



Plum Lines

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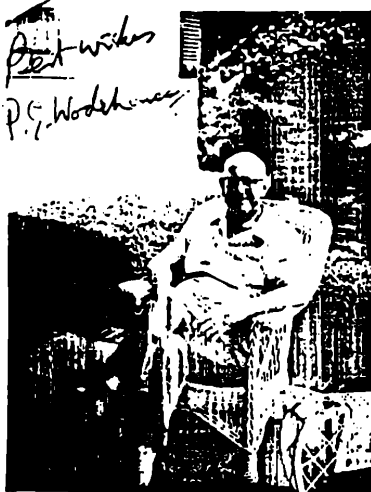
Note from Plum

Walter Hatfield writes:

"In 1969, with my birthday approaching and seeking to do something special, my wife wrote to Plum describing my fondness for his writing. The attached letter and photograph were his response. Needless to say, they made that year's birthday special and I have treasured them ever since."

P. G. Wodehouse
Remsenburg
New York, N.S.C.

March 9, 1969



Dear Mr Hatfield,

I thank you so much for your letter. I am so glad that Mr Hatfield has enjoyed my books.

I have just finished a new one - the last, I should imagine - of the Blantyre Castle series (This one is Number 12!). They come out very well and make a cool end to the series, as it leaves Lord Emsworth alone and happy with his pig!

Yours sincerely

P. G. Wodehouse

The note and picture are shown here considerably reduced. The novel was published in London, September 1969, as *A Pelican at Blandings* and in New York, February 1970, as *No Nudes Is Good Nudes*. The novel ends as he describes it, with Lady Constance "now on the ocean with only a few hours to go before her reunion with James Schoonmaker" and Lord Emsworth dining "in his shooting coat with the holes in the elbows." I was surprised to learn that Plum expected it to be the last in the series - as it was...OM

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"Jeeves and Wooster"

Rhoda Koenig

The big news in the world of Wodehouse at the moment is the advent of a five part British TV series with the above name. The first episode appeared on the last Sunday evening in April. Two popular English actors, Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie, take the parts of Jeeves and his gentleman. Several people sent me articles about the series from English newspapers. The following excerpts are from a London *Sunday Telegraph* article, passed along by Alex Hemming and Pauline Blanc. For more on the series see "The Men Who Make the Queen Mum Smile," page 14. The excerpts in the adjacent column, also from the *Sunday Telegraph*, give us the views of the adapter of an earlier series.

Fry and Laurie are aware that Wodehouse maniacs will be up in arms and at their writing-desks when they see that alterations have been made in the sacred texts. In the televisual Jeeves and Wooster, Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps rather than Tuppy Glossop tricks Bertie into a stunt that makes him drop into the Drones Club swimming pool in his soup and fish; and the hot-water bottle that Bertie mistakenly punctures in retaliation does not belong to the eminent loony doctor Sir Roderick Glossop but to a previously unknown Professor and Madam Cluj of Bormania. Fry would be the first to protest at such changes if he were on the other side of the screen, he admits, but "there have been very good reasons for what Clive Exton has done, and they work."

"Eighty per cent of the joy is in the writing," Laurie puts in, "so the adapter has had to be bold..."

"and say that what people want is the plots and characters, even if you're only getting 20 per cent of Wodehouse."

"No, no!" Laurie says. "We hope to get more than that."

"No, no," Fry plummily reassures. "We'e sure it will be much more than that."

Fry is much younger than previous Jeeveses, but he thinks precedence is not the same as accuracy. "Jeeves is darkish and respectful. That's the only physical description of him. Valets tend to be quite young. Butlers are old."

PGW Hits

Philip Purser

Television first embraced Bertie Wooster and Jeeves 25 years ago in the series "The World of Wooster" with Ian Carmichael as Bertie. "PG Wodehouse's Jeeves was brought to the screen with an accuracy and elan which surprised even the author," said the BBC Yearbook proudly.

Surprised he may have been, but not altogether agreeably so. "They're all so *old*," he told the writer and journalist Peter Lewis.

"He thought of Bertie and his cronies as young scamps," says Lewis, "still in their early twenties." Carmichael, then 45, struck him as particularly too long in the tooth.

"I had written a full series of six or seven episodes, very hard work. The trouble with trying to make visual comedy from any Wodehouse story is that not a lot happens in them. And what the characters say to each other is very rarely smart or comical in the style that situation comedies strive for. Jeeves thinks of Wooster as being "mentally negligible" but he never utters the phrase. That would be totally out of character."*

"The essence of Wodehouse lies in the writing - as when Jeeves is described as entering in a solemn procession of one, or in that famous line about someone, I've forgotten whom. How did it go? "One could see that while not actually disgruntled, he was very far from grunted." How do you translate that to the screen?"

* It is true that Jeeves thought of Bertie as mentally negligible without saying so (see, at least, "Bertie Changes His Mind" in *Carry On, Jeeves*). But Jeeves *did* utter the phrase, Bertie overheard it, and it lead to consequences. The short story in which this occurs first appeared in *The Strand* of February 1922 as "Scoring Off Jeeves," then in *Cosmopolitan* of March 1922 as "Bertie Gets Even." The story was then broken into two parts for unknown reasons and appeared in book form as "The Pride of the Woosters is Wounded" and "The Hero's Reward" in *The Inimitable Jeeves* (London, 1923). A few months later the American edition of the book appeared as *Jeeves*. One story, four titles, four publications - no wonder bibliographers pick at the coverlet and stick straws in their hair. Len Lawson unearthed this information for me in what practically amounted to a trice.OM

Remsenburg Revisited

John Park's "Remsenburg Pilgrimage" in the Spring *Plum Lines* told how he and his wife were kindly introduced to the Wodehouse home in 1983 by a neighbor, Mrs. Alex Seibert. I sent Mrs. Seibert a copy of that issue of *Plum Lines* and received a friendly letter in return. She notes that the Wodehouse's former housekeeper, Mrs. Margaret Zbrozek, is still living in "the Lane" as housekeeper to another resident. I was happy to hear that both women enjoyed reading about our activities. Mrs. Seibert's letter included some interesting reminiscences:

I was fortunate to be considered a friend of the Wodehouses. Many's the time, towards the end of [Lady Wodehouse's] life, that I've sat on her bed, singing some of the old war-time songs which she loved. I was invited to be her companion at a special commemorative dinner for Plum given by one of the New York City libraries. We stayed in an hotel with strong British flavor—sorry!—its name is forgotten but the memory of it remains, very cherished.

Lady Wodehouse and I shared a bedroom with private bathroom. She was tickled by the idea of the telephone being wired close to the toilet. I remember I telephoned my husband and when he said "Where are you?" I replied, "On the john!" I hooted at the surprise in his voice!

Then there was the day when I was invited to dinner, along with—guess who?—Elizabeth Taylor. She sat opposite to me in the Wodehouse dining room. Elizabeth went to school with one of the Wodehouse granddaughters who was staying awhile with Lady Wodehouse.

Needless to say, I was thrilled to bits when Elizabeth handed me an autographed (her own) copy of one of Plum's books. It is one of my most treasured possessions.

I certainly treasure the Wodehouse friendship. There was always some fun to fore, and a pun or two as well. It's been said that punning is the lowest form of humor, but not with "Plummy."

Notes from Norman

Norman Murphy writes:

News from the Front! Jimmy Heineman gave a party for Dick Osborne's 80th birthday last week. [About the middle of May...OM] A whale of a party and Dick looked younger and younger as the evening went on. Charlotte and I came down from Cumbria for it and nearly everybody who is anybody in the Wodehouse World was there. It was a wow.

Jeeves of Belgravia is a very posh dry-cleaning firm in London. Some weeks ago they opened a new branch where the smartness of Chelsea meets the respectability of South Kensington. They asked me along to perform the grand opening. I was delighted to do so, since it was within 500 yards of four places Wodehouse had lived - all of which he had used in his novels. The firm celebrated their 21st birthday last month and I was involved in that as well. Splendid Wodehousean affairs; I arrived at one of them in a 1925 Lagonda with the broly and bowler fluttering in the breeze.

Do you remember how I used to stress how fact and fiction become confused? Two days ago, the TV Bertie and Jeeves series showed a splendid but shamefully short version of the prize-giving at Market Snodsbury Grammar School. Tomorrow morning [May 24] Charlotte and I drive south to meet my destiny - I am the prize giver at Hanley Castle Grammar School. Fun for everybody but me! I just wish I had the courage to follow Gussie's immortal procedure.

Norman has identified Hanley Castle Grammar School, quite firmly, as the original of the Market Snodsbury school in his book *In Search of Blandings*. What a shame we could not be there for Norman's prize giving.



HANLEY CASTLE GRAMMAR SCHOOL — circa 1910

From the fact that he spoke as if he had a hot potato in his mouth without getting the raspberry from the lads in the ringside seats I deduced that he must be the headmaster.

Right Ho, Jeeves, 1934

Something new

Len Lawson

Jim Earl came across a little item in the London *Sunday Times* of 11 March that may presage an important publication: "... the complete (and mostly unpublished) letters of P.G. Wodehouse, complete with *echt* Woosterisms and reflections on aunts, were bought last week by Century Hutchinson. The relatively modest price (rumoured to be less than £70,000) is because Hutchinson has been Plum's publisher since time began. The bulky volume will be out in the autumn."

Jim added a footnote about that *echt*: it means authentic, genuine, and typical, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. You and I know these things, of course, but there are people who don't.

Jim's clipping also announced that *Good Stuff*, by Dennis Gunning, winner of The P.G. Wodehouse Humour Prize last year, has been issued in paperback (Century, £6.99).

Doug Stow gave me a review of *The Oxford Book of Humorous Prose: From William Caxton to P.G. Wodehouse*, edited by Frank Muir. Plum's contribution is "Ukridge's Accident Syndicate." Of the book's 1,162 pages, 50 are devoted to Wodehouse, 25 to Dickens, and 18 to Mark Twain.

Jim Earl sent along a quite favorable review from The London *Times* which notes that the editor "precedes each selection with a passage of italicized comment which is helpful and informative." Jim has just bought his copy and finds it "very good value" at £17.95 (\$35 in the U.S.). (Oxford University Press)

Remember the Easton Press edition of Wodehouse mentioned in the Spring *Plum Lines*? Bill Blood bought the three volume set and reports that "they are beautifully done. Aside from the Folio Society's *P.G. Wodehouse Short Stories*, published in 1983, all of Plum's books have been issued in trade editions...no large paper nor limited editions, just plain run-of-the-mill trade editions. Easton has made this set of three books, called *The Best of Wodehouse*, into a genuine tribute to the Master." The address again: The Easton Press, 47 Richards Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06857.

Deep in their research laboratories on opposite sides of the Atlantic, two of our members have independently made the same astounding discovery. In T. S. Eliot's *The Old Possum's Book of Practical*

Cats, the poem "Bustopher Jones the Cat about Town" includes the words "Drones" and "Pothunter." Surely these are references to the works of the Master. And who are these eagle-eyed gentlemen? Jim Earl and Frank Axe, that's who. And just what have the rest of you been doing for the good of the Society?

Pauline Blanc sends a wildly enthusiastic review from the *San Francisco Chronicle* of a new recording of the 1934 musical "Anything Goes." (Bolton and Wodehouse, you remember, wrote the original book for this show, and members of the Wodehouse Pilgrimage saw an excellent revival in London last summer, courtesy of the Literary Executors of the Estate of P.G. Wodehouse.) The reviewer describes the recording as "positively shimmering," with "astonishingly spirited arrangements," and a female lead who surpasses Ethel Merman. Unfortunately it seems to be available only on compact disc (EMI/Angel 4DS 49848).

Martin Scullin has, at last report, spotted three PGW quotes in *The Portable Curmudgeon* (New York: New American Library, 1987)

In their latest catalog Barnes and Noble has knocked a dollar off the prices of most of their PGW books:

- (1) *Who's Who in Wodehouse* \$13.95
- (2) *Full Moon*, trade pb, \$6.95
- (3) *The Gold Bat and Other Stories*, a large Penguin pb which contains *The Gold Bat*, *The Head of Kay's*, and *The White Feather* for an incredible \$4.95
- (4) *The World of Mr. Mulliner*, a 622 page hardbound book for \$6.95

Order from Barnes and Noble, 126 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10011, or call toll free 1-800-242-6657. Add \$4 for shipping and sales tax in CA, CT, MA, MN, NJ, NY, and PA. The catalog key for this special catalog is A50M 168C.

Jan Kaufman passed along a sales catalog from Edward R. Hamilton, Falls Village CT 06031. It lists

Name-Calling

Something Fresh, *Summer Lightning*, and *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* for \$7.95 each. These are remainders from the hardbound New Autograph edition. Add \$3 for shipping and sales tax in CT.

Toni Rudersdorf has sent me a P.G. Wodehouse catalog from an English rare book dealer which contains an astounding amount of material. You may want to get on his mailing list for future catalogs. Write to John Adrian, 12 Cecil Court, London WC2N 4HE, England. Telephone 071-836 2987.

Toni has discovered *Whatever Happened to Lady Chatterly's Lover*, by Martin Levin. This little book consists of a series of essays on the whereabouts of various people. Some are real people, such as Jeeves and Sherlock Holmes, while others, such as Frodo Baggins and Peter Pan, are fictional. It was published in 1985 and although still listed in *Books in Print* is no longer available from the publisher. It has eluded me so far. If you happen to find a copy, congratulations. If you find two copies, let me know.

Rowena Mackenzie found this letter in the London *Daily Telegraph*. It explains why such delightfully odd names were attached to many of the Drones, who were as a group perhaps the youngest of Plum's characters.

Sir:

Peterborough announced the forthcoming auction of four letters written by P.G. Wodehouse to a schoolfellow at Dulwich mysteriously addressed as "Jeames." I can reveal that he was an artist called Eric George.

The letters reveal that "Jeames" had left Dulwich before Wodehouse, had gone to Oriel College at Oxford and that he intended to become an artist. The name "Jeames" is clearly from Thackeray's *Yellowplush Papers: The Autobiography of Jeames of Buckley Square*.

....[George] served in the 1914-1918 war, and the 1934 edition of *Who's Who in Art* lists him as a painter of figure designs and portraits. He died in 1961.

The first three letters, written in 1899 when Wodehouse was in the sixth form, are all addressed to "Jeames." The fourth, written in 1954, is to "Dear Jimmy." The assumption that James was the recipient's first name seems obvious but was unlikely.

Up to 1914, public schoolboys rarely used Christian names; these were restricted to the immediate family. Surnames were the rule, softened as appropriate by a nickname that clung to its owner through life. This is why Bertie Wooster's companions rejoiced in such sobriquets as Bingo Little, Pongo Twistleton, and Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright (in real life a senior naval officer known as Bubbles throughout his career).

We shall probably never know why Eric George was called "Jeames." But surely any self-respecting schoolboy of the 1890s would rather die than let it be known that his Christian name was that of the most derided schoolboy in fiction - Dean Farrar's *Eric, or Little by Little*.

Col. N.T.P. Murphy
Gosforth, Cumbria



She (Heloisse Pringle) dogs my steps, popping up unexpectedly. I wouldn't be a bit surprised to find her in my bath nestling in the soap dish.

Without the Option, *Carry On, Jeeves*

Report from Paris

Dear Ed:

Herewith a report of the second annual Joint Meeting of the Lake Geneva and Paris Sections of the Society, duly held on May 12 over luncheon in a carefully selected Paris wine bar. M. Serge Lafont and the undersigned were again in attendance. The formal proceedings opened - an immediately closed, to avoid any delay in addressing the main business at hand - with the election of officers of both Sections. Mssrs. Lafont and Bentsen were nominated and re-elected *tout de suite* by unanimous acclaim as Honorable Presidents of their respective Sections.

The above-mentioned main b. at h. was of course the sampling and evaluation of certain bottled fluids for which the French are so justly renowned throughout the civilized world. We also exchanged views on such weighty questions as the Barribault enigma (Serge unflaggingly continues his research) and - most important - France as a superbly qualified venue for a meeting of the Society. As we all know, P.G. had the good sense to reside there for several years, and would it not be folly of the worst sort for us to ignore such wisdom?

Luncheon terminated after three or four hours and two or three bottles (or perhaps three or four bottles and two or three hours?); had it gone on longer it seems unlikely that even this brief report could have been written.

Bill and Ellen Bentsen



Last Chance for TWS Pins

Judy Finnegan writes that as of April 24 only 26 of her beautiful TWS pins remained. Judy designed these pins, had them made, and provided one for everybody who came to the Klamazoo Convention last fall. They are so good looking that I've tried in vain to find a way to reproduce the design in *Plum Lines*: top hat, white gloves, monocle, and the letters TWS, all outlined in gold on the cover of a plum-colored (all right, red) book only 3/4" by 1" in size. Someone who looked remarkably like Jeeves was seen hawking these on a street corner in Mayfair recently.

Port in a Storm

A recent letter in the *London Times* :

Sir, Mr. R.A.W. Rudd asks if a butler would ever serve port from a bottle. That, I would venture to suggest, is the least of their misdemeanors. The draught of butlers who appear in the novels of P.G. Wodehouse include:

Beach, butler to Lord Emsworth; shot Rupert Baxter with an air gun.

Adela Shannon's Phipps; spent three years in Sing-Sing for safeblowing.

Butterfield, butler to Sir Watkyn Bassett; listened at doorways, gathering information for his memoirs.

Even a gentleman's personal gentleman was not above such skulduggery. When not masquerading as Chief Inspector Witherspoon of Scotland Yard, or assisting Honest Patch Perkins as a bookmaker's clerk, did not Jeeves have occasion to spike the orange juice belonging to the new-fancying Gussie Fink-Nottle?

One wonders what the Junior Ganymede made of these goings on.

Yours faithfully,
Paul Pickerill
(Pipe organ builder)
Olton, Solihull, West Midlands

Paul is one of our newer members and surely our only pipe organ builder....OM

A Few Quick Ones

Bill Blood, founder and several times president of our little band, who has hardly recovered from celebrating his 83rd birthday, is now recovering from major surgery. I'm sure he would be glad to hear from his many well-wishers. His address: Captain William Blood, 82 Evergreen Drive, New Britain PA 18901

Bill has been leading a seminar on PGW at Delaware Valley College near his home, doing his bit to Spread The Word. Bill writes that the College "has a program called The Center for Learning in Retirement, fashioned after a similar program at Harvard, wherein senior citizens attend seminars led by other senior citizens with some proficiency in a dozen or so subjects. Seminars meet for two hours once a week for a semester. I talked them into letting me lead a seminar on PGW. I have about 17 in my group...We may get some new members out of this!" I have a copy of Bill's teaching plan for each of the 16 meetings and will be glad to send it to anyone interested in a similar project.

Jimmy Heineman sent the story of the archepiscopal pigs appearing on page 17. It is known from highly placed sources that the Archbishop of Canterbury is a Wodehouse fan and has named one of his pigs Clarence.

Paul Pickerill found this clue in the London *Times* crossword puzzle of March 13: "Listen to the log-cabin humorist." Nine letters. "No prizes for getting the answer," says Paul. [Why listen, I wonder? OM]

I'm late in thanking Len and Shirley Lawson. Several issues ago they took over the dull but necessary job of getting *Plum Lines* into the mail: folding the newsletters, stuffing, sealing, and stamping the envelopes, sticking on the address labels, and finally hauling the big box of mail to the post office. I suppose that makes them the publishers. It certainly makes me grateful.

Marilyn MacGregor has relieved me of another job by writing to prospective and new members of the Society. I enjoyed writing those letters, but they were taking more and more time. I hereby officially blubber with gratitude to Marilyn, too.

Jim Earl has seen the first two episodes of the new British TV series "Jeeves and Wooster," described elsewhere in this issue, and says "I think they are very

good. ITV are going to issue video tapes of the series." Jim encloses a London *Daily Mail* article on the series informing us that Stephen Fry, who plays Jeeves, has been a Wodehouse fan since the age of 11 when an aunt gave him *Very Good, Jeeves* for his birthday. "It was just so funny...The following day I went out and bought every Wodehouse book I could find. It's a crush I've never grown out of. I now own about 150 original editions of his works and 300 to 400 ordinary hardbacks."

Donald Daniel sent news in March that "there is now being broadcast on BBC Radio a production of *Heavy Weather* adapted by Richard Usborne. It is in four episodes of 30 minutes; very good."

Donald added the following note: "Members who are musically minded will be intrigued to learn that the great Italian conductor Victor de Sabata was a fanatical Wodehouse admirer and apparently frequently wrote letters in a Wodehouse style. This information comes from a record magazine I receive; nothing is said as to whether all this was done in English or Italian. Are there Italian translations of Wodehouse?"

Jim Earl forwards news from a London *Daily Mail* columnist of "the excellent campaign of Dulwich MP Gerald Bowden to force the Arts Minister, Richard Luce, to provide a fitting commemoration for P.G. Wodehouse."

I was therefore delighted to hear that Mr. Bowden has lured the Minister into paying a visit next week to the P.G. Wodehouse Memorial Library at Dulwich College, the Master's alma mater. I cannot believe that Mr. Luce would disappoint Wodehousians in such a setting."

Frank Muir, a judge of the 1989 P.G. Wodehouse Humour Prize, writing in the London *Observer*: "Examining the way Wodehouse constructed a story is a wondrous experience for a working author, like a bulldozer mechanic peering into the movement of a Patek Philippe watch."

OM

The Oldest Member

Plum Park

David Albert

Having noticed on a recent vacation that many tourist attractions and amusement parks were based on literary works (Tom Sawyer, the Wizard of Oz, Jules Verne, etc.), I felt it was high time our dear old Wodehouse had a place of his own. I hereby offer a plan for a major theme park called PLUM PARK.

Like any modern amusement park, PLUM PARK has rides, shows, games, and four themed areas: the delightful English countryside of *Blandings Castle and Market Blandings*; the bustle of a 1920's *London Street* on a sunny spring day; the high rises of *New York City* during Prohibition; and the 1930's glamor of the silver screen in *Hollywoodland*. What sets PLUM PARK apart from other attractions are the many strolling characters brought to life from the pages of Wodehouse's books. In fact, guests would encounter one right at the admission gate. There is no fixed admission price; rather, Bertie Little tries to squeeze a loan out of each for a money-making scheme he has (which mainly involves betting on a sure thing at the races).

Once inside the gates, guests enter *Blandings Castle* with its sweeping drive and rolling parkland, where every prospect pleases and only man is vile. Guests may take a walking tour of the Castle with Rupert Baxter as their efficient guide, view the twenty or so guest rooms, entangle themselves in a suit of armor, and visit an audio-animatronic Beach meditatively sipping port in the pantry. The tour ends abruptly, however, when the guests must avoid Lady Constance by taking an immediate departure down the waterpipe outside a bedroom window.

Feet firmly on solid ground once more, guests may row a boat across a lake to an island and be chased by irritable swans, try their luck at the shooting gallery where the targets are the bent-over forms of Beach and Rupert Baxter, or play a round of golf on the excellent course...provided they can get past the Oldest Member and his endless stories.

At the petting zoo guests may visit lethargic cats, muttering Aberdeen terriers, herds of yapping Pekinese, a gorilla, and various snakes, apes and ocelots owned by Hollywood starlets for publicity purposes. The highlight, of course, is a visit to the Empress of Blandings herself, fondly hosted by Lord Emsworth and George Cyril Wellbeloved. Nearby is the Pigs Have Wings ride, similar to Disneyland's Dumbo the Flying Elephant ride, but substituting

Empresses for elephants, of course.

Guests in need of refreshment can head to *Market Blandings* to dine on Anatole's fine French cuisine, or to the Angler's Rest for drinks and storytelling by Mr. Mulliner. Gift shops offer Empress of Blandings piggy banks, Buck-U-Uppo, and little statues of the Infant Samuel at Prayer, suitable for knocking off mantelpieces and smashing into a million bits. A book store displays Whiffle's *On the Care of the Pig* and the complete works of Rosie M. Banks.

Leaving *Market Blandings*, guests may take the excellent milk train to *London Street*, whose main attraction is a wild cab ride with Bertie Wooster chasing Claude and Eustace through the busy streets, while trying to dodge the dozens of young men who throw themselves in front of the cab for various reasons. Other attractions include Aunt Agatha's House of Horrors and a funhouse called Roderick Glossop's Loony Bin. Games include shooting hazelnuts with a slingshot at a top hat, and Policeman's Lift, where one tries to relieve a constable of his helmet.

After lunching at Barribault's, it's on to the Junior Ganymede or the Drones Club, where one may swing from the athletic rings and take a refreshing plunge into the pool in correct evening dress.

From *London Street* to *New York City*, guests must take a transatlantic liner, where they may buy Mickey Mouse dolls with heads that screw off. Guests will probably find they must travel back and forth across the Atlantic several times for plot reasons.

Once in *New York City*, guests may see one of the many Broadway shows written by Wodehouse and Bolton or root for Battling Billson at the fights. After taking Billson to Doctor Sally's First Aid Station, guests could dine at the Purple Chicken or see the "Performing Flea" circus, sponsored by Donaldson's Dog Biscuits.

Then it's on to *Hollywoodland*, where the Superba-Llewellyn Motion Picture Theater offers continuous showings of "A Damsel in Distress." The Laughing Gas ride allows a guest, through special effects, to become a bratty child star who is kidnapped and taken on a high speed chase. A few lucky guests are hired by the movie studio as screen writers. Each one is put into a room alone and forgotten for the rest of the Park's season.

Finally, as you stumble dazedly toward the exit, there shimmers Jeeves who, with a respectful cough

The Earl(s) of Shrewsbury

like an aged sheep on a distant hill, brushes you off with a whisk broom, selects a tasteful tie and ties it in an elegant knot, the perfect souvenir of your visit to PLUM PARK.

Crimes Waves

The Crime Wave at Blandings may be a truer picture of life in an English country house than we realize. Readers of the following letter in the London *Daily Telegraph*, forwarded by Donald Daniel, will realize that a mere six pops of an air gun on a summer afternoon constitute not a crime wave but a pleasant punctuation of the post-luncheon somnolence.

SIR: The footman who rampaged through Lord Darby's household with a sub-machine gun in 1952 (obituary, March 22) attracted so much attention because he reversed the normal order of things. Usually the servants were on the receiving end.

In the 1880s, the Duke of Manchester used to hold lunch parties at which the climax was the driving of every type of game on the estate—deer, rabbits, hare—past the dining room window. The ensuing fusillade often resulted in injury to the long-suffering gamekeepers.

However, the standard rate of a sovereign for every identifiable wound soothed most grumbles plus the proviso that rifles were forbidden.

Perhaps the nearest equivalent to Lord Derby and his footman was the member of the Wedgwood family who was shot by his gamekeeper. His tombstone bore the unfortunate legend: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

During the Wodehouse Pilgrimage last year our group spent a pleasant evening with Jim and Margaret Earl, TWS members in Shrewsbury.

The pleasure of their acquaintance was renewed a few weeks ago when they made a tour of California. Jim and Margaret, and Len and Shirley Lawson, spent a weekend with my wife and me in the redwoods of Felton, helling around in the local dens of iniquity and on Sunday afternoon joining a Wodehouse orgy with 20 or so members of our San Francisco group. Jim Earl and Len Lawson are unregenerate Wodehouse collectors and it was difficult for me, observing their intense conversations, to decide which was further gone in Wodehouse madness. Their wives are quite well balanced, considering the company they keep. A great weekend.

The visit and party reminded me again that I have never belonged to another group I enjoy as much as The Wodehouse Society.



Col. N.T.P. Murphy
Gosforth, Cumbria

Jim Earl and The Great Barribault's Contest

OR

A Letter from Bertie Wooster

Serge Lafont's investigations, described in the the Spring *Plum Lines*, are the first serious efforts to discover where Plum found the name Barribault for Claridge's Hotel. The article has prompted a letter from Bertie himself, passed on to us by Jim Earl.

I say, you know, it's not often I correspond with chaps--in this modern age I generally use the telephone or get Jeeves to dash off a wire, but I thought I'd put you right about the fearful fuss you are making about Barribault's.

I had returned from the Drones Club rather late one night, having been kept there past my usual bed time by old Cyril (Barmy) Fotheringay-Phipps. We have been drawn together in the Drones Club Annual Darts Doubles Tournament, and while same doesn't take place for five weeks he insisted we practice together against strong opposition (Oofy Prosser and Pongo Twistleton-Twistleton), because in a few days he goes to the good old U S of A for three weeks' holiday. Get the picture? There is Bertram partaking of a final whiskey and soda thoughtfully left out by Jeeves, and opening the latest *Plum Lines* just received by the afternoon post from America. It appears that the editor has received a query from Rob Kooy, who runs the Netherlands P.G. Wodehouse Society, about how Barribault's got its name.

Well, I thought, anything to help a couple of good eggs like these. I saw the solution in a flash--yes, you've guessed it--apply to good old Jeeves for the answer first thing next morning. So, after finishing the w and s, and with contented mind resulting from work well done, I went to bed.

It didn't seem long before Jeeves was materialising with the tea, and I was about to put the question of the previous night to him when I realized that relations were a little strained between us over the matter of some specially shrunk and pre-frayed jeans which I had bought the previous morning from a delightful sales chappie in Carnaby Street. This chappie assured me that they were the absolute cat's whiskers for casual wear in the mornings at St Tropez, where we shortly intended to holiday. But would Jeeves see it my way? Not at all. I wouldn't go so far as to say that he sneered at the jeans, but there was an expression on his face I didn't like at all. It was as if I

had stepped on some noxious substance on the pavement and transferred it onto the carpet.

"Come, Jeeves," I said, "and give me your honest opinion."

"I would prefer not to, sir," he said, and exited rather sharply from the room.

So you can see the circumstances gave me pause as someone says, rather like the cat i' the adage, and letting I know not what wait upon I will or some such term Jeeves is fond of.

I don't mind telling you I nearly gave in the following morning. In the interests of triangular good will between Holland, the U S of A and Great Britain, I was prepared to bow the Wooster head and apply to Jeeves for the answer, and indeed was about to do so, when having served the good old eggs and b. Jeeves, having intimated that the St Tropez holiday was imminent, inquired if I intended to visit the Burlington Arcade, where he had seen some snappy gent's wear suitable for both French holidays and Wooster, B. At this unwarranted interference with the rights of man, the good old Wooster chin (see letter to *The Times* below) jutted, and I replied with a touch of hauteur that I was already suited in that department. A heavy frost descended in the room, chilling the eggs and b., and I realised that Bertam stood alone against the world in re the matter of the Barribault conundrum.

Still, as someone says somewhere, a worry shared is a worry halved, and I resolved to put the matter to the more intellectual members of the Drones Club. Well, you know, I've never put myself about as a brainy cove, but some of the answers I got convinced me that in the main the Drones is populated by lunatics.

Things brightened up a bit at lunch when my old pal Bingo Little told me soothingly that he would find the solution for me the very next day. He promised to put the problem to his wife, the well known novelist Rosie M. Banks, and her ingenious mind would solve it without fail.

I had misgivings which proved to be more than justified. The following morning this misguided female telephoned me to say she had the answer. I was slightly uneasy as there seemed to be some ineffectually suppressed giggling coming down the line. She began: "You see, Bertie, I saw right away that

the name gives us an anagram: RIB A BALT SUR, which is clearly a plea for help by a North European sailor and means, "I am a Lithuanian. Give me some money, sir, to buy a rib of beef." His plea was so successful that he was able open a restaurant he called Barribault's."

After this load of frightful tosh there was what I believe is called a pregnant silence and then I heard them both shrieking with laughter and Bingo came on the phone to say, "Leave it to Jeeves, Bertie."

I slammed down the telephone pretty smartly, I can tell you. The Wooster amour propre had definitely taken a dent. Just at this moment Jeeves appeared, alerted by the slamming of the phone, to ask if everything was all right. We Woosters are not made of iron, and I found myself pouring out the whole sad story of my friends' defection to his sympathetic ear.

He carefully placed a parcel on the table, murmured "One moment, sir," and retired. Sixteen and one half seconds later he returned and said, "Mrs. Little was on the right lines, sir, but got the anagram wrong." He handed me a paper with three short words on it and added this explanation:

"The solution is A BRUTAL RIB, sir. This was a remark made by our creator, Mr. Wodehouse, on leaving a well known Clarges Street hotel after partaking of a not very well roasted rib of beef. As he proceeded up Piccadilly his lightning brain transposed the phrase to Barribault. That, sir, is the sum and essence of it all."

"The parcel," he added, "contains your holiday clothing, sir. I have burnt the frayed jeans."

Well, I mean to say, what can you do?

Yours sincerely,

Bertram Wilberforce Wooster

Letter to the *London Times*, 30th November 1937:

Sir,

Your correspondent Mr. John Hayward is to a great extent right in his statement that Bertie Wooster has a receding chin.

A fishlike face has always been hereditary in the Wooster family. Froissart, speaking of the Sieur de Wooster who did so well in the Crusades - his record of 11 Paynim with 12 whacks of the battleaxe still stands, I believe - mentions that, if he had not had the forethought to conceal himself behind a beard like a burst horsehair sofa, more than one of King Richard's men--who, like all of us, were fond of a good laugh--would have offered him an ant's egg.

On the other hand, everything is relative. Compared with Sir Roderick Glossop, Tuppy Glossop, old Pop Stoker, Mr. Blumenfield, and even Jeeves, Bertie is undoubtedly opisthognathous. But go to the Drones and observe him in the company of Freddie Widgeon, Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright, and - particularly - of Gussie Fink-Nottle, and his chin will seem to stick out like the ram of a battleship.

Your obedient servant
P.G. Wodehouse

(From *The First Cuckoo*, a selection of the most witty, amusing and memorable letters to *The Times*, 1900-1980. George Allen & Unwin, publishers.)



The Square, Shrewsbury

Lyle H. Kendall

Dr. Lyle Kendall, a retired professor of English, published scholar, and co-proprietor of the Limestone Hills Book Shop in Glen Rose, Texas, died in February of this year. Dr. Kendall's antiquarian book store has been a major American source of Wodehouse books. Looking over his Catalog Thirty, of March 1989, for example, I find 46 items by or about PGW. They range from a first edition of *The Gold Bar* (1904) through *The Hollywood Omnibus* (1985), and include along the way such items as a *Strand* magazine and a German edition of *If I Were You*. His descriptions were meticulous and perceptive. He noted, for instance, that a *Head of Kay's* includes "a prize sticker for Regular Attendance at Catechism, awarded by R. D'Arcy Punter, Vicar, (didn't give a prayer book)."

His work has contributed significantly to our pleasure in the writings of P.G. Wodehouse. We shall miss him. His widow is continuing the bookstore.

Bertie Speaks!

Bertie Wooster is alive and well - a race horse who has won £43,00 in his career, but is clearly not in the vanguard of his youth.

Bertie's performance at Kempton Park in early April merited only a "Bertie finished nowhere" from our racing correspondent Jim Earl. Headlines in the public press were even less polite: "The Pride of the Woosters is Humbled," "Not Yet in Mid-Season Form?" and "Does He Miss His Trainer, Jeeves?"

In a May 3 outing at Kempton, Jim showed his (not unlimited) faith in Bertie by betting £1 on him each way (win and place) and made a modest profit of £1.50. Jim's interview in the unsaddling enclosure following the race yielded these notes:

Jim: Well, that's better, third place.

Bertie: Yes, I sprang a plate at the start and that didn't help, and then the jock got me blocked in, otherwise I might have won.

Jim: Still, £1100 for third place isn't bad.

Bertie: Tell that to the owner. I bet I'll be out again soon. And in this heat - it was 80F out there today.

Jim: Is it your age, then?

Bertie: Well, ask yourself. The first, second, and fourth are all four year olds and me going on eight. I'm ready to retire to the Drones Club, but will they let...

(Here he was led away, whinnying.)

Wodehousian or Wodehousean?

Jimmy Heineman writes in considerable distress as follows:

Dear Ed:

Which is the correct way of spelling the word meaning "of or pertaining to Wodehouse"? Is it Wodehousian or Wodehousean? Can you or your readers tell me which it is, and why? I have seen both ways of spelling the word. The indecision facing me each time I must spell it is getting to me.

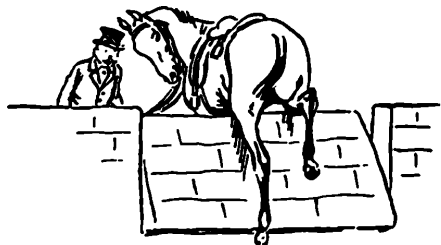
Would you and your readers restore my confidence?

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Jimmy Heineman

I'm glad Jimmy has brought this problem into the open. Many's the time my editorial fingers have paused, trembling, over the computer keys, while I pondered the Wodehousean-Wodehousian question, aware that I must publicly commit myself to one or the other spelling in full view of hundreds of people who know and care about words. I usually take the coward's way out by using both spellings alternately - that way I'm right half the time.

This state of uncertainty must not continue. Jimmy is our honorary president and a publisher of books about Wodehouse. Such a man deserves our best efforts. The matter is surely susceptible of a ready explanation - there's gotta be a rule about it somewhere! English teachers of The Wodehouse Society, let us hear from you: which spelling is right, and why?



The Young Wodehouse

Suzanne Siegel writes:

AT LAST! Risking a charge of "sticking on side" I must say I am thrilled to announce the successful printing of *The Young Wodehouse*, based on my drawing of *The Master*. Those of TWS who attended the October 1989 convention in Kalamazoo will (I hope!) remember seeing it on display there. In any case I have already had numerous requests - well, at least three - for copies of this drawing when they became available in reproduction.

Pine no more! The weary waiting is at an end! They are available NOW! The signed and numbered edition has been printed in a warm brown sepia-toned ink on heavy cream-colored stock. It is eminently suitable for framing at the convenient size of 8 by 11 inches, which makes a nice fit in a ready-cut 8 by 10 mat.



Bookseller's Paradise

I have matted and framed the Number One of the edition and am sending it to the Wodehouse Memorial Library at Dulwich College. The actual commission to do the picture came about as a result of Mr. Jim Thorne's generous idea of paying me to produce an image of the Master for last fall's TWS convention in Kalamazoo. I had mentioned...that I wanted to do a picture of *The Young Wodehouse*, since he was very handsome as a young man and [a picture from his youth] is not what we usually see on his book jackets. The two photos I used for reference are in *Bring on the Girls* and *P.G. Wodehouse: Portrait of a Master*. The drawing is a study for a painting I am going to do for Mr. Thorne in the same monochrome color scheme of sepia-tones as appears in the print.

Jay Weiss sends a review of the autobiography of Paul Minet, an English second-hand bookseller. Minet is a successful businessman and an uncommonly honest recorder of his bookselling world. In light of his realism his most remarkable trait may be that he was motivated by the stories of P.G. According to the reviewer "...he believes that P.G. Wodehouse had everything to do with his career. "For me, the world of Wodehouse was not the imaginary paradise conveyed to most readers - I took him far more seriously than that. My aim in life may have been to bend all my abilities toward making a fortune, but the reason for making a fortune was to enjoy a countrified, upper class ease which remained entirely outside my means." Perhaps a unique example of Plum's influence.

Late Booking: My First Twenty Five Years in the Secondhand Book Trade (Old Knowle, Frant, East Sussex: Frantic Press, 1989, 199 pp, £12).

The Men Who Put a Smile on the Queen Mum's Face

David Lewin

The London Mail, April 15, 1990

The following excerpts describe how "England trendiest actors" feel about playing two of our favorite characters...OM

Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie met exactly ten years ago at Cambridge...when Laurie was president and producer of the Cambridge Footlights revue. They have been close friends and have worked closely together ever since.

At that time Fry thought he might become a teacher and Laurie contemplated his future as a policeman in Hong Kong "with Serpico-like knee-length white shorts". Now they are to star in a new P.G. Wodehouse TV series - Fry as Jeeves, Laurie as Wooster - starting shortly.

Stephen Fry at 31 is older (by two years) than Laurie. He is taller (by two inches at 6ft 4in) and richer because he wrote the script of the successful revival of *Me and My Gal*.

I asked them what they saw in each other when first they met.

Stephen Fry: "I saw someone who was overwhelmingly modest, openly worried and not cocky. He was vulnerable but also blindingly funny. He could be funny without winking or blinking at the audience."

Hugh Laurie: "My first thought was - bli-mey! Stephen is tall with acres of tweed and an almost stiff collar. And surprisingly sombre: not as chatty as he was to become."

"I was shy," said Fry.

Hugh Laurie continued: "My overwhelming emotion when he started writing for the Footlights was one of relief that I wasn't going to have to steer this ship on my own as both president and producer.

"What I wanted was the show to be grown-up and not to have a lot of squeaky undergrads capering about. Gravitas was the word and Stephen had more suitcases of gravitas than any undergraduate I had ever met. Exactly the same as he does now."

"It is my speciality," said Fry, and they both laughed.

An how do they see each other now? Laurie: "When I first met him, Stephen was about 58 years old

and now he is 22. What I have done is put on ten years and he has shed about 25. Damn him."

Fry: "Hugh has grown in confidence. Somehow in those days I had show business in my blood but Hugh was an oarsman and an athlete who fell into show business by mistake because he is so talented.

"In that first show we did, he became impatient with the camp males in the chorus parading themselves in such an undignified and undisciplined manner. He was baffled by it all then because he was used to a rowing eight where people did as they were told. Now he can handle it all."

They had talked to me about the intimacy of a scene in *Jeeves and Wooster* where the servant has to hand a towel to the master in the bathroom. It is handled on screen as perfectly normal without any hint of a possible homosexual relationship between them.

"In fact there is no suggestion of sexuality of any kind in the stories," said Laurie. "As Wooster, I kiss a girl only once and she is my cousin - and I kiss her chastely on the cheek. Wooster never lingers over it."

At first glance, in the keen and often chill wind of the 90s, the impeccable Jeeves and the impossible Wooster would seem an anachronistic couple washed up from some timeless and kinder past. But the P.G. Wodehouse stories about them still sell by the million around the world (even, oddly enough, in Japan) and the Queen Mother says she reads them every night so she can go to bed "with a smile on my face despite the strains of the day."

And that is the key. That is why, after more than 25 years, Jeeves and Wooster are back on television.

The series, made independently by Granada, was filmed on location in London and the Home Counties to reflect an era when the biggest problem was the loss of an unimportant girlfriend or, more seriously, the failure of a pet pig to win a prize in some competition or other.

Fry said, "As Evelyn Waugh wrote, Wodehouse characters have never tasted the forbidden fruit. They are still in Eden, the gardens of Blandings Castle from which we are all exiled.

"Jeeves and Wooster have a pure relationship, so there can be no sniggers. What is appealing about them

is the sheer innocence of it all. When we did the scene with the bath towel, we found a kind of intimacy that you couldn't have today."

I wondered if Hugh Laurie could have played Jeeves and Stephen Fry Wooster? They didn't think so.

"But every time Brian Eastman [the producer] came to a list of possible Woosters," said Fry, "Hugh was at the top and every time he came to a Jeeves, I was."

"The real difference between us in the parts is in the colour of our voices. Mine is in the brown and purple range for Jeeves. Hugh's is blue and mustard-yellow for Wooster."

If they have a secret wish, it is to play the villains in a James Bond film. "Menace is the most enjoyable thing for an actor to try to create," says Hugh Laurie. "You have a greater opportunity to ham it up than in any other part."

"That is why actors like playing terrifying barristers in wigs - looking at their fingernails and waiting for a reply," said Fry. "Heroes have to work so much harder."

"When Edmund Kean, the famous tragic actor, was on his deathbed, someone asked him what it was like to die. Was it hard? And Kean replied, "Oh, comedy is hard. Dying is easy."



This is What Happened to "Jeeves"

Pat Hooker

An article in the May 1989 *Plum Lines* asked the question, "What Happened to Jeeves?", a reference to the 1975 British musical that flopped rather badly. The following article examines the remains from the viewpoint of a woman who is a Wodehouse fan, saw the show, and is an adapter of Wodehouse.

In answer to a recent *Plum Lines* article, "What Happened to Jeeves?", regarding the ill-fated musical of that name, I can add a postscript. I am one of the - alas - few people who actually saw the thing, and have bent my brain trying to understand why it flopped.

Alan Ayckbourn is one of the two best playwrights in England, and a confessed Wodehousian. Andrew Lloyd Webber is by no means a nonentity, and the music he wrote for "Jeeves" is, for me anyway, the best he's ever done. The cast was excellent: David Hemmings a delightful Bertie, Michael Aldridge a perfect Jeeves, a Madeline Bassett of one's wildest dreams. Lovely production - I still treasure the memory of the garden scene for Bertie's "proposal" to Madeline being provided by members of the Drones Club wandering around a bare stage clutching portable rose bushes - including one pudgy chap who smoked all the time (through a long holder, of course). And there was nothing at all wrong with the lyrics - I rushed out and bought a record of the production, and it still cheers me up on dreary winter afternoons. I'd love to quote some of the lyrics, but copyright...!

So, what went wrong? Speaking as a Wodehouse purist, I had grave reservations about the book itself. I have adapted Wodehouse, and have learned the bitter lesson that there is nobody, but nobody, who can improve on the Master when it comes to plotting - which is perhaps why so many Wodehouse adaptations have fallen flat on their faces, because so many people think they can do better than he. Nobody can - it's as simple as that.

The plot of "Jeeves" was an amalgam of *Right Ho, Jeeves* and *The Code of The Woosters*. So: we got a mixture of Bertie's initial problems with Madeline, and the added complication of the famous

cow-creamer. Well, okay - one could see the logic of that, perhaps. The point at which the credibility of this member of the audience became decidedly strained was with the arrival of Honoria Glossop at Totleigh Towers. Indeed, by the end of Act II, Bertie was engaged to three girls - I have now forgotten who the third was, but by this time the spun-steel snowdrop of Wodehouse's original story was stretched to breaking point (assuming, of course, that one can stretch a snowdrop).

I was vividly reminded of Rosie M. Banks writing a story for the Christmas issue of *Woman's Wonder*, entitled "Tiny Fingers", in which "she had chucked off the wraps completely. Scooping up snow and holly and robin redbreasts and carol-singing villagers in both hands, she had let herself go and given her public the works." Also a distinct whiff of the story conference in the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Corporation, when Mr. Schnellenhamer is criticising the scenario of their latest mega-film: "This guy, as I see it, is in a spot. He's seen his wife kissing a fellow and, not knowing it was really her brother, he's gone off to Africa, shooting big game, and here's this lion has got him down and is starting to chew the face off him. He gazes into its hideous eyes, he hears its fearful snarls, and he knows the end is near. And where I think you're wrong, Levitsky, is in saying that that's the spot for our big cabaret sequence."

I don't know how many fingers were in that pie. But I cannot help but cry: when, oh when, will people dramatising Wodehouse realize that he was a theatre man from soup to nuts, and that nobody can improve on his plotting and dramatic impetus? But apart from that quibble, I for one thoroughly enjoyed "Jeeves", and if it's ever revived I'll be the first in the queue for seats!



Musical comedy is the Irish stew of drama. Anything may be put into it, with the certainty that it will improve the general effect.

Bill the Bloodhound, *The Man with Two Left Feet*, 1917

NEWS



Harriet: died after fighting a leaner, younger sow

Archbishop's prize pig meets a sad end

By W F Deedes

HARRIET, most charismatic of the Archbishop of Canterbury's prize-winning Berkshire pigs, is dead.

She fought another younger and leaner sow called Poppy at the Archbishop's pig headquarters at Aldington in Kent, exhausted herself and suffered a heart attack. The verdict was death by misadventure. The Archbishop has been informed.

At the time of her death Harriet was 2½ years old. Due to an oversight at the time of her birth she was never registered and so could not enter for show prizes.

She then selflessly concentrated her efforts on producing prize-winners, first with Basil, who proved an unsatisfactory husband, and later with a boar named Butch Cassidy.

Harriet first entered the lives of our households in November, 1987. My wife purchased her as a wedding anniversary gift. When Harriet's bulk rendered her unmanageable as a pet in our modest sty, we returned her to the Archbishop's minders next door.

Although unshowable, she was widely admired in knowledgeable pig circles and enjoyed being photographed. This proved to be her undoing.

Her death came about after a photographer had arrived to take pictures for a magazine. Harriet and Poppy were released from their respective homes for the benefit of the camera. Jealousies were aroused. Innumerable children survive her.

Picture: ERIC ROBERTS



The Archbishop with Portia, another of his pigs, which won a first prize at the Kent Show last July

Information and New Memberships
Marilyn MacGregor

Dues Payments and Address Changes
Tom Wainwright

Editorial Contributions
Ed Ratchffe, OM