

# WOOSTER SAUCE

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

Number 81

March 2017

## Introducing Our New President: Alexander Armstrong!

In this, the Society's 20th anniversary year (see below), we are delighted to introduce a new President to follow in the illustrious footsteps of Richard Briers and Sir Terry Wogan.

We are absolutely thrilled to tell members that Alexander Armstrong has agreed to become our new President, and that his first act has been to tell *Wooster Sauce* how he fell in love with Wodehouse. I am sure you'll enjoy reading Alexander's terrific piece on page 2 as much as I did, not least for his enjoyably Wodehousean allusions and quotations.

Most members will be familiar with Alexander's work, but for those who aren't, he is best known as half of the comedy duo Armstrong and Miller, starring in four TV series of *The Armstrong and Miller Show* (originally *Armstrong and Miller*). He has chaired *Have I Got News for You* more than 20 times and has co-presented the hugely popular TV quiz show *Pointless* since 2009. As if that weren't enough, he hosts two programmes for Classic FM, has published five books, and has released two albums.

We are fortunate to have attracted this talented polymath into our fold, and are very happy indeed to welcome him as our new President.

— HILARY BRUCE



## By the Way – The Society is 20 Years Old!

As if acquiring the wonderful Alexander Armstrong as our President wasn't cause enough for jubilation, this year also marks the 20th anniversary of the Society's formation. We are all making merry as a result, and in that spirit, Paul Kent has prepared a timeline tracing the Society's history over two decades (even covering a bit of pre-history); see page 3. As a treat for our members, this expanded issue is in glorious colour, as will be the June issue – a very special way of celebrating our new President and the happy collection of Wodehouseans that comprise our Society.



# Why I Love P G Wodehouse

by Alexander Armstrong

President, The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)

One of the (many) boons of growing up in a far-flung cranny of Northumberland (five miles even from the nearest nook) was that every year your Christmas holidays stood a good chance of stretching on indefinitely into January, way beyond the bounds of what the school calendar ordained. This was especially true in the '70s and '80s, a period when (it must be remembered) the seasons took their work very seriously indeed. None more than Winter, which could be relied upon obligingly to dump colossal quantities of snow across the higher passes of the county from mid-December until well into February.

It was on one of these blissful nights of sanctioned truant in early 1981 that my father decided the time had come for us to be introduced to the world of P G Wodehouse. In a scene I remember as if it were last night, my brother, sister, and I sat in rapt silence around the fire as holiday-prolonging snow dropped silently outside, and Dad, a glass of whisky at his side, read to us 'The Great Sermon Handicap'.

Occasionally in life one is lucky enough to meet an instant friend, some lovely person with an enthusiastic sparkle in their eye and a ready laugh, someone who'll embrace you warmly as a brother and welcome you immediately into their circle, perhaps with an amiable hand on your arm. This is what I feel every time I read Wodehouse, and this is how he introduced himself to us that wintery night. Of course he is celebrated in richly-earned raptures for his immaculate use of language, garlanded for his deceptive ease of style behind which such solid erudition lies hidden, but what I adore him for, over and above all of that, is the simple warmth of his company. In it a reader of any generation and any background – even culture – can sit happily swathed in a golden beam of benign English sunshine.

As children we pounced on PGW, and he became an overnight family institution. We even invented strange rules, like not allowing anyone to read P G Wodehouse on their own: he *had* to be read out loud. Possibly because that was how we'd first discovered him, but also – the reasoning ran – why would you bother reading something to yourself that you were going to end up itching to read out to the assembled company anyway?

And so Bertie Wooster and Jeeves, Bingo Little, Aunt Agatha, Catsmeat, Anatole, Oofy, et al. became part of our family lore. They came with us everywhere. I can remember us all huddling around a table on a train up to London while my brother Dominic was so wracked with laughter at the *mise en scène* of Cora Bellinger that he couldn't get the words out, and we, in sympathetic convulsions of our own, had to wait minutes until the gales had subsided. And then the poor, encroached fourth person at our table, a lady in her sixties, laid aside her Logic Puzzle book and asked if she could listen in, too.

The important thing, though, was that from the age of ten onwards I was never really homesick again because I would never countenance leaving home without at least one book of PGW in a bag conveniently close to hand. Being my parents' vintage, these were always of the Penguin edition with the somewhat ascetic cover illustrations by Ionicus (surely a moonlighting crossword setter with a name like that), but thus armed I would stride out with barely a backwards glance. Boarding school, French exchange, lone train journeys across continents: mere trifles when in this glorious company.

On that winter's night a flame was lit that has warmed my whole life since and will continue to do so, I am quite certain, for as long as I can read. Indeed, when my eyes fail me I'll plug in Martin Jarvis's excellent audiobooks and round my little life with a Jeeves.

"What can you get on G. Hayward?"

"Only four-to-one now. I think there's been a leak, and Steggle has heard something. The odds shortened late last night in a significant manner."

"Well, four-to-one will clear us. Put another fiver all round on G. Hayward for the syndicate. That'll bring us out on the right side of the ledger."

"If he wins."

"What do you mean? I thought you considered him a cert., bar Heppenstall."

"I'm beginning to wonder," said Eustace gloomily, "if there's such a thing as a cert. in this world. I'm told the Rev. Joseph Tucker did an extraordinarily fine trial gallop at a mothers' meeting over at Badgwick yesterday. However, it seems our only chance. So long."

(From 'The Great Sermon Handicap', 1922)

# The Society at 20

## A Special Anniversary Salute: Part 1

by Paul Kent

With a lot of merry back-slapping, we raise a toast to The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) as we mark our 20th anniversary. Much has changed over the years, yet much must remain reassuringly familiar to those who were there from the beginning. In this and the next issue of *Wooster Sauce* (the Society’s coeval), we’ll be looking back over these two eventful decades in a timeline of words and images.

Certain names recur with reliable frequency in the following pages, not least those of Tony Ring – *Wooster Sauce*’s original editor – and his successor (since 2007), Elin Murphy; but also (of course) the late, inimitable, and indefatigable Norman Murphy, the Society’s Founding Chairman, who did so much to set the tone for the entire enterprise.

Over the 80 editions of *WS* that have appeared thus far, this tone is much in evidence: clear-headed scholarship shot through with a sense of fun and mischief that regularly borders on the surreal. Eggs, Beans, Crumpets, valets, butlers, earls, aunts, pigs, newts, golf, cricket, fine food, drink, vicars, and policemen’s helmets will all be present and correct in this attempt to distil the peculiar genius of the Society into a few short pages.

As ever, the whole salmagundi is sanctioned by the enduring and generous cooperation of the Wodehouse Estate and, in particular, Sir Edward Cazalet, PGW’s grandson, lending an official imprimatur to these records of the Society’s many and varied activities and enthusiasms.

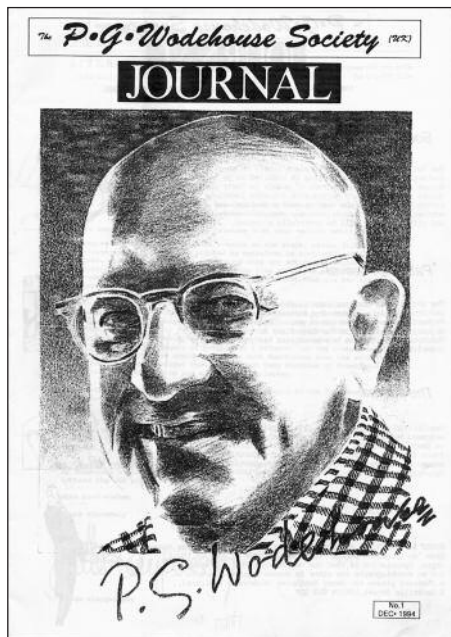
### Pre-history: 1994–1997

Back in March 1997, the headline of *Wooster Sauce* issue #1 announced:

ARRANGEMENTS FOR SOCIETY’S RELAUNCH  
PROGRESSING SMOOTHLY

‘Relaunch?’ Well, yes . . . Before the Society existed in its present form, there was a previous incarnation (which occasionally referred to itself as

‘The P G Wodehouse Literary Society’) that had as its house journal . . . *The Journal*, which first appeared in December 1994 and lasted seven issues.



The original journal, pre-*Wooster Sauce*

The fledgling group, loosely organized by Richard Morris from his home in Northampton, “urgently need[ed] to place itself on an official footing”, and to that end they had already secured four celebrity patrons: Richard Briers, Tom Sharpe, Stephen Fry, and noted Wodehouse scholar Richard Usborne. Morris also noted that “the loyal member of Her Majesty’s Opposition, Rt Hon Tony Blair MP is also a Wodehouse fan. Tips on how to attract his patronage will be shamelessly received”, as would “gifts of lucre” and “self-nominations” for the Society’s committee.

That first issue featured an article by Norman Murphy debating the location of Blandings, as well as a contribution from Murray Hedgcock entitled ‘Why Wodehouse Appeals’, from which comes the following estimation of those pioneering early members:

With due humility but unqualified devotion, I have to acknowledge myself as down among the wine and spirits, stuck firmly and forever in the second class of Wodehouseans. First come those accomplished super-buffs who – as aggravating studies endlessly remind us – Know Their Wodehouse. They quote segments of appropriate dialogue, word-perfect, at will; instantly identify fellow enthusiasts by picking up on the PGW-radar the merest smidgeon of a whispered Plum phrase; and always know which book is which, identifying adventure and character by reflex. Trailing moodily in their rear come we who love the Master deeply, but Take The Broad View, finding it impossible to recall anything specific other than the merest snippet of dialogue or description – and then getting it wrong anyway. We always confuse books, and would no more remember the difference between *Money for Nothing* and *Money in the Bank*, than we could list and identify each Bertie and Jeeves adventure by title and specific content.

No change there, then!

## Overseas Wodehouse Societies

The Americans got there first, founding theirs in 1980, with the Dutch following in 1981 and the Belgians in 1989. Wodehouse's novels were 'un-banned' in Russia in 1990, finally lifting Stalin's 1929 injunction, and paving the way for the Russian Wodehouse Society to get off the ground. A German society appeared in 2001, though subsequently disappeared. To date, other groups have been organized in France, Sweden, Finland, Italy, India, Pakistan, and Australia.

By Number 3, membership (of both classes of Wodehouseans) stood at 85, and the Editor was working himself up into a righteous lather over politician Roy Hattersley's description of Wodehouse in the London *Evening Standard* as a "minor comic writer" and "a light diversion . . . most of [whose] humorous distractions are formulas and tricks". "Not a day passes," Mr Morris thundered, "without the sight of Mr Hattersley's red-streaked and puffy face staring out at you from one national newspaper or other: churning out opinion and expressing sentiment on almost every subject under the sun. . . . I do not doubt [his] aptitude for developing long-winded (some might say robust) arguments, but he has gone too far."

It is perhaps difficult to imagine now, but all was not sweetness and light in PGW's world; indeed, in these early issues of *The Journal*, it's easy to get the impression that Wodehouse enthusiasts were on their collective back foot. Andrew Crowther felt he was forced to "defend . . . Wodehouse's early work" in a lengthy two-part article, and Plum ranked "no better than ninth among the great comic writers of the English language in the Oxford Dictionary of Humorous Quotations". But light relief was never too far away, and was provided in Number 3 by the Editor's interview with a Wodehouse "lookalike", who noted, in "a rustic Norfolk accent":

Oh yeah. He's that Greek looking bird. No problem with playing him at all. I just puff the face out a bit and nobody knows the difference. Anyway, I knew his family, and he was Greek.

You heard it here first! But Richard was well aware of the value of publicity – good or bad - and clearly conscious of the new Society's role both in guarding the Wodehouse legacy and promoting what we would now call the (dread word) "brand". Issue 4 records a letter from President Bill Clinton, thanking him for his complimentary copy of *The Journal* and noting: "I enjoyed it greatly and remember reading Wodehouse in my days at Oxford."

Talking of things transatlantic, Number 5 recorded the Society's first (and so far only) schism. In an eerie precursor of the 2016 EU referendum,

110 members were polled on "exploring the possibility of the Society becoming a chapter of the international organisation" [*sic*] – for other nations had pre-empted the formation of our own dear Society [see text box, left]. Of the 86 who replied, a 4-1 majority thought it a good idea, while 10 promptly resigned, in order to "operate a sectarian policy of 'English only' members" in a separate group. While regretting their action, the Editor thought the vote a worthwhile exercise, even though it might mean "we would become . . . the poor relative of our American cousins".

By 1997 the Brits were still struggling to keep their Society together, despite the rumoured enthusiasm of Diana, Princess of Wales, who was said to be "an ardent admirer of PG, especially the female characters in his novels". While Number 6 was bullish, and even included "The Under 21 pages" aimed at young enthusiasts, Number 7 was to prove *The Journal's* last: Richard had run things "single-handedly and with a slight feeling of apprehension not to say isolation", and seemed to be feeling the strain – so clearly something had to change. Step forward master strategist Tony Ring, who formulated a new plan of action that heralded not only a reborn society (with Richard as Vice-Chairman), but the debut of *Wooster Sauce*.

And so the story of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) finally reaches its beginning.

## 1997

**WOOSTER SAUCE** 

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

Number 3 September 1997

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**PARTY TIME!**



*The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) invades the Savage Club, July 10, 1997. Happy to be there were John Wells, Lucy Treggar, Lara Cazalet, Hal Cazalet and our President, Richard Briers.*

As foreshadowed in the June *Wooster Sauce*, The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) held a Press launch at the Savage Club on July 10 in the presence of Richard Briers (the President), the Committee, several of our patrons (Lord Chalsey, Sir Richard Scott, Geoffrey Smith, Lucy Treggar, John Wells, Tony Whitstone, and Patrick Wodehouse) and members of the Press. P G Wodehouse was himself a member of the Savage Club from 1922 to 1929, and, although he rarely visited it during that period, his membership remains a notable connection with today, for our Chairman, Norman Murphy, is a member.

Lara and Hal Cazalet, step-great-grandchildren of PGW, and each on the professional stage, sang *Rill and Sinner Rill* respectively, before Lucy Treggar injected a brief moment of levity into the proceedings by arriving unannounced to accuse your Editor of certain untoward advances supposedly made towards her the previous year, in a scene freely adapted from *The Episode of the Hired Post* (in *The Man of Meats*, Porpoise, 1991). The unexpected nature of her appearance caused a gratifying number of those present to be taken in for some moments, and the overall effect led to the report in *The Times* referring to her interlude as 'brilliant'!

P G Wodehouse and many other authors have been accused from time to time of relying on coincidence to further their plots. None would have dared use the real coincidence which we discovered for ourselves. Some years ago, Lucy's *alma mater*, Brynston school, instituted an award for Drama in her name. And two subsequent winners were . . . Lara and Hal Cazalet!

Since the Savage Club proved to be a suitable location for an informal get-together, the Chairman is inviting *all* Society members to join him and the Committee on Tuesday, October 14 (which would have been PGW's 116th birthday) for drinks. Gentlemen will be required to wear ties. The same restriction does not apply to ladies, who will be equally welcome. It is regrettable, but expenditure at the bar will have to be borne by members themselves. It is to be hoped that many members can take this opportunity to meet others, discuss ideas for the Society to pursue, and revel in conversation about the joy of Plum's work.

**PLACE:** Savage Club, (inside National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, close to Embankment tube station)

**TIME:** 6pm to 8pm on Tuesday October 14th

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Issue number 3 celebrated the Society's first meeting.

On July 10 the newly-constituted Society, with Norman Murphy at the helm as Chairman, held a glittering Press launch at London's Savage Club, of which PGW himself had been a member from 1922 to 1929. Richard Briers had been advanced from Patron to President, and an impressive array of no fewer than 28 Patrons (see page 13) had been recruited from among the Master's fans, including newly-crowned PM Tony Blair, Stephen Fry, Richard Ingrams, John Mortimer, Frank Muir, Lord Lloyd-Webber, Griff Rhys Jones, Tom Sharpe, John Wells, and Patrick Wodehouse (PGW's nephew). A constitution was drawn up by Oliver Wise, and Norman welcomed members old and new with this bullish call to arms on the front page of *Wooster Sauce* Number 1:

I imagine all of us, at one time or another, have met people who express surprise that we enjoy P G Wodehouse's writing. With a slight sense of disapproval they say things like: "Oh, but he's awfully lightweight, isn't he? I mean, he was only a humorist." And when you reply that he was admired by Housman, Kipling and Galsworthy, that Evelyn Waugh called him 'The Master', and that Hilaire Belloc regarded Wodehouse as the finest writer in the language, they look disconcerted and change the subject. My opinion is that these people feel that you cannot be a 'great' writer if you make your readers laugh. The late Sir Robert Birley, headmaster of Eton, had no truck with this view. He told me once that I was right to regard Wodehouse so highly since, he said, the equal of his prose would never be seen again. It would simply not be possible, since Wodehouse was the end of a line of English writers that began with Shakespeare; writers brought up on the foundation of the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and the Classics.

Once again, there's the unmistakable feeling that Wodehouse is under threat from a world that no longer understands him, but Norman closed his welcome on a positive note: "Whatever your particular Wodehouse interest, we hope that membership of the Society will further it."

*Wooster Sauce* Number 2 had as its headline:

UP AND RUNNING!

The new publication certainly hit the ground at a brisk trot, with debut articles from future committee members Elin Woodger (a review of *Laughing Gas*, in

## From Wooster Sauce, Number 1

The second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* was published in 1989 in 20 volumes . . . and it encompasses some 2.4 million quotations, of which . . . over 1600 are found in the works of P G Wodehouse. Only four of his books (*French Leave*, *Something Fishy*, *A Few Quick Ones* and *The Girl in Blue*) are not represented. . . Perhaps what is even more remarkable is the analysis of the books which provide the highest number of quotations. Twelve books provide over 30 each: *The Inimitable Jeeves* (103); *Laughing Gas* (97); *A Damsel in Distress* (61); *Very Good, Jeeves* (48); *Hot Water* (41); *Right Ho, Jeeves* (41); *The Code of the Woosters* (38); *Bill the Conqueror* (36); *The Luck of the Bodkins* (36); *Jill the Reckless* (34); *Service With a Smile* (34); *Mr Mulliner Speaking* (33).

a dramatic production staged by a group of home-schooled children in New England) and Tim Andrew (a favourable assessment of a limited edition of *The Luck Stone*, available at 40 quid a pop). There was also a fascinating contribution by Jan Piggott, then the Dulwich College archivist, on PGW's fictional accounts of a public school education:

There is a constant dialogue in the novels, and an interesting tension, between the claims of the class-room and the athletic fields, the gymnasium or courts. There is the danger of falling into the extremes of being a 'slacker' in one's work, and on the other being a 'swot'. Mike Jackson's father removes the brilliant cricketer from his beloved school for being a 'slacker'; Mike's report says that "an abnormal proficiency at games has apparently destroyed all desire in him to realise the more serious issues of life". Wodehouse's irritation at this academic snootiness is hinted at by the parody of the schoolmaster's style, [and he] goes on to justify the supremacy of the physical over the academic in another passage by claiming that the athlete as a product of nature is a more

perfect type of animal, while the scholar is the outcome of artificiality. Mike's elder brother Bob is a typical normal athletic animal, who finishes oiling his bat before facing "the stress of wrestling with the speech of an apparently delirious Athenian general, whose remarks seemed to contain nothing even remotely resembling sense and coherence".

## Our Committee, Then and Now

### 1997:

Norman Murphy, Chairman  
Richard Morris, Vice Chairman  
Helen Murphy, Treasurer  
Tony Ring, Editor, *Wooster Sauce*  
Sir Edward Cazalet  
John Fletcher\*  
Oliver Wise

(\* John became our first  
Website Editor in 1998)

### 2017:

Hilary Bruce, Chairman  
Christine Hewitt, Membership Secretary  
Ian Nilo-Walton, Treasurer  
Elin Murphy, Editor, *Wooster Sauce*  
Mike Swaddling, Website Editor  
Tim Andrew  
Sir Edward Cazalet  
Paul Kent  
Tony Ring  
Lesley Tapson  
Oliver Wise

The *annus mirabilis* of 1997 continued with that July press launch (at which Lara Cazalet sang ‘Bill’ to the Society for the first time), and the event enjoyed national coverage in *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, and the *Sunday Independent*.

Issue 3 carried two pages of news from overseas societies. The Dutch Society reported 300 members, the Swedish 90, and the Indian a “loosely formed” 18, “consisting of retired business executives, college students, a school principal, and some Government officers”. The Belgian Society (numbers unreported), canvassed for participants in The Great Balloon Hunt, informing the squeamish that “the actual hunt differs from the real stuff through the complete absence of pheasants, grouse or other game”.

Moreover, there was the first of many subsequent invitations to join the Chairman on one of his celebrated walks around Bertie Wooster’s London (“Participants are strongly advised to wear comfortable walking shoes”). To top it all, Channel 5 showed the 1961 movie version of *The Girl on the Boat*, featuring our President, Richard Briers, as Eustace Hignett, and Norman Wisdom as the hero, Sam Marlowe.

### *From Wooster Sauce, Number 4*

P G Wodehouse fever has hit Bulgaria. Thirty Wodehouse novels have recently been translated into Bulgarian, and are now storming the best-seller lists. “I have a copy of one,” Tony Ring, editor of *Wooster Sauce*, tells me. “The title is in Cyrillic, but I am sure it is *Thank You, Jeeves* because the figures on the front have blackened faces.”

The final issue of the year solicited the first contribution from future Chairman’s Consort Robert Bruce, then occupying the far lowlier position of Accountancy and Audit Correspondent of *The Times*, whose readers he informed: “It was P G Wodehouse who established the basic principle for dealing with tax inspectors. It comes in the lyrics he wrote for a show called *Sitting Pretty*: ‘You simply hit them with an axe.’ It is excellent advice and applicable to all occasions.”

## 1998

The list of Society Patrons suffered early losses, as *Wooster Sauce* reported the passing of the brilliant humorist Frank Muir CBE; broadcaster Benny Green; and that “true Wodehouseian [*sic*] addict”, John Wells – schoolmaster, linguist, translator, actor, and co-founder of *Private Eye*. Their places were filled by actor Martin Jarvis, Ned Sherrin CBE, and Keith Waterhouse CBE. Also handing in his dinner pail was J C Armitage, better known to

Wodehouseans as Ionicus, the illustrator who designed somewhere around 60 covers for the Master’s work published by Penguin. Nick Townend reviewed Tony Ring and Geoffrey Jaggard’s publication *Wodehouse Goes to School*; Nick is still writing the regular scholarly column ‘The Bibliographic Corner’ (which first appeared in June 2000) to this day. The ‘Editor’s Tailpieces’ for Number 5 welcomed ‘The Youngest Member’ to the Society (Stephanie Garlick of Winnersh, aged 8), who helped swell Society ranks to ‘about 280’.

The year 1998 had numerous firsts. On the sporting front, niblicks and plus-fours were much in evidence at the Society’s inaugural Golf Day on April 21, held at the Tandridge Club in Surrey (“The weather was dry and just right, if not obviously a day when ‘the whole of Nature cried “Fore””,” *WS* reported); and the first fixture between the (as yet unnamed) Gold Bats and the “Dulwich Common Room” took place on July 2. The PGW team, led by Bob Miller (as it would be for many years to come), began an honourable tradition of losing – on this first occasion by 66 runs. The headline of *WS* Number 7?:

### SOCIETY COLLAPSES!

The Society’s first regional meeting was reported as having convened in a Birmingham pub, with several committee members in attendance. Only it wasn’t the first: there had been an earlier gathering in Edinburgh three weeks previously, on June 10, in that renowned hostelry The Greyfriars Bobby, and “afterwards in a Grassmarket flat”.

In this year of innovations, members sat down to the First Formal Dinner at the Inner Temple, having paid £30 to see inspired performances from Patrons Sir John Mortimer QC and Lucy Tregear (gamely standing in for Maria Friedman, who didn’t turn up). The menu comprised *Saumon fumé et oeufs de caille* Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe, *Poulet d’amour au Ukridge*, *Tulipe d’amande*, *sorbet à la mangue et fruits tropicaux* Dahlia Travers, and *Allumettes au fromage* Madeline Bassett, all topped off with *Café Lord Emsworth*. Anatole would have been proud.

### **Heroes and Villains, Part 1 Musicians who are/were fans of PGW (as reported in WS)**

Lou Reed (who requested “some Jeeves books to read on the Eurostar”), Lemmy (Ian Kilminster) of Motörhead, Sting, Charlie Watts, Mick Jagger, Bette Midler, and David Gilmour (Pink Floyd). Musicians of other ilks include Andrew Lloyd Webber, Tim Rice, Bix Beiderbecke and Sir Edward Elgar. DJs (that’s Disc Jockeys, not Dinner Jackets) include John Peel, Andy Kershaw, Mike Read, Ken Bruce, Danny Baker – and of course our very own Sir Terry Wogan.

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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 Pamith'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 begotter.

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, if seemed mostly), although Mr Mulliner might have been saddened to note little demand for port and lemons, small batter, pint of stout, or even whisky sour.

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The lead story of issue number 8 reported on the Society's first biennial dinner in 1998, with President Briars.

Notwithstanding the departure of 'The Europe 10' back in 1996, the International Wodehouse Society was finally brought into the world courtesy of the Millfield Charter, signed in Maarssen, Holland, by representatives from the English, American, Dutch, Swedish, and Belgian groups, with the aim of "closer liaison and co-operation amongst member Societies".

And talking of things international: "We have been unable to resist the forces of progress any longer," the Editor reported, prefacing his announcement that "the Society website will go onstream [sic] . . . on Thursday 15th October, the 117th anniversary of Plum's birth". Unfortunately, email messages within the Society still had to be sent to committee member John Fletcher, who would then "arrange for [them] to be faxed, telephoned or photocopied and mailed" to members lacking the necessary technology.

## 1999

This year opened with the results of an international poll to find, in effect, Wodehouse's Greatest Hits from among his short stories. The voting of UK members is given in the box to the right.

It was a year liberally punctuated by food: M. Albert Roux, the celebrity chef –

whose restaurant Le Gavroche was the first Michelin 3-star restaurant in the UK – was persuaded to recreate four of Anatole's signature dishes from the kitchens of Brinkley Court, where he enjoyed the reputation of "God's gift to the gastric juices" and "the supreme slinger of roasts and hashes". The first, *Mignonette de Poulet Petit Duc* (translated by Bertie as "Le Bird of Some Kind *avec* Chipped Potatoes"), involved "a deciliter (whatever that is) of Madeira, morels, and a solitary truffle". PGW was so enamoured of it, the recipe featured in no fewer than four novels. The second, *Nonnettes de Poulet Agnes Sorel*, was essentially more chicken, truffles, and Madeira, only this time blended rather than chopped. (Agnès Sorel, by the way, was a favourite mistress of King Charles VII of France.) Next came *Noix de Riz de Veau Toulousaine* (unspeakable bits of veal calves and coqs with yet more Madeira and liberal amounts of cream), a recipe which, served as Timbales, was a major player not only in Anatole's Dinner of Legend and Song in *The Code of the Woosters*, but also featured in 'Jeeves Makes an Omelette', *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, *Jeeves in the Offing*, and *Much Obligated, Jeeves*. Clearly a favourite. Bringing up the rear was *Sylphides à la Crème d'Écrevisses* (loads of crustaceans but no Madeira), the star of three novels and one story.

Despite the proliferation of heart-clogging ingredients, membership of the Society rose to 450, the northernmost of whom – Walden Porter – hailed from Joensuu in Finland, a university town situated 62 degrees north of the equator, where the local library was reported to have no fewer than 60 Wodehouse titles on its shelves. Closer to home, one vigilant member spotted a village called Pontybodkin on a map of Wales. Other stories of note included the succession of Elin Woodger to the presidency of The Wodehouse Society (our US cousins) and an item on how PGW's work was one of the set texts in Japanese school examinations. But the scoop of the year (and, according to WS, "his greatest triumph" so far) had to be Norman Murphy's discovery of "The

### Favourite Short Stories of International Wodehouse Societies

Overall Favourite:	Uncle Fred Flits By*
Jeeves and Wooster (UK):	The Great Sermon Handicap
Jeeves and Wooster (US):	The Aunt and the Sluggard
Blandings:	Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend
Ukridge:	Ukridge's Accident Syndicate
The Oldest Member:	The Clicking of Cuthbert
Mr Mulliner (UK):	Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo
Mr Mulliner (US):	The Rise of Minna Nordstrom
Drones – Bingo Little:	Bingo and the Peke Crisis
Drones – Freddie Widgeon:	Goodbye to All Cats
Drones – Other:	The Amazing Hat Mystery
Other:	Mr Potter's Rest Cure

\*: The Belgian and US Societies agreed

Hunstanton pig, source of the immortal Empress”. Starting from his habitual premise that Wodehouse drew far more from real life than is commonly supposed, Norman opined that “[t]here had to be a real pig somewhere” – and so it proved, courtesy of Mr Tom Mott, who had lived at Hunstanton Hall as a young boy, and even had a picture of the noble animal in his possession. She is pictured below, the sole resident of the long-gone pigsty, where Wodehouse would have encountered her, probably repeatedly, between 1926 and 1929, when he wrote both “Pig-Hoo-o-o-ey” and *Summer Lightning*.

**WOOSTER SAUCE** 

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

Number 12 December 1999

**PIG-HOO-O-O-EY!**

Norman Murphy writes about his greatest triumph



The Hunstanton pig, source of the immortal Empress  
Picture copyright: Mr Tom Mott

I had been looking for the original of the immortal Empress of Blandings in a desultory manner for fifteen years, but it was only recently that I managed to make the final identification. Two factors kept me going. I had found Wodehouse was always accurate in his descriptions and in her article about him in *Strand* magazine, January 1929, his daughter Leonora wrote of his faithfulness to places and things:

"An old pigsty, if he once knew the pig that lived there, is Heaven to him for always."

There had to be a real pig somewhere.

The Empress appeared first in 1927 (in *Pig-Hoo-o-o-ey*) and she became established as the centre of Blandings life in 1929 (with *Summer Lightning*). These dates took me back to Hunstanton Hall in Norfolk where, in 1986, I had found the remains of an old pigsty. But how on earth was I to find out what sort of pig had been in it back in the mid 1920s?

It was only this year that I managed to contact Mr Mott, who had lived at the Hall as a small boy. He remembers Wodehouse very well, he remembers the pigsty and he remembers that in the mid-1920s there was only one pig in it. I then asked my last question – was it a white pig or a black pig? It was a black pig. I had come to the end of a long search and I got my reward when Mr Mott added:

"I've got a photograph of the pig somewhere".

I do not claim for one moment that this was the only pig that Wodehouse knew in his long life, but I now know his movements at an average of every twelve days or so from 1920 to 1930. There wasn't a pigsty at the houses he lived in in London or Long Island or at the flats in New York. I have visited them all. And in that decade I can only find two other visits to country estates, each for a few days at a time. But he spent two months at Hunstanton in 1926, a month in 1927 and another month in 1928 – at exactly the time he was developing *Summer Lightning*.

There HAD to be a real pig somewhere and now, courtesy of Mr Mott, we know what she looked like.

Quotations from P G Wodehouse are reprinted by permission of the Trustees of the Wodehouse Estate and/or Hutchinson

Notwithstanding Norman's matchless sleuthery, perhaps the most heartening story of 1999 arrived courtesy of Kate Jones, reporting from the (in those days) wildly fashionable Hay Festival of Literature, where an unnamed author had remarked: "Isn't it funny that P G Wodehouse has become fashionable all of a sudden?" Which it seems he had, even among the (in those days) Young Turks of Comedy, who fell over themselves to mint the gushiest of endorsements: "Sublime comic genius," wrote Ben Elton, adding, "These are books on Heaven's library shelves"; "[T]he Wodehouse wit should be registered at Police HQ as a lethal weapon," trilled Kathy Lette; "I welcome new and not-so-new readers to the Wodehouse fold," commented Tony Blair, who had clearly awarded himself this unofficial and unremunerated role of meeter-and-greeter.

And so, within two years of its foundation, the Society had single-handedly managed to completely rehabilitate the reputation of its hero. Not a bad start to the New Millennium . . .

The Committee – having decided that the New Millennium would *not* start on January 1, 2000, but a year later – clearly hadn't sanctioned members to party like it was 1999. But there was still plenty of jollification in *Wooster Sauce's* pages as the rest of the planet enjoyed its somewhat premature celebrations. The new era began in the March issue with a terse missive from Sir Richard Body MP, a Society member and a Past Chairman of the Berkshire Breed Council, informing our Chairman that his 'original' for the Empress was in fact a Large Black (a "miserable breed") and not a Berkshire, like "our beautiful heroine". Norman offered a typically robust riposte: "I am not hurt, just disappointed, that anyone might think I could not distinguish a Large Black from a Berkshire. This basic skill is an essential qualification for service on the Committee of our Society. However, I accept Sir Richard's justifiable objurgations. I used the wrong words. I should have spoken of the 'source', not the 'original' of the immortal Empress."

You can see how wars start . . . but the Society was soon to become intimately involved in the future of the Berkshire – more of which in a moment.

Perhaps the most significant news of the year arrived with the announcement by the publishing house Everyman of "an ambitious new uniform

### Heroes and Villains, Part 2 Boooooooo!

It's difficult to imagine, but some people are entirely resistant to the appeal of PGW, and down the years, *WS* has fearlessly named and shamed these recreants. We have already encountered Roy Hattersley MP in these pages, but for the record, here's a complete roll-call of these literary deviants:

**Muriel Spark** (novelist): [PGW's books] "feature nobody at all that you couldn't take out with an insect spray."

**Sean O'Casey** (playwright): "English literature's performing flea."

**Petronella Wyatt** (journalist and author): "I suspect that Wodehouse wasn't really an individual at all. Rather he was a left-wing plot to demoralize the British and strip us of any residual backbone."

**P J O'Rourke** (controversialist and writer): "I just don't get it."

**John Wain** (poet and novelist, writing in 1956) "Sooner or later the record will have to be taken off."

**Will Self** (novelist): "An effete writer of a vanished and decadent Establishment."



hardback edition” of “the complete works” of P G Wodehouse. Although the inevitable launch party took place (somewhat ominously) “in the room used as the ballroom in the film *Titanic*”, Stephen Fry led the great and the good from the Society in wishing the project well. There was, of course, no need for worry: the series successfully concluded 15 years and 99 volumes later. Moreover, the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Writing would also make its debut at that year’s Hay-on-Wye Literary Festival (it was won by Howard Jacobson’s *The Mighty Walzer*).

Plum’s rehabilitation continued apace: not only was Robert McCrum approached to write a new authorised biography (eventually published in 2004), the Master was voted the planet’s 48th best writer in a poll for World Book Day, two places above Shakespeare! And the *Guardian* opined (with no evidence to support its claim) that *The Code of the Woosters* was the 95th best book of the 20th century.

In cricket news, the Gold Bats lost to the ‘Dastardly’ Dusters (by 91 runs), although the latter did – controversially – field an Australian ex-professional on their team.



But perhaps the highlight of the summer had to be the Wodehouse Millennium Tour – aka In Search of Blandings – which took in the sites Norman had earlier identified as, presumably, the ‘sources’ and not the ‘originals’ of Lord Emsworth’s stately pile, Weston Park and Sudeley Castle, as well as other locales relevant to PGW’s life and work. The group (some of whom are pictured above with Norman) was filled to the brim with an international collection of Wodehouseans. As American visitor John Graham later commented, “I am even more convinced than when I read his book that Norman Murphy is right. It has really transformed the way that I’ll read all of Blandings. It’s going to be more real to me than it ever was.” Job done!

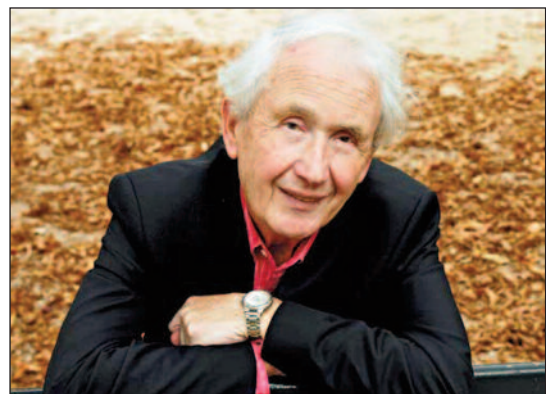
October 19 witnessed the first of the Society’s biennial dinners to be held at Gray’s Inn. No less a personage than Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother wrote: “I regret that I am unable to be with you. However I send my best wishes and, as Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright once said – ‘May you all have a binge to stagger humanity.’” And staggered

humanity was: Society patron and ‘definite good egg’ Griff Rhys Jones delivered the encomium, good-humouredly referring to his fellow Wodehouseans as being “seriously unhinged”.

## 2001

It was celebrities all the way in 2001’s editions of *Wooster Sauce* – and some cracking writing. March’s edition featured an article in the series ‘My First Wodehouse Experience’ written by Frank McCourt, whose bestselling autobiography *Angela’s Ashes* has the dubious distinction of spawning a whole new genre – the so-called ‘misery memoir’. If you’ve read it, you’ll know why Frank needed industrial quantities of laughter to counteract the unrelenting grimness of his early years in Limerick:

[M]y mother’s feet began to bother her, and when she could no longer walk the mile to the Carnegie Library, she would send me to get her a couple of nice romances and “not be bringing home any adventure books or books about Englishmen bothering the poor natives of Africa”. The librarians were strict about keeping children from the adult library but once you had a note from “your poor mother” you were admitted and watched. A child could easily go astray in a library though my only straying was towards the ‘W’ section, two glorious shelves of PG Wodehouse. The librarians were now suspicious. Why was this urchin spending so much time with his head stuck in the Ws? They would pluck Wodehouse from my hands and scan the stories: This Mulliner? This Jeeves? This Ukridge? . . . [But] a Wodehouse addict at any age is not to be denied . . . [and] it was therefore the work of a moment to slip under my sweater a mint copy of *The Code of the Woosters* though beneath my intrepid exterior there lurked a nameless dread. As I handed the librarian my mother’s romances I forgot to press the Wodehouse to my bosom and when the book slipped down down down to the floor there ensued a contretemps that even the great brain of Jeeves would have found difficulty of resolution. The librarians barred me forever from the Carnegie Library and if I was caught within fifty yards of the place the police would be called. The librarians said it was plain from the outset that I was up to no good, reading books about the idle rich in England . . . books by that man Wodehouse, who couldn’t take anything seriously.



Frank McCourt

And it was not only Irish librarians who were suspicious of Plum. The June issue revealed that J. Edgar Hoover (of FBI fame) was convinced that *Piccadilly Jim* doubled as a German code book, and ordered all his European agents to scour bookshops in allied-occupied France for copies. In the same issue was a brilliant piece from actor Simon Callow (pictured), who had already recorded several audiobooks of Wodehouse titles for Penguin. What follows (dues to shortness of space) is a fairly vicious précis of his article entitled “Interpreting Timeless Prose”:



*Right Ho, Jeeves* was the first proper novel I can recall reading. I was nine, living in the small town Fort Jameson in the centre of what was then called Northern Rhodesia. I had been rudely uprooted from South London and was clinging rather desperately to whatever splinters of England and Englishness I could lay my hands on; Wodehouse proved to be a positive raft of the stuff. . . . My ambition then was simply to be Jeeves, omniscient, omnicompetent, and, even more urgently, to avoid becoming Bertie. At the time, alas, all the omens were pointing towards Bertie and away from Jeeves. . . . I hadn't, I confess, read the novels for a long time when I was enlisted by Penguin. When I started recording them, I was forcefully struck by the musical perfection of the prose, which I had hardly noticed before. Only when you read it out loud do you understand how unerringly it is phrased: like Mozart, though some of the imagery is as mad as anything from the pen of a French Surrealist or absurdist. It's the conjunction of formal perfection with the higher reaches of nonsense which creates the inspired effect. Then there is the dialogue: not for nothing was Wodehouse one of the most successful and skilled dramatists of the 20s and 30s, in both plays and musical comedies. It's dazzlingly effective and quite seriously nutty; the characters live in their lines as much as in the descriptive prose. . . . Wodehouse took a moment in history and made it immortal and eternal, a twenties Eden, mythic and pre-lapsarian, childish but immensely sophisticated, a skittish dance to the music of a time out of time. To conclude, then, reading the books is like taking a dip in spring water on the edge of Eden in a world of Nymphs and Shepherds, except that the nymphs are sipping Manhattans and the shepherds are wearing monocles.

But all this celebrity endorsement paled into insignificance beside the main news of the year, which attracted the headline *SOCIETY SPLICE!* and the following bombshell . . .

Those attending the Philadelphia Convention of The Wodehouse Society in October were rewarded for their willingness to travel by the sensational news imparted on the first evening

by our Chairman, Norman Murphy. He announced that the previous weekend he had married the retiring President of TWS, Elin Woodger, thus cementing a trans-Atlantic alliance of which our political masters would undoubtedly approve. . . . Our heartiest congratulations go to the happy couple, who first met when Elin joined one of Norman's Wodehouse Walks in 1993.

Well, did you ever! And from the sublime to the utterly ridiculous: it was reported by the *Daily Mirror* that Vinnie Jones, the former hard-man-of-Wimbledon-FC-implausibly-turned-thespian, was being lined up to play Jeeves in a movie version of the *By Jeeves* musical. Strangely, this didn't happen.

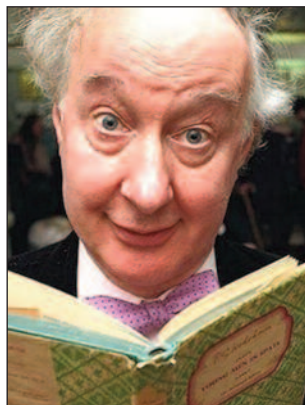
## 2002

This was the year in which Boris Johnson, then MP for Henley-on-Thames, agreed to become a patron of the Society; despite this, the year turned out rather well. In three years, membership had almost doubled to 850 and spread throughout 20 countries, and it was from one of the great bastions of Wodehouse fandom that the following anecdote arrived – and which, the Editor informed us, was no word of a lie: Two folks in their twenties, chatting away. Sanjay mentions to Meeta that he was reading Wodehouse. She confesses that she hasn't read any. “And you call yourself an Indian!” comes the reply.

Under Secretary-General for Communications at the United Nations (and later Society Patron) Shashi Tharoor opened many members' eyes when he detailed quite how popular PGW remained in India,

reporting that the Master's works were still widely available on railway station platforms and airport bookstalls; that in 1988, state-run television broadcast a 10-part adaptation of *Leave It to Psmith* in Hindi; that libraries stocked multiple copies of each title; and that, in British Council libraries, demand for Wodehouse titles outstripped that of any other author. Moreover, Wodehouse was the one British writer whom Indian nationalists could like without alienating their supporters. Tharoor recalled how his former mother-in-law, the daughter of a prominent nationalist politician, had introduced Britain's last viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, to PGW's writing in 1942. "It was typical," he wrote, "that the symbol of the British Empire had not read the 'quintessentially English' Wodehouse, but that the Indian freedom-fighter had."

The year 2002 was stuffed with excellent writing, including an article by another Patron, the actor Jonathan Cecil (pictured), who focused on the Dude, Knut or Silly Ass (pronounced "Silly Ahh-ss") tradition in English culture, citing Bertie as the ultimate example. Although . . .



I am not convinced of Bertie's stupidity. . . Crass stupidity is ultimately irritating rather than funny. Bertie's mind is definitely superior to Bingo's or Gussie's – slow, but never uninteresting: after all, he is Wodehouse's spokesman. For me he is a sort of childlike upper class Everyman: a decent, well-meaning gentleman up against a world of aunts – menacing like Aunt Agatha, cheerfully manipulative like Aunt Dahlia – incompetent ex-schoolfellows, bossy or soppy would-be fiancées, and fearsome magistrates and loony doctors. Without the heaven-sent presence of Jeeves, what man could cope? Many twentieth century actors maintained the silly ass tradition – mythical, perhaps, but ever popular – notably the dashing chump Ralph Lynn and the

### Newt News

2002 was the year of the newt, news-wise. Not only was a colony of protected great-crested newts holding up engineering work at the expanding Stansted airport, PC Mick Hayton was appointed Newt Relocation Officer at Peterlee police station, rescuing the great crested variety from danger as building work progressed on the new nick. They were apparently attracted by the lights on contractors' vehicles, but fell down the drains as they approached. Notwithstanding this unfortunate tendency, it was reported that there were 18,000 viable colonies in the UK.

### Heroes and Villains, Part 3 Politicians and political types who are/were fans of PGW

President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya / Michael Foot / Tony Blair / James Naughtie / Kaiser Wilhelm II / Enver Hoxha of Albania / John Sergeant / John Simpson / John Humphrys / Gerry Adams / Sir John Major / Ann Widdecombe / Brian Walden / Mishal Husain / Alan Johnson / Kim Philby/ Boris Johnson / Michael Gove / and, er . . . ex-Alleynian Nigel Farage

earnestly dithering Claude Hulbert. This tradition continues with Harry Enfield's 'Nice-But-Dim'. Sadly, actors come and go, but happily Bertie Wooster . . . goes on forever.

Jonathan went on to record 40 unabridged Wodehouse titles on audiobook before his untimely death in 2011.

There was further dissection of our hero in an article entitled 'Why Isn't Bertie Fat?' by James Clayton:

He gets up late after having been brought tea, and, occasionally, bread and butter in bed. His breakfast is usually eggs and bacon, with marmalade and toast, followed by coffee, presumably containing milk, but there is some variety in that occasionally he will have kippers or sausages, or kidneys on toast and mushrooms . . . He then goes off to the Drones for lunch . . . and while details are rarely given of his lunches, when circumstances take him to the Senior Liberal Club he has six courses without any indication that he might be overdoing it. The famous picnic lunch at the races would have consisted of the following: ham sandwiches, tongue sandwiches, potted meat sandwiches, game sandwiches, hard-boiled eggs, lobster, cold chicken, sardines, cake – "and if we want a bit to eat after that, of course, we can go to the pub." . . . There are many references to afternoon teas, at the flat, or in country houses, and these usually consist of something oozing with butter, such as toast, or muffins, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the tea is with milk. Every night, wherever he is, he has dinner . . . [a]nd when he selects the dinner of his choice as a reward for accepting a term of imprisonment, the menu contains 19 items. . . . And as for drink? Cocktails before lunch taken with a half-bottle of wine or champagne and followed by brandy, cocktails before dinner, wine during dinner, a whisky and soda to help him sleep. In addition there are the occasional drinks he takes when he feels the need to restore the tissues . . . No wonder Aunt Dahlia, Gussie Fink-Nottle and Stilton Cheesewright all think he drinks too much – and tell him so!

In other news, it was announced that the traditional policeman's helmet, that irresistible Boat Race night target, was to be replaced with an 'attack-proof' alternative; there was a hilarious

demonstration of hog-calling at a Society meeting (with live and recorded examples so convincing that “if you shut your eyes there appeared to be a pig in the room”); the Society slap-up dinner migrated to Lincoln’s Inn; and a sermon 28 hours long was preached by the Reverend Chris Sterry, in a bid to enter the *Guinness Book of Records* and win a place in any revised version of ‘The Great Sermon Handicap’. Finally, there were numerous tributes to Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, who died in March at the age of 101, and who was not just a fan of Wodehouse but a close family friend, employer, and relative of the Cazalets. Patrick Wodehouse, Plum’s nephew, contributed the following anecdote:

At the luncheon which followed the Plaque unveiling at Dunraven Street [PGW’s Mayfair address] in 1987, the Queen Mother ended her speech by saying “Whenever I am feeling tired or low, I go to bed with a Wodehouse, and I always fall asleep with a smile on my face”. My wife Nancy was heard to whisper to her neighbour, “But I always go to bed with a Wodehouse, and I always fall asleep with a smile on my face!”

## 2003

A year crammed with pith and moment. In no particular order: Norman stood down as Chairman upon his 70th birthday, to be replaced by Hilary Bruce, who has held the position magnificently ever since; membership reached 1,000; Wodehouse short stories were to be translated into Azerbaijani for the first time; it was revealed that Plum’s regular order at the Savoy Grill was corned beef hash; members of the Society attended a pig-racing event in Leatherhead on 18 July; it was reported that ‘Madeline Bassett’ had won the 1.10 at Lingfield Park on 14 November 2002, coming in at 7-1; 117 fictional brand names



Chairman Hilary Bruce with Sir Edward Cazalet and Tim Brooke-Taylor at a Society dinner

### **Appointments in the Clergy (as regularly submitted by Murray Hedgcock)**

Dr Adrian Armstrong, formerly priest-in-charge North and South Muskhams, and of Averham with Kelham (Southwell), has become honorary curate (known as honorary assistant priest), Wiveliscombe with Chipstable, Huish Champflower and Clatworthy (Diocese of Bath and Wells).

### **Heroes and Villains, Part 4 Actors and performers who are/were fans of PGW**

John Lithgow, Graeme Garden, Barry Humphries, Joanna Lumley, Simon Williams, Rowan Atkinson, Zoe Wanamaker, Ben Elton, Billy Connolly, Tom Courtenay, Simon Callow, Barry Cryer, Paul Merton, Orson Welles, Alexander Armstrong, Kate O’Mara, Frankie Boyle, Miles Jupp

were identified in PGW’s works; *The Mail on Sunday* gave *The Pothunters* Centenary Exhibition at Dulwich College four stars, double the rating for Tracey Emin’s new exhibition; and the AGM was rushed through in a breathless nine minutes – a record since equalled, but only once bettered, usually thanks to verbose Treasurers. But perhaps the sensation of the year was that the Gold Bats won *both* their annual big matches, against the Dusters and the Sherlock Holmes Society – the latter played to 1895 Rules, complete with narrower wickets, five-ball overs and underarm bowling, of which Robert Bruce proved himself the doyen, taking three wickets.

Barry Day edited a wonderful new resource for Wodehouseans: *The Complete Lyrics of P G Wodehouse*, drawing on the libretti of no fewer than 20 musical comedies and over 350 songs. The following is taken from an article he penned for *WS* to introduce his magnum opus:

Wodehouse met [Jerome] Kern when they both worked on a London show in 1906 but their true partnership didn’t begin for another ten years. Plum was in New York working as theatre critic for *Vanity Fair*. One evening in 1915 he went along to review a musical called *Very Good Eddie*, written by [Guy] Bolton and Kern. “I enjoyed

it in spite of lamentable lyrics” was his verdict – which just happened to coincide with the way Bolton and Kern felt about it. Would he consider writing some for their next show, they asked him? He would and did. In fact, the trio went on to write a number of shows together over the years, but none more significant than the handful they wrote specially for the tiny 299-seat Princess Theatre between 1917 and 1919. . . .They were all tired of Broadway’s current musical fare – imported British shows and cheesy Viennese-y operettas. They would write small-scale, affordable, accessible contemporary American shows in modern American idiom – ‘midget musical comedy’. What they created between them hit the spot with New York audiences and, indeed, audiences all around the country, where the shows would tour for years. Wodehouse’s

contribution was in many ways the most significant. His heroes and heroines sang the way real people talked – just wittier. All the song writers of the so-called ‘Golden Age’ of American musical theatre that was about to begin acknowledged his pioneer work and regarded him as their mentor. . . . Ira Gershwin, Lorenz Hart, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter . . . the list is endless.

An unexpected honour arrived courtesy of Australian sports journalist Peter Fitzsimmons, who selected Plum as scrum-half in a fantasy Rugby Football team drawn from “famous people who have

played the game”. The other members? Boris Karloff (like Plum, a member of the Hollywood Cricket Club; as Murray Hedgcock wrote, “Which team wouldn’t want to have Frankenstein charging hard at the opposition?”), Bill Clinton, George Bush, Ted Kennedy, Meatloaf, Jacques Chirac, Pope John Paul II, Idi Amin, Che Guevara, Prince William, Richard Harris, James Joyce, Yoshiro Mori, and Sir Edmund Hillary. Coach: Benito Mussolini who was “convinced [rugby] would go a long way towards toughening up the [Italian] population”.

*(To be continued in the June issue.)*

### ***Our President and Patrons, Then and Now***

**1997:**

***Richard Briers, President***

Rt Hon Tony Blair MP  
Henry Blofeld  
Ian Carmichael  
Jonathan Cecil  
Nicolas Colicos  
Alan Coren  
Stephen Fry  
Benny Green  
Sir Nicholas Henderson  
Lady Hornby  
Sir Simon Hornby  
Richard Ingrams  
Lord Lloyd-Webber  
John Mortimer QC CBE  
Frank Muir CBE  
Rt Hon Lord Oaksey OBE  
Jan Piggott  
Lord Quinton of Holywell  
Griff Rhys Jones  
Rt Hon Sir Richard Scott  
Tom Sharpe  
Godfrey Smith  
Iain Sproat  
Lucy Tregear  
Auberon Waugh  
John Wells  
Tony Whittome  
Patrick Wodehouse

**2017:**

***Alexander Armstrong, President***

HRH The Duke of Kent KG  
Henry Blofeld OBE  
Simon Brett  
Ann Briers  
Simon Callow CBE  
Lara Cazalet  
Jonathan Coe  
Nicolas Colicos  
Stephen Fry  
Murray Hedgcock  
Lady Hornby  
Richard Ingrams  
Martin Jarvis OBE  
Boris Johnson  
Lord Lloyd-Webber  
Nigel Rees  
Griff Rhys Jones  
Rt Hon Lord Scott  
Godfrey Smith  
Dr Shashi Tharoor  
Lucy Tregear  
Tony Whittome

**Note: Sir Terry Wogan served as our President from 2014 until his death in January 2016.**



*Richard Briers*



*Sir Terry Wogan*



*Alexander Armstrong*

### ***From Wooster Sauce, Number 4 How Chandler Might Have Written Wodehouse by Sebastian Faulks (future author of Jeeves and the Wedding Bells)***

I had a short let at that time on an apartment in Berkeley Mansions. The rent was low because the owner was away in Pentonville and the elevator screeched like a Palm Springs widow at a black-jack table. The caretaker was called Jeeves, the kind of guy who reads Spinoza for the gags. He showed in a blonde with eyes like fog-lamps on an Oldsmobile.

“Miss Madeleine Bassett to see you, Sir.”

“I don’t do matrimonial,” I said.

“Oh, Bertie, you naughty boy,” said the blonde. “I know you’ve always held a torch for me and now I’ve got good news for you.”

I sat down heavily behind the desk. Suddenly the day held as much charm as a stevedore’s undershirt.

## Society News

### **Jonathan Coe, Patron**

With great pleasure, we announce that Jonathan Coe, who won the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize in 2001 for *The Rotters' Club*, has agreed to become a Patron of the Society. A large crowd present at our meeting in November 2015 will recollect listening to an extremely entertaining discussion between our newest Patron and fellow writer David Quantick about the nature of British humour, with more than a passing reference to Plum. He has been quoted as saying, "More and more I feel that, just as all art aspires to the condition of music, all humour should really aspire to the condition of Wodehouse." We are delighted to welcome Jonathan as a Patron.



### **A Golden Opportunity**

The view from the window tells the tale – the sea of mud is slowly changing into something that might, one day, qualify as a sward. And in the shed – is that a whiff of linseed oil in the air . . . ?

It all adds up to only one thing – the cricket season approaches, and arrangements must be made.

Fortunately, they have been. Provisional dates for The Gold Bats' two principal matches have been agreed (see below); these dates will stand unless postings on the Society's website change them. (There won't be another issue of *Wooster Sauce* before the matches, so please check.)

Meanwhile, Gold Bats Captain Julian Hill is working on teams and strategy, and naturally he is keen to welcome new cricketing talent to the team. If any members would like to discuss playing, don't be put off – the required standard is not . . . unattainably high, shall we say –

The two fixtures are:

**Gold Bats vs the Dulwich Dusters on Thursday, May 18, 6.00 pm** at Dulwich College, London SE21 7LD. For the avoidance of doubt, this is an adult team, the Dusters being staff and teachers at the school. The setting is pure Wodehouse, the pitches are fabulous, there is a bar in the pavilion, and last year Dulwich organised a post-match barbecue, so fingers crossed for 2017.

**Gold Bats vs the Sherlock Holmes Society of London on Sunday, June 18, 11.30 am** at West Wycombe Cricket Club, HP14 3AE. West Wycombe is a charming National Trust village near High Wycombe, and the ground is in a lovely setting. The luncheon interval is a long one, so players and spectators can enjoy their picnic lunches. After close of play, generally around 6.00 pm, the pubs of the village provide a welcome location for players to lick their wounds as well as for those modestly (we hope) triumphant.

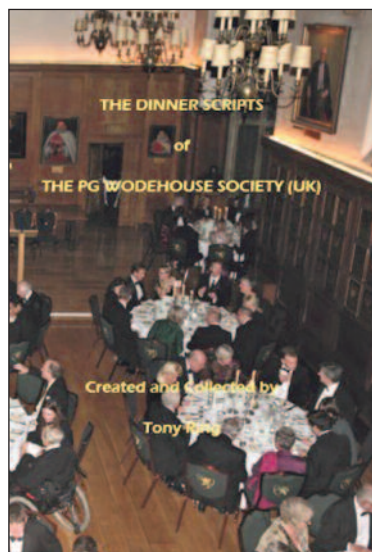
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## *The Dinner Scripts of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK)*

As you will have read, the Society has reached its 20th anniversary, and as the Committee took stock of its activities over those two decades, we decided to offer members the opportunity of acquiring a copy of all the scripts which have been written and used for the biennial formal dinners, and which have helped them to acquire a high reputation for memorable evenings.

The Society has been very fortunate over the years in the list of professional entertainers who have participated in these presentations, which are built round a combination of Wodehouse's words on a particular theme with generally four or five of his most relevant lyrics interpolated in the dialogue. Apart from the complete texts of the scripts themselves, the book includes a foreword from Patron Lucy Tregear; relevant pages of information from each of the dinner programmes; the menus; a list of Wodehouse songs used; a list of participants in the entertainments; and the Society Grace, specially

written for use at the first Dinner, and at every subsequent event.



The book is being published privately on behalf of the Society and will not be available through Amazon or any similar distributor.

– TONY RING

# The AGM and Italian Translations

by Laura Loehr

On November 23, 2016, some 30 or so hearty souls gathered at the Savoy Tup for the Society's AGM, followed by the evening program: an interview Paul Kent held with Gabriella Valentino on the topic of translating Wodehouse works into Italian. More on that to come.

Chairman Hilary Bruce opened the AGM with a moving tribute to the Society's founder Chairman, Norman Murphy, whose huge presence in the room will be missed by all. Hilary noted that, on evenings such as this, he delighted in answering questions, sharing knowledge, or being presented with a new Wodehousean byway to explore and research. Owing Norman a big debt of gratitude, everyone raised a glass to toast the memory of our Absent Friend.

The Chairman's report stated that the PGWS ship is mercifully still afloat, which is always good news. The Society is solvent, membership is stable, we keep doing good things. We stand at the reporting year's end with 907 members, three-quarters of whom are in the UK. Hilary noted the importance of *Wooster Sauce*, and reminded us that Elin, the Editor, would like to hear from volunteers willing to review things or report on events. Hilary thanked the Wodehouse Estate Trustees for their cooperation, as well as Chris Reece, our webmaster; our book examiner, Louis McCulloch; and our database manager, Sue Williams (aided by Bryan Williams).

The Treasurer's report from Ian Nilo-Walton stated simply that more oof came in than went out, which is also good news. July's Jeeves Centenary celebration came within budget, with general agreement that this was a most worthwhile event and use of funds. All officers stood again for election and were unanimously approved; the two committee members whose rotations had retired, Lesley Tapson and Oliver Wise, were willing to stand for re-election, and this was also approved. There being no other business, the AGM ended in 12 minutes, so Norman's record of 7 minutes still stands.

After a break, Paul introduced Gabriella, who is currently preparing her PhD at Swansea University, on the topic of the accuracy of translations of P. G. Wodehouse's works into the Italian language. During the course of the interview, we discovered that Gabriella first became enamoured of Wodehouse

when her father gave her *Heavy Weather* to read (in Italian, of course) when she was 12. She read all the PGW books she could find, except for the Jeeves series, which she didn't like at first, but eventually did come to enjoy.

Gabriella (who didn't read Wodehouse in English until 10 years ago) searched for as many translations of Wodehouse's works as possible, and now has access to translations of 89 books. Her program at Swansea University is comparing authors' works translated into different languages. Gabriella considers herself fortunate to be working with humorous works and to be in touch with Italian fans of the Master. She has developed a new approach to the study of humour, exploring the elements of style in PGW's work, including references, allusions to other writers, language use, intention, and whether translators' mechanisms render the same effects of humour as the original English.

Different people translate the same texts differently; circumstances of the times also influence translations. The linguistic codes from the 1990s are better than the ones from the 1930s, given the role Italian Fascists had in determining what was 'proper' and what was not (to get past the censors). One also needs to find out what is behind the word (idiom, jargon, tone, modernisation of word use) to understand intention of meaning.

Paul read a selection from *Right Ho, Jeeves*, then Gabriella and her husband read two different translations of the same passage in Italian, which delighted us all. Gabriella spoke of what happens when there are bad translations (in any language), as that could damage the author's reputation. A Q&A followed the interview, with lively participation from the audience.

Hilary then shared the Parish Notices, which hadn't been done earlier. Next year (2017) is the Society's 20th anniversary, for which several things will be done to mark it. Tony Ring spoke about the book he's preparing with the scripts from past Society dinners (see page 14). There will be a new Society tie. Gentlemen were asked to provide opinions about the proposed designs and fabric samples, which Christine Hewitt had with her. There will also be a lapel pin with the PGW typewriter logo as its feature. It looks like an exciting year to come!



Gabriella Valentino and Paul Kent

# A Musical Celebration at the BL

Oh gee, what joy to hear Hal and Lara Cazalet sing some of Plum's fruitiest lyrics! That was the treat bestowed upon an enthusiastically receptive audience at the British Library's Knowledge Centre on January 28. This special event, entitled 'P G Wodehouse: A Musical Celebration', explored Wodehouse's career as a lyricist and also celebrated the library's recent acquisition of the Wodehouse Archive. The audience – some 150 strong – included several members of the Dutch Wodehouse Society.

The programme was introduced by Roly Keating, Chief Executive of the British Library, and featured a panel of speakers including Sir Edward Cazalet, Hal Cazalet, Sophie Ratcliffe (editor of *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*), and Wodehouse biographer Robert McCrum, who chaired the proceedings. To cap everything, Lara Cazalet joined brother Hal onstage to perform some of their great-grandfather's songs, accompanied by the incomparable Stephen Higgins on piano.

In the first part of the programme, Edward spoke about how the archive had been created, and he provided biographical background that included personal reminiscences of Plum and Ethel. A particularly poignant note came near the end of his narrative, when Edward spoke of Wodehouse's death while sitting in a chair in his hospital room, holding a pencil. Edward noted that he still has, and treasures, that very pencil "because it tells us so clearly what a hard worker Plum was, because he was still continuing to write even as he was dying".

Robert and Hal then talked about Wodehouse's career in the musical theatre, with particular emphasis on the Princess musicals and his collaborations with Guy Bolton and Jerome Kern. Hal pointed out that Wodehouse's method was to fit the lyrics to the music; Sophie noted the apparent incongruity of this, given that Wodehouse was not very musical himself. Robert summed up PGW's life in three stages: the apprenticeship of his earliest years; the Middle Period (roughly 1921–39), when he created some of his greatest works; and the postwar years. Hal and Sophie both talked about the personalities Wodehouse worked with, and Sophie read from some of Wodehouse's letters.

The panel was joined onstage by Wodehouse expert Tony Ring for a question-and-answer session.

Members of the audience inquired about Wodehouse's inspirations, motivations, and characters (one chap wanted to learn the story of the prawns), while a question about Plum's years at Dulwich prompted Robert to read the opening sentence of *The Luck of the Bodkins* ("Into the face of the young man who sat on the terrace of the Hotel Magnifique . . ."), then point out: "You can't write a sentence like that without a classical education." Hal made the excellent point that Plum's development as a lyricist contributed significantly to his craft in writing novels.

All the members of the panel, as well as Lara and Stephen, shared favourite Wodehouse quotes. Many, if not all, must have been known to most of the audience, but the waves of delighted laughter greeting every one demonstrated how PGW retains his inimitable power to entertain and amuse.

At intervals throughout the programme, Hal and Lara entertained us in style, with songs that showed off Wodehouse's peerless way with words.

Hal comically performed 'Put Me in My Little Cell' from *Sergeant Brue* – Plum's first outing as a professional lyricist. Hal was subsequently joined by Lara for 'You Never Knew About Me' (from *Oh, Boy!*). They later sang 'The Enchanted Train' (*Sitting Pretty*), the charmingly romantic ballad that, as Hal noted, showed why Jerome Kern was considered to be the Schubert of the American musical theatre.

The talented duo's antepenultimate piece was made even more entertaining by Hal singing, in syncopation, George Gershwin's 'I Got Rhythm' as Lara sang Wodehouse's lyrics to 'Oh, Gee! Oh, Joy!' (written with Gershwin for *Rosalie*). The effect was sparkling and great fun.

In due course, Lara sang 'Bill' – perfect as always, with just the right pause before 'I don't know'. And the programme ended with a bang: after Hal put up a slide of a manuscript page with notes showing Plum's contributions to the lyrics of Cole Porter's 'Anything Goes', he and Lara launched into a show-stopping rendition of that song featuring revised lyrics from 1975. The proof was in the performance: Wodehouse really had what it took! The success of the afternoon amply demonstrated that the Wodehouse Archive is in good hands at the BL.

– ELIN WOODGER MURPHY



Hal and Lara entertained with panache.  
(Photo by Peter Nieuwenhuizen)



# Press Coverage of the Wodehouse Archive

News that the British Library had acquired the Wodehouse Archives attracted much attention in the Press, particularly aspects regarding the war years. *The Times* (November 28) cheered the acquisition with the headline ‘Very good, Jeeves. British Library hails Wodehouse’, in which it was reported: “Five years ago the release of MI5 files detailing the agency’s post-war investigation into the author’s alleged treachery concluded that Wodehouse had not consciously assisted the enemy and that there were insufficient grounds for prosecution. The acceptance of his archive by the British Library may be seen as a form of redemption.”

Biographer Robert McCrum also spoke of redemption in an article published in *The Observer* and *The Guardian* on November 27 (see [bit.ly/2fGR4ii](http://bit.ly/2fGR4ii)). Robert noted: “This rare and brilliant archive not only casts fascinating new light on Wodehouse’s comic genius, and painstaking daily revisions of his famously carefree prose, it also holds the key to the controversy that has tormented the writer’s posthumous reputation, the ‘Berlin broadcasts’. Yet, unlike many authors, he made no attempt to protect this collection, which is all the more authentic for being free of authorial intervention and contrivance.”

Christine Berberich of *The Independent* (December 11) focused on the Berlin broadcasts in her article ‘PG Wodehouse shrugs off wartime controversy to take his place among the greats’ (see [ind.pn/2l7Iqu2](http://ind.pn/2l7Iqu2)). After a lengthy examination of the episode, she concluded: “The British Library’s acquisition of Wodehouse’s archive, including his wartime papers, is an important step towards recognition of PG Wodehouse as a great of 20th-century British literature – not just as a comic writer but as an

accomplished artist who enriched English culture through a host of immortal characters.” Quite right!

Jack Malvern of *The Times* (December 28) wrote of ‘How Wodehouse answered his critics’, an article reprinted in other newspapers around the globe (see [bit.ly/2kx1GPE](http://bit.ly/2kx1GPE)). Malvern made specific reference to the animosity between Wodehouse and A. A. Milne, who had viciously attacked his fellow author over the Berlin broadcasts. Malvern quoted PGW’s ripostes to Milne and to Harry Flannery, an American journalist who claimed to have warned Wodehouse against doing the radio talks.

The feud with Milne was the subject of an article by Robert Hardiman in the *Daily Mail* (December 28; see [dailym.ai/2kSiUL5](http://dailym.ai/2kSiUL5)). “This is one Wodehouse tale with no happy ending, wrote Hardiman, “no ‘What ho?’ or ‘toodle pip’. There is no pot of honey for the progenitor of Winne the Pooh, either. Rather, Milne ends up with a pot of something very different over his head.” Like Malvern, he quoted extensively from letters and notes now in the Wodehouse Archive.

In his *Times Diary* column of January 31, Patrick Kidd reported on the musical event held at the British Library on January 28 to celebrate the archive acquisition, as well as the 100 years since Wodehouse had a record five musicals appearing on Broadway at the same time. As Patrick pointed out, “It was said that if Wodehouse had died in 1920 he would have been better known as a lyricist than a novelist.” Fortunately, Wodehouse did not die until 1975, by which time he had left a wealth of books, letters, notes, articles, lyrics, and much more that was lovingly preserved by Sir Edward Cazalet and now resides as the Wodehouse Archive at the British Library.

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## The 19th International TWS Convention

The Wodehouse Society (aka TWS) cordially invites you to a bash that will undoubtedly resound through the ages: the 19th International TWS Convention, entitled ‘Mr. Wodehouse Goes to Washington’, to be held at the Hamilton Crowne Plaza Hotel, 1001 14th Street N.W., Washington, D.C., October 19–22, 2017.

Wodehouseans from the Four Corners of the Earth will foregather for fun, frolic, and fulfillment. If you have never attended one of our conventions, you are in for a treat; if you have attended a prior convention, you already know this. We will browse; we will sluice. We will share camaraderie. There will be drama, and there will be comedy. There will be music; there will be singing; there will even be Charleston lessons. A rummage sale, silent auction, raffle, and fiendish quiz are also on the agenda.

Saturday the 21st will be a full day of activities, with riveting talks on the Master to both amuse and edify. At this writing, we have at least one Pulitzer Prize-winning author, one professor, and one doctor on the agenda. Many revelers will wish to sport costumes evocative of Wodehouse and his times at our gala banquet. There will be prizes for costumes, but we are not at liberty to

divulge the categories in which they will be awarded. Did we mention the Sunday brunch and improving skit to be written by a Tony Award-winning playwright and acted by various of our members, among others?

We have heard that some of you may have spouses or other hangers-on who, for inexplicable reasons, have not yet become true fans of Plum. Do not fear. Our hotel is just a few short blocks from multiple tourist attractions, including the White House (drop by and tell the occupant what you think), the many buildings of the Smithsonian Institution, art galleries, Georgetown, etc.

Like Jeeves says, if you oversleep and miss this one, you will think yourself accursed. Please do not let such a fate befall you!

– BOB RAINS

# The Words in Season *by Dan Kaszeta*

## *Soup and Fish*

Assiduous readers will have noticed that your correspondent has taken the liberty of slightly renaming this column. While one reserves the right to investigate individual interesting Wodehousean words, the kind editor of *Wooster Sauce* has granted liberty to expand the remit of this column to include longer constructs.

Most of us Wodehouse enthusiasts will be familiar with Bertie Wooster and others putting on “the old soup and fish” – that is, full evening attire. The term *soup and fish* is sometimes rendered with hyphens, sometimes not. The Wodehouse canon is so replete with this particular construct, a full catalogue would take ages. Bertie himself puts on the soup and fish listlessly (*Very Good, Jeeves*) and sombrely (*Thank You, Jeeves*), and he wears it into the pool at the Drones Club (*Right Ho, Jeeves*). Bertie is by no means the only one putting on the soup and fish; among others, Howard Chesney does so in *A Pelican at Blandings*.

I had originally thought the expression applied only to male attire. This is not universally the case. There is at least one instance of women donning soup and fish, this being Dahlia Prenderby, who “buzzed off to don his soup and fish herself” before we find the spectacle of Freddie Widgeon throwing a tortoiseshell cat in ‘Goodbye to All Cats’ (1934; most commonly found in *Young Men in Spats*). Nor is it limited strictly to fiction. PGW himself refers to a “primitive suit of soup-and-fish” having been left to him by his Uncle Hugh.

I once had a teacher in school with a necktie that looked like a trout, and we all hope that the “kipper tie” (actually named, I’m told, in reference to fashionista Michael Fish) is relegated to history. But the traditional components of evening dress are not particularly ichthyic in nature. So where does this particular phrase come from? All of the 19th century usages I could find actually refer to “soup and fish” as

the customary first course in a formal dinner. One of the oldest, from a novel called *The Commissioner* by the prolific but now largely obscure George James, is a bit of verse, made up by a character in the novel:

That evening bell, that evening bell,  
How many a tale its tinklings tell  
Of soup and fish, and that sweet hour,  
When it invites men to devour.

The novel is a bit dreadful. Your correspondent reads this stuff so you don’t have to. To get the context right, you see. In this case, it was a false alarm. Soup and fish was referring to, well, soup and a bit of fish. One can easily intuit that, as soup and fish was the customary way to start formal dining, one donned “soup and fish” to have one’s literal soup and fish.

It isn’t until we get into the 20th century that *soup and fish* migrates from being the first course to being what you put on to have the first course. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, credit is granted to P. G. Wodehouse for *Piccadilly Jim* (1917). However, I must reluctantly exclude Wodehouse from the credit for first use as it appears to have been in colloquial use in the USA before that book. I found an example of “soup-and-fish” in its sartorial usage in the September 4, 1914, issue of *Variety*, the venerable entertainment rag in the USA: “and Pat wore soup and fish at the matinee.” It is clear from the context that they expect their readers to know what it meant.

By the time we get into the 1920s, we start to get more prolific occurrences in print beyond the Wodehouse works. These include a short story called ‘Soup and Fish’ I was unable to locate, published in the vaguely entitled *Everybody’s Magazine* by one George Worts.

Based on the example found in *Variety*, we can fairly conclude that Wodehouse did not coin the phrase. It is clearly another example of contemporary slang that he incorporated into literature.

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## *Highballs for Breakfast in the Press*

### *iNews*, November 7

In ‘Hangover advice from literature’s greatest drinkers’, Louise Rhind-Tutt identified Wodehouse’s six varieties of hangover (the Broken Compass, the Sewing Machine, the Comet, the Atomic, the Cement Mixer, “and, most dreaded of all, the Gremlin Boogie”). She also described Jeeves’s pick-me-up and the famous effect it had on Bertie (see ‘Jeeves Takes Charge’). The source of her information? *Highballs for Breakfast*, of course.

### *The Times*, November 19

In his review of *Highballs for Breakfast*, Patrick Kidd mentioned some classic Wodehouse drinking scenes – most notably Bertie’s reaction to Jeeves’s pick-me-up and Gussie Fink-Nottle’s legendary performance at the

Market Snodsbury prize-giving: “It is one of the finest comic vignettes you will read and offers a good gateway drug for Wodehouse Novices. Beware, though, one sip can leave you addicted for life.”

### *The Daily Mail*, January 17 (from Stephen Payne)

An item mentioned Wodehouse’s “lifelong enthusiasm for strong drink” as described in the new book *Highballs for Breakfast*. The item referred to PGW’s unique names for drinks and states of drinking, such as ‘green swizzles’, ‘lightning whizzers’, ‘stewed to the gills’, and ‘tanked to the uvula’. It quoted from a 1946 Wodehouse letter to a friend: “I have come to the conclusion that gin and Italian vermouth (i.e. dry martinis) are the greatest thing in life.”

## Poet's Corner

### The Story of Otis

The tale of Otis Quackenbush  
Is one I think you ought to hear,  
So I'll relate it (and I'll try  
To keep it fairly short, too) here.  
To make a fortune he essayed,  
As often people do essay,  
By raising fowls in Michigan,  
A portion of the USA.

At first the venture prospered  
And the eggs were large and numerous.  
"Hot diggety dog!" said Otis,  
Who was often rather humorous.  
"If things go on the way they are  
I'll soon, I shouldn't wonder, wear,  
To keep off chills, ten-dollar bills  
As spring and summer underwear."

He spoke too soon. One afternoon  
The hens refused to lay for him,  
Which meant of course a marked decrease  
In what's called take-home pay for him.  
Inside the coop each day he'd scoop  
To find an egg, but was it there?  
Now to, now fro, he searched,  
But no albuminous deposit there.

He clasped his head. "This is," he said,  
"The darnedest thing I ever knew.  
I'd hoped for lots of income tax  
To give the Internal Revenue,  
And now, it seems, those golden dreams,  
So roseate and fair withal,  
Have got the axe. You can't pay tax  
If you have not the wherewithal."

But as he moaned his lot and groaned  
And started in to curse it he  
Met a man called Hibbs who was  
One of the nibs at Michigan University.  
He sketched the jam he was in.  
"I am," said he, and shyness threw aside,  
"On the very brink of drinking ink  
And thus committing suicide."

Now Hibbs was a man who knew his hens  
As one might say from A to Z  
And, giving away this useful bit  
Of friendly counsel gratis, said:  
"The first and foremost entry every  
Farmer's got to stick in his  
Notebook is this – 'There's nothing  
Half so touchy as a chicken is'.

"Remember, then, that every hen,  
Young, middle-aged or hoary, 'll

Take umbrage in an instant if  
You're brusque or dictatorial.  
And often in the summer months,  
When you were feeling dry and hot,  
I've heard you speak abruptly while  
Conversing with a Wyandotte.

"To put it in a word," he said,  
His amour-propre demolishing,  
"Your manners, my dear fellow,  
Need an awful lot of polishing."  
Your clothes as well. They give an air  
Of laissez-faire and messiness,  
And if there's one thing hens demand,  
It's chic and vogue and dressiness.

"Those overalls you're wearing now.  
They're muddy. Do you roll in it?  
And on your head you have a hat  
Of straw that's got a hole in it.  
No wonder that these hens of yours  
Are quitting work and packing up.  
Your looks and your deportment are  
In urgent need of jacking up."

And Otis said, "By Jove, you're right!"  
A new expression jilt his eyes.  
He wasn't one to take offence  
When friends began to criticize.  
He said, "These gaping wounds which up to now  
Have gashed my breast have healed.  
Henceforward I will be a blend  
Of Brummel and Lord Chesterfield."

So now when Otis feeds his fowls  
He wears (and very proper, too)  
A morning coat, striped trousers (pressed),  
Gloves (yellow) and a topper, too.  
His mode of speech, once so abrupt,  
He's disciplined until it is  
Unlikely ever to offend  
The dumb chums' sensibilities.

He now has kegs of splendid eggs  
Of extra special quality,  
And all is gas and gaiters,  
Not to mention joy and jollity.  
If ever farmer's heart was in  
A golden glow, 'tis his.  
It teaches us a lesson,  
This experience of Otis's.

From *Punch*, 19 September 1956  
(Written after a report from poultry experts  
at Michigan State University that hens are  
very sensitive to any form of discourtesy)

# The Wooster Source

by Graeme Davidson

*This is the real Tabasco,  
It's the word from Bertie Wooster,  
That spiffy chum of Stiffy Byng,  
Whose nippy mutt called Bartholomew  
young Bertie knew,  
And which though not at his 'at it chewed,  
at his ankles it chewed  
And thereby showed an absence of Wooster  
Code and quite the wrong attitude.*



"And what do you propose to do now?"

"Oh, I've got it all planned out! After you've seen my uncle and broken the news..."

"What!"

"After you've..."

"You don't mean to say you think you're going to lug me into it?"

He looked at me like Lillian Gish coming out of a swoon.

"Is this Bertie Wooster talking?" he said, pained.

"Yes, it jolly well is."

"Bertie, old man," said Bingo, patting me gently here and there, "reflect! We were at school –"

"Oh, all right!"

"Good man! I knew I could rely on you."

'All's Well', *The Inimitable Jeeves* (1923)

It seems rummy that water should be so much wetter when you go into it with your clothes on than when you're just bathing but take it from me that it is. I was only under about three seconds, I suppose, but I came up feeling like the bodies you read of in the paper which "had evidently been in the water several days." I felt clammy and bloated.

At this point the scenario struck another snag.

'The Hero's Reward', *The Inimitable Jeeves* (1923)

Lady Malvern was a hearty, happy, healthy, overpowering sort of dashed female, not so very tall but making up for it by measuring about six foot from the O.P. to the Prompt Side. She fitted into my biggest arm-chair as if it had been built round her by someone who knew they were wearing arm-chairs tight about the hips that season. She had bright, bulging eyes and a lot of yellow hair, and when she spoke she showed about fifty-seven front teeth. She was one of those women who kind of numb a fellow's faculties. She made me feel as if I were ten years old and had been brought into the drawing-room in my Sunday clothes to say how-d'you-do. Altogether by no means the sort of thing a chappie would wish to find in his sitting-room before breakfast.

'Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest', *My Man Jeeves* (1919)

## Wodehouse Quiz 22

### The Engaged and the Affianced

by David Buckle

1. In 'Jeeves Takes Charge', to whom is Bertie Wooster engaged to be married?
2. In 'The Reverent Wooing of Archibald', 'Archibald and the Masses', and 'The Code of the Mulliners', who is engaged to Archibald Mulliner?
3. In which Blandings novel do Tipton Plimsoll and Veronica Wedge become engaged?
4. Roderick Pyke fails to turn up at the altar in *Bill the Conqueror*. What is the name of his disappointed fiancée?
5. In 'Farewell to Legs', what is the name of Angus McTavish's fiancée, who falls for Legs Mortimer?
6. Who, at different times, has been engaged to Gussie Fink-Nottle, Bertie Wooster (more than once), and Roderick Spode?
7. In which novel does Aileen Peavey aka Smooth Lizzie, poetess, together with her onetime fiancé, Edward Cootes, plan to steal Lady Constance Keeble's necklace?
8. Aided and abetted by his Uncle Fred, from whom does Reginald 'Pongo' Twistleton run away from his marital obligations, on discovering that she likes to rise at six in the morning?
9. In which book are Linda Gilpin and Johnny Halliday engaged, not engaged, and then engaged once more?
10. Jeremy Garnett, after overcoming many obstacles, becomes engaged to Phyllis Derrick in which novel?

(Answers on page 23)

# The Words of Wodehouse

by June Arnold

For this special anniversary edition of ‘The Words of Wodehouse’, solve the clues in the top grid, then transfer the letters from there to the bottom grid, which will give you a quote from *Psmith Journalist*; reading down Column A will give you the name of a certain distinguished journal familiar to Society members. Answers are on page 23.

**Clues:**

- 1 Cosmo \_\_\_\_\_, character in *Cocktail Time* (6) / \_\_\_\_\_ Murphy, former PGW Society Chairman (6); A small drink (4)
- 2 George \_\_\_\_\_, landlord of the Emsworth Arms (5) / Years related to Column A (6) / Ballots (6)
- 3 *Golf* \_\_\_\_\_, collection of short stories (7) / Swiss house (6) / Sheltered side away from the wind (3)
- 4 Jerry \_\_\_\_\_, solicitor in *Money in the Bank* (9) / Sword used in fencing (4) / Set fire to (3)
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ Ring, the Society’s first journal Editor (4) / Hilary \_\_\_\_\_, current Society Chairman (5) / Game of chance (5)
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ Cazalet, grandson of PGW (6) / Wax light (6) / Compere of a TV programme (4)
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ Briers, former Society President (7) / Riches (6) / Free oneself of something (3)
- 8 Lord \_\_\_\_\_, character in *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* (6) / Sir \_\_\_\_\_ Churchill (7) / The male person (2)
- 9 Professor in *Bill the Conqueror* (7) / Sound of a bell (5) / Small (3)
- 10 Lord \_\_\_\_\_, character in *Money in the Bank* (9) / Eavesdroppers (9)
- 11 J. Russell \_\_\_\_\_, character in *French Leave* (11) / Archaic word for ‘while’ (6)
- 12 \_\_\_\_\_ Murphy, current journal Editor (4) / Penny \_\_\_\_\_, small musical instrument (7) / Tell something to go away (4)

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

# The 35th Anniversary Dinner of the Dutch Wodehouse Society

by Tony Ring

The UK Society is not the only Wodehouse Society with a notable milestone to cheer. On 19 November last year, the Dutch Society celebrated its 35th anniversary with a guided walk around Utrecht and a black tie dinner at the Paushuize in Utrecht, at which my wife Elaine and I represented the UK Society.

During the afternoon, some 20 members were treated to a walk around the historic streets of Utrecht; our guide, President of the Dutch Society Peter Nieuwenhuizen, provided a detailed and informative commentary. Such is his vision, Wodehouse knowledge, and imagination that he was able to cross the boundary of irrelevance to propose plausible two-stage links between the places of interest in Utrecht and a Wodehouse location, event, or character – even though there were no *direct* connections. For example, at the Louis Hartlooper Cinema Complex he spoke about the Hollywood story ‘The Rise of Minna Nordstrom’. But the highlight of the walk was a visit to the Nicolaïkerk, where the friendly organist played what Peter suggested was a world première on a church organ of the theme from the 1990s TV series *Jeeves and Wooster*, followed by a rousing rendition of ‘Sonny Boy’, in which we walkers all joined.

Dinner guests congregated from 6.30, and before we sat down there were a number of short speeches – from the President, Bart Pepermans for The Drones (the Belgian Society, represented by six members), and me, on behalf of our Society. During the dinner there were opportunities for communal singing led



Peter leads Wodehouseans through the streets of Utrecht.

(Photo courtesy of Peter Nieuwenhuizen)

by the Belgians with piano, kazoo, and swanee [slide] whistle; a Wodehouse quiz; and two sketches from *Right Ho, Jeeves* and *The Code of the Woosters*, performed by Dutch members.

The advertised expected close of proceedings of 10.30 was comfortably passed even before tables were changed, the dessert served, and old friends and acquaintances together put the world to rights once more. It was not until 00.30 am that the staff of the Paushuize were finally able to persuade the last group to collect their coats. My last thought as I left the very convivial gathering was that when our Society reaches its 35th birthday, our Dutch friends will just have celebrated their Golden anniversary. How will they celebrate that?

---

## Honouring Wodehouse at Degenershausen

As announced in the last *Wooster Sauce*, a special Wodehouse event will take place at Degenershausen – Plum’s German retreat for the summers of 1941 and 1942, after he was released from internment camp. The event will take place on May 20 at the Degenershausen landscape park in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany. The focal point will be the baptism of the ‘Wodehouse-Linde’, a tree under which Plum often relaxed.

The event is also a chance to celebrate the centenary of the first Wodehouse publication in Germany. The programme is likely to consist of a thematic park tour and a lecture from a newly published translation, among other things.

For information on travelling and accommodation, contact:

For information about Degenershausen, visit the website: [www.landschaftspark-degenershausen.de](http://www.landschaftspark-degenershausen.de).

– MARTIN BREIT

# Using the Lemon

by Linda Tyler

“Are you taking the dog?”

“Yes; she’s waiting by the front door.”

“What time will you be home?”

“Probably about five.”

And so begins my writing day, the one day each week when my husband (and the dog) works at the local historically-preserved railway. (The dog does not work, but rather plays with a fellow railway Labrador, the two of them swimming after sticks in the river.)

My literary hero is P G Wodehouse. And I aspire not only to his writing ability, but also to his writing day. It was the perfect day: writing, reading, eating, napping, watching TV, and some exercise.

He began with what he called Swedish exercises, namely toe-touching, arm-swinging, and the like. I’m happy not to bother with that. Whilst eating breakfast (toast and marmalade, cake and tea), he read a novel. Over porridge and coffee, I flick through the TV guide.

A short walk with the dogs followed for Plum, before he adjourned to his study overlooking the garden, initially working on his beloved Monarch typewriter and later a Royal electric. I take my coffee up to the bedroom, where the computer sits in a corner.

I am working on a novel set in the late 1600s in the Mediterranean, so I have tabs open on pirate life, ships, code, and folklore. There are many distracting items on these websites – I’m sure Wodehouse would have loved such a resource. I’ve learned that pirates wore hooped earrings because of the belief that pressure on the earlobes prevents sea-sickness. And that ‘close quarters’ were barriers of wood across a

ship’s deck, with ‘loop holes’ through which to fire when a ship was boarded by her enemy.

Before long it is lunch time. Plum ate a cooked meal, followed this with a long walk, then watched his favourite TV programme (a soap called *The Edge of Night*), enjoyed a proper tea (cucumber sandwiches and all), and had a snooze, before returning to his writing.

As I eat a sandwich – in the kitchen in the winter, in the garden in the summer – I read. Today it’s a compilation of private letters to and from famous people; funny, touching, and enlightening correspondence. I allow myself no more than half an hour – it’s easier to read than to write and I could spend the rest of the day doing that – and go back to work upstairs.

By the time my husband (and the dog) returns home, I’m in full flow. He says he knows this as soon as he comes through the door, because the house is vibrating with my bashing the keyboard.

I tear myself away to say hello and to drink the cup of tea he brings; I write until he eventually puts his head round the door to ask in a hopeful voice, “What time is dinner?”

Plum ended the day with a cocktail, dinner (eaten early to allow the cook to get home), and reading until bedtime. Dreaming of literary stardom (and a cocktail . . . and a cook), I make the evening meal.

Despite a day with little physical exercise, I fall asleep almost as soon as my head touches the pillow. My last thoughts are words from the great man himself.

*I pressed down the mental accelerator. The old lemon throbbed fiercely. I got an idea.*



## Answers to Wodehouse Quiz (Page 20)

1. Lady Florence Craye
2. Aurelia Cammarleigh
3. *Full Moon*
4. Felicia ‘Flick’ Sheridan
5. Evangeline Brackett
6. Madeline Bassett
7. *Leave It to Psmith*
8. Hermione Bostock
9. *A Pelican at Blandings*
10. *Love Among the Chickens*

## Answers to The Words of Wodehouse (page 21)

- |                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Wisdom / Norman / shot        | 7. Richard / wealth / rid |
| 2. Ovens / twenty / votes        | 8. Sidcup / Winston / he  |
| 3. <i>Omnibus</i> / chalet / lee | 9. Appleby / chime / wee  |
| 4. Shoemith / foil / lit         | 10. Uffenham / listeners  |
| 5. Tony / Bruce / lotto          | 11. Clutterbuck / whilst  |
| 6. Edward / candle / host        | 12. Elin / whistle / shoo |

*Quote: “Cosy Moments should become red hot stuff. I could wish its tone to be such that the public will wonder why we do not print it on asbestos. We must chronicle all the live events of the day in a manner which will make readers’ spines thrill.”*

*Journal: Wooster Sauce (of course!)*

# The Bibliographic Corner *by Nick Townend*

## Don't Overlook Recent US First Editions: Part Two

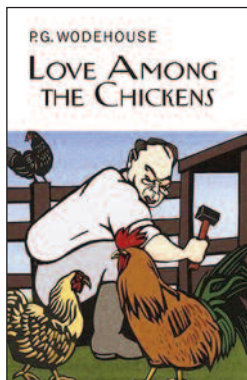
This column continues our review of four different categories of recent US first editions published by the Overlook Press, using the texts and titles of the uniform hardback series of 99 Wodehouse titles published by Everyman in the UK.

The third category comprises books previously published in the US under the same title as in the UK, but where the text of the previous US publication varied materially from the UK text. These comprise the following titles now published by Overlook in the US, using the text of the UK first edition.

- *The Prince and Betty* (11 August 2015) – “the books entitled *The Prince and Betty* which were published in the UK [McIlvaine, A15b] and the USA [A15a] are substantially different novels” (*A Simplified Chronology of PG Wodehouse Fiction*, May 2011, page iii). The Overlook edition uses the UK text.

- *Bring on the Girls* (30 October 2014) – as McIlvaine says of the UK first edition (A75b), “the 30 photographs differ from those in the American edition [A75a]” and “the English edition is much rewritten to emphasize London productions”. The Overlook edition uses the UK text.

- *Love Among the Chickens* (10 November 2011) – the Overlook edition uses the text of the rewritten 1921 UK edition (A7c); the only previous US edition (A7b), published by Circle in 1909, used the text of the original 1906 UK edition (A7a), albeit with some changes.



- *The Luck of the Bodkins* (1 November 2002) – the text of the UK first edition of 1935 (A54a) is significantly longer than the text of the US first edition of 1936 (A54b), which used the shorter text used in the original magazine serialisations (in the UK in *The Passing Show* from 21 September to 23 November 1935 (D117.1-10); in the US in *Red Book* from August 1935 to January 1936 (D53.9-14)). The Overlook edition uses the longer UK text.

The fourth category comprises books previously published in the US under a title different from the corresponding UK title, but where the text of the US first edition was essentially the same as the text of the UK

first edition. These comprise the following titles now published by Overlook in the US, using the UK title.

- *A Gentleman of Leisure* (31 March 2003) – originally published in the US as *The Intrusion of Jimmy*

- *The Coming of Bill* (20 April 2006) – originally published in the US as *Their Mutual Child*

- *Jill the Reckless* (30 April 2005) – originally published in the US as *The Little Warrior*

- *The Clicking of Cuthbert* (1 November 2002) – originally published in the US as *Golf Without Tears*

- *The Girl on the Boat* (13 March 2008) – originally published in the US as *Three Men and a Maid*

- *The Adventures of Sally* (12 April 2012) – originally published in the US as *Mostly Sally*

- *The Inimitable Jeeves* (10 May 2007) – originally published in the US as *Jeeves*

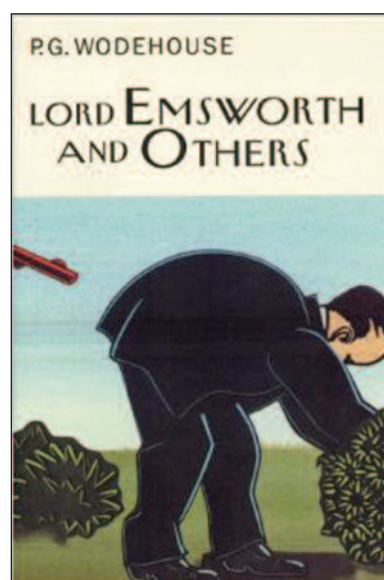
- *Sam the Sudden* (1 November 2007) – originally published in the US as *Sam in the Suburbs*

- *The Heart of a Goof* (30 November 2006) – originally published in the US as *Divots*

- *Summer Lightning* (15 September 2003) – originally published in the US as *Fish Preferred*

- *Right Ho, Jeeves* (1 November 2002) – originally published in the US as *Brinkley Manor*

- *Lord Emsworth and Others* (1 November 2002) – originally published in the US as *The Crime Wave at Blandings*

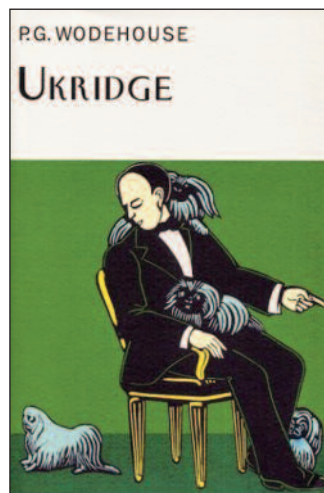




- *Barmy in Wonderland* (29 October 2009) – originally published in the US as *Angel Cake*
- *Ring for Jeeves* (12 April 2004) – originally published in the US as *The Return of Jeeves*
- *Something Fishy* (31 July 2008) – originally published in the US as *The Butler Did It*
- *Jeeves in the Offing* (1 November 2002) – originally published in the US as *How Right You Are, Jeeves*
- *Ice in the Bedroom* (4 August 2011) – originally published in the US as *The Ice in the Bedroom*
- *Frozen Assets* (1 April 2010) – originally published in the US as *Biffen's Millions*
- *Galahad at Blandings* (6 August 2009) – originally published in the US as *The Brinkmanship of Galahad Threepwood*
- *Company for Henry* (1 November 2012) – originally published in the US as *The Purloined Paperweight*
- *Much Obligated, Jeeves* (12 April 2004) – originally published in the US as *Jeeves and the Tie That Binds*
- *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen* (2 April 2009) – originally published in the US as *The Cat-Nappers*

In case some readers may think I have omitted some titles from this fourth category, I should point out that some titles, where the title of the US first edition differed from the title of the UK first edition, have already been published in the US using the original UK title. To the best of my knowledge, these comprise the following, which therefore also represent US first editions in accordance with this fourth category. All the titles listed below were published in paperback format.

- *Ukridge* – originally published in the US as *He Rather Enjoyed It*; published in the US under its UK title by Pennyfarthing in 1988 (AAbn32).
- *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* – originally published in the US as *Bertie Wooster Sees It Through*; published in the US under its UK title by Perennial Library in 1983 (AABo77).
- *A Pelican at Blandings* – originally published in the US as *No Nudes Is Good News*; published in the US under its UK title by Pennyfarthing in 1988 (AAbn92).
- *Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin* – originally published in the US as *The Plot that Thickened*; published in the US under its UK title by Pennyfarthing in 1988 (AAbn95).



## Margaret Zbrozek

We were saddened to learn of the death in July 2016 of Margaret Zbrozek, aged 89. Margaret had been the Wodehouses' cook at Remsenburg and also helped to look after the couple. In April 2012, Margaret attended the unveiling of the marker for P. G. and Ethel Wodehouse. She is remembered fondly by the Cazalet family.

## The Incomparable Martin Jarvis

by Tony Ring

Walton-on-Thames in Surrey may not be the first place you would think of when asked where you might find Martin Jarvis, aided as always by his director and wife Ros Ayres, performing a live recording of two Jeeves stories for transmission by Radio 4. But the Riverhouse Arts Centre, a converted barn holding, at a guess, an audience of 150 enthusiasts, was where my wife, uncle, and I enjoyed an evening on Saturday, January 21.

The thing about recordings of this nature, if you haven't been to one, is the surprise element. Martin was recording two adaptations which will be broadcast as 30-minute programmes, and even with the inevitable repeats of lines interrupted by a cough or need for a drink and a suggestion by the director that a couple of sentences might be re-recorded with slightly different emphasis, each recording took just 40 minutes. Jarvis, of course, is an audiobook reader of enormous experience, and he has worked with Ros so long that their work procedures are more or less seamless.

The audience were treated to 'Jeeves and the Yule-tide Spirit', probably to be transmitted about the weekend before Christmas (experience suggests the Saturday, repeated on the Sunday) and 'The Aunt and the Sluggard', which experience again suggests will be the following weekend. Watch out for the programmes come the festive season later this year. Martin was on top form using the voices of Bertie, Jeeves, Sir Roderick Glossop, and Aunt Agatha, with a new, American, aunt (not Bertie's) in the cast alongside Rockmeteller Todd in the second story, which was set (and written) in New York in 1916, just before Plum's musical theatre career took off.

Martin Jarvis is as good a reader of Wodehouse as you could hope to hear. These programmes will be no exception.

# Recent Press Comment

## ***New Statesman*, 18–24 November**

(from Caroline Franklyn)

In answer to his own question – “What genre fiction will best soothe those living in the turbulence of the recent Earth-Shattering events?” – Nicholas Lezard wrote: “There’s always Wodehouse, who is widely recognised as a universal pick-me-up, . . . I’ve always found him more of a consolation for a broken heart than a balm for those living in the turbulence of Earth-Shattering political events.”

## ***The Daily Telegraph*, November 25**

(from Carolyn De La Plain)

The obituary for the writer Tim Heald noted that he wrote a series of detective novels that one reviewer described as “crime writing with a P G Wodehouse flair”.

## ***The Daily Telegraph*, November 28 (online) & 29**

(from Peter Thompson)

Charlotte Runcie argued ‘Why P G Wodehouse deserves his place among the literary greats’, writing: “We have a strange lack of respect for geniuses who make us laugh. . . . We assume that just because a book is easy to read, it must have been easy to write. In fact the opposite is true, as Wodehouse’s letters . . . prove. He spent years meticulously plotting every masterpiece . . . It’s a mark of true genius that you can sail through his books with laughter filling your heart on every page.”

## ***Golf Digest*, November 28**

David Owen suggested that “Wodehouse should be considered mandatory reading for all serious golfers” and quoted from ‘The Heel of Achilles’: “Golf is in its essence a simple game. You laugh in a sharp, bitter, barking manner when I say this, but nevertheless it is true. Where the average man goes wrong is in making the game difficult for himself. . . . A man who could retain through his golfing career the almost scornful confidence of the non-player would be unbeatable. Fortunately such an attitude of mind is beyond the scope of human nature.”

## ***The Times*, December 2** (from Christopher Bellew)

The obituary of “hard drinking and swearing editor of *Punch*” Stanley Reynolds reported that he “liked to dress as an English toff, preferably one from a P G Wodehouse novel who is about to head off for a weekend in the country”. The article also mentioned Reynolds’s passion for keeping pigs, “just like a Wodehouse character”.

## ***The Guardian*, December 3** (from Terry Taylor)

Dennis Barker wrote in his obituary of Andrew Sachs that radio was a favourite medium “and brought the opportunity to play another great scene-stealing subordinate, PG Wodehouse’s Jeeves, valet to upper-class buffoon Bertie Wooster”.

## ***The Week*, December 3**

(from Roger Bowen and Alexander Dainty)

Author D J Taylor nominated *Psmith in the City* as a favourite book.

## ***The Sunday Times*, December 4**

(from Ian Nilo-Walton)

Author Philip Pullman’s list of favourite books/authors included *The Code of the Woosters*.

## ***Slightly Foxed*, Winter 2016** (from Ian Nilo-Walton)

A review of *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* concluded: “Pelham Grenville Wodehouse lived to a great age, had a very long and happy marriage, and conjured up an idyllic world to which he allowed us access. Saints have done less for humanity.”

## ***The Daily Telegraph*, December 3**

The clue for 21 across in the General Knowledge crossword: “–, my dear Watson” – phrase in P.G. Wodehouse’s *Psmith, Journalist*, mistakenly attributed to Sherlock Holmes (10).

## ***The Washington Post*, December 7**

Michael Dirda’s holiday book picks included three boxed sets by PGW. “Start to read anything by P.G. Wodehouse and you’ll be smiling before you reach the end of the page.”

## ***Austin Daily Herald*, December 11**

Jason Schoonover, in writing about Faith Sullivan’s book *Good Night, Mr Wodehouse*, said that Ms Sullivan “credits writer PGW as her savior (*sic*) as she reads his works each night as she encounters life’s ups and downs”.

## ***The Millions*, December 18**

In ‘A Year in Reading’, Adam Boretz wrote that he “developed a full-blown Wodehouse Addiction” following the death of his grandmother. While “various relatives squabbled about who should inherit which silver teapot and why, I quietly made off with her collection of orange-spined paperbacks, taking with me Bertram Wilberforce Wooster . . . and his peerless gentleman’s personal gentleman, Jeeves.” Boretz also provided a favourite PGW quote: “I’m not absolutely certain of my facts, but I rather fancy it’s Shakespeare who says that it’s always when a fellow is feeling particularly braced with things in general that fate sneaks up behind him with a bit of lead piping.”

## ***Only Connect*, BBC2, December 19**

(from June Arnold and Michele O’Leary)

Victoria Coren Mitchell admonished the team who did manage to find the connection between “Ring for..., Much Obligated..., What Ho..., and The Inimitable...” after two clues but who said they had never read any of PGW’s books. She told them that the Jeeves books “were the greatest books ever written in the English language”. Wise woman!

**The Guardian, December 22** (from Jo Jacobius)

In 'The Code of the Woosters: PG Wodehouse's guide to fighting fascism', Sam Jordison wrote of the many reasons to love that particular book. "It's a novel by one of the finest exponents of the English language at the very top of his game. . . . [H]ere in 2016 it seems more vital than ever . . . because this is the book in which Bertie Wooster teaches us one of the best and most effective way of beating fascists: you stand up to them and you point out exactly how ridiculous they are." He went on to quote Bertie's famous verbal spanking of Roderick Spode, and added that Wodehouse "showed a good way forward against home-grown fascists and Hitler alike: you send them up as the rotters they are."

**BBC 4, December 30** (from Linda Tyler)

From the programme *King George and Queen Mary: The Royals Who Rescued the Monarchy*: "Queen Mary looked at the summer reading list of her granddaughter Princess Elizabeth (now the Queen), which had been provided by Elizabeth's mother, and saw that all seventeen books were by PG Wodehouse."

**Round Britain Quiz, Radio 4, January 2**

(from Terry Taylor)

Q2: "Why ought you ask permission from Mum and Dad before taking tea with primates, sending an email to an Oceanic domain, or reading the works of Plum?"  
Answer: PG (of course.)

**The Guardian, January 7** (from Terry Taylor)

In a feature in which a number of writers selected their favourite funny books, Sebastian Faulks selected the Jeeves stories: "I have never been able to tune into Lord Emsworth but the Jeeves-Wooster relationship has a tensely comic energy. A few years ago I heard Terry Wogan read the famous Gussie Fink-Nottle prize-giving speech to a large audience at the Cheltenham festival. They say you could hear the laughter in Birmingham."

**The Daily Telegraph, January 7**

The General Knowledge Crossword clue for 23 across: - - Jeeves! Title of a novel by PG Wodehouse: or, a 1936 film starring Arthur Treacher and David Niven (5, 3).

**The Times, January 21** (from June Arnold)

The letters page featured correspondence from Joseph Connolly pointing out and disagreeing with Patrick Hogan's omission of PGW and *The Code of the Woosters* from his list of 100 best books.

**The Oldie, February 2017**

(from Christopher Bellew and Mike Swaddling)

Matthew d'Ancona, writing in the Modern Life column, explained what the Alt-right means, concluding that it

"is not a serious force in this country . . . Should you be unlucky enough to encounter one of its members in a social situation, remember Bertie Wooster's denunciation of Roderick Spode." After repeating said denunciation (see *The Code of the Woosters*), d'Ancona's last word was: "unimprovable".

**Third Age Matters, Winter edition**

(from Roger Bowen)

Francis Beckett took a stand against those who would criticise his decision to wear socks under his sandals. "Never in my lifetime have the fashion police been so tyrannical as they are now. . . . [Y]ou have to look back to the emergence of Bertie Wooster and his personal fashion gauleiter Jeeves to find a time when what one is permitted to wear was so strictly controlled. I wonder what would have happened had Bertie stood up for freedom as I have . . . of course we know what will happen. One way or another, Bertie will fall into line."

**Today, Radio 4, February 2** (from Hilary Bruce)

The Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, Stig Abell, in discussing the substantial increase of sales of 1984 and rising sales of dystopian novels, advised people to read PGW for ten minutes a day as an antidote, quoting, yet again, Bertie's anti-Spode speech.

**Albuquerque Journal, February 4**

(from Sharon Mitchell)

In the *New York Times* Crossword, the clue to 2 across read: The "P" of P.G. Wodehouse (6).

**The Hindu, February 7**

In '25 books you must read before you're 15' Harshikaa Udasi wrote: "*The Code of the Woosters* is a good step into the eccentric world of Wodehouse and his characters. . . . The earlier you are introduced to Wodehouse-isms, the longer you can savour the fun. . . . This book is classic Wodehouse fare – memorable scenes, convoluted plot and the zaniest characters ever. And not to forget, those long-winding complex sentences that do not permit a superficial read."

**The Hindu, February 8**

Arathi M wrote: "Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse is an English author whose wit is beyond measure. Whether it is the ramblings about Bertie Wooster or writing short stories, his books remain the most widely read of the 20th century. . . . Most English humourists who came after him drew inspiration from his comedy as there had not been a writer since then who made such magic with his knowledge of words."

**IndiaToday, February 14**

Served up '10 P.G. Wodehouse quotes for when you are having a bad day'. To see them, go to [bit.ly/2lgyJfz](http://bit.ly/2lgyJfz).

"You mean you planked the entire capital on a horse?"  
Bingo laughed bitterly.

"If you could call the thing a horse. If it hadn't shown a flash of speed in the straight, it would have got mixed up in the next race. It came in last, putting me in a dashed delicate position. Somehow or other I had to find the funds to keep me going, so that I could win through to Rosie's return without her knowing what had occurred. Rosie is the dearest girl in the world; but if you were a married man, Bertie, you would be aware that the best of wives is apt to cut up rough if she finds that her husband has dropped six weeks' housekeeping money on a single race. Isn't that so, Jeeves?"

"Yes, sir. Women are odd in that respect."

(From 'Jeeves and the Impending Doom', 1926)

# Future Events for Your Diary

## April 30, 2017 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.

## May 18, 2017 Gold Bats vs the Dulwich Dusters

The Gold Bats are back in action and will be playing against the Dulwich Dusters on this date, starting at 6 pm. If all goes well, there will be a post-match barbecue. See page 14 for further details.

## May 20, 2017 Special Event at Degenershausen

The date is now set for a very special event marking Wodehouse's time at Degenershausen, Germany, following his release from internment. The event will feature a tree 'baptism', as well as a park tour and a lecture. For details, see page 22.

## June 18, 2017 Gold Bats vs the Sherlock Holmes Society of London

This traditional match will be played again this year at the West Wycombe Cricket Club, with a start time of 11.30 am. Bring a picnic lunch! See page 14 for details.

## July 12 and October 4, 2017 Society Meetings

All right, we lied, but not deliberately. It is still not certain whether we will continue to meet at the Savoy Tup, but hold onto the above dates in your calendar, and all should be known by June. You can also check the Society's website for the most current information.

## September 10, 2017

### Richard Burnip's Wodehouse Walk

Take a walk with Richard Burnip and enjoy a lot about and by Wodehouse along the way! See April 30 for details on when and where.

## October 19-22, 2017

### TWS Convention in Washington, D.C.

The Wodehouse Society will be holding its 19th biennial convention, 'Mr. Wodehouse Goes to Washington', in, appropriately enough, Washington, D.C., at the Hamilton Crowne Plaza. See page 27 for information about convention activities..

## October 29, 2017 Richard Burnip's Wodehouse Walk

Take a walk with Richard Burnip and enjoy a lot about and by Wodehouse along the way! See April 30 for details on when and where.

It is a curious fact, and one frequently noted by philosophers, that every woman in this world cherishes within herself a deep-rooted belief, from which nothing can shake her, that the particular man to whom she has plighted her love is to be held personally blameworthy for practically all of the untoward happenings of life.

(From Sam the Sudden, 1925)

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| 17 | Press Coverage of the Wodehouse Archive                     | 24 | The Bibliographic Corner: Don't Overlook Recent<br>US First Editions: Part Two |
| 17 | The 19th International TWS Convention                       | 25 | Margaret Zbrozek   |
| 18 | The Words in Season: <i>Soup and Fish</i>                   | 25 | The Incomparable Martin Jarvis   |
| 18 | <i>Highballs for Breakfast</i> in the Press                 | 26 | Recent Press Comment   |

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