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The Queen Mother and Wodehouse: An Unofficial Analysis

BY TODD MORNING

AS MOST MEMBERS OF our Society know, the late Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, was a Wodehouse fan and patron of The Wodehouse Society. So when I learned that *The Queen Mother: The Official Biography*, William Shawcross's authorized biography of the Queen Mother, had been published, I decided to find out if it contained any official mentions of P. G. Wodehouse.

I was not disappointed. The index includes six Wodehouse references. The first comes from a 1913 letter sent by the young Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon to her brother in which, Shawcross suggests, "her lifelong devotion to the novels of P. G. Wodehouse may have already begun." It's hard to say whether there's a touch of early Wodehouse in this lighthearted letter or whether the future queen is having some fun with the then current Edwardian slang: "Arthur Duff has given me a NEW PONY. It's 16 years old, but awfully good still. Only 11 days now. HOORAY. WHAT HO! PIP. PIP."

Most of the other references to Wodehouse occur in discussions of the Queen Mother's reading habits, which were fairly wide-ranging. It was heartening to discover that she did her bit to spread the word about Wodehouse. She advised the distinguished professor of church history, Owen Chadwick, OM, KBE, FBA, FRSE, to read Gussie Fink-Nottle's prize-giving speech in *Right Ho, Jeeves*. In a letter to the Queen Mother, Chadwick reported on his assignment: "My laughter caused great consternation in the silent college library."

Finally, Shawcross writes that the Queen's Mother's 1976 trip to Burgundy "could have come from the pages of her beloved Wodehouse." Frankly, I had trouble seeing why this trip was particularly Wodehousian. We learn that an escorting policeman crashed his motorcycle and broke his arm in two places, and that "the canon showed the Queen Mother his cathedral; a crowd of children held pink roses and sang Purcell in her honour." I guess you had to be there.

After lugging this massive official biography around for a few days (and it is big, totaling 1,096 pages and weighing in at about four pounds), I decided to read some other books about the Queen Mother for more Wodehouse references. In *Behind Palace Doors*, his memoir of his time as equerry to the Queen Mother in the mid-1990s, Major Colin Burgess reports that he rarely saw her read fiction, and that she only seemed to read mysteries by Dick Francis. (At her advanced age, the Queen Mother was having problems with her eyesight and reading was difficult.)

Yet, unlike the aforementioned trip to Burgundy, the picture that Burgess presents of life in the Queen Mother's



*Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon
(later Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother)*

household has some genuine Wodehousian moments. Take this description of Burgess's dealings with one of the Queen Mother's frequent guests:

One guest whom I particularly dreaded was Lord Slim. . . . When you went up to greet him formally he would reply by way of a sharp punch in the stomach. The first time this happened, I practically doubled up in pain and he shouted at the top of his voice, "Hello, young man, and how are you?"

Every time I met him he did this. The Queen Mother would see me doubled up, smile, and say, "Oh, I see you met Lord Slim."

And consider this account of a chef who rivals Anatole in temperament:

"So then, what are we having for lunch today?" It was a question I often asked the staff at Clarence House shortly after I arrived for work. "I'm not sure," was the reply from one of the servants "The chef's gone on strike."

"What! What! How am I going to break that to the Queen Mother? What the hell are we going to do? More to the point, why has he gone on strike?"

"Someone upset him," was the reply.

This was looking bad, but it was up to me to tell her, so I did: "Erm, ma'am, I have some bad news. The, erm, chef seems to have downed tools."

"You mean, he's gone on strike?" she replied.

"Erm, yes, ma'am apparently someone upset him."

"Oh well, obviously he's a bit upset, but I'm sure he'll come round eventually and get back to work. In the meantime, we shall have to eat salads."

I came across another House of Windsor connection to Wodehouse in *On Royalty: A Very Polite Inquiry into Some Strangely Related Families* by the journalist and broadcaster Jeremy Paxman. Paxman describes the library at a royal residence to which he was invited for a weekend:

I had been mildly surprised to notice a shelf at Sandringham holding the most eclectic collection of books, from a leather-bound edition of the sixth-century philosopher Boethius through Dick Francis, P. G.

Wodehouse and Frederick Forsyth to a leather-bound collection of poems by Keats. Then I discovered that while all the thrillers had the bookplate "THE QUEEN'S BOOK" inside their front cover, the leather editions could not be opened: they were bookends.

I'm afraid that I didn't find this as much a cause for outrage as Paxman. For one thing, it was heartening to discover that I would have something to read if I ever found myself at Sandringham on a rainy weekend—admittedly unlikely. Besides, I could hear Jeeves say, "You would not enjoy Boethius, sir. He is fundamentally unsound."

Paxman invokes the world of Wodehouse at another point in the book when he makes a disparaging remark about the present Duke of York, suggesting that he would have no problem fitting in at the Drones Club: "Prince Andrew emerged from his education the sort of person whose idea of humor is bread-roll marksmanship."

I looked through several other (unofficial) biographies of the Queen Mother, but could find no other mentions of her fondness for Wodehouse. So I thought I would wrap things up with remarks about Wodehouse from the Queen Mother herself. In 1988 she made a short speech as she unveiled a blue plaque at a house in London where Wodehouse once lived. Here's what she had to say:

I am particularly pleased to have been invited to unveil this plaque as for many years I have been an ardent reader of P. G. Wodehouse. Indeed, I am proud to say that his very first book, *The Pothunters*, was dedicated by him to members of my family.

Sir Pelham Wodehouse succeeded in the great ambition of so many novelists: not only has he brought new words and expressions into the English language but he has also created characters whose names have become household words—Jeeves and Bertie, Lord Emsworth and his prize pig the Empress of Blandings, and even Aunt Agatha to name but a few, live on as immortal characters.

Nevertheless I think that Wodehouse's greatest gift is that fifty or sixty years after many of his books were written they still make us all laugh, and I am sure that generations to come will continue to laugh at them just as much as we have done. What an encouraging thought for the future!

The Remsenburg Historical Marker Project

WITH INPUT FROM BOB RAINS (OILY CARLISLE),

ANDREA JACOBSEN (SWEETIE CARLISLE), AND THE TWS BOARD

AS YOU WILL no doubt recall from “An Unplanned Pilgrimage” (*Plum Lines*, Spring 2011), last fall Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen wandered around eastern Long Island in search of the final resting place of Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse in Remsenburg, New York. Upon reaching the right church and cemetery, they discovered—horror of horrors—that there was no historical marker to inform the wayfarer that he or she had arrived at a sacred spot.

The duo felt that something must be done, and upon contacting the board of The Wodehouse Society, Bob and Andrea were granted permish to look into the matter and report back with the fruits of their researches, and to provide some suggested solutions that would not break the society’s bank.

Having read that our society was responsible for erecting a plaque at the Little Church Around the Corner, Bob took a trip there in November shortly after his visit to Remsenburg. Inside he found the lovely and touching plaque honoring Plum and Ethel and their 1914 wedding at the church.

Bob and Andrea then contacted various authorities. They reported that New York State neither approves nor disapproves historical markers. As long as a proposed marker is not on state land or a state right of way, New York simply doesn’t care. One must get permission from the landowner on whose property one wishes to erect the marker and comply with any local signage ordinances. Otherwise one is free to proceed.

In this case, the landowner is the Remsenburg Community Church. Bob and Andrea researched and failed to find any legal impediment. Town historian Zachary Studenroth made it final when he responded to them, writing, “Thank you for contacting me with regard to the proposed sign that would mark the gravesite of P. G. Wodehouse. He was, of course, a giant of 20th century English literature, and well deserving of such a tribute.”

Andrea procured the verbal blessing of the Community Church’s Rev. Anne H. McAnelly (Presbyterian) and then received a letter from Rev. McAnelly confirming the decision of the church to grant the Society permission to proceed.

At this point, the statutory road was paved and ready for travel. Bob and Andrea contacted several foundries and found that, in the historical marker biz, you get what you pay for. If we raise a goodly chunk, we’ll get

quite a nice-sized marker; if we raise less, well, the size will vary depending on the donations. Whatever we build, we’ll have a Wodehouse logo or emblem or such, and some text to tell the visitor what’s up. The foundry we choose would only create and ship the marker; TWS would still have to make arrangements for its installation. Total cost could be something up to \$5,000, again depending how much we raise for the project.

How Can You Help?

THE BOARD OF The Wodehouse Society has endorsed the project, and is willing to manage the historical marker fund. TWS will donate \$500 to start the process, and private donations are already trickling in. And now is your chance to help, too!

Donations can commence immediately. Please send your check, payable to The Wodehouse Society, to Kris Fowler; be sure to note that your check is for the Historical Marker Fund. Or you can donate via PayPal (the best option, especially, for those outside the USA) by taking the PayPal option to “Send Money” for “Services” in the desired USD amount, to Kris Fowler’s official treasurer’s e-mail address at twstreasurer@wodehouse.org.

Donations are NOT tax-deductible! We are not a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; we are recognized as a “social club” by the IRS. So your donation will be out of the goodness of your heart.

In the near future, we will sponsor a contest for members and others to submit wording for the text of the marker and an appropriate logo/emblem. We are considering asking for a small donation to the project with each entry. When the project approaches successful completion, a ceremony and dedication will be planned and all will be invited.

If we raise too much money (a nice problem to have, that!), the surplus would be added to the general treasury of TWS for other future good purposes, including conventions or other items or activities approved by the board of our fair society.

We also invite chapters to participate in a “chapter challenge,” whereby the chapter whose members contribute the most will be recognized in these pages and feted mercilessly as honorary sluicees when next we see them.

All in all, a worthy project, as we continue to cement the legacy of Wodehouse!

An American Discusses English Culinary Eccentricities

BY DR. WILLIAM E. WELMERS, TWS

William (Bill) Welmers, Ph.D., was an ordained minister and former missionary who taught at the University of Pennsylvania, Cornell University, and UCLA before retiring to the Arkansas Ozarks with his wife, Bee. This article is the next in a series of "classics" that we're republishing for the pleasure of our current members. It was originally published as a supplement to the Plum Lines issue of May 15, 1985.

I HAVE SOME problems with English cuisine as portrayed in the works of P. G. Wodehouse. To begin with, the Drones Club members are identified by what they prefer with tea: Eggs, Beans, and Crumpets. And yes, it's a fact: in London you can be served hardboiled eggs or baked beans with tea!

When I read about someone digging into steak and kidney pie, I presume it is a sort of meat pie—but to me a piece of beef ceases to be a steak if it is cut into smallish pieces, and kidneys are what friends of mine back in the '30s used to pay 5¢ per pound to feed the cat; they weren't fit for human consumption. Actually, we were served kidneys, along with liver and bacon and fish and fried tomatoes and eggs, once in a British boarding house in the then Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1950, and I guess even the kidneys were good—we were both starved and exhausted! But when Plum depicts, as he does in one novel, an American movie mogul pitching into his steak and kidney pie in a restaurant in Beverly Hills, California, I have to doubt his knowledge of our eating places. And, in another book, we again hear of cold steak and kidney pie, presumably a delicacy?

Plum also, repeatedly, refers to an inexpensive dinner as featuring a chop. A pork chop, a lamb chop, or some other chop? To me, a chop generally means pork. In England, I have some suspicion that it more often means lamb, or even mutton. Is that edible? (Another English writer, about a century ago, compared the finest antelope meat he had tasted with good Welsh mutton; that would, for me, rate it as minus 1 on a scale of 10.) I confess my illiteracy when it comes to "chump chop." Even my New World dictionary defines *chump* as a thick or butt end; I could only associate it with a blockhead or fool.

And a "suet pudding"? Suet is something you feed to woodpeckers or raccoons in our charming rural area, or get a little fat fried out of in preparing some other dish. A pudding is sweet, with corn starch and usually eggs, plus chocolate, tapioca, butterscotch, etc. To me,

the words *suet* and *pudding* are mutually exclusive. But then, British puddings are American cakes.

Plum says (in something I read recently) that "biscuits" are what Americans call "crackers"; but our cookies are also British biscuits, and I have no idea what they call our baking-powder biscuits. And is "roly-poly pudding" actually a jelly roll?

A further comment on what I would call a pudding: a blancmange. In *Ice in the Bedroom*, there is an allusion to a blancmange tasting like "jellied blotting paper." We know what he means! In Ghana, in 1948–49, we asked our cook if he could make a blancmange, and he assured us he could. It was awful. Very gently, Bee asked him: "Kwame, how many eggs did you put in this blancmange?" As if grievously offended, he assured her, "Oh no, ma, I did not use any eggs." So Bee went on, "How much milk did you use?" As if much offended, he protested, "Oh no, ma, I did not use any milk." So Bee asked, "Well, what did you use?" Defensively, he answered, "Oh ma, I only used corn flour and vanilla and sugar and water!" (Darned little sugar at that!) We later told that story to an English woman who had lived in Burma for many years. She knew the product, and explained, "Ah yes; we call it 'shape.' It doesn't have any flavor, any food value, or any other merit. All it has is shape!"

I don't in any way mean to be snide, or even culture-bound. Above all, I cherish tolerance. You can have your jellied eels, as long as you'll let me enjoy my fried squid!

"And then she did give me a look. It was the sort of wondering, revolted look a very spiritual woman would give a fat man gulping soup in a restaurant. The kind of look that makes a fellow feel he's forty-six round the waist and has great rolls of superfluous flesh pouring down over the back of his collar. And, still speaking in the same unpleasant tone, she added, 'I ought to have told you, father, that Mr. Glossop always likes to have a good meal three or four times during the night. It helps to keep him going till breakfast. He has the most amazing appetite. See, he has practically finished a large steak-and-kidney pie already.'"

Right Ho, Jeeves (1934)

More on the Swinging of a Cat

BY CHARLES E. GOULD, JR.



DAVID LANDMAN's almost incredibly learned piece "More Than One Way to Swing a Cat" (*Plum Lines*, Volume 31, Number 4, Winter 2010) calls to mind—my mind, at least, and few are lesser—a conversation repeated to me by a former colleague who, when he was a student at Yale, had lunch with Professor Cleanth Brooks, then approaching 80, the first of the New Critics. Over the hasty pudding, my former colleague (then about 20) asked Professor Brooks what he thought about Professor Harold Bloom, the first among the last of the New Critics, who was then perhaps approaching 40. "Professor Bloom," replied Professor Brooks, with the bored southern drawl which somehow disappeared when he read Keats aloud, "gives b.s. a bad name."

Professor Landman's scholarship, of course, is not to be faulted, though I wish he had included a reference to W. S. Gilbert's line in *HMS Pinafore*, "Silent be! It was the cat!"—Rafe Rackstraw's allusion not only to the cat o' nine tails but also to the ship's cat. He might also have drawn a useful line from the autobiography of Mark Twain: "A man who picks up a cat by the tail gains knowledge he cannot learn any other way."

However, in professing if not protesting perhaps too much, my good friend Professor Landman has obfuscated or even overlooked the obvious (as I believe Sherlock Holmes cautioned us against doing). Jim Marvin, who sings a marvelous lyric about nesting time in Flatbush, comes from Meadowsides, Long Island, where sailing is life itself. To Jim, a *cat* would be a strong tackle used to hoist an anchor to the *cathead* of the ship—not easily swung in the average Flatbush flat. Wodehouse was not a seafaring man, but experience suggests that he knew every word in the English language apart from the ones he created, and it is impossible to think—knowing how he loved the animals themselves—that he would actually contemplate swinging a *feline* cat.

PROFESSOR LANDMAN REPLIES: That Renaissance man Charles E. Gould, Jr., questions, among other things, my derivation of the phrase "room to swing a cat" from the brutal practice of flogging, at one time a discretionary punishment of miscreant seamen. He wonders why I did not extend my researches to consider the cat that the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines (in entry number 7 under that term) as a word "applied to different parts of the contrivance by which an anchor is raised . . ." even though he admits that it is not likely anyone could or would have the desire to swing such

a weighty piece of machinery. I remind him that it was not my intention to etymologize the idiom; I was merely giving the most frequently cited origin of the phrase found in glossaries of nautical terms and slang as lead-in to the main thrust of my article, which was to bring to the attention of Plummiess a troubadour song in which a moggie is actually swung.

Mr. Gould would have done better, in my opinion, to have put forward as an alternative origin the sense of a cat as a prostitute (cf. cathouse), it being far more likely that a lightsome bit of fluff—especially during the Jazz Era—would have been swung on a dance floor.

But why should both Mr. Gould and I assume that the idiom has an origin in actual practice? Perhaps it has no more relation to actuality than the expression "off his/her rocker." We all know what it means when someone is said to be off his or her rocker, but, as far as I can see, it pertains to no reality. Has someone fallen off Mick Jagger's lap and gone stupid—or, in this case, stupider? Has some nonagenarian been tipped off his rocker and, striking his or her head upon the porch floor, attained instant dementia? Is the hand that rocks the cradle (i.e., the rocker) not the hand that rules the world, but rather the hand of a mad woman? I do not know the answer to these profound questions, and would be obliged if someone, preferably Mr. Gould, would clear up my confusion on this point.

[We've done a bit of online research, and there are some who propose that the phrase "off his rocker" had its origin in the 19th century and simply referred to Professor Landman's second guess above. However, more credible sources (not more credible than Professor Landman, but than the aforementioned online source) indicate that the phrase came from the early days of steam engine development—in particular beam engines—where the beam engine rocks back and forth. If the engine comes off the pivot (rocker), it "goes mad," flailing about and smashing up everything about it. Rather like some folks we've encountered in certain urban areas.—Ed.]

He stared down, hoping against hope that the animal was merely in some sort of coma. But a glance told him that it had made the great change. He had never seen a deader cat. After life's fitful fever it slept well.

"Good-bye to All Cats" (1934)

The Psychology of the Individual *or* About That Scripture Prize

BY JILL COOPER-ROBINSON

AS I AWAITED the arrival of the e. and b. to the accompaniment of raucous argument which passes for birdsong at the feeders in the morning, I mused on one of life's great mysteries: could winning a Junior School prize influence the course of one's entire life? Can the incidental yield the profound?

I am qualified to write on this subject as I, like Bertie Wooster, won the school Scripture knowledge prize. In fact, it might be postulated that Bertie's school experience and my own were quite similar.

Can you imagine a school today, unless strictly parochial, offering Scripture classes? But back in the '60s, in my case, the private schools in Canada *were* parochial. Mine was firmly C. of E., and in spite of Henry's unpleasantness some 300 years earlier, church *was* state, all pretense to the contrary. British-based private schools (which simply meant that you had to pay) offered Scripture classes, though in my own case (and I suspect in Bertie's, too) Old Testament only.

As you know, that's the testament with the stern and demanding God as opposed to the loving and forgiving fellow of the New Testament. This fit in nicely with the unspoken object of Scripture classes, which was to use biblical allegory as a tool to promote the obedience without which the British upper middle class could not impose the assumption of administrative divine right.

We can surmise that Bertie came into young adulthood in the Edwardian teens and twenties. He was comfortably well off (thanks to that packet his father won at the moment of his birth) but not as wealthy as, say, his pal Oofy Prosser. Now, Bertie has many a well-documented relative: uncles, aunts, various troublesome cousins. However, in spite of their numbers, they appear to have had little or no influence in the making of young Bertie Wooster. They complicate his life, they enrich it, but life was governed foremost by his school experiences and his schoolmates. Already the parallels with my life become evident.

From Bertie, through Wodehouse, we hear much about *preux chevalier* and the Code of the Woosters. The first refers to the chivalrous interaction with women. Mine being a school for ladies, we did not have to bother with observing such *preux*, merely with receiving it. If there were expectations with which we were burdened, one was certainly the expectation that we would marry well during our debutante year. After which, of course, there were numerous suffocating expectations and rules, all worse than the burden of *preux*.



*Bertie's Canadian parallel,
Jill Cooper-Robinson*

But the code—that is, the interaction with school chums—was as great a concern for us as it was for Bertie. To wit, one did not let down one's friends. Full stop. This central obligation quite simply was understood. Wodehouse only spells it out because he is writing for a buying public (especially American) larger than those few who went to private school. "Code" was that accepted body of social behavior which luckily corresponded more or less to the public and legal one (barring a few details here and there) and which, if you played within it, guaranteed your own personal army for life. In return for access to this support network, there were rules, certain inviolable rules which you ignored at your own peril. In school, for instance, to cheat at games, or steal, or snitch, or bully, would win the offending party a truly creative punishment, such as masked operatives gagging and blindfolding a perp in the muffled silence of the cloakroom before prayers while detailing the torture of St. Jean de Brébeuf among his enemies in early Canada. St. Jean was roasted and carved from the toes up; our bully was mock-carved from the toes up with an icicle.

Bertie was shaped by school curricula, including a heavy portion of English grammar and literature. By my university days I had studied every Shakespeare play three times. We did not neglect the poets; all of Bertie's references are achingly familiar. History, too: over 11 years, one token year each was paid to American and Canadian, while nine full years were classical and British. I can recite the names and salient points of

interest of many of the 300 or so Roman emperors, and I still have a crib ruler inscribed with the monarchs of England. There was great emphasis on languages: lots of French and Latin. An eight-year Scrabble game in Latin rested on a library table over the summers. We petitioned for physics, at first to no avail. But finally, one afternoon, while being instructed in the finer points of hosting a tea, the headmistress poured a very full cup of tea, placed it on a saucer, walked across the room with it at chest level, and, as she walked, gently moved the cup up and down. Doing so prevented the liquid from spilling out of the cup from side to side. “And that, ladies, is all you really need to know about physics.”

Knowledge of all these subjects ensured that you could function within the social expectations of your class, firmly upper-middle. Scripture lessons, on the other hand, promoted duty useful to the state. These Bible studies had a deep and lasting effect, as illustrated by Bertie’s continual reference throughout his life to Balaam’s ass, the deaf adder, Jezebel, Naboth’s vineyard, the fate of Lot’s wife, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Nary a day passes when an incident doesn’t arise to remind Bertram of those well-recorded parables. They taught him about cause and consequence, about how quickly a lapse in obedience can bring down the wrath of an avenging God . . . or a commanding Aunt.

Now, perhaps this brainwashing would have been much less effective had competitive persuasion had any chance. That other such influences were not possible in childhood was ensured by the simple limitations of time. Almost all Bertie’s hours from the ages of 5 to 16 would have been spent in school, with only his peers and teachers around him. Similarly, our company was so fixed and small as to be exclusively and mutually dependent. The 15 friends I entered school with were virtually the same 15 people with whom I graduated, with whom I plucked the gowans fine, linked to me by what are called imperishable memories, having done the same sequestered stretch together to the exclusion of all others. We are “lifers.” These are the ties which cannot be broken, and so I understand the bonds that Bertie shares with his sometimes flawed pals.

Now, Bertie is not the Wodehouse character I would most like to be. I’m sure many of us would want to be Psmith or Gally or Uncle Fred—all three the real brains in the firm. But my upbringing and Bertie’s saved us from turning out like Ukridge, he who makes unending trouble for himself. It is no coincidence that none of these other Wodehousean characters ever won the Scripture knowledge prize. Such a prize requires a well-developed conscience, you see, and that was not their strong suit. On the other hand, Bertie’s intellect (ahem!)

was very fertile ground for said conscience. And so it is that Bertie is the character with whom I most empathize: stumbling, well-intentioned, burdened by conscience, and seemingly thrown this way and that by the vagaries of the gods. Though, despite appearances, he is perhaps not their victim at all.

Bertie, by his crackpot *modus operandi*, is actually an inadvertent catalyst for plot complications. Without ambition, greed, or effective guile, but filled to the brim with good intentions, psychologically excitable and anxious to a fault, he is responsible for “aught that befalls him” as Marcus A. (one of the better Roman emperors) has observed. Naïve and gullible, Bertie emerges as mug supreme. If there is an opposite condition to sociopathy, Bertie is it; Bertioopathy, perhaps?

So, did winning the SKP in and of itself create a mug? Not by a long shot. The conditions which were a perfect breeding ground for muggishness in Bertie are noticeably absent in other recipients. Certainly such conditions were absent in that other notable recipient, Rosie M. Banks. This information is an important contribution to our profile of Bertie because, though Rosie may appear to be psychologically feeble judging solely on the sentimental drivel of her romance novels, she is actually a hardheaded business woman and a realist where her own fluffy-minded husband is concerned. No mug she!

Unlike Jeeves, whose moral compass is guided by the work of Spinoza, Bertie is not his own master. And this, finally, is the key to understanding Bertie and the crucial component in his life of the SKP. Born under empire, descendant of class, raised by school, nurtured by parables, guilt-ridden by nature, Bertie’s own moral compass is all emotion.

Bertie is a man who can count his measurable accomplishments in life on just two fingers: a piece in *Milady’s Boudoir* and the Scripture knowledge prize. For the effect of the latter on Bertie—that boulevardier, marital near-misser and gilt-bond coupon-clipper—who can say whether or not his *savoir-faire*, generosity of spirit, and uncanny ability (with some assistance) to sidestep catastrophically wrong marriages were not all subliminal results of his winning the prize?

As an adult, Bertie remains in awe both of Scripture lessons and the prize. This points to one conclusion: that the incidental can influence the profound. The crowning achievement of Bertie’s school career, indeed of Bertie’s entire intellectual life (an oxymoron if ever there was one), winning the SKP gets a lot of credit. No matter, best of all he is an essentially charitable man, and so, for all his other deficiencies, Wodehouse has given him an angel, the very temporal Jeeves, with

whose help he has miraculously scraped through to middle manhood intact.

We cannot leave without mention of the prize itself. Although the identity is technically unknown, we have the opinion of Gussie Fink-Nottle to provide a hint. "Looks rather bilge to me," he says, "from a glance at the title page." This may have been jealousy; there is plenty of that going around among those who failed to win the prize. In "Jeeves and the Old School Chum," La Pyke shows much the same mean spirit and also invokes doubt that her school chum Rosie M. Banks won the prize legitimately. But from my experience the prizes themselves always were bilge. I think mine in this case was a book, entitled something like *Helpful Children and the Rewarding Life*. See? Bilge, utter bilge.



Wodehousevski

KAREN SHOTTING informs us of a writers' competition that transpired in December 2010 in the *Spectator* (U.K.). In this contest, writers were to "submit a book-jacket blurb that is designed to be as offputting as possible." Karen comments that George Simmers's entry "makes Wodehouse sound like one of those Russian novelists who specialize in grey studies of hopeless misery." Here's the offering from Mr. Simmers, presumably blurbing *The Code of the Woosters*:

A feeble-minded young man lives a life of useless pleasure in London, until he is inveigled into crime by a bullying relative. Admirers of the grimmer works of George Gissing will appreciate this author's remorseless chronicling of his anti-hero's increasing desperation as he struggles to escape the consequences of his actions. Daringly, Wodehouse makes the simpleton himself the narrator of the story, so that for 200 pages we are trapped within the confines of his limited sensibility as he struggles to make sense of his plight, his only intellectual resources a collection of tags vaguely remembered from a wasted education. Cunningly, the book's subtext implies a quasi-Marxist analysis of class relations, as the hopelessness of the book's anti-hero is contrasted with the resourcefulness of those doomed to spend their existences in the servants' hall.

A Few Quick Ones

John Baesch and Evelyn Herzog provide a heap of potential Quick Ones articles from time to time. What follows include highlights from their latest passel or two.

In the "Sunday Lunch Club" column in the September 4 *Sunday Telegraph*, Terry Wogan suggests that there may be some autobiographical angst in the Bertie Wooster line "There's some raw work done at the baptismal font, Jeeves." Mr. Wogan wonders if "Pelham" was not pleasing to Wodehouse, and mentions many other interesting names, including Zowie Bowie.

Speaking of Mr. Wogan, in the "Sunday Lunch Club" column in the December 19 *Sunday Telegraph*, he tells of his retirement from his BBC program, and how little time he has found for the things he expected to do. His morning duty is the cup of tea he brings to his wife, but "hardly has he brought what Wodehouse called the 'healing Bohea' to the good woman's bedside, than he's running about . . . like the headless chicken of yore."

In an advertisement in the December 20 *Times* (London) for a Radio 4 presentation of *The Artistic Career of Corky*, the writer mentions how the BBC must love Martin Jarvis, "one man who can supply an entire repertory company of voices for a Wodehouse tale."

In the December 5 *Sunday Times*, there's a brief report of the most common questions posed on the Ask Jeeves internet search engine. According to the article, the most common question asked (presumably in England) is "Why is England so bad at football?"

Sebastian Faulks, in his new book *Faulks on Fiction: Great British Characters and the Secret Life of the Novel*, anoints Jeeves as one of the great British characters. According to the book's reviewer in the February 5 *Spectator*, "the chapter on Jeeves is more or less a thank-you letter," and mentions that Faulks quotes Evelyn Waugh's remark "that criticizing Wodehouse is like taking a spade to a soufflé." A January 29 *Daily Telegraph* book review provides a much more in-depth study of the Jeeves chapter, "The Mood Will Pass, Sir," as well as Jeeves's methods and language.

Sally Baker, the "Feedback" editor of the *Times* (London), is applauded in a letter to the editor from Dr. John Burscough of Lincolnshire for her use of quotations from leaders. Dr. Burscough quotes the oft-repeated Wodehouse line that "If it were not for

quotations, conversations between gentlemen would consist of an endless succession of ‘What-ho!’s.”

In the November 21 *Sunday Telegraph*, letter writer Mark Taha of London comments positively about a reviewer’s prediction that George MacDonald Fraser’s *Flashman* books will be used in school some day. In Mr. Taha’s litany of other possible “set books” in English schools, he suggests Raymond Chandler, Edgar Wallace, and, of course, P. G. Wodehouse, among others.

Peter Cannon tells us that the third chapter of Joseph Wambaugh’s *Hollywood Hills* (2010) contains this sentence concerning a failed dinner party: “Raleigh played his role to the hilt, but Stephen Fry as Jeeves . . . couldn’t have saved this one.” In the novel, the character of Raleigh, who has served time in prison for petty crimes, works as a waiter for the caterer.

In an article entitled “What Ho, It’s Jeeves the Hedge Funder” in the January 2 *Sunday Times* (London), Peter York describes the new breed of super-servants to the super-rich, including “servants” who manage the great wealth of their employers.

Terry Kitchen in Dearborn!

THOSE OF YOU who have attended recent conventions know that there are some special traditions at these events. One terrific tradition is Terry Kitchen’s performances (typically on Thursday night leading into the convention) at some local hot spot. In Dearborn, once again, we’ll get the goods from Terry. This time, you’ll want to be at the Good Times Caffe at 22810 Michigan Avenue, at around 8 P.M. This venue is about two miles from the hotel, and we’ll have more details and a map in the September issue. The Good Times Caffe has a good menu of sandwiches, wraps, and paninis, as well as coffees and desserts.

Terry (aka Max Pokrivchak) has been named “one of New England’s best songwriters” by the *Boston Globe*, and his latest CD, *Summer to Snowflakes*, is available at www.terrykitchen.com and on iTunes. [If you haven’t heard Terry before, his material ranges from gentle to fierce, is at once humorous and poignant, and tells stories that touch us all.—Ed.]

It’s even possible that, for a couple of tunes, Terry may have a guest star who strongly resembles your humble *Plum Lines* editor. More details will be provided in the Autumn issue.



BOB RAINS AND ANDREA JACOBSEN (aka Oily and Sweetie Carlisle) came upon this “PG Woodhouse Cymbidium” hybrid at the greenhouse at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden. Bob did some online research, but couldn’t find the precise reason for the name (or misspelling). Elin Woodger points out that Wodehouse orchids have been spotted before (<http://www.pgwodehousesociety.org.uk/orchids.html>), though probably from a different nursery. We’re sure that these blossoms would make a nice addition to your garden (if you enjoy the appropriate climate), presumably under your plum tree.



The boudoir of the Empress was situated in a little meadow, dappled with buttercups and daisies, round two sides of which there flowed in a silver semicircle the stream which fed the lake. Lord Emsworth, as his custom was, had pottered off there directly after breakfast, and now, at half past twelve, he was still standing, in company with his pig-man Pirbright, draped bonelessly over the rail of the sty, his mild eyes beaming with the light of holy devotion.

Heavy Weather (1933)

The Mulliner Games

BY KEN CLEVINGER

Ken Clevinger has become a bit of an encyclopedist of various items from the Wodehouse stories, particularly in regard to all things Mulliner. In recent years, he's documented the Mulliner zoological menagerie, alcoholic drinks in Mulliner stories, saints in the Wodehouse canon, and dedications with which Plum prefaced his stories. Ken has also educated us in regard to the lyrics that Wodehouse contributed to many early Broadway shows. Never a man to let a pun fail to punish us, Ken recently published his first collection of essays, Rannygazoo. In this article he gives us an overview of the references to sports in the Mulliner stories. While this (like many of Ken's works that appear in Plum Lines) is an abridged version, I'm sure that Ken would be happy to get you the full-length version if you desire.

LIKE AUGUSTUS MULLINER, P. G. Wodehouse was a sportsman. I don't mean to suggest that Wodehouse would throw eggs at butlers at 3 A.M. in Wimbledon Common! No, Plum was a real sportsman. He was an avid games player at Dulwich College and followed sports throughout his life. He took interest, sometimes passionate, in public school cricket, rigger, boxing, golf, horse racing, and even baseball later in life. So it is little wonder sports appear regularly in his writings.

Of the 43 Mulliner short stories, plus "Romance at Droitgate Spa," four are devoid of sports by name or even passing reference by metaphor or simile: "George and Alfred," "From a Detective's Notebook," "The Story of Webster," and "The Smile That Wins." But more than a score of sports are featured throughout the remaining 39 tales.

If you take the mention of the Anglers' Rest as a fishing reference, it is scarcely a surprise that dangling a line is a popular sport in the Mulliner creel. Both Mr. Mulliner and his nephew George are "keen fishermen." In two stories, "Big Business" and "The Voice from the Past," "huntin', shootin', and fishin'" is the phrase used to sum up the pursuit of rural pleasure by the leisure class. In "Another Christmas Carol," Wodehouse inflates the phrase "swelling with ecstasy" by suggesting that the sweller was like "one of those odd circular fish you get down in Florida, which when hauled to the surface puff themselves out like balloons." And we find Osbert Mulliner outfitted by the Cohen Bros. with a fishing rod as he sets off to potter around the world.

Cricket was apparently Plum's favorite form of sporting on the green, but it only merits four innings

in Mulliner. It is the topic of casual conversation in "Romance at Droitgate Spa" and "Honeysuckle Cottage." In "Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court" something unfair is said to be "not cricket." In "Monkey Business" we find an image of knavery deemed as "not quite the straight bat."

Golf was also a Plum passion. The game appears in nine of the Mulliner stories. That Wodehouse knew the ups and downs of golf is evident from his literary use of the sport. Golf could be a game so elevated by love as to make one suddenly "shoot the first nine in one over bogey," as described in "Best Seller." Likewise, being on the "twelfth green at Squashy Hollow, trying out that new putter" is akin to paradise in "Portrait of a Disciplinarian." But in "The Juice of an Orange" we find golf links less a paradise and more a den of inequity as dubious stroke counts are reported. And we know the golf club itself can be "nasty looking" if brandished as a potential weapon in "The Bishop's Move."

"Best Seller" gives us an analogy between golf and writing the first chapter of a novel. The initial scribbling, like a first drive, leaves one wondering "what's the big deal?" But as you metaphorically slice off from the second tee, like seeing the blank sheet of paper headed "Chapter Two" stretch off to infinity, you begin to understand writer's block. "Best Seller" also illustrates the fickleness of the female when an otherwise sweet, kind, and previously unlettered girl declines to accompany her boyfriend to the Amateur Championship in favor of literary pursuits.

Apparently being naturally good at golf marks one as a special kind of fellow in "Something Squishy," even if others see your golfing knickers as dandified. Not as wildly dandified, presumably, as the golf costume seen on the gamboge elephant in "The Nodder." Wodehouse also draws a vivid image of coolly calculated mayhem when he describes the perpetual vice president of Our Dumb Chums' League as "looking not unlike a high priest of one of the rougher religions who runs his eye over the human sacrifice preparatory to asking his caddy for the niblick."



Then there's the long, wonderful, pure Plum sentence from "Honeysuckle Cottage": "He was stoutly opposed to the idea of marrying anyone; but if, as happens to the best of us, he ever were compelled to perform the wedding glide, he had always hoped it would be with some lady golf champion who would help him with his putting, and, by bringing his handicap down a notch or two, enable him to save something from the wreck, so to speak."

Plum was also a fight fan. He boxed at Dulwich College and remained interested in the world of prize fighting for most of his life. Nine rounds of the Mulliner series have "roped-ring" references. Curiously, over half of these also involve the clergy. It seems likely that at some point Plum must have personally known a clergyman who embodied the strong, muscular, Christian cleric who symbolizes the late Victorian-era Church of England. In "Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo" the vicar is the boxer. In both "Gala Night" and "Cats Will Be Cats" bishops either are former heavyweight champions or eagerly watch the fight and encourage their champion. And that champion feline fighter Webster is duly praised for his "sporting spirit." In "Anselm Gets His Chance" it is merely a curate who is engaged in boxing lessons. Other boxing terms appear such as "ring-seats," synonymous with a choice vantage point, and "the bell for the second round," meaning a second encounter. I suspect Plum is adding more of himself in "Romance at Droitgate Spa" when hero worship is described as the "look of awe a small boy has when he sees a heavyweight champion of the world." Then there is the pitiful young man who loses a girl to a prizefighter, women being notorious for being "fascinated by the strong, tough male" as we learn in "Monkey Business."

Wodehouse was also a football XV player at Dulwich and remained a fan of public school rugger for most of his life. But that interest did not translate to many football (soccer) references in Mulliner. Just three stories come out of the scrum with football images, and one of these is actually about American football. The head of the Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Company, as he tries to buck up his writer's morale, is favorably compared to a rousing football coach. Rugger, normally called rugby today, appears most noticeably in "Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo," in regard to the awe a junior school boy feels for the old school's football fields and the school captain of football.

If you do not count fishing, sports with a net play few roles in the Mulliner circus. Tennis is the exception, as six of the tales serve up references to this genteel sport. Like playing golf, playing tennis can get a fellow



thoroughly admired as Sir Claude Lynn was for his tennis in "Something Squishy." So, too, is Freddie Boot, the "tennis champion of the county" in "The Fiery Wooing of Mordred." On the other hand, to lounge around in a comfortable "tennis shirt" all day is seen as disreputable in husbands, at least by wives, as we learn in "Honeysuckle Cottage." Finally, tennis, like the weather, is a safe topic of conversation in the dark when a kidnapped bulb-squeezer is being rescued by the girl whom he loved at first sight and whose father has kidnapped him. It's another winner of a plot served up by that ace author Wodehouse. The Mulliner stories score love all!

This same set of lovers in "Romance of a Bulb-Squeezer" also converse politely about polo when the topic of tennis is out. Polo has three other chukkers in the Mulliner stable. To play polo is the mark of a gentleman in "Something Squishy." If a fellow is off on a round-the-world putter to forget a girl, polo sticks are de rigueur, as we learn in "The Ordeal of Osbert Mulliner." Finally, either nobody or everybody cares about polo if you are a megalomaniac movie mogul in "The Nodder."

Of the horse-based sports in Mulliner, horse racing leads the field, but jousting, not surprisingly, appears in "The Knightly Quest of Mervyn." The second Mulliner reference is in "Another Christmas Carol," where jousting is a real dickens of a way to control one's weight.

Of horse racing, there are references to the Grand National in "The Fiery Wooing of Mordred" and to Ascot in "The Reverent Wooing of Archibald." It seems Plum must have drawn some connection between horse racing and wooing. In "The Right Approach" Augustus Mulliner was headed to Kempton Park to encourage a favorite when he (Augustus, not the horse) was pipped at the post by a godmother's fancy and fell in love at first sight with Hermione Brimble. We also know that Ethel, Plum's wife of more than 60 years, was a game punter and the purchaser of a race horse, Front Line, at one point in their lives, so that may be the love linkage.

Fox hunting in its usual form is reported in "A Slice of Life," and the glad cry of "tally-ho!" resounds in

both “Strychnine in the Soup” and “The Rise of Minna Nordstorm.” Much of Wodehouse’s fiction is set in the “English hunting district,” as it’s called in the latter story. We are, therefore, not surprised to read of “hunting and other hardy sports of the aristocracy of the countryside” in “The Awful Gladness of the Mater.”

The remaining Mulliner sports references are numerous. Collegiate rowers appear in “Anselm Gets His Chance” and “Mulliner’s Buck-U-Uppo.” Swimming or bathing features in “The Bishop’s Move” and “Portrait of a Disciplinarian.” Both man and dog swim in the river in “Honeysuckle Cottage.”

We find several track-and-field references in the Mulliner games. People are frequently running fast. In “The Truth About George” we learn that “all Mulliners have been athletes” and George’s turn of speed could have favorably impressed an “Olympic Games Selection Committee.” In “Open House” Eustace Mulliner “raced for the open spaces at an excellent rate of speed.” And the foot-race winner must be Desmond Franklyn in “The Story of William.” Myrtle Banks reports that she “never saw a man run so fast” as he ran from matrimonial obligations.

The field sports are also well-represented in Mulliner. We find javelins thrown in “The Knightly Quest of Mervyn.” In “The Juice of an Orange” there is a reference to taking “a running jump.” This jumping event is different than that won by the unknown passenger on the train whose sitting high jump (her second attempt) doubtless set a new indoor record in “The Truth About George.”

I will not include African big-game hunting or grizzly bear shooting as sports for our consideration. We’ll pass on tiger and rhinoceros hunting, hare puncturing, cockfighting, and almost the entirety of “Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court” as well. On similar grounds we’ll bypass greyhound racing and potshots taken at retired colonels at leisure.

And so we come down to those almost one-off sports in the Mulliner games. Bowling is arguably unathletic, but it merits reference in “A Slice of Life” and “The Reverent Wooing of Archibald.” Wodehouse always seems able to work in a favorable recommendation of his “Swedish exercises,” here found in “The Truth About George.” Throwing inked darts, billiards, draughts (checkers to Americans), and quoits (a ring-toss game) are all generally indoor games, as is the almost “Forgotten Sports of the Past—Number Three, Meeting the Mater” as described in “Something Squishy.”

Outdoor fun includes the egg-and-spoon race, cycling, car racing, fives, or, for the less energetic, hopscotch, as played in “Archibald and the Masses.”

Wodehouse also pays homage to his own lifelong good habit of walking, pursued “with a sportsman’s enthusiasm” in “The Awful Gladness of the Mater.” But perhaps the highest example of a healthy out-of-doors sport is in “Monkey Business.” There Montrose Mulliner may have lowered the Hollywood record for “climbing steps with a gorilla loose in the neighborhood.”

Lest readers imagine from this infatuation with sports in Mulliner that your author is in any way athletic, allow me to disabuse you of the notion. I am rather like the Peke Reginald, of whom we learn in “Open House” “that there is nothing of the athlete” about this dumb chum. Still, I deeply respect the “good clean spirit of amateur sport” as celebrated in “Buried Treasure,” and Plum’s Mulliner stories reflect both his personal interest in and knowledge of sports. As regards the written English language, Plum could “make it play ball.”



Good Thing He Left . . .

ACCORDING TO an article written by Lynnley Browning in the January 27 *New York Times*, the bank known as HSBC, where a young P. G. Wodehouse was once employed, would possibly be indicted on charges of selling tax-evasion services to some wealthy American clients. HSBC stands for “Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation.” As of this writing, HSBC had not been indicted, though some clients of HSBC had been.

Goodbye to the Piles of Bricks

IN THE JANUARY 8 *Times* (London), architectural correspondent Marcus Binney bemoans the destruction of “numerous magnificent Victorian buildings.” He points out that they have been destroyed or condemned because of “myopia and prejudice, and even more because they became a joke.” To make his point, he quotes P. G. Wodehouse’s 1937 comment about Walsingford Hall: “Whatever may be said in favor of the Victorians, it is pretty generally admitted that few of them could be trusted within reach of a trowel and a pile of bricks.”

Saturday Lectures for the 2011 Convention

(Possibly the best ever, if I do say so myself!)

BY ELLIOTT MILSTEIN

FOR ME, the high point of every TWS convention since my very first one at Kalamazoo College in 1989 has been the Saturday program. Some lectures have been quite erudite, some rather clever, some hysterically funny, some entertainingly delivered, and at least once or twice every convention, someone manages to combine all those qualities into one talk.

Many examples spring to mind. Foremost, for me, was Curtis Armstrong's "Noddies I Have Known," delivered in 2003 in Toronto, and his follow-up talk on *Laughing Gas* in Los Angeles. How fortunate, then, are we that we will be sampling Curtis's wit and wisdom once more in Dearborn as he speaks on "Wodehouse in a Changing World." I have no idea what that means, but I know it will be erudite, clever, hysterical, and entertaining. (I haven't really put the pressure on you much there, have I, Curt?)

Another favorite memory of mine is the time in Houston when Tony Ring's lecture on turn-of-the-century poetry began at the back of the lecture hall, with him bellowing out Rockmetteller Todd's "BE!" presumably reading from a book of verse with a limp mauve leather cover. Even his presentation on cricket in Boston (interrupted by a lost cricket player wandering into the room) didn't beat that moment—though it was close. Will we be treated to something as special this time as he discourses on "Courting the Muse"? What on earth could that be about? Wodehouse and the NCAA championship? I guess we won't know until he delivers it on Saturday, October 15.

The event that wins the "goose bumps" award, for me, was in Houston, when Norman Murphy revealed a picture of the pig that was the inspiration for the Empress of Blandings. Straining as I was to catch and understand every word of his disquisition, *that* at least I got. How exciting was that? In Dearborn, Norman will tell us of "The Last Puzzle" (I'm puzzling over it now) and then will drop the role of earnest historian and show us a lighter side as he leads The Hands Across the Sea Touring Company in the presentation of two short skits, one set at Blandings and the other starring Bertie and Jeeves.

"Do you mean there is entertainment as well as lectures on Saturday?" I hear you ask. Why, yes, I do! Let the cry ring round the clubs: "The Saturday talks include entertainment!" Two years ago in St. Paul,

we were enchanted by the vocal stylings of Maria Jette as she sang some well-known and lesser well-known Wodehouse songs. It is hard to say which was more compelling, her lovely singing or her scholarly comments on Plum's lyrics. I knew then we had to have her in Dearborn, too. So, using all my charms (yes, all of them . . . they're gone now), I have enticed her and her talented accompanist, Dan Chouinard, to give us a second helping. That alone will be worth the price of admission, I am sure.

Other returnees to the lecture circuit include the erudite Major Tom Smith, speaking on Jeeves's management style; John Graham, who will guide us through the work of some Wodehouse illustrators; and Elin Woodger taking "The Anglo-American Angle," a POV for which she is well placed. I am sorry to report that I too will take the podium again, this time in a multi-media presentation on (appropriately for our venue) "Automobiles in Wodehouse." Finally, for good measure we will have first-time speaker Paul Abrinko on "The Psychology of the Individual Child," a topic that is bound to grip.

Well, if this doesn't get you reaching for your pen and checkbook, I really don't know what will. Personally, all I can say is I mean to get lit an' buy orchestra seats to the next show . . . well, you know.

Hope you do, too, and see you there!

Convention FAQs

BY ELLIOTT MILSTEIN

A NUMBER of questions have arisen from the multitude who have registered for Happy 130th Birthday, Plum!, our convention in Dearborn. This column will address those issues in case others planning on registering now are wondering the same things.

Saturday Barbecue: Several people have registered for the Saturday lectures but not the BBQ. Please note that if you do not have transportation, the only other option for lunch that will get you back in time to attend the second half of the lectures is to eat at the hotel restaurant. If you are avoiding the BBQ because you

are of vegetarian bent, fear not. The BBQ will also have portabella mushrooms, veggie burgers, and several meatless side dishes.

Cooking Demo: Several people have registered for the Saturday lectures AND the cooking demo. Please note that the cooking demo takes place shortly after lunch and during the Saturday lectures afternoon session, so if you choose to go to the cooking demo, you will miss one or two lectures in the afternoon. The cooking demo was originally designed for the “Wodehouse Widows” (or widowers) whose spouses cannot tear themselves away from the lectures but who wouldn’t be caught dead watching them themselves. There is, however, nothing wrong with signing up for both and coming and going between them, if you so choose.

The registration form said that the cooking demo will only move forward if we have 20 sign-ups. As of this writing we have 10, so it is still in limbo. We hope we will get more, but if not and it is cancelled, refunds will be given at the time of registration.

Tickets for the Henry Ford Museum: As noted in the Winter 2010 issue of *Plum Lines* (pages 1–2), you can get discounted combo tickets to the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village at a price of \$28.80 (\$27 for seniors). To get these tickets, write a check made out to Elliott Milstein and send it to me. *Checks must be received by June 16.* Checks will be cashed only if I am able to purchase tickets; if this does not happen, your checks will be returned to you. If tickets are purchased, you can collect them at registration.

Paying via PayPal: The easiest way to send your payment through PayPal is to take the option to “Send Money” for “Services” to twstreasurer@wodehouse.org. Specify in the notes section that you are paying for your convention registration. Then send in your registration form, noting that payment was made by PayPal. Another way is to send the registration form first, indicating that you want to pay via PayPal; our treasurer can then use the PayPal option to “Request Money” from your e-mail address.

He was ink stained but cheerful. Happiness, as solid thinkers have often pointed out, comes from giving pleasure to others; and the little anecdote that he had just committed to paper would, he knew, give great pleasure to a considerable number of his fellow men.

Summer Lightning (1929)

Call for Convention Raffle and Sale Items!

IT HAS BECOME our tradition to have fundraising activities at our conventions. We will do so again in Dearborn to benefit the Convention Reserve Fund, which helps to underwrite some of the more costly aspects of our binges. Plans are still taking shape, but there will certainly be raffles and a rummage sale, as before. To that end, we need donations of all sorts: Wodehouse books, audiobooks, cow creamers, statuettes of the Infant Samuel—you name it. For the rummage sale, you can even go beyond Wodehouse and contribute worthy items you no longer need but think others would like to buy. *Donations for either the raffle or the rummage sale can be sent to: Elliott Milstein.* If you’re not attending the convention, we would still welcome your contribution(s). If you are coming to Dearborn and it’s simpler to bring your rummage sale donations with you, that’s fine, but please send potential raffle items to Elliott. Look for further details in the September issue.

Treasurer’s Report for 2010 BY KRIS FOWLER

Balance as of December 31, 2009	\$23,022.31
Income:	
Membership dues	\$11,810.95
2009 Convention loot	\$30.00
2011 Convention income	\$464.00
Interest, misc. ¹	<u>\$152.43</u>
Total Income	\$12,427.38
Expenses:	
<i>Plum Lines</i> production and mailing ²	\$14,048.33
2011 convention general expenses	\$0.00
Correspondence, supplies, other	<u>\$6.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$14,054.33
 <i>TWS Convention Reserve Fund</i> ³ :	
<i>Balance as of December 31, 2009</i>	\$9,194.80
<i>2009 Convention loot</i>	<u>\$30.00</u>
<i>Balance as of December 31, 2010</i>	\$9,224.80
Total Balance as of December 31, 2010	\$21,425.36

¹The major item was a donation in memory of Ray Steen.

²Including remaining 2009 mailing expenses, as well as all 2010 printing and mailing expenses

³Included in the Total Balance

Wodehouse in the Comics—Revealed!

BY PETER NIEUWENHUIZEN

Wodehouse stories have not been turned into comics in great numbers. We have the Dutch series of Leave It to Psmith by Georges Mazure (1961), the Japanese manga by Bun Katsuta (2008–2010), and two anonymous comics in the magazine Top Spot (1959). Now, Peter Nieuwenhuizen, chairman of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society, reveals the name of the illustrator who produced the two comics in Top Spot.

THE STORIES of Wodehouse are hilarious to read. They are also good material for turning into musicals, movies, and plays, but what about the comic section? Is Wodehouse suited for comic books, or even comic strips in daily newspapers and magazines?

In the Netherlands the artist Georges Laurent Mazure (1919–1980) designed three book covers for Dutch translations of Wodehouse novels in 1960 and 1961 (*Doctor Sally*, *Summer Moonshine*, and *Thank You, Jeeves*).

Mazure, who had great interest in Wodehouse, perhaps because he lived in England for some time, created 11 illustrations for *Doctor Sally*. Then, in 1961, he produced a serial of 100 episodes of *Leave It to Psmith* in the daily newspaper *Rotterdams Dagblad*. Mazure's daughter Muriël kept all of his drawings of this serialization, called *Laat 't maar aan Psmith*.

In 2006 I asked if there was a possibility for making an album of her father's work. As a result, the comic album *Leave It to Psmith* was published by Boumaar in the Netherlands for the 25th anniversary of the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society.

In 2008 the Japanese cartoonist Bun Katsuta started a series of three manga with the title *Please, Jeeves* based on several Bertie and Jeeves stories. Tamaki Morimura, who translates Wodehouse into Japanese, acted as adviser to Bun and the publisher Hakusensha. In 2009 the manga were successfully marketed in Japan.

The first known Wodehouse comic strip was published before Georges Mazure's covers. In 1958 the magazine *Top Spot* was published in London by Amalgamated Press (later Fleetway Publications, now a division of Egmont Publishing).

The magazine *Top Spot* featured topics such as war, sport, westerns, true life adventure, and historical

drama. It was designed to be a male version of *Valentine*, the very successful magazine for teen girls. In *Top Spot* there were adaptations of stories by Alexander Dumas, Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allan Poe, and others.

The famous illustrators of *Top Spot* included Dino Battaglia, Luigi (Gino) d'Antonio, Jesus Blanco, Arturo Perez del Castillo, Graham Coton, Cecil Doughty, Robert Forrest, Ruggero Giovannini, and William (Bill) Baker.

Some of the comic magazines were translated and published in other countries, as *Eagle* with the famous Dan Dare, *Pilot of the Future*, of cartoonist Frank Hampson. In the Netherlands it became the magazine *Arend* with pilot Daan Durf.

As far as we know, *Top Spot* was not translated and republished. The magazine lasted only two years. After 58 issues it merged into *Film Fun* in January 1960 and later into *Buster*. The covers of the early issues featured various glamour models.

Top Spot issue no.18 appeared on February 21, 1959, and in it appeared the Wodehouse comic "The Heroic Chump" (or "The worm that turned—and caught the early bird!"). This comic was a story of four pages about William Mulliner and was based on "The Story of William" (published in 1927 in the U.S. in *Liberty* as "It Was Only a Fire"). The cartoonist was unknown and the comic wasn't signed.

Eight months later, on October 31, 1959, there was a second Wodehouse comic of three pages in *Top Spot* issue no. 47. This comic was called "The Bacon and Egg Affair" (see page 16 for part of this comic), and the plot involved Archibald Mulliner, who could mimic a hen laying an egg ("The Reverent Wooing of Archibald"), and Aurelia Cammarleigh. Again, the artist was unknown: Amalgamated Press had a policy that artists were not allowed to sign their name to their work. In the 58 issues of *Top Spot*, there were no more Wodehouse comics.

Steve Taylor, who is a Dan Dare aficionado, is an expert on the history of Fleetway. He stated that, in the late 1960s, publisher Fleetway was on the verge of throwing out thousands of original artboards that were



Top Spot magazine



Georges Mazure's cover of Doctor Sally

Love at first sight can be disastrous—ask anyone who's suffered. It was even more so, when Archibald Mulliner, the Don Juan of Bond Street, became involved in—

THE BACON AND EGG AFFAIR

Based on a story by
P. G. WODEHOUSE

ARCHIBALD MULLINER HAD JUST RELAXED HIS LOWER JAW IN ORDER TO EXAMINE DOVER STREET MORE COMFORTABLY, WHEN THERE SWAM INTO HIS LINE OF VISION A GREEK GODDESS.



GOLLY!

HE REELED AS IF THE COCKTAIL HE HAD JUST CONSUMED WAS HIS TENTH AND NOT HIS FIRST!

ALGY, OLD PRUNE, ANY IDEA WHO THAT GIRL IS? SEEMS TO ME I'VE MET HER SOMEWHERE OR SOMETHING, OR SOMETHING—IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN!



ALGERNON WYMONDHAM-WYMONDHAM FOLLOWED ARCHIBALD'S POINTING FINGER IN TIME TO OBSERVE THE GIRL IN QUESTION.



THANKS, I'LL REMEMBER. TELL ME ABOUT HER, I MEAN, HAS SHE ANY FATHER OR MOTHER OR ANY ROT OF THAT DESCRIPTION?

GIRL NAMED CAMMARLEIGH, AURELIA CAMMARLEIGH. INTRODUCE YOU IF YOU LIKE, SHE'S SURE TO BE AT ASCOT. LOOK OUT FOR US THERE.



ONLY AN AUNT, SHE LIVES WITH HER IN PARK STREET, SHE'S POTTY!

POTTY? THAT DIVINE CREATURE...



THINKS WHO WROTE WHAT?



NOT AURELIA—THE AUNT, SHE THINKS BACON WROTE SHAKESPEARE.



YOU MUST HAVE HEARD OF SHAKESPEARE, FELLOWS, WELL KNOWN! HE USED TO WRITE PLAYS, ONLY AURELIA'S AUNT SAYS HE DIDN'T, SHE SAYS A BLOKE CALLED BACON WROTE THEM.



ALGY MOVED ON, AND ARCHIBALD WENT OFF TO THE BURLINGTON ARCADE. THE PROCESS OF BUYING SOCKS EASED FOR A WHILE THE TURMOIL THAT RAN ROT IN HIS VEINS, BUT ALGY'S WORDS HAD CONFIRMED HIS WORST SUSPICIONS.



WHAT HAVE I TO OFFER A GIRL WITH AN AUNT KNOWING ALL ABOUT SHAKESPEARE AND BACON?



MONEY? PLENTY OF THAT, YES, BUT WHAT IS MONEY? SOCKS? I'VE GOT THE FINEST COLLECTION IN LONDON, BUT SOCKS AREN'T EVERYTHING. A LOVING HEART? A FAT LOT OF USE THAT IS!

A GIRL LIKE AURELIA CAMMARLEIGH WOULD, ARCHIBALD FELT, DEMAND FROM THE MAN OF HER HEART SOMETHING IN THE NATURE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS—HE WOULD HAVE TO BE A MAN WHO DID THINGS!



AND WHAT CAN I DO? ABSOLUTELY NOTHING—EXCEPT GIVE AN IMITATION OF A MAN LAVING AN EGG!

IT WAS OBVIOUS TO ARCHIBALD WYMONDHAM, THAT TO A GIRL LIKE AURELIA, THIS ONE AND ONLY ACCOMPLISHMENT WOULD BE CONSIDERED BUT COARSE BUFFONNERY. HE BLINKED AT THE VERY THOUGHT OF HER EVER LEARNING THAT HE WAS CAPABLE OF SINKING TO SUCH DEPTHS.



AND SO, WHEN SOME WEEKS LATER HE WAS INTRODUCED TO HER AT ASCOT...



THEY TELL ME YOU IMITATE A HEN, MR. MULLINER?

IT IS A LIE! A FOUL LIE WHICH I SHALL TRACK DOWN TO ITS SOURCE AND NAIL TO THE COUNTER!

BRAVE WORDS! BUT HAD THEY CLICKED? DID SHE BELIEVE HIM? ARCHIBALD TRUSTED SO, BUT AURELIA'S EYES SEEMED TO PIERCE THROUGH TO THE DEPTHS OF HIS SOUL AND LAY IT BARE FOR WHAT IT WAS—THE SOUL OF A HEN-IMITATOR!

HOWEVER SHE HAD ASKED HIM TO CALL AND ARCHIBALD RESOLVED THAT NO MATTER WHAT THE MENTAL STRAIN, HE WOULD SHOW AURELIA THAT THERE WAS MORE TO HIS CHARACTER THAN HAD APPEARED ON FIRST SIGHT.



IT APPEARS, MEADOWS, THAT THERE IS—OR WAS—A BLOKE CALLED SHAKESPEARE WHO WAS A SECOND BLOKE BY THE NAME OF BACON.

INDEED, SIR!

stored in the basement of Fleetway House. Also, the original payment books were about to be destroyed. In the payment books were listings of every strip and cover that Amalgamated Press (AP) had paid for including the names of artists and their work.

Former AP editor Leonard Matthews rescued the boards and payment books and kept them in a special rented flat. Later, Matthews sold the artboards via the London dealer Norman Shaw. With the help of the payment books, the cartoonist of the two Wodehouse comics (as well as many other missing artists) could be identified: his name was Cecil Orr.

So who was this chap Orr? Cecil Orr (1909–1965) was a freelance artist who worked for newspapers, magazines, and comics and did several projects for AP. He was born in Glasgow and studied at the Glasgow School of Arts. He became a professional freelancer at Associated Scottish Newspapers and produced much work for advertising campaigns (beer, gas, tobacco, cheese, etc). Orr was a very versatile artist: he also created many theatrical posters, caricatures, and children's book illustrations. During World War II he joined the RAF and served throughout the war. His artistic work appeared in various publications, including *Radio Times*, *Sun*, and *Mickey Mouse Weekly*. You can read more about him in the magazine *The Artist* (June 1946, pp. 83–84).

And, if you want to visit Fleetway House in Farringdon Street in London as I did last December, hoping to find a Wodehouse artboard in a nearby rubbish bin, don't bother. According to Steve Taylor, the original house was redesigned (to put it mildly) some years ago, and the basement is empty. But what's left for us as readers are the two famous *Top Spot* Wodehouse comics!



One of the three installments in *Bun Katsuka's Please, Jeeves* manga. *Bun* has since created more manga based on the *Bertie and Jeeves* stories.

Broadway Special Bit of Fun

As mentioned in the Broadway Special report in Chapters Corner (page 20), M. E. Rich "brought along a program she claimed to have found in a library book, which listed the performers scheduled for the King's Deverill Village Concert." Here, for your pleasure, is her "find."

PROGRAMME
VILLAGE HALL
HIGH STREET
KINGS DEVERILL, HANTS
8.15 PM
A SHORT ADDRESS
THE REV. SIDNEY PIRBRIGHT

1. Miss Eustacia Pulbrook (violin): "Zigeunerweisen" by Pablo Sarasate
2. Miss Muriel Kegley-Bassington: "My Hero" from *The Chocolate Soldier*
3. Master George Kegley-Bassington: Poem "Ben Battle" by Mr. Thomas Hood
4. Mr. Adrian Higgins (impressions): Woodland Songsters and Farmyard Calls
5. Mr. Claude Pirbright & Mr. Bertram Wooster: "A Merry Melange of Fun"
6. Mr. Esmond Haddock: "Tally-Ho!" composed by Miss Charlotte Deverill
7. The Church Choir: "The Yeoman's Wedding Song" by J. Poniowski
8. Miss Poppy Kegley-Bassington (Interpretive Dance): "A Vision of Salome"

INTERVAL AND REFRESHMENTS

9. Mr. Percy Kegley-Bassington: Prestidigitation, Legerdemain and Conjury
10. Constable Ernest Dobbs: "A Policeman's Lot" by Messrs Gilbert & Sullivan
11. Mr. Augustus Fink-Nottle: "Hoppity" by Mr. A. A. Milne
12. Colonel and Mrs. R. P. Kegley-Bassington: "A Pair of Lunatics!"
13. Master Thos. Gregson and Sam Goldwyn: "The Hound of the Deverills"
14. Mr. Watkyn Kegley-Bassett: "A West End Cavalcade of Impersonation"
15. The Church Choir: "The Voice that Breathed o'er Eden" by John Keble

CLOSING REMARKS BY MISS CORA PIRBRIGHT

FINALE: "GOD SAVE THE KING"

Chapters Corner

IT'S FUN BEING with other Wodehouse fans and reading about what others are doing. So please use this column to tell the Wodehouse world about your chapter's activities. Chapter representatives, please send all info to the editor, Gary Hall (see back page). If you're not a member of a local chapter but would like to attend a meeting or become a member, please get in touch with the contact person listed.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Collicott
Phone:
E-mail:



Birmingham Banjolele Band

(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)
Contact: Caralyne Campbell
Phone:
E-mail:



BBBers Nancy Tanner, Joy Rhea, Jack Davis, and Debbie Dalton take tea. (photos by Cynthia Yeager).

THE BIRMINGHAM BANJOLELE BAND celebrated the vernal equinox with a high tea, and other more potable beverages, in Knoxville on March 19 at the home of Cynthia Yeager. Seventeen celebrants munched on a delicious selection of tea sandwiches, fruit scones with cream and lemon curd, a seed cake, and other assorted sweets. After tea, we had a spirited reading of "Jeeves and the Old School Chum" by eight costumed readers, and we marveled at Plum's way with words.

We had to delay our April 23 Nashville event, so please continue to watch this space for word of the rescheduling, at a more propitious time, of "P G and the Frogs" by Barbara Bowen. But, the good Lord willing and the creek don't rise, July 23 will find us in the beer garden of Knoxville's Crown & Goose Pub for a social sequel to our last summer's delightful gathering there.



Ken Clevenger enjoys the tea in style.

Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)
Contact: Ed and Missy Ratcliffe
Phone:
E-mail:



The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)
Contact: Amy Plofker
Phone:
E-mail:



WITH TYPICAL OPTIMISM, the Broadway Special gathered on March 25, 2011, at The Players in Gramercy Park to consider *The Mating Season*, a particularly Plummy chronicle of goings-on in and

around Deverill Hall, populated by no fewer than five aunts, a dozen star-crossed lovers, and a hound. But while the vernal equinox may have duped us into thinking that spring was nigh, we again faced an evening not unlike the chill felt back in January. Not very conducive to thoughts of mating, but a certain matiness was nonetheless apparent as we tossed back flagons of restorative liquids and pondered the tone of this narrative, which was written with a touch, here and there, of American jargon. Have you ever watched one of those juggler johnnies tossing meat cleavers, flaming shashlicks, and cricket bats while walking a tightrope? There, that's your plot. And all's well that ends well, if that's the phrase I want, as it must in Wodehouse.

M. E. Rich brought along a program (see page 16) she claimed to have found in a library book, which listed the performers scheduled for the King's Deverill Village Concert, as well as lyrics for several of the vocal selections. An enjoyable recital of these lyrics followed, with John Baesch nailing his delivery of "Hoppity." But the pièce de résistance, the tour de force of our soirée, had to be Madeline Basset (Sally Herships) relating to Bertie Wooster (Amy Plofker) the gripping and tragic romance (penned by Rosie M. Banks) of Mervyn Keene, Clubman. There's a reason we're called the Broadway Special, folks, and these two thespians were not only deeply committed to their parts but also gave their audience a night to remember. Not a dry eye in the house—you shoulda been there!

Next up? Friday the 13th of May, same time, same place, the usual Specialists. We're in for a bit of *Heavy Weather* . . .

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)

Contact: Jeff Peterson

Phone:

E-mail:



ON SUNDAY, February 20, Capital! Capital!, some 31 members strong, met for a buffet dinner and an evening on the theme of Frederick Altamont Cornwallis Twistleton, the 5th Earl of Ickenham, aka "Uncle Fred," just about everybody's all-time favorite P. G. Wodehouse character. Ms. Freda Kirkham, never timid or uncomfortable behind podiums, led the proceedings with readings from *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* and with quotes from other stories. What's not to like about an evening dedicated to a gentleman like Uncle Fred, who endeavors to spread sweetness and light and who has a talent for impersonation when he needs to use

such subterfuges to baffle enemies of sweetness and light? The evening, however, took a twist when Freda introduced the assembled ears to Aunt Clara, something like a non-Wodehousean female counterpart to Uncle Fred. It seems that Aunt Clara could step out just as high, wide, and plentiful as Uncle Fred. Freda then led all CapCappers in singing a rousing song about said Aunt Clara, with the chorus:

We never mention Aunt Clara,
Her picture is turned to the wall.
Though she lives in the French Riviera,
Mother says she is dead to us all!

Uncle Fred would have said that he had found a soulmate. Our capital members said that they had a great evening.

Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Herb Moskowitz

Phone:

E-mail:



THE CHAPS OF CHAPTER ONE met for lunch on Sunday, March 13, at the Dark House Tavern in Head House Square in Old City, Philadelphia. There were five regrets and two late arrivals due to the changeover to Daylight Savings Time (seems that someone's valet was remiss in setting the clocks). Despite a raucous 50th birthday celebration going on the next room, food and drink were served with alacrity.

After a discourse on the Philadelphia Flower Show (ending that day), members got down to discussing "The Truth About George," a scintillating example of Plum's deft touch with wordplay. Moderator Herb Moskowitz (Vladimir Brusiloff) gave a fascinating disquisition on the history of the crossword puzzle, which began in 1913 as a "word cross" and swiftly became a near international craze. He mentioned a 1920s review of crosswords by *The New York Times*, which rather snippily suggested that it was just another way to waste time and that it would soon run its course. Members also took part in declaiming two excerpts from the story.

Vladimir also passed around a crossword puzzle he created for the occasion, the clues being characters in the story and famous stutterers in history. It was asked if George Mulliner was based on the future George VI, the subject of *The King's Speech*, but as "The Truth About George" was first published in 1926, that Bertie was still the Duke of York and there was no indication that he would succeed his brother David, the future

Edward VIII. The discussion then turned to raillery on the royals and what names the Prince of Wales and the newly affianced Prince William might take when they would accede to the throne. John is out, and so is Richard: As The Girl in Blue said, “They retired his number.”

Janet Nickerson mentioned that this meeting was the one-year anniversary of her membership in Chapter One, which she had made official by becoming a member of The Wodehouse Society earlier this year. She brought her welcome letter from membership secretary Ian Michaud, of which she shared the following excerpt: “. . . as you’re already fully acquainted with the good folks at Chapter One, I will just point out that Chapter One will go down in song and legend for the bang-up job it did of hosting our 2001 National Convention.”

At the end of the meeting, Vladimir collected funds to feed Gussie, the Mandarin newt (Philadelphia Zoo) that we adopted many years ago, and who sports a sign outside his tank, telling of our charity.

The next Chapter One meeting was to have been May 22, at 1 P.M. at the same locale, i.e., the Dark Horse, Old City, Philadelphia.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate
(Chicago and thereabouts)
Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison
Phone:
E-mail:



The Clients of Adrian Mulliner
(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)
Contact: Marilyn MacGregor
Phone:



The Dangerous Intellectuals
(Florida)
Contact: Alison Currie
E-mail:



Reda Proeger was the only Dangerous Intellectual who arrived at the one-year chapter anniversary meeting in April. Reda reports that, despite the dearth of DIs, Wodehousean antics abounded nonetheless, as she buried herself in *A Wodehouse Bestiary*. We’re happy to report that she enjoyed an epiphany that most of us have felt when she read “Uncle Fred Flits By” for the first time. She report that “it is hilarious—my favorite so far!” Have a nut?

The Drone Rangers
(Houston and vicinity)
Contact: Carey Tynan
Phone:
E-mail:



AFTER THE RETIREMENT (and departure from Houston) of longtime head honcho Toni Rudersdorf, the Drone Rangers are trying to divvy up the workload.

The Drones are reading short stories this year. So far we have had a theme for each month with a corresponding dinner the next. In March we each chose a golf short story and gave a little summary. This month is a dinner month, so we are having dinner at a golf course.

In April/May our theme was Aunts. In May we planned to go to Auntie Chang’s Dumpling House for dinner.

The Flying Pigs
(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)
Contact: Susan Brokaw
Phone:
E-mail:



Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham
(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)
Contact: Laura Loehr
Phone:
E-mail:



The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels
(San Antonio and South Texas)
Contact: Lynette Poss
Phone:
E-mail:



The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)
(Boston and New England)
Contact: David Landman
Phone:
E-mail:



AND THE EARTH opened her mouth and [nearly] swallowed them up! Those who follow this column will be aware that the NEWTS live a life up to the gills in high drama. There was the nottle (meeting) one rainy afternoon when our deliberations were interrupted by a half dozen yellow-slickered firemen who, with axes bared, stormed the premises in response to our host’s

perfectly reasonable decision to conduct the charcoal grilling indoors out of the wet.

Experts in the science of disorder (pandemonology) deemed the resultant ruckus the unsurpassable crest gem of turbulent nottles, and it remained so until the “Welcome to Spring” cluster this March when the NEWTS topped it the moment the exterior steps upon which they were tiered for a group photo collapsed under the massy weight of the swarm. No one was hurt but, like a nervous martini, both shaken *and* stirred, the NEWTS resolved to take a group photo *before* the browsing and sluicing begins.



The NEWTS in happy times just before the brouhaha (photos by David Landman)



The aftermath of the crush of the NEWTS

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

Phone:

E-mail:



THE NORTHWODES’ adventures are being chronicled at <http://www.northwodes.org>, courtesy of Rhys Parry’s work in turning it into a blog to which we can all contribute. Conveniently, the interested follower can also elect to receive notifications of new content.

For those who need to be brought up to date, here’s a progress report. Book discussions at the Wilde Roast Cafe in February and April, masterminded by Angie Meyer, ranged from Blandings (*Summer Lightning*) to Brittany (*Hot Water*). Unrelated as those settings may seem, Dave Fritz notes this resemblance: The line in the book “Chateau Blissac has burglars the way other houses have mice” reminded those in attendance of the fact that “Blandings Castle has imposters the way other houses have mice.” So, one of the topics that came up was the number of imposters as well as the number of burglars at Chateau Blissac, who was which, and how many of the imposters were also burglars, and vice-versa (believe it or not, they did not totally overlap!).

A bit of thievery was attempted at St. Paul’s Happy Gnome on Boat Race Night; see the accompanying photo in which Akshay Rao (who may or may not have been an imposter) celebrates the occasion in the Bertie Wooster–approved manner. The rest of us merely reveled in the fine browsing and sluicing to be had at this jolly gastropub, fast becoming a Northwodes favorite.

But on Derby Day, we followed our fine old tradition of gathering in the paneled bar of the Lexington for authentic mint juleps, outsized onion rings, and hotly contested wagers. We welcomed new member Maggie Ment, as recruited by Faith and Dan Sullivan, and all joined Joan Barnes in a rousing chorus of “My Old Kentucky Home” at the appropriate point. Lucky Gail Toussaint scooped the pot when Animal Kingdom romped home. We admired her Bingo Littleish plan to invest the takings in the lottery, thereby no doubt putting her on velvet (or at least seeing her through to the next quarter’s allowance). The Northwodes’ quarterly agenda includes a yarn with Mr. Mulliner in June, and some sort of fete later in the summer. Any Plumemies touring the area are encouraged to get in touch.



Potential imposter Akshay Rao separates a would-be bobby (David Fritz) from his helmet. (Photo by Maria Jette)

The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Karen Shotting

Phone:

E-mail:



FAITHFUL READERS of our chapter reports have been waiting, breathlessly, for the outcome of PZMPCo's researches into the potential for a cocktail called the "Zizzbaum." We are happy to report that this libation made its inaugural appearance (to universal acclaim) at our March meeting. Bill Graff volunteered to lead the Zizzbaum Cocktail Steering Committee, which was empowered to consult with experts in the field (his local mixologist), and was given the mandate to create a cocktail worthy of the name. Armed with the broad general idea that a Zizzbaum should be fizzy, Bill and his committee set to work, and we are pleased to announce that the recipe, printed below, is the winning concoction.

Ingredients

Crushed Ice	Ginger Cognac
Gin	Simple Syrup
Cold Brut Champagne	Lemon
Lemon Juice	

Put ice in cocktail shaker and add 2 fluid ounces of gin. Into that mixture, put one teaspoon of simple syrup and a splash of ginger cognac. Add 1/2 fluid ounce of lemon juice. Shake vigorously (but being careful not to bruise the gin). Place some crushed ice into a thoroughly chilled champagne flute and strain the cocktail into it. Top the glass off with champagne and add a lemon slice. Drink and enjoy!

Everyone agreed that this was the goods, and that the seemingly innocuous lemon slice (omitted from the first experimental batch) was of the essence. Mr. Schnellenhamer and Mr. Levitsky both concurred that Bill's efforts should be recognized with a promotion to the executive level, with brevet rank as a brother-in-law.

Our merry group of Noddors then turned its attention to a thoroughly enjoyable reprise of "Uncle Fred Flits By" (Four Star Playhouse, 1955), with David Niven infusing the part with just the right combination of insouciance, benevolence, savoir faire, and majestic disinterest in the English law of trespass. We highly recommend it to one and all. Also on the bill that day, setting a more solemn tone, was the BBC's "P. G. Wodehouse: The Long Exile."

At our April meeting, we ruminated over "The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy," a story chosen, among other reasons, because of its signature cocktail, the Green Swizzle. Our own Zizzbaum is not quite in the "planter" class (having merely three types of alcohol), but the wizard behind the Planters' Bar who saved Bertie's life with the Green Swizzle did set the bar rather high. We are delighted with our more modest effort and invite other chapters to weigh in with their own variations on the theme.

We meet on the second Sunday of the month at 12:30 P.M., at Book Alley, 1252 E. Colorado Blvd, Pasadena, California (www.BookAlley.com). Please note that this is a change of location for us. We do occasionally meet elsewhere, and the best way to keep abreast of our activities is to join our Yahoo! group (there is a link at www.Wodehouse.org/TWSchapters.html; you may simply follow the link, and click on Plum's picture). Of course, you can always send an e-mail to the above address.

The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein

Phone:

E-mail:



The Portland Greater Wodehouse Society (PGWs)

(Portland, Oregon and vicinity)

Contact: Carol James

Phone:

E-mail:



The Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney

(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Contact: Jelle Otten

Phone:

E-mail:

THE NEXT MEETING of the Right Hon. Knights will be on Saturday, October 22, at 1:00 P.M. in Mulliner's Wijnlokaal, Lijnbaansgracht 266-267, Amsterdam. A report of the June 4 meeting of the Knights will be published in the Autumn 2011 issue of *Plum Lines*.

The Size 14 Hat Club

(Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Contact: Jill Robinson

E-mail:



Rannygazoondheit

BY GARY HALL

KEN CLEVENGER's self-published book of essays, *Rannygazoo*, is available on Amazon.com. As an editor myself, I must hitch up my pants and take several grains of salt before starting my review of Ken's collection. This is because the first piece in the book (entitled "Editors: the modern *raison d'être* for the horsewhip") heats the coals and brings the rake. The subspecies of the human race known as editors takes it on the chin.

In this essay, Ken lists the Ten Commandments of the editor, which include some humorous jabs ("Nobody understands the rules for commas, so change them arbitrarily") and some that come rather close to the bone ("If a word makes you think, excise it"). Ken says that "an editor would never allow the whole picture to emerge . . . Readers don't need to know the truth, only what we want them to know." While hoping that I haven't personally driven Ken to the dungeon of despair through my slicing and dicing of his works, it does appear that his overall experience with editors has been a bit rough. I'm hoping that when I see him in Dearborn in October, he's holding a cocktail rather than a horsewhip.

Ken quotes other writers (T. S. Eliot said that "most editors are failed writers . . . but so are most writers") but focuses on Wodehouse's editorial experiences. Perhaps the line that I latch onto like a life preserver is Wodehouse's quote about being a ruthless self-editor: "I sometimes think the secret to writing is to go through your stuff till you come to something you think is particularly good and then cut it out."

Ultimately, Ken has found the perfect solution to editorial cuts by self-publishing, and so all is peace and harmony, especially since I received the blessing of a free copy. Ken acknowledged the "superbly improving hands" of several editors, including Elin Woodger, Norman Murphy, and the "ultimate editorial hand" of Casey Hayden.

Most of the other essays have appeared in the pages of *Plum Lines*, albeit in somewhat edited form. So, in *Rannygazoo*, you get the opportunity to read them in their gloriously unabridged form. You'll find good biographical information in the comparison/contrast of Wodehouse with Einstein, and in Ken's essay about "Dorothy L. Sayers and P. G. Wodehouse: A Mutual Admiration Society."

Some of the most entertaining to my mind are "A Study in Scotch: Drinks in Mulliner," which graced the

first page of *Plum Lines* a few years back, and the great collection of early Wodehousean lyrics in "Innuendo in Wodehouse," which you may have seen (edited) in last year's Autumn *PL* issue.

All in all, it's quite a varied and rich collection of material, and Ken's reputation as a bit of a Wodehousean encyclopedist is on strong display as he thoroughly documents the "Wodehouse Book Dedications" and creates "A Calendar of Wodehouse Saints" (embellished by way of Ken's own poetic license).

Ken's method is, first and foremost, thorough. He has done his research, with love. While he occasionally presents minor variations of the actual Wodehouse quotations, his documentation of the dedications, drinks, and other items demonstrate his love of poring through the canon and extracting connections and threads of information.

Ken's style is certainly his own, and exceedingly good-humored. An unabashed and prolific punster and word associationist, he often spins a sentence or three just to reach a punning endpoint. In the essay on saints, there are many examples: "Doubtless St. Thomas is in there too and we can also shout out a 'hey' to St. Jude"; "St. Brule may be the *crème de la crème* of Wodehouse's saints"; "Cars are so versatile that it would take a saint to keep up with all their manifold ways of doing good in Wodehouse's fictional world." Sometimes I think there's a pun in there and can't quite grasp it. For example, he concludes his paragraph on St. Rocque with the comment "Least [sic] you find this review . . . pestilentially slow, we will move along." Was I to assume that Ken would have us pronounce "Rocque" as "roshe" for the connection to "roach"? I'm not sure, but it's part of the playful challenge.

On occasion, Ken will invent new words, often compound, to make his point ("Jeeves is himself an effective contra-connubilent") Through all of this, he continues to provide a vast amount of information, some researched, some invented, all a bit of fun.

Overall, the book is heavily infected with the spirit of humor, and Wodehouse is present in bucketfuls. There are hundreds of fine quotations, many a gay lyric, and at least a semester's course of educational material in the little volume. In future *PL* issues, Ken continues his work as a canon crawler. In fact, you can find his new work in this issue, where (on page 10) you may enjoy his latest (edited) efforts in the article "The Mulliner Games." Enjoy!



Show Boat in Connecticut and *Jeeves in the Morning* in Fort Worth

STAGE WEST THEATER in Fort Worth, Texas, is producing another Wodehouse play: *Jeeves in the Morning*. The production will run August 25–September 25. For more information, check out the website at <http://www.stagewest.org>. The Drone Rangers are quite likely to take a field trip to see the show; if you'd like to go along with them, contact Carey Tynan.

FROM THE BROADWAY SPECIAL: The chapter members are planning a trek to Connecticut for a Sunday, July 10, matinee performance of *Show Boat* at the Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam, Connecticut. This show, of course, has the famous Wodehouse lyric “Bill,” and is, of course, a seminal American musical. To attend with the chapter folks, contact M. E. Rich or Amy Plofker.

See pages 13 & 14 for important convention news!

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Volunteer Officers

President of The Wodehouse Society and
Editor in Chief, AOM (Apprentice Oldest Member):
Gary Hall

Treasurer (dues payments):
Kris Fowler

Editor Emeritus: Ed Ratcliffe

Membership Secretary (new-member inquiries,
contact information changes):
Ian Michaud

<http://www.wodehouse.org/inquiry/>

Proofing Editor: Elin Woodger

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Mailer Liaison, Rosters, Dues Sheets, Website
Maintenance: Neil Midkiff

Website address: www.wodehouse.org

Website Hosting: Shamim Mohamed, aka Pongo

We appreciate your articles, research, Quick Ones, My First Time tales, and other observations. Send them to Gary Hall via e-mail or snail mail at the addresses above! Deadlines are February 1, May 1, August 1, November 1. If you have something that might miss the deadline, let me know and we'll work something out!

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“If ever anyone earned a refreshing snort, you are he. Pour it out, Jeeves, and shove it down.”

“Thank you very much, sir.”

“Cheerio, Jeeves!”

“Cheerio, sir, if I may use the expression.”

Very Good, Jeeves (1930)