

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

Volume 28 Number 3 Autumn 2007

A New Murphy Walk: Wodehouse's Early London

BY BOB "OILY CARLISLE" RAINS
AND ANDREA "SWEETIE CARLISLE" JACOBSEN

AT THE CRACK of 9:30 A.M. on July 10, a group of International Wodehouse Week walkers (aka IWWs—appropriately “the Wobblies”) gathered 'neath the International Time Clock Map at the Piccadilly Circus Tube stop to visit vestiges of Plum's *Globe* years of 1902–14. In fear and awe of Norman Murphy, we were *on time*, even if some suffered from morning heads. Bright and chipper Christine Hewitt greeted us and explained this was really Norman's Walk; she was just his mouthpiece. Some felt we had the best of both worlds: Norman's encyclopedic wisdom and Christine's articulation.

First off, Christine directed our Starbucked eyes toward the Criterion Restaurant (est. 1874) where Gally Threepwood frequented the first “American”—i.e., long—bar in London. Callously, Christine allowed no time to pause and enter for a tissue restorative. She pushed us onward to the Trocadero, where, your reporters understand, Young People today queue up to see and be seen. Apparently 'twas ever thus. The Master used the setting as the Bandolero in *Uneasy Money*. Next door is a portal through which we could see, had we x-ray vision, the old pathway to Arundell Street, the opening site of *Something Fresh*.

Heading on, we saw the Café de Paris, known in 1924 as Mario's, noted in seven PGW books, including *Cocktail Time*. Bearing left, we admired Herbert Westbrook's erstwhile lodgings on Rupert Street, where Wodehouse heard the story he made into *Love Among the Chickens*, his first novel for adult readers.

At Leicester Square, we paid homage to the Empire Theatre, formerly the Empire Music Hall, where a safety



Christine Hewitt delights and instructs her charges on PGW's early years in London.

screen was once torn down by a squadron of Sandhurst cadets led by one Winston Churchill. We also viewed various and sundry locations near the square where young Gally Threepwood was known to cavort. Moving on, we were tantalizingly shown the outside (only) of Nigel Williams Rare Books in Cecil Court which specializes in the Canon. But did the heartless Hewitt allow us to enter? We think you know the answer.

Past St. Martin's Lane, on to No. 39 Bedford, the HQ of *The Lady* magazine, a weekly published since 1885. Could this be the model for Aunt Dahlia's *Milady's Boudoir*? A helpful Weeker purchased a copy of the current issue of *The Lady*, over which we pored for clues. The cover story, “For the Love of Lavender,” surely has the scent of the Edwardian epoch and would not offend the sensibilities of anyone's aunt.

At Covent Garden, we stopped in front of the National Sporting Club where, in Plum's time, one could have watched boxing matches. Christine pointed out the former Bow St. Police Court, known to Plummies as Boshier St., where one might get 20 days "without the option." Our Chairman, Hilary Bruce, told us how, in her youth, she gave aid and comfort there to guests of the Crown.

Past the home of the Yorick Club (PGW was a member) to the Strand where he worked for the *Globe*. At the nearby Gaiety Theatre, Plum, still in his 20s, contributed as a writer of extra lyrics. After stopping by Sir Arthur Sullivan's statue on the Embankment (for obvious reasons out of sight of that of Plum's hero, Sir W. S. Gilbert), we came to Simpson's in the Strand, a culinary emporium where the Master was known to get himself around beef with the fixings. Simpson's hospitality was repaid with mention in five books, including *Something Fresh*.



Sir Arthur Sullivan and a rabid fan

We weary Weekers finally washed up at the Coal Hole pub on the Strand, in its present building since 1904 and mentioned by Himself. Opposite are the former sites of several long-gone periodicals for which Wodehouse wrote, *The Captain* magazine among others. Our walk was over, our heads were full, but our stomachs were empty. In gratitude to our stern mistress Christine, we repaired with her to lunch downstairs in the Coal Hole at a table where perhaps Plum himself consumed restoratives a century ago.

See pages 6–11 and 24 for more on A Week With Wodehouse.

Newport Tour is Full!

THE TWS Divine Providence Convention Coordinator informs us that the Friday bus tour to Newport has reached its maximum capacity. Please see www.wodehouse.org/TWSprovidence for the latest convention information.

Brotherly Love Sermon Challenge Still Open

ASPIRING SERMONIZERS are reminded that a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity awaits them at the Divine Providence convention. As reported in the Winter 2006 issue of *Plum Lines*, the NEWTS are offering a prize for the best version of the Reverend Francis Heppenstall's unpublished masterpiece on Brotherly Love. Unlike the prize homily valued solely for its length in "The Great Sermon Handicap," the entries in this contest will be judged on their potential to keep a church full of drowsy parishioners with morning heads awake on a warm summer day, while at the same time answering any and all outstanding questions about life in general and Brotherly Love in particular.

Sermons are welcome from all religious traditions—even those with only one adherent—and must be no longer than three double-spaced pages or 10 minutes' reading time. The three most noteworthy entries will be read at the Divine Providence convention, either by the author or, if the author prefers it, by a vicar to be appointed by the Upper Bingley Ecumenical Council. A prize will be awarded to the author of the entry deemed to be the best of the three.

Please note that all entries must be received by October 1, 2007.

Continued Call for Clean, Bright Entertainers

THE NEWTS are still seeking volunteers to perform at the Clean, Bright Entertainment they are preparing for the Friday night of the Divine Providence convention. So, brush up your bird calls, tune up your banjolele, call up a friend to play Pat to your Mike, and then contact Max Pokrivchak.

The Great Sermon Handicap at the Divine Providence Convention

BY FATHER J. WENDELL VERRILL



SEVERAL YEARS AGO, the NEWTS gathered for a Paschal celebration of Plum at the spacious Victorian mansion in Waltham, Massachusetts, that serves as the rectory for St. Mary Church, where I then resided. At that memorable nottle,¹ a short version of the Great Sermon Handicap was devised and conducted. We NEWTS have enjoyed many a sermon handicap since then, and it occurred to us that, given the theme of our upcoming convention, we should try this wheeze on a broader audience, and the Sunday morning brunch seemed to be the most appropriate time at which to do it.

A reasonably coherent clergyman with time on his hands having been obtained to officiate,² the official format and contest rules were worked out. In order to prepare convention attendees (and enable non-attendees to hold their own sermon handicaps if they like), we offer them here:

1. An unbiased person (preferably a boy whose voice has not broken by the second Sunday of Septuagesima) opens a Bible at random to the Old Testament and points to any verse on the page. Said person then reads that verse and the one following it to the assembled masses, then hands the Bible to the officiating cleric, who retires to muse upon the selected passage.
2. While the reverend gentleman muses, turf accountants pass among the congregation collecting betting slips, upon which are inscribed the punter's name and estimate as to how long the clergyman is likely to maunder on about the chosen text. Estimates should range from 1 to 20 minutes, the cleric having agreed in advance to try to keep his homily within that range.
3. After the betting windows have closed, as it were, the priest delivers a sermon using the two verses as his text.
4. The winning wagerer is the person who comes the closest to—without going over—the time when the cleric finally chokes out an “Amen” or some similar declaration and stops talking.

Should the preacher actually reach 20 minutes, someone with a good watch calls “time” and the punter whose bet was closest to that time wins.

5. In the unlikely event of a tie, the contestant who gives the best explanation of Antidisestablishmentarianism is declared the winner. (No, just kidding; we'll flip a coin or something).

Some handicapping points to bear in mind at the Divine Providence convention:

- The cleric presiding over this particular sermon handicap is pushing 70 and declining fast! He is Roman Catholic, and the typical RC Sunday sermon runs 10–15 minutes. The usual weekday homily might run closer to 7 minutes.
- The preacher is expected to be entertaining and original, and much of his ability to be so depends on the text chosen. A selection from the “Begats,” for example, could result in a seriously shortened effort.
- The preacher cannot prepare ahead of time since he doesn't know what the text will be. Thus, betting on the low side might seem to be advisable. With a decently sized congregation, however, he might be inspired to unusual flights of fancy. You just never know.

Please note that the NEWTS chaplain is a man of fiscal probity and all efforts at bribery will be brought immediately to the attention of the committee (he has other virtues, too, but they're pretty faint and fading fast). In closing, we would like to advise anyone with a delicate conscience regarding the loose and casual treatment of Sacred Scripture to seriously consider taking a refreshing nap during this event.

¹ A NEWTS gathering is referred to as a “nottle,” in honor of that well-known champion of newts, Gussie Fink-Nottle.

² I recently retired.

From Charity Bazaars to Rummage Sales

BY NORMAN MURPHY

IT WAS IN the mid-19th century that it became fashionable for Society ladies to take up charitable work, and various duchesses and ladies of rank began to organize events to raise money for those less fortunate than themselves. By the 1870s, these had become very popular and were well supported by the wives of wealthy businessmen since it gave them access to peeresses whom they would never otherwise have had the opportunity to meet. The duchesses, marchionesses, and countesses gave the organizations “tone” and the businessmen’s wives provided the necessary finance.

Various types of fund-raising functions were tried, but it soon became clear that the most effective was a Charity Bazaar. In many ways, these resembled the charity auction evenings held today where millionaires bid enormous sums to take a film star to dinner or to ride in someone’s vintage Rolls-Royce. It was accepted that, at a Charity Bazaar, you would pay vast sums for some nondescript item but “it was all for charity”—and if the stallholder was the pretty daughter of a peer of the realm, maybe even a peeress herself, who could refuse?

These charity bazaars lasted a surprisingly long time, certainly up to the 1930s, and it was a memory of them that led Wodehouse to write “The Right Approach” in *A Few Quick Ones* (1959). When Augustus Mulliner, formally attired in topper and morning dress, had to attend a charity bazaar at “Balmoral,” Wimbledon Common, his boredom vanished when he espied Hermione Brimble presiding over a stall.

... he hastened up and began buying everything in sight. And when a tea-cosy, two Teddy bears, a penwiper, a bowl of wax flowers and a fretwork pipe-rack had changed hands, he felt he was entitled to regard himself as a member of the club and get friendly. “Lovely day,” he said.

That was at one end of the social scale. In the countryside, until the 1950s, social welfare was commonly the responsibility of the vicar, and he had many causes that required support. In *Money for Nothing*, Lester Carmody reflected gloomily on the five shillings extracted from him by the Rev. Alistair Pond-Pond.

Many men in Mr. Carmody’s place would have considered that they had got off lightly. The vicar had come seeking subscriptions to the Church

Organ Fund, the Mothers’ Pleasant Sunday Evenings, the Distressed Cottagers Aid Society, the Stipend of the Additional Curate and the Rudge Lads’ Annual Summer Outing, and there had been moments of mad optimism when he had hoped for as much as a ten pound note.

Every rural community experienced the fund-raising events we read of so often in Wodehouse, notably the unforgettable concert in *The Mating Season*. Sales of Work were popular for a time, while charity auctions of items donated by parishioners were another method. In *Cocktail Time*, a revolting cabinet was, through the machinations of Lord Ickenham, sold for 500 pounds, though the money went not to his godson, as intended, but to the renovation of the church heating system.

This generosity in a good cause once led to some embarrassment in the Murphy household. My clerical father-in-law donated to his local fête a superb, high-backed, ornate Victorian chair which my five-year-old daughter had named the Princess Chair because she felt like a princess when she sat in it. When we went back one summer holiday to find it gone, there were so many tears and reproaches that we were forced to go and look for the new owners and buy it back!

A constant feature was the Jumble Stall which appeared at every Scouts’ Open Day, Church Social, or Village Fête. Jumble Stalls, also called White Elephant Stalls, sold miscellaneous items the donor was glad to get rid of. I remember these very well, and many was the fine bargain I procured for threepence or sixpence as a boy, including a splendid blackthorn walking stick which, 60 years later, is in my hall-stand as I write.

Today, in cities, people take their unwanted clothing and bric-a-brac ornaments to charity shops. However, in some rural districts, I am happy to say, the old communal spirit still exists in Bring-and-Buy Sales. Giving away things you do not want is one thing. Selling them in a good cause—and getting some money back—is quite another.

In the Cumbrian village where I lived for 11 happy years, the Bring-and-Buy Sale in the Village Hall run by the Women’s Institute was a big event. People brought in whatever they wanted to sell, and the Women’s Institute took 10%. The event was very popular and I was conscripted for door duty, taking people’s 20-pence admission and, later, checking that items going out had a correct Sold tag on them. A responsible job, which once

produced a splendid and unexpected Wodehousean bonus.

It was in 1988, when we were clearing up, that I heard from across the Hall the clear tinkle of a tea-bell. It was being rung by the lady on the White Elephant Stall to attract my attention to help carry some heavy items. I asked to see the bell, recognized it immediately, and bought it—for the colossal sum of 15 pence. It was a souvenir tea-bell from the Wembley Exhibition of 1924, where Bertie Wooster and Charles Biffen drank Green Swizzles. It is now part of the presidential regalia of The Wodehouse Society.

But, despite changes of name over the decades, the traditional Rummage Sale is still with us and still stirs that sense of greed and curiosity. There is always the thought that somewhere in that untidy pile is something we had sought for years. It might be a statuette a thousand years old, a long-out-of-print paperback we remember from our childhood, or even a Wembley Exhibition tea-bell.

In “Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend,” Ern was the proud new owner of Lord Emsworth’s cherished straw panama hat. I have to state now that if Jean Tillson thinks she can grab my panama for her Rummage Sale

at the Divine Providence convention (see article below), then she had better think again! (But I am donating three relatively new Wodehouse paperbacks.)

“Oh, you are going to the Fête?”

“Yes, sir, thank you, sir.”

For the first time, Lord Emsworth found himself regarding that grisly social event with something approaching favour.

“We must look out for one another there,” he said cordially. “You will remember me again? I shall be wearing”—he gulped—“a top hat.”

“Ern’s going to wear a stror penamaw that’s been give ’im.”

Lord Emsworth regarded the lucky young devil with frank envy. He rather fancied he knew that panama. It had been his constant companion for some six years and then had been torn from him by his sister Constance and handed over to the vicar’s wife for her rummage-sale.

“Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend” (1928)

Announcing a Rummage Sale in Aid of The Wodehouse Society Convention Fund

BY JEAN TILLSON

BY AN AMAZING COINCIDENCE, the NEWTS are hoping to introduce an exciting new convention feature in Providence this October: a rummage sale in aid of the TWS Convention Fund. The Fund helps cover unforeseen expenses connected with our biennial gatherings, and it is also used to underwrite some of the more costly aspects of these binges (such as audio-video services for the Saturday talks and wine with dinner at the banquet), in an effort to keep registration fees as low as possible.

So, why not donate your duplicate Wodehouse books to this worthy cause? Many of us are a few books short of a complete collection; some of us are desperate for a bound copy of a favorite old tattered paperback; and some of us just want a reading copy to give to a friend, keep at our summer cottage, or amuse us on the long ride home.

Surplus memorabilia are also welcome, and the rummage sale is a wonderful opportunity for you to purge your collection of cow creamers or pig figurines. In fact, anything connected to Wodehouse and his world is suitable for donation, such as books by the

“rivals of Wodehouse” or, indeed, any other writers you think would appeal to your fellow Wodehousians. Period clothing and costume jewelry you no longer wear would also make excellent contributions.

If you are not planning to attend the Divine Providence convention but would still like to help out, feel free to mail your donations to me.

If possible, please e-mail me to let me know what you are sending. Note: Donations cannot be returned if unsold, but anything left over will be forwarded to the planning committee of the next TWS convention (in this case, the Northwodes) to provide “seed items” for their own rummage sale.

Finally, those of you who have nothing to donate can simply bring lots of money to the convention with you and emulate Augustus Mulliner!

Oh, What a Week!

BY ELIN WOODGER

Chateau Impney



THERE CAN BE superb advantages to living in England, one of which is being on the spot when the U.K. Wodehouse Society celebrates its 10th anniversary by holding A Week With Wodehouse (July 8–15). Mind you, it would have been worth it to shell out the air fare for this event.

Superbly organized by Chairman Hilary Bruce, Remembrancer Norman Murphy, and Entertainment Impresario Tony Ring, the seven-day extravaganza was enjoyed by participants from no fewer than nine countries—and oh, what a week it was! From London to Hampshire to Shropshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire, we enjoyed both fascinating sites of Wodehousiana and the company of like-minded souls who bonded from the start.

The core group doing the full week's events numbered 43 people from around the globe; during the London events, we were also joined by anywhere from 10 to 30 Plummies seeking to enjoy at least part of the fun. Said fun began on the evening of Sunday, July 8, at the Shaftesbury London Hyde Park Hotel, where the opening reception was—well, noisy, to say the least. Wodehousians, it seems, are not shy when it comes to making friends with other Wodehousians, and it was clear the week would see no shortage of feasts of reason and flows of soul.

Hilary Bruce officially opened the proceedings and introduced Edward Cazalet, Plum's grandson. Edward read a letter from the Society's president, actor Richard Briers, who regretted not being able to join the group but said he counted on Hilary and Norman controlling the troops in truly Wodehousian fashion—free of sex and violence!

Hilary, Norman, and Tony announced what lay ahead in the week, and Patrick Wodehouse, Plum's nephew, enthralled us with reminiscences of his uncle. By the end of the evening, the hotel staff had to push people out the door; otherwise, we would have stayed all night, chattering and sluicing up a storm.

On Monday and Tuesday, Weekers were divided into three groups who had their feet tested as they rotated among three Wodehouse Walks: Bertie Wooster's Mayfair (the classic Walk, led by Norman); Wodehouse's Early London (Norman's newest walk, led by Christine Hewitt—see page 1); and Wodehouse's Dulwich (led by yours truly). The Dulwich walk included a visit to the Wodehouse Library at Dulwich College, where archivist Calista Lucy had laid out treasures from the Wodehouse Archive and where we admired Plum's study in a glass case in one corner. To learn more about the sites seen on all three walks and other Week events, visit the U.K. Society's website at www.pgwodehousesociety.org.uk.

The remaining London events before the core group set off for Wodehouse's England included a gathering at the Savage Club on Tuesday night (see page 7) and, on Wednesday, a visit to Lord's cricket ground. Here Murray Hedgcock spoke to us about PGW and cricket, and we enjoyed seeing such famous sites as the Long Room (where women weren't admitted until 1999), the Visitors Dressing Room (where honors boards list cricket's greatest names), the famous pavilion (recently restored), and the more modern Media Centre (quite a contrast to the pavilion's Victorian look). We also paid homage to the famed Ashes (don't ask) in the museum.

After three days of walking, by Thursday we were ready to board a bus and be transported to the Wodehousian delights that awaited us outside London. By the end of the final celebration dinner back in London (see page 10–11), our laughter, tears, and reluctance to leave each other gave evidence of an incomparable experience. Oh, yes, it was quite a week!



The main party of A Week With Wodehouse gathers in a rare spot of sunshine.

July 10: A Savage Gathering

BY KEN CLEVENGER

THE WORD *convivial* best describes the P G Wodehouse Society (UK) get-together on the evening of July 10, 2007, in London. Mixed emotions were also evident. This was the last time the Savage Club would host the Society's meeting, and some folks were not completely dry-eyed over the sweet sorrow. Still, the meeting, with the 43 participants of the Week With Wodehouse program and a large number of other Society members as well, was a happy and well-sluiced occasion.

The UK Wodehouse Society leadership, superbly represented by Hilary Bruce, made the invited guests and its own members feel welcome and quickly dispatched the old business agenda. Commendably, the UK Society has obtained a Blandings novel in Braille to present to the Royal Institute for the Blind, whose library only has one other Wodehouse story, a Jeeves and Wooster novel. Well done, cousins!

In new business, Tony Ring announced, wittily as always, the expected Christmas release of his new book, *The Wit and Wisdom of P. G. Wodehouse*. It sounds like a marvelous stocking stuffer for your favorite Plum lover. Narcissism not objected to.

The highlight of the evening was Robert McCrum's talk about his biography of Wodehouse. He noted that the recent paperback edition of *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life* contains some new material of interest to dedicated

Wodehouseans. Mr. McCrum, the literary editor of *The Observer*, observed that Wodehouse's "life, or rather after-life, goes on." Certainly the worldwide Wodehouse societies are proof of the truth of that observation. He also reminded us that many new Wodehouse readers started as Jeeves and Wooster watchers, thanks to the Fry & Laurie television series. And in seeking to summarize what he knows of Wodehouse, after years of research for the biography, Mr. McCrum confessed that "like Shakespeare, [Wodehouse] is a mystery." All in attendance were pleased with the great compliment thus paid to one of the most-read and well-loved poets and playwrights in the English language.

Finally, we heard that a new literary project was underway to produce an edition of Wodehouse's collected letters. The editor, a Wodehouse fan for years thanks to her father's fondness for Plum's books, solicits the aid of all Society members who may own Wodehouse correspondence. Sophie.Ratcliffe@keble.ox.ac.uk will find her if you care to share any of Plum's letters you may have.

The end of the business meeting only marked the start of more conviviality. Rather like what Patrick O'Brian describes as a "fine convivial din" in the gunroom of HMS *Surprise* ensued. New friends were made. The conversation flowed like the beer, wine, and mixed drinks. And if the art- and caricature-covered walls of the Savage Club bar will no longer contain the Society's future feasts of reason and flows of soul, then it is now a better place for having done so for the past 10 years.

July 12: Plum's Emsworth

BY KRIS FOWLER

THURSDAY SAW the Week's first excursion outside of London—the excitement was obvious, as all 43 participants were present and correct before time. Norman called the roll and explained the researches that determined our itinerary. Tony Ring, entertainment director, distributed the first of his Fiendish Quizzes and thereafter introduced various short readings, such as cricket authority Murray Hedgcock expertly putting over the poem "The Umpire."

When the microphone was not in use, the buzz of Wodehouseans chattering prevailed until we alighted at Wodehouse's birthplace in Guildford: a pleasant house as far as one could judge, properly identified with a blue plaque and enhanced by a nearby street sign for "Wodehouse Place."



The Weekers meet the owner of a PGW card.

We then continued south to the small coastal town of Emsworth for a look at Wodehouse's residence, Threepwood. This backs onto the former site of the school where his friend Herbert Westbrook (the model for Ukridge) taught; its characteristics were used in *The Little Nugget*. As we goggled, a 97-year-old gentleman passed by who just happened to possess a holiday card from Wodehouse to his housekeeper, who had been the gent's neighbor; as Norman has previously shown,

there's no substitute for being on the spot! There was just time to stroll down to the harbor—aka the “lagoon” in one of the more obscure stories on our background reading list—before a sumptuous lunch at Nicolino's. Four local members of the P G Wodehouse Society joined us to contribute their bit to the camaraderie.

Replete, we waddled up the street to the Emsworth Museum and took turns visiting the narrow aisle with the Wodehouse material. We inspected newspaper clippings (e.g., his housekeeper's wedding notice, specifying the useful cheque—not fish-slice—presented by Mr. P. G. Wodehouse), copies of PGW's letters over the years to said housekeeper, and photos of the town during 1903–14, when Wodehouse lived there. Another exhibit related the demise of the town's famous oyster industry, an event noted in *A Damsel in Distress*. The booklet “Emsworth's Plum” (by Linda Newell) listed

dozens of nearby place names used in Wodehouse's works, including Boko Fittleworth's and Bobby Wickham's surnames.

Back on the coach, a five-mile detour yielded a lovely view of Stansted Park, used as the setting for Sanstead House in *The Little Nugget*. Returning to London, we continued our intellectual investigations. Tamaki Morimura discussed the challenges in translating Wodehouse into Japanese. Then Tony Ring hosted a brainy game show presenting five 1903 *Daily Express* verses of contested provenance, asking us to decide which were actually written by Wodehouse. We scored rather below 100% on this test.

We returned to London a bit ahead of schedule, to the relief of those with theatre tickets. All were well satisfied with the day's pilgrimage to Wodehouse's early homes and haunts, and agog for delights still to come.

July 13: Blandings in the Rain

BY ELIN WOODGER

THOUGH IT WAS Friday the 13th, and rain started pouring down as soon as we left London, nothing could dampen the spirits of a group of Wodehousians on their way to Blandings Castle. It was a long drive to our first stop, and our driver Dave must have wondered what he had gotten himself into as Entertainment Master Tony Ring—after passing out the devilishly hard daily quiz—began calling people up to the microphone to deliver readings. First was Ranjitha Ashok, who read “A Letter from Aunt Agatha,” in which Bertie's nemesis ably and wittily defended herself. Our appreciation was all the greater when we learned that the letter was written by Ranjitha!

Next Masha Lebedeva and Arthur Findlay entertained us with a reading from “The Clicking of Cuthbert,” with our Russian member Masha appropriately taking the part of Vladimir Brusiloff. There was much laughter and applause, and those who are coming to the Providence convention are in for a real treat (I shall say no more). Masha and Arthur were followed by Bob Rains, who did a hilarious reading from “Bertie Changes His Mind,” and then Tony initiated a debate about which of Bertie's fiancées he (Bertie, that is, not Tony) should have married. After much discussion of several candidates, a vote was taken, and Pauline Stoker got the nod by a wide margin.

Just before arriving at Weston Park, Tad Boehmer read from *A Wodehouse Handbook* the features of Weston Park that, in Norman's opinion, make it the

Blandings Castle estate. Our soaked group slogged across the terraces and out to the cedar tree where Gally had drinks brought to him. From there we went round to the kitchen garden and saw the pigsty where the Empress was moved when in danger of being nobbled by Sir Gregory Parsloe. Tad and Bob played an outdoor game of chess (Bob won) before we adjourned for a noisy but delicious lunch in the Stables Restaurant, after which many of us visited the main house. Then it was back on to the coach and ho for nearby Shifnal (aka Market Blandings), thence to Stableford.

Stableford is, of course, where Wodehouse's parents



Norman requests that you walk this way in Weston Park!

moved in 1895 after returning from Hong Kong (following a few months in Dulwich), and it is because of his visits here that PGW came to know and love Shropshire so well. Their home, The Old House—now called Hayes Bank—is owned by Peter Hollingsworth, who greeted us enthusiastically and showed us around the grounds. A couple of dogs received a lot of attention from animal-loving tourists; Wodehouse would have approved.

July 14: Two Great Castles

BY JOHN GRAHAM

SATURDAY SAW the finest weather of the week, a rare Wodehousian summer day. Our first coach stop was Upton-upon-Severn, Worcestershire. Norman has traced the origin of Buck-U-Uppo to a tonic concocted by a local High Street chemist. And it is here that Mr. Mulliner's Anglers' Rest was surely located, as we are told it lies along the river Severn. In his research, Norman narrowed the choice down to three historic pubs in Upton, but quite recently settled on The Plough as the most likely one. With all these literary sights to see, what was the first stop for most of us? Not the chemist or the pub, but a secondhand bookshop. The local bookseller showed little surprise when 43 eager customers descended on his shop, all asking for Wodehouse.

Just up the road from Upton is the tiny village of Hanley Castle, where Plum's uncle, the Rev. Edward Isaac, preached lengthy sermons and sipped Buck-U-Uppo with a visiting bishop. Across the road from Hanley Castle is Severn End, prototype for Aunt Dahlia's Brinkley Court. Our coach driver Dave ably threaded the bus through the narrow brick gates standing at the entrance to the driveway leading up to Severn End, then back again to Hanley Castle. It is here we found Wodehouse's model for Market Snodsbury Grammar School, where Gussie Fink-Nottle famously distributed the school prizes under the influence of spiked orange juice in *Right Ho, Jeeves*. The school bursar gave us a tour of the main hall, where prizes are still awarded, and the ex-warden of St. Mary's welcomed us to the Rev. Mr. Isaac's parish church. We lunched at The Three Kings, ably served both food and drink by Sue, the pub's owner and barmaid.

Our final stop of the afternoon was Sudeley Castle in nearby Gloucestershire, not far from Cheltenham, where Wodehouse's parents moved in 1902. Norman has argued that Sudeley is surely the ancient pile that inspired Blandings Castle, and so convincing is his

Then it was back on the coach and ho for the hotel in Tewksbury, with a side trip to Droitwich Spa to view the impressive Chateau Impney Hotel, the model for Walsingford Hall in *Summer Moonshine*. On our way, John Graham read excerpts from chapters 1 and 2 of *Heavy Weather*. Though the weather had been very heavy indeed, it didn't matter a whit as our hearts were light and filled with the joy of an event-filled day.



The Plough Inn in Upton, identified as the Anglers' Rest

theory that the BBC filmed *Heavy Weather* here in 1995. Our happy band of pilgrims spent two contented hours basking in the glow of its lofty Tudor towers, lovely flower gardens and expansive grounds—complete with two long yew alleys. Norman danced a contented jig.

At dinner that night, we were treated to a talk by Adrian Tinniswood, an expert and writer on life in English country houses. Adrian offered illumination into those aspects that frequently come up in Wodehouse. It was an excellent end to an excellent day.



Sudeley Castle: "Surely the ancient pile that inspired Blandings Castle."

July 15: Of Aunts and Pigs

BY SUSAN COLLICOTT

OUR LAST DAY started with another lavish breakfast, and we were away at 9:15 A.M. Bill Franklin interviewed people on his video-recorder while Norman passed out handouts on Cheney Court and Corsham. Tony Ring announced the current quiz scores before handing out the day's questions. Karen Shotting read out two different poems to illustrate how Wodehouse reworked plots and ideas. Yours truly then read out some "Provincial Lady" (E. M. Delafield) bits on the travails of attending Literary Society meetings, with some back references to Wodehouse. After this, *Anything Goes* was put on for us to listen to as we passed the small village of Pennsylvania!

I admired the landscape—rolling hills dotted with sheep, fields hedged round, church spires in small villages . . . it was so much more beautiful than I'd imagined. My first trip to England was surpassing all expectations. Then we turned off into a thickly wooded lane and soon sighted Cheney Court, better known as Deverill Hall, lair of the aunts. This was Wodehouse's home while his parents were in Hong Kong; the grandmother and four aunts who brought him up appeared as the Deverill sisters in *The Mating Season*. We walked down stone steps into the gardens to look at the house as Wodehouse's favorite aunt had drawn it over a century before. As Norman said, the architect packed a little of everything into it when it was built just after the English Civil War. At the back of the house, we even saw a fire bell, though, in clear anticipation of our visit, the rope to it had been removed!

Our next stop was Corsham, passing the Collicott Veterinary surgery(!), and Norman took us on a short walk. We entered the grounds of Corsham Court via a kissing-gate where Norman demonstrated to many of us why it was so named. The Court is a splendid



Truffle (aka Smiley) the Pig is happy to see the large number of Tour participants!

Elizabethan building, but we could only admire it from outside before walking down the High Street to lunch at the Methuen Arms. It was a traditional English Sunday lunch of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, so abundant I was worried about sleeping all the way back to London, but sheer enjoyment kept me awake.

On the coach, Doug Jeffords read from "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!" while we looked forward to the last attraction on our tour: Truffle, a champion Berkshire sow! In the courtyard of a Lambourn racing stable, we met our hostess, Mrs. Dunlop, who took us to pay our respects.

Truffle clearly enjoyed meeting her admirers and eating the apples we brought. While Mrs. Dunlop explained the beauty routine involved in showing her, Norman charmed Truffle with his expert back-scratching with the point of his umbrella. On her strolls about the paddock she was controlled by use of a large board and a springy cane gently applied to her cheeks and nose, the more "touch-sensitive" bits of her. Our hostess showed great skill in maneuvering what could be a very reluctant quarter-ton of pig, and it was suggested that Norman adopt the same method for herding us around!

Alas, we were running late and so had to say goodbye to Truffle and return to London. The coach entertainment continued with Sushmita Sen Gupta and Jelle Otten each giving us a reading and then, all too soon, we arrived at the Corus Hyde Park Hotel, in time for the Sunday banquet.



Umbrellas can do more than just keep out the rain.



Rainy Cheney Court

The Farewell Dinner

BY KAREN SHOTTING

THE FAREWELL DINNER at the Arts Club began, of course, with browsing and sluicing, in the form of a convivial champagne reception followed by a toothsome dinner. Although Anatole could not oversee the dinner personally, his deputies served a toothsome repast, and the dinner was enlivened with PGW quotations read by Society members, including Sir Edward Cazalet.

The musical entertainment began with a community rendition of “Boiled Beef and Carrots,” and then Doug Jeffords set the tone for the individual performances with a Johnny-Cash-meets-P. G. Wodehouse interpretation of “London, Dear Old London.” Paul Abrinko and Monika Eckfield shone in a winsome interpretation of “You Never Knew About Me.” Monika could easily have been mistaken for the Soul’s Awakening as she listened raptly to Paul’s limpid tenor singing the first verse, and her clear soprano rang out on the second.

Our guest celebrity, Martin Jarvis, who played Jeeves on Broadway in *By Jeeves*, then presented the prizes to the week’s winners of the fiendish quizzes. Overall winner Kris Fowler scooped the *Best of Wodehouse* anthology from Everyman; foreign-language winner Tamaki Morimura received a copy of translations of *The Great Sermon Handicap*, which included such exotic languages as Armenian, Somali, and Coptic; and the daily winners, including John Graham, Elin Murphy, Kris Fowler, and this reporter, received *Piccadilly Jim* limited-edition movie posters. Tad Boehmer received special recognition as the overall most-helpful-to-the-organizers award: a copy of Norman Murphy’s *True and Faithful Account of the 1989 Wodehouse Pilgrimage*. The Society thanked the tour’s organizers for providing us with an unforgettable experience and presented Norman and Elin Murphy and Hilary and Robert Bruce with framed portraits of Patience the Pig.

Mr. Jarvis then brought the house down with a tour-de-force reading of “Fixing It for Freddie.” His magnificent spot-on vocal interpretations ranged freely from small-boy cuteness as he urged Elizabeth Vickers to “Kiss Fweddie” to Bertie’s brilliant patter to Jeeves’s magisterial solemnity.

The evening went from one high point to another but, for me, the pinnacle of pure listening pleasure



*The Youngest Member?
Tad Boehmer dresses to
the nines.*

was Tamaki Morimura’s brilliant solo performance of “Bill.” Tamaki had won the hearts of all her fellow participants as the messenger bringing the good news from PGW to Japan, but when she closed her eyes and poured her soul into PGW’s superb lyrics to Jerome Kern’s lovely ballad, she gave us a truly unforgettable moment.

The other musical performers—Arthur Findlay, who sang “Sir Galahad” a cappella, and Carey Tynan and this reporter, who sang “Rolled into One” with the comforting crutch of our guest piano accompanist, Tony Britten (to whom I express my undying gratitude for rearranging the piece to fit

our voices mere minutes before dinner)—enlivened the second half of the musical entertainment. As one of the performers, I am unable to give an impartial review, but the audience seemed to like us, and I can report that I had great deal of fun doing it.

After more quotation readings and more communal singing, our Organizer Nonpareil, Hilary Bruce, had the unenviable task of announcing that A Week With Wodehouse had ended. Although history will undoubtedly show that in a strict chronological sense her words were true, I think I speak for my fellow participants when I say that the Week will never end in our hearts and imaginations.



Revelry to the end! Standing from left: Susan Collicott, Paul Abrinko, Andrew Waters. Seated from left: Ken Clevenger, Joan Clevenger, Sushmita Sen Gupta, Monika Eckfield, Katy Griffiths.



Chapters Corner

CONDUCTED BY SUSAN COHEN



IT'S FUN BEING with other fans, and it's fun reading about what other fans are doing. So please use this column to tell the world—the Wodehouse world, that is—about your chapter's activities, zany and otherwise. Representatives of chapters, please send all info to me, Rosie M. Banks, otherwise known as Susan Cohen (see Chapter One below). Anyone reading this who is not a member of a local chapter but would like to attend a meeting or become a member can get in touch with the contact person listed.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Collicott



Phone:

E-mail:

THE ANGLERS' REST meets every other month (aside from holiday madness months when all bets are off) at various locales in the Puget Sound area. Much discussion of any topic in any way associated with Wodehouse takes place—and then everything else, too. We attend local arts events and try new restaurants, pubs, and teahouses. We read passages from favorite Wodehouse books out loud; trade interesting Wodehouse-related items; and lend books, tapes, CDs, and DVDs to one another with abandon. Join us for a relaxing or invigorating time with folks of like mind and attitude.

We Anglers met in August to celebrate the friendship and life of our recently departed member, Ray Steen. Everyone had wonderful memories, and it was astonishing to hear how far Ray reached out, how many people he had touched. Readings of favorite Wodehouse passages were dedicated to Ray, and we vowed to follow his example by reaching out to more people and writing real postal letters, not just e-mail! The following weekend we gathered again to greet Tony and Elaine Ring as they came through Seattle. Dinner was at the Dragonfish Café, a local favorite and a good example of the local pan-Asian, PNW-fusion cuisine. Much hilarity ensued, the browsing was delicious, and the sluicing included local brews. The Rings got in quite a bit of Wodehouse time, as they were also to meet up separately with other local TWS folks who could not make the dinner. It was

a lovely summer Seattle weekend, and it is hoped that the Rings enjoyed their time in the Pacific Northwest. The Anglers' Rest hopes all travelers to our area would let the chapter know should you have any free time—we Anglers love playing tour guide!

Birmingham Banjolele Band

(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)

Contact: Caralynn Campbell

Phone:

E-mail:



Blandings Castle

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)

Contact: Ed and Missy Ratcliffe



Phone:

E-mail:

The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)

Contact: Amy Plofker

E-mail:



Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)

Contact: Jeff Peterson

Phone:

E-mail:



ON JUNE 24, Capital! Capital! gathered at its adopted restaurant for an evening of good food, good society with fellow Wodehousians, and, for this particular event, cricket. Ed and Sharon Powell gave a multimedia presentation on "Wodehouse & Cricket: You *Can* Understand Cricket (Enough)," based on the premise that a better understanding of the game provides a better understanding of Plum himself, who loved the game. CapCap members learned of men in slips, fine legs, silly mid-offs, and googlies. Plus, a member of the local Washington, D.C., cricket league attended in his whites to provide color, if that makes any sense at

all. And somehow our understanding of the sport, and Plum, did begin to make sense.

Capital F.O.R.M.

(Friends Of Ralston McTodd—Ottawa and vicinity)

Contact: Megan Carton

Phone:

E-mail: mcarton@rogers.com



Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Susan Cohen

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:



The Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison

Phone:

E-mail:



OUR CHAPTER holds bimonthly meetings with a wide range of activities. Sometimes members of the Syndicate meet in each other's homes to enjoy a potluck supper and read Wodehouse. Sometimes we meet in an Irish pub where there's good browsing and sluicing. We enjoy theater outings followed by dinner at a restaurant, and every time City Lit does a Wodehouse production, we are in the audience. We go to the Chicago Botanical Gardens to stroll through the English garden there, while reading excerpts from Wodehouse. We play miniature golf together and have one grand croquet game every year.

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Marilyn MacGregor

Phone:



SENIOR BLOODSTAINS are held at Wodehouse Society conventions. Junior Bloodstains are held every January, part of the big annual Sherlock Holmes celebration in New York. The meetings are always great

fun. One does not have to be a Client to attend; anyone interested in both Holmes and Wodehouse is welcome.

The Drone Rangers

(Houston and vicinity)

Contact: Toni Rudersdorf

Phone:

E-mail:



THE DRONE RANGERS have been continuing to live for pleasure alone. During our most recent meeting at Barnes & Noble, we ate cake, cookies, cheese straws, fresh fruit, and chocolate truffles. We also drank coffee and went out after the meeting for a proper meal. We enjoyed browsing and sluicing and also shared our many and varied views on the book of the evening, *Quick Service*. This book is so lavishly littered with "good ones" that the meeting went on and on because we all had favorite phrases to share. Other customers who were cluttering up the B&N, using it as if it were a library, seemed to feel we were laughing too much, but as they say, "Let them eat cake, as long as it is not OUR cake!"

Our last dinner out was remarkable for being posh. It was news to us that a posh restaurant would allow us to have separate checks, but the owner was most accommodating. He came to our table and chatted up beautiful Susan Garrett and the more ordinary-looking Toni Rudersdorf. His waiters took the lead from him and, although there were many customers attempting to catch their eye, hovered around the beautiful Ms. Garrett, filling her water glass, offering her tastes of various wines and delicacies from the desert tray. We lingered over photos of Fran Knight's trip to Turkey and Greece, which seemed to put the waiters on fire. Each of them had to see the photos and stayed to tell of their own trips. It was a long and delightful evening.

We will return to whatever-its-name-was restaurant to see our many friends and Wodehouse fan-waiters in future. In August, however, we planned to dine at a little Greek restaurant that your correspondent also cannot recall the name of. Perhaps it is time for a spot of liquid stimulant to get the little grey cells percolating.

The Flying Pigs

(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)

Contact: Susan Brokaw



Phone:

E-mail:

ON SATURDAY evening, July 7, members of the Cincinnati-based Flying Pigs chapter met at the home of Dirk Wonnell and Susan Brokaw for our second annual summer outdoor BBQ. We sluiced and browsed al fresco, enjoying perfect summer evening weather with plenty of lightning bugs but few mosquitoes. We discussed future plans and the books we were reading and then, after dinner, played a yard game—famous here in Cincinnati—called “Cornhole.” For the uninitiated, it is much like a carnival beanbag game, but the bags are filled with corn rather than beans. And there are not nearly as many arcane rules as in cricket. We squared off into teams, calling ourselves the Drones and the JGs (Junior Ganymedes), and played until it was too dark to see either bags or boards. I don’t remember which team won, but it doesn’t matter because we had fun.

The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: James P. Robinson III



Phone:

E-mail:

THE SAN ANTONIO chapter of TWS continues to meet monthly on the second Thursday of each month (except when we don’t). We have a split personality: March, May, July, September, and November find the Jellied Eels assembling at a local eatery/watering-hole, which we work mightily to tie in with PGW or his works in sometimes very obscure ways, while in April and every other month thereafter we gather as the Mottled Oyster at Barnes and Noble. We have lots of lighthearted fun together and would love to add to our roster.

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society

(NEWTS – Boston and elsewhere in New England)

Contact: Anne Cotton, president



Phone:

E-mail:

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler



Phone:

E-mail:

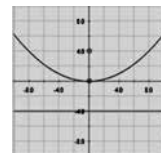
THE HEADLINE was “Northwodes Lose Shirts at Derby” after our May 5 gathering at the venerable Lexington Restaurant. More accurately, nine of us Northwodes lost our shirts, and lucky Rhys won them all when the favorite, Street Sense, did his stuff. Several people were rooting for Nobiz like Showbiz, as having a name with Wodehousean significance; he was edged out by Sam P., with an even closer connection to the protagonist of *Sam the Sudden* (aka *Sam in the Suburbs*), but both finished well back in the pack. The results were passed with no allegations of rannygazoo. Mary had run a clean book, and runners were drawn out of Dave’s spiffing bowler under the pure eye of Ann Sophie (honorary 18-year-old). Happily, at a buck per horse the damage didn’t approach the three thousand and five pounds, two and sixpence causing so much consternation in *The Return of Jeeves*, which we had read for the occasion. Attention during the summer turned to the publicity campaign for hosting the ’09 Convention; expect a few Northwodes to buttonhole you in Providence about the delights in store in lovely St. Paul. Mark your calendars now: June 12–14, 2009!

The Pale Parabolites

(Toronto and vicinity)

Contact: Peter M. Nixon

E-mail:



THE PALE PARABOLITES . . . those who are seeking the Pale Parabola of Joy . . . whatever that may be. The Pale Parabolites’ motto is *nil admirari*. Like the Empress of Blandings, the Pale Parabolites take things as they come and marvel at nothing.

The Pelikan Club

(Kansas City and vicinity)

Contact: Sallie Hobbs



E-mail:

The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Melissa D. Aaron

Phone:

E-mail:



WE MEET the second Sunday of every month at 12:30 at Vroman’s Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado, Pasadena. The readings change every month and can be found by checking our calendar or subscribing to our mailing list; we promise that it’s very low traffic. NB to

Plummies in Southern California, whether domiciled or just passing through—come up and see us. We also occasionally attend events of interest, such as the Avalon Ball on Catalina Island; an Art Deco dance in the fabulous Casino; and the Lanterman House Tea, a ragtime-era event. We go to ukulele festivals, silent movies, etc. Subscribers to our e-mail list can be kept abreast of such local amusements. Information about our mailing list and important links can be found at our website: www.lahacal.org/wodehouse.

The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein



Phone:

E-mail:

SINCE OUR LAST 10-Q report, the Board of Directors of The Pickering Motor Company has had two high-level meetings. The first, held in June, took place at the home of recent high school graduate Spencer Smith, hosted by founding Pickering members Michael and Sherry immediately following their celebratory festivities. As a result, the graduation baked meats did coldly furnish forth the Wodehouse tables, as it were.

The book discussed was *The Mating Season*, and all in attendance (who had read it) agreed it was a pippin. But most of the time was spent feverishly planning the Pickering trip to the October TWS convention. There was much wailing and gnashing of teeth when the Mahakians revealed their inability to attend, thereby dashing any hope of a Pickering performance at the Sunday brunch, as originally hoped for. The remainder of the board, however, pledged to attend, with Larry Nahagian taking over the responsibilities of planning the group's culinary outings in Providence.

The second Board meeting took place on August 6, and the book discussed was *Young Men in Spats*. Each story was carefully dissected and discussed by all members, and there was a lively debate as to which story in the group was the best. Oddly enough, "Uncle Fred Flits By" was not the consensus as several members strongly advocated "Trouble Down in Tudsleigh" and "Tried in the Furnace." Elyse then took a poll of all members planning to attend the convention regarding what costumes they were preparing for the Saturday night banquet (speculation is that Elyse has something special in store, given her derisive laugh when LuAnn said she was coming as the Empress). Afterward, the

group settled in to watch the special-feature interviews on the new Wooster and Jeeves (Niven and Treacher edition) DVDs, which were enjoyed thoroughly.

Further lively debate ensued regarding what we should read next. Michael requested one that takes place in America, and the group settled on *Psmith Journalist*, as David slid quietly under the table. Sherry, being absent again for the August meeting, was, again, nominated as president, but this time, the Board decided that LuAnn's superior leadership skills (not to mention her beautiful agendas) qualified her as President for Life.

The next meeting has been called for the week prior to The Wodehouse Society convention. Anyone within driving distance who would like to attend is invited to do so.

The Portland Greater Wodehouse Society (PGWs)

(Portland, Oregon and vicinity)

Contact: Carol James

Phone:

E-mail:

The Size 14 Hat Club

(Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Contact: Jill Robinson

E-mail:



The Soup & Fish Club

(Northern Virginia area)

Contact: Deborah Dillard

Phone:

E-mail:



JUST LIKE the noble bull terrier, The Soup & Fish Club doggedly keeps at the heels of the world to remember Wodehouse. Every year I place an ad for the Soup & Fish in the Newcomers Guide of the local fish wrap. When people call, I make like a blue-tick hound and point them toward Jeff Peterson and Capital! Capital!; Jeff works wonders with raw recruits. And on my birthday, or thereabouts, I buy the local library a present, usually one of the master's classics on CD. It's cheaper than buying myself some large bauble and much more rewarding. Next issue: the winner of the Best Antique in the Clifton Car Show, sponsored by The Soup & Fish Club.

She could not have gazed at him with a more rapturous intensity if she had been a small child and he a saucer of ice-cream.

"The Clicking of Cuthbert" (1921)

Price Increase for *A Wodehouse Handbook*

NORMAN MURPHY has announced that, unfortunately, he has been forced to raise prices for *A Wodehouse Handbook*, as follows:



Two-volume set: UK£30 / US\$60
 Shipping within the U.K.: £6.50 per set
 Shipping to Europe: £8.75 per set
 Shipping outside Europe:
 Airmail: UK£18.75 / US\$37.50
 Surface mail: UK£9.75 / US\$19.50
 PayPal fee: £2.50

This, however, should really be it from now on. For further information, write to Norman.



Briskly now! The master and his disciples.

“*The Luck Stone*—Read It”

BY NICK TOWNEND

THE LUCK STONE was one of Wodehouse's earlier novels: it first appeared in print in September 1908, when Wodehouse was 26, but was not published in book form until 89 years later, some 22 years after his death.

Richard Usborne accurately described *The Luck Stone* as “a blood-and-thunder school story” (*Wodehouse at Work to the End*, 1976, p. 55). Wodehouse wrote it, with assistance from Bill Townend, under the pseudonym of Basil Windham. It originally appeared in 19 weekly installments in *Chums*, from September 16, 1908, to January 20, 1909. Eighteen of the installments are included in Eileen McIlvaine's *P. G. Wodehouse—A Comprehensive Bibliography and Checklist* (1990; D80), but bizarrely the installment for December 2, 1908, is omitted, an oversight corrected in the *McIlvaine Addendum* (2001 D80.11a).

Bound volumes of *Chums* for this period are scarce—as Usborne said, “You're fortunate to have discovered *The Luck Stone*. Read it”—and are typically advertised for sale, depending on condition, at prices in the U.K. ranging from £350 to £750. Single issues of the publication are even scarcer, because *Chums* was really a story paper, rather than a magazine. The poor quality of the physical paper and the lack of stiff covers were not conducive to the survival of many copies.

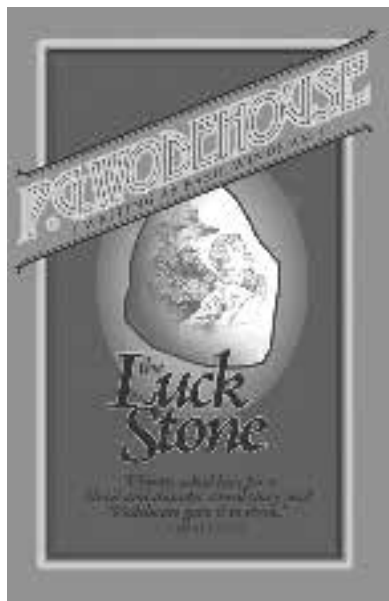
Being a paper, *Chums* was bound into volumes exactly as it was issued. This was in contrast to bound volumes of magazines such as *The Captain* and *The Strand*, where the covers and advertising sections were typically not bound in. This means that single issues of *Chums* may become more common, as it is easy to break up bound volumes to liberate the complete single issues, something that is not possible with *The Captain*.

It became much easier for fans to read *The Luck Stone* in 1997, when it was published in book form by Galahad Books. Two separate issues appeared simultaneously: a hardback version (*McIlvaine Addendum*, A109.2), bound in red and issued without a dust wrapper, in a numbered print run of 250; and a leather-bound issue (*McIlvaine Addendum*, A109.1), with a print run of only 26 (lettered from A to Z). The non-leather issue is typically advertised for sale in the U.K. at prices ranging from £40 to £150.

The first (and only) paperback edition was published in the United States in 2006 by Odbody & Marley. It is still available (via www.theluckstone.com) for \$19.95. Delightfully, this edition contains some of the illustrations from the original serialization in *Chums*,

and an appendix, featuring 13 advertisements from *Chums* to facilitate a modern reader's understanding of what were in 1908 contemporary references. In the same vein, there are 65 footnotes to aid understanding (particularly for an American reader unfamiliar with English colloquialisms). As is inevitable with footnotes, these range from the obvious ("pipped on the post", "sha'n't"), through the enlightening ("Denman Cross"—a detective in stories by Herbert Maxwell), to a couple which are just plain wrong.

The first is "Sticks on side," where the footnote says: "'Side' is bias or prejudice. To 'stick on side' is to be excessively attached to a school, team etc." In fact, it is to be excessively proud of oneself or one's position; the *Oxford English Dictionary* identifies *side* as late 19th-century slang and defines it as "pretentiousness, conceit." See, for example, chapter 1 of *The White Feather*



The Luck Stone, 2006

("The rummy thing is that the worse they are, the more side they stick on") and "How Payne Bucked Up" in *Tales of St Austin's* ("He knows he's a cert. . . . He's beginning to stick on side already. This was the unpardonable sin"). In *Wodehouse at Work to the End*, Usborne constructs from Wodehouse's school fiction ten commandments for public school boys, and the second of these is "Thou shalt not put on side."

The second is the explanation of the Emeriti: "Latin, plural of *emeritus*. Those who are retired but honorarily retain their title. [OK, right so far.]. Here, retired professors and/or graduates." In fact, the Emeriti are a well-known touring cricket club comprised of old boys of Catholic public schools.

Nonetheless, despite these two minor blemishes, the paperback is certainly the most accessible way of enjoying an unusual Wodehouse story, and at less than 9 cents a page, it represents very good value.

Editor's note: The Luck Stone is subject to copyright restrictions outside the United States, so overseas readers are advised to check that they will not breach their local copyright situation before importing the Odbody & Marley edition.

The Jeeves Films

BY DAVID McDONOUGH

"O Horrible! Horrible! Most Horrible!"
—Hamlet's Father's Ghost, upon leaving
the premiere of *Step Lively, Jeeves*

OLD POP SHAKESPEARE knew whereof he spoke. The two films of alleged Wodehouse origin released recently in a single DVD package are *Thank You, Jeeves* (1936) and *Step Lively, Jeeves* (1937), and they are, to put it bluntly, an abomination. Actually, two abominations, I guess.

Simply put, Hollywood has not done right by our Plum. The Jeeves movies are both B films and even taken as such, they are very bad films. They look bad, are filled with uninteresting to bad actors, are poorly directed, and have absolutely nothing to do with Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster and Jeeves.

Thank You, Jeeves claims to be based on the novel of the same name, but it's as if someone who had never read *Gone with the Wind* bought the rights to it and decided that it was about a flirtatious girl named Scarlett O'Hara who was into kite-flying. The film Bertie is an upper-class twit who is constantly and enthusiastically falling in love with girls, getting in trouble, and getting Jeeves in the soup as well. A Mysterious Young Woman appears at the door, in possession of secret plans that will Change The World, or Plunge The World Into War, or something, if they fall into the hands of the Denizens Of The Underworld who are following her. Bertie might have read a book with this plot, but Wodehouse would never have written it.

Bertie and Jeeves follow the girl to a country inn. For reasons that absolutely don't matter, Bertie buzzes around the girl, inadvertently helps the Denizens, gets trapped in a cellar, and helps save the day. Jeeves contributes by getting continually annoyed by people, most notably a colored chappie, played by Willie Best in one of those incredibly offensive and stereotyped performances that make modern audiences shudder in horror. Eventually Jeeves, no mastermind here, biffs a few of the Denizens on the bean, and the plans go wherever the plans were supposed to go.

The relationship between Jeeves and Bertie in the film has none of the complexities of the literary duo. They are just a stuffy valet and his idiot master, and they seem to have no relationship to each other beyond a pay packet. There is no indication that Jeeves has any interest, vested or otherwise, in helping Bertie, beyond a basic loyalty to the job.

David Niven as Bertie is pretty good at the dithering sort of dialogue and makes one wish that he had had a shot at a really first-class treatment of Wooster. He did play Uncle Fred in a 1950s television production of "Uncle Fred Flits By" and acquitted himself well.

Arthur Treacher is all wrong for Jeeves. If Jeeves was a vintage cow-creamer, Treacher would be Modern Dutch. He had started in American films in 1929 and soon settled in to his niche as the perfect butler in film after film. He was not a valet, and therein lies the problem. A supercilious butler is funny; a supercilious valet is just cold. A far better valet was Eric Blore, the tubby little chap who served actors like Edward Everett Horton in the Astaire-Rogers films. Although he disapproved of his master's taste in ties or whatnot, and knew where all the bodies were buried ("Oh, if I weren't such a gentleman's gentleman I could be such a cad's cad!"), he would still come through for his employer in the end. But Blore's characters weren't very bright or forceful, and so he would not have been right for Jeeves.

In *Thank You, Jeeves*, Treacher's Jeeves is supercilious; in *Step Lively, Jeeves*, he's just an idiot. Bertie is not mentioned in the film, and Jeeves, as Brian Taves writes in his estimable book *P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood*, takes on some of Bertie's dimwittedness. He is duped by two con men who convince him that he is a descendant of Sir Francis Drake. This is based on a real swindle: a man in Iowa named Oscar Hartzell apparently made a very nice living in the Twenties and Thirties by assuring people that they were heir to a nonexistent Drake fortune.

Jeeves, being for plot reasons an absolute cloth-head, accompanies his two benefactors to New York, where he ends up at a country estate. He then virtually disappears from the film, giving way to the supposedly humorous con men, moronic comic gangsters who bear far more resemblance to Damon Runyon characters than to anything out of Wodehouse, and to a snappy-patter romantic couple. All ends happily. The only one left out in the cold is any viewer who stuck around through this twaddle.

These films are no more than a blip on the Wodehouse career. Plum's biographers have given them short shrift. It is left to Taves, rightfully, to discuss the films at length, in chapter 4 of his book, "British and Hollywood Adaptations." It is to this tome that the reader wishing to know more should repair. Taves's extensive research and thoughtful analysis sum up the films and the atmosphere around them perfectly. His prose on the subject is far more worthwhile than the films themselves.

So, too, are the two short documentaries included on the DVD. Actually, the short films are really one long one edited into two parts: "Thank You, P. G.: The Life of P. G. Wodehouse" and "The World of Wodehouse." Both films feature extensive and welcome comments from Wodehouse biographer Robert McCrum; Tony Ring, who has authored so many fine companion pieces to the Wodehouse canon; TWS vice president Kristine Fowler; and Mr. Taves, in fine form. All are enthusiastic in their praise of Wodehouse, and tactful about the films. Some of the best insightful commentary is contributed by the film actor Curtis Armstrong, a longtime Wodehousean. And we are pleased to note the presence of one Norman Murphy, who can be understood by American ears if one really tries, although one feels that subtitles accompanying Mr. Murphy would not have been out of place.

Collecting *Hot Water*

BY JOHN GRAHAM

SOME WODEHOUSE bibliophiles specialize in collecting English editions, some in American editions, and some in both. And then there are those purists who seek to acquire only a single copy of each of Plum's 100 books: the earliest first edition, no matter where it was published. For this group, the novel *Hot Water*, which celebrated its 75th anniversary this summer, presents a real problem. This is because *Hot Water* was published on exactly the same date (August 17, 1932) in both England and America. It was the first time one of Wodehouse's books had been published simultaneously in both countries, and among his books published with the same title on both sides of the Atlantic, this would happen only once again (in 1938 with *The Code of the Woosters*). Prior to its book appearance, *Hot Water* had been serialized in the United States in *Collier's* between May 21 and August 6, 1932. Surprisingly, there was no U.K. magazine appearance.

Herbert Warren Wind records that Wodehouse struggled over the writing of *Hot Water*, scrapping 30,000 words of each of three drafts before he was finally satisfied. His hard work shows: the complex plot line resembles the very best machinations of a top-drawer Blandings Castle novel. In fact, Wodehouse once wrote to his friend Bill Townsend that the story is "really a sort of carbon copy of *Leave It to Psmith*," albeit with the action shifted to the north coast of France and a cast of characters almost exclusively American, refugees from Prohibition. There is one English character in

the book: Bloomsbury novelist Blair Eggleston, author of *Worm i' the Root* and *Offal*. (Wodehouse obviously liked Eggleston, as he resurfaced years later as Honoria Glossop's timid suitor in "Jeeves and the Greasy Bird.")

Wodehouse wrote *Hot Water* toward the end of his first stint in Hollywood and dedicated the book to the young Irish-born screen actress Maureen O'Sullivan, whom Ethel had befriended. In 1981 O'Sullivan contributed a touching essay, "The Wodehouses of Hollywood," to the centenary volume for the Wodehouse celebration at the Pierpont Morgan Library. In it, the actress, who is best known for playing Jane to Johnny Weissmuller's Tarzan, says that Wodehouse once told her she was the model for *Hot Water*'s heroine, Jane Opal.

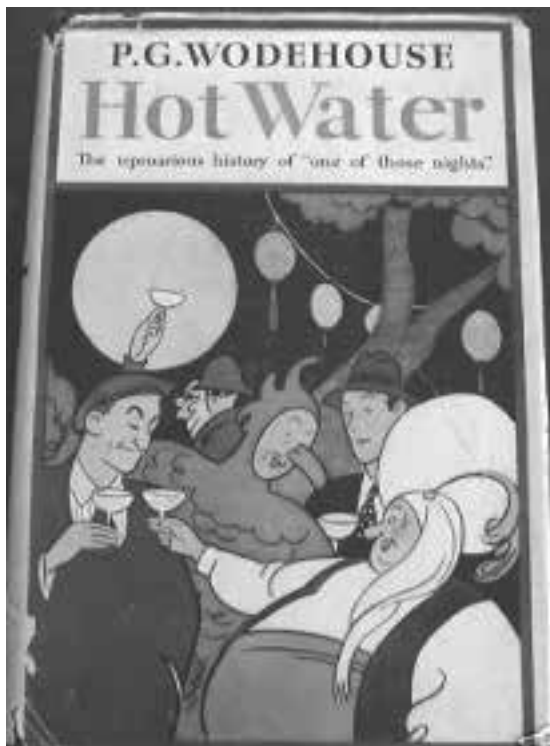
The English first edition was published by Herbert Jenkins at a price of 7'6. Nowadays a very good copy in an intact first-issue dust jacket is likely to sell for around £1,000 (\$2,000 at current exchange rates). Fortunately there are less expensive alternatives for those with fewer dollars and more sense: as usual, Jenkins reprinted the book (at least five times) with the same jacket, changing only the ads on the flaps and the price on the spine. Another option is to seek out a Canadian first, which used the same jacket and sells for a fraction of the price of an English first. The illustration on the front of the dust jacket is signed by Abbey, an unknown artist with several Jenkins jackets to his (or her) credit. Wodehouse biographer and rare-book dealer Joseph Connolly once described the illustration this way: "J. Wellington Gedge points at the young couple with both a finger and a cigar. But they don't care." I think he is mistaken in identifying the pointer as Gedge; judging by the figure's bulging waistline, it is surely Senator Opal.

The American first edition was published by Doubleday Doran at a price of \$2. By the end of 1932, just 12,416 copies had been sold, a number that clearly disappointed Wodehouse, as discussion of it figures prominently in his correspondence with the editor of Little, Brown, with whom he published his next three books (*Heavy Weather*, *Thank You, Jeeves*, and *Brinkley Manor*). Looking back, it is not

clear why Wodehouse was so unhappy with Doubleday Doran. He certainly could not complain about their choice of the dust jacket artist, for it was none other than Rea Irvin. Born in 1881 (just like Plum), Irvin was the first art editor of the *New Yorker* magazine. During his career he drew 169 covers, including the very first one of the urbane dandy with monocle and top hat known as Eustace Tilley. For *Hot Water*, Irvin drew not only the colorful front cover of the dust jacket but also six black-and-white illustrations used throughout the book.

Like its English counterpart, the American first (in the all-important dust jacket) is rare today. But when a very good copy surfaces, it rarely sells for more than \$600, a bargain relative to its English cousin. A second printing (noted as such on the inside flap of the jacket) is much cheaper, and it's possible to buy a decent first without jacket for less than \$50. If you want the Irvin drawings and don't care about the dust jacket, there is an even cheaper option: publisher P. F. Collier and Son reprinted *Hot Water* as part of a uniform series of 1930s and 1940s Wodehouse novels. McIlvaine describes only three titles in the series, but I know of at least eight: *Summer Moonshine*, *Laughing Gas*, *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, *Quick Service*, *The Code of the Woosters*, *Very Good, Jeeves*, *Young Men in Spats*, and *Hot Water*. Each volume has orange-red boards, gold and black lettering on the spine, and a bold "PGW" on the front cover. Individual copies on eBay rarely sell for more than \$10.

When *Hot Water* was released in England, the reviews were generally disappointing (or "rather sinister," as Plum complained to Townend). On reflection, Wodehouse admitted that there were too many Americans in the story and that perhaps he should have made the hero an Englishman. All of this might help to explain why, in 1935, when Plum turned *Hot Water* into a play (called *The Inside Stand*) for actor Ralph Lynn, the main character became none other than Freddie Widgeon. The play opened in London on November 21 at the Saville Theatre and ran 50 performances. McIlvaine makes no mention of the play ever being published; an unpublished typescript (there is one in the British Library) would be considered a rare find indeed.



Rea Irvin's dust jacket art for *Hot Water*

Rabelais and P. G. Wodehouse: Two Comic Worlds

BY BARBARA C. BOWEN

This is part 2 of the article which first appeared as part of The French Renaissance Mind: Studies Presented to W. A. Moore in the journal L'Esprit Créateur, XVI, No. 2 [Winter 1976], 63–77. It is reprinted here, with minor changes, by permission of that journal and of the author, then at the University of Illinois, now a Vanderbilt University emerita. Numbered endnotes are from the original article; lettered footnotes have been added for those of us who are not French Renaissance scholars. The research for this article was greatly facilitated by a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship in 1974–5, although this is not the project for which the Fellowship was awarded. Part 1 appeared in the Summer 2007 issue of Plum Lines.

Intellectual parlor-games

THE RESEMBLANCE [between Rabelais and Wodehouse] is very intriguing, for it implies more intellectual kinship than we should expect between the Renaissance and the modern writer. We should remember that Wodehouse received an English public-school education, based on the Classics and including such obsolete exercises as writing Latin verse, which was closer to Rabelais' education than we might imagine. In particular, like Rabelais, he learned about literature from ancient authors whose basic principle was not originality but *imitatio*^k—the imaginative use of *topoi*.^l

What do I mean by “intellectual parlor-games”? First of all, the parody of literary traditions familiar to the reader. We have mentioned some aspects of their pastiche of the epic, and there are many others. They also make fun of courtly love conventions, Rabelais briefly, in Panurge's conversation with the lady of Paris (P 21) and Wodehouse at much more length, in the “bilge” written by Rosie M. Banks and spoken by Madeline Bassett and Cora McGuffy Spottsworth (“Hark to the wavelets, plashing on the shore. How they seem to fill one with a sense of the inexpressibly ineffable”²⁶). Wodehouse is often pastiching recent authors and literary trends unfamiliar to today's reader,²⁷ just as Rabelais is full of echoes of Folengo, Erasmus^m and Castiglione.ⁿ

Such parodies are intellectual in-jokes, and so very often is the use of quotation, metaphor, and cliché by both humorists. The only detailed discussion I have seen of Wodehouse's use of quotations²⁸ does not even mention the essential fact that they are all to be found in a dictionary of quotations. Like Rabelais, he uses a compilation instead of the original source: Bartlett and Roget's *Thesaurus* where Rabelais used Ravisius Textor or Caelius Rhodiginus. And in using these quotations both deliberately underline their nature as clichés or *topoi*. How many times does Rabelais say “jusques au feu exclusivement”^o or “sans les femmes et petite enfants”^p?

How many times does Jeeves “shimmer into a room,” is Bertie caught up in the “rush and swirl of recent events,” or is a character compared to Longfellow's description of a ship being launched: “He moved, he stirred, he seemed to feel The rush of life along his keel”?²⁹ There are even whole “set-pieces” copied from one book to another, like the Drone's description of Uncle Fred, Major Flood-Smith's eulogy of Valley Fields, or the picture of the public gardens in St. Rocque. And two young lovers who are crossword enthusiasts declare their passion out of the *Dictionary of English Synonyms* (“Will you be my wife, married woman, matron, spouse, helpmeet, consort, partner or better half?”³⁰).

Wodehouse, like Rabelais, delights in the juxtaposition of styles, and often in the combination of quotations from different sources into one sentence, which invites a type of guessing-game. Rabelais' conclusion to Janotus de Bragmardo's appeal for the bells (G 19): “Mais, nac petitin petetac, ticque, torche, lorne, il feut declairé hereticque; nous les faisons comme de cire. Et plus n'en dict le deposant. *Valete et plaudite. Calepinus recensui*”^q contains tags from five distinct literary and legal contexts. Wodehouse's scrambled quotations are not as intellectually varied, but often just as funny: “It has been well said of Bertram Wooster that when he sets his hand to the plough he does not stop to pick daisies and let the grass grow under his feet,”³¹ or: “You can take a horse to the water, but you can't make it play Santa Claus.”³²

As these examples show, Wodehouse's speciality is

^k imitation of classical models

^l traditional motifs or themes

^m Dutch humanist and theologian, 1466–1536

ⁿ Italian writer on courtly manners, 1478–1529

^o right up to the stake exclusively

^p not counting the women and children

^q But he was declared a heretic; we make them out of wax. And further the deponent sayeth not. Farewell and applaud. I, Calepinus, compiled it.

the mixed metaphor or simile, and the best of his are well up to Rabelais' standard. They sometimes take the form of straightforward juxtaposition of two metaphors ("locking the stable door after the milk has been spilt"³³). Or they may use startlingly eccentric description or comparison, like Wodehouse's "silent pool of coffee"³⁴ or "sprung at it with the vim of an energetic bloodhound,"³⁵ and Rabelais' Jupiter "contournant la teste comme un cinge qui avale pillules"^r (QL, Prologue). Are pools of coffee usually noisy? Bloodhounds are normally seen as lethargic, not energetic, and where would a monkey find pills? Still another variety dear to both is the quotation or cliché in lofty language which ends in colloquialism. "O dieux et deesses celestes," says Panurge to the Parisian lady (P 21), "que heureux sera celluy à qui ferez celle grace de ceste cy accoller, de la baiser et de frotter son lart avecques elle,"^s which creates a similar bathetic effect to Bertie's misquotation of Jeeves's remark: "Full many a glorious morning had he seen flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye and then turn into a rather nasty afternoon,"³⁶ or to the description of Lionel Green, who "might have been a motion-picture star whose face had launched a thousand bags of popcorn."³⁷ The intellectual gamesmanship here requires separating the constituent elements fast enough not to be held up in one's reading. Another aspect of the juxtaposition of styles is the disconcerting use of technical terminology in circumstances where the reader least expects it. Rabelais does this frequently with legal, medical, theological and scholastic jargon, and Wodehouse does it more often than one might think. Latin tags are frequent (*rem acu tetigisti* is one of Jeeves's favourites), and we are sometimes treated to an enumeration of the Latin names of birds found in an English garden at dawn on a July morning,³⁸ the technical names for the bacteria of milk,³⁹ or the professional methods of distinguishing false pearls from genuine ones.⁴⁰ And both are likely to slip Biblical quotations into almost any context, though of course Rabelais always does so with polemical intent, while Wodehouse's vicars and curates quote Scripture in order to impress their hearers and amuse the reader, and in other cases the quotation is so well hidden as to be almost invisible:

"Look at me. Getting busy all de year round, woiking to beat de band—"

"In prisons oft," said Jimmy.

"Sure t'ing. And chased all roun' de town."⁴¹

In all these cases: pastiche, quotation, metaphor and juxtaposition of styles, both novelists are playing

games with a reader who is presumed to have the same kind of intellectual background and training which they have. A still more general resemblance is their use of cliché, which we have already touched on. They are always conscious that language is composed of clichés, and they draw our attention to this fact in remarkably similar ways. Rabelais describes Gargantua's childish activities by means of a string of proverbial expressions (G 11), and several episodes in the *Quart Livre* are built on the literal use of metaphors like "ne trouvasmes que frire"^t (17). He constantly plays on the literal and metaphorical meanings of a word, as in "les lingieres, lorsque la poincte de leur agueille estoit rompue, ont commencé besoigner du cul"^u (G 28), or the impoverished aristocrats "jouant des haulx boys"^v (TL 2), or the wish: "si je montasse aussi bien comme je avalle"^w (P 14). Wodehouse constantly uses this technique. Bingo is described as a right-hand man feeling like a left-hand man⁴²; when Jeff Miller is told that someone hasn't a leg to stand on he replies: "Awkward if he wants to roller-skate"⁴³; and when Lord Ickenham is informed that the Rev. Cuthbert Bailey has told someone to go to hell his immediate reaction is: "Strange advice from a curate."⁴⁴ Often Wodehouse further underlines the nature of his clichés by pretending they are original (Lord Emsworth "was as blind, to use his own neat simile, as a bat"⁴⁵), or by pretending to get them wrong ("He is as rich as creosote, as I believe the phrase is"⁴⁶). This is a speciality of Bertie's, who often has to check with Jeeves that he has his clichés right.

There are many, many more examples of all of these techniques, but these few suffice, I hope, to show that both writers are debunking different levels of language in an analogous way, and expecting their reader to realise it.

Other stylistic devices

BEYOND the intellectual-snobbery aspect of style there are many more *rapprochements* to be made, and here I shall have to be inexcusably brief. One of

^r turning his head away like a monkey swallowing pills

^s O celestial gods and goddesses, how happy will he be to whom you will grant the favour of embracing this woman, of kissing her and rubbing bacon with her

^t we found nothing at all (literally, nothing to fry with)

^u the seamstresses, when the points of their needles were broken, began to work with the blunt end

^v literally, playing oboes; punningly, playing with lofty trees, i.e., cutting down trees on their land for sale

^w if I went up as well as I put it down (tr. Frame)

Rabelais' specialities is *fantaisie verbale*, and although Wodehouse is not a rival here he uses it superbly on occasion. I don't know whether he made up such gems as ninctobinkus, rannygazoo, bohunkus, skrimshanker, oompus-boompus, and hunky-dory, any more than I know whether Rabelais invented *incornifistibuler* or *bouttepoussenjambions*, but they add a similar kind of gusto to his prose. And listen to Wodehouse when he really wants to play with language: "A sort of gulpy, gurgly, plobby, squishy, wofflesome sound, like a thousand eager men drinking soup in a foreign restaurant."⁴⁷ The inventive energy expended by Rabelais on synonyms for sexual activity is directed by Wodehouse toward insult. A few of his best: greasy Tishbite, big chunk of boloney, herring-gutted window-cleaner and low-down, horn-swoggling, double-crossing skunk.

Like Rabelais he enjoys taking words apart, or forging new ones. Everyone quotes the disgruntled man whom time had done nothing to grundle,⁴⁸ and Bertie is convinced that "already I am practically Uncle Percy's ewe lamb. That will make me still ewer."⁴⁹ But such examples are rare; he prefers, again like Rabelais, the deformation of normal speech by people who are eccentric, or drunk, or merely foreign. Alongside the Ecolier Limousin, Panurge's strange tongues, the *propes des bien yvres*^x and Homenaz we could put the French of the Vicomte de Blissac and Aunt Dahlia's chef Anatole, the German of Schwertfeger (in *Hot Water*), the professional jargon of Sir Roderick Glossop, the "precious" language of literary young men like Cosmo Blair and Percy Gorringer, and the sozzled Gussie Fink-Nottle's speech at the Market Snodsbury prizegiving.

As we might expect, hyperbole is a favourite device—one might say, a permanent habit of mind—of both authors. Characters are larger, and nastier, than life: meals are huge and so are reactions. In Wodehouse "a cascade of people falling downstairs"⁵⁰ means two people, a startled woman's "eyes were now about the size of regulation golf-balls, and her breathing suggested the last stages of asthma,"⁵¹ and Bertie when trying not to laugh "distinctly heard a couple of my floating ribs part from their moorings under the strain."⁵² Most of Wodehouse's characters habitually overreact, which helps to enlarge the trivial setbacks of their lives into disasters of epic proportions. In Rabelais only Panurge usually overreacts, and the comedy often consists in contrasting his overreaction with the normal behaviour of the others.

More surprisingly, Wodehouse is equally adept at litotes. He does not, like Rabelais, describe extraordinary scenes in a matter-of-fact manner, but he does sometimes juxtapose a genuinely horrific event and an

underreaction: "Wee Nooke had gone up in flames. It gave me quite a start."⁵³ The most regular user of litotes is Jeeves, who, when Bertie cries: "Jeeves! Hell's foundations are quivering!" will reply: "Certainly a somewhat sharp crisis in your affairs would appear to have been precipitated, sir."

Repetition of tag phrases has already been mentioned, and must be emphasised. Characters in both works have their own "refrains": *matiere de breviaire*, *comme vous aultres*, *messieurs*, or *Prenez moy un Decretaliste*^y in Rabelais; and in Wodehouse Jeeves's "psychology of the individual," Ukridge's "Corky, old horse," or Lord Ufftenham's "Hey!" Wodehouse is especially fond of the repeated quotation, like "When pain and anguish wring the brow," or "the f. of the species is more deadly than the m."

Euphemism and periphrasis are also important devices of both, though as we have seen they are used in different domains. Pantagruel disapproves of the Ecolier Limousin's periphrases, but Rabelais uses plenty of his own: *l'aube des mousches* for "noon" (QL 9), *la reparation de dessoubz le nez*^{aa} for eating (P 17), and all the varied euphemisms for the sexual act. Wodehouse enjoys this too: an accordion is a "stomach Steinway,"⁵⁴ Bertie drinking tea is "lubricating the good old interior with a soothing cup of Oolong,"⁵⁵ and in the kingdom of Oom periphrasis is the normal mode of speech ("If you know a superior excavation, go to it").^{56 bb}

A variety of periphrasis both are fond of is the comic use of irrelevant information to slow down the narrative or to annoy. Rabelais' best-known example is Dindenault praising his sheep instead of selling one to Panurge (QL 6–7), but he also does it in passing, as in this example (QL 9):

Vous aultres gens de l'autre monde, tenez pour chose admirable que, d'une famille Romaine (c'estoient les Fabians), pour un jour (ce feut la trezieme du moys de Febvrier), par une porte (ce feut la porte Carmentale, jadis située au pied du Capitole, entre le roc Tarpeian et le Tybre, depuys surnommée Scelerate). . . .

All the information in parentheses is quite irrelevant to the matter in hand. In Wodehouse this is one

^x palaver of the potted (tr. Frame)

^y breviary matter, like you gentlemen, Take a Decretalist

^z dawn of the flies

^{aa} below-the-nose restoration

^{bb} originally "a better 'ole" in a famous World War I cartoon caption by Bruce Bairnsfather

of Jeeves's specialities. He is forever holding up the action or breaking Bertie's train of thought by finishing quotations Bertie is not interested in, or providing information in too much detail. In *Thank You, Jeeves* (ch. 21) he takes a magnificent revenge on Mr. Stoker, who had not treated him with sufficient respect, by giving endless irrelevant details about potting-sheds and cooks, instead of getting to the point. This scene always reminds me of Panurge taking revenge on Dindenault by haranguing him while he drowns.

There are other minor rhetorical devices which could be cited (Rabelais's *contrepéterie*, as in *femme molle à la fesse* for *femme folle à la messe* (P 16), is occasionally used by Wodehouse, as in Bertie's "Tup, Tushy" for "Tush, Tuppy"),⁵⁷ but I think that *fantaisie verbale*, use of unusual types of language, hyperbole, litotes, repetition, euphemism and periphrasis, are the most typical and interesting. However different the subject-matter, similar devices of style will help to create similar effects.

Conclusion

IS THERE one, or have we been merely indulging in intellectual parlor-games? I think the foregoing analysis does imply a few helpful conclusions. First and most obvious, Wodehouse's comic technique, like that of any great writer, repays detailed analysis,⁵⁸ and the kind of analysis used for Renaissance literature has a surprising amount to tell us about a twentieth-century author. Secondly, despite his constant parade of contempt for great literature and philosophy ("It's like Shakespeare. Sounds well but doesn't mean anything"),⁵⁹ he is, like Rabelais, a profoundly intellectual writer in many ways. And finally, the basic resemblances between the two in all domains: plot and action, character and language, is that they are always debunking—pricking the balloons of tyranny, hypocrisy and pretention which threaten civilisation. Writing in anxious, turbulent times, they restore their reader temporarily to sanity, to a world where villains are foiled and purity of motive—and of language—must necessarily triumph. Evil is not ignored but exorcised by the comic techniques they share (and by many others they do not share), so that the final impression given is one of optimism, of confidence that the powers of darkness will not destroy us. This is without doubt a kind of conservatism, and a comparison of the conservative aspects of both would be interesting. It is surely heartening to see that at least in this case the French Renaissance mind and the modern mind are not so far apart.

26. "Feet of Clay," in *Nothing Serious*.
27. Much valuable information in Usborne, especially chs. 1 and 2.
28. Clarke Olney, "Wodehouse and Poets," *The Georgia Review* 16 (1962), 392–9.
29. Longfellow, "The Building of the Ship," ll. 349–50: "She starts,—she moves—she seems to feel / The thrill of life along her keel."
30. "The Truth About George," in *Meet Mr. Mulliner*.
31. *Much Obligated, Jeeves*, ch. 8.
32. "Jeeves and the Greasy Bird," in *Plum Pie*.
33. "Ukridge Starts a Bank Account," in *Plum Pie*.
34. "Jeeves Exerts the Old Cerebellum," in *The Inimitable Jeeves*.
35. *A Gentleman of Leisure*, ch. 8.
36. *The Code of the Woosters*, ch. 4.
37. *The Purloined Paperweight*, ch. 2.
38. *Money for Nothing*, ch. 6.
39. *Doctor Sally*, ch. 16.
40. *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*, ch. 12.
41. *A Gentleman of Leisure*, ch. 13.
42. "Bingo Bans the Bomb," in *Plum Pie*.
43. *Money in the Bank*, ch. 1.
44. *Service with a Smile*, ch. 5.
45. *Leave It to Psmith*, ch. 1.
46. "Jeeves Makes an Omelette," in *A Few Quick Ones*.
47. "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!" in *Blandings Castle*.
48. *The Mating Season*, ch. 9.
49. *Joy in the Morning*, ch. 23.
50. *A Pelican at Blandings*, ch. 10.
51. "The Truth About George," in *Meet Mr. Mulliner*.
52. "Sir Roderick Comes to Lunch," in *The Inimitable Jeeves*.
53. *Joy in the Morning*, ch. 9.
54. "A Good Cigar is a Smoke," in *Plum Pie*.
55. "Startling Dressiness of a Lift Attendant," in *The Inimitable Jeeves*.
56. "The Coming of Gowf," in *The Clicking of Cuthbert*.
57. *Right Ho, Jeeves*, ch. 12.
58. I mention this because Henry Appia, in a sympathetic article, states that the basis of Wodehouse's comedy is not analysable ("O rare P. G. Wodehouse!" *Etudes Anglaises* 26 [1973], 22–34).
59. *Joy in the Morning*, ch. 16.

* * * * *

AND WE FIND ON <http://www.squidoo.com/bestnonbooks>: According to Google, there are 2,700 web pages devoted to the topic of "books never written" [including] books never written but mentioned in real world fiction books (by noted writers such as François Rabelais, P. G. Wodehouse, Douglas Adams, Umberto Eco, and Edward Gorey among others).

—Ed.



Let the games begin.



Threepwood



Severn End ("Brinkley Court")

He was a tall, rangy-looking greybeard, and he went off from the start with a nice, easy action, pausing and clearing his throat at the end of each sentence, and it wasn't five minutes before I realized that here was the winner. His habit of stopping dead and looking round the church at intervals was worth minutes to us, and in the home stretch we gained no little advantage owing to his dropping his pince-nez and having to grope for them.

"The Great Sermon Handicap" (1922)

That Darn Assyrian, Like a Wolf on the Fold

BY STU SHIFFMAN

A FREQUENT IMAGE used by Wodehouse is an allusion to one of Lord Byron's more memorable poems. With a vivid image full of action and color, it's not surprising that a public-school-educated Wodehouse (and, through him, Bertie Wooster) liked quoting and paraphrasing it:

Having become so accustomed during our hobnobbing of the previous day to seeing this uncle by marriage in genial and comradely mood, I had almost forgotten how like the Assyrian swooping down on the fold he could look, when deeply stirred. . . .

"One false step, and he'll swoop on me like the—who was it who came down like a wolf on the fold?"

"The Assyrian, sir."

— *Joy in the Morning*

So, who was this Assyrian anyway?

*The Assyrian came down like the wolf on
the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple
and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars
on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on the
Galilee.*

So begins Lord Byron's familiar "The Destruction of Sennacherib," commemorating the incidents detailed more familiarly in that well-known news sheet of the ancient world, the Bible. According to the chronicler of 2 Kings (and his priestly redactors), Hezekiah, king of Judah, refused to become an Assyrian feudatory—that is to say, a person holding land by feudal fee; a vassal—and to pay tribute in this instance to the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Mesopotamia, baby, modern Iraq). Now, you didn't blow off King Sennacherib in a brief cuneiform note. A baked clay tablet just does not and will not present the proper emotional tones. It's like e-mail. The transmittal of cuneiform correspondence between the capitals of the region was the ancient version of the internet. While it was a miracle of Bronze Age technology of reproducible communication, it was a lot slower.

Sennacherib was the son of Sargon II, whom he succeeded on the throne of Assyria (705–681 B.C.). This Sennacherib was a tough cookie, and the Assyrians were the Sopranos of the Fertile Crescent. In about 700 B.C., Sennacherib forbade illegal parking on the Royal Road in Nineveh; the penalty was death by impalement on a stake. This seems a trifle harsh, but that was the way he worked. He'd beaten the Babylonians and the Elamites and made the Hittites and Canaanites watch their asses. The Egyptians took refuge in Great Power politics. Now this little king of Judah thought he had an option not to pay out the simoleons in tribute. You did not pull this on the great King of Assyria.

Sennacherib set out from his capital of Nineveh and marched on Jerusalem. He was able to sack many cities in Judah, including Lachish. The siege of that great city was, well, a bit thick. Judean women and children were marched off before the eyes of the men who were being tortured and executed. Sennacherib's annals then claim that 200,000 Judeans were deported from their homeland, and the fate of these deportees likely paralleled that of the Israelites two decades earlier. He laid siege to Jerusalem, but soon returned to Nineveh, with Jerusalem not having been sacked.

Assyrian chronicles of King Sennacherib's achievements do not treat it as a disaster but as a great victory; they state that the siege was so successful that Hezekiah was forced to give a monetary tribute. It involved the destruction of 46 cities of the state of Judah and the deportation of 200,150 people. Hezekiah, king of Judah, is said to have finally sent his tribute to Sennacherib. In the Taylor Prism, Sennacherib states that he had shut up "Hezekiah the Judahite" within Jerusalem, his own royal city, "like a caged bird."

Sadly, these great archaeological sites of ancient Nineveh and Nimrud are in a dreadful state today following the years of economic sanctions following the first Gulf War, the most recent war, and years of occupation in Iraq. Dr. John Malcolm Russell, art historian and author of *The Final Sack of Nineveh* (1998), asks:

"Why is this happening now? Iraq has a rich and varied heritage, and this heritage has been coveted by the Western world since the nineteenth century heyday of imperial acquisition. Then, 'like the wolf on the fold,' representatives of European governments descended on the palaces of Mesopotamia and sacked them to fill the halls of the

British Museum, the Louvre, and the Berlin Museum. Numerous sculptured slabs found their way into smaller collections in England and America as well." ("Stolen Stones: The Modern Sack of Nineveh" by John Malcolm Russell, December 30, 1996, <http://www.archaeology.org/online/feature/nineveh>)

The young British explorer Austen Henry Layard had excavated the ruins of Nineveh in 1847 and rediscovered the lost palace of Sennacherib across the Tigris River from modern Mosul in northern Iraq. According to Russell:

Inscribed in cuneiform on the colossal sculptures in the doorway of its throne room was Sennacherib's own account of his siege of Jerusalem. It differed in detail from the biblical one but confirmed that Sennacherib did not capture the city. . . . Here one could see the king and army, foreign landscapes, and conquered enemy cities, including a remarkably accurate depiction of the Judean city of Lachish, whose destruction by the Assyrians was recorded in II Kings 18:13-14.

The most spectacular of these was a group of 28 Assyrian sculptures, which were presented by Layard to his cousin, Lady Charlotte Guest. She displayed them at her home, Canford Manor in Dorsetshire, in the Nineveh Porch, a Gothic Revival garden pavilion built especially for them. Russell tells the story of the fate of many of these reliefs in *From Nineveh To New York: The Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School* (1997). The bulk of this collection, as the title tells us, is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Russell described the "archaeological" discovery he and Dr. Julian Reade of the British Museum made of a genuine Assyrian stone relief under layers of plaster on the wall of a sweet shop in a boys' public school in England, Canford School (once Canford Manor). In "Saga of the Nineveh Marbles" (*Archaeology*, March/April 1998), he writes:

In the spring of 1992, while working in the archives of the British Museum, I found an inventory of



Studying the wolfish Assyrians

sculptures from the Nineveh Porch, a charming and eccentric mid-nineteenth-century garden pavilion on the grounds of Canford Manor, an estate in Dorset, England. . . . In early May, I visited the estate, today a private school for boys, with Julian Reade, the British Museum's assistant keeper of western Asiatic antiquities. We were surprised by the beauty of the little building and by its excellent state of preservation, its iron doors and stained-glass windows looking as if they had been installed only yesterday. I was particularly pleased to find two casts of reliefs still in place on the wall just inside the door, since they showed how the sculptures had been mounted.

Back at the British Museum, Russell looked in the inventory for the two casts seen in the porch. It identified the upper part of one as a genuine Assyrian relief. A photograph Reade had taken confirmed that it corresponded to a relief previously thought to be lost. They returned to Canford, accompanied by a stone conservator from the British Museum, who removed innumerable paint layers from the slab and pronounced it to be stone.

And what happened to these stones that Russell and Reade found at the boys' school, the panel depicting Assurnasirpal II and attendant and inscribed with the "standard inscription" giving the name and title of the King and summarizing his military achievements and the small fragment with the three severed heads? The large piece was eventually sold at Christie's in July 1994 to a Japanese museum via dealer Noriyoshi Horiuchi for £7 million which with commissions came to a total of £7,701,500, or \$11.9 million, the highest price then ever paid for an antiquity, three times what had been previously paid for an ancient work. The bidding had lasted three minutes and 40 seconds. The small stone fetched \$118,000.

It makes one wonder what unknown (and unchronicled) treasures might lurk at Blandings and in Lord Emsworth's little museum.

Conditions during the tea hour, the marquee having stood all day under a blazing sun, were generally such that Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, had they been there, could have learned something new about burning fiery furnaces.

"Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend" (1928)

The Empress of Blandings Was a Berkshire Sow

BY MAGGIE SCHNADER

Maggie, a member of the Broadway Special, herewith reports on a very British—and very Emsworthian—experience.

THE EMPRESS OF BLANDINGS, Lord Emsworth's beloved Berkshire sow, was "three times silver medallist in the Fat Pigs class at the Shropshire Agricultural Show" (*Service with a Smile*, 1962). There is no longer a Fat Pigs class in pig competitions in England, but the Berkshire remains a pedigree breed, and the Berkshire sow had its own show class at the 101st Okehampton Agricultural Show in Devon in the summer of 2006.

Roughly 225 miles south of Shropshire, along the northern edge of Dartmoor National Park,* lies the town of Okehampton. We need only recall Dr. John D. Watson's narrative of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* to immediately envision the bleakness of Dartmoor, where traditional farmland mixes with ancient granite tors, burial grounds, mines, quarries, and fog. As for Okehampton itself, in Agatha Christie's *The Sittaford Mystery* (1931), which is also set in Dartmoor, a town called Exhampton is the site of the mysterious death of Captain Trevelyan. On August 9, 2006, my husband Yale and I arrived at Bristol Airport and drove to the Bearslake Inn in Sourton, on the perimeter of Dartmoor National Park, six miles southwest of Okehampton.

The Okehampton Agricultural Show took place at Stoney Park Showfield on August 10. Many animals competed for medals that day. We saw horse classes in the main ring, including the huge heavy horses and the splendid driving classes. We watched the sheep-shearing competition, which seemed to go on all day, with fascination. We saw hundreds of prize cattle, sheep, goats, furry and feathered animals and other species that I can't remember. But the biggest thrill was entering the pig tent and seeing those magnificent animals up close.

When I entered the huge pig tent, I was amazed at how sweet-smelling and clean it was. This could not have been easy to accomplish. For showing, each pig was scrupulously bathed and oiled. (Pig oil is recommended, but baby oil will do.) There must have been at least a hundred or more pigpens in that tent. Many of the pigs had private pens; other pens appeared to hold families. Most of the pigs lay blissfully on the straw and ignored the human visitors walking up and

down the aisles as if they were of no consequence at all. Each pig appeared convinced that she was the center of her universe, beloved by her owner, whose goal in life was to serve her. Just like the Empress of Blandings. We met owner/handlers who had rented an extra “kit” pen in the pig tent and sat there on folding chairs as a temporary home next to their pigs.

One pig appeared extremely dissatisfied with his pen. He attacked the metal frame continuously and powerfully by throwing himself against it over and over again, forcing the temporary stakes at the corners of the opening gate to rise up out of the ground. His handlers had a devil of a time containing him while they secured the posts. (I use the male pronoun here under the assumption that the pig was a boar, although I don’t remember that for sure. However, in my research I learned that “temporary hurdles are no barrier to an amorous boar out on the town,” and so I am going under the assumption that this rambunctious pig was indeed all-male. Surely we remember that the Empress of Blandings was once left in a bathroom unattended and without food for quite some time and showed no such antisocial behavior other than eating the soap, which under the circumstance seems to me to have been appropriate behavior.) In any case, clearly this particular animal at the Okehampton Show was not a contented pig.

That day, many different breeds competed for medals in the various pig sections. In addition to Berkshire sows, I remember seeing British Saddlebacks, Gloucestershire Old Spots, and an all-pink pig which I believe was a British Landrace. All breeds may compete with each other in classes defined by age of pig rather than by breed. The competitions take place outdoors in a ring adjoining the pig tent.

Each pig is led from the tent to the judging ring by his or her own personal handler, who wears a white showing coat and looks like a doctor. The handlers carry long hooked canes in one hand and white boards in the other, which they use to keep their pig in place as they parade around the ring. But pigs have their own ideas about where to go. Their handlers often had to run fast to keep up with them and get them back in line. The judge, a large man in a black suit and a black bowler, was also sometimes forced to chase pigs around the ring, often while bending over in order to evaluate their hams down to the hocks.

Ultimately, the judge would make his decision and pass the information in a low voice to an assistant. The assistant would then whisper to an official announcer, who announced the results to the crowd through a bullhorn. Then the wide winner’s sash would be thrown

over the champion, who, more often than not, would try to shrug it off. The winner’s sash would ride across the pig’s back and fall to the floor, and the pig would continue on his own majestic path (most likely back to the pig tent), for he knows in his heart that he needs no confirmation of his greatness from these unimportant two-footed creatures.

The Berkshire Sow Class prize winners at the 101st Okehampton Agricultural Show were as follows: first place and champion, Dittisham Lady 10; second place, Smallicombe Stonebow; and third place, Dittisham Lady 11.

As the sun set, we drove back to the Bearslake Inn along a hedge-bounded single-lane road, only backing up twice into a lay-by to allow cars that were coming at us head-on room to pass. I wondered how anyone could think that Lord Emsworth was dotty for being obsessed with the Empress. I couldn’t wait to get to a proper bookstore and buy a copy of Whiffle’s *The Care of the Pig*.

* Previously known as the Royal Forest of Dartmoor; established as a national park in 1951.

Of Proclamations and Convention Funds

TO MARK the 126th anniversary of Plum’s birth, NEWT John Kareores is attempting to arrange for October 15, 2007—the Monday following our convention weekend—to be officially declared P. G. Wodehouse Day in the state of Rhode Island and the city of Providence. If he is successful, the formal documents issued by the governor and mayor proclaiming that date’s dedication to Plum will be sold (separately) at auction during the convention’s Saturday night banquet, with proceeds benefiting the TWS Convention Fund. If you do not plan to attend the convention but would like a chance to bid for one or both of the proclamations, this is your chance. TWS President Jean Tillson will accept bids through October 6. Note: Please be specific about which proclamation you are bidding on and, if bidding on both, the amount that constitutes your best offer for each. Whether attending the convention or not, we encourage all Wodehousians to submit bids, both to aid our Convention Fund and to add a unique item to your personal Wodehouse collection.

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*We appreciate all your articles, Quick Ones, quotes, and
observations. Send them on!*

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