

WOOSTER SAUCE



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

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OH, BOY!

REVELRY BY NIGHT

*An account by Murray Hedgcock
and John Fletcher of happenings
at the recent dinner*

The Inner Temple is not some Holy of Holies but one of several large buildings inside that complex of squares, gardens and chambers devoted to legal affairs between Fleet Street and the Thames. Not far away must have been the office of Lord Tilbury. A quarter of a mile to the north-west was Psmith's "quite snug little flat in Clement's Inn" where he accommodated Mike Jackson for the duration of *Psmith in the City*.

And on the night of 15th October, 1998 the Inner Temple rang to the laughter and happiness of those who loved those characters and honoured Wodehouse their begetter.

Jurists from the centuries looked down from their portraits in the hallowed Parliament Chamber of the Inner Temple as The Society celebrated The Master's birthday – and it surely was not too fanciful to imagine an approving twinkle in the eye of stern judges and their ilk as the revelry developed. Even the Right Honourable William Pitt, Prime Minister of a deprived (ie pre-Wodehouse) era, looked a more kindly and human character as the Wodehouseans, assembled from home and across the seas, acclaimed their hero.

The invitations said "7 for 7.30" for a privileged 90 (what weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth there must have been among those tardy applicants who could be there in no better than spirit). The eager were there well before seven, approving of the gin and tonic (well, champagne, it seemed mostly), although Mr Mulliner might have been saddened to note little demand for port and lemon, small bitter, pint of stout, or even whisky sour.



The President, Richard Briers OBE, passes on a message of goodwill from Gally Threepwood

Among those present were His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent; three Wodehouses: Patrick (PG's only surviving nephew), Charles, and his wife Joyce. Charles's grandfather was PG's Uncle Fred, but (he said with some regret) he was not at all like the Uncle Fred that PG created. From the USA we were delighted to greet Dan and Tina Garrison, Phil Ayers, and Marilyn MacGregor.

Seated in the panelled dining chamber, we were properly set on our way with Grace (see page 10) given by the Chairman, Lieutenant-Colonel Norman Murphy, in a curious late second century northern Gaul accent.

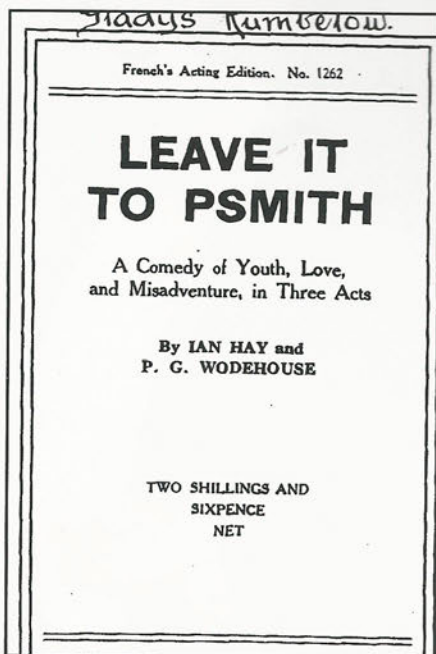
(Continued on page 10)

Who Was the Earl of Middlewick?

asks Alan Day

Alan is a retired librarian whose books include the recently published *Inside the British Library*

Exactly how a single copy of the Samuel French acting edition of Ian Hay and PG Wodehouse's *Leave It To Psmith*, (A Comedy of Youth, Love and Misadventure) (1932) came to be discarded by Manchester City Libraries it is pointless at this stage to conjecture. Presumably the sole survivor of a set acquired for use by local amateur dramatic societies, it was certainly not in its pristine state but, apart from some names marked in pencil opposite the list of characters, it was in fairly decent condition and well worth the modest 15p asked for it in the library sale. Seldom have two coins of the realm changed hands so rapidly.



Produced at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London, 29 September 1930, where it clocked up a respectable 156 performances, *Leave It To Psmith* was, of course, a loose (very loose) dramatisation of the book published seven years earlier. It was, in fact, the third and last adaptation resulting from a two man syndicate formed in 1928, the others being *A Damsel In Distress*, produced at the New Theatre, London, which ran for 242 performances, and *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*, based on one of Ian Hay's short stories, which was also presented at the New Theatre, running for 115 performances from 22 April 1929. So much is clear.

What is far from clear is why Lord Emsworth, and Beach, his butler, disappeared from the *dramatis personae*. Nobody expects an original novel's plot to be strictly adhered to when translated into a three-

act play, but there seems no obvious or apparent reason why two of PGW's most celebrated characters should vanish inexplicably from the scene, even in a collaboration in which PGW supplied the scenario (from thousands of miles away in Hollywood), and Ian Hay rewrote the plot.

If they were capitalising on the success of the earlier book, as they undoubtedly were, there were cogent reasons why Lord Emsworth and Beach should continue their roles in the public eye. By now three episodes in the Blandings saga had been recorded – in *Something Fresh* (1915), *Leave It To Psmith* (1923), and *Summer Lightning* (1929), and readers and London playgoers alike would be totally familiar with them, and no doubt puzzled and disappointed to find them usurped by the hitherto unknown Earl of Middlewick and his henchman Bellows, neither of whom was ever heard of again.

This is not all. Threepwood, as we all know, is the family name of the Earls of Emsworth, with the eldest son taking the courtesy title of Lord Bosham. Nowhere in the saga is there any mention of a Middlewick earldom related closely enough to the Threepwoods to take over Blandings Castle even for a short period. Moreover, Freddie is given the name Bosham and provided with a stepmother, Lady Middlewick, and a previously unrecorded Great-aunt, Calpurnia, Dowager Duchess of Dulworthy. So the long-suffering Lord Emsworth not only disappears but, *in absentia*, is gratuitously endowed with a non-existent second wife, whilst his second son loses his true patronymic. It has all the appearance of a prodigiously botched cover story.

No information could be gleaned from the essential reference works. Of recognised authorities, Geoffrey Jaggard for once seems to have nodded in his indispensable *Blandings The Blest*, apparently having no knowledge of the Earl of Middlewick, who is not included



MEET THE REAL ROSIE M BANKS!

Courtesy of Bob Nissenbaum, Dan and Susan Cohen

Bob Nissenbaum, a member of the American-based The Wodehouse Society (TWS) is also a book-dealer, and some years ago discovered a Pocket Book entitled *Surgical Nurse*, written by Rosie M Banks and published in 1959.

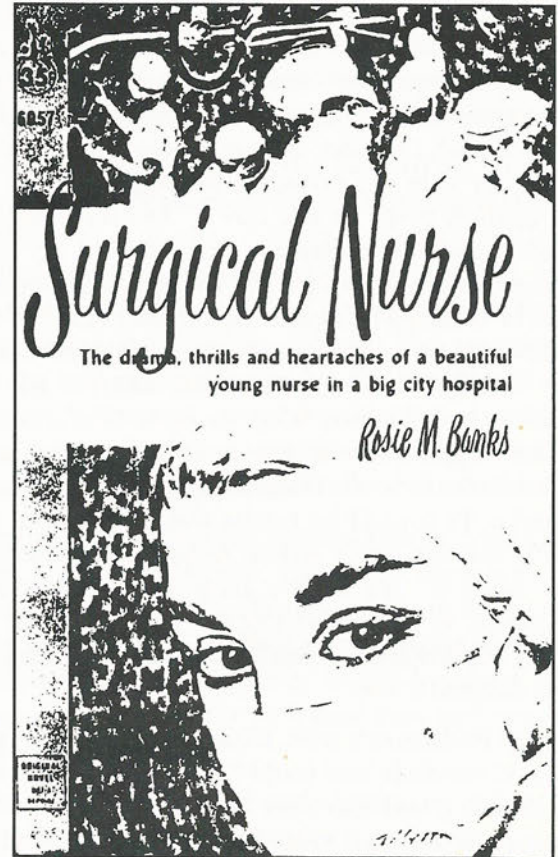
Subsequent researches by him and Susan Cohen, a member of both TWS and our Society, showed that Rosie M Banks was the pseudonym of Alan Jackson, a New York writer and Wodehouse fan who died, alas, some years ago.

They also established that the following titles exist:

Surgical Nurse	May 20, 1959	1243
Settlement Nurse	November 16, 1959	M4153
Navy Nurse	May 16, 1960	M4137
Ship's Nurse	January 2, 1962	M4223

Wodehouse was asked to approve the use of Rosie M Banks's name and was happy to do so, being reportedly rather amused by the idea. Appropriately, the books are genuine heartthrob fiction for the masses, though perhaps not up to the high standards set by *Only a Factory Girl* and others.

Many thanks to Dan and Susan Cohen for these gems.



Who Was the Earl of Middlewick (Continued)

in his Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage, or, for that matter, of the more lowly Bellows. The academics, JHC Morris and AD McIntyre failed to investigate in their *Thank You Wodehouse*, as did the researcher NTP Murphy in his exposé of who's really who and what's where, *In Search of Blandings*. Recourse to the prosographer Daniel Garrison's *Who's Who In Wodehouse* proved equally fruitless. The question has to be asked, was there a conspiracy of silence?

The implications of this likely suppression of evidence are far-reaching. Even in the context of the Wodehouse oeuvre, in which impostors are hardly unknown, only the most pressing of reasons can lay behind the unexplained switch of characters, one a member of the peerage, for the entire length of a three-act play. Were the Earl of Emsworth, and his butler, removed from the Shaftesbury stage on the orders of a Government minister, or perhaps on the wishes of an exalted personage? Surely, nobody of lesser importance could persuade (or coerce?) Lord Emsworth to absent himself from 156 stage appearances, and then allow him to reappear three years later in *Heavy Weather*, and to star in another seven full-length novels and a clutch of short stories. In no way can this episode be glossed over as just

another episode in the well-documented life of an elderly and eccentric peer.

Doubtless a hefty dossier is gathering dust in a secluded office somewhere in the heart of Whitehall, but an embrangement of this magnitude should not be allowed to slip from public memory. It occurred long enough ago not to fall foul of the 20 year, 30 year or 50 year rule respecting confidential details of private and public life or the security of the state. Or is it of such a heinous nature that the whole story will never be revealed? One last question: why did Ronald Eustace Psmith disappear from view once the final curtain dropped at the Shaftesbury? PGW's explanation that he banished Psmith because he couldn't think of a suitable plot for him can only be regarded as the master being economical with the truth.

We are wading in very murky waters here and some plots are more sinister than others. A more plausible explanation is that Psmith was hoicked away to a safe house because he had learned more than was considered good for him, especially in the light of his universally known addiction to persiflage, a potential danger to whatever was going on. There is more to this affair than readily meets the eye.

AN OPULENCE OF ORLANDOS

Aspects of the association between Weston Park and Blandings Castle

The first in a series of three articles by (Roland) James Moxon

As an English-born Roland (the first of my two patronymics) I have always been intrigued by its Italian counterpart, Orlando. As a small-part schoolboy actor I fell for it in my favourite Shakespeare play – the delightfully bosky *As You Like It*. And it pleased me to meet it again as the name of the patron of my father's country living in Shropshire, Orlando Bridgeman, 5th Earl of Bradford of Weston Park in the county of Salop. (Although the park is just on the Staffordshire side of the county boundary, its postal address has been Weston Park, Shifnal, Salop for more than a century.) Indeed it goes back in that family for more than 300 years to Sir Orlando Bridgeman, 1st Bart, successively Charles II's Lord Chief Justice and Lord Keeper of the Great Seal and son of Bishop Bridgeman of Chester. As the name of one of the great heroes of medieval romance, with popular English versions in the 16th and 17th centuries, Orlando had become a name that was destined to stay.

Bishop Bridgeman's wife, Elizabeth Helyar, was herself a great romantic and could hardly have foreseen that in choosing that name for their first-born they were creating a dynasty. Indeed the name has stayed with the Bridgeman family through twelve successive generations to this day.

One cannot be sure why Plum Wodehouse was attracted to the name Orlando (or Orlo for short), which he certainly was, as it recurs at intervals – usually in a light-hearted context – throughout his works. But on his first introduction to Weston Park, to have been confronted by such an Opulence of Orlandos – not simply one, but three under the same roof – must have made its mark on so receptive a mind as the young Wodehouse's, to be tucked away for future use.

Lord Orlo Vosper (*Pigs Have Wings*), who won Gloria Salt back from Sir Gregory Parsloe in the end, was portrayed as a lovesick young peer, with a penchant for inflicting on the Blandings house-party a flow of heart-breaking ballads wailed in a reedy tenor to the pom-pom of the piano keys.

More sickly still is another of Lady Constance's young protégés, the side-whiskered crooner Orlo Watkins who, in the short story *The Go-getter* from *Blandings Castle*, trifled with the affections of Cousin Gertrude – earmarked, as is known to all, to be the bride of the Rev Beefy Bingham at his well-deserved Much Matchingham vicarage. Inevitably Orlo's Waterloo, in consequence of a drawing-room dog-fight, occurred when Cousin Gertrude's eyes rested on his feet of clay as he cringed on top of a tall china-laden cabinet. It was game and set to Beefy.

Nor do Plum Wodehouse's fully extended Orlandos, who are no more than "bit parts", appear in any sounder context. Orlando Maltravers is the name Stiffy Vokes assumed (*Heavy Weather*) in the year '99 in a vain attempt to baffle the bookies. In *Pigs Have Wings* Orlando Wellbeloved emerged as the quite dotty father of none other than George Cyril of the same name, the long, lean, rich scented pig-man with a mouth like a halibut and a broken nose – given to painful spasms "like an ostrich swallowing a brass door-knob". There may be more Orlandos scattered here and there – if so I have missed them. But on this count they are not to be taken all that seriously.

But how did young Wodehouse come to meet the Orlando Bridgemans?

In *Bring on the Girls* he told of his day trip into Shropshire in May 1927 accompanied by Guy Bolton with whom he was on holiday at Droitwich Spa. It was, he said whimsically, "in the hope of finding Blandings Castle and catching a glimpse of Lord Emsworth's pig." In point of fact they did no more than visit the village of Stableford, in what Guy described as "this grim solitude". Indeed Wodehouse's father's decision to take a twenty-year lease on a house without even consulting his wife ("Victorian husbands were like that") had not met with her approval and – after giving it more than a fair innings of seven years – they moved on to Cheltenham. But the teenage Plum adored it and made the neighbourhood, in the greatest detail, the setting for his school stories, ie Dulwich in a rural Shropshire setting.

It was the county social life into which they inevitably plunged ("Have you nice neighbours in your part of Shropshire?" asked Algernon Moncrieff of John Worthing in *The Importance of Being Earnest*) that Plum did not enjoy, though in hindsight we can see that he made his knowledge of it the basis of much of his life's work. In writing about it, he liked to affect that he was a social buffoon (we now see that all those devastated occasional tables laden with china that take a toss down the ages probably spring from one such *faux pas* on his part in his Shropshire days) and that piano-playing elder brother Armine (a recipe for the Orlos perhaps?) was the suave attraction that got them their weekend invitations.

These were, we now see, most certainly, from Weston Park as it fits every test of likelihood – though tactfully no names have ever been mentioned. There is little, if any, alternative in that neighbourhood.

(To be continued in March 1999)

P G Wodehouse – A Dissenting View

by Murray Hedgcock

I love the world of Wodehouse dearly, and have done so for near enough a half-century – but as so often in life, love is mixed with pain.

Pain, because I can never feel truly and completely a part of Wodehouse, for the simple reason that his characters and settings in their quintessential England (even if an England that never quite existed), hold a theological certainty foreign to my background.

PGW plots and people are traditional to the point of belonging to the established Church: bishops, vicars and curates, choirs and congregations, figure largely and significantly in story upon story. The Church of England provides a religious rock upon which the entire oeuvre rests: even dodgy characters like scoundrelly sparetime bookmaker (and periodic nobbler) Rupert Steggles are within the flock, and attend church as a matter of course, Steggles actually being in the choir at Twing.

And it's not just a matter of the better classes at their Sunday devotions. Entertainment in plebeian Bottleton East as much as in the village halls tends to be provided by representatives of the Church, and the unwashed masses duly turn up to be lectured at, played at, or just sung at – resigned, perhaps irritated, but still accepting it as the norm. Anglican authority rules – OK?

BUT, What About My Lot?

Where are the Dissenters, the Nonconformists, we whose family tradition puts us outside the State communion?

The Wodehouse picture of England, its Church and members seems to operate on the grand old motto of a certain Sunday newspaper: All Human Life is There. Your standard Englishman, be he nice or nasty, frivolous or serious, upper-crust or of the masses, belongs to the same linking group.

Some have called the Labour Party a 'broad Church', because of the range of beliefs it encompasses: perhaps the Church of the Wodehouse world is even broader, in that it seems to embrace virtually everyone.

True, chapel folk (to use the identifying idiom) appear to lurk occasionally in the background, their disciplines and dogmas casting a gloomy shadow over the more lighthearted and wide-ranging life and times of your average C of E Englishman. They are amiable and indulgent, tolerant and easygoing (with the odd exception like Sir Watkyn Bassett or Sir Roderick Glossop), understanding that a certain licence is permitted to young blood, not least in the matter of Boat Race Night celebrations and suchlike.

Not so the Nonconformists, as Aunt Dahlia explained in *Much Obliged, Jeeves*, when the hope was to persuade Market Snodsbury to turn out in the cause of Ginger Winship, a charming chap whose youthful high spirits regularly left him in the hands of the Metropolitan Constabulary on Boat Race and rugger nights:

"The merest whisper of such goings-on will be enough to alienate every voter in the town. . . . You don't know what these blighters are like. Most of them are chapel folk with a moral code that would have struck Torquemada as too rigid."

Well, yes, that sounds like my Methodist upbringing.

And I wonder – did lighthearted Plum at some stage in his youth (maybe in his time at Emsworth) have a run-in with chapel folk, his obvious enjoyment and expression of life falling foul of dour Nonconformist doctrine or authority? Did this memory suddenly surface as he penned the tale of Ginger Winship, too good an opportunity to miss.

In the words of *Private Eye*, I can only add solemnly . . . I Think We Should Be Told.

I SAY!

Favourite Exchanges – 8

"Did you know," said Mike, "that a flea one-twelfth of an inch long, weighing one eighty-thousandth of an ounce, can broad jump thirteen inches?"

"No," said Terry.

"A fact, I believe. Watching your father brought it to my mind. He's very agile."

Spring Fever, 1948

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Former Minister for the Arts Iain Sproat wrote to say that reading the pastiches of Raymond Chandler writing Wodehouse (*WS* September, page 2) had reminded him of parodies by Sydney Gydney of James Joyce writing Wodehouse and *vice versa* which he had recently come across, though he thought that they had been written a generation before:

P G Wodehouse as written by James Joyce:

What ho I said you are doubtless referring to the eminent French artist of that ilk said Jeeves watteau would go nicely in the drawing room with your Toulouse Lautrec artists of the world unite you have nothing toulouse but lautrec he added misjееvously are gayparee I said at the stern of the century with all those cocottes and grisettes la belle epox Lautrec put it all down on oo-la-la can-canvas ou est la plum de ma tante vive la tante cordiale are you going to Finnegans wake enquired Jeeves no my head is spinning it's the morning after precisely so said jeeves it's the mourning after how long will it last I asked a wake is a long time . . .

James Joyce as written by P G Wodehouse

An affable enough cove Stephen Dedalus, bound to me by tissues of art and imperishable memory, if that's the phrase I'm groping for. No doubt Jeeves would know, he still eats fish regularly, brainy beggar. Years ago the said Dedalus and I had done a stretch at Clongowes College, then under the sway of Baldyhead Dolan, Master of the Pandypat and all-round bad egg. Such sore travails draw striplings together like hoops of, what is it, steel.

So when I bumped into young Dedalus unexpected outside the Drones one fine summer morning the old ticker leaped.

"Pip pip, old horse," I cried. "How are tricks these days?"

"I'm an artist now," he replied modestly.

A request for the source of the quotation on the back of a *Flashman* book raised by *Simon Frazer* (*WS* September, page 16) brought not only a veritable torrent of written replies, the first from *D G Setford* in France and others from such worthies as *Simon Gordon-Clark* and *Oliver Wise*, but a number of coy whispers-in-the-ear.

All were agreed that it came from Keats's *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, but what it proved to your Editor was simply that he had phrased the question wrongly. What he really wanted to know was when Wodehouse first made that statement about Flashman. Because it wasn't in 1988.

Oliver Wise, incidentally, offered this spoof from a long distant *Punch*, which he had learned whilst studying the poem at Eton:

There can't have been an R S P C A
In Panama, on that auspicious day
When Cortez, quite the stoutest of his men,
Stood silent – upon a Peke – in Darien.

David Mackie wrote to say that he had recently visited the Cecilienhof Palace at Potsdam, where he had seen the famous room where the Potsdam Agreement was signed, and been shown various rooms where the Russian, American and British delegations had their offices. Looking around the elegant bookcases he spotted a Herbert Jenkins edition of *A Gentleman of Leisure*, which thus means (despite McIlvaine's suggestion that there was an HJ edition in 1911) that it was a post-first war book. He thinks the bookcase in which it was seen was in the British delegation's room.

[*Editor's Comment:* this is reminiscent of Iain Sproat's report of the sight of a volume of *Captain* which included a PGW story on the table next to the bed where Tolstoy died.]

Wooster Sauce's dedicated staff have investigated the reported views of Muriel Spark (*WS* September page 18) on PGW's writing, and finally discovered a possible explanation. In a review of her book *The Only Problem* in *The Wall Street Journal* on Friday 13 July, 1964, while Michael Gorra admired the consistency of her work he wondered:

"if she hasn't begun to pay for it with the loss of that crucial capacity to surprise herself. Her work now reassures, where it once disturbed, as if she were the P G Wodehouse of the eternal life."

He then went on to say that although reviewers tend to describe each of her books as "vintage Spark", it should be recognised that even the best wines have off-years and hope that there's a better one to come. Could the author have been holding a grudge against the object of the comparison all these years?

AMERICAN JOURNALISTS EXPOSED

Pennsylvania member John Baesch puts his local press in their place

PGW spending is subject of a criminal probe

When our man in Philadelphia, John Baesch, saw headlines like these in his daily papers on the 15th and the 16th of

He is, though, able to set members' collective minds at rest. The dramatic headlines were no more than examples of the sub-editors' art (*Creed*: mislead all the people all the time). The abbreviation 'PGW' was *not* meant to refer to PG Wodehouse! The untutored minds of the staff both at

HEAT on PGW

Aghast at PGW

October, he realised that an investigation was necessary. He wondered whether the officers of one of the societies devoted to our favourite author had exceeded its budget – maybe correspondents had been receiving replies by first rather than second class mail, or possibly the sheer volume of contributions from members had caused the journal to have four extra pages. Perhaps it was a reflection on the UK Society's dinner, attended as it was by four American guests. Had they sought to charge expenses for their trip?

the *Daily News* and the *Inquirer* assumed that readers would know they were referring to the Philadelphia Gas Works, whose executives were alleged to have found clever ways to reduce controls over their expenditure of company money. In a Ukridgean coup, one step they took was not to replace a clerical employee responsible for examining company credit-card bills when he died! Phew!!

NEWS OF TWO TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

Two new series of 'book' programmes on television started this autumn, and each carried features of Wodehousean interest. On November 7, Channel 4 launched the latest series of *Booked*, in which Ben Elton nominated *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* as a book which had had a marked impact on his life. It was the first Wodehouse he read, at the age of twelve, and he paid generous tribute to the author, whom he described in effusive terms as the best British humorous writer of the century.

Nigella Lawson, the resident literata on the programme, also enjoyed the humour, while Edmund White, an American guest evidently not too familiar with Wodehouse, also appreciated the style and quality of the writing.

Subsequently, the November 13 edition of the BBC2 programme *Bookworm*, fronted by Griff Rhys Jones, led with a ten-minute item about PGW. Regrettably, the makers decided to concentrate yet again on the events of the wartime period but, having done so, they handled the topic with as much sensitivity as one might have hoped.

A number of Society members appeared on the programme, including Iain Sproat, Auberon Waugh, Tony Ring and Jan Piggott. As always, Iain was authoritative in putting across the facts, and viewers would have been left in no doubt of the true position. Let us all hope that this broadcast, 37 years after Evelyn Waugh's original 'Reparation' talk on the radio, really is the last fluttering of media interest.

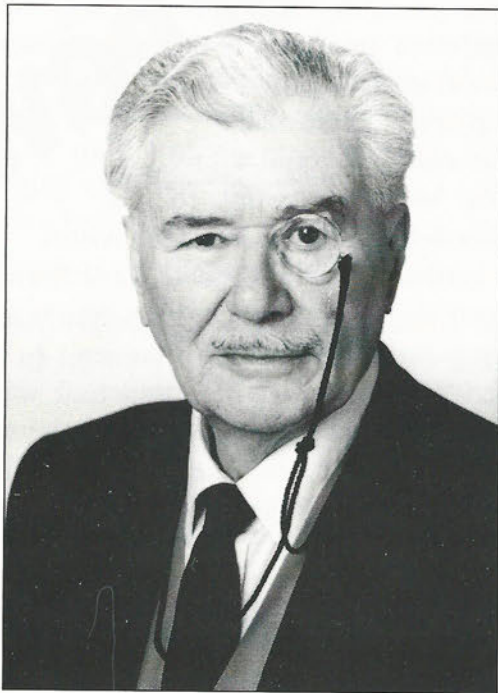
RECOLLECTIONS OF A LONG LIFE

The Editor recently visited octogenarian member Barrie Pitt at his home in Taunton, and learned not a little about the time he spent with P G Wodehouse.

What do you call a twenty-two-year-old who received advice as to his writing from P G Wodehouse? Bill Townend? Yes, or Barrie Pitt.

What do you call someone who was asked to read the first few draft chapters of *Money in the Bank*, and say if they contained adequate highspots after 7,000 and 12,000 words? Lucky? Yes, or Barrie Pitt.

What do you call someone who left school and went to work in a bank, hated it and eventually became a very successful writer? P G Wodehouse? Yes, or Barrie Pitt.



Barrie spent several months in company with Plum and others during 1941, but seems to have been the only member of the circle in which he found himself to have approached the Master for advice on writing. Boredom and the apparent lack of opportunity to lay constructive plans for the future had led him to commit to paper two or three short stories which “had been maturing soggily at the back of my mind”, and in due course, with great trepidation, the aspiring author approached his literary idol with the news.

“Oh, splendid,” said PG immediately. “Would you like me to read them?”

Overcome with excitement, Barrie retrieved the papers from their hiding-place and presented them

at the Oracle. “Thank heavens you can write clearly,” was the initial observation.

A couple of days later they chanced to meet again. Barrie was thrilled to be told “You can write, and don’t let anybody tell you otherwise.” There ensued a discussion about which publication should be approached to buy the stories. “*Atlantic Monthly* might take one,” said Plum, “but they won’t have heard of you, will they?” And as Barrie hadn’t heard of *Atlantic Monthly*, that seemed to balance things out rather nicely.

In relation to another story, of about four thousand words, Plum suggested disentangling the two strands of plot, rewriting them and ending up with separate stories of about fifteen hundred words each, which he thought might be suitable for *Lilliput* or *Strand*. Wodehouse never tired of talking to Barrie about the craft of writing. He advised him, as he had once advised Bill Townend, to see stories in terms of plays, and to ensure that there was plenty of dialogue. “Readers like lots of talk,” he added.

It was with great astonishment that Barrie found himself being asked to comment on the draft of the early chapters of *Money in the Bank*. He was easily able to identify both the approach to life and the physical appearance of their friend Max Enke in one of the leading characters, Lord Uffenham. Enke was a man who was always carrying a slide-rule and coming up with the most extraordinary statements. Barrie told me that he and Plum had both been present during one such exchange, between Enke and Sandy Youl, which was to be etched in stone in chapter 6 of *Money in the Bank*:

“I have just been working it out in my mind . . . and I find that I could put the whole dashed human race into a pit half a mile wide by half a mile deep.”

“No, don’t,” said Anne. “Think how squashy it would be for the ones at the bottom.”

Barrie became a professional writer, largely in the field of recent military history, where he became highly respected and regarded as an expert, and published many authoritative books.

His fictional output, alas, was confined to a single volume (*The Edge of Battle*, Ballantine Books, 1969), coupled with many contributions to *Adventure*, one of the best boys’ comics of the period.

(Continued on page 9)

MEMORIES OF LOW WOOD

by Jacqueline Powell, née Grant

Happily employed as Ethel Wodehouse's secretary for about eighteen months, my duties mostly consisted of walking Lopy the Boxer and Wonder the Peke, checking the honesty or otherwise of the cook's market bills and, sometimes, driving my boss in her Lancia to the Place Vendôme, Paris, for her to buy beautiful clothes!

I intended going to London in the Spring of 1940 for nursing training, but meanwhile this idyllic employment reached dizzy heights when Low Wood was 'Open House' for any British Officer at a loose end. One of these, Colonel Rex King Clark, MBE, MC, recalls in his book *Free For a Blast* taking his Company to the dunes near Le Touquet for field firing "during what was the coldest winter this century". I remember spotting him in the White Star Café in Paris-Plage, and pointing him out to Ethel who crossed the road and asked him to a party! Other frequent guests were Hurricane pilots from 85 Squadron RAF based at Le Touquet Aerodrome, and English and French girls from local villas.

Rex King-Clark further recalls that he spent several very happy evenings at Low Wood, and that

"PG himself did not appear very often, but one day I had tea with him and his dog, alone, in their lovely drawing-room. He was quiet and studious-looking and I found it difficult to believe that I was talking to the creator of such splendidly eccentric characters as Psmith, Jeeves and Bertie Wooster."



Plum at Low Wood, Le Touquet in May 1940, with John Leckie of the RAF, Ethel, Jim Boothby of the RAF, Jim's friend and Lopy the boxer.

Ethel Wodehouse was extremely generous with her hospitality, seeing it as hers and Plummie's small contribution to the morale of the armed services. I recall that of an evening, while we all danced to the gramophone, Plum would put his head round the door to say "Is everybody happy?" with that gentle, bespectacled smile! "Come and join us, sir" was the cry, but back to work he always went.

The photograph above was taken in May, shortly before the Germans invaded Le Touquet. Unfortunately, none of the advice that we or any other British subjects received, either from the vice-Consul at Boulogne, or from our own friends in the Armed Forces, was to the effect that we should have left Le Touquet earlier than we attempted.

What a beautiful but cruel spring it was.

Recollections of a Long Life, continued

Barrie seems, by accident, to have adopted a number of Wodehousean traits during the early part of his life, using pseudonyms on four or five occasions and as may be seen from his photograph, sporting a monocle. One experience he underwent comes straight from an E Phillips Oppenheim or Ian Fleming story, as it might have been adapted by Wodehouse for the movies. Barrie, it seems, was on a Greek island being pursued by the Italians, a situation

rather more serious than that experienced by Ukridge with his creditors, when he came across a wedding ceremony. Surreptitiously, with the help of the islanders, he took the place of the bridegroom, and in the confusion and bustle of the festivities afterwards escaped from the island, never to see his bride (if that she were) again. Such a shame that his mentor never learned about that escapade, for he could surely have made good use of it!

REVELRY BY NIGHT AS OUR SOCIETY

It was heard with some satisfaction by those knowing Latin but with some bafflement by others – and with smug approval by those who had been quick enough to open their special programmes and read not only that:

“Grace has been specially written for the use of the Society by Paul W de Voil, MA (Oxon), FTIL., solicitor”

but that it came complete with an English translation.

We feasted on fare of which Anatole might have been proud (see page 11) and there was a written tribute to that guardian of the gastric juices. When Sir Edward Cazalet came to propose the toast of HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother he gave us her letter of reluctant refusal: her “*ipsissima verba*” (this was less authentic 2nd century Latin than 20th century legalese Latin, in the spirit of the place and in deference to the lawyers present). But we wondered what Plum would have thought of a gathering at which a bare handful of diners accepted the invitation to smoke.

Our President, Richard Briers OBE, introduced Sir John Mortimer QC, commenting: “I seem to be the only paid-up luvvie present”. He apologised for the



Sir John Mortimer QC proposes a toast

The Wodehouse Grace

by Paul de Voil

Accipe, precamur, Domine gratias quas agimus tibi propter haec et omnia beneficia tua, et concede ut nos, oboedientes sermonibus famulorum tuorum quamvis longis, conemur satisfacere tibi et verba tandem audiamus optata: “Euge bone serve et fidelis”, per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen

Accept, we beseech Thee, O Lord the thanks which we render unto Thee for these and all Thy benefits, and grant that we, listening obediently to the sermons of Thy ministers of whatever length they may be, may endeavour to give satisfaction unto Thee and at length hear the hoped-for words: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

absence of the Hon. Galahad Threepwood, who in a warm message beginning “Dear Eggs, Beans and Crumpets” explained that he had deputed “Tricky Dicky” Briers to read some of his recollections, “and I hope he doesn’t make a hash of it”. He didn’t. We laughed long and loud. There is something so special about PGW that, even if you know a passage almost by heart, then you can still delight, to the point of wallowing, in the words, the timing, the pictures conjured up as you hear it again – especially if they come in the tones of so splendid an interpreter.

Then Sir John Mortimer proposed the toast of the Society and invited us into his own world of Wodehouse fantasy, explaining how as he lay in bed that morning his man, Cazalet (a name received with much approval), had explained he was to attend the dinner of The PG Wodehouse Society – “Mr Little attended last year, when his rendition of Sonny Boy was not appreciated”.

Cazalet, in best Jeeves fashion, had told his master that he had laid out a black tie. “Why”, Mortimer had said, hope beginning to dawn, “is Aunt Agatha dead?”

(Sir John explained in an aside to his listeners how he had ‘fallen among booksellers’. He had been launching a new book in Leeds, where booksellers’ idea of wearing black was black tracksuit trousers and trainers.) When Cazalet explained that for a formal occasion such as this dinner a black tie would

MEMBERS SALUTE THE MASTER'S BIRTHDAY

THE DINNER MENU

*Saumon fumé et oeufs de caille Sir
Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe*

*Poulet d'amour au Ukridge avec
legumes variés*

*Tulipe d'amande, sorbet à la mangue
et fruits tropicaux Dahlia Travers*

*Allumettes au fromage
Madeline Bassett*

Café Lord Emsworth

Les Vins

be of the essence, Sir John had asked how he would be able to dress as he made his way from Leeds to London.

"I can only suggest, sir, that you make full use of the Disabled Toilet in the Milton Keynes Service Area," was the reply.

"Which is what I did" Sir John said (bringing what might be described as gales of laughter).

Sir John Mortimer looked at the task of writing humour, arguing: "Anyone on a wet Tuesday afternoon can write a tragedy; it's easy to write about troubled adolescence in distant Australia, or broken marriages in Islington. To write great comedy is difficult. As I found working with Dicky Briers, you have to take comedy terribly seriously. The great gift of Plum was to depict ordinary people, and get them into extraordinary situations. Here was a writer who was highly educated, who could write a joke in the style of Euripides or Shakespeare, and you get from him an insight into the whole of our cultures".

Then it was time for cabaret – and offered for our delectation was the incomparable pairing of Hal and Lara Cazalet, with Lucy Tregear most welcome as a last-minute substitute for Maria Friedman, and Madeleine Mattar as the brilliant accompaniste. Hal and Lucy opened proceedings with *You Never Knew About Me*, from *Oh, Boy*, and it was a shock as, while Hal and Lara offered *Till the Clouds Roll By* from the same show, the Parliament Room clock

chimed ten. We had been there 2½ hours, and it had seemed like ten minutes.

Lucy further livened the night with a full-blooded version of *Cleopatterer*, which had the more nervous gentlemen drawing back in their chairs as she shimmered and slithered among the tables, while the braver kissed her passing hand – a performance of splendid verve and brio. Like Hal and Lara, she is as superb acting as singing.

Lara must have sung "Bill" dozens, hundreds of times – but she sang for us with a delicious mix of warmth and humour that reminded you just why this is the best known of all Plum's lyrics. And finally, Hal gave us *Sonny Boy* – and how! Every drop of pathos was distilled into his rendition, and handkerchiefs should have been handed out to control the racked emotions, punctuated by bursts of laughter as he reached varying pitches of intensity.

Never did the costermongers of Bottleton East thunder their applause as did the Wodehouse Society and its guests, and Hal gave us the encore we demanded, bringing more plaster from the ceiling, tears to the eyes, and laughter to the throats, in the ideal finale to an ideal evening.

(All dinner photographs by Ginni Beard,



Hal and Lara Cazalet hoping the clouds will roll by

Did You Know?

Publishing Errors – 8

The American first edition dust jacket of *Sam in the Suburbs* (UK title *Sam the Sudden*), published by George H Doran Company, misspelt Wodehouse's name on its back panel in a manner which may well be unique.

A Commutation Ticket with a Real Punch

SAM IN THE SUBURBS

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Author of "Leave it to Psmith," "Bill the Conqueror," "The Little Warrior," "Mostly Sally," "Golf Without Tears," etc.

The romance of Sam and Kay and the missing bonds makes one of the most amusing pieces of reading ever written by P. G. Wodehouse, Master of Hilarity. And "Sam in the Suburbs" also marks the entrance of a character who is destined to become as famous as "Jeeves" or "Psmith". This is Hash Todhunter, former shipmate of Sam on a freighter, who drags his cadaverous and affectionate length throughout the amazing plot.

Sam and Kay and Hash and the uncles, and those heroes, Lord Tilbury and Soapy Molloy—they are the Suburbanites who live and love and suffer as only Wodehouse characters can.

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY *Publishers* New York

THE SMILE THAT WINS

Favourite Nifties – 5

He came in now in that wary manner peculiar to lawyers, looking from side to side as if expecting to see torts and malfeasances hiding behind the curtains and misdemeanours under the piano.

If I Were You, 1931

MY MAN JEEVES BOOKMARK

Alan Day of Sandbach drew our attention to this bookmark which was used as a promotional giveaway by Waterstone's late last year.

The most interesting thing about this particular quotation is that it came from *Leave It To Jeeves*, in the early collection *My Man Jeeves*. Mysteriously, the second sentence was omitted from the rewritten version of the story (*The Artistic Career of Corky*) when it appeared in *Carry On, Jeeves*.

Honor Wilson-Fletcher at Waterstone's has kindly supplied sufficient copies for all members to receive one with this issue.

Happy Christmas!

W

"I was so darned sorry for poor old Corky that I hadn't the heart to touch my breakfast. I told Jeeves to drink it himself"

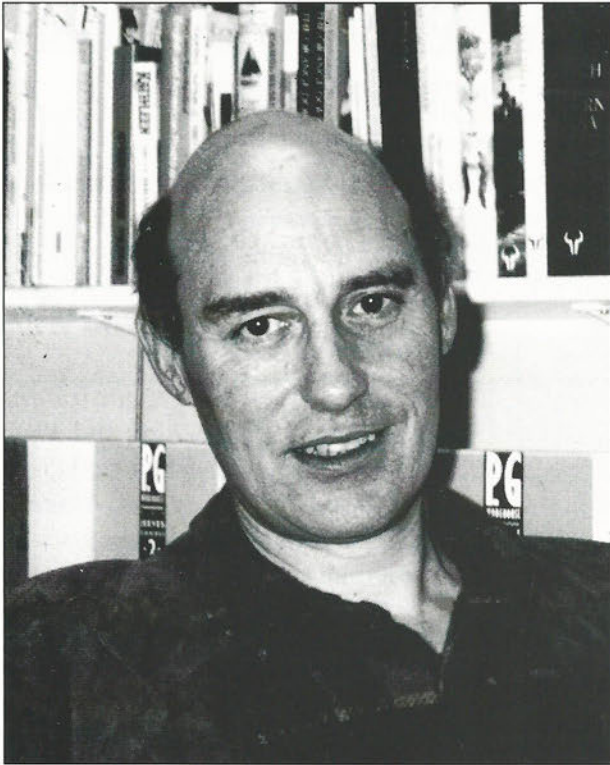
P. G. Wodehouse
My Man Jeeves

*Books for every taste
at Waterstone's*

News of a School Drones Club

Dr David Whittle (Chairman), Caroline Allen (Secretary) and Hannah Painter (Treasurer) write about the PGW Club at their school

The members of the Leicester Grammar School Drones Club feel that its haphazard organisation, in keeping with its great literary model, is one of its strengths. Born in 1992, it fell into abeyance before reaching national prominence this summer when on the air during *Test Match Special* Henry Blofeld graciously agreed to be president. Such esteemed patronage precipitated a minor rush for membership and a serious quest for activities, all debated by the ad hoc committee at weekly lunchtime meetings in the Music Office. A shrimping expedition to Herne Bay is on the cards, but a foray to steal a policeman's helmet was abandoned on legal advice (the barrister father of the Hon Sec). The Club is hoping to persuade the Biology department to make a serious study of newts, and the school Dance Band will shortly resurrect the Director of Music's (ie the Chairman's) arrangement of *Sonny Boy*, a song for which he has long had a soft spot. Now the Club has applied for corporate membership of The PGW Society (UK), not that there is such a category, it hopes to participate in events both literary and musical.



PROFILE OF A PATRON

Tony Whittome first met Plum by torchlight under the bedclothes at his prep school, and was hooked for life. What joy he felt when, a generation later, he found himself the editorial director at Hutchinson responsible for most of the Wodehouse oeuvre! "Like putting your shirt on Bluebottle to romp home in the Cambridgeshire – every day of the year," he says. High spots of his experience, he adds, include learning the finer points from Dick Usborne ("sympathy and shrewdness personified"); helping to organize the triumphant unveiling by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother of the plaque at Dunraven Street (in Wodehouse's time, Norfolk Street); publishing the 'trade paperback' anthologies such as the five-volume Jeeves; and experiencing our chairman's mesmerising tours of London, trying to keep up with his speed of tongue and erratic fleetness of foot.

NEWS OF MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

Lorna Dallas receives an award; Ronald Harwood's new play

We must congratulate Lorna Dallas, whose CD *The Girl I Knew* has been named CD of the Year by the prestigious *BBC Music Magazine*. This recording, which covered rarely heard songs composed by Jerome Kern and Ivor Novello, included two Wodehouse songs, *Nuts in May* and *London, Dear Old London*. Michael Billington said in the October issue of the magazine that "Lorna Dallas is Kern's best modern interpreter." *London, Dear Old London* was also selected by United Airlines for inclusion on one of their long-haul audio programmes.

Lorna spoke to *Wooster Sauce* about Wodehouse lyrics:

What I have found so fascinating about the Wodehouse lyrics written with Kern is that they took the musical theatre form away from the melodramatic and operetta style that had long been dominated by the likes of Victor Herbert. Wodehouse was as truthful a lyricist as Kern was a melodist. Together they forged a new path in the musical theatre. Wodehouse wrote of 'real' situations and with refreshing candor of the feelings and situations he saw and felt. I feel his lyrics are like a conversation. Were they the true forerunners for the much later teams of Lloyd Webber and Rice? Lerner and Loewe?

He found an impish humor in the wry twist of the lyric to spin out the humor through the longest

musical strain. The thoughts expressed in *London, Dear Old London* could even be those of today, and *Nuts in May* – well, it has so many little innuendos, innocent or not, it is good, tongue-in-cheek fun, and mine was firmly planted in my cheek in preparing and performing it.

Let's hope Lorna is able to find more rare Kern/Wodehouse songs for her next recordings. For members who never know what to say when asked what they want for Christmas, the details of Lorna's CD are:

The Girl I Knew, Harbinger Records, HCD 1501.

Ronald Harwood is a playwright renowned for his moving plays which have a moral dilemma and have been known to draw out audible exclamations from a more than usually absorbed audience. In his latest play, *Equally Divided*, he couples the moral dilemma with rather more humour than usual.

By an extraordinary coincidence, in view of the correspondence on page 6, one of the characters in this new piece is an antique dealer who, arriving at Edith's house to look over the collection left by her mother, breaks out into Keats, and more particularly, as you may have guessed, the lines about stout Cortez and his men's wild surmise!

EXCLUSIVE! PENGUIN REVEALS TO WOOSTER SAUCE THEIR PLANS FOR NEW REPRINTS

Kate Jones writes:

I suppose most of us first read P G Wodehouse as a Penguin paperback. My first discovery was *The Little Nugget* which I found in a jumble sale. So it is a particular pleasure now that I work as an editor at Penguin Books to be planning a reissue of the best comic writing of the century, the works of P G Wodehouse.

We begin in April next year with *The Clicking of Cuthbert* and *The Heart of a Goof*. The front covers will display praise from John Updike and the back, the following from Lynne Truss:

If ever comic writing captured the joy of doing the long twelfth at Auchtermuchtie in one under bogey, here it is. Wodehouse keeps his eye on the ball and never presses, his clear shots to the emerald fairway leaving lesser writers to hunt furiously in the long rough, chewing their niblicks and snapping their spoons. Once you have begun them, you will go through Wodehouse's classic golf stories like a bullet through a cream puff. They are sheer, kick-your-heels-up bliss.

Then in May we will reissue all the novels and short story collections featuring Jeeves and Bertie Wooster. Further praise from a wide range of admirers (Jay

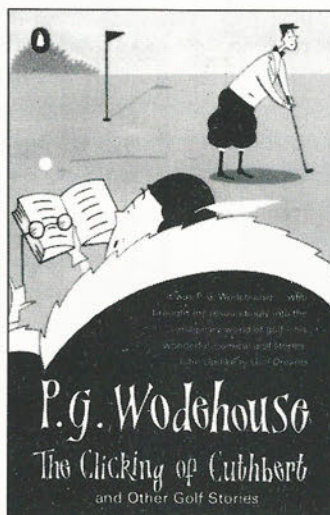
McInerney, Ben Elton, John Mortimer and others) will adorn these books and we hope to mark this republication with a great deal of celebration.

Three Jeeves titles, *The Code of the Woosters*, *The Mating Season* and *Right Ho, Jeeves* will be published with new introductions as *Penguin Modern Classics*. All other titles will be back to the traditional size, priced at £ 4.99.

The design of the covers for the series (see the exclusive preview!) was inspired by original jackets of hardback editions, particularly the American *The Ice In The Bedroom*.

We will reissue the *Mulliner* titles in an omnibus edition in the summer, with the majestic Blandings books following in the autumn. More titles to follow in the year 2000 . . .

Penguin look forward to working with Wodehouse Societies in the UK and overseas, and if you have any queries, comments or suggestions please write to me at Penguin Books 27 Wrights Lane London W8 5TZ. In the meantime, I hope our reissue gives you all an excuse to reread some wonderful books and finds a new generation of readers for a writer of genius.



DUTCH COURAGE FOR DINNER IN MAARSSEN

The second memorial dinner of the Dutch P G Wodehouse Society was held in a restaurant near Maarsssen on Saturday 17 October, and was attended by 90 members and guests, including Rosemary Spencer KMG, the British Ambassador to the Netherlands, and representatives of Societies in Belgium, Sweden, UK and the USA.

The dinner was hosted by the President of the Dutch Society, George de Ceuninck van Capelle, who sought in his usual inimitable way to bring chaos to the orderly organisation preferred by Jan Paul Kruimel. His perseverance ensured that proceedings did, at least from time to time, proceed!

The evening was conducted largely in English, but with typical Dutch panache, some of the linguistic gyrations inevitably being amusing to our ears and producing the unforgettable phrase "the unspeakable Norman Murphy"! Further Dutch courage was demonstrated by the decision to serve English wines. Members of the Belgian Drones Club provided musical entertainment.

Towards the end of the evening the Millfleet Charter (see page 15) was signed on behalf of the five countries present. This established the International Wodehouse Association, of which Tony Ring was appointed the first President. Rosemary Spencer became the second British Ambassador to become an hon member of a Low Countries Wodehouse Society, and in her acceptance speech she made the popular comment that Wodehouse's writing was as inspirational as one of Jeeves's pick-me-ups.

WHY AN INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION?

The concept of an International Wodehouse Association (IWA) was first raised in 1996, before our Society had been born. A need was perceived for more formal links between the growing number of organisations, and soon afterwards the president of the Belgian Society, Kris Smets, produced a first draft of a document setting out its purpose.

This was discussed in Belgium last autumn, and Norman Murphy agreed to revise the text into more standard English. His redraft formed the basis of *The Millfleet Charter*, which was signed in Maarssen by Tony Ring, Daniel Garrison (USA), George de Ceuninck van Capelle (The Netherlands), Sven Sahlin (Sweden) and Kris Smets (Belgium).

THE MILLFLEET CHARTER

PREAMBLE

More than twenty years after his death, the cultural legacy of P G Wodehouse is still enjoyed around the world. Translated into many languages, his novels, short stories, plays and lyrics give pleasure to millions. Some read him for the intricacy and humour of his plots, some enjoy his incomparable use of the English language, others find pleasure in the Arcadia he created.

It is a measure of the affection and admiration in which his work is held that Wodehouse associations have sprung up around the world, ranging from societies with nearly a thousand members to small dining clubs. Whatever their size, they all have this in common – enjoyment of Wodehouse's work and pleasure in the companionship of fellow enthusiasts.

A happy and fruitful liaison already exists amongst the various organizations. Joint functions have been held, information on new Wodehouse publications passes amongst Societies and a network of contacts and friendships has been created.

As a result of this worldwide interest, certain projects have been suggested whose success depends on the cooperation of Wodehouse Societies. It is these suggestions that led to the concept of an International Wodehouse Association.

The object of this charter is to build on the current friendly liaison and co-operation amongst Wodehouse Societies by providing a framework in which such liaison and co-operation in matters of common interest can be further developed for the benefit of all Wodehouse enthusiasts.

AIM

The aim of the International Wodehouse Association is to provide an international forum for the furtherance of enjoyment of the works of P G Wodehouse, by means of closer liaison and cooperation amongst member Societies including, where appropriate, the encouragement of joint projects and research into his life and work.

PRINCIPLES

The International Wodehouse Association is a voluntary alliance of Wodehouse Societies. It is an international, not a supra-national, organisation designed solely to build on the present happy liaison amongst societies by encouraging further co-operation amongst them and, if asked to do so, by assisting in the co-ordination of proposals and projects of Wodehouse interest.

It is stressed that member Societies within the Association remain completely independent, retaining their own identity, integrity and constitution. They have the right to join or withdraw from the Association as they wish and to participate in its activities only insofar as they are happy to do so.

Editor's Note:

The first project which the IWA is addressing is the selection of short stories and other material for the new Wodehouse Anthology, due in 2000. Members will recall getting a ballot form to select their favourite stories with the last *Wooster Sauce*, and I am pleased to say a fair number of replies have been received.

However, to make the ballot truly representative, we need as many replies as possible, so I ask those who have not yet found the time to complete their form and return it to me at the address at the foot of the back page by December 7, one week later than the original deadline. Thank you to all those who have replied.

Review of *The Haunted Major* by Robert Marshall

by Alison Lindsay

Originally published in 1902, *The Haunted Major* has been republished by Canongate with the original illustrations by Harry Furniss and a new introduction by Hugh Laurie. ISBN 0 86241 786 4. £ 5.99

Alison Lindsay is one of our Scottish members who, despite the coincidence of her name with the Open champion in the book, claims no family golfing history.

Born in Edinburgh in 1863, Robert Marshall served in the army before embarking on a career as a dramatist. The golf motif of *The Haunted Major* might have been expected from a man who listed it as one of his interests in *Who's Who*: the novel has as its central event an epic struggle pitting a novice against an Open champion. The winner is to have the first opportunity to propose to the wealthy American widow Mrs Gunter. In this David and Goliath clash the winner, amazingly, is the novice, by virtue of a supernatural set of golf clubs. I can already hear the cognoscenti frothing at the mouth in their attempts to rattle off the PGW parallels: *The Magic Plus Fours*, of course, and *The Long Hole* (to win Amanda Trivett). And *Those in Peril on the Tee*, where the prize was avoiding marriage to Agnes Flack. Save your breath, my friends: Wodehouse first read *The Haunted Major* long after these stories saw the light of day.

How do we know that? Because Wodehouse said so in a review of the Scottish Academic Press edition of the book for the *Sunday Times* in August 1973. A typed draft of this review was discovered in 1982 by Charles E Gould, the American Wodehouse scholar (and one of our members), among a miscellany of PGW papers in New York. As Wodehouse's *Introduction*, it was finally published in an American edition of the book alongside Charles Gould's own. Now the UK is given an opportunity to read *The Haunted Major* with an *Introduction* by Hugh Laurie.

The eponymous hero, and narrator, is an egocentric individual named Major the Honourable John William Wentworth Gore: 'old Jacky Gore' to his intimates. Like Bertie Wooster, he frequently conveys more to the reader by his narrative than he is conscious of, although in a very different fashion to Wooster's idiot child *persona*. Here, for instance, is a useful society tip from Gore:

"I hold that true friends are those whose position, affluence and affection for one may be of material assistance in the race towards the goal of one's personal ambition."

In his introduction, Hugh Laurie describes Gore as "a man so breathtakingly arrogant that you find

yourself blinking, and looking round the room, and then going back a sentence or two." *Rem acu tetigisti*, Hugh.

Piqued by the attention which Mrs Gunter (who is "quite beautiful, especially in her photographs") appears to take in Jim Lindsay, a champion exponent of the game, Gore is provoked into a rash offer to beat Lindsay after a mere week of practice. Like many a golfing virgin, Gore anticipates little difficulty in mastering "the art of striking a ball from a certain distance into a hole": is he not, after all, an expert cricketer and polo player? But golf, despite intensive study, obstinately fails to be mastered, and his success is only achieved following the intervention of the ghostly Cardinal Smeaton. No mean exponent during his own lifetime, the Cardinal presses his antiquated clubs on Gore, whose initial doubts disappear after a demonstration of their powers. To give him his due, Gore is reluctant to take what he suspects may be an unfair advantage; but the Cardinal has one more trick to ensure success.

This new edition includes on the back cover a tribute from Wodehouse praising its "urbane charm". As Wodehouse points out, Marshall was breaking new ground in producing, not just a golf story, but a funny golf story. After PGW's own golf stories, with their larger than life characters, and bizarre incidents, a ghostly golfing Cardinal may sound almost commonplace, but we must give Marshall the credit for being first off the tee.

Besides its comic plot, *The Haunted Major* has a mesmerising hero in Gore, and the original illustrations of the cavorting Cardinal Smeaton are particularly good. Well worth a read, even if you are not terribly keen on golf. But then a reader of *Wooster Sauce* would never contemplate such an admission, repeating instead Wodehouse's conclusion to his Introduction:

"How little they [Marshall's publishers] knew that there would come a day when the first thing a publisher would ask a novelist, submitting his new novel, would be 'Has it a strong golf interest?'"

Hallelujah, if I might be permitted the expression!

OTHER REVIEWS

DogDogs by Elliot Erwitt (ISBN 0 7148 3805 5)

When in America in 1974, Elliot Erwitt published *Son of Bitch*, a collection of photographs of dogs taken over some 25 years, it was accompanied by an introduction *About My Friends*, one of the last essays written by Wodehouse before his death.

Now, the British publisher Phaidon Press has brought out a further book on the same subject, with photographs of 'dogs in pictures' as Erwitt himself describes them, but this is no ordinary book.

The 500 pictures are in black and white, and naturally cover a wide range of breeds and poses. The designers have chosen a clever way of emphasising the differences between the vertical and horizontal pictures, though it takes some getting used to. Essentially, the book can be opened at either end, to view the horizontal pictures from one, and the vertical from the other. They are divided by what are traditionally the preliminary pages and two introductory essays, a new one by Elliot Erwitt himself, and PGW's *About My Friends*.

Even if the book did not have the wonderful series of photos, we might regard it as a cheap way, at £ 6.95, to obtain an elusive Wodehouse essay. As it is, not only should Wodehouseans buy one for their own collections, but should seriously consider it as a small Christmas present for canine-loving friends.

Anything Goes – Lyceum Theatre Crewe by Nick Townend

A small but select group of members met on 17 October to see Acton Amateur Operatic Society's production of Cole Porter's *Anything Goes*, with a meal beforehand. The book, originally written by Wodehouse and Bolton, has been substantially and frequently revised, this version being written in 1987 for a revival at American Beaumont Theatre.

Although Wodehouse's remaining input is minimal, the overall atmosphere is very Wodehousean. Like *The Luck of the Bodkins* it is set on a transatlantic liner, with Billy Crocker (shades of Piccadilly Jim) trying to win Hope Harcourt, who is engaged to the silly ass Englishman, Lord Evelyn Oakleigh. The show is notable for great song standards, and the star of this production was Gail Johnson's Reno who, in looks and voice reminiscent of Bette Midler, really carried the show through with a flourish..

Audiotapes of stories from Carry On, Jeeves

CSA Telltapes engaged patron Martin Jarvis to record eight of the stories in *Carry On, Jeeves*, and they are available on two double-cassettes. The first, *Carry On Jeeves*, includes four stories based in the UK including *Jeeves Takes Charge*, the second, *Carry On Jeeves in New York*, has four of the American stories. Martin Jarvis is a past master at presenting audio books, but the point must be made that Jonathan Cecil's recording of the whole book for Chivers ACB works out cheaper than this pair of cassettes.

Recent Press Comment

Independent Magazine, August (from Murray Hedgcock)

Described Angelo Sanchez-Pino of *Le Caprice* as 'the most consummate maitre d'hotel in London', and said that he exuded 'the quiet authority reminiscent of a Latin Jeeves'.

Weekend Australian, 9 August (from Murray Hedgcock)

In its *Nerdscape* column, reviewed the value or otherwise of the website service called *Ask Jeeves*.

Daily Telegraph, 15 August

In *The Fiddy Files*, Dick Fiddy wrote a piece about Nancy Kominsky, a 'remarkable Italian-American 50-year-old' who was a gifted painter with the ability to pass on her expertise. In the early 80s, in Rome, she met and subsequently married Patrick Wodehouse, and set up home in London.

Book World, 16 August (from David Landman)

Michael Dirda's list of 100 recommended very amusing books, selected on a one author/one entry basis ('otherwise half the books would be written by P G Wodehouse, Evelyn Waugh and Terry Pratchett'), included *Leave It To Psmith* on top of the list, though with a disclaimer that position was not necessarily everything.

Daily Mail, 22 August (from Murray Hedgcock)

Robert Low introduced his review of *Letters Home* by Brian Johnston in the following terms:

Some dull critic once accused P G Wodehouse of inventing a quite unbelievable world peopled by absurd characters. The critic had clearly never met Brian Johnston . . . lover of cricket and cake, excruciating puns and double entendres, and the general purveyor of good fun. If that critic had dipped into *Letters Home*, he would have had to concede that Wodehouse was a social realist of Soviet proportions.

Daily Telegraph, 12 September (from Norman Murphy)

John Mortimer chose *The Inimitable Jeeves* for his *Book of the Century*, claiming that there had never been a great writer who couldn't do jokes.

Evening Standard, 25 September (from Helen Murphy)

Helen had a letter commenting on the Wodehousean aspect of the degree offered by North Illinois University in Golf and Business Studies

Sunday Times website, 25 September (from Murray Hedgcock)

Lord Hurd, chairman of the Booker Prize Committee, identified Wodehouse, Waugh, Trollope and Dick Francis as his favourite reading.

Times Magazine, 26 September

Ben Elton was quoted as saying:

They did a good thing, my parents, in about 1970. "Here's something you might like," they said and gave me a copy of *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*. Just sublime genius. What a brilliant idea to give it to me.

Daily Express, 26 September (from Murray Hedgcock)

At an auction in Switzerland, the 1928 Aston Martin featured in ITV's *Jeeves and Wooster* series was expected to fetch £ 65,000.

Economist, 26 September (from Murray Hedgcock)

Under the headline *Jeeves Strikes it Rich*, the writer heartily welcomed the return of domestic services, pointing out that in America a 'household manager' can earn \$ 100,000 a year, and a nanny \$ 40,000 plus car and accommodation.

USA Today, 6 October (from Phil Ayers)

A review of a gender-reversed *Swan Lake* asked if the shirtless, barefoot men were just an empty gimmick.

Not if you've met a real-life swan, as lead dancer Scott Ambler did when posing for a photo shoot. "It was supposed to have been trained, but it was a vicious, vicious swan. Their beaks have teeth that allow them to hang on to weeds. Their feet have claws like fish-hooks."

[Editor: so why didn't you take Jeeves with you?]

Times, 10 October (from Sue Deniou)

Carried a review of *DogDogs* by Elliott Erwitt (see page 16)

Sunday Times Books section, 11 and 18 October

For their choice of *My Funniest Book*, John Mortimer selected *The Jeeves Omnibus* and Melvyn Bragg named 'Almost any P G Wodehouse'.

Quote Unquote (Radio Programme), 13 October

Richard Griffiths referred to the American origin of the expression 'Stiff upper lip'. He said that the most likely explanation was that it dated back to the days when sugar was introduced in the 19th century. People who ate a lot found their teeth rotting and blackening, so they wanted to keep their mouths shut, and their top lip was forced downwards.

Independent Weekend Review, 17 October

Carried an excellent article about P G Wodehouse in their *Accidental Heroes of the 20th Century* series, in which the writer claimed to have identified the only political statement he had ever made;

There is nothing wrong with England . . . that a ton of bricks falling on Spode's head wouldn't cure.

JOAN HICKSON

On 18th October, 1998, it was announced that Joan Hickson, best known for her Miss Marple character on television, had died. Three of her earliest professional appearances were in Ian Hay/P G Wodehouse plays: *A Damsel in Distress*, *Baa, Baa Black Sheep* and *Leave It To Psmith*, from 1928 to 1930. In a letter to the Editor in 1987 she wrote:

I remember his being very shy, and he hardly spoke to any of us, except his friend Ian Hay. They were my first jobs and were very enjoyable and successful.

Recent Press Comment (Continued)

Times, 16 October

Included a paragraph on the Society Dinner on its Court page.

Guardian, 17 October (from Peter Wightman)

Michael Davie of London had a letter published rejecting Polly Toynbee's view that Lord Emsworth was hostile to Lords' reform.

What absolute bilge. Ordered by his ghastly sister Constance to attend a state opening, Lord Emsworth potters off "thinking, as so many others had before him, that the ideal way of opening parliament would be to put a bomb under it and press the button."

Sunday Times, 18 October

Godfrey Smith reported the Society Dinner at the Inner Temple and acclaimed it "a smash".

Times, 21 October

The *Diary* report that the Society was set to sack Tony Blair as a patron as he repeatedly failed to name Plum's works among his favourite books was mischievous and wholly misconceived. No such suggestion has ever been discussed. Members may care to know that a gracious, partly hand-written letter was received from the Prime Minister regretting his inability to attend our dinner, and we remain hopeful that our timetable and his will one day coincide.

Times, 22 October

Robert Bruce commented on the Grace which Paul de Voil had written for the Society dinner.

CHIVERS' LATEST AUDIO-BOOKS

Chivers have now published an unabridged audio-book of *Service With A Smile*, read by Nigel Lambert. This will be reviewed in March's *Wooster Sauce*, but can be obtained, together with the other twenty-odd titles, from *The Audio Book Collection*, FREEPOST (BA 1686/1) Bath, BA2 3AX or by freephone telephone, 0800 136919.

Plans for next year include *Psmith Journalist* and *A Pelican at Blandings*.

POETS' CORNER

The Cricketer in Winter

The days are growing short and cold;
Approaches Autumn, ay and chill Yule:
The latest bowler now has bowled
His latest devastating pillule.
Gone are the creases, gone the 'pegs';
The bungling fieldsman now no more errs
By letting balls go through his legs
And giving batsmen needless fourers.

Things of the past are drive and cut,
With which erstwhile we would astound men;
The gay pavilion's doors are shut;
The turf is given up to groundmen;
Gone is the beautiful length-ball,
Gone too, the batsman who would snick it;
Silent his partner's cheery call.
Football usurps the place of cricket.

Now, as incessantly it pours,
And each succeeding day seems bleaker,
The cricketer remains indoors,
And quaffs mayhap the warming beaker.
Without, the scrummage heaves and slips;
Not his to play the muddied oaf. A
Well-seasoned pipe between his lips,
He reads his *Wisden* on the sofa.

Or, if in vein for gentle toil,
Before he seeks a well-earned pillow,
He takes a flask of linseed oil
And tends his much-enduring willow,
Feeling the while, what time he drops
The luscious fluid by degrees on,
Given half-volleys and long-hops,
How nobly it will drive next season!

Then to his couch, to dream till day
Of fifties when the pitch was sticky,
Of bowling crisply 'put away',
Though it was manifestly tricky,
Of umpires, confident appeals,
Hot shots at point, mid-off and cover,
Of cricket-lunches (perfect meals!)-
Such dreams attend the cricket-lover.

And, though the streets be deep in snow,
Though slippery pavements make him stumble
Though rain descends, though blizzards blow,
It matters not: he scorns to grumble.
What if it lightens, thunders, hails,
And common men grow daily glummer,
In him contentment never fails;
To such a man it's always Summer.

This poem first appeared in Punch on 30 September, 1903.

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

December 3 – Murphy's Wodehouse Walk

Join the Chairman on one of his famous walks round Wodehouse's London. As the winter approaches, the walk will go ahead only if there are a minimum number interested, so call Norman to let him know you would like to go

Then simply be at the top of the escalators at Green Park Underground Station at 2pm.

February 16, 1999 – Savage Club

An informal gathering of members and guests from 6pm, at which photographs from the Dinner can be viewed and ordered. The Savage Club is in the premises of the National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Court, close to Charing Cross station.

Spring 1999, probably June – Emsworth Museum

No date has yet been set for a proposed visit to Emsworth Museum in Hampshire. More details in the next issue, but if any member wishes to be kept informed before that, please send a stamped addressed envelope to the Editor with your request.

July 1 or 8, 1999 – Cricket at Dulwich

The date of next year's early evening cricket match against the Dulwich staffroom will shortly be finalised. Our 1999 dinner is likely to follow (see below).

July 1 or 8, 1999 – Dinner at Dulwich

Present plans are to arrange the Society dinner (with appropriate guest speakers) at Dulwich College to follow the cricket match. In view of the success of this year's function, may we suggest that members put both these dates in their diaries pending further news. The AGM, expected to be very brief, will probably be held during the evening.

October 22 - 24, 1999 – US Society Convention

Full details for this event, which is to be held at the Warwick Park Plaza Hotel, Houston, can be obtained from the organiser,

EDITORS' TAILPIECES

Do you remember the song *Sonny Boy*, which was sung five times at the same concert in Bermondsey East in *Jeeves and the Song of Songs*? In October, I attended the George Gershwin Centenary Celebration at the Palladium and was amused to find that the programme contained four separate renditions of *I Got Rhythm*, the last performed by an artist not unlike the description of Cora Bellinger.

And John Fletcher reports another instance of Wodehouse almost coming to life. On page 49 of Porpoise Books' latest publication, *Wodehouse at Blandings Castle*, you will find a tasteful picture of a nude female above a caption *Sir Aylmer Bostock: Myself in the Early Twenties*, which is meant to illustrate one of the major plot catalysts of *Uncle Dynamite*. Printers Antony Rowe telephoned John to enquire whether the caption had been misplaced!

One of the songs featured in the stage musical *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* which was touring in October is *Homesick*, during which a number of the cast recall what they miss about New York.

One of the memories is *Sally*, the Wodehouse/Bolton/Armand Vecsey hit musical of the early 1920s.

In the last issue of *Wooster Sauce* there was a quiz offering a prize of the video of *The Girl on the Boat*. I must report the princely total of no entries, so the prize will be held over for another occasion.

Members who have paid a second subscription (or had two paid for them) should receive with this issue a copy of *Kid Brady, Lightweight*, the first of seven Kid Brady stories being given as Christmas presents to loyal members. Members who are still enjoying their first subscription will start receiving these publications in December 1999, provided they maintain their membership!

To encourage new members into the Society, the Committee has decided that applicants from December to March should pay £20 for a period of membership through to May 2000. This applies equally to gift memberships so please consider whether your friends would like to join.