



Plum Lines

A Quarterly Publication of The Wodehouse Society
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Dues are due!
See page 12

Notes from Plum

Norman Ward

One day over twenty years ago, reflecting on how much I admired Plum as a writer, it occurred to me that it was time to tell him; and I did. In the same letter, with some trepidation, I asked if I could reciprocate in some minuscule way by sending him one of my books. He accepted the offer, I sent the book, and to my utter delight received a letter which said in part:

Thank you so much for the Cheese book...
It's terrific.

Just the sort of book I like best. I nearly finished it at a sitting, but restrained myself so that I should have something good to read later on.

Naturally heartened by these words, I sent Plum another book, which he acknowledged like this:

Thank you so much for Mice. I am revelling in it. That and Cheese are what I call ideal breakfast books. I always have my breakfast on a tray in the sunparlor and it needs a special sort of book to accompany it. These are just right.

Since I wrote you last I have started a new Blandings Castle novel and am having my usual difficulty with the opening chapters. I always find the going tough till I have introduced all the characters. Once that is done the rest is easy.

By this time (the letters above are dated April 8 and May 14, 1968), practically carried away by Plum's kind words, I asked him if I could dedicate my next book to him and he graciously agreed. But alas, he never saw it: *Her Majesty's Mice* did not appear until the spring of 1977. But it does start off with:

To P.G. Wodehouse
with affection
and admiration
and permission

I have printed Plum's notes in their original lineation - he typed them on small notepaper. "the Cheese book" or *The Fully Processed Cheese*, 1964, is out of print. "Mice" or *Mice in the Beer*, 1960, is available from Western Produce Prairie Books, 2310 Millar, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7K 2C4. I have a copy and I can certify that it's good reading. *Her Majesty's Mice*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1977, is out of print. The Blandings Castle novel mentioned by Plum was presumably *A Pelican at Blandings*, published in September of 1969.

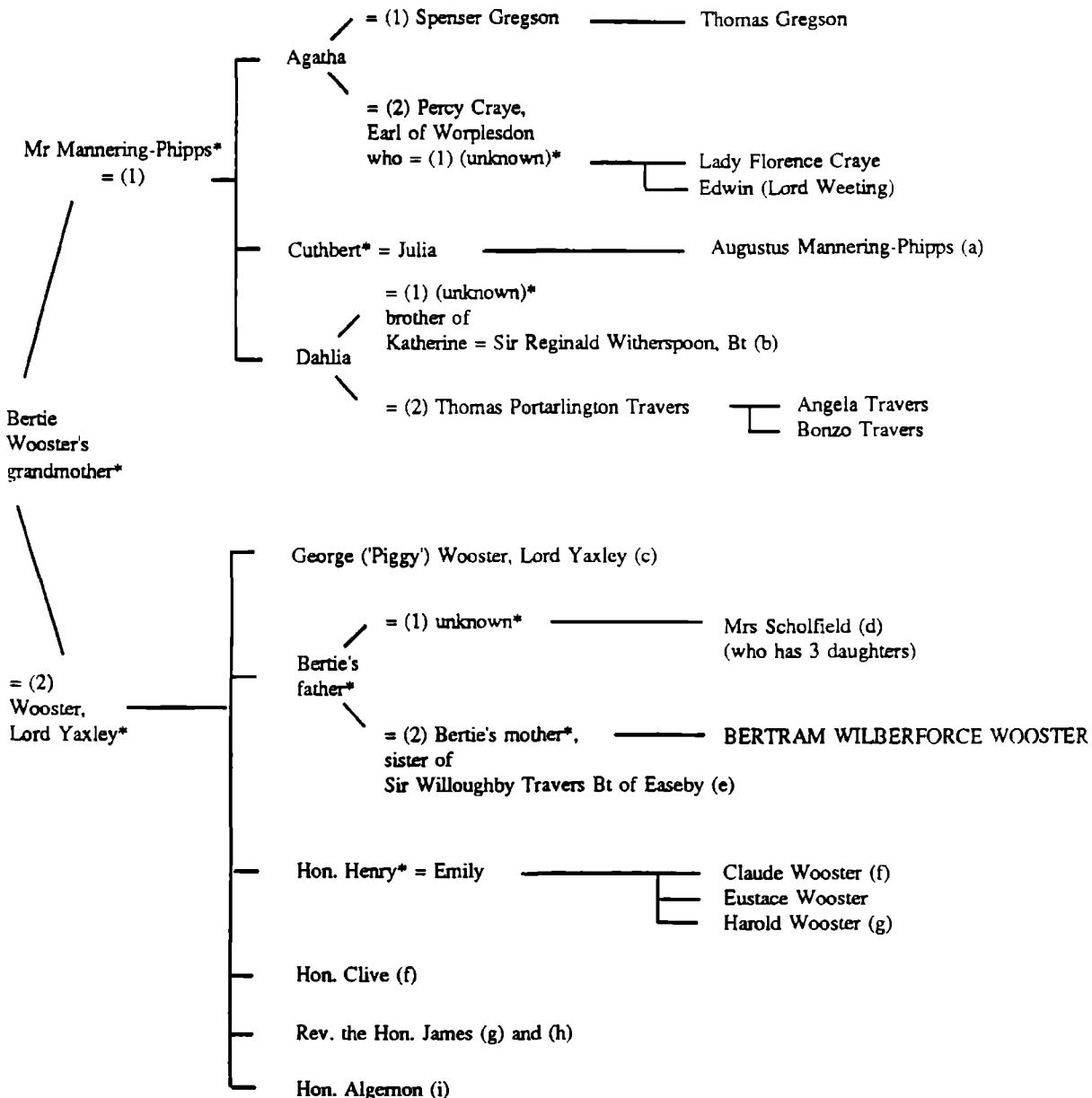
Norman Ward's article "Plum's Canada" appeared in the May 1989 *Plum Lines*. ...OM

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BERTIE WOOSTER'S FAMILY TREE

John Fletcher



On the left, Bertie's grandmother and her two husbands.

In the middle, Bertie's parents, uncles and aunts.

On the right, Bertie's generation, including his half-sister, cousins and step-cousins.

At the bottom, where to find the more elusive relations.

Those dead or presumed dead when the saga begins are marked *.

(a) from *The Man with Two Left Feet*, "Extricating Young Gussie".from *The World of Jeeves*,

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|-----|---|-----|--|
| (b) | "The Ordeal of Young Tuppy" | (e) | "Jeeves Takes Charge" |
| (c) | "Indian Summer of an Uncle" | (f) | "The Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace" |
| (d) | "Bertie Changes his Mind" | (g) | "The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy" |
| (h) | from <i>Much Obliged Jeeves</i> ch.8 | | |
| (i) | from <i>Something New</i> (or <i>Something Fresh</i>) chs. 7-9 | | |

DISENTANGLING THE WOOSTER RELATIONS

The Mannerling-Phipps Problem may explain why nobody else has tried to draw the Wooster family tree; not even Jaggard, author of "Wooster's World" and "Blandings the Blest", nor Morris, author of "Thank You, Wodehouse", who have both drawn family trees for Lord Emsworth and the Threepwoods.

The first Bertie story to be published is "Extricating Young Gussie" in "The Man with Two Left Feet". Bertie, without a surname, has an uncle, Cuthbert Mannerling-Phipps, now dead, whose son is the young Gussie of the title. Aunt Agatha "bosses my cousin, Gussie Mannerling-Phipps. She bosses her sister-in-law, Gussie's mother".

Gussie's mother Julia was a vaudeville artist, so low in the social scale that Aunt Agatha "had pulled up her socks and put in a lot of educative work, and with a microscope you couldn't tell Aunt Julia from a genuine dyed-in-the wool aristocrat". So Julia cannot be the sister of any husband of Agatha; if Julia is Agatha's sister-in-law, Cuthbert and Agatha must be brother and sister. In other words, Agatha should have been born a Mannerling-Phipps.

This is the first apparent contradiction. We know that Aunt Agatha's name before marriage was Wooster from "Fixing it for Freddie" (this "Miss Wooster that I knew married a man named Spenser Gregson"). Similar evidence for Aunt Dahlia comes from "Right Ho! Jeeves" (Chapter 22) ("The years rolled away from her, and she was once more the Dahlia Wooster of the old yoicks-and-tantivy days"). In "Much Obliged, Jeeves" Bertie calls Dahlia "the genial sister of my late father" (Chapter 2) and (Chapter 6) he wonders how two sisters can be as different as Agatha and Dahlia.

Aunt Agatha says in "Extricating Young Gussie" that Gussie is head of the Mannerling-Phipps family, and has no title. This marks them off sharply from the Wooster family, whose head must be Lord Yaxley.

You can resolve this contradiction easily if Bertie's grandmother married twice, first a Mannerling-Phipps, then a Wooster. In one sense they were two families, with two surnames and two "heads of the family". In another sense they were one family, all brought up together, thinking of themselves as brothers and sisters.

When and why did Agatha and Dahlia, born into the Mannerling-Phipps family, acquire the name Wooster? Probably when their mother remarried. People do change their surnames, particularly if during their childhood their mother marries again. Leonora Rowley became Leonora Wodehouse. If you are being brought up by the same parents, it is easier to have the same surname; it shows affection and loyalty, and it saves boring explanations. We don't want to say anything against Aunt Agatha so we won't call her the biggest snob in the Wooster saga, but if

she had been, it might have suited her to pass herself off as a Lord's daughter. Cuthbert may have had to remain a Mannerling-Phipps to keep his timber estates at Beechwood, but his sisters had no such incentive.

This solves two other riddles.

First, we know that there was a Wooster peerage because Uncle George, "Piggy" Wooster, was Lord Yaxley ("The Indian Summer of an Uncle"). The sons and daughters of peers have courtesy titles on formal occasions. If Aunt Dahlia were the daughter of Bertie's grandfather Lord Yaxley, she would have been the Hon. Mrs Travers. If her father had been the Marquess or Earl of Yaxley, she would have been Lady Dahlia Travers. Yet the first page of "Jeeves in the Offing" says simply "of Mrs Thomas Portarlington Travers of Brinkley Court, Market Snodsbury, near Droitwich". The last page of "Aunts Aren't Gentlemen" has "from Mrs Dahlia Travers of Brinkley Manor, Market Snodsbury, Worcestershire". If she was just plain Mrs on at least these two occasions, her father was no Lord. Possibly if Uncle George had inherited his title sideways, from a distant cousin rather than his father, his brothers and sisters would not be "the Hon." The evidence that he did not inherit it sideways but from his father is the Hon. Algernon Wooster; see near the end of this article.

Second, in "The Love that Purifies" Bertie calls Mr Anstruther "an old friend of Aunt Dahlia's late father". Why not "an old friend of my grandfather"? Obviously because Aunt Dahlia's late father and Bertie's grandfather were two different people.

There is hardly any record of Bertie's Immediate Family. This reticence is easiest to explain if his parents died young and he had no brothers.

His sister presents a problem. In "Bertie Changes his Mind", Jeeves talks about Bertie's sister Mrs Scholfield and her three daughters travelling home from India; but in "Thank You Jeeves" chapter 6 Chuffy asks him aggressively "Have you any sisters, Bertie?" and the answer is "No".

Never accept an apparent contradiction in Wodehouse; he knows what he is writing about. Mrs Scholfield might have died between these two stories, but even so she would deserve to go into the tree. However the remarriage explanation is I think more plausible here too.

To most people "sisters" means people with different Christian names and the same surname, the same two parents, about the same age, brought up together, with strong bonds of affection. But any of these characteristics may be missing. Half-sisters and step-sisters may not even have met.

Mrs Scholfield was probably a half-sister, living in India and married to someone in the Indian Civil Service. Bertie remembers her only when it suits him. As she has three children she is likely to be older than Bertie so I have made her a child by an earlier marriage; and a Wooster rather than a maternal relation, so that Bertie could be Uncle Willoughby's sole heir.

We hear little of uncles Henry, Clive and James, and that mostly in dialogue, which explains why they are never "the Hon." I have assumed that Uncle James, whose address and interests we do not know, is the same person as the clergyman uncle in Kent in "Much Obliged, Jeeves" whose name is not given.

Edwin, the Earl of Worplesdon's menace of a son, I have ennobled. The eldest or only son of an Earl is usually a courtesy Lord, like the Earl of Emsworth's eldest son Lord Bosham. Earl's younger sons are the Hon., like Freddie Threepwood. Edwin must have been one or the other, yet he is not accorded either a peerage, or the Hon., in any of the books. I wanted the family tree to incorporate proper titles, and there is a short story "Disentangling Old Percy" not published in a book, about Lord Worplesdon and his children, in which Edwin is Lord Weeting. So that is the name I have used.

Uncle Willoughby comes in "Jeeves Takes Charge", when Bertie first meets Jeeves. "Willoughby" is a rare, aristocratic Christian name. He is "Sir Willoughby" but has no surname, and I have called him Sir Willoughby Travers. If he were even a distant cousin of Tom Travers, it might help to explain how Bertie seems to know Uncle Tom before the marriage to Aunt Dahlia.

This "Sir" means either a knight or a baronet; knights do not pass on the title to their eldest sons but baronets do. Sir Willoughby could hardly have been given the honour of a knighthood or a baronetcy, because his was not an honourable life. So he must have inherited a baronetcy, making him the eldest son and head of his particular family. He was therefore not a Wooster, because the eldest son and head of the Wooster family must be Lord Yaxley. So probably he was Bertie's mother's brother.

This solves another problem. How rich were the Woosters? Bertie says he is loaded with doubloons, and that is not just his sunny temperament. When Stiffy Byng's uncle Sir Watkyn Bassett ("Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves") does not allow her to marry the man she loves she threatens to marry Bertie for money. She says "one might do worse than take a whack at the Wooster millions". But look closely and you will see that Bertie is the exception.

Claude and Eustace are sons of Bertie's late Uncle Henry, that "blot on the Wooster escutcheon" ("Sir Roderick Comes to Lunch"). Like the other Woosters they are gentlemen, which means they scrape by on unearned income. They were sent to Eton and expelled from Oxford, but they have inherited little and always borrow from Bertie. Dahlia and Agatha live in grand houses because they have rich husbands; personally Dahlia is always destitute. If anybody had the rolling acres and the Wooster

millions, it should have been Lord Yaxley. Yet he lives in rooms in Jermyn Street and eats at his club. When he wants to marry a waitress Aunt Agatha reckons "a hundred pounds will be ample" to buy her off. He must be poorer than Bertie.

Bertie inherits his fortune not from his Wooster father but from his Uncle Willoughby. In "Jeeves Takes Charge" Bertie says "I was more or less dependent on my Uncle Willoughby", so his father could not have left him much. Even clearer is the evidence in Usborne's article "Holy or Unholy Writ" in the Wodehouse "Centenary Celebration". When "Jeeves Takes Charge" first appeared, and as it was reprinted in the June 1980 Saturday Evening Post, Bertie explains that he generally went to Sir Willoughby's place in Shropshire in the summer because he was "down in his will for a substantial chunk of the right stuff". From then on we never hear of Uncle Willoughby and Bertie is financially independent. When Willoughby died he seems to have left the lot to Bertie, which is plausible if he had no other close relations, not even Mrs Scholfield.

The Honourable Algernon Wooster appears in "Something New" (in England "Something Fresh") chapters 7, 8 and 9. This was published in 1915, which makes it the first appearance of the name "Wooster". Unless there were two unrelated Wooster peerages, against which the odds are enormous, we must fit him into Lord Yaxley's family.

The Hon. Algernon and George Lord Yaxley are alive at the same time. Algernon cannot be the son of some cousin from whom George might have inherited the title, or Algernon would have inherited it first. They must both be sons of a Lord Yaxley, and Algernon must therefore be another of Bertie's uncles.

Algernon's behaviour and talk is as young and almost as foolish as Freddie Threepwood's. Freddie was Bertie's age; for proof, "Beefy" Bingham was at Oxford with both Freddie ("Company for Gertrude") and Bertie ("Jeeves and the Song of Songs"). Could Bertie have had an uncle about his own age? Yes; indeed Wodehouse's early book "The Prefect's Uncle" is about a schoolboy four years older than his uncle. Algernon must have been Bertie's youngest uncle.

My Conclusion is that the Wooster Saga has few contradictions. There are various possibilities and unsolved questions: which of Aunt Dahlia's husbands was the father of Angela and Bonzo? Which was really Katherine Witherspoon's brother? Was the order of birth Agatha, Cuthbert, Dahlia? From this family tree you can almost forgive Aunt Agatha her resemblance to Attila the Hun, especially if her parents and stepfather died leaving nine orphans, of which she was not only the strongest character but also the oldest.

Please let me know if you have better answers to these questions.

Remsenberg Pilgrimage

John Parks

My introduction to the world of Wodehouse took place at my grandmother's house one rainy afternoon when I was about 13 or 14. In the small bookcase at the end of the lounge room, a title on the spine of a book grabbed my adolescent attention - what on earth could a book called *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* possibly be about? Only one way to find out - I started reading and from that moment on I realized I had found a new friend - a man whom I would never meet but who would always hold a very special place in my heart. I've read and re-read most of his works and I sent him birthday and Christmas cards for years. He sent me cards in return, and these momentos are among my most treasured possessions.

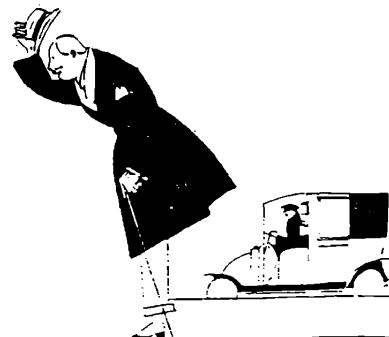
In April 1983 my wife Gloria and I took a holiday to the United States and Canada, including a couple of days in New York. I set aside one day to try to find Basket Neck Lane, Remsenberg, New York.

We discovered that the way to Remsenberg by train was from Pennsylvania Station in Manhattan to the little whistle stop of Speonk, nearly two hours away on Long Island. My long suffering wife, who, I might add, has never read or wanted to read a Wodehouse novel (I still love her in spite of this appalling flaw in her character), did not utter a word of protest at having been dragged away from the many tourist "must sees" of Manhattan. In Speonk we met a very friendly cab driver who was able to take us to the "Lane," as the locals call it - it's a lovely wooded area with each house set back in its own acreage. We arranged from him to pick us up in two hours, and we wandered along the Lane in the hope of meeting someone who could point out to us the Wodehouse home, my plan then being to stand at the front gate and drink it in, as it were!

We hit the jackpot! I approached a lady pottering in her large front garden and to my delight she not only knew the house but was very friendly with Lady Wodehouse and every afternoon took the two Wodehouse dogs out for a walk. She was Mrs. Alex Seibert, an extremely nice lady. When she found we were all the way from Sydney, Australia, she insisted on telephoning Margaret, Lady Wodehouse's housekeeper, who, after speaking with Lady Wodehouse, invited us to come and call.

About 300 yards down the Lane from the Seibert home we found the house, a lovely rambling brick and timber, painted white with red trim. We entered by a side door, and Margaret, a lady of German extraction, greeted us and told us that Lady Wodehouse had instructed her to serve us sherry. We both told her that it was very kind of her etc. etc..., but we did not want to be any bother, but she insisted. "Madam said you must have sherry," so we had sherry.

As we walked into the lounge room we heard steps....there was Lady Wodehouse making a very tottery entrance down the stairs. Margaret was rather



cross with her for coming down, as she had not been well and hadn't been out of bed since her birthday, several days before. She was wearing a flowing, diaphanous dressing gown, with a little make up and a blue ribbon in her hair - she really did look the grand dame! After greeting us and kissing us both on the cheek she waved us to sit down and told me as I sat in a large floral covered chair that it was Plum's favorite.

Dear reader, imagine my utter euphoria. Here I was with the Parks posterior firmly esconced in the very chair that had on innumerable occasions been the recipient of the somewhat vaster and infinitely more distinguished derriere of the master himself.

Margaret served us afternoon tea with a slice of Lady Wodehouse's birthday cake, while I chatted on in a dazed sort of way with our hostess, bringing up events in her life with Plum that she was delighted to recall.

We seemed to be there only a very short time when Margaret came in to say our faithful cab driver was waiting for us at the front gate. We said our goodbyes to Lady Wodehouse and Margaret and the two rather large dogs which had the run of the house. As we reached the beginning of Basket Neck Lane at the main road I noticed a small cemetery off in the trees - it is here that Plum and Ethel now lie side by side.

One day we'll return and lay a tribute on the graves....

John Parks was described to me recently as "Australia's leading Wodehousean"OM

Something new

Len Lawson

Two important new books deserve our special attention: Garrison's second edition of *Who's Who in Wodehouse* and Gould's *What's in Wodehouse* are now available and I have my copies in hand. I highly recommend both. In this new edition Dr. Garrison has added all the characters in the *uncollected* works of PGW, and tells us where these uncollected stories were published. This book has to be the last word on who is who in Wodehouse. Every page provides a raft of information. In his introduction Dr. Garrison discusses some of the scholarly works on PGW and his writings. (Many of these works are, unfortunately, hard to find.) This is a nice hardbound edition with a dust jacket illustration of Gussie peering out from under Bertie's bed where he is hiding from Roderick Spode. The book was offered several months ago by Barnes and Noble, 126 Fifth Ave., New York NY 10011-5666, for \$14.95 plus \$4 postage and insurance, plus sales tax for CA, CT, MA, MN, NJ, NY and PA.

Charles Gould's *What's in Wodehouse* is our first quiz book and Charles has set a very high standard. It's worth the price just to see the variety of quizzes that he has devised. (And one must pity his long suffering students.) There's a crossword puzzle, a wordsquare, anagrams, acrostics, all manner of fill-in-the-blanks, illustrations to identify, and a true or false test. The book includes 24 sections with over a thousand questions. Answers are provided for all but the last section, and that section offers extra credit for the student. Correct answers to the section, when sent to the publisher, will earn you a Summa Cum Laude certificate signed - imprinted, that is - by the Empress of Blandings. The publisher tells me that over a dozen of these certificates have been issued so far. And who is this publisher, you ask? None other than Jimmy Heineman, and many thanks to him! Charles will sign the book if you order it from him: Charles Gould, Kent School, Kent CT 06757. The price is \$14.95 plus \$2.50 for shipping. (Shipping means priority mail to Charles, so your book arrives quickly.)

Jimmy Heineman has good and bad news for us. The good news is that he has published the first of several volumes of "The Great Sermon Handicap." In this volume the story is rendered in English, phonetic English, and the romance languages. Later volumes will present the story in other languages. The first volume is hardbound with dust jacket and includes some very nice illustrations by William Hewison. The price is \$19.95 plus \$2.50 shipping and handling, plus sales tax where applicable, from James H. Heineman, 475 Park Avenue, New York NY 10022. You may also purchase the book, at the same price, from Charles Gould at the address given above.

The bad news is that Jimmy's co-publisher of the

new Wodehouse bibliography has dropped out of the project, and publication will be delayed until August. Now, more good news. Jimmy is working on a book about the Wodehouse Pilgrimage of last July. Colonel Murphy is the author. Jimmy has previously mentioned plans to publish a book dealing with Wodehouse, Bolton, and Kern, and one on essays about Wodehouse. Let's hope all these pan out.

Joan Vincent tells me she bought a new reprint of *If I Were You* at B. Dalton, the nationwide book chain. This is one of two large-format paperback editions published recently by IPL at \$7.95 each - the other is *Full Moon*. IPL also reprinted *Service with a Smile* in standard paperback format at \$4.95. Each of these reprints includes a new introduction by D. R. Benson, a well known Wodehouse scholar who has edited several volumes of short stories by PGW and provided entertaining introductions for all of them.

IPL's full name is International Polygonics Ltd and the company is a kind of sibling of B. Dalton (both are owned by Barnes & Noble). We must look upon IPL with a kindly eye because it also published Dan Garrison's *Who's Who in Wodehouse*.

Kim Wilson tells us of an interesting packaging of a series of PGW short-story audio cassettes. Each cassette is packaged with an Earl Grey tea bag and a receipt for lemon scones. Kim didn't know the price - nor has he, to the best of my knowledge, tried the scones. For more information, contact Crystal Clarity, Publishers, 14618 Tyler Foote Road, Nevada City CA 95959.

Century Hutchinson Ltd is offering two omnibis, *The Jeeves Omnibus* and *The Aunts Omnibus*, in large-format paperback at £9.95 each.

The Jeeves collection has now been offered in almost as many editions as the Bible. The aunts collection is new to me. It contains the two novels *The Mating Season* and *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*, five short stories, and extracts from *The Inimitable Jeeves*. I have both books in my collection but I anticipate a problem, as some inconsiderate person has carelessly scribbled "Ed Ratcliffe" on the half title page of each. Century's address is Brookmount House, 62-65 Chandos Place, London WC2N 4NW, England.

There was a howl of fury which caused the local policeman, who had just been about to turn into the street, to stop and tie his bootlace.

A Few Quick Ones

Doug Stow has sent me a flyer from The Easton Press offering a "leather-bound edition of *The Best of P.G. Wodehouse*...a 3-volume set of *The Inimitable Jeeves*, *The Code of the Woosters*, and *Leave It to Psmith*." The pages are gilt-edged, the illustrations are specially commissioned, and the books look luscious. The price for the three volumes is \$118.50 plus sales tax, payable in three monthly installments. For more information write to The Easton Press, 47 Richards Avenue, Norwalk, Conn. 06857.

My apologies to Charles Bishop: I forgot to mention in the last issue that he contributed the very interesting article "Wodehouse Sahib." Several readers have told me how much they enjoyed it.

John Fletcher's "Bertie Wooster's Family Tree," beginning on page 2 of this issue, can only be considered a triumph of research and ratiocination. To track down the widely scattered clues about relationships, consider their implications for the family structure, and explain inconsistencies, requires unusual persistence and ingenuity. John is an Englishman, a member of the English Drones Club, and now a member of The Wodehouse Society. John told me about his work on the family tree during the Wodehouse Pilgrimage last year, and I urged him to share his discoveries with the rest of us. I'm very happy to present them in *Plum Lines*.

Mindi Reid, whose clever poem "The Cup that Cheers" appears in this issue, joined our little band just recently. Her writing has appeared in several other publications, and I'm looking forward to more of her work.

Stories like those by Norman Ward and John Parks in this issue, about personal contact with Plum and his family, are among my favorites. Anyone else have a story like that to contribute? Plum wrote a great many notes to his fans - most of them, probably, just friendly acknowledgements. But some, like those to Norman, included personal touches we would all enjoy. I couldn't print them all, but I'd like to have the pleasant problem of choosing the most interesting. Please send copies, not originals!

Rob Kooy, editor of *Nothing Serious*, the Dutch Wodehouse newsletter: "Only very recently I discovered that Bussum, the small town where I was born and still live, is a very appropriate place to live when one's a Wodehouse fan. I read a book about the ancient history of the region and the word Bussum seems to come from a combination of two medieval words: Bos-heim, whose English meaning is Wood-home (or house). How about that?" It's fate, Rob, that's what it is.

Finally, I must thank all the good contributors who are sending all the good contributions. If *Plum Lines* is interesting, you make it so. Thank you, thank you, and thank you.



O M

The Oldest Member

"When a studio executive charges you, look to the left but jump to the right. This baffles the simple creature."
Barmy in Wonderland, 1952

New Members

The Colonel is coming!

An invasion? No, it's a pilgrimage, and the warrior isn't armed. Colonel Norman Murphy, leader of our fearless band of Wodehouse Pilgrims in England last summer, is making his personal pilgrimage to America this fall. He writes:

"I shall be over in October. I want to see Remsenberg and New York on the Wodehouse side, and the Shenandoah Valley and Gettysburg to justify all those long years I spent studying and reading about the Civil War, after which I intend to go due west to the Pacific, then south to California and east again to St. Louis, down the Mississippi, and back to New York through the Carolinas. That's the theory anyway. On the way I want to meet as many Wodehouse Society members as I can. So you can tell them I am giving fair warning."

Norman was a friendly and interesting companion on our trip last year, and I'm sure you will find him unchanged. Let's show him the natives are friendly.



Some of us, before the Pilgrimage, had imagined Norman as a Colonel Blimp: balloon-like, red faced, and walrus mustached. We found that he looks much more like the lean and intense Sherlock Holmes.

"I've seen the the light," said the policeman, hitherto an atheist, "and what I wanted to ask you, sir, was do I have to join the Infants' Bible Class or can I start singing in the choir right away?"

The Mating Season, 1949

The Cup That Cheers

Mindi M. Reid

The world is worse than ever 'twas
since Cain first flattened Abel;
(Can't even count on Mother Earth:
tectonic plates aren't stable;)

The streets aren't safe, nor hearth nor home -
Wall Street's incomprehensible;
The masses laugh and sneer at what
was once thought common-sensical;

Music's loud, with occult verse,
Dance - near pornographic;
You take your life within your hands
to venture forth in traffic;

Everything you eat or drink
sports data to defame it -
studies shout: "It kills!" "It heals!"
both ways at once - you name it;

The wilderness is clogged with trash,
poor otters bathe in oil;
The talentless have fame and wealth
while Great Souls starve and toil;

Atrocities abound that would
make old Attila shudder;
Honor, innocence, compassion
are not most men's bread-and-butter;

Well - I can only take SO much!
Come, Landlord, fill my cup-o'
with bravery-renewing brew -
Yes! Make mine BUCK-U-UPPO!

Moo!

These two Victorian silver-gilt cow creamers were offered at a prestigious show in New York not long ago for \$30,000 the pair. With such an asking price, we can only be glad that Tom Travers cleaned up to an amazing extent in Sumatra rubber and Sir Watkyn Bassett pocketed all those fines in the Bow Street police court - or, possibly, inherited the stuff in sackfuls. Surely they were on hand when the show opened, fighting over the treasures.

A Plum Pudding for an English Christmas

Christmas Day and Boxing Day (December 26), 1989, were great days for Wodehouse fans in England. On the first of those days the *Bookmark* program on BBC2 television presented *Plum*, an hour-long biography of The Master. A reviewer called it "an excursion in search of the elusive personality of P.G. Wodehouse," and continued:

"....there was plenty of evidence that Wodehouse's never-never land of butlers and Berties and pig-struck earls was based in part on fact, as Wodehouse biographer Richard Usborne, who has started to look like his hero, suggested.

As a Wodehouse buff since the age of 12, I was fascinated to meet members of American and European fan clubs, a retired colonel who spends his time tracing down the fictional locations, and the noble head of the Wodehouse clan, Lord Kimberley, who really does breed prize pigs. It was amazing how many people were still around with personal memories of Plum...."

Our own John Fletcher calls it "the fairest, most understanding, and most constructive thing done on the air about him." Among those who appeared in the show were Tom Sharpe, Lady Francis Donaldson, Edward Cazalet, and Norman Murphy. Jim Earl and Donald Daniel sent me clippings from Britain about the show, and Jan Kaufman sent a clipping from a copy of the London *Sunday Express* she bought in Seoul, Korea.

Boxing Day brought BBC2's *Wodehouse on Broadway, a Musical Memoir*, a dramatized account of his work on Broadway musicals from 1915 to 1926. Plum was one of the busiest songwriters in America in that period, with a string of partners that included Guy Bolton, George and Ira Gershwin, Jerome Kern, and Sigmund Romberg. Twenty of his songs were performed on the show, and, lest we forget the Englishness of Plum, the show included a cricket match. (Not all the match - the show lasted 90 minutes, not several days.) Donald Daniel and Jim Earl once again sent clippings, joined this time by Vic Bolwell.



Serge Lafont and The Great Barribault's Contest

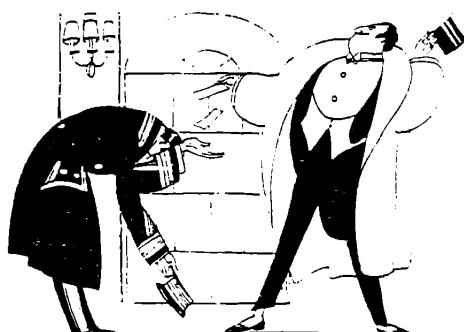
The Great Barribault's Contest was announced months and months ago in this august journal, and I haven't received a single serious entry. The question is simple: Where did Plum find the name Barribault? Before the Second World War some of his characters frequented the expensive (and quite real) Claridge's Hotel in Mayfair. After the war the hotel, still unmistakably Claridge's, has changed its name to Barribault's in his stories. The name Barribault sounds French to me, but I know no French at all. Plum lived principally in France from 1934 until 1940, and in Paris from 1945 until the name Barribault's made its first appearance in *Full Moon*, published in May of 1947. (Wodehouse may, of course, have invented the name, but that would void the contest and we won't even consider the possibility.)

Norman Murphy suggested, some time ago, that a search of the Paris telephone directories and similar records in the period 1945-1947 might turn up the name. I passed the suggestion along to Serge Lafont, our member in Paris. The entertaining story of his initial research follows.

I am very flattered that you think I might be of some help on the Barribault enigma. I have to admit, though, that my first investigations were not as rewarded as I hoped. I gather that it was very naive of me to expect solving easily a mystery which has baffled the superior minds of generations of TWS members.

The first avenue I explored was whether the origin of the name could prove meaningful: I would venture that Barribault is effectively a noun of French origins, but the ault termination makes it sound very medieval. The trouble is that the French language has evolved a lot since the happy days of Crecy and Azincourt and [nearly] all the words in ault have fallen so low as to end with a very common aut. The English language, on the other hand, has very carefully preserved the exotic allure of its imported words, and you can still find a fault in somersault, where on the continent we will be happy with a mere "une faute dans un saut." I would then think that Plum might have come across Barribault in Great Britain as well as France. I have nonetheless explored some more:

As far as the etymology is concerned, I have found that Barri, more commonly Barry, as in Du Barry, originates from a Saxon word meaning either extremity or walls (as in the walls which surround a city). By extension, it has come to mean what was beyond the walls, i.e., the suburbs. Bault itself is a variation of baud, from the Provençal baud (merry) or the



German bald (bold or strong). Barribault then means stronghold, merry suburbia, or anything in between.

I have to admit, though, that this is totally useless information.

I checked dictionaries to try to find Barribault in one piece. Alas, even the Larousse, the Litr., and the Dictionnaire des rues de Paris have not yet revealed anything of interest.

I then turned to the obvious and checked the [current]phone books. I found four Barribauds in Paris and one Barribault in Greater Paris. I called this single Barribault, filled to the brim with hope and excitement. Alas, it was not to be! Not only did this Barribault have nothing to do with any restaurant of whatever description, but he informed me that he was the first of his name to live near Paris, his ancestors originating from Vendée. I have also to add, however, that this sub-moron was not aware that PGW had ever existed. I see you shudder and I cannot blame you.

I then checked the Vendée phone books and found that three Barribaults still reside in this remote area.

I intend to pursue the hunt; my next step should be to consult the phone archives for any 1945 Parisian Barribault, in case my informer has misled me, which would not surprise me at all from someone who has not read the good books. I shall keep you informed of my progress. No stones shall be left unturned.

Serge has established that Barribault is at least an uncommon, if not a rare, name in France. Its rarity may make Plum's source easier to identify. We await further reports with breathless anticipation.

Call for Dues

It's dues time again, folks! Our convention last fall voted to raise our dues to \$15 per year. This is the first dues increase in our history and the last, we hope, for a long time to come. All our labor is volunteer, of course, but increases in our expenses - paper, copying, and postage soon- and the desire to build a reserve fund have made this increase necessary. Our membership has increased greatly in the last few months, but that hasn't brought us any economies of scale.

Please note that this is the only dues request you will receive. We do not mail out separate dues notices. We're a very small group, in the hands of a rampant gang of amateurs, and we couldn't handle the extra paperwork.

If you're sending dues from outside the U.S.A., please make sure that your check or money order specifies U.S. funds. Otherwise, American bankers will charge us huge sums of money to handle these items.

Please send your renewal checks or money orders to our treasurer

Tom Wainwright

by May 1, to be sure of receiving the Summer issue of *Plum Lines*. We'd hate to lose you!

If you find a separate notice enclosed with this issue of *Plum Lines*, stating that you are an honorary member, that means you have entered the ranks of the blessed and you don't have to pay dues.

Those who pay up promptly will receive a standing invitation to Aunt Dahlia's for the coming year, where Anatole will extend himself to the utmost at the very mention of your name. Laggards will have their business affairs taken in hand by the Efficient Baxter.



...the head of a whacking great fish, lying on the carpet and staring up at me in a rather austere sort of way, as if it wanted an explanation and apology.

"Sir Roderick Come to Lunch," *The Inimitable Jeeves*, 1923

Financial Statement Tom Wainwright, Treasurer

Beginning balance, December 31, 1988	\$2744.25
Income	
Dues	\$2777.75
Interest	<u>129.13</u>
Total income	2906.88
Expenses	
Printing, copying, mailing	\$1389.24
Postage	936.96
Miscellaneous	<u>265.51</u>
Total expenses	2591.71
Ending balance, December 31, 1989	3059.42

Information and Memberships
Marilyn MacGregor

Dues Payments and Address Changes
Tom Wainwright

Editorial Contributions
Ed Ratcliffe

Writers through the ages have made a good many derogatory remarks about money and one gets the impression that it is a thing best steered clear of, but every now and then one finds people who like the stuff and one of these was Jane. It seemed to her to fill a long-felt want.

The Girl in Blue. 1970