



# Plum Lines

A Quarterly Publication of The Wodehouse Society

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WCY + 7

The following is reprinted from *The London Daily Mail* of June 4, 1988

## *What ho, Jeeves. I'm back!* by Yvonne Thomas

That most quintessential of English writers, P.G. Wodehouse, has finally come in from the cold - and returned home to the land of Jeeves, Bertie Wooster, and cricket on the village green.

In a final act of reconciliation towards the great writer, who was branded a traitor during the war but who never ceased to love England, the Queen Mother yesterday unveiled a blue plaque on the house in Mayfair where he lived - with ten servants - from 1924 to 1934.

Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, known to his friends and family as Plummy, would have loved it. Lords and Ladies who might have graced a weekend at Blandings Castle were there - Sir Nicholas Henderson, Lord Montagu, Lady Donaldson and Plummy's nephew Patrick, who used to stay there as a schoolboy while his parents were in India.

Afterwards, with the Queen Mother, they all went into the house, 17 Dunraven Street, for *browsing and sluicing* or - in non-Bertie Wooster language - a small private lunch.

P.G. Wodehouse died in America in 1975 aged 93. He never returned to England after the war. But before the end he knew he had been forgiven, although he had never been quite sure what crime he had committed. And when an admirer, Michael Pointin, wrote for his permission to suggest a blue plaque on the house in Dunraven Street - then called Norfolk Street - he wrote back: "I like the idea very much, so go ahead with my blessing."

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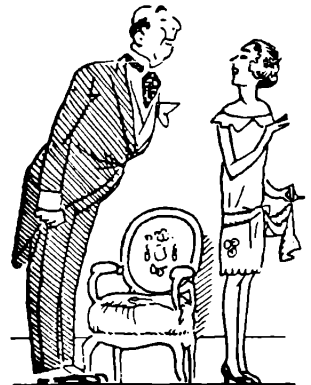
At yesterday's blue plaque ceremony to honour the creator of Jeeves, Patrick Wodehouse, son of P.G.'s beloved elder brother Armine, recalled life with his Uncle Plum and his equally amusing Aunt Ethel in the 16-roomed house.

It was homely and warm, with a dotty Edwardian flavour just like the books Uncle Plum spent all his time writing. Patrick recalls: "Mr. Pavey the butler was quite jolly, dressed in somber black. Charles the footman was much younger and had a green uniform with silver buttons embossed with the family crest."

They, and a couple of housemaids who dressed normally in blue uniforms but changed into black for lunch, served meals, appearing, says Patrick, like witches in a pantomime, through a door concealed in the decor.

"Below stairs was my friend Mrs. Bostock, the cook. She used to bake the most delicious hot jam rolls and was the best maker of rice puddings I have ever heard of. She put cream in them, serving them stiff and cold like ice cream."

"I didn't see Plummy much because he was



A vintage butler of obviously a very good year.  
*Something Fishy*

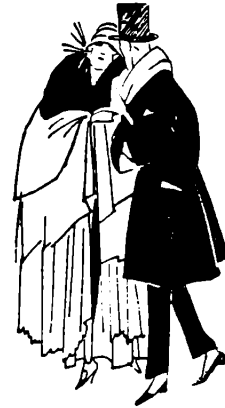
always writing. He was a very mild man, and gave me his school stories, all autographed. I was the only child in the house, so I had to be taken out by the servants and entertained."

"Aunt Ethel was the steam behind the engine. I remember one afternoon I sat on the floor of the drawing room with her while she sorted out piles of letters. She had a standard technique with overdue correspondence."

"She would write: "Dear so-and-so, I am terribly sorry not to have answered your letter before, but by some terrible mistake all my letters were forwarded to the South of France, and it was ages before I got them." I wondered what the recipient thought if they'd received one before."

"One day she thought the canary looked grubby and decided to wash him. We went down to the bathroom with the black marble basin. She held him under the warm tap and applied the soap. He did not seem to relish this treatment. In fact, his toes turned up and we thought his last hour had come."

"Ethel cried large, slow tears as she dried him on the towel. But he made a good recovery. Some time later he flew too near the open fire



and was killed." The same sort of gentle loopiness affected others around him.

Patrick recalls missing his grandmother's funeral because he and Leonora (P.G.'s adopted stepdaughter) stopped to have just one more cream cake at the Great Western Hotel, then arrived by taxi at the crematorium when it was all over. You feel that his Uncle Plum would not have minded.

The following excerpts are reprinted from *The Observer* of London, June 5, 1988

## *Sir Plum of Dulwich*

by Michael Davie

The Queen Mother last week unveiled a plaque on a house where the late Sir Pelham Wodehouse (1881-1975) once lived in central London, but if you really want to commune with the spirit of the great man, the best place in England to go is unquestionably leafy Dulwich, in southeast London.

It is a little hard for the ordinary person to grasp the extraordinary relationship between Wodehouse and Dulwich College. He was there from 1894 to 1900. He did well. He was good at games. He was distinctly brainy. He took part in Greek plays. He joined in.

Dulwich has a good record this century with best-selling authors: A.E.W. Mason, C.S. Forester, Raymond Chandler, and Wodehouse. But none of the others remained so attached to their Alma Mater. Dulwich now has a fine Wodehouse library. That, and the P.G. Wodehouse Shelter for stray dogs and cats at the Bide-A-Wee Home near Remsenburg, Long Island, are his principal memorials - apart from 128 [more like 73 - OM] novels, hundreds of short stories, 12 plays, numerous lyrics, film scripts and articles, and some humorous verse.

Inside the library at Dulwich is a re-creation

"He then gave a hideous laugh and added that, if anybody was interested in his plans, he was going to join the Foreign Legion, that Cohort of the Damned, where broken men may toil and die, and dying, forget."

"Noblesse Oblige"

of his Remsenburg study - typewriter, spectacles, desk, etc.,--and, on the first floor, locked away from sticky fingers, many books and documents. One of the most revealing is a postcard, written in June 1939. The Wodehouses then lived in Le Touquet. Storm clouds were gathering. The postcard is a one-liner: "When is the Brighton match?"

Wodehouse used to fly over to England when he was one of the best known writers alive, to report school matches for the school magazine. He reported several matches in 1939. The last visit he ever made to England was in July 1939, when he received an honorary degree from Oxford, and, with his old school-friend Bill Townend, watched Dulwich play St. Paul's at cricket. But the Dulwich district, London SE21, continued to appear in his books for the next 30 years. That's where his heart lay.

"I have had homes in Mayfair, in Park Avenue, New York, in Beverly Hills, California, and other posh localities," he wrote, "but I have always been a suburbanite, and it is when I get a plot calling for a suburban setting that I really roll up my sleeves and give of my best."

. . . . .

Three years ago, the Master of Dulwich made a speech about Wodehouse, arguing that this passion was not so peculiar, even though it might seem so to "lady biographers"--a clear side-swipe at Frances Donaldson, the official biographer. But was it normal? The more that becomes known about P.G. Wodehouse, the more complicated he seems to us.

The usual picture is of the eternal schoolboy, at ease with life, a genial old duffer. True, his sunny life was briefly clouded by the bit of trouble about the [war-time] broadcasts, but...everything came right in the end, in the nick of time, when, six weeks before he died, he was given a knighthood.

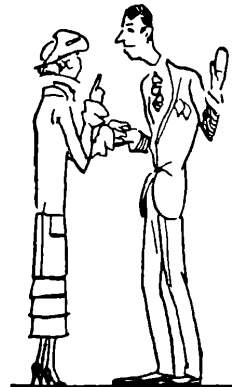
But Dulwich librarian, Mrs Margaret Slythe, sees it differently. Outside, boys of all sizes are playing cricket on the vast playing fields in front of the imposing Victorian buildings. Into her glassed-in office comes a stream of boys asking for paper-clips or change for telephone calls or bets. One boy is hanging about the library with a notice "Silence Please" stuck to his sweater by

Cellotape. Mrs Slythe rips it off, briefly ticks off the boy, and restores it to its proper place at the entrance. "But someone put it on me!" wails the boy.

Living in this Wodehouse atmosphere, Mrs. Slythe has a special perspective. There has been a huge amount written about Wodehouse already,...[but] the surface has barely been scratched, she says cheerfully. ("All Wodehouse people are cheerful," it has been remarked.)

For instance, on the first floor of the library, in blue boxes, lies the correspondence between Wodehouse and his old Dulwich school-friend and fellow-author Bill Townend; the 400 letters contain a lot of Dulwich material, as the two old buffers recalled their schooldays. This treasure-trove was presented to the Dulwich library by a former Wodehouse publisher in 1981.

Dulwich, Mrs. Slythe points out, was Wodehouse's home. His parents were abroad. At Dulwich he formed his first ambiguous view of aunts. He had a clever elder brother, Armine (a family name). An aunt used to come to Dulwich and the young Plum would be sent to West Dulwich station to meet her. But she would have come to visit, not him, but Armine.



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I'm very happy to tell you that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, has graciously consented to become an honorary member of The Wodehouse Society. *OM*

## *TWS trip to Dulwich*

What better way to start our report than to quote from the letter of welcome from Mrs. Margaret Slythe, librarian of the P.G. Wodehouse Library of Dulwich College?

"...We recently had a meeting to consider your proposed visit next summer...It would be ideal if your visit were to coincide with a ceremony in Westminster Abbey!

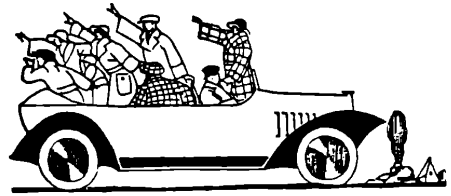
In terms of accommodation here at Dulwich College, boarding houses are nostalgic and tolerably comfortable but not by any means hotels. Even so, it may please your members to wake up to sounds that Plum would have experienced and we should do everything in our power to make your stay a memorable one.

In order to enjoy Alec Hemming's Presidency of The Alleyn Club, you will need to be here in July, not August. The college term ends on Friday 7 July 1989 and the best time to come would be any days between Sunday 9 July and Saturday 22 July. Obviously you will need to ensure that this time is possible for your members and your guide, Norman Murphy....

I hope you will understand that if you stay at Dulwich during your visit, the College will need to make a charge to cover staff expenses. The Bursar suggests this should be in the region of 15 pounds per person per day, to include dormitory accommodation and all meals. Bed and Breakfast only would of course be less expensive (probably 10 pounds per day), while a formal banquet would add to the cost.

We shall look forward to hearing from you after you have had a chance to discuss our proposals with your society members. "

The exact date of our rendezvous at Dulwich College and the number of days we stay on campus will depend on Col. Murphy's itinerary for us. This itinerary will consist in part of walkabouts in Dulwich and the club area of London, and a bus tour and overnight stops in



the Valley of the Severn and parts of Shropshire and Worcestershire, all settings for many of Plum's novels.

At the moment we expect to spend a total of about one week at Dulwich, London, and the West Country.

Our European and Canadian members are most welcome to be part of our Wodehouse Pilgrimage. The committee (see address below) would appreciate knowing of your plans as well as those of our U.S. members.

Anyone wishing help in planning further travel and reservations in England or other parts of Europe either before or after Col. Murphy's tour may get in touch with the Donlon and Connor Travel Agency, 27 Maiden Lane, Suite 500, San Francisco CA 94108, telephone (415) 788-1223. Mr. David Donlon can also arrange for air travel via British Air at a group rate for our travellers to London from the U.S. and Canada.

Late word from President Bill Blood: in order not to disappoint our English and continental members, and to accommodate our stay-at-home American members, we will have a two-part convention, one part in Dulwich, one in America.

## *The great public opinion survey*

In the May *Plum Lines*, Doug Stow proposed that we have an American convention in 1989, in addition to our trip to England, and asked for other member's opinions. Seven members respon-

ded, and all of them supported Doug's proposal, in most cases with enthusiasm. It was only a straw vote, and a very small straw at that, but it was unanimous.

## A few quick ones

Bill Horn writes: "June 16 is Bloomsday for James Joyce fans. How about a Plumsday for us?" A fruity suggestion. What's your opinion?

A career development company has invited us to a "How to Deal with Difficult People" seminar. I didn't know we had any difficult people in our Society. It's true that most of us hope to encounter a policeman on Boat Race night or yearn to swipe a cow creamer - criminal, yes, but difficult? Never! Jolly good fellows all.

William Sarjeant, one of our new members, published an interesting paper entitled "P.G. Wodehouse as Reader of Crime Stories" in the September/October 1987 issue of *The MYSTERY FANcier* magazine. I've read articles about Plum's influence on crime fiction, but this is the first I've seen on his reading of the genre. Prof. Sarjeant must have done a good deal of digging - his paper includes 38 footnotes.

Fergus Horsburgh raises a question that has been asked before, but never, to my knowledge, satisfactorily answered. Fergus has sent me a copy of a *Vanity Fair* article of August, 1915, written by P. Brooke-Haven and illustrated by Ethel Plummer. P. Brooke-Haven is known to have been P.G. Wodehouse. Can Ethel Plummer have been Ethel Wodehouse? The first name is the same, the last name is suspiciously like Plum.

But if Ethel had been a professional illustrator the fact could hardly have escaped her husband's biographers. Can anyone give a final answer, with supporting evidence, to the question: who was Ethel Plummer?

Dan Garrison has very kindly bought and sent me an excellent source of artwork for *Plum Lines*: a Dover publication entitled *1001 Spot Illustrations of the Lively Twenties*. I've used Pauline Blanc's drawings so far, and I hope to do so in the future, but Pauline is not an inexhaustible source. Many thanks to both of you.

Dan is preparing a second edition of his *Who's Who in Wodehouse* and writes that he would welcome "aid and advice" from us.

More information about life in Plum's Norfolk Street house, where the Queen Mother unveiled a plaque recently, can be found in David Jasen's *A Portrait of a Master*.

Correction: Robert H. Montgomery, Jr., of New York City is not a new member, as I listed him in the May *Plum Lines*, but a member of long standing.

Finally, thanks to Tom Wainwright for the name of this column.

The Oldest Member

While Monty Bodkin was not actually spat at the moment, there did undoubtedly hang about him a sort of spat aura.

*Heavy Weather*

## Raymond Chandler exhibition at Dulwich

Raymond Chandler, American writer of detective stories, and P.G. Wodehouse, English writer of humor, had more in common than the English language. Both attended Dulwich and were students there at nearly the same time. I found this and other interesting facts in a leaflet issued by Dulwich College at the opening of the Raymond Chandler Centenary Exhibition in the Wodehouse Library on February 27, 1988.

Quoting from the leaflet: In September 1900, Raymond Chandler came to Dulwich College, aged twelve. He missed P.G. Wodehouse by a summer holiday but they shared a

friend in Bill Townend...The Master at Dulwich at that time was Arthur Gilkes who worked ceaselessly for the highest form of literature and was himself a published author. Chandler remembered Gilkes' ideals all his life and claimed that the strength of morality and fair-mindedness of his detective hero, Philip Marlowe, were based upon the teaching of Gilkes. Many years after leaving Dulwich, Chandler described his legacy from the College as "literacy and intellect." His classical education, he claimed, had saved him from being fooled by pretentiousness.



## Something new

Len Lawson

In the May *Plum Lines* I asked where we could get copies of *Northwest* magazine, whose February 1988 issue included "The Romance of a Bulb Squeezer." Bill Horn and Elliot Milstein sent me the address of the source, and Elliot sent a copy of the magazine--thank you both very much. We can order copies for \$3.00 each from East/West Network, Inc., Subscription Dept., 5900 Wilshire Blvd., 8th Floor, Los Angeles CA 90036.

Pauline Blanc still has copies of "Uncle Fred Flits By" in the compact and convenient *Tales for Travelers* series. You can order copies from her for \$1.25 each, including postage and handling, at 1203 Bosworth Street, San Francisco CA 94131.

Wessex Books, 558 Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park CA 94025, (415) 321-1333, has the following:

<i>Bring on the Girls</i> , large pb format	\$3.95
<i>Eighteen-Carat Kid &amp; Other Stories</i> , edited and introduced by David Jasen	7.50
<i>Not George Washington</i> , edited and introduced by David Jasen	5.95
<i>The World of Mr. Mulliner</i> , preface by PGW	8.95
<i>Fore!</i> , edited and preface by D.R. Benson	6.50
<i>A Wodehouse Bestiary</i> , edited by Benson, foreword by Howard Phipps, Jr.	8.50
<i>Wodehouse on Crime</i> , edited by Benson, foreword by Isaac Asimov	5.50
<i>Wodehouse at War</i> , by Ian Sproat	5.95
<i>P.G. Wodehouse, A Literary Biography</i> , by Benny Green	6.50
<i>P.G. Wodehouse</i> , by Francis Donaldson	8.95
<i>P.G. Wodehouse, An Illustrated (profusely) Biography</i> , by Joseph Connolly	8.95
<i>Wodehouse Nuggets</i> , by Richard Usborne	9.50

Wessex still had a copy or two of *Sir Agravaire* the last time I was there. They generally have a used copy of the revised edition of David Jasen's *A Portrait of a Master* in large paper format, and sometimes *The Uncollected Wodehouse* edited by David Jasen. All these are under \$10 each. Most of these books are remainders and won't be available at these prices very long. Several of them already command much higher prices in specialist catalogs.

Wessex charges \$1.25 postage and handling for the first book and 50 cents for each additional book. California residents must pay sales tax. Wessex accepts credit cards.

You may have noticed David Jasen's name mentioned frequently in this column. In my humble opinion he has done more for the average PGW reader than anyone else. His biographies and bibliographical works are excellent, of course, but don't pass up an opportunity to pick up any of the four books of PGW stories he has edited. *The Eighteen-Carat Kid & Other Stories* and *Not George Washington* are available from Wessex, as noted above. The other two are *The Uncollected Wodehouse* and *The Swoop and Other Stories*. All these books contain stories from PGW's early days that haven't been seen for years and many of them were never before published in book form.

"...God bless my soul, though, you can't compare the lorgnettes of today with the ones I used to know as a boy. I remember walking one day in Grosvenor Square with my aunt Brenda and her pug dog Jabberwocky, and a policeman came up and said the latter ought to be wearing a muzzle. My aunt made no verbal reply. She merely whipped her lorgnette from its holster and looked at the man, who gave one choking gasp and fell back against the railings, without a mark on him but with an awful look of horror in his staring eyes, as if he had seen some dreadful sight. A doctor was sent for and they managed to bring him round, but he was never the same again. He had to leave the Force, and eventually drifted into the grocery business. And that is how Sir Thomas Lipton got his start."

*Uncle Fred in the Springtime*

## *The 5000 pound P.G. Wodehouse Prize*

The following announcement appeared in *The Observer* of London, June 5, 1988. A separate announcement stated that "the winner will receive 5000 [pounds] and an additional advance paid under the publishing contract."

Century Hutchinson, publishers of P.G. Wodehouse, and the *Observer* announce the P.G. Wodehouse Prize, to be awarded to the best unpublished comic work of fiction or non-fiction submitted to the judges by 6 February 1989.

The winning entry will be announced and serialized in *The Observer* in July 1989 and will be published by Hutchinson in October 1989.

The judges are Frank Muir, Tom Sharpe, Anthony Cheetham and Michael Davie.

Rules and conditions: 1. All entrants must be prepared to enter into a publishing contract with Century Hutchinson for world, including serial, rights. 2. All entries must be more than 40,000 words in length. 3. Entries must have been

written in English. Translations are not acceptable. 4. Entrants may submit only one typescript. 5. Entries must be typed on A4 paper on one side of the sheet only and with double spacing. 6. Each entry must be clearly marked with the author's name and address. 7. Entries will be returned only if submitted with a large self addressed envelope. 8. Every precaution will be taken to avoid loss or damage to entries, but Century Hutchinson will accept no legal responsibility for loss or damage at any stage. 9. No correspondence will be entered into and the judges' decision will be final. 10. The judges reserve the right not to award the prize if the standard of entry is not sufficiently high. 11. Employees of Century Hutchinson and *The Observer* are excluded from entry.

## *Reminder*

A note from President Bill Blood: It is a policy of our Society (approved at the last three conventions) that members failing to pay annual dues will be dropped the following year, after a friendly reminder. They may, of course, be reinstated without prejudice upon payment of current and prior dues. Dues are our only source of revenue, aside from rare instances of contributions. Your 83 cents a month keeps your Society alive.



## *Remember....*

Stop for a moment on October fifteenth to remember Plum. Leigh Hunt's arguments in favor of observing Shakespeare's birthday apply with equal force to Plum:

"The birthdays of such men ought to be kept, in common gratitude and affection, like those of relatives whom we love....The busiest finds time to eat his dinner, and may pitch one considerate glass of wine down his throat. The poorest may call him to mind, and drink his memory in honest water."

We can all accord him thanks for the treasure of humor he bequeathed to us. Wherever you may be on that day, whatever you are doing, remember Plum and thank him in your own way.



Supplement to *Plum Lines* , Vol. 9, No. 3, August 1988

The following article is reprinted from *London Review of Books*, Vol. 6, No. 18, October 4-17, 1984.

## Diary

by Richard Usborne

I have had, as a holiday task, to cut the sixty-five thousand word P.G. Wodehouse novel *Quick Service*, published in 1940, down to about twenty-five thousand words for a BBC Radio *Book at Bedtime*. Ten periods of fourteen minutes, nine of them to start with a minute or so of re-cap of earlier chapters, and all except the last to end, preferably, at a gasp-moment, to encourage listeners to tune in again tomorrow night. I have done several such jobs for BBC Radio on Wodehouse books. I have not found him easy to abridge. His plots are very tightly-laced and you cut at your peril. A snatch of dialogue or narrative on page 20 may be a plant for a twist in the story on page 220. Wodehouse himself could cut his novels when occasion demanded - i.e. when the payment for a shorter version was big enough. Sometimes top-paying American magazines, such as *The Ladies Home Journal*, would ask for his new novel, to run it as a 'one-shotter': sixty-five thousand words cut to twenty-five thousand as a complete story, in one issue, while the novel was fresh in the bookstores in hardback. Wodehouse did the job and he produced a balanced story, fast and funny. I have read more than one of his 'one-shotters' and then read the full-length originals. One prefers the full-length, of course. But the potted flower is in all essentials the good *Wodehouse floribundus* of the garden.

*Quick Service* is one of the best Wodehouse light novels. Joss Wetherby, the brash, buzzing, bouncy hero (how, in Wodehouse, with that name could he be anything but the hero?), and Sally Fairmile (find me a Sally in all the ninety or more Wodehouse books who is not the heroine, or at least on the side of the angels) are headed for the last-page fadeout towards the altar. It's painful to cut a word of Joss's bright, amorous fencing. He's the sort of Wodehouse character his elders call 'a darn sight too fresh': the sort who, in love at first sight, grabs the heroine to kiss her, and gets his shins kicked. But Sally is soon shocked to find she likes it, engaged though she may have become last night to Lord Hobleton, who has perfect manners, an outsize adam's apple and a rather good tenor voice in which he sings 'Trees.' Can we do without Lord Hobleton and thus save ourselves a few thousand words across the board? No, he is twined into the plot in a dozen places. Well, what about Chibnall the butler, engaged to Vera, barmaid at the Rose and Crown? Surely we shall be able to confine Chibnall to his butlerine duties and omit vapid Vera altogether. No, not a chance. If Vera doesn't report that J.B. Duff's moustache is false (Chibnall had come into her bar unexpectedly and seen her stroking it and jumped to the wrong, jealous conclusions) - no, the plot is far too intricate for such deep cuts. Well, what about J.B. Duff's dyspepsia? From long study of Wodehouse I know that a middle-aged unmarried man's dyspepsia is going to be cured, later if not sooner, by the medicaments of that kindly unattached middle-aged

woman: and love will take the place of heartburn in the party of the first part. You've got to let Duff keep his dyspepsia.

The breakfasts must stay. It's mouth-watering to read, and it would be really sad to cut, a Wodehouse country-house English breakfast: 'silver dishes warmed by little flames, smiling from the sideboard', scrambled eggs, bacon, sausages, fish and kedgerree. And in this case a large, pristine ham is waiting to be sliced. One of Duff and Trotter's Paramount hams. (What a challenge to today's fibrous breakfasts!) Following Wodehouse and, I imagine, paying his estate handsome tribute for the name, there *is* now a Duff and Trotter, in SW8 and the London telephone book. I understand they cater (food, wine and spirits) for the sort of parties that get a mention from 'Jennifer' and *The Tatler*. 'Jeeves of Belgravia' is now an established name for cleaning and valeting services in London. There is a Drones restaurant at 1 Pont Street. And now *Punch* has started an 'Oofy Prosser's City Column'. Who else in the fiction of this century has provided names for such a handful - a catering firm, a valeting service, and a City column. What next?

In his courtship of Sally, Joss compares her to a delicate Tanagra figurine. Much of Wodehouse's humor is word-play with cliché and jargon: the clash of pulpit prose with race-course slang, Shakespeare with Music Hall. Wodehouse knew that 'exquisite Tanagra figurine' was a cliché, but I bet that he, and Joss and Sally, thought that a Tanagra figurine *was* exquisite. I know better now. The passage in *Quick Service* made me realize that never to my knowledge had I seen a Tanagra figurine, nor did I know where Tanagra was - assuming that it was a place, not a sculptor. So I went to the British Museum: up the main stairs and then sharp to the right. A trove of small terracotta figures was dug up by archeologists in 1873 in a village, Tanagra, in Boeotia, north of Athens. The BM has three showcases for Boeotian terracottas, two of them for items from Tanagra. Dates BC 300-200. The figures are not much disfigured by age, and a number of them retain the colours that were painted on them two thousand or more years ago. Gods, demi-gods, heroes, goddesses, satyrs, animals, small groups. But none at all seemed to me to rate the word 'exquisite', which is part of the cliché. In fact, amateur work, I'd say. Some of the figurines could have been shaped by children puddling clay, as toys. They are between three inches and 12 inches in height. Not even attractive. If Joss Wetherby had seen the BM's Tanagra figurines, he wouldn't have compared his loved one to any of them. Had Sally seen them, she might have gone back to kicking his shins for his intended compliment.

How, then, had the phrase 'exquisite Tanagra figurine' come into the language with sufficient mileage to make it a cliché? I went to the London Library and looked up Tanagra in the Subject Index. I was referred to a pamphlet: a print-off of an address given by Quentin Bell in March 1976 - his fifth Gwlym James Memorial lecture at the University of Southampton. I recommend the pamphlet, titled 'A Demotic Art'. It told me, learnedly and amusingly, just what I wanted to know about the 'coroplasts of Boeotia'. (The nearest my *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* comes to 'coroplast' is 'coroplasty', a word used in eye surgery, 'an

operation for forming an artificial pupil'. Professor Bell's word must have come via the ancient Greek for 'a modeller of small figures', which I found in my Liddell and Scott lexicon.)

These small terracotta figures have been found, as easy-to-make dolls and grave-offerings, all around the Mediterranean, and some in the Crimea. Christianity diminished the demand for them. It was not till the big find at Tanagra in 1873 that they became fashionable possessions for collectors. Tanagra figurines suddenly became the rage. They were claimed to be 'the most charming works of Hellenistic civilization'. Prices soared. 'Tanagra, once trash, had become Art, or acquired the status of High Art,' says Professor Bell. By 1877 the Greek government had to put guards around the Tanagra excavation site. Theft, fraud, forgery and clumsy restoration were rampant. Bodiless heads were stuck onto headless bodies, eyebrows and lips touched up with new paint.

There arose a factory for forgeries at Myrina, second only to Tanagra as a productive dig. The British Consul in Piraeus warned travellers and collectors against the most barefaced local restorers - Xacousti, Lambros and Rousopolis were names to remember, he said. Then the market broke: partly because forgeries had swamped it, but largely because Greek art of the last centuries before Christ was no longer regarded as the all-time absolute of beauty. Professor Bell remembered that in his youth Boeotian coroplasts were being sold, cheap and in quantity, like Christmas-tree decorations, at a little Mediterranean coastal village called St Tropez, which was so far off the map then that he and his friends were able to swim in the sea without costumes.

Professor Bell's pamphlet answered my question. The phrase 'exquisite Tanagra figurine' became current in the short period when fashion dictated that the figurines *were* exquisite, in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. Then fashion and taste (and prices) turned away from the glory that was Greece, and the bottom fell out of the market for Boeotian coroplasts, whether made two years ago or two millenia. But the cliché lives on.

On the blisteringly hot last Friday of the Wimbledon fortnight (semi-finals of the Men's Singles on the Centre Court) we were shuffling along in the queue on the road towards the gate. Suddenly the calm was broken by running figures, a man, perhaps a bag-snatcher, pursued by a policeman. The miscreant sprinted across the road and turned in at a gate towards the Golf Club. The young cop in pursuit was going well, and the last I saw of the chase was the cop throwing his helmet into the shrubbery on the other side of the fence. I hope that, thus disencumbered, he caught his man.

There was a don at Corpus Christi, Oxford named Grundy, of whom good stories were told, in imitation of his voice and glorifying his exploits. Grundy may well have been a tutor at Corpus to P.G. Wodehouse's elder brother. Armyne Wodehouse took a Double First (Mods and Greats) and won the Newdigate, the University's annual poetry prize. He also played cricket in the Fresher's Match, and was a good pianist. He became a Theosophist and for a period was in charge of the young Krishnamurti who, he believed, was the new

Messiah. Well, yes, Grundy...I never met Grundy when I was at Oxford. He may have died before that, leaving a fragrant memory in the Grundy stories. One of them (and I won't try to cope with the voice effect) was of a Varsity rugger match in which he had performed in the year dot. It went this way. 'It was in the Inter-University Match, and Cambridge that year had a very fast wing-three-quarter, very fast. The score in the last minute was ten points to us, nine to Cambridge. Then this Cambridge winger broke clean away from a scrum, clean away, and raced for our line. Our captain came up to me and said: "Grundy, catch that man." My word, what a crash we came!'

Policeman's helmets were trophies in several of the Bertie/Jeeves novels and stories. I fell to wondering, as we shuffled on, what Bertie would have done that afternoon had he been in my place in the queue at Wimbledon. He had a strict code about pinching policeman's helmets - a game that roused graduate members of the Drones Club to their best efforts in Leicester Square on Boat Race nights. The code of the Woosters was strict and Bertie had been arrested more than once for sticking to it. A policeman's helmet is only a fair cop and keepsake if it has been removed from the very head of the officer - the forward push followed by the upward lift. Bertie would not have left the queue and gone to the shrubbery to pinch the cop's lid. Unsporting. I hope the cop, having got his man, retrieved his helmet safely from the shrubbery.

For the Wodehouse archive he is assembling, Edward Cazalet, grandson of the 99-year-old widowed Lady Wodehouse, recently bought, for 175 pounds, a short ts. letter from Wodehouse to a Mr. Slater, dated 2 July 1953. Mr. Slater had asked Wodehouse where Market Blandings was, the station for the Castle, with Jno Robinson's taxi waiting to rattle you up to the home of the Earls of Emsworth. Wodehouse wrote: 'I have never revealed the fact before, but Market Blandings is Marlborough. I passed through it years ago on a motoring tour and was much impressed by it. It seemed to me just the town which ought to be two miles away from Blandings Castle.' This late-revealed statement will put the cat among the pigeons in the tight little world of Wodehouse topographical scholarship. In this context the names of two retired soldiers, Colonel Norman Murphy in Cumbria and Colonel Michael Cobb in Devon, spring to the lips. Marlborough is now on the metaphysical overlay map of Wodehouse's Merry England. Back to your plotting-boards, colonels!