



# Plum Lines

The quarterly newsletter of The Wodehouse Society

Vol. 15 No 2

Summer 1994

## Dedication of plaque to the memory of Sir Pelham and Lady Wodehouse



*"Dear little, dear little church 'round the corner,  
Where so many lives have begun."*

P. G. WODEHOUSE

On Sunday, May 1, 1994, the Wodehouse Society dedicated a plaque in the Little Church Around the Corner in New York City to the memory of Plum and Ethel Wodehouse, who were married there on September 30, 1914. Here's an account of that happy weekend by **Elin Woodger and Toni Rudersdorf.**

**A**h, what a weekend! And what better way to herald the arrival of spring than to get together with Wodehousians. The Faithful gathered from all over the country, including a nottle of NEWTS (collective noun compliments of John Graham) from Boston. Said nottle drove down on Friday, April 29, to stay at Brinkley Court, located but 45 minutes away from Remsenburg, the first stop of the action-packed itinerary that President Toni Rudersdorf had prepared for us.

### Remsenburg

On Saturday morning a foggy start quickly gave way to sunshine, and by the time we arrived at the cemetery in Remsenburg, it was clear that a beautiful day was in store for us. Spring was apparent on every side, with flowering trees, tender green grass, and flowers strewn about in profusion. We stretched our legs and portered about the gravestones until we spotted Margaret Zbrozek (Lady Wodehouse's housekeeper) coming to join us. Then came the van bearing the pilgrims from New York, augmenting our number to an even dozen, including a distinguished guest: Hal Cazalet, great-grandson of Ethel and Plum. We were joined by Lee Davis and Ann Smith, the latter having been a secretary for Plum and/or Ethel. Ann had already placed a bouquet of fresh yellow jonquils at the graves to "brighten it up a bit." Lee had a two-fold claim to fame: As a boy, he had caddied for Wodehouse and Guy Bolton, and as a man he has written a book (published last fall and available through Frits Menschaar or Jimmy Heineman) about the Bolton, Wodehouse, and Kern collaboration. Margaret brought cards for us to sign

man he has written a book (published last fall and available through Frits Menschaar or Jimmy Heineman) about the Bolton, Wodehouse, and Kern collaboration. Margaret brought cards for us to sign and send to Mrs. Alexandra Seibert (a Wodehouse friend and neighbor just now in the hospital) and Sir Edward Cazelet in London, and Lee, Ann, and Hal brought some wonderful stories about the Wodehouses.

### **The vacuum cleaner saleswoman**

After visiting the Wodehouse gravesite, we ambled down Basket Neck Lane, gathering at the end of a certain driveway to goggle at the house in which Plum and Ethel had spent so many happy years together. The present owners spotted us (well, in fact we were pretty hard to miss), and Toni wasted no time in charming them into allow us to trample through their house.

Tony's version of the incident: "They were on their way out for the day and, seeing us, hesitated just long enough for me to leap forward, large teeth flashing, hand extended like a vacuum cleaner salesman and oil oozing from every pore. My plan was to get permission for us to ramble over the grounds and goggle at closer range. But, with the now famous generosity of the people in that hamlet, the lady waved her hand in a dismissive way at the house and said heartily—"Oh, go on in. It's not the same as when they were there, but go on in."

### **Sanctum**

Lee, Ann, and Hal described the house and grounds as they were in the Wodehouses' day, and their stories were incomparable. One very touching moment occurred when we stood in Lady Ethel's bedroom and Hal reminisced about the last time he saw his great-grandmother, about a year before she died. It was also rather ripping to stand in the room that had been Plum's study and to think of all the great prose that had been written there.

From there it was on to the Bide-a-Wee shelter and the pet cemetery to take numer-

A keepsake to commemorate  
the dedication of a plaque  
in memory of

**P. G. Wodehouse**

in the

Church of the Transfiguration

*"The Little Church Around the Corner"*

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May 1, 1994

New York, New York

ous photographs of the graves where several of the celebrated Wodehouse pets are buried.

### **Book-Friends**

Finally on to Manhattan for the Saturday night dinner at Book-Friends Cafe. For this event, our number swelled to 20 with the addition to our party of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Schwed (Plum's long-time American editor), among others. Laughter and Plummy conversations permeated every nook and cranny of Book-Friends, and my understanding is that the rafters are still shaking. The food was good, too, but alas, no breadrolls were available for tossing.

After dinner, led by Carolyn ("Let the Games Begin!") Pokrivchak and Maria ("Who Sleeps in New York?") Sensale, some of us took a late night spin on the Staten Island Ferry. As we returned to our hotel, Carolyn pointed out that we should have our own Great Sermon Handicap. Her partners in crime quickly saw the sense in this. When all bets were in, the predicted time of the upcoming sermon ranged from 12 to

35 minutes, with the most interesting prediction being that of Chris Riff: 16 minutes and 45 seconds.

### Sanctum again

Sunday morning came far too soon for some we could name, but heroically we clustered 'round the breakfast table at the Washington Square Hotel and faced down the eggs. Gray clouds provided the long-predicted downpours, but amazingly the sky began to clear as we walked to the church. We found the Little Church Around the Corner easily, Plum's directions being so precise. With the addition of those who came just for the plaque dedication, our group was now a mini-convention, and "What ho!"s rang out within the solemnity of the church.

The service began, and it was clear that we were in for a long one, this being an Episcopal High Mass. It was some time before the rector made his way to the pulpit and certain individuals in the pews glanced expectantly at their watches. Now, the question is: Do you count the opening announcements as part of the sermon, or wait until he has cleared his throat and launched into the good, pithy stuff before you begin watching the clock? This could be of crucial importance to certain bettors, especially John Fahey, who had put his money on 35 minutes. But even without the announcements, the rector proved to be in good form—a slow, careful speaker, with an interesting habit of seeming as though he was about to conclude, only to turn slowly and carefully onto another avenue of thought. For a while, it seemed as if young Fahey was going to win.

As to what the sermon was about, those of us who had hoped for a lively discussion of Wodehouse and humor were quickly disappointed. Father Catir chose to concentrate instead on certain Ethiopian eunuchs who haven't a clue. At one point it was mentioned that in a way we are all eunuchs. I wanted to take issue with this, but we were only about halfway through what turned out to be a service lasting an hour and a half. It seemed best to wait for a more appropriate moment to debate this rather interesting theological point.

### Dedication

After a time the service concluded and the plaque dedication began. Two jolly speeches were delivered by Florence Cunningham and President Toni, and at last the veil was dropped and our plaque revealed itself in all its bronze glory. It is in a prominent spot on the north wall of the church, eminently more readable than its neighboring plaques, and, as it bears a perfect quote from *Uneasy Money* about the Little Church Around the Corner, it is sure to stir up even more interest in Wodehouse when people read it. Frits Menschaar donated a copy of *Uneasy Money* to the church for that very reason.

After a reception in the garden and a tour of the church, the various Wodehousians finally and reluctantly took their leave of one another, with high hopes of meeting again in Boston in 1995. Many thanks should go to all those who made the weekend possible: Father Norman J. Catir and his staff of the Church of the Transfiguration; Sir Edward Cazalet, who generously provided a large portion of the benefaction; Florence Cunningham, who initiated the project; Len Lawson, who saw that it was carried forward; Frits Menschaar, who made the plaque and its place in the

*Sunday, May 1, 1994*

*Church of the Transfiguration*

11:00 a.m.

Service dedicated to P. G. Wodehouse

*Father Norman J. Catir*

12:30 p.m.

Welcome

*Florence Cunningham*

Dedication

*Toni Rudersdorf, President of The Wodehouse Society*

Tea in the garden following the ceremony

church a reality; John Graham, who did most of the on-site grunt work to coordinate activities, especially the pilgrimage to Remsenburg (and paid for our transportation from Manhattan to Remsenburg and return); and President Toni Rudersdorf, who planned and executed a splendid weekend filled with fun activities. All in all, an event that did the Wodehouse Society proud, and it was a pleasure to be a part of it.

A special treasure was the beautiful booklet designed and printed by Doug and Margaret Stow to commemorate the occasion. [I've copied some of it on these pages with its margins reduced. —OM]

Sir Edward Cazalet telephoned his greetings and best wishes to all those gathered for the event and sent his regrets that he was unable to join us. His son Hal, living in New York City just now, represented the family very ably.

By a nose

Oh—you're probably wondering about the results of the Great Sermon Handicap. The final time was 17 minutes and 10 seconds. Thus the amazing Chris Riff won by a nose over Mary Miley, who had predicted 18 minutes. On the other hand, if you count the opening announcements, then Elin Woodger was a likely winner with a bet of 20 minutes. We'll leave it to Steggles to decide.

*The plaque is inscribed:*

P. G. WODEHOUSE, 1881-1975, AUTHOR

married Ethel Rowley in 1914 in this church:

“ . . . the only church that anybody could possibly be married at. It's on Twenty-ninth Street, just around the corner from Fifth Avenue. It's got a fountain playing in front of it, and it's a little bit of Heaven dumped right down in the middle of New York.”

In loving memory,

THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY

## Dedication speech

by Toni Rudersdorf

These are President Toni Rudersdorf's remarks at the dedication of the plaque in memory of Sir Pelham and Lady Wodehouse in The Church of the Transfiguration (The Little Church Around the Corner) in New York City on May 1, 1994. Toni was preceded by Florence Cunningham, who started it all back in 1991. Florence delivered a brief speech of welcome.

In the summer of 1914, Joe DiMaggio and Thor Heyerdahl were born, the Kodak color photographic process was patented, and Archduke Franz Ferdinand met a bad end in Sarajevo. At the same time, P.G. Wodehouse sailed for America in company of John Barrymore, about whom he had been commissioned to write some articles. They crossed the Atlantic barely ahead of the Great War. Being in New York for what promised to be a good while, he did what other men had done before, he went out on a blind date. One month later he and the young lady he met that day were married in this little church. That was September 30, 1914...the beginning of a 61 year adventure.

P.G. Wodehouse, like the heroes in his books, admired and had sympathy for people who displayed courage in the face of hardship. It is very likely that Ethel's attraction owed at least a bit to her ability to face the difficulties life had handed her with spirit and resource.

In 1914 P.G.W. was 32 years old and Ethel was 26. He was already established in the literary world having published 16 books and participating in one way or another in eight musicals. In one of these, *The Beauty of Bath*, he collaborated for the first time on a song (“Mister Chamberlain”) with Jerome Kern.

Shortly after their marriage, the Wodehouses settled into life in Manhattan, Plum having sold “Extricating Young Gussie,” the first Wooster and Jeeves story, to *The Saturday Evening Post* for a handsome sum. He also accepted the position of literary critic for *Vanity Fair*

and in that capacity crossed paths again with Jerome Kern. This was the beginning of his fortune and a lucky break for theatre-goers.

It wasn't until 1918 that the Wodehouses, in company of their first two Pekingese, were able to begin their trans-Atlantic travels. Plum had literary and musical interests in England and in the U.S. so they were often in shipboard company with theatrical and musical stars, many of whom became friends.

They lived on Walton Street in London until 1919 when they returned to America, moving into a cottage in Great Neck near Guy Bolton. In the first ten years Plum wrote lyrics and part of the book for 12 musical comedies, four plays and incidentally published 20 books. His marriage began making an impression on his novels, notably *Jill the Reckless* (1921) and *Adventures of Sally*. His heroines were often chorus girls who took to the stage because of a pressing financial burden. The song "Little Church Around the Corner" was written in 1920.

Back in London in 1921, Ethel bought Front Line, a race-horse which the caring for and admiration of became their family hobby. Rufus, the Pekingese lived with them, soon joined by the beautiful Susan who, in the fullness of time, presented them with puppies. It was in 1929 an article written by their daughter, Leonora, was published in *The Strand* in which the Wodehouse family's preoccupation with their pets was described. She said they preferred to stay at home or travel in relays rather than leave their pets alone or with strangers.

When necessary, however, they would pack the Pekes and move, which they did in 1930 to Hollywood. It was here, in 1931 that Plum made his famous bloomer in the press about his highly paid status as a non-writing writer. This was only shortly after having taken a financial beating, along with the rest of the world, in the collapse of Wall Street and during the first round of his Internal Revenue Blues. A few months later, in 1932, they again packed the pets and moved, this time to France.

In Le Touquet they bought a home, Low Wood, and settled in to finding and caring for all the local stay pets. Ethel showed their Pekingese in local competitions, worked on improving their home and maintained a pleasant social life while Plum wrote 21 books and had a number of musicals running both in London and the U.S.A. This was at the close of what has been termed by historians "The Long Weekend," the lull between the wars.

It is possible that had the income-tax laws of the

day not been so difficult, giving both the IRS and the Inland Revenue ways to double-tax them, Plum and Ethel might not have been in France when war broke out in 1939. During the time of his internment by the German military, Ethel and the amazing Pekingese, Wonder, struggled along to survive in France. She sold her jewelry and lived on the proceeds. She also sent money and food to Plum in his detention camps. He wrote to her frequently and she was able to keep Guy Bolton and other Americans who were trying to get him freed up-to-date on his welfare. He was finally freed in 1941 but not to go home. Ethel joined him and they remained in Germany, unable to leave and muddling through with the help of friends and providence until the end of the war.

Benjamin Franklin wrote, "without a friend, life is a wilderness." In the wilderness that followed the war the friendship that characterized this marriage was strong enough to establish a new life and to carry them over their many terrible losses. They were unable to return to England because Plum had not yet been cleared of the accusations against him stemming from the Berlin broadcasts. Their finances were frozen while the IRS once again sought for ways to claim more of them. And, most tragically of all, Leonora, their daughter, had died while they were gone.

Over the course of their marriage, the Wodehouses lived in America, France, England, and Germany. They had friends among Hollywood movie stars, Broadway and London actors, and many writers and publishers. Wherever they were they maintained a "safety zone," a little island of affection populated with dogs and cats. The people who lasted in their lives were also fond of animals. In Plum's letters I have found only one reference to a person (who was certainly long lasting) who failed to come up the mark, animal-wise. In a letter to Guy Bolton in February, 1965, he remarked: "...why on earth Peter Schwed can't understand what wonderful creatures cats are."

When you read the letters of P.G.W. you find little paragraphs that I refer to as "jewels." These are the story of his life with Ethel, their involvement with and affection for animals. They act as a window to The Wodehouse's World. Some examples I gleaned from letters to Guy Bolton in the 1960's:

No news from Remsenburg except that the calico cat which used to turn up for food every evening now comes into the house as if he owned it. He has pinched my chair in front of the television in Ethel's bedroom and I can't lift him off as he has a way of lashing out if touched. I suppose we shall find a formula eventually. (May, '64)

Life has been rendered still gloomier by Ethel taking in a Siamese cat which bit both her hands, fought one of the other

cats, and bit Ethel in both legs when she joined in. Ethel is now in bed with her right leg propped up and feeling very sorry for herself. This, the doctor says, will go on for ten days! The Bide-a-Wee people are sending for the cat this afternoon and it is nowhere to be found. We think it must be in the rafters of the cupboard in E's room. (May, '67)

The Peke is firmly established in our home, and I know it would break Nella's heart to part with him. He is a fascinating dog, but at present much too chip-on-the-shoulder. He started off by fighting Jed every time they met, but now seems to be settling down. But last night Ethel was brushing him and he bit her good. But I think he will get all right soon. (Oct. '69)

Ethel sends her love. She is at the moment attending to a stray cat (our eighth) in the upstairs bedroom. (July '69)

There are very few people who really mean anything in one's life, and it's no good pretending there are. With animals it's different. (Aug. '61)

I suppose everyone knows about the development of the animal shelter and its odd conclusion. The Wodehouses financed expansion and improvements of the Bide-a-Wee animal shelter near Remsenburg and Ethel went daily to help out and feed the animals. In Florence Donaldson's biography Ethel is described as losing her last interest in life when the shelter management put an end to her daily trips there. I do not think this is necessarily so, although certainly an unfortunate loss to her of human contact. She and Plum continued to

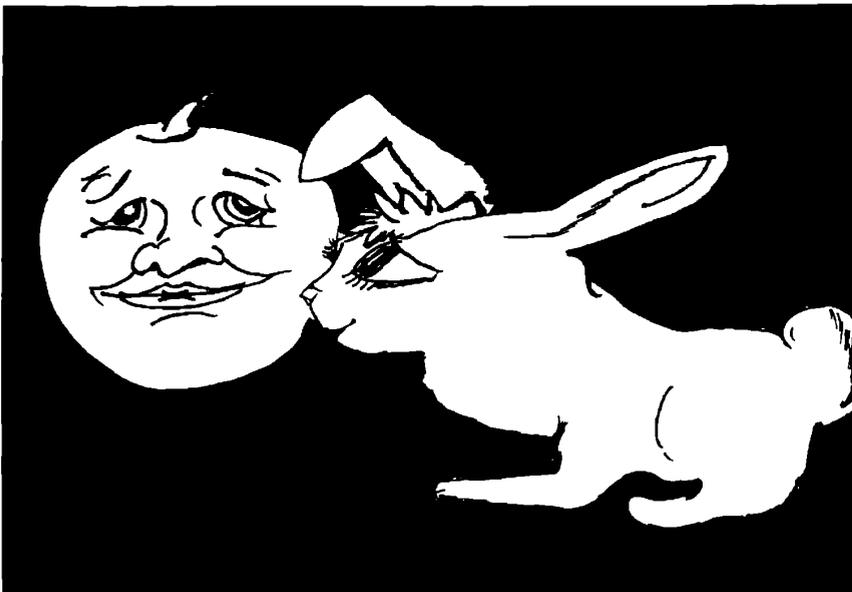
help lost and hurt animals 'til the end of their days.

This logo, a Plum with a Bunny, is a play on two names, two terms of endearment. [Toni was describing a commemorative button made up for the occasion, with a plum and bunny on a plum-colored

“Over the years  
together they  
created two happy  
worlds...”

background, the words “Plum and Bunny,” and the wedding date. The original sketch for the button is shown below.] P.G. was Plum from earliest childhood, and his pet-name for Ethel was Bunny. This clicks if you know about the popularity of the book *Raffles*, by E.W. Hornung. Raffles was a “Master Criminal,” the Mayfair Bandit, and he had a partner, Bunny, who might be looked upon as his secret weapon. Bunny made it possible for the Bandit to win the gold and glory, to get away with the goods. Bunny was there pulling the other oar and rising to some pretty strange challenges. I like to think Ethel was given this name as an affectionate acknowledgment of their partnership. But then again, maybe Plum just thought Ethel was cute and cuddly.

In 1975 the Apollo Mission ended successfully, Andrei Sakharov won the Nobel Peace Prize and on Valentine's day P.G. Wodehouse died. This is the way the priest said it would be 61 years earlier, death parts us from those we love. Plum and Ethel might not seem to have been very much alike, but clearly they knew how to find goodness in each other. Over the years together they created two happy worlds, one filled with furry animal faces, the other filled with Beans and Crumpets. It is because of that world that we are here together to honor them today.



# Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern

by William Cole

David McDonough sends a recent review of an interesting new book. The review is from the East Hampton (Long Island) *Star*, with no date. Excerpts follow. Ignore the dismissive tone of what you are about to read—to say that the Princess shows were not real musicals and not worth writing about is like saying that Man o' War was not a racehorse.

Wodehouse we know and love; Kern's songs we know and love. But who is this guy Bolton?

He's that always forgotten man, the one who writes the "book" for musical comedies; the librettist. Back in the teens and the '20s, people did indeed know his name; he was even immortalized in a versc, purportedly by George S. Kaufman [or Dorothy Parker?] that went like this:

This is the trio of musical fame,  
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern.  
Better than anyone else you can name,  
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern.  
Nobody knows what on earth they've been bitten by,  
All I can say is I mean to get lit an' buy  
Orchestra seats for the next one that's written by  
Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern.

## The Princess shows

Guy Bolton, often with the collaboration of P.G. Wodehouse, wrote the books for what were known as the "Princess Shows," musical comedies that ran in the small 299 seat Princess Theatre on New York's 39th Street from 1915 to 1918... The important thing about the Princess Shows, that almost makes them worth writing about [ha!], was that they were the first musical comedies to integrate book, music, and lyrics.

At least that's the stance taken by the author Lee Davis, who teaches a course in the American theater at Southampton College. The real American musicals came into being in 1943, when "Oklahoma" integrated dance with the other elements.

I assume that all the Bolton bio we'll ever see is

in this book; and he does get more pages than his famous collaborators. He was a charmer, a ladies' man, a noted anecdotist. His four marriages ended disastrously, and his children [were] pretty much neglected.

## Long Island connection

Bolton and Plum, lifetime pals, both ended up in Remsenburg, where, in their 80s, they'd meet for a stroll each morning at the Post Office. Long Island featured large in their lives and work. When Plum married in 1914, he lived for a time in Bellport; later both he and Bolton had homes in Great Neck.

In a 1919 Bolton show a young comedian, Fred Allen, played a reporter for the "Sag Harbor Bee." In 1958 I visited Plum in his grand Remsenburg estate, to take a book jacket photo. We had a pleasant lunch, preceded by two martinis. After lunch he retired, not for an old man's nap, but to get his daily dose of the soap "As the World Turns." He said to me, "Amazing, these plots." And added, "I began a new novel a few days ago, then suddenly realized I'd used the same plot 30 years ago."

Lee Davis does a good job keeping track of the plays, the personal lives, and the peregrinations of his busy trio.

The book stands... as the only biography of Guy Bolton, who amusingly and rightly suggested that his epitaph should read, "He wasn't always as much of a damn fool as he was sometimes."

**Bolton and Wodehouse and Kern**, by Lee Davis, published by James Heineman, New York, \$29.95



# Convention '95!

by Elin Woodger

As we reach the mid-way point of 1994, Wodehousian thoughts turn to what lies ahead for us in 1995—or more specifically, what are those convention planners up to?

Well! We are up to our ears in smashing ideas and having a jolly good time putting it all together. For starters, the location is the Copley Plaza Hotel, right in the heart of the city. This will provide a convenient walk to just about anywhere. The Copley Plaza is a landmark of the city, surrounded by many other landmarks, including the Trinity Church, Hancock Tower and Boston Public Library. Great shops and bookstores can be found on nearby Boylston Street and Newbury Street and in Copley Place and the Prudential Center. Other Boston highlights accessible from the Copley Plaza: The Public Gardens and Boston Common; Beacon Hill; Faneuil Hall Marketplace; Symphony Hall; multiple museums; and, of course, the ever-popular Freedom Trail.

Then there is the program being planned. Festivities will officially begin on Friday afternoon (October 20) with talks and skits, and a reception that evening. Saturday will be filled to the brim with talks, skits, and games, capped by a banquet that will have a few surprises for conventioners. In addition, on either side of the “official” program, there will be plenty of extracurricular activities to choose from, including:

On the afternoon of Thursday the 19th or morning of Friday the 20th, the leaf worshipers among us will go on an expedition to view some of New England’s finest fall foliage.

On Sunday the 22nd, after the traditional brunch, interested parties will head over to the Charles River to view the Head of the Charles Regatta, as well as bother the local law officers. (Remember—

first the forward tilt, *then* the upward lift.)

A Pinch the Bobbie’s Helmet Contest is being planned, in addition to other games for the competitive souls among us.

A kazoo chorus to be accompanied by instruments is now being assembled, and all interested musicians are invited to participate. If you play an instrument or would like to take up a kazoo, contact Toni

Rudersdorf to volunteer your services. We particularly need at least one violin. There will be a lively selection of music, including the theme from the Wooster and Jeeves series.

Finally, for the slow-witted among us, one final reminder of the all-important date: **October 20–22, 1995**. Looking forward to seeing you there, old bean!

We are also soliciting nominations for the 1997 convention site. Any chapter interested in hosting the 1997 get-together should so inform Toni Rudersdorf.

Meanwhile, some of you are probably chafing at the bit to know more about hotels. Unfortunately, as we are still waiting to learn what the 1995 rates will be, you will also have to wait until the next issue of *Plum Lines*.

A certain liveliness was beginning to manifest itself up in the gallery. The raspberry was not actually present, but he seemed to hear the beating of its wings.

“The Masked Troubadour,” 1937

# Poppy Kegley-Bassington

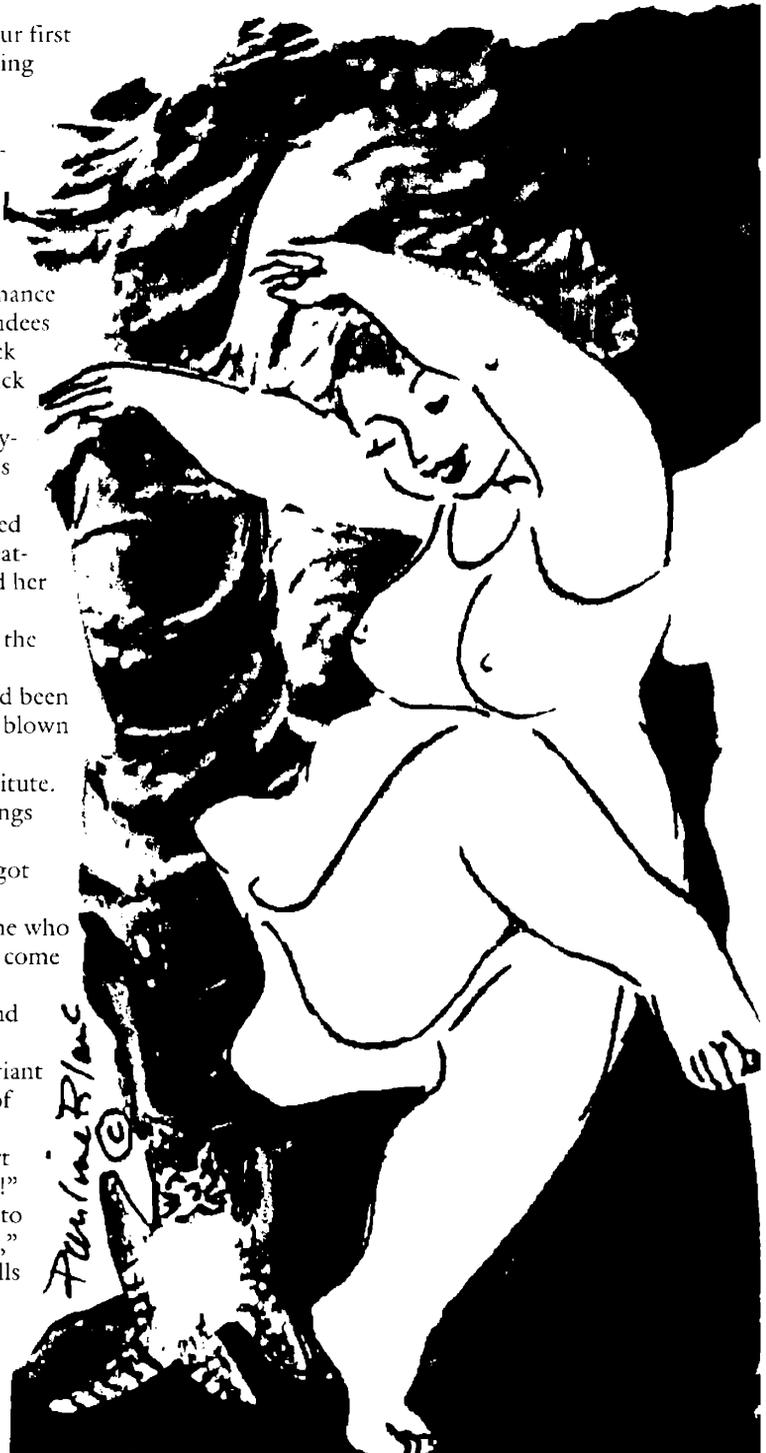
**P**auline Blanc here provides our first view of a minor but enchanting character in *The Mating Season*. Miss Poppy Kegley-Bassington, you recall, performed her Rhythmic Dance at the King's Deverill village concert. She appeared on stage shortly after the much-admired Esmond Haddock, and it was her performance that moved Bertie and other standees to demand the return of Haddock and, what is more, to get him back on stage.

Bertie tells us that Miss Kegley-Bassington was "one of those girls who do rhythmic dances at the drop of a hat and can be dissuaded from doing them only with a meat-axe. The music that accompanied her act was Oriental in nature, and I should be disposed to think that the thing had started out in life as a straight Vision of Salome but had been toned down and had the whistle blown on it in spots in deference to the sensibilities of the Women's Institute. It consisted of a series of slitherings and writhings, punctuated with occasional pauses when, having got herself tied in a clove-hitch, she seemed to be waiting for someone who remembered the combination to come along and untangle her."

Plum describes her as "long and dark and supple," but Pauline presents her here in a more luxuriant form, consistent with the spirit of the dance.

Her performance was cut short by chants of "We want Haddock!" "Though she pluckily continued to slither for a few moments longer," Bertie tells us, "the contest of wills could have but one ending. She withdrew, getting a nice hand, for we were generous in victory..."

And here for the first time, and for the ages, is Miss Poppy.



# The Oxford Wodehouse quiz

**Charles Bishop** passed this quiz along to me recently from the computer network. My only clues about the man who sent it are that his name is Steve and he is a graduate of Oxford. If anyone can provide more information I'll give Steve full credit in the next issue.

**A**s a graduate of Oxford I receive a quarterly magazine from the University which usually has some features of interest, but normally only to fellow Oxonians. However, in the current issue, there is an article entitled "What Ho, Oxford!" that may well have considerably wider interest. It takes the form of an examination paper and reads as follows:

Thanks to the generosity of Mrs Paula Meiggs, *Oxford Today's* archives have recently been augmented by a 1930s run of the *Oxford Magazine*, a time when it was under the editorship of her late husband, the distinguished Balliol classicist Russell Meiggs. His editorial policy ensured that erudition jostled entertainment in nice measure, as this unusual examination paper from 1937 shows. We defy any reader to get a first. The questions are as follows. Have fun!

1. Where in the Master's work is there set forth a solution of the problem of war guilt? How does it compare in penetration with the theory of the origin of the American Revolution advanced by whom in what book? What light is cast on such theories by the case of Rodney Spelvin?
2. Give a definition of "desiderium" in the works of the Master. Give more definitions if you can.
3. What evidence have we for the theory that Mr Bertram Wooster was at Oxford, at Christ Church, and read PPE? What other character was at Christ Church if Mr Wooster was?
4. Which character in the Works was at Trinity Hall or was no gentleman?
5. What progress in the study of ethics was made by Mr Wooster? What other character had made, at one time, some progress in this science? Would he have fared better or worse if he had done Greats (or Moral Science Tripos)? (Reasons for

saying no must not involve the use of proper names.)

6. What persons were alarmed by (a) erastianism, (b) schism, in the village?
7. Who used this quotation? and of whom?  
'She starts. She moves. She seems to feel  
The stir of life along her keel.'
8. Who, on what occasion, acted like Dante on what occasion? What evidence is there that the resemblance was accidental?
9. How many prizes (if any) did Mr Wooster win at school? For what subject (or subjects)?
10. Who was up at Balliol in 1926? What did he do after going down? (Penalties will be applied for excessive elaboration in answering this question.)
11. Where is Ipsilante mentioned? Is it Ypsilanti (Michigan)?
12. What Russian author is compared to the Master? In what terms? By whom?
13. List the references to Stalin, Lenin, Trotsky in the Works.
14. Who behaved like Alastor? Who had heard of the poet Shellac?
15. What evidence have we of Mr Wooster's attitude to modern physical research?
16. How many newspapers has Peebles (if the Master is right)?
17. Who 'lived in the spirit of the Monks of Thelema'?
18. What is a 'wofflesome' noise? Who made such a noise?
19. Who is Lord Bosham?
20. Who felt like the historian Gibbon? Why?

21. Who was 'one of the young men whom the Ravens feed'?
22. Who had read *The Wrong Box*?
23. What character at what point in his career recalls (faintly) a character in Mr Huxley's *Antic Hay*?
24. Whose laugh was  
 (a) 'like a squadron of cavalry charging over a tin bridge'  
 (b) 'like waves breaking over a stern and rock-bound coast'  
 (c) 'like a train going into a tunnel'?
25. Whose face was 'like a motor-mascot'?
26. Whose voice was 'like Old Dry Sherry'?
27. Whose voice would have enabled whom to 'make a good living calling the cattle home across the Sands of Dee'?
28. What did this voice screech like?
29. On what occasion did Mr Wooster quote John Bright?
30. On what occasion does the Master defy the rules of Greek Tragedy? Do all his Narrators imitate him?
31. What son of what clergyman tried to auction his trousers? Where? Why?
32. What evidence is there that Psmith read *Puck*?
33. What evidence is there that the Master forgot either the appearance of a character or of Miss Clara Bow?
34. Who said 'Every time a fairy sheds a tear, a wee bit star is born in the milky way'?
35. Who thought (sometimes) that 'flowers must be the souls of little children who have died in their innocence'?
36. Who 'apparently never went to bed until he was fifty'?
37. What had Lord Emsworth to fear from the publication of whose reminiscences?

Steve ended by saying that he had no answers to most of these questions, and neither have I. I'll print any reasonable number of your answers in a later issue, but you had better provide solid evidence (chapter and verse) to back them up and reduce controversy.

If Steve or anyone else provides answers from *Oxford Magazine*, I'll print them.

## A tribute

Jim Earl found this appreciation of Wodehouse by William Scammell in the English *Spectator* of October 24, 1992.

Much ink has been spread on the vexed question of whether Wodehouse's world bears any relationship to the real one. The answer is yes, but. He is real in the same sense that *Pilgrim's Progress*, "Little Red Riding Hood," Ivy Compton-Burnett, *Doctor Faustus* and *High Noon* are real. He's inner not outer, a guide to the quixotic despotisms of the spirit, which values requital over compromise and *civitas*.

Where Kipling kept terror at bay by immersing himself in know-how and manliness, a la Housman, Wodehouse did it by upholding the proprieties his similes and metaphors were pledged to subvert. His sentences are fanatical about nuance and tolerant of human frailty. It wouldn't take much ingenuity to unearth whole playing-fields of latent homosexuality beneath the jolly japes, nor to find the politics of empire in his Great Game of outwitting the aunt, the poet, the swot, but that would be about as much fun as shooting fish in a barrel or calling him "the highbrow's lowbrow," as Colin Welch did once. He's a good man to have at the airport, by your sickbed, and in between marriages and funerals. Delightful, absolutely.

# Newtfont?

by Frits Menschaar

The newt as literary motif, the newt as myth, the newt as primal urge—none of these great themes has received its proper consideration. But Frits Menschaar, at least, has done his bit to fill the lacunæ: he may have traced Plum's newt-interest to its source.

Many TWS members, particularly members of the New England Chapter, may wish to trace Plum's happy newts fixation to its original source.

To my knowledge, the first appearance of the newt motive in the Wodehouse canon is in "The Magic Plus Fours"—in the *Strand* magazine of December, 1922, later included in *The Heart of a Goof* (1926)—where the Cohen Bros., second-hand clothiers, provide an unsuspecting customer, who had come in to buy a cap, with two pairs of trousers and "a miniature aquarium for keeping newts in." In "Fair Play for Audiences," first published in *Pall Mall* magazine of August 1928 and later included in *Louder and Funnier* (1932), a casual reference is made to "the B.B.C.'s

lecture on the private life of the newt." In *Heavy Weather* (1933) Gally asks Sue Brown: "Shall I turn on the radio? There may be a lecture on Newts."

These three instances present the newt motive in its embryonic stage. Newtmania in its fully developed form entered the scene in 1934 with *Right Ho, Jeeves*.

The Robert Benchley essay, "The Social Life of the Newt," first published in *Vanity Fair* in 1919, gives an in-depth description, in the Benchley vein, of newtonian life and customs, including courtship habits, work ethics, and community life. Reading it, one cannot escape the suspicion that it must have been a prime source of Gussie's (and Jeeves's) encyclopedic knowledge on the newt and its behavior in sickness and health.

Wodehouse himself contributed to *Vanity Fair* for many years, starting in 1914. In 1919, the year of the Benchley article, *Vanity Fair* published no less than 10 Wodehouse essays. That Wodehouse read the Benchley treatise on newts, therefore, can be taken as read. Also, Wodehouse and Benchley were personally acquainted. Altogether, it seems reasonable to assume that Benchley's essay triggered the development of Plum's newtmania which has enchanted millions, and is sure to enchant millions more. Three cheers for Robert Benchley!

# Jim Earl

I'm very sorry to inform you of the death of Jim Earl on May 25 in Shrewsbury, England after a long period of ill health. Jim was a long-time and very active member of our Society. He contributed many articles to *Plum Lines* and acted as a collection point for dues of British members. He acquired an excellent Wodehouse collection and enjoyed exchanging Wodehouse books with other members. He and his late wife met the members of our Wodehouse Pilgrimage

in Shrewsbury on a memorable evening in 1989—the first of a number of visits by American members to Jim in Shrewsbury and by Jim to his American friends. We remember his visit to California two years ago, when we took him to a saloon in the gold rush country and played darts with him—*electronic* darts. We remember his hearty good humor, his kindness, and his generosity. He leaves behind many good friends in America, and I'm sure just as many more in England. We shall miss him greatly.

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

*Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, 1939

## A few quick ones

**E**lizabeth Hamilton discovered a Christopher Hitchens review of *Yours, Plum*, the collection of Wodehouse letters edited by Francis Donaldson. In a *Times Literary Supplement* of September 1990, it begins with the following advice on a vital subject: "The choice of one's first Wodehouse is frightfully important. How often one runs across a soul practically dead, who claims 'not to see the funny side', only to discover that fate had slipped the lead into the boxing glove by dealing him one of the golfing stories first crack out of the box. My invariable practice with young people starting out in life is to hand them "Archibald and the Masses", or *Right Ho, Jeeves* in the case of the better element, and then to shoot my cuffs and sit back, a confident smile on the lips. But at a tender age I first clicked with *Joy in the Morning*."

The statement is worth noting for more than its content. I admire Hitchens's restraint in imitating, only slightly and briefly, Wodehouse's literary style, a style that an occasional fan tries to copy, almost always with embarrassing results. If ever I attempt such a foolish act I hope someone will tug at my coattails, ease me off the stage, and whisper gently in my ear the one word, "Don't."

**S**ome member, whose name I'm sorry to have misplaced, sent me a review of the recently published and monumental *Oxford Sherlock Holmes*. The reviewer, Owen Dudley Edwards, comments that "Conan Doyle's leading disciple was probably P. G. Wodehouse... Bertie Wooster and Jeeves are the truest heirs of Watson and Holmes."

Edwards is a man to be reckoned with in the Wodehouse world as well. **Richard Osborne** remarks in his Foreword to the McIlvaine bibliography, "I hope this great bibliography has note of Owen Dudley Edwards, of Edinburgh University, and his study of "The Textual Revisions of Leave it

to Psmith," from its first appearance as a serial in the *Saturday Evening Post* in America in the spring of 1923 to publication as a book in England that autumn. Meanwhile, also from Owen Dudley Edwards, an epitaph:

When he died, I asked a Carmelite friend of mine to remember him at Mass. He looked at me from two deep, dark, blue Kerry eyes.

"Well, I will, since you ask me. But in the case of someone who brought such joy to so many people in the course of his life, do you really think it's necessary?"

**D**olores Robinson sends an article on literary societies from the English *Sunday Telegraph* of 13 June 1993. Its author, Jessica Mann, asserts that "The common feature of literary societies is that the authors on whom they focus created a complete world, a parallel universe... They are all worlds it would be either thrilling or comfortable to inhabit. Nobody wants to live in the worlds created by Evelyn Waugh or George Orwell or Graham Greene." People join, she says, "as much for the social life as for any literary chatter... A lack of inhibition and an atrophied sense of the ridiculous seem to be prerequisites." So *that's* what we are!

**H**elen Murphy found a recent editorial in the English *Times* advocating the lengthy sermon and denouncing in brimstone prose a current proposal in the Church of Scotland that brief sermons be considered a prime good. "The Rev. Heppenstall's sermon on brotherly love," thundered the *Times*, "lasted for 45 minutes, provided he did not accidentally drop several pages of excursus." How good it must be to live in a country where a leading newspaper can refer casually to the Reverend Heppenstall, knowing that its reading public is familiar with him.

OM

The Oldest Member

# Plumacroscopic 2

by Maria Kane

**M**aria has done it again! In response to the enthusiastic reception of her first Plumacroscopic last year, she has devised a new one. Some contestants asked for a harder puzzle this time, so Maria sent me two sets of clues, hard and easy, and asked me to choose which set to print. In the interest of your sanity and to encourage a wide participation, I've printed most of the easy ones and just a few hard ones. No prizes this time, but everyone who sends in a solution will be immortalized by the appearance of his, her, or its name in *Plum Lines*. Those who send in complete and correct solutions will be shocked by the appearance of their names in particularly vulgar type. Send your solutions to me, Ed Ratcliffe, 538 San Lorenzo Ave, Felton CA 95018. Have fun!

1 H	2 M	3 B	4 S		5 P		6 M	7 L	8 U	9 K	10 S	11 B	12 E	13 D		14 H	15 I
16 K		17 T	18 D	19 Q	20 K	—	21 N	22 C	23 J	24 M	25 B		26 N	27 K	28 H	29 B	30 C
31 M	32 A	33 D	34 S		35 K	36 J	37 O		38 B	39 I	40 M	41 U	42 R	43 J	44 S	45 C	
46 P	47 L	48 N		49 U	50 B	51 K	52 M	53 S		54 U	55 O	56 M	57 N	58 K		59 G	60 B
61 C	62 N	63 K	64 S	65 O	66 H	67 A	68 J		69 S	70 F	71 M		72 J	73 O	74 B	75 S	76 A
77 D	78 C	79 Q		80 N	81 R	82 T		83 J	84 I	85 K	86 M		87 Q	88 E	89 C	90 K	91 D
92 S		93 J	94 T	95 N		96 P	97 N	98 M	99 R		100 K	101 J	102 D	103 E	104 O		105 B
106 J	107 K	108 F	109 N	110 H	111 G	112 L		113 U	114 S	115 J		116 D	117 N	118 G	119 L		120 U
121 G		122 T	123 F	124 P	125 C	126 E	127 U		128 E	129 M	130 A	131 B	132 C	133 G	134 F	:	135 P
136 M	137 G	138 T	139 B	140 L	141 U	142 N		143 I	144 M	145 G	146 K	147 N	148 H	149 S		150 O	151 E
152 M	153 L	154 S	155 H		156 C	157 H	158 S	159 T	160 K	161 Q		162 Q	163 B	164 M	165 F	166 A	167 O
	168 M	169 A	170 Q	171 U	172 S	173 E	174 R		175 C	176 T	177 M	178 B	179 S	180 D	181 K	182 N	183 E
	184 H	185 L		186 H		187 R	188 S	189 J	190 Q		191 C	192 D	193 I	194 M	195 U	196 J	



N. Yes, another book title! 1952 (3 words)

—  
21 147 142 95 80 117 97 62 26 109 182 57 48

O. Makes an appearance during a  
crime wave, 1936

—  
65 55 104 167 150 37 73

P. Member of the Wrykyn Eleven. First  
materializes in 1904. (Apostrophe is not  
a misprint.)

—  
,  
96 46 124 135 5

Q. This dapper gadabout has known more  
policemen by their first names than any  
other man in London.

—  
161 170 87 19 190 162 79

R. Thus starts the title of a famous book, 1934

—  
99 81 174 187 42

S. Story title, 1913 (2 words here, one of  
which is hyphenated, with “The” omitted)

—  
44 172 149 114 53 34 4 154 64 69 92 10 179 75 188 158

T. See Note from Maria, below

—  
82 159 176 138 17 94 122

U. Portrayer of Jeeves (2 words)

—  
195 113 41 171 120 8 141 49 54 127

**Note from Maria:** I apologize to the purists among my fans. Believe me, I tried, but there was no way to fashion the left-over letters into four words that were in some way or other related to PGW. To make up for this faux pas, here are the clues for the four words—items F, I, L, and T above—in no particular order:

1. Parallel, comparable
2. Nobody in a foreign country
3. County seat of Marion County, Florida
4. Loopy, barmy, eccentric, potty, absurd, crazy, odd—all synonyms culled from chapters 1 and 2 of *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*.



They moved off slowly with bowed heads, like a couple of undertakers who have forgotten their coffin and had to go back for it.

*The Mating Season, 1949*

# Five Star Hotel

by Richard Usborne

Slim as a splinter,  
stern, parental,  
Frankfurt's Inter-  
continental,

a new hotel,  
from the skyline soars,  
a sentinel  
on thirty floors,

its shoulders break  
the clouds apart,  
a concrete stake  
in the city's heart:

a paradise  
for the well-heeled guest;  
at a topmost price  
he gets the best;

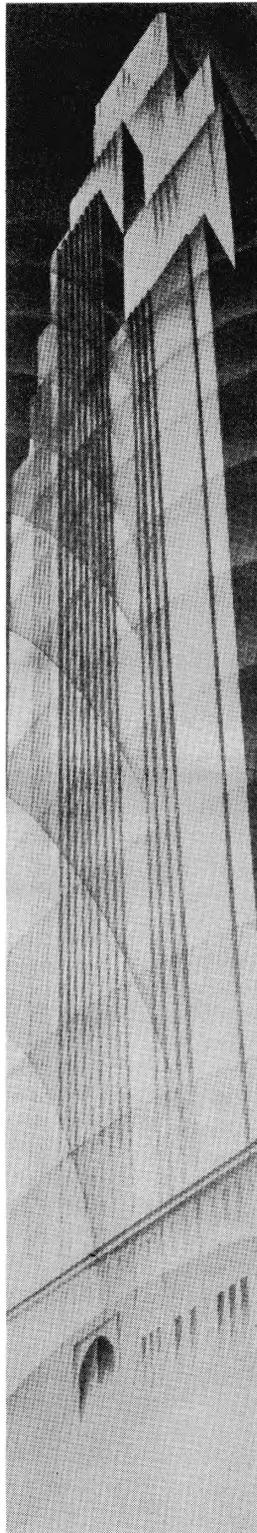
lounges manned  
by instant waiters,  
music (canned)  
in the elevators;

masses of headroom  
everywhere  
and in the bedroom  
space to spare;

a bathroom fitted  
with four main "pieces"  
shelves well kitted,  
towels like fleeces:

two Bibles at  
my *bedde's bedde*,  
pristine, fat,  
discreetly ready

to fit me for  
sleep or a sermon  
in English or,  
if German, German:



bedlights graded  
to choice of pitch  
(strong, soft, shaded)  
with pillow switch:

and if none's the right light,  
a half-inch thick  
white wax nightlight  
with unused wick.

These quenched, to You  
I make a prayer,  
*Dominus illu-  
minatio mea.*



**Pauline Blanc** found this poem, undated, in the *Punch Guide to Good Living*. It isn't by or about Wodehouse, but it's by our very own Wodehouse savant and author, Richard Usborne, than whom there is surely none whomer.

The Emsworth Arms' idea of a writing room was an almost pitch dark cubbyhole with no paper or pens, and in the ink-pot only a curious sediment that looked like something imported from the Florida Everglades. *Pigs Have Wings*, 1952

How far more splendid,  
ornamental,  
Frankfurt's Inter-  
continental.

# Secrets of modern Dutch revealed!

LATEST EXPOSÉ!

by Christopher Hartop

**Elizabeth Rosenberg** sends this interesting history of silver cow creamers. In it we learn at last why Georgian cow creamers were de rigueur and why modern Dutch were justly scorned. The article is from a recent issue of *Christie's International Magazine*, published by the international auction house, and was written by the head of the Silver Department at Christie's New York, who probably knows as much about the subject as anyone in the Brompton Road. (The headlines above are mine, not his.) Elizabeth notes that the article was provided by her sister, Vivian Swift, head of the Watch Department at Christie's New York.

A George III silver cow creamer to be offered in the sale of Important Silver, Objects of Vertu and Russian Works of Art on 14 April in New York, prompts some literary thoughts.

It was a silver cow. But when I say 'cow,' don't go running away with the idea of some decent, self-respecting cudster such as you may observe loading grass into itself in the nearest meadow. This was a sinister, leering, underworld sort of animal, the kind that would spit out of the side of its mouth for twopence. It was about four inches high and six long. Its back opened on a hinge. Its tail was arched, so that the tip touched the spine—thus, I suppose, affording a handle for the cream lover to grasp. The sight of it seemed to take me into a different and a dreadful world. (*The Code of the Woosters*, 1938)

The silver cow creamer—that charming evocation of Georgian whimsy—has always enjoyed a special place in the affections of antique silver collectors on both sides of the Atlantic. But to P. G. Wodehouse it appears to have represented all that was batty about Uncle Tom, that shadowy figure over whom looms large the imposing figure of Bertie's Aunt Dahlia. While Lord Emsworth's love for his pig, the Empress of Blandings, and Gussie Fink-Nottle's obsession with newts are all accepted as part of the natural order of things, for Bertie Wooster collecting old silver seems to be beyond the pale:

I don't mind confessing I'm not much of a lad for old silver; and though I've never pained him by actually telling him so, I have always felt that Uncle Tom's fondness for it is evidence of a goofiness which he would do well to watch and check before it spreads. (*The Code of the Woosters*)

Luckily for us, Uncle Tom's silver collection—and perhaps most importantly his quest for

a genuine cow creamer—provides Wodehouse with endless plots, ploys, and sub-plots, as when Aunt Dahlia, always ready to exploit Uncle Tom's weakness for old silver in order to get him into a good mood, telephones Bertie to ask him for a favour:

"... all I wanted to tell you was to go to an antique shop in the Brompton Road—it's just past the Oratory—you can't miss it—and sneer at a cow creamer." I did not get her drift. The impression I received was that of an aunt talking through the back of her neck.

"Do what to a what?"

"They've got an 18th Century cow-creamer there that Tom's going to buy this afternoon."

The scales fell from my eyes.

"Oh, it's a silver whatnot, is it?"

"Yes. A sort of cream jug. Go there and ask them to show it to you and when they do, register scorn."

"The idea being what?"

"To sap their confidence, of course, chump. To sow doubts and misgivings in their mind and make them clip the price a bit..."

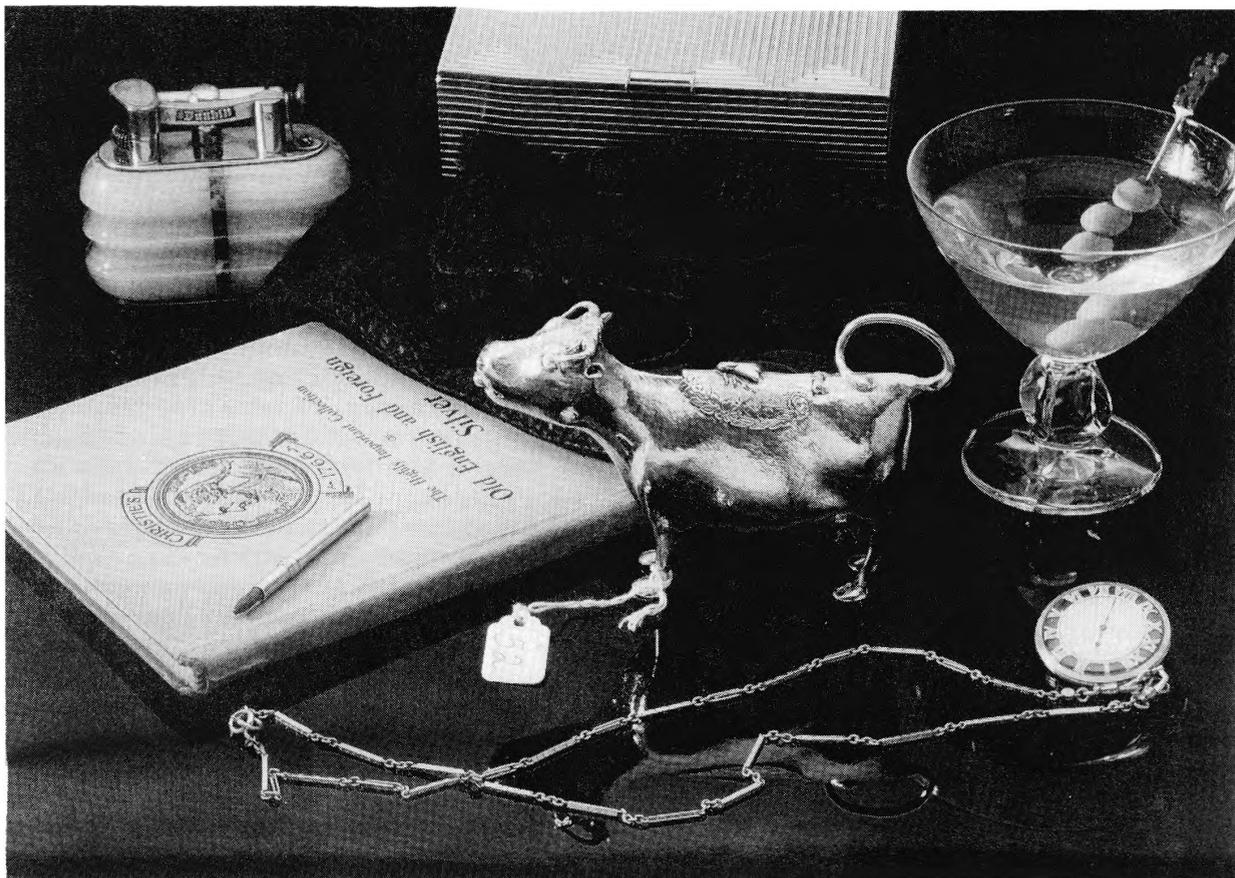
Aunt Dahlia, obviously a seasoned negotiator, has obviously picked up quite a bit about old silver from Uncle Tom's activities:

"... Oh, yes, and tell them you think it's modern Dutch..."

"Why?"

"I don't know. Apparently it's something a cow-creamer ought not to be."

How true, for to be totally genuine a Georgian cow creamer should bear the maker's mark of one of just a handful of London silversmiths, all working in



A George III silver cow creamer, maker's mark of John Schuppe, London, 1763. Estimate: \$5,000–\$7,000. Note (a) bee on hatch cover and (b) juvenile-delinquent expression on face. (Photo from *Christie's International Magazine*.)

the 1750s and 60s. The most common one found is that of John Schuppe who appears, according to Arthur Grimwade in his book *The London Goldsmiths*, to have been a Dutchman working in London. The cow creamer enjoyed only a brief vogue of a few years; it is easy to image the delighted stir they must have caused when produced at a fashionable tea table but, perhaps understandably, their popularity was brief and none appears to have been produced after about 1770. A hundred years later, however, the Dutch revived the form as tourist knickknacks and, as Aunt Dahlia is quick to point out, that is just what a cow creamer ought not to be.

There are hairy cow creamers, and others, curiously, that appear to be totally hairless. Most have bees quite inexplicably resting on their backs. The cream pours out of the slit that forms the cow's mouth, often curved upwards in a broad smile, and it seems that it was this facial expression more than anything else that drove Wodehouse to rave; one cow creamer, described in a later

Wooster tale, is described as having

“... a juvenile-delinquent expression in its face, a cow that looked as if it were planning, next time it was milked, to haul off and let the milkmaid have it in the lower ribs.” (*How Right You Are*, Jeeves, 1960)

In this story, Bertie makes no bones about his horror of the thing:

“Why anyone should want such a revolting object has always been a mystery to me; it ranks high up on the list of things I would have been reluctant to be found dead in a ditch with, but apparently they liked that sort of jug in the 18th Century and, coming down to more modern times, Uncle Tom was all for it . . .”

— as indeed are many collectors today. In recent years exceptionally fine examples have sold for as much as \$26,400 at Christie's in New York but, for the ghosts of John Schuppe and his friends, perhaps Bertie Wooster's diatribes have been the most astonishing.

# Another slice of Bacon

by Charles E. Gould, Jr.

Plum's letter in which he first told of his marriage to Ethel includes his mysterious use of "Milton" as her last name. (See the Winter 1993 *Plum Lines*.) Here Charles Gould provides a truly Baconian solution to the mystery.

1. Ethel's previous names were *Newton*, *Rowley* and *Wayman*.
2. From the first, drop "New"—obviously a tactless reference to her previous wifely states. That leaves TON.
3. He was excited about going next day to *Melrose Grange*, *Bellport*, *Long Island*. Take the initials of the main address, italicized above, and you get MLI—useless, at first glance.
4. Consult now the 2nd and 3rd lines of Gray's "Elegy," which would have been on Wodehouse's lips then (later, Jeeves will quote "Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight, Sir," and does not Bertie, perhaps with Jeeves's help, claim that "Melancholy mark'd him for her own"? No matter: Wodehouse knew this one):

The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the *lea*,  
The *plowman* homeward plods his weary *way*.

The italicized words echo *all* of the syllables for Ethel's latter two names: *plow-lea* and *way-man*. Regardless of pronunciation, the two lines supply also the "ow" combination in "Rowley" three times. Easy, now, to transpose MLI.

The first line of the poem offers an echo of

"Ethel" in "the knell."

5. Wodehouse wrote this letter to Bradshaw in 1914, about to write a new stanza of his life, call it 1915. It is in stanza 15 of Gray's poem that we find the phrase to which OM has alluded, "Some mute inglorious Milton." Biographers have shown that Ethel Wodehouse was neither mute nor inglorious, but transposing MLI now certain.
6. Now a slow study of items above, especially 2–5, will show how a brain as fast as Wodehouse's could have come up with "Ethel Milton" in 1914. Don't forget: in 1971 he was calling Aubrey Upjohn Arnold Abney.

**B**ob Elliott has another explanation:

After giving the matter some thought it is my contention that the recent change in his status has brought the name Milton prominently to his mind. We must remember that he had already achieved 32 years of bachelorhood, a not inconsiderable achievement in itself. It is a possibility that the name Milton is intertwined in his mind with *Paradise Lost*.

I would hate to think this was the explanation. I would much rather believe that in the light of his just having acquired his Ethel it is more likely that he was thinking of *Paradise Regained*.

## Bob Noyes: in memoriam

**T**he New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society mourns the passing of Charter Member NEWT Robert Noyes on March 25, 1994. It can truly be said that Bob was the glue that brought the NEWTS together into a cohesive group. In October of 1992 he and his wife Grace generously opened their family home on Nantucket Island to us for a weekend of fun, games, and breadroll-tossing. The result of this wonderful

weekend was a sense of family that has become the norm for all NEWTS. We will always remember Bob for his warmth, wit, generosity, and abundant hospitality, not to mention his extraordinary knowledge of Wodehouse. Most of all, we will remember him for having tossed the first breadroll. We miss you, Bob, and hope you are strolling sunny, moss-covered paths with Plum in that great Blandings Castle in the sky.

# Something new

by Doug Stow

England has caught up with America in honoring its greatest writer by forming a literary society to promote the works of P.G. Wodehouse. P.H.G. Thompson sent me a clipping from *The Weekly Telegraph* describing the event. Founder Richard Morris, a short story writer, says, "The idea is to encourage interest in Wodehouse's musical comedies as well as his novels." There will be a twice-yearly magazine. Membership is £8, but no address is given in the article.

I just read a blurb about what I thought was a new book and immediately ordered it from our local bookseller only to find that it was published in 1992! It's *Wodehouse is the Best Medicine*, edited by D.P. Benson. Although none of its eleven stories is previously unpublished, the selection is good and there is a foreword by a Dr. Lendon H. Smith and a preface by Benson. A rather colorful but somewhat grotesque dust jacket covers the book. Intenational Polygonics of New York is the publisher.

On a recent trip to New York, Margaret and I had the joy of a too brief visit with Fritz Menschaar and his cat. I particularly enjoyed perusing his marvelous Wodehouse collection and did a little up-close and personal shopping among his books for sale. I noticed he had a few of the keepsakes

Margaret and I printed for the plaque dedication at The Little Church Around the Corner, but I don't know whether they are for sale. It's a lovely little booklet if I do say so myself.

## Polite Society

**H**elen Murphy sends a brochure about the Polite Society. "I have been a member for several years," writes Helen, "and it struck me that PGW must be more or less the quintessentially polite author. Although it is British based there are many members world wide. It is sad to think that there should be a need for such a body, but there we are!"

The Society's brochure notes that "Good manners cost nothing and profit everybody. It is the Polite Society's case that even small advances would make society less expensive to administer, more productive, healthier and happier. Why? simply because more considerate behaviour would

mean fewer accidents, less stress and more united homes. Our aims have less to do with social etiquette than with better standards of considerate behaviour in our daily dealings with others."

The Society's patrons include representatives of high, as well as polite, society: the Duke of Devonshire, the Marchioness of Cholmondeley, and Sir John Gielgud, among others. (I note with pain, but without surprise, the absence of the Duke of Dunstable.) Prospective members may obtain information from Mrs. Gill McKenzie, Secretary, The Polite Society, 6 Norman Avenue, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1SG, United Kingdom.

## Want ads

For sale:

### Paperbacks (UK)

1. Dr. Sally, 1959, Penguin 1st edition, fine, £4.
2. Uncle Fred in the Springtime, 1954, Penguin 1st edition, very good, £3.
3. The Girl on the Boat, 1968, Pan 1st edition, fine, £3.
4. The Inimitable Jeeves, 1963, Penguin reprint, fine, £2.

### Hardbacks (UK)

5. The World of P. G. Wodehouse, by H. Wind, 1st edition, fine, dust jacket, £10.
6. The Favorite Wonder Book, 1938, 1st edition, good, includes William Tell Told Again, illustrated, amongst other stories, £10.
7. The Great Book of Humour, 1935, fine, includes The Ordeal of Young Tuppy, £10.
8. The World of Psmith, Barrie & Jenkins, ex library, good, £8.

### Audio tapes

9. Very Good Jeeves, mint, three stories read by Martin Jarvis, two tapes, £8.
10. The Golf Omnibus, mint, two tapes, £7.
11. Heavy Weather, two tapes, mint, £7.

Please write to Daniel Bright, 4 Warnham Close,

## New Members

## The Funniest Golf Writer...

**J**ohn Hannah found an article about Plum in the May 1994 *Golf Digest* magazine, headed "The Funniest Golf Writer who Ever Lived." It occurs to me that that may be faint praise—how many funny golf writers have there been?—but it's true. The article is intended for the general reader: five pages of text and several photographs that surely introduce some fraction of the Great Unwashed to Wodehouse. We must be grateful.

It is not, however, as we elitists like to say, wholly

devoid of interest for the specialist. The author claims, rightly, that the first golf story appeared not in the early 20s, as I had always thought, but in 1910. It was "Archibald's Benefit," the first Wodehouse story in *Collier's* magazine. And his last appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Argosy* in 1965: "Sleepy Time" or "The Battle of Squashy Hollow." That's a span of more than half a century, a par 6 on any course.

# Frances Donaldson

Jan Kaufman sends word of the death of Frances Donaldson, best known to us as the author of *P. G. Wodehouse, a Biography*. The *New York Times* notice of March 29 follows.

Frances Donaldson, an author known for her award-winning biography of King Edward VIII and a loving but candid biography of her father, the playwright Frederick Lonsdale, died on Sunday at her home [in London]. She was 87.

Lady Donaldson's *Edward VIII*, published in 1974, won the Wolfson Literary Award and was the basis for a six-part television series, "Edward and Mrs. Simpson," starring James Fox and Cynthia Harris. The British-made adaptation was shown on American television in 1980.

*Freddy*, Lady Donaldson's biography of her father, the playwright and society bon vivant, was published in 1957 and was praised for its balance of candor and affection.

Her other books include *Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of a Country Neighbor* (1967); *P. G. Wodehouse* (1982), a biography of the novelist and humorist, and *The Royal Opera House in the 20th Century* (1988). She also wrote two autobiographies, *Child of the 20's* (1959) and *A 20th-Century Life* (1992).

She is survived by her husband, 2 daughters, a son and 11 grandchildren.



Frances Donaldson's was the authorized biography of P. G. Wodehouse. She was a close friend from their school days of Plum's adopted daughter Leonora, her husband Jack played golf with Wodehouse before the Second World War, and her father was a friend of Wodehouse. She recalled arriving with her father at the grand Mayfair residence for one of Ethel's parties. The door was opened by Wodehouse himself who said, "Don't come in. You'll hate it." She remained close to Wodehouse's step-grand-children, Lady Hornby and Sir Edward Cazalet, the latter of whom gave her access to his substantial library of Wodehouse's private papers. (I'm indebted to Barry Phelps's *P. G. Wodehouse: Man and Myth* for this information.)

# Autographs

William Hardwick found an article on autographs and their prices in the English *Daily Telegraph* of November 29, 1993. A few quotes:

"Signatures on their own are not valuable, it's what they're on," says Roy Davids, director of Sotheby's printed books and manuscripts department. "If you had a letter from Lady Thatcher to President Reagan talking about the special relationship, it would be worth about £4,000 or £5,000, but if it was just a note to the milkman in Flood Street saying 'Leave two pints,' it would be worth about £50. What's important is to whom they're writing and what they're writing." But, he says, "Prime ministers' autographs will never approach the value of authors."

As an example, a Dickens letter will go for £4,000 or £5,000 pounds, but autographs by P. G. Wodehouse and Rudyard Kipling for only £18, and the Queen Mother's for something in between.

# Anger and pie

Robert Hall has offered a simple explanation of a curious phrase in "Leave It to Jeeves" (1919). It's odd that any sentence of such a careful writer should require explanation, but several people have asked about it. The phrase occurs at the end of a passage about Jeeves:

He's like one of those weird chappies in India who dissolve themselves into thin air and nip through space in a sort of disembodied way and assemble the parts again just where they want them. I've got a cousin who's what they call a Theosophist, and he says he's often nearly worked the thing himself, but couldn't quite bring it off, probably owing to having fed in his boyhood on the flesh of animals slain in anger and pie.

I can't find Robert's explanation right now, but it amounts to this: the cousin ate (1) pie and (2) the flesh of animals slain in anger. Theosophists may have dietary concerns, but I suspect Wodehouse was merely using the reversed phrase for its mildly comic effect.

## Maximal newts

**M**arilyn MacGregor, our fearless newt correspondent, has further revelations for us. In the book *Oaks of California* she finds that the arboreal salamander climbs trees, squeaks when agitated, and does all this without lungs. I find this to be remarkable. I myself am only marginally capable of these feats, whether agitated or calm, and I am, or have always supposed myself to be, fully lunged. The world is full of wonders.



## Jeeves the faceless

**D**aniel Cohen found this use of Jeeves in a letter to the editor of an American Kennel Club magazine. "It must rank," he says, "among the odder uses of Jeeves." I fully agree. The letter is lengthy and doggy—a couple of paragraphs will give you the flavor:

"Jeeves," I say to my sophisticated communication system, "I've decided I want a dog." My chair tilts back slightly and a portion of the wall lights up with canine categories. Heavens," I say, "I didn't realize there were so many types of dogs."

"Over 400 canine breeds as of noon today, allowing for obsolete and deleted breeds," replies Jeeves, the voice coming from the wall.

[After further discussion Jeeves announces that a dog is being prepared, will be delivered soon, and may be retained only so long as the animal is well treated.]

"Well," said I, "I feel quite privileged to be entrusted with this responsibility. Fix me a cool libation, Jeeves."

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## Volunteer staff

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Information and new memberships	Marilyn MacGregor
Dues payments and address changes	Tom Wainwright
Contributions to Plum Lines	Ed Ratcliffe

Dues are \$15 per year.

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