Deakin)

Jack Malvern reported on Sir Salman Rushdie's statement at the Cheltenham Literature Festival that "Gatsby could have had a happy ending if only he'd called Jeeves". Rushdie, who grew up in India on a regimen of Wodehouse (among others), said he fantasised about rewriting *The Great Gatsby* so that Bertie Wooster and his trusty valet intervened to give the story a happy ending: "I've thought that if Jeeves could just visit West Egg he would solve the problem . . . that Gatsby loves Daisy and that she's married to somebody else. So Jeeves would, of course, unleash Bertie on Daisy to woo her, thus attracting the wrath of her husband and it would all work out in such a way that Gatsby and Daisy would live happily ever after and that Bertie would have to throw away the horrible socks that Jeeves didn't like."

**Deccan Herald, October 20**

In an article entitled 'Driven by the Clock', describing two clocks telling the same time, J S Raghavan began by quoting the opening of *The Girl on the Boat*, in which "The hands on the Dutch clock in the hall pointed to thirteen

minutes past nine; those of the ormolu clock in the sitting room to eleven minutes past ten; those of the carriage clock on the bookshelf at fourteen minutes to six. In other words it was exactly eight and Mrs Hignett acknowledged the fact by moving her head on the pillow. She always woke at eight precisely."

**The Guardian, October 22** (from Nirav Shah)

In discussing Wales's exit from the Rugby World Cup and the 'witch hunt for a victim', Paul Rees wrote: "In past eras, the invective would have been confined to living rooms, bars and public transport but it now goes global in a click and spawns a furious frenzy, not quite what P G Wodehouse had in mind when he wrote his short story 'The Clicking of Cuthbert'."

**The Observer, October 25** (from Terry Taylor)

In his review of *John le Carré: The Biography*, by Adam Sisman, Robert McCrum described the author as a literary Jeeves who, when working with le Carré, had to quietly correct his master's narrative with "here a discreet cough, there a raised eyebrow with a sharp intake of breath". Le Carré himself described his 'rascally father' as a 'Ukridge' character who made and lost several fortunes and was twice imprisoned for fraud.

**Spear's, October 28**

In discussing his career, Patrick Kidd, Society member and *The Times'* political sketchwriter and column editor, wrote of attending this past summer's celebration of the completion of the Everyman Wodehouse series. It was held at the Goring Hotel, where he "enjoyed even more discussing Wodehouse with his grandson, Sir Edward Cazalet, and some of the learned and fun members of the P G Wodehouse Society".

**Mail Online, October 29**

When asked what she would take to a desert island, the writer Cathy Kelly replied, "The entire P G Wodehouse canon, so I could giggle as I was starving to death. From the Jeeves and Wooster books to the bliss of Blandings Castle, where a large pig really is in charge of it all, nothing makes me smile more than Wodehouse."

**The Guardian, October 31**

Robert McCrum, writing from Seattle, Washington, reported on The Wodehouse Society convention then taking place, musing, "Who knows what Wodehouse would have made of all this?" See pages 6-7 for more. For Mr McCrum's report, see <http://bit.ly/212uktd>.

**Daily Mail, November 7** (from Terry Taylor)

The *Weekend* magazine featured Society patron Henry Blofeld, whose pictured souvenirs included two first editions of PGW works. He recollected that "my dad used to read [Wodehouse] to me as a child and the character Psmith particularly resonates. Like him I briefly worked in the City. I had a bowler hat, looked a proper prat and absolutely loathed it."

**Pointless, BBC One, November 12**

(from Martin Stratford)

The aim of this quiz show is to rack up the fewest points possible by identifying questions the fewest people will be able to answer. In a round on famous Smiths and Joneses, one question asked for the first name of the PGW character whose surname was preceded by a silent P. Surprisingly, three out of 100 people correctly said it was Rupert, which host Alexander Armstrong also knew.

# Future Events for Your Diary

At the time of going to press, 2016 dates had not yet been settled for our traditional cricket matches. Please check the website periodically, where information will be updated as soon as it's available. Definitive dates will be published in the March 2016 issue of *Wooster Sauce*.

## February 10, 2016 Society Meeting at the Savoy Tup

Why do you love P G Wodehouse? Now is your chance to let others know! The Entertainment Impresario is inviting members to hold forth – briefly – on what makes PGW special to them. For further details, see page 3. As ever, we gather at the Savoy Tup from 6 p.m.

## February 28, 2016

### Richard Burnip's Wodehouse Walk

Richard Burnip will lead a Wodehouse-themed walk for London Walks (note: this is not a Society-sponsored event). The usual fee is £10, but our members get a discounted price of £8. No need to book a place; just be at exit 2 (Park Lane east side) of Marble Arch Underground station at 2.30 p.m., and identify yourself as a Society member.

## March 8–20, 2016 *Oh, Boy!* in New York City

Musicals Tonight! will stage another classic Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern musical at the Lion Theatre in New York City – its last-ever production.

## July 20, 2016 Society Meeting at the Savoy Tup

Who knows what our Entertainment Impresario has in store for us in July? See future issues of *Wooster Sauce*, as well as the Society's website, to find out. We meet at the Savoy Tup from 6 p.m.

## October 20, 2016 Dinner at Gray's Inn

Mark your calendars now! The Society's biennial dinner will be held at our customary venue of Gray's Inn, London. More details will be provided in future issues of *Wooster Sauce*, and on our website.

## November 16 OR 23, 2016

### Society Meeting at the Savoy Tup

The date of our AGM will be decided by the time the March 2016 issue of *Wooster Sauce* is printed. Stay tuned for details via the Society's website.

"Jeeves," I recollect saying, on returning to the apartment, "who was the fellow who on looking at something felt like somebody looking at something? I learned the passage at school, but it has escaped me."

"I fancy the individual you have in mind, sir, is the poet Keats, who compared his emotions on first reading Chapman's Homer to those of stout Cortez when with eagle eyes he stared at the Pacific."

"The Pacific, eh?"

"Yes, sir. And all his men looked at each other with a wild surmise, silent upon a peak in Darien."

"Of course. It all comes back to me."

(from *Thank You, Jeeves*, 1934)

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