

Jeeves: Man and Myth

by Christine Bury

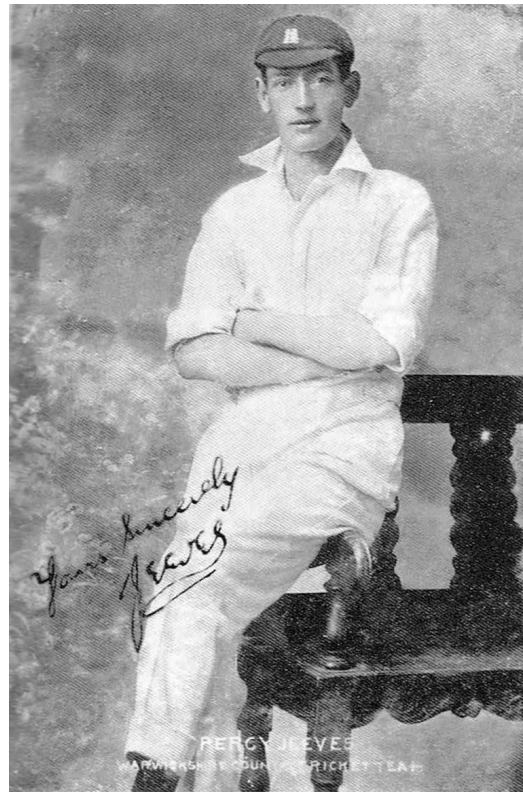
Jeeves the erudite and competent valet in the P G Wodehouse stories is a perfect foil to his happy go lucky and often hapless master, Bertie Wooster. For almost 60 years the couple featured in many comedic stories. Wodehouse based the character of Jeeves on a real person as he wrote to Rowland Ryder, son of the Warwickshire County Cricket Club secretary, in 1967. Ryder had asked whether Wodehouse had really named the character after a professional cricketer, Percy Jeeves.

Wodehouse replied:

“Yes, you are quite right. It must have been in 1913 that I paid a visit to my parents in Cheltenham and went to see Warwickshire play Gloucestershire on the Cheltenham College ground. I suppose Jeeves bowling must have impressed me, for I remembered him in 1916 when I was in New York and starting the Jeeves and Bertie saga, and it was just the name I wanted.

I have always thought till lately that he was playing for Gloucestershire that day. (I remember admiring his action very much.)”

So, who was Percy Jeeves that Wodehouse should have admired and remembered him three years after he saw him in action on the cricket pitch. Warwickshire lost that day, Jeeves only took one run and one wicket, yet that match gained his name immortality.



Percy was born on 5th March 1888 in the West Riding of Yorkshire, the third son of Edwin and Nancy Jeeves. His father was a railwayman. Percy was the third son and he and his brothers first picked up a bat and ball at school. Percy loved cricket and on becoming a professional cricketer he joined Warwickshire.

Like so many other young men who never fulfilled their potential, Percy died in WW1 on the Somme battlefield.

Source:

The Real Jeeves by Brian Halford published by Pitch Publishing in 2013