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## A Weekend with Wodehouse, Norfolk Style

BY KAREN SHOTTING

**H**ALCYON DAYS, idyllic settings, paradisaical locations, sunny, azure skies: these are all things that come to mind when ruminating, as I do frequently, about the magical world that P. G. Wodehouse created for our enjoyment. Add a dash of rannygazoo, a soupçon of ingenious wordplay, and a cluster of convivial companions and you have the basic ingredients for a Wodehouse novel—or A Weekend with Wodehouse in Norfolk, East Anglia, U.K., the destination of a jolly group of 43 Wodehousians from seven countries who took part in the festivities there from May 25 to 27, 2012.

On Thursday night the Weekenders convened at Champagne Charlie's near the Embankment in London to meet and greet each other. The rafters rang with "view halloos" to old friends and introductions to new acquaintances. Hilary Bruce, honored chairman of our host, The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), was there with Robert Bruce, Chairman's Consort and Accompanying Person, greeting everyone and providing a briefing on the delights in store for us. Sir Edward Cazalet, Wodehouse's grandson, welcomed us and wished us godspeed on behalf of Plum's family. Norman Murphy, the U.K. Society's Remembrancer, Wodehouse authority extraordinaire, and The Man Who Knows Almost Everything (TMWKAE) provided us with lots of background information to peruse prior to starting the journey.



*All Weekenders received this custom-designed plate featuring the weekend's logo.*



*Kimberley Hall*

Our pious pilgrimage was to include stops at Kimberley Hall (until 1958 the home of the Earls of Kimberley, cousins of Wodehouse, who may or may not have descended from a Sir Bertram of Wodehouse—personally, I don't much care if it's true, it just sounds so *right*); Hunstanton Hall (a stately home that Plum often visited and used as a basis for the settings of a number of stories); Blickling Hall (a home of Wodehouse ancestor Mary Boleyn); and, just for fun, Sandringham, as the Queen, busy elsewhere with Diamond Jubilee preparations, was not using it that weekend.

We boarded our coach Friday morning and set off to the sound of Jonathan Cecil's mellifluous recording of "Jeeves and the Impending Doom." The selection of this particular story was not

a random one: All Jeeves aficionados know that this is the story that found Bertie Wooster and the Rt. Hon. A. B. Filmer roosting atop an Octagon, trapped by a very protective and angry nesting swan. (This swan, as swans go, may have been well up in the ranks of the intelligentsia, but was no match for Jeeves, particularly when he was armed with a raincoat and boathook.) More of the Octagon anon.

We stopped for lunch at The Green Dragon in Wymondham; after all, a Wodehouse gathering is not complete without judicious amounts of browsing and sluicing. With our tissues restored, we were able to face with equanimity the knowledge that Tony Ring had some group participation planned for our entertainment, some of which, he admitted without a blush of shame, was poetry.

Half the fun of a Wodehouse tour is engaging in some general silliness with fellow Wodehousians, and Tony, our master of revels, had plans for keeping us amused during the drive. The proceedings kicked off with contributions from the group on the subject of the Most Engaging Child in Wodehouse. Volunteers picked a child from the canon, gave us some background on the child, and made predictions as to the child's future.

Various participants championed the cause of some fairly unlovable slabs of Gorgonzola, including George Threepwood, Lord Emsworth's enterprising grandson (*Service With a Smile*); Young Blumenfeld, representative of the Least Common Denominator of American audiences ("Jeeves and the Chump Cyril"); Joey Cooley, who was so popular that two participants found him worthy of note (*Laughing Gas*); Ogden Ford (*The Little Nugget, Piccadilly Jim*); and Gladys and Ern ("Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend"). All of the contributors—Gloria Nakamura, Amara El Gammal, Ken Clevenger, Tony Ring, Bob Rains, and Andrea Jacobson—gave us new perspectives on these youths. It was Bob and Andrea who rang the bell with their vision of Gladys and Ern selling "flarze" in Piccadilly with a sideline in vases and finally making their fortune with flarze.com. A small portion of said fortune was to be used to purchase a derelict Blandings Castle and convert it into a spa for the use of the members of The Wodehouse Society.

Kimberley Hall, where Wodehouse occasionally visited his cousins, was our next destination. It is no longer owned by the Wodehouses/Earls of Kimberley, but its gracious owners, the Buxtons, allowed us to roam through many of the rooms on the ground floor and to stroll the grounds of this large stately home. The hall's foyer is dominated by an imposing staircase, but a surprisingly cozy salon, overlooking a scenic lake

and lovely parkland, told us we were in a home, not a museum. Mr. Buxton, in his casual attire, reminded us of Lord Emsworth, and no one would have been surprised to find him drooping over the fence of the pig sty, had there been a pig sty.

After leaving Kimberley Hall, we traveled through the East Anglia countryside to Norwich and Norwich Cathedral, featuring a magnificent Wodehouse stained-glass window, the next stop on our itinerary. Among the helpful information distributed to us earlier was a simplified Wodehouse family tree, and it was quite useful in helping us to follow along as Ian Alexander-Sinclair told us the history of the window and the Wodehouses memorialized on it (descendants of PGW's great-great-grandfather).

Saturday's visit to Hunstanton Hall was a highlight for me. Peaceful, serene, idyllic—it was a slice of Wodehouse's world come to life. The spectacularly sunny day with the bluest of blue skies might have been ordered specially for our visit, and I could picture Wodehouse blissfully engaged in his favorite activity—tapping away at the typewriter that he had perched on a bedside table in a punt on the moat. If Sudeley Castle and Weston Park are the architectural and topographical models for Blandings Castle (as we know from TMWKAE's research), I have to nominate Hunstanton Hall as the model for the atmosphere of sunny tranquility at Blandings, where every prospect pleases and only man is infesting the place with impostors stealing pigs and diamond necklaces.



*Hunstanton Hall*

A number of treats were in store for us beyond the feeling of having stepped into Wodehouse's world. This Eden-like setting also contributed in other ways to the Blandings and the Jeeves and Wooster oeuvres. With Norman Murphy as our guide, we gazed upon the former bijou residence of the black pig that inspired Wodehouse to create the Empress of Blandings. It

did not take a huge flight of fancy to picture the now-derelict structure, fresh and new, on the grounds of Blandings Castle with the Empress cozily ensconced and snuffling contentedly after getting outside of a tasty mangel-wurzel or two.

And no imagination at all was needed to accept Norman's statement that a certain structure at Hunstanton Hall was the source for the Octagon at Aunt Agatha's estate in Woolam Chersey. Merely accepting the evidence right before our eyes was not, however, sufficient for two of our members. Tamaki Morimura and Frank Hammerle determined to conduct the ultimate test. Noting on its walls the grooves that occurred at regular intervals (just right for strategic placement of the hands and feet), both of these intrepid climbers scaled the Octagon's wall—and did so right



Frank Hammerle climbing the Octagon wall

speedily—showing us once again that Wodehouse's fictional world was grounded in reality.

The coach trip to Blickling Hall found us reciting some of PGW's early poetry and exercising the little grey cells over a fiendish quiz regarding the English titles associated with ten Wodehouse foreign bookjackets. Blickling Hall was, at one point, the home of Wodehouse's many-times-great-grandmother Mary Boleyn (sister of the fatally unlucky-in-love Anne Boleyn). In addition to sumptuous furnishings, a clock tower, and extensive gardens, our attention was irresistibly drawn to a portrait of Sir Philip Sidney, namesake of TWS's Netherlands Chapter, The Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney, and a chap often referred to in Wodehouse stories.

Entertainment on this leg of the journey was provided by the reading of letters written to Bertie Wooster proposing marriage. First, we heard from various previous fiancées. Heloise Pringle (Tamaki Morimura) spoke of her great love for Bertie and kind intentions to mold him into a better, brighter Wooster. Madeline Bassett (Tim Richards), although

heartbroken at Sir Roderick's untimely demise in an explosion at a ladies' undergarment factory in France, resolved to finally make Bertie happy by marrying him. Trixie Waterbury (Sue Reece), though owning up to having exceeded the girth of a more-than-average-sized hippopotamus, was sure that she was now refined enough to become Mrs. Wooster. The field then opened up to non-Wodehouse contenders, as Carey Tynan proposed Lady Georgiana (from the "Her Royal Spyness" series by Rhys Bowen) as a potential bride. Christine Hewitt sponsored Elizabeth Bennet of *Pride and Prejudice* fame, and Elaine Ring put in a kind word for Cleopatterer's wibbly-wobbly charms. My own masterful excursus on the reasons why Bertie should marry Pauline Stoker resulted in a proposal, albeit grudging, from Bertie (Chris Reece) after consultation with Jeeves (Tony Ring).



Blickling Hall

Our final day included visits to the ruins of Castle Rising (a distant Wodehouse ancestor, John Wodehouse, was Constable here in 1402) and Sandringham (no Wodehouse connection) and the announcement of one more quiz winner. Tony had passed around cover illustrations of PGW books published in foreign languages, with their titles omitted. The Weekenders' task was to guess which books they were, purely on the basis of the cover art. Much to my surprise, I had managed to guess correctly four out of ten titles and carried home, along with many happy memories, *Very Good, Jeeves* on CD, read by Jonathan Cecil.

(All photos by Karen Shotting)

The moat proper was a narrow strip of water which encircled the Hall and had been placed there by the first Carmody in the days when householders believed in making things difficult for their visitors.

*Summer Moonshine* (1937)

# The Anglo-American Angle

BY ELIN WOODGER

Here is Part Two of Elin's talk from the Dearborn convention. Part One appeared in the Summer 2012 issue of Plum Lines.

THE WODEHOUSE CANON is chockablock with cross-cultural observations, and those by Americans regarding England often have to do with the weather. Having had a long, hard time adjusting to it myself, I can sympathize with Howard Steptoe's comment in *Quick Service*: "What's the sense in sticking around in a climate like this? If you like being rained on, come to Hollywood and stand under the shower-bath."

In *The Adventures of Sally*, our heroine, who has just returned from her first trip abroad, is rather critical in her impressions of England when talking to the Anglo-American Mr. Faucitt, particularly regarding the damp conditions. After he says, "You missed something by not lingering in England, Sally," she replies, "I know I did—pneumonia." She changes her tune, however, when she returns to England and finds much to praise about it in a letter to Ginger Kemp:

Oh, Ginger, this English country! Why any of you ever live in towns I can't think. Old, old grey stone houses with yellow haystacks and lovely squelchy muddy lanes and great fat trees and blue hills in the distance. The peace of it! If ever I sell my soul, I shall insist on the devil giving me at least forty years in some English country place in exchange.

I know exactly what Sally means. One of the great joys of living in England has been exploring the glorious countryside and the small, ancient villages that still dot the land. (Sigh)

Ivor Llewellyn, however, wouldn't notice the English countryside if you handed it to him on a plate. In *Pearls, Girls and Monty Bodkin*, he takes advantage of his wife's absence to go out on the town with Monty. When Monty observes the late hour and the fact that drinks are still being served, Mr. Llewellyn asks:

"What's your objection to that?"

"I'm thinking of the police."

Mr. Llewellyn would have none of this defeatist outlook.

"Absurd. A level-headed man like Otto Flannery is bound to have squared the police."

It would have been his first move on opening a nightclub."

"You can't square English police."

Mr. Llewellyn looked more than ever as though there were a credibility gap between his ears.

"Ridiculous. You're talking wildly, Bodkin. England's a civilized country, isn't it?"

Here Wodehouse implies that American police are a corruptible lot, an allegation apparently borne out by the crooked Captain McEachern in *A Gentleman of Leisure*. But the policemen in "The Rise of Minna Nordstrom," who wear "a wooden, hard-boiled look," refuse the money Mr. Schnellhamer offers them—a movie role rather than a bankroll would probably have been a more successful bribe.

On either side of the Atlantic, representatives of the law are usually depicted in Wodehouse as strong, tough figures of authority, and generally men of few words. In the case of the English policeman, one of those words is "Ho!" As Bertie Wooster constantly tells us in all his dealings with the men in blue, "Ho!" is an invariable element of their conversation: "Evidently police are taught this as a part of their training. And after all, it's not a bad way of opening a conversation in the sort of circs. in which they generally have to chat with people."

In *Galahad at Blandings*, Sam Bagshott learns this after he accidentally goes off with Beach's watch and Constable Evans catches up with him. Sam tries to explain, but the constable responds with nothing but "Ho!" Finally, Sam has had enough:

"Can't you say anything except Ho?" he snapped.

"Yus," said Constable Evans. He was not as a rule a quick man with repartee, but it was not often that he was given an opening like this. With the insufferably complacent air of a comedian who has been fed lines by his straight man, he proceeded. "Yus, I can say something except Ho. I can say 'You're pinched,'" he said, and laid a heavy hand on Sam's shoulder.

Wodehouse had an exceptional knack for writing dialogue, and in large part this was because he noted down words and expressions as heard them, especially in the "Phrases and Notes" notebooks that he kept during the years 1901–05. These included things he heard in both England and America, in particular a lot of American slang. In doing this, he honed his craft and brought verisimilitude to his stories.

He also replicated dialect, with very happy results. In the sublime story “Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend,” our heroine is a young Cockney. When Lord Emsworth first encounters Gladys, he comments on the flowers her brother, Ern, is holding, to which she replies:

“A treat, ain’t they? I got ’em for ’im up at the big ’ahse. Coo! The old josser the plice belongs to didn’t arf chase me. ’E found me picking ’em and ’e sharted somefin at me and come runnin’ after me, but I copped ’im on the shin wiv a stone and ’e stopped to rub it and I come away.”

After releasing Gladys from the cowshed, giving her tea, and offering her food to take back to Ern, Clarence asks her if there is anything else she’d like.

A wistful look came into Gladys’s eyes.

“Could he ’ave some flarze?”

“Certainly,” said Lord Emsworth. “Certainly, certainly, certainly. By all means. Just what I was about to suggest my—er—what is flarze?”

Beach, the linguist, interpreted.

“I think the young lady means flowers, your lordship.”

“Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. Flarze.”

On the American side, Wodehouse pulled off a very good East Side Bowery accent in *A Gentleman of Leisure* and *Psmith Journalist*. The latter features one of my favourite Wodehouse characters, Pugsy Maloney. We first meet Pugsy when he appears in Billy Windsor’s office bearing a cat. After putting the animal down, he bursts into speech:

“I wasn’t hoitin’ her,” he said, without emotion. “Dere was two fellers in de street sickin’ a dawg on to her. An I come up and says, ‘G’wan! What do youse t’ink you’re doin’, fussin’ de poor dumb animal?’ An’ one of de guys, he says, ‘G’wan! Who do you t’ink youse is?’ An’ I says, ‘I’m de guy what’s goin’ to swat youse on de coco if youse don’t quit fussin’ de poor animal.’ So wit dat he makes a break at swattin’ me one, but I swats him one, an’ I swats de odder feller one, an’ den I swats dem bote some more, an’ I gets de kitty, an’ I brings her in here, cos I t’ink maybe youse’ll look after her.”

And having finished this Homeric narrative, Master Maloney fixed an expressionless eye on the ceiling, and was silent.

We also encounter the East Side accent in *The Little Nugget*; Buck MacGinnis says to Peter Burns: “Say, I want a talk wit youse. I took a slant at youse under de lamp-post back dere, an’ I seen it was you, so I tagged along. Say, I’m wise to your game, sport.”

For me, it’s not just the “youse” and “dere” that give this dialogue accuracy—it’s the “Say” that does it. It reminds me of the old Dead End Kids films, in which the characters talked just like this, almost every sentence preceded with “Say”—“Say, whattaya think you’re doing?” “Say, I gotta great idea!” and so on.

Wodehouse must have heard that “Say” quite a lot, because in rereading the canon, I became conscious of how often his American characters begin sentences this way. In *Psmith Journalist*, Bat Jarvis uses it constantly, as is to be expected of a man from the lower East Side, but it’s surprising how often it’s spoken by American characters from all walks of life, including those henpecked husbands I referred to earlier. Frequently “Say” is combined with “listen,” another word that appears with great regularity. This is driven home in an exchange between Sigsbee Waddington and Hamilton Beamish in *The Small Bachelor*:

“Say, listen!” said Sigsbee H. Waddington.

“Proceed,” said Hamilton Beamish.

“Say, listen!”

“I am all attention.”

“Say, listen,” said Mr. Waddington.

And there are two more “Say, listen”s before Mr. Waddington finally gets to the point.

But compare and contrast this abundance of “Say”s with the equally abundant “I say”s uttered by the Brits in Wodehouse’s books. And that expression is often combined with other words to give precisely the same effect as “Say, listen.” For example, when Ginger Kemp first proposes to Sally Nicholas in *The Adventures of Sally*, he says, “I say, look here, will you marry me?” I have therefore reached the scholarly conclusion that America and Britain are two nations with a common language divided by the perpendicular pronoun.

In Wodehouse’s later works, the differences between nationalities are quite subtle, and both terminology and cultural references can become confused. In *Full Moon*, for example, Tipton Plimsoll ends a telephone conversation with Freddie Threepwood by saying, “Good. Right. Fine. Swell. Capital. Excellent. Splendid.” It’s that “Capital” that bothers me—not what an American is likely to say. In the same book, we are told: “The emotions of all three members of the Wedge family may be briefly set down as those of a family which feels

that it is batting .400.” Now, that’s a distinctly American term, and I wonder how many Brits would have known its meaning back in 1947? Very, very few, I’d say.

Wodehouse spent so much time in England and the United States that after a while, nation-specific words and expressions began to blend in with each other, so that we find Brits talking like Americans and, more often, Americans talking like Brits. And sometimes a character’s national identity is a mystery. In *Uneasy Money*, Elizabeth and Nutty Boyd live on Long Island, so we assume from this that they are Americans; the assumption is supported by Nutty asking Bill when they meet, “You’re from England, aren’t you?” But Nutty says such things as “I’m dashed” and “Where’s the dashed head-waiter?” Does his use of the word *dashed* mark him as a Brit now living in America?

We never know for sure because, for the most part, Wodehouse doesn’t bother himself with problems regarding a character’s accent. And this leads us to what I call “The Case of the Missing Accent.”

Take *Leave It to Psmith*. How does the very English Psmith get away with impersonating the Canadian Ralston McTodd? There is very little difference between a standard American accent and a Canadian accent. But nobody ever comments on the fact that Psmith sounds every bit as English as others in residence at Blandings Castle. Similarly, when the American Eddie Cootes is forced into the role of Psmith’s valet, nobody seems to notice that his accent is not what it should be.

Now, it isn’t easy to assume an English accent—I’ve tried. I’ve lived in England for ten years, and yet any time I try to sound like a Brit, I’m laughed at or begged to stop. When I return to the States for a visit, I’m sometimes told, “Ooh, you sound just like a Brit.” Well, no, I don’t—only my vocabulary has been affected by my years in England. Wodehouse himself spent a lot of time in America, including the last 28 years of his life, but he sounded like an Englishman to the end.

An accent is simply not something that changes in an instant, and usually only trained actors can pull it off. Yet, remarkably, we find innumerable occasions in Wodehouse’s stories where Americans in England are mistaken for Brits, and I always wonder—what’s wrong with their ears?

Sometimes the ears do work. In *Jill the Reckless*, Freddy Rooke muses on the American Nelly Bryant’s “soft voice. Rummy accent and all that, but nevertheless a soft and pleasing voice.” And when Jill joins the chorus, another girl comments: “I thought you were English. You’ve got an acthent like the fellow who plays the dude in thith show.” But these are rare instances of an accent being identified.

On occasion, characters will be asked whether they’re English or American, but it’s usually on the basis of something they’ve said, not the sound of their voice, which I find odd. The fact of the matter is, it’s human nature to notice accents. There isn’t a month that goes by that I’m not asked “Are you American?” or sometimes “Are you Canadian?”

Yet this natural tendency seems to elude a lot of Wodehouse’s characters. In *Hot Water*, it doesn’t seem to strike Senator Opal that Packy Franklin, pretending to be an English barber, has a distinctly American accent. It gets even more complicated when Packy pretends to be the Vicomte de Blissac—a Frenchman without a French accent. Only Miss Putnam seems to question his bona fides:

“How idiomatically you speak English, Vicomte.”

“Yes?”

“I am sure nobody would take you for a Frenchman.”

Here again, in Packy’s opinion, was a trend of thought that called for prompt measures.

“I was educated at an English school.”

“Where was that?”

“Aytong.”

“Aytong?”

“E-t-o-n.”

“Oh, Eton? That accounts for it, doesn’t it?”

Packy hoped so.

“But what seems so odd to me is that you speak English so like an American.”

Packy was beginning to dislike this woman.

...

“I have travelled in America much. Ah, mademoiselle,” said Packy, with Gallic fervor, “how great a country!”

As a final comment on this subject, I draw your attention to *Cocktail Time*, in which we learn that Oily Carlisle has an “Oxford accent which he had been at some pains to cultivate for professional purposes.” An Oxford accent is about the poshest you can have, so all praise to Oily for achieving it. But how do we explain this exchange between Oily and Constable McMurdo?

“This is all very absurd,” he said in his gentlemanly way, “but the thing can be settled, it seems to me, quite simply. If my wife struck Mr. Wisdom with a . . . what was the word you used, officer?”

“Cosh, sir.”

“Thank you. I think you must mean what in my native country we call a blackjack.”

Now, if Oily is affecting an Oxford accent, one assumes he is trying to pass himself off as English. Why, then, make reference to “my native country”? And what about his wife, Gertie? Is she, too, faking an accent? These are deep waters.

There are many other such puzzles in the canon, but if Wodehouse wasn't concerned about them, then neither should we be. And if he goofed at times, I suggest it is only because years of writing in two varieties of English, and of living in both countries, had caused a fusion of Americanisms and Britishisms in his writing. Today, thanks to the internet, American English and British English are becoming even more fused, which is why we are all the more grateful to Wodehouse for preserving the idioms and phraseology of his time with such superb skill.

In 1997 Tony Ring wrote that a new edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* had 1,600 Wodehouse quotes in it, and that many Americanisms are attributed to him. All those Americanisms were almost certainly not coined by Wodehouse himself—in most cases he was simply the first British writer to use them in print.

But that is unimportant. What is important is that if England and America are indeed two countries separated by a common language, then we are tremendously lucky in having Wodehouse to bridge the gap.



Elin Woodger, London

## A Man's Man's World

JOHN BAESCH AND EVELYN HERZOG sent this along: In an article in the January 3 *Times* (London), Sarah Vine bemoaned the un-Holmesian nature of the recent *Sherlock* movie. She pointed out that, unlike the character in the movie, the literary Holmes is immune to carnal passions, and that his only desire for titillation is that of the mind. Ms. Vine then mentioned other literary characters for whom (according to her) there is no place for women, including Jeeves and Wooster. In reference to these types of characters, she said that “this is not just a man's world, it's a man's man's world.”

## Indomitable Will and P. G. Wodehouse

CHARLES KUPFER, Associate Professor of American Studies and History at Penn State Harrisburg, says that “Wodehouse is more than a favorite author with me, he's like a friend, or an antidote.” Kupfer documents the power of this antidote in his new study of World War II entitled *Indomitable Will: Turning Defeat into Victory from Pearl Harbor to Midway*. It's an insightful and original study of how the early defeats for the U. S. turned ultimately to victory. In it, Kupfer looks at how English and American cultures intermixed in ways that were enforced by various literary figures. Kupfer gives good attention to Wodehouse in the book, and notes “the synchronicity of *Money in the Bank* being serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post* in December 1941, just as Americans were learning about Pearl Harbor.” Kupfer then realized that “Wodehouse was the perfect symbol for the Anglo-American cultural convergence.”

One section of the book is dedicated to “Magazines: News, Interpretation, and Opinion.” In this chapter, Kupfer analyzes in depth the adjustments that were made by various periodicals to the pace and mood of the war effort. Wodehouse is studied at length. “Blandings was just one of the gentle, amusing gossamers which Wodehouse draped over the less-appealing real world; a trick with which he seduced and held his fans.”

Mr. Kupfer gives appropriate treatment to Roderick Spode, of course, and the radio broadcasts. He points out that the June 26, 1941, interview with CBS correspondent Harry Flannery “did as much damage to Wodehouse's reputation as the German broadcasts” when Wodehouse made the comment that “I've always thought of the United States as my sort of country . . . and I long to get back there once more.”

The outcry was mostly in Britain, of course, and we're shown that that anti-Wodehouse sentiments “were mostly absent in the United States, where Wodehouse's characters seemed innocent examples of English eccentricity, without political significance.”

Kupfer is a lifelong PGW fan, and he states that Wodehouse's comic genius is commonly acknowledged. “But nobody else ever got various American and English lingos so exactly right, which is a serious literary achievement.” [See Elin Woodger's talk on the same topic immediately preceding this article.] He concludes that the war-induced push for pro-British opinion in America was a success that “rested on a sturdy and organic cultural foundation, exemplified by Wodehouse.”

# A Family Memory

BY EDWARD CAZALET

*The dedication of the historical marker at the Remsenburg Community Church was a notable moment in the history of The Wodehouse Society and we hope that many members visit and that many passers-by will find the marker a welcome guide to the legacy of Wodehouse. At the ceremony, various Wodehousean luminaries spoke. Sir Edward Cazalet, Plum and Ethel's grandson, could not be present in person, but sent these wonderful comments. Here are Sir Edward's words.*

MAY I SAY straightway how delighted all of the members of the Wodehouse family are that so many of you have generously come to pay homage to Plum's final home at Remsenburg through the inauguration of the splendid marker in his memory. May I also add how very sorry I am not to have been able, through a clash of dates, to be with you in order to deliver this speech personally.

As you know, Plum, with my grandmother Ethel, made Remsenburg his home for the last twenty years of his life. He was as devoted to this place as Lord Emsworth was to the Empress of Blandings's sty. As his adoptive grandson, I was fortunate enough to come over from England regularly to stay here with him and my grandmother during those years. As a result, I came to appreciate just what Remsenburg meant to him, why it suited him so ideally, and why the locals here so loved and respected his kind and peaceful character.

Plum and Ethel made the decision to move to Remsenburg after making a visit to his oldest friend and work collaborator, Guy Bolton, and Guy's wife Virginia. The Boltons had already bought a house down here, and on that first visit, the Wodehouses fell in love with the peaceful, leafy, and spaciouly laid-out hamlet of Remsenburg. By April 1955 they had bought a house in Basket Neck Lane, about half a mile from the Boltons' property, and in that same year they moved out of their New York apartment to make this their permanent home.

By this time Plum was 73 years old. He was always a very private man and he now, above all else, only wanted to be left alone with Ethel so that he could continue to write undisturbed about his many families of immortal characters.

To mark their feelings for the U.S. and for this place in particular, in 1955 he and Ethel became naturalized U.S. citizens. By this time he had, in fact, lived more years of his life in America than in England, and as a

result, both he and Ethel became dual American and British citizens. Perhaps a glimpse of their life down here can help to paint a picture of the background of these decisions.

Ethel occupied the upstairs bedroom and bathroom of the house in Basket Neck Lane, having a lovely view out over their twelve-acre plot which led down to the waters of Moriches Bay. Plum's sleeping and working quarters were at the back of the house at ground-floor level with, just as he wanted, the entrance from his study leading directly out into the garden.

His day followed a strict routine. Up by 7:30 A.M., he would first weigh himself to ensure that he always kept himself at the weight at which he had been when he left college. Then he would do his exercises—if the weather was fine, on a little platform just outside his study which led down to the garden or, in inclement weather, in his study. As a result, an early morning driver down Basket Neck Lane might be surprised to catch a glimpse of a large, portly gentleman waving his arms and legs about as though in some mystic ritual! These exercises were always the same, the well-established and well-known "daily dozen" which he had done since 1918. As a result, even when in his nineties and still writing bestsellers, he was able to touch his toes at least twelve times without bending his knees.

Later he would have breakfast on his own—Ethel always being late to bed and late to rise—and she would leave little late-night notes for him in the kitchen which would typically read like this:

My darling. Bless you. I love you more than ever. Poona [the cat] has just dined on chicken liver and is now fast asleep on the top of the cupboard. So, do not disturb her when you get your coffee cake.

These notes would be signed, with kisses, "Bunny," the name by which he always called her.

After breakfast, he would start work at about 9 A.M. and continue until midday. He would then go up to Ethel's bedroom, followed by a group of excited dogs and cats, to watch, with her, a television soap called *The Edge of Night*. He was fascinated by its plot.

A quick gin martini with Ethel would be followed by lunch surrounded by dogs and the odd cat and a four-mile walk accompanied by three of the dogs. If Guy Bolton was around, he would come with him. This walk invariably included the semicircle which constitutes Basket Neck Lane, passing at regular intervals those well-built houses standing in their own open lawns, with at times excellent views out across the water. From



time to time an occupant's dog would emerge and be greeted by a friendly exchange with Plum's dogs and, indeed, with Plum himself, who knew all the dogs by name.

When, on his walk, he came out onto Main Street, he would arrive at what, for him (excluding his own home), was the most important building around, namely the local U.S. Post Office. This was his only real contact with the outside world and there he would collect his mail, including letters from friends and his agent, fan mail, and a mix of English newspapers and periodicals which might be a week or so out of date but which comprised his main lifeline to the old country. This package he would carry with eager anticipation over the last leg of the ritual walk. If ever you had seen him passing by on his own you could have seen Plum suddenly laughing out loud, pulling a notebook and pencil from his pocket and making a note of some amusing incident or phrase which had come into his mind. He admitted that he spent much of his time when out walking, planning the plot and dialogue scenario of his current work.

On arrival back home it was time for another two hours work, perhaps replying to fan letters received from dozens of readers each week, including a number of present members of the British and American Wodehouse societies.

This would be followed by a shower, after which he would meet Ethel in the small room they called "The Bar," where Ethel would mix some powerful martinis for both of them. Plum would have two of these (quite lethal for many but certainly not for him) and any odd "dividends," as he called them, that might be left in the shaker. At 6:30 P.M. there was the evening meal prepared by the wonderful cooks, first Gracie, and later Margaret Zbrozek. The apparently early hour was necessary because Gracie would have to return home to cook for her own large family. The dogs and the odd cat would sit waiting around the dinner table gazing imploringly at one for tidbits and, in particular, for a portion of any ice cream that was around.

After dinner Plum would move into the sitting room and ensconce himself in an armchair for a period of two to three hours reading. This latter ranged from thrillers to Shakespeare, interspersed with the completion of crosswords at breakneck speed.

Then it was to bed at around 10:30 P.M. for Plum, and a good night's sleep with at least one dog on his bed and number of other animals in baskets in his room. Ethel went always much later to bed. She would be cleaning out the icebox, watering trees, or finding something else to occupy her time.

Plum led this almost hermit-like life as an unvarying routine over his last two decades seven days a week, with no holidays or weekend variations. Save for big celebrations on his 80th and 90th birthday parties, there were only rarely any other celebratory events, or the odd visitor from New York. You may appreciate from this morning's trip that Remsenburg's distance from New York mercifully discouraged regular or casual drop-ins.

As you will have gathered, Plum and Ethel were true animal lovers. Virtually every pet they ever owned while they were at Remsenburg had been a stray which, perhaps surprisingly, had been abandoned by its former owners on their return to New York on Labor Day after spending their summer holidays in this area. On this part of Long Island, there appears to have been some sort of bush telegraph among local dogs and cats which led them to come to the ever-welcoming Wodehouse home. Indeed, as the number of abandoned animals increased, Plum and Ethel founded nearby the P. G. Wodehouse Shelter as part of the Bide-A-Wee Association in order to help resolve this serious problem.

It was on February 14, 1975, St. Valentine's Day, with a pen still in his hand, that Plum died of a heart attack in the local hospital at Riverhead. In tribute, the Remsenburg Post Office lowered its flag to half mast, just clear of the piled-up snow.

Plum, who was a compulsive writer, is now regarded as the greatest English humorist of the 20th century as well as a leading master of the English language. It was Evelyn Waugh who wrote those immortal words of him which surely say it all:

For Mr. Wodehouse there has been no Fall of Man, no aboriginal calamity. His characters have never tasted the forbidden fruit. They are still in Eden. The Gardens of Blandings Castle are that original garden from which we are all exiled. The Chef Anatole prepares the ambrosia for the immortals of High Olympus. Mr. Wodehouse's work can never stale. He will continue to release future generations from a captivity that may be more irksome than our own. He has made a world for us to live in and delight in.

By the time they reach their seventies, most writers slow down and find that their best writing days are behind them. Not so with Plum. The fact that he was able to continue to produce work of high quality until the very end of his life was in no small part due to the tranquility, peace, and beauty of the haven which Remsenburg provided for him. How profoundly

fortunate Plum and Ethel were to be cared for so well and with such consideration and affection by Nella, his brother Armine's widow, from September 1964. She remained with them for the rest of their days. As part of their own personal team they had Ann Smith, who was Ethel's skillful secretary; cooks Gracie and Margaret; Lynne Kiegel, who cared for Ethel with the utmost diplomacy; and many others who made sure that they were looked after to the highest standard.

So, for this reason, it is not only his family but all Wodehouse fans who owe this community, including those who took such impeccable care of Plum and Ethel in so many different ways, such an enormous and lasting debt.

*Sir Edward then thanked the various Wodehouseans who initiated the project and helped it along to this wonderful conclusion. Finally, he thanked the Remsenburg Community Church for permitting the placement of the marker and assisting with the project, and all the other members of The Wodehouse Society who played a part in the project's success.*



## Report from the Remsenburg-Speonk Media

THE REMSENBURG WODEHOUSE marker dedication was significant not just to Wodehouseans but also to the local residents. Dawn Watson wrote of the ceremony in the April 26 *Southampton Press*. According to Dawn, the “much-needed rain did little to dampen anyone's spirits during the dedication.”

Dawn described the purpose of the gathering and detailed the speeches and songs that sprang to the rafters of the little chapel. She took excellent notes about the foodstuffs that awaited the attendees, thereby adding some nice flavor to the article and complimenting caterers Bob and Lisa Nidzyn of Scales and Tails Catering and the Trackside Cafe. Dawn concluded by saying that she “was fortunate enough to bump (that being the operative word as everyone was packed shoulder-to-shoulder in the chapel during the ceremony) into [several well-known local residents]. It was a truly great time, meant to honor a wonderful man who just happened to also be a legend.”

## Letters to the Editor

I ENJOYED READING Curtis Armstrong's Dearborn paper in the summer issue of *Plum Lines*, where Curtis discussed “characters who remain untouched and apparently ignorant of what is happening in the world” and providing (in the “friction threatening in the Balkans”) “just one example of the real world imposing upon the land of eternal summer that is Wodehouse's fictional world.”

Perhaps readers of *Plum Lines* may be interested to know that Wodehouse's first novel, *The Pothunters*, includes two oblique references to the Boer War (October 1899 to May 1902), which was in progress both when Wodehouse was writing the story and when it was serialized in the *Public School Magazine* (January to March 1902), showing that Wodehouse's schoolboy characters, at least, had some awareness of what was happening in the world.

The first reference occurs in Chapter 11 (“The Sports”): “In the centre of the ring the band of the local police force—the military being unavailable owing to exigencies of distance—were seating themselves.”

The second reference occurs in Chapter 17 (“We'll Proceed to Search for Thomson if He Be Above the Ground”): “Nor did the Babe have a hand in the carrying of the stretcher. That was done by as many of the evening-dress brigade as could get near enough. They seemed to enjoy it. One of them remarked that it reminded him of South Africa.”

Regards, Nick Townend

OLD FISH: Said journal having arrived today, I can only say “Boy Howdy.” You have really gone and done it with this issue. *PL* consistently improves my daily life, but this issue surpasses my high expectations. Fresh mountain air no doubt.

In brief, I was amused, informed, challenged, and educated. And my dues are current. The postal service failed to postmark the expensive stamps. I'll steam them off for reuse.

To summarize: I laughed; I did not cry.

In a State of Being Overwhelmed, I am, etc.,  
Anatole (Chris Dueker)

I MUCH ENJOYED *Plum Lines* as usual, particularly Curtis Armstrong's piece. I'd be glad if you would pass on my appreciation to him; it not was not only well-observed, but made me laugh several times. That's a difficult feat when up against PGW himself.

With kindest regards,  
James Hogg

# John Alais Fletcher, 1929–2012

BY ELIN WOODGER MURPHY

**W**ODEHOUSEANS EVERYWHERE were sad to learn of the death of John Fletcher on June 11, 2012. John was a teacher, author, and publisher, as well as a founding member of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) and its first website editor.

Before the U.K. Society was formed, John was a regular contributor to *Plum Lines*, including, in 1990, a scholarly article on Bertie Wooster's family tree, "Disentangling the Wooster Relations." I first met him at the 1993 convention in San Francisco, and we became friends, emailing each other often. After I became a writer and editor myself, I frequently turned to him for advice; he was particularly good at explaining obscure literary terms and concepts.

John was born on September 27, 1929, in Holt, Norfolk, and educated at Welbury, Wellington College, and Queens College, Oxford. In May 1962 he married Tana Goschen, with whom he had a son and three daughters. He had two disparate careers, spending half his working life in industry and the other half teaching English. He also ran courses on communication skills. In his spare time he collected books, particularly the works of P. G. Wodehouse, Enid Blyton, Walter de la Mare, and G. K. Chesterton.

In 1991, retired from teaching, John set up Porpoise Books; its first publication was *A Man of Means*, which PGW had co-authored with C. H. Bovill around 1914. John also published numerous Wodehouse-related works, including Norman Murphy's *The Reminiscences of the Hon. Galahad Threepwood* (1993) and Tony Ring's *You Simply Hit Them With an Axe* (1995). Perhaps most notable was his work with Tony to produce the *Wodehouse Millennium Concordance*; eight volumes were published between 1994 and 2001. More about this project can be read in an article by Jan Wilson Kaufman in the Autumn 2000 *Plum Lines*, "John Fletcher in the Springtime."

In 1997 John was part of the team that won the Great Scripture Knowledge Contest at the Chicago convention. His formidable writing skills and knowledge of Wodehouse served him well when he took on the editorship of the U.K. Society's website after



*John dancing at the 2001 convention  
(photo by Tom Smith)*

its formation that same year. His devotion to the societies on both side of the Atlantic was evident in his faithful participation (until recent years) in their events, including conventions. His experiences as a publisher resulted in a humorous, highly enjoyable talk he gave at the 2001 convention in Philadelphia: "Writing Cheques at Intervals: The Life of a Wodehouse Publisher." Sadly and inexplicably, this paper was never published in either *Plum Lines* or *Wooster Sauce*.

Uppermost in my own mind, though, is the U.K. Society's 2000 Millennium Tour. As part of the entertainment on the coach,

John read the prize-giving scene from *Right Ho, Jeeves*. I thought I knew that passage cold, having read it so often myself, but John's rendering gave it new life, and he had everybody on the coach helpless with laughter. I have never heard a better reading of that scene.

John knew, understood, and loved words, and his love of writing and of Wodehouse resulted in several books that still inform and entertain us. He was kind, charming, erudite, and funny—a man I shall always remember with a smile.

## Spying on Wodehouse

**L**IZ DAVENPORT found this reference to Wodehouse in John le Carré's 2010 book, *Our Kind of Traitor*:

"He's got a huge engine and it runs on alcohol. He's proud of that."

Perry sounded as if he was proud of it, too.

"Or if we misquote the Master"—Hector, it turned out, was a fellow devotee of P. G. Wodehouse—"the kind of chap who was born a couple of drinks below par?"

"Precisely, Bertie," Perry agreed in his best Wodehousian, and they found time for a quick laugh, supported by B-list Luke who with Hector's arrival had otherwise assumed the role of silent partner.

## Tony Ring's *Second Row, Grand Circle*

P. G. WODEHOUSE's career in the legitimate (non-musical) theatre was neither as long as his career as a writer nor as spectacularly successful as his work in musical comedy.

Nevertheless, he did write or adapt more than a dozen plays for Broadway and/or London's West End, on which, at one time, he had three plays being presented simultaneously. And in some ways, the story of the other twenty or so plays he wrote, or started, that did not achieve successful production, is more informative.

His work as a playwright has been referred to more in passing than as a subject in its own right in the biographies and other studies. Now the first book dedicated to Wodehouse's legitimate theatre activities has been compiled and published by Tony Ring. With a total of 511 pages including an extensive index, fifty full-page illustrations, and a foreword by Martin Jarvis, Tony's *Second Row, Grand Circle: Reference Guide to the Contribution of P. G. Wodehouse to the Legitimate Theatre* is in two parts.

The first third of the text describes Wodehouse's approach to the theatre; examines the problems that he and several of his contemporaries had with the intervention of the U.K.'s Censor of Plays; and, drawing

extensively from his own written words, describes the anxieties, hopes, and frustrations he experienced in trying to have two of his plays staged, in light of numerous half-promises from prospective stars and commercial managers.

The remainder of the book is a comprehensive reference guide of all the plays in which PGW participated, whether or not produced, and whether or not published. Of 32 known to have been completed, considerable information is provided for the 29 scripts which have been traced, including (if available) a brief history of its evolution, a précis of the plot, a concordance of characters, a selection of nifties, production dates, cast lists, and publication details.

The book, which was published at the end of July, may be obtained directly from Tony. It costs £25 with an additional, but regrettable, mailing fee to the USA of £12.

The preferred method of payment is by a sterling payment of £37 to his PayPal account. If this is not feasible, please e-mail him for details of how to make an equivalent payment of \$60 instead. The book is certain to become a valued addition to the PGW aficionado's bookshelf.

## If You Long for *Downton Abbey*, Give Wodehouse a Try

BY BARBARA BROTMAN

*We received permission from the Chicago Tribune to reprint this terrific article from March 12, 2012. Not only is it a bit of fun for Wodehouseans in general, but it makes mention of The Wodehouse Society's upcoming 2013 convention in Chicago, with some of the Chicago Accident Syndicate members (and convention planners) prominently quoted. We should also mention the possibility that the ever-popular CityLit Theatre Company may put together some dramatic readings at the time of the convention. In addition, there are sure to be many Wodehouse-themed options for the Plummy visitors next year. Enjoy!*

ARE YOU PINING for *Downton Abbey*? I share your Anglophilic pain. I was moping through the offseason, sighing over the happy resolution of the Lady Mary/Matthew storyline in the PBS Masterpiece drama and perusing a "Free Bates" T-shirt.

But now I've pressed into service a worthy replacement: P. G. Wodehouse.

The prolific British author, whose name is pronounced "Woodhouse," wrote about the same Edwardian world of wealth, leisure, and servants. It's a completely different style—Wodehouse was a humorist, and one of the wittiest and best—but I've been re-reading my "Bertie and Jeeves" collection with particular relish.

And it turns out that I join a veritable Chicago hotbed of Wodehouse fandom. Our city not only boasts a chapter of the national Wodehouse Society, but will host its next convention, in 2013.

Conventions are held every other year in various cities, attracting Wodehouse devotees from as far away as Russia and Japan.

Think of it as the G-8, only with people throwing bread rolls at dinner. At least that's what happened at the last Chicago convention, in 1997, in tribute to an entertainment mentioned as occurring at the fictional Bertie Wooster's fictional club, the Drones.

Driving around with an audiobook of *The Inimitable Jeeves* for company, I am captivated. In Wodehouse's

world, people lunch at their clubs, pay visits to the swells in the country, and dress for dinner. Their worries are minor, their cocktails perfect, their servants happy and respected.

His style is clean, elegant and possessed of a wit that makes English majors swoon. His characters are vivid and recognizable. The disapproving aunt, the braying gasbag, the moocher, the twit—you know them all, and have never laughed at them more.

Because Wodehouse is hilarious.

“The Great Sermon Handicap,” the chapter in *The Inimitable Jeeves* that has Bertie and friends placing bets on the length of country vicars’ Sunday sermons and describing the parsons like racehorses, is a deadpan masterpiece.

It makes a fine escape—better, really, than *Downton Abbey*.

“It is an innocent world,” said Daniel Garrison, a professor emeritus of classics at Northwestern University and a member of the Chicago Accident Syndicate (the name refers to a Wodehouse story about an insurance scam and to Chicago’s history of organized crime).

“In *Downton Abbey*, you find these people who have lived in a private, separate world all their lives suddenly having to deal with the grim facts of the Great War,” he said.

“Wodehouse scarcely mentions it. He wrote his way through two world wars and scarcely mentioned either.”

“The characters are just so likable,” said Tina Garrison, who works in product development for an educational publisher and is the professor’s wife. “There’s nothing really malevolent. Everything works out OK. It’s just funny, helping us laugh at ourselves and all of our human quirks.”

The lighthearted universe where no one works and the narratives are really about nothing, Daniel Garrison said, is much like that modern setting for humor, *Seinfeld*.

He found *Downton Abbey* “a little soapy for my taste,” he said. “It takes the lives of its characters seriously, and that’s against the Wodehouse rules.”

But Tina Garrison enjoyed watching, partly because she had Wodehouse in mind.

“Any time you get someone tootling around the countryside in a roadster, you can’t help but think of Bertie,” she said. Bertie Wooster is the cheery son of privilege who is always being rescued from his hijinks by his wise manservant, Jeeves, in one of Wodehouse’s series.

“There is something about that period of history that people love,” said Katherine Lewis, president of the Chicago Accident Syndicate.

“Those times were fun,” said Lewis, a jazz radio producer. “The music was new; everything was exploratory; women were cutting their dresses short, bobbing their hair, and smoking in public.”

And Wodehouse’s writing is superb, said Daniel Garrison.

“He is one of the greatest stylists in the English language,” he said. Wodehouse is quoted dozens of times in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in sample sentences demonstrating the meaning of a word.

The 2013 convention will be held at the Union League Club, a dead ringer for Wodehouse’s Senior Conservative Club. It will feature the traditional “browsing and sluicing”—Wodehouse-ese for snacking and drinking—and the presentation of papers. Daniel Garrison once gave one explaining how the Wodehouse stories and characters are adapted from ancient Greek and Roman comedy.

“And we usually have some skits for people to act out,” he said. “In St. Paul, I did a Wodehouse story which (put) Bertie and Jeeves into Lake Wobegon.”

“It’s a bunch of goofballs,” said chapter member Tina Woelke, as suggested by the bread-throwing incident.

“I have never laughed so hard in my life,” she said.

*Downton Abbey* resumes production in the spring. And The Wodehouse Society’s Chicago convention will be in October 2013.

First-timers are welcome. Wodehouse people are good eggs, though the master stylist could have his characters deliver devastating jabs, like this one from Bertie during a tiff with Jeeves:

“Very good,” I said coldly. “In that case, tinkerty-tonk.”

And I meant it to sting.

## Wodehouse vs. the Hurricane

Beth Carroll sent this hurricane anecdote from Bailey White’s *Mama Makes Up Her Mind and Other Dangers of Southern Living*: “I took all the precautions. I filled the bathtubs with water, put buckets under all the leaky spots in the roof, closed all the doors and windows. . . . The wind began to scream, and we could see the tops of the long-leaved pine trees doing a mad dance against the black sky. . . . But my mother, who is not afraid of anything, tottered out to her little bed on the screen porch as usual with the cup of Ovaltine and *Young Men in Spats*, by P. G. Wodehouse. ‘I’ll come in if it gets too bad,’ she said.”

# Chapters Corner

**W**HAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? We welcome you to 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: Caralyn Campbell  
Phone:  
E-mail:



**T**HE BIRMINGHAM BANJOLELE BAND met on Saturday, July 21, at the Crown & Goose Pub in Knoxville, Tennessee. The special treat, besides the Angry Orchard cider, was a reporter, Jack Neely, from the Knoxville weekly paper (*Metro Pulse*), who wrote a very nice article about Wodehouse, TWS, and our group. It can be found on [MetroPulse.com](http://MetroPulse.com).

And the good news is that there is Wodehouse in Knoxville, as evidenced by the Birmingham Banjolele Band. We had a fun and lively get-together and tried, around the press of the press, to organize some future festivities.

Our plans call for a September 29 event: there was a lot of sentiment for tea in someone's home. We had a lovely time doing this once before with the guests bringing the sandwiches and tea cakes and such; Nancy Tanner's seed cake was a big hit. We will again do a Wodehouse reading.

On December 15, we are set for chez Clevenger in Alcoa, a pre-Christmas event, with some Plum reading like "Another Christmas Carol" and/or "Jeeves and the Yuletide Spirit." Joan and Ken will take care of the catering, and volunteer readers will be welcome.

Other dates in 2013 will be February 2 and March 30. The March date is reserved at the Union Avenue Book Shop for a public reading event to try to attract new fans to the group. We expect that the February

meeting will be a commercial tea event in Knoxville or Maryville.

In April 2013, *Leave It to Jane* (a Wodehouse, Bolton, and Kern musical) will be playing in New York City, produced by Musicals Tonight! We are talking, tentatively as yet, of trying to meet as a group in the city for dinner and a chance to see that show.

Then, the next thing you know, it will be June or July 2013 and we will be noshing again at the Crown & Goose, wondering where another year went.

## 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:



## Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)  
Contact: Jeff Peterson  
Phone:  
E-mail:



## Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)  
Contact: Herb Moskowitz  
Phone:  
E-mail:



**C**HAPTER ONE met at The Dark Horse Pub in Philadelphia on May 20. Attending were John Baesch, Caroline Daffron, Deborah Dugan, Larry Dugan, Hope Gaines, Diane Hain, Evelyn Herzog, Jim Karcher, David Mackenzie, Herb Moskowitz, and Janet Nickerson.

The first order of business was a report on the Remsenburg-Speonk trip from those who had gone to the historical marker dedication. Janet Nickerson (Nobby Hopwood) shared photos she had taken, and members commented on how wonderful the marker looks. Members expressed delight and gratitude for the efforts of Robert (Oily Carlisle) Rains and Andrea

(Sweetie Carlisle) Jacobsen for their extraordinary efforts to organize the event.

John Baesch (Mike Jackson) and Herb Moskowitz (Vladimir Brusiloff) reported on a trip they had taken with Evy (Miss Mapleton) to the Philadelphia Zoo, where they checked in on Gussie, Chapter One's Mandarin newt, in the Amphibian and Reptile House. Chapter One adopted Gussie many years ago, and the zoo has a small sign on the newt tank announcing our sponsorship. Herb passed around materials the zoo had provided on Gussie, including photos and a certificate. He promised to send everyone a photo of the three Wodehousians and Gussie by e-mail, and here it is:



John Baesch (left) points to Chapter One's Newt Adoption Announcement. Evelyn Herzog and Herb Moskowitz also checked on the Newt Exhibit. (photo by Herb Moskowitz)

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



**T**HE 2013 CONVENTION of The Wodehouse Society will be sponsored by our Chicago chapter. You'll find the registration form included with this issue.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate has created a website with very helpful information about the convention. You can visit <http://wodehousechicago.com> for information now, and as convention time draws near.

The convention will be held October 18-20 at the Union League Club of Chicago, a wonderful venue, to say the least. As the registration form states, in 2009, the Union League Club was voted America's number one city club.

As typical with our conventions, there will be much fun and many illuminating speakers. Proposals for

skits and talks are being solicited now; you can write to Susan Diamond with your proposal at [szdiamond@comcast.net](mailto:szdiamond@comcast.net).

This will be the second convention hosted by our Chicago contingent, the last being in October of 1997, where a grand time was had by all. Get your registration form in early and your rooms at the Union League Club of Chicago (as detailed on the registration form) and we'll see you there in 2013!

**The Clients of Adrian Mulliner**  
(For enthusiasts of both PGW  
and Sherlock Holmes)  
Contact: Elaine Coppola  
Phone:  
E-mail:



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



**H**ERE'S A SUMMARY of the Drone Rangers activities: April: Dinner was at Ouisie's Table. June: Dinner meeting was at Berryhill Baja Grill. Carey brought pictures from the Weekend with Wodehouse trip in May. July: Book of the month was *Wodehouse on Crime*.

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



**A**FTER MONTHS of trying to select a date for a Flying Pigs get-together, schedules finally worked out in June for our group to meet for dinner, conversation, and a Wodehouse reading at the home of Rev. Bill Scrivener and his wife, gourmet cook extraordinaire Susan Pace. We reconnected over cocktails on the patio on one of the few mild evenings we've had in Cincinnati this summer. A delicious, multicourse meal followed and we completed the evening with a continuation of our reading chapters from *Pigs Have Wings*. Such good, clean fun!

**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:



P. G. WOULD have been Plum-proud of our Liz Davenport as she introduced the author to approximately twenty senior citizens via OASIS, an organization for successful aging (I'm all for *that*). Her emphasis was the Wodehouse works other than those of the Bertie/Jeeves and Blandings collections, but she found that many in attendance were unfamiliar with even those. Liz kept her audience engaged and entertained. We are hoping to possibly augment the roll of the Mottled Oyster as a result.

To show our appreciation for her ambassadorship, the MO bestowed upon Ms. Davenport—aka Miss Postlethwaite—two genuine copies of works by Rosie M. Banks from the collection of The Oldest Member, aka Bob Adams. (It appears that Mr. Wodehouse was asked for permission to use the Rosie M. Banks pseudonym, and he, amused, granted it. The result was several romances written about nurses: *Settlement Nurse*, *Navy Nurse*, *Ship Nurse*, and *Surgical Nurse*, and others. They were published in 1959, 1960, and 1961. Now there's a bit of trivia for you!)

Otherwise, our members have been staying out of trouble by reading various titles, dining together monthly, and raising the occasional (ahem) glass to PGW. What better path could there be to successful aging?

### The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)

(Boston and New England)

Contact: David Landman

Phone:

E-mail:



TO THE ASTONISHMENT of all, the NEWTS' Spring meeting actually took place before the dog days of summer. We gathered at the home of Stef Adams, she of the welding torch and magic cookie tray. Assisted by her efficient and charming mother Joanne, Stiffy provided a sumptuous repast and, when the last crumb had been speared by a moist fingertip, was awarded the silver medal in the NEWTS chocolate-chip cookie olympiad, the highest honor in our power to bestow since the gold had been awarded in perpetuity to Elin Woodger Murphy many years before. Had our funds run to it, Stef too, would have earned gold.

### The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

Phone:

E-mail:



### The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Karen Shotting

Phone:

E-mail:



IN JUNE, PZMPCo members Karen Shotting and Gloria Nakamura joined the merry throng of Wodehousians for the U.K. Society's Weekend with Wodehouse, and in honor of that occasion, PZMPCo read *Money for Nothing*, in which PGW used Hunstanton Hall as a backdrop. (Hunstanton Hall in Norfolk was one of the stops on the Weekenders' journey.) Gloria provided the group with details regarding our trip, and *Money for Nothing* was a big hit with our members.

In July we read one of PGW's lesser-known works, *Bill the Conqueror*. As with all Wodehouse works, it has a lot of good bits, particularly at the beginning, but we, like many Wodehousians, ranked it as not among our favorites. Our readings for August through October are as follows:

August: *Thank You, Jeeves*

September: "Honeysuckle Cottage," "A Slice of Life," and "Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court"

October: *Right Ho, Jeeves*

Ken Clevenger, TWS's illustrious president, will join us in October to discuss Wodehouse as a gastronome. We may change our meeting location for this occasion (perhaps to a restaurant), so watch our Yahoo! Group page or check with Karen if you are planning to attend.

We generally meet the second Sunday of each month at 12:30 P.M. You will usually find us at Book Alley, 1252 East Colorado Blvd, Pasadena, California (<http://www.bookalley.com>), and our Yahoo! Group page is <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PZMPCo>.

### The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein

Phone:

E-mail:



THE PICKERING MOTOR CO. gathered at Elliott and Elyse Milstein's home on June 3, 2012. We were saddened to learn that board member and friend Adam Bayer and his family have relocated to Portland,



Oregon. They will be missed. Adam is the artist who designed the logo, poster, and program for the recent convention. He is a great talent. We considered giving him a plaque or proclamation recognizing his services, but realized we would have to ask him to design his own award. We settled for passing a resolution making him a life member of the Pickering Motor Co.

The Pickerings are like the Mafia: once you are in, you are in for life.

Our president, Luann Warren, made the traditional motion that any absent member—in this case Ann Harpe—be elected president of the chapter. It was voted down 9–1, Luann being the only member who voted for Ann.

The book for this meeting was *Heavy Weather*. We had a serious discussion comparing the performances of Ralph Richardson and Peter O’Toole as Lord Emsworth. Richardson seems to be the chapter’s favorite, but Elliott defended O’Toole’s performance as a “brave reinterpretation that, although odd, worked on some planes.” We are still trying to figure out what that means.

David raised the question of whether Pirbright the pigman was related to Catsmeat and Potter-Pirbright and sister Corky. We didn’t think so, but here is a new subject for genealogical research. In further discussion of the Pirbright family tree, the question arose as to whether there were any other Pirbrights in the world of Wodehouse. Being too lazy (or inebriated) at this point to ascend the stairs necessary to consult *Who’s Who in Wodehouse* or *The Millennium Concordance*, no one came up with their uncle Sidney or the more obscure Angela Pirbright, the “tennis player engaged to Walter Judson.”

Elliott then explained why he believes that Lady Julia is one of Wodehouse’s best characters and the confrontation scene between her and Gally is one of the finest scenes in the canon. Also, for some inexplicable reason, Elliott entertained us with a recitation of “The Walrus and the Carpenter” by Lewis Carroll.

The next meeting was to have been September 8, 2012. The book is *Right Ho, Jeeves*.

### **The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club?** (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

**T**HERE IS A NEW chapter shaping up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Stay tuned for more information. Here’s Allison Thompson’s information from their semi-formative meeting: “Eight of us foregathered recently to take turns reading aloud the marvelous Gussie Fink-Nottle speech at Market Snodsbury

Grammar School as well as a few other favorite passages. We all shared thoughts about our love for Wodehouse’s humor and his impeccable writing style. We began discussions about selecting a chapter name and thoughts for future meetings. Venues such as an English-style pub, a cricket match, or a newt-viewing expedition to the zoo were bandied about, as was the idea of meeting in Emsworth, Pennsylvania, though none of us know what venues might lurk there! We decided that it was premature as yet to become a formal group with a president and dues, etc., though we may want to go in that direction in the future. We thought that meeting quarterly would fit all our busy schedules. Abigail Thompson was volunteered to be the next meeting chair. She will select a venue and a theme or a reading. The meeting will probably be in October, so look for an announcement coming out in mid-September. Happy PGWing!”

### **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:

**O**N MAY 18, several Honorable Knights welcomed Paul Denman, TWS member from Columbia, South Carolina, and his wife, Jean, at the Knights’ Wodehouse headquarters (Mulliner’s Wijnlokaal) in downtown Amsterdam. Paul and Jean were visiting The Netherlands. Their most important purpose was to pay a visit to the Floriade 2012 in Venlo. The Floriade is an agricultural exposition that is organized every ten years.

Paul, like Wodehouse, is an Anglo-American. Born in Hampshire in England (not far away from Emsworth), he moved to the U.S. after marrying Jean, who hailed from Dallas, Texas.

The evening was enjoyable, with delicious meals and beverages and hilarious discussions about Wodehouse and his works.

June 9 was our regular meeting. Wil Brouwer—a new member of The Wodehouse Society and also a Right Honorable Knightess (if that is the word I am looking for) of Sir Philip Sidney—reported about her visit to

New York City and Remsenburg, Long Island, for the unveiling of the historical marker near Remsenburg's village church. She told us that, although it was raining cats and dogs, it was a great day with entertainment, food, and drinks.

Another Knightess of our chapter, Josepha Olsthoorn, reported about her attendance at the Weekend with Wodehouse in Norfolk, U.K. Wodehousians from all over the world enjoyed the Wodehousian entertainment and the visits to (among other places) Kimberley Hall, the 15th-century Maid's Head hotel in Norwich, and Hunstanton Hall.

Josepha was taken by surprise when we granted her the Rosie M. Banks Award with double peacock feathers, for fifteen years of managing and editing the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society's newsletter *Nothing Serious*.

A big part of our meeting was spent on the presentation of three new books, published by the Dutch society. The first book is a translation of *The Man Upstairs*, an early Wodehouse story. It was translated by Herman van Riel and Marcel Gijbels, and the Dutch title is *De Bovenbuurman*.

The second book is *Goede Gnoes*, with published translations and compositions for the poem "Good Gnus (A Vignette in Verse) by Charlotte Mulliner," written by Wodehouse and published in *Mr. Mulliner Speaking*. In 2010 the Dutch society organized a contest for the best translation of "Good Gnus" in Dutch and for the best piece of music composed for the translated poem. All contributed translations (including translations in several other European languages) and compositions are collected in the little booklet *Goede Gnoes*. According to the judges, Joep van Brederode won the award for best translation, and Peter Nieuwenhuizen took the prize for best music.

Finally, the book *De P. G. Wodehouse Society op Reis* was presented. This book is a collection of stories, reports and pictures about the trip to Wodehousean England which was made by members of the Dutch Society and several Honorable Knights in 2009.

It was a good Wodehouse harvest in the Amsterdam chapter. The next meeting of the Honorable Knights is on Saturday, October 20, at Mulliner's Wijnlokaal, Lijnbaansgracht 266-267, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

**The Size 14 Hat Club**  
(Halifax, Nova Scotia)  
Contact: Jill Robinson  
E-mail:



## Final Call for TWS Logo

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS of TWS is going to be wrapping up the logo design competition process this autumn and winter so creative artists and designers should sharpen the pencils and computer keys and send in any more entries ASAP.

The Board still cherishes some version of "TWS" as a monogram that is clear, easy to see as a letterhead-like image on a page and in the form of a lapel-sized pin, but we put no restraint on your creativity or artistic freedom. Color is welcome and no Wodehouse theme is off-limits.

The Board seeks your efforts on behalf of the Society as a generous donation. But as an inducement to the materialistically minded, TWS's President has offered to donate three of his Wodehouse books as prizes for the top three entries: *Sunset at Blandings*, *Uncle Dynamite*, and *Performing Flea*, all UK first editions in at least good or better condition. You may propose more than one logo and if you have already sent in an entry or two, why stop there? Let it become a habit. Your submissions should be sent to Ken Clevenger. Please make the subject line: TWS LOGO.

## Apuleis and Plum

Elliott Milstein found, in the March 19 *National Review*, Tracy Lee Simmons's review of Sarah Ruden's new translation of *The Golden Ass* by Apuleis. Referencing Ruden's introduction, he writes that Apuleis "created a narrator who is sometimes urbane, sometimes naive, sometimes ironic, self-pitying and sympathetic all within a single sentence."

Elliott was reminded of another fictional character's narration style. Sure enough, later in the review Simmons says of Ruden that "with timely advice from a well-read husband, she . . . strategically mimicked authors in English now known by name for their 'slatternly ornamentation' and boisterousness—P. G. Wodehouse, Kipling and George MacDonald Fraser."

He then gives an example of the success of this strategy: "We read 'Now, I was making my way home from a dinner party somewhat late, and I was, well, more or less plastered—I won't try to disavow my guilt in this,' and we think we hear Jeeves shimmer into the room the next morning to prepare one of his potions for Bertie's hangover."

# Collecting Wodehouse

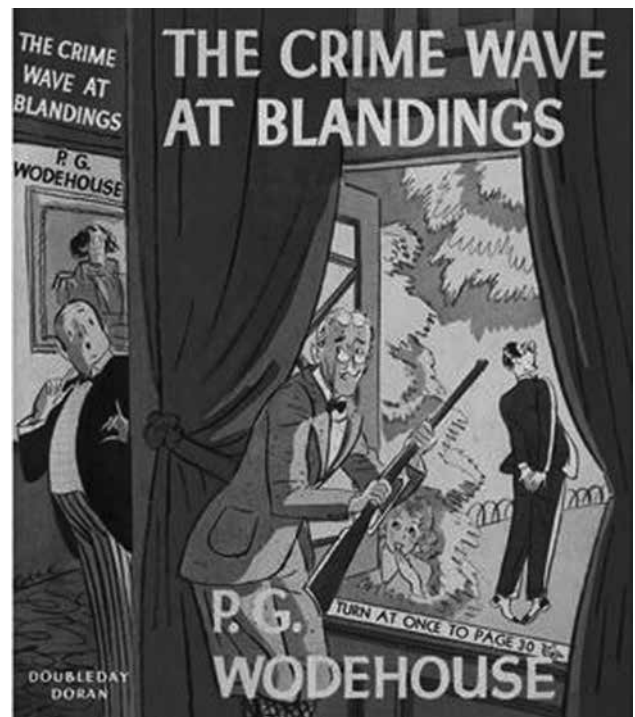
BY JOHN GRAHAM

THE FEBRUARY 2012 issue of *Firsts* (which calls itself “The Book Collector’s Magazine”) is likely to be of interest to many TWS members. The cover story, by Kathryn Smiley, is about collecting the works of Thorne Smith, the American humorist of the ’20s and ’30s best known for *Topper*. You may recall that Kathryn was the author of *Firsts*’ January 2003 special issue on Wodehouse. So, as might be expected, her new article contains plenty of references to Plum. For example, near the beginning she says: “Although comparisons between Wodehouse and Smith are common—both were humorists, both went to Hollywood and soon left, both loved dogs and were kind to children—the two writers were very different. Wodehouse books were full of good, clean fun. Smith books were good and full of fun, but they weren’t what you’d call clean.” Like most articles in *Firsts*, it is informative, full of high-quality illustrations and includes a useful bibliography and price guide to first editions. Like me, you may end up giving Thorne Smith a try.

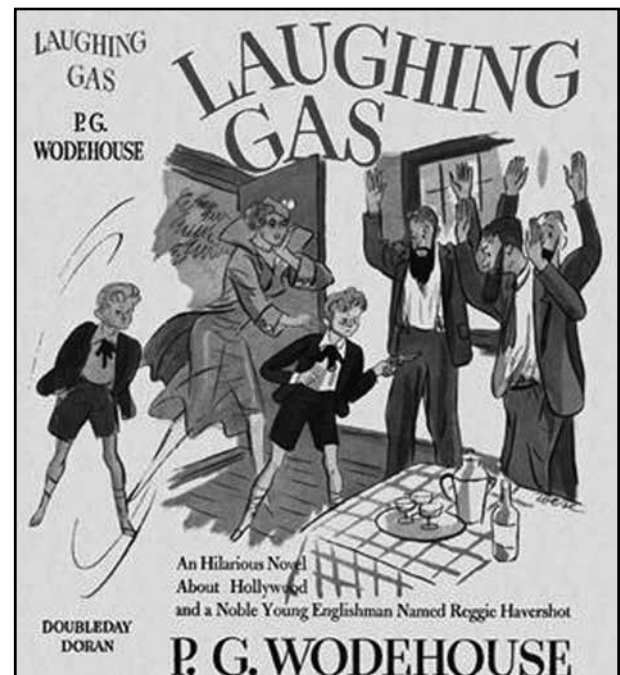
An accompanying article by Robin Smiley, called “Hey, Babe! The Delightfully Naughty Illustrations of Herbert F. Roese,” looks at the life and work of the artist who illustrated many of Thorne Smith’s books and dust jackets. What makes this article of particular interest to Wodehouse collectors is that Roese (who never included the “Herbert F.” in his signed drawings) is the same artist who illustrated seven of Plum’s dust jackets for Doubleday, Doran in the latter half of the 1930s: *Blandings Castle*, *Young Men in Spats*, *Laughing Gas*, *The Crime Wave at Blandings*, *Summer Moonshine*, *The Code of the Woosters*, and *The Week-End Wodehouse*. Robin’s article includes splendid black-and-white reproductions of all seven.

By my count, Roese illustrated more U.S. first editions of Wodehouse than any other single artist. (James Montgomery Flagg and May Wilson Preston are tied for second place, with five each.) Roese’s covers are some of the best (and certainly the most colorful) Wodehouse dust jackets ever produced on either side of the Atlantic.

If these two articles are not reason enough to get a copy of *Firsts*, the magazine ends with one more juicy Plum: a four-page spread (with photos) on *Piccadilly Jim* in its regular “Books into Film” column. *Firsts* has a website (<http://www.firsts.com>) where you can order back issues. The February 2012 issue, including postage, costs \$10. While you are there, be sure to order a copy of their January 2003 issue on Wodehouse, if you do



First American edition dust jackets by Herbert E. Roese



not already own one. For my money, other than Eileen McIlvaine’s bibliography, it is the single best resource a Wodehouse collector can own. (I want to thank Charles Gould for telling me about the February 2012 *Firsts*. Charles wrote the very first article on collecting Wodehouse that the magazine ever published, in August 1991. Sadly, *Firsts* no longer has copies of that issue for sale.)

# Additional Fun from the Historical Marker Unveiling

At the April 22 gathering in Remsenburg, the new historical marker was erected on the grounds of the community church in that fine town. A busload of excited Wodehouseans traveled together from New York City to attend this important dedication. Along the way they entertained each other quite admirably. Thanks to Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen, and Elaine and Tony Ring, for sharing some of the goods that enlivened the ride.

The first item (“A Posting Received . . .”) was one of several offered by various participants, wherein various women (upon Jeeves’s retirement) were applying to be Bertie’s wife. There were six supplications, including a song from Tamaki Morimura (as herself); an improvised speech from Amy Plofker (as herself); a version of “Cleopatterer” from Elaine Ring; and others from Maggie Schnader, Evelyn Herzog (who submitted the winning entry), and Andrea Jacobsen, who presented the following entry (written by Bob Rains). We’ve received word that Elliott Milstein was quite funny in the role of Bertie as he explained his choice for a mate. Enjoy!

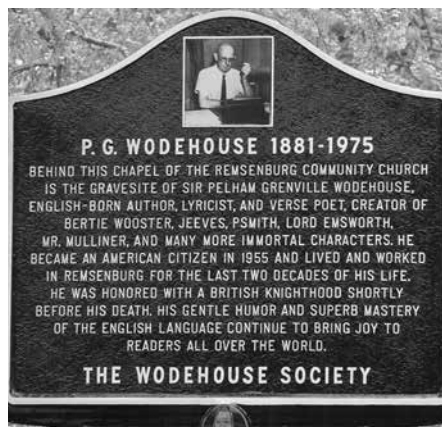
## A Posting Received by an Online Dating Service after Jeeves’s Retirement and Subsequently Obtained by Bob Rains Through Means He Is Not Currently at Liberty to Reveal

Dear Mr. Wooster,

I read with great interest your profile on ChristianSingles.com. I feel that in so many ways you are the man for me and I am the woman for you. Note that I say “woman” not “girl,” as surely it is time for you to put aside the silly young things of your past—Bobbie Wickham comes to mind—and settle down with a mature person of substance.

I was immediately taken with the fact that you won the Scripture Knowledge Prize at the Malvern House Preparatory School. I, too, have been deeply interested in matters of a theological nature. Indeed, a certain Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale was a great mentor and very close personal friend of mine.

I blush to acknowledge that men are of the flesh and take a deep interest in the pulchritude of the fairer sex. When I was created by Mr. Nathaniel Hawthorne, the science of photography as you know it today did not exist; hence I can offer you no picture of me captured by a lens. But Mr. Hawthorne was kind enough to describe me as, “tall, with a figure of perfect elegance on a large scale.” I have, he added, “dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it (throws) off the sunshine with a



The new historical marker at the Remsenburg Community Church (photo by Tony Ring)

gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, (has) the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes.” Mr. H says that I am “lady-like too, after the manner of the feminine gentility of (my day); characterized by a certain state and dignity.” If that is not enough for you to conjure up an image of me, suffice it to say that I was recently portrayed on the silver screen by Demi Moore. And you know what a “hottie” she is!

I have read that at one time you were contemplating taking your sister and her children into your home, but through the nefarious interference of a former manservant of yours named Jeeves, you were induced to change your mind. Now that you have reached a dignified station in life, perhaps you will rethink this issue. Do you really want to end up without an adult child to care for you in your dotage and carry on the Code of the Woosters? It may well be that both you and I are a little past the prime age for procreation. Indeed, I was created in 1850, so I am past the century and a half mark, although I hasten to add that I am extremely well preserved. Nevertheless, I, for one, would not relish another round of diapers and late-night feedings. But that presents no problem whatsoever for I come as a package deal with my precious little Pearl. She is, as her name suggests, a lustrous gem. Even on her worst days she’s at least semi-precious.

Please consider me, Mr. Wooster. I have been through a lot, and I can bring a lot to you. I have proven that I know how to love. And, as you consider my fervent plea, remember this: “A” is for available.

Hopefully yours,  
Hester Prynne

*The second piece was well-timed, as many of the bus riders had attended a performance of Sitting Pretty the night before. While some of Mrs. Rorer’s recipes and other*

concepts would need a health and safety warning if put out today, it's quite entertaining as is.

*Mrs. Rorer and the  
Wodehouse-Bolton-Kern Show  
Sitting Pretty*

BY ELAINE RING

IT IS MORE THAN twenty years since John McGlinn's double CD of the score of *Sitting Pretty* became available to the public. As early as the first hearing, my husband, Tony, loved the recording but, so it seemed to me, always used to ensure that the track "Mr. & Mrs. Rorer" was playing when I came into the room. Was he trying to impart a subliminal message that I was not adequately fulfilling my wifely duties?

But it wasn't for several years that I was willing to enter into the spirit of the joke, which I ingenuously took it to be. I imagine that all *Plum Lines* readers will be familiar with Norman Murphy's basic thesis, to the effect that nearly all characters in Wodehouse fiction have a basis in real life. With Mrs. Rorer, Wodehouse had taken the comparison one stage further than usual—he actually used her real name. She was an author, and I took a real interest in her when Tony presented me with a copy of her first book: *The Philadelphia Cook Book*.

Sarah Tyson Rorer, born October 18, 1849, in Richboro, Pennsylvania, was the daughter of Charles Tyson Heston and Elizabeth Sagers. When the family moved to Buffalo where her father practised his profession as a chemist, Sarah was enthralled by the subject, and her interest may have influenced her future profession as a dietician. In 1870, the family returned to the Philadelphia area, and it was there that she met her husband, William Albert, with whom she had a daughter (who died at a very young age) and two sons.

She became a teacher of domestic science, a lecturer on the impact of food on health, an author, and an editor. She partly owned and wrote for the magazine *Table Talk*, and was the editor of *Ladies' Home Journal* until 1911, a journal Wodehouse would first write for in 1916.

Mrs. Rorer enrolled in a cooking class at the New Century Club in 1882, going on to teach the class and to lecture at the Women's Medical College on a range of health issues. By 1884, she had opened the Philadelphia Cooking School, which she ran for eighteen years, during which time it had over 5,000 students. Part of her work was involved in the preparation of healthy meals for the sick through the approval of a doctor, an innovation which allowed her to claim to have been

America's first dietician, opening up hospital dietetics as a new field for study and employment.

Unusually for a woman of her time, she became a household name, immortalized not only in the Wodehouse lyric but also honored at the 1925 Chicago Woman's World's Fair.

The cooks among you will want to know whether her recipes from 120 years ago or so were reliable. Her intention was clear: to focus on healthy main meals rather than desserts, although she promoted a healthy way of making ice cream in which she advocated use of only the freshest ingredients, and excluded eggs, gelatin, and thickening agents.

Vegetables were her forte. She believed that they were the most important element of a proper diet and a healthy body. She stressed the importance of *not* overcooking vegetables to avoid losing their nutritional value. Consequently, she advocated boiling asparagus for only 20 minutes before adding salt, and a further ten afterwards. For cabbage, however, she directed the cook to cut the cabbage into quarters, soaking it in cold water for one hour. According to Mrs. Rorer, it would then be drained and covered with boiling water for fifteen minutes. Having drained it again, and pressed out all the water, it should then be returned to salted boiling water along with a small piece of chili pepper (to "diminish the unpleasant odor"), covered and, depending on the age of the cabbage, boiled for between one and two hours.

A simple, straightforward recipe for a nutritious dish, no doubt, and one which Tony insists the cooks at his English primary school followed to the letter.

She believed herself to be at home with recipes for meat, as well. The first verse of the song goes:

When Mrs. Rorer was a bride  
She kept her husband well-supplied  
With every appetizing dish  
That any hungry man could wish.  
And so when vamps came round his way  
And did their best to make him stray,  
She said that she'd do nothing rash,  
She held him with her corned beef hash.

Her recipe for corned beef hash, starting from scratch, also assumed that cooks had plenty of time, because first, she offered her grandmother's recipe for corning beef:

Cut a round of beef into four slices. Rub each piece lightly with salt on all sides, and let it stand one day before corning. Make a brine

from one tub of water, a half-pound of sugar, a teaspoon of powdered saltpetre, and salt until the brine will float an egg. Put the meat into this brine and allow it to remain for two weeks. Cover it carefully and look at it frequently. See that the brine covers the meat; if not, make a little more from salt and water and add to it. At the end of two weeks, take out the meat and hang it in a cool place to dry.

The latter part of October, March, or April are the best times for corning beef. If the weather is too warm, the meat will spoil before it dries; if too cold, it will not take the salt well.

Once the corned beef has been prepared satisfactorily, one could proceed to follow the recipe for the hash:

- 1 pint of cooked corned beef, chopped fine
- 1 pint of cold boiled potatoes, chopped fine
- 1 tablespoonful of butter
- 1 teaspoonful of onion juice
- 1 cup of stock or water
- 3 dashes of pepper

Mix the meat and potatoes together, put them in a frying-pan, add the stock, butter, onion juice and pepper; stir constantly until it boils. Serve on buttered toast.

But maybe her recipes were not all to the taste of her family, after all. The final lines of Wodehouse's lyric were:

And there'd be no divorce today  
If only wives would act the way  
That kind Mrs. Rorer used to do.

It seems ironic, therefore, that while at the peak of her career as a dietician, Mrs Rorer and her husband separated. It may have been the cabbage which caused the rift, but whatever the explanation, Wodehouse realised that to present her whole life history in song would have been inconvenient for the context in which it was to be sung.

Nevertheless, although he restricted the lyric to the twin (but possibly make-believe) image of a skilled cook and a happy family woman, it was, as I hope Norman would approve, an image based on real life.

*Much of this data is derived from [http://pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/bios/Rorer\\_\\_Sarah\\_Tyson.html](http://pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/bios/Rorer__Sarah_Tyson.html).*

## Wodehouse Tips His Hat

BY WILLIAM (TOM) THOMAS

WHEN I FIRST READ Wodehouse's "A Sea of Troubles" many years ago, I was struck by his reference to an unnamed Indiana author in a story set in an English hamlet. As *Plum Lines* readers doubtless recall, a Mr. Meggs in that 1914 tale, first collected in *The Man with Two Left Feet and Other Stories* (1917), having decided to end his life, sets out to share his wealth with several associates, including his private secretary, the prim Miss Pillenger, "a wary spinster of austere views" with "a deep-rooted suspicion of men."

Accordingly, when she arrives for work one day, Mr. Meggs greets her with an uncustomary smile, a stack of bank notes totaling 500 pounds, and a kiss on her forehead, and in return he receives a blow to his jaw and an animated denouncement of his treachery toward a defenseless woman. Wodehouse explains that Miss Pillenger previously "had been secretary to an Indiana novelist [and] had learned style from the master." They part company soon after this misunderstanding, and Mr. Meggs overcomes his thoughts of suicide, thus providing the story's happy ending. But would Wodehouse have mentioned an Indiana novelist if he didn't have a particular "master" in mind?

Two recent discoveries rekindled my interest in Miss Pillenger's former employer. The narrator of *Love Among the Chickens* (1920) tells a neighbor that he became involved in Ukridge's ill-fated chicken-raising enterprise just as a character might be drawn into a fable by Mr. George Ade. And the narrator in *Not George Washington* (1907) thought less of a fellow book-lover who "could see nothing humorous in Mr. George Ade, whose Fables I knew nearly by heart."

George Ade (1866–1944), an Indiana native widely acclaimed for his literary achievements, perhaps is best known today for *Ade's Fables* (1914). Wodehouse, Bolton, and Kern's hit musical comedy *Leave It to Jane*, which appeared on Broadway in 1917, was an adaptation of Ade's farce *The College Widow*, which opened there in 1904. Dan Cohen in a *Plum Lines* occasional feature titled "Rivals of P. G. Wodehouse" (Autumn 2004) reported that in 1952 Wodehouse placed Ade at the top of his list of departed humorists, and Norman Murphy assures readers on three occasions in his *A Wodehouse Handbook* (2006) that Wodehouse admired George Ade. Conversely, Lee Coyle, in his biography *George Ade* (1964), quotes from a 1937 letter in which Ade wrote that Wodehouse is one of few present-day writers with Mark Twain's knack for humor.

It seems safe to conclude that Wodehouse honored Ade with a literary tip of his hat in that 1914 story, and it seems equally safe to suggest that readers back then had no trouble identifying the “master.”



## And Yet Another Tip . . . ?

BY NEIL MIDKIFF

WHILE LISTENING to an audiobook of *Blandings Castle*, I noticed in the Hollywood Mulliner story “The Castaways” the list of “other” screenwriters (“Mr. Doakes, Mr. Noakes . . .”) who throw their scripts on the bonfire finished off with “Mr. Markey.” For some reason I’d never noticed it in print, even though it’s used three times in the story, but when hearing it spoken it jumped out at me. That name sounded unusual (not like Wodehouse’s usual coinages) and yet familiar, and I realized that I knew of a real screenwriter named Gene Markey from films such as *The Florodora Girl* and *Baby Face*.

Brian Taves’s book *P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood: Screenwriting, Satires and Adaptations* reveals that Wodehouse and Markey were jointly credited on the unused *Rosalie* screenplay of 1930 at MGM. I checked with Brian and he assures me that joint credit doesn’t necessarily mean that they shared the same “rabbit hutch” while working on it—but given that the frustrations of projects like *Rosalie*, worked on by a number of writers and then abandoned, must have inspired *Scented Sinners* in “The Castaways,” I can’t help thinking that the use of Markey’s surname in the story must have been a tip of the hat to a colleague.

Brian would be more convinced if we could find a real-life Mrs. Cooper, Mr. Lennox, and Mr. Dabney too, but it’s clear enough to me that the use of “Mr. Markey” in the story can hardly be a coincidence.

## Treasurer’s Report for 2011

BY KRIS FOWLER

**Balance as of December 31, 2010** **\$21,425.36**

### Income:

Membership dues	\$12,536.32
2011 Convention income	\$30,931.10
Drones Club ties	\$90.00
Historical Marker	\$5,715.54
Interest, misc. <sup>1</sup>	\$307.29

**Total Income** **\$49,580.25**

### Expenses:

<i>Plum Lines</i> production and mailing	\$12,189.77
2011 convention general expenses	\$29,317.39
2013 convention deposit	\$1,500.00
Cricket gear	\$195.89
Commemorative stamp covers <sup>2</sup>	\$1,781.33
Historical Marker <sup>3</sup>	\$391.14
Correspondence, supplies, other	\$133.60

**Total Expenses** **\$45,509.12**

**Total Balance as of December 31, 2011** **\$25,496.49**

TWS Convention Reserve Fund (*included in the Total Balance*):

Balance as of December 31, 2010	\$9,224.80
Raffle, auction, rummage sale excess proceeds	\$2,077.71
Balance as of December 31, 2011	\$11,302.51

<sup>1</sup> The major item was a donation in memory of Ray Steen.

<sup>2</sup> The cost was largely supported by donations made, over multiple years, in memory of Ray Steen.

<sup>3</sup> Most expenditures for the historical marker will appear in the 2012 report.

## Plumski Wodehousovich



William (Tom) Thomas sent the following: Editors of the *Economist* devoted a page in that weekly magazine (June 2) to how enterprising personal advisors in London are helping to assimilate wealthy new residents, many of them from Russia, by “smoothing their way to high society and shaping their tastes.” And the editors, without naming him, affirmed Wodehouse’s lasting contributions to our language by deeming it unnecessary to explain the article’s title: “Jeeves and Woosterovich.”

## Quote of the Hour

A **B**LOGGER for the *Chicago Tribune* website has provided a link to a Wodehouse random quote generator website. The link provided is [http://blogs.chicagotribune.com/news\\_columnists\\_ezorn/2012/05/fine-line-generator.html](http://blogs.chicagotribune.com/news_columnists_ezorn/2012/05/fine-line-generator.html). And guess what? The quote generator is a website hosted by TWS's Pongo!

## Handy Bookmarks

**N**EIL MIDKIFF'S web pages on the Wodehouse short stories and novels (<http://home.earthlink.net/~nmidkiff/pgw/story.html> and [novel.html](http://home.earthlink.net/~nmidkiff/pgw/novel.html)) give handy data on first magazine appearances, alternate titles, and much more.

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Rabbits frisked in the hedgerows. Cows mused in the meadows. Water voles sported along the riverbanks. And moving a step higher in the animal kingdom, the paying guests at Sir Buckstone Abbott's country seat . . . were all up and about.

*Summer Moonshine* (1937)

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*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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