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# The 2013 Chicago Convention: What's on Tap?

BY TINA AND DAN GARRISON AND SUSAN Z. DIAMOND

THE CHICAGO ACCIDENT SYNDICATE has lined up a stellar list of speakers for the Saturday program. From across the pond, we'll have renowned Wodehousians Tony Ring, Norman Murphy, and Michael Pointon. Peter Nieuwenhuizen is coming from The Netherlands, while Dan Garrison is making the difficult and arduous trek from Evanston, Illinois. Chris Dueker (aka Anatole) is returning to Chicago, the scene of the crime of his first TWS convention in 1997. Our speakers will be covering such diverse topics as "Of Mumps and Men"; "The Frustrations of a Proven Successful Playwright"; "A Tale of Two Knights: Sidney and Wodehouse"; "Romantic Plots in Wodehouse: The Greek Comedy Formula"; "Wodehouse and the Girl Friends"; and "Plum, Her Majesty, and Me." We'll leave it to your imagination as to which speaker will be covering which topic.

Because our theme is "The Empress Strikes Back," we will be featuring that marvelous pig in a tale for which the world is now ready: a dramatization of the first meeting of Lord Emsworth and friends with the other Master, Mr. Sherlock Holmes. Gayle Lange Puhl, a midwestern Sherlockian and Wodehousian, is the perpetrator of this original story.

We do have a few spots left on the program for those of you who would like to join this elite group. Presentations should be approximately twenty minutes in length—to allow for Q&A and a highly flattering introduction of the speaker within a thirty-minute period. If you have an idea for a presentation, please contact Susan Diamond at. Please note that TWS policy is that speakers are "comped" into the Saturday talks portion of the program but are responsible for all

other costs associated with the convention, including other portions of the program, travel, meals, and accommodations.

If you plan to attend the convention as a single, and would like to be assigned a roommate at the Union League Club's convenient accommodations, please send your request, and we will pair you up.

If you have PGW-related collectibles to contribute to the **rummage sale** (proceeds help keep convention costs down), mail these items to the Garrisons, or bring them when you arrive. Please let us know if you are sending anything along. *If you have any very special items for the auction, let us know as soon as you can.* You may e-mail us.

Registrations are arriving steadily, so be sure to make your hotel reservations now at the Union League Club of Chicago (312-427-7800); make it clear that you are making reservations for the Wodehouse Society Convention, October 17–19. We are working on events prior to these dates, so (for this and other reasons) you may want to prolong your stay.



# The Tie That Binds, Part 1: The Wooster/Threepwood Connections

BY JILL COOPER-ROBINSON

NO ONE KNEW better than Wodehouse the truth of the maxim that large families need no others. All action and amusement may be drawn from inside their own ranks with little necessity for time spent in getting to know an adversary or ally. Besides, the results are comfortably predictable. Many Wodehouse stories deal with the misguided actions of characters whose relationships are well understood by both the characters themselves and PGW, while we readers grapple with the ties that bind them together. Daniel Garrison's *Who's Who in Wodehouse* offers a bit of a guide to the Threepwood and the Wooster family trees, with subsequent work provided by John Fletcher,<sup>1</sup> Yasmine Gooneratne,<sup>2</sup> J. H. C. Morris,<sup>3</sup> and others.

Fletcher's inspired hypothesis was that there were two marriages by Bertie's grandmother. Agatha, Cuthbert (now deceased), and Dahlia come from Bertie's grandmother's first husband, a Mannering-Phipps. The second marriage was to a Wooster from which are derived Bertie's uncles George, Henry, Clive, James, and Algernon. He also has an Uncle Willoughby Travers from his late mother's side.

We must not overlook the two marriages of Bertie's own father, the first yielding that seldom-seen sister Mrs. Scholfield, nor forget the multiple marriages of aunts and uncles, etc. Certainly these marriages explain a lot, and I for one accept them without reservation.

More recently Gooneratne, while accepting Fletcher's ideas, has put forward a few of her own. She contends that Bertie must have inherited his father's name because first-born sons did in that class and time; that the source of Bertie's wealth was his Uncle Willoughby; that this same Willoughby was a Wooster and not a Travers; and that Algernon Wooster (a guest at Blandings Castle in *Something Fresh*) is Bertie's cousin and not Bertie's uncle. While these ideas are interesting, most tantalizing is Gooneratne's passing remark that "the possibility arises that . . . [the] Earl of Emsworth . . . [is] related to the Woosters."

Indeed! I suggest such is not merely possible but fact, and herewith I launch my own contribution to muddying these waters, to wit: The Threepwoods and Woosters are related in several ways. Furthermore, almost everyone in the Threepwood/Wooster saga, with a couple of notable exceptions, is related either to the Woosters or to the Threepwoods, and if someone is related to one, then by extension they are related to the other and thus they are all in the family.

All connections lead to Lord Emsworth. This dreamy, cloth-headed peer of the realm, Clarence Threepwood, so ineffective in and of himself, is a magnet for the domestic drama that provides all our entertainment. J. H. C. Morris ably drew the Threepwood family tree and, based upon this information, Clarence may be imagined as a drowsy, myopic spider sitting at the center of a web from which radiate fourteen main lines, each standing for one of his siblings or one of his two sons. These lines are intersected by other lines representing most of the collateral characters in the stories. It is some of these characters with whom we are concerned here.

First we'll give attention to the main Threepwood/Wooster connection. Let's consider one instance of the importance of being Percy (or Julia, or Cuthbert, or . . .). Every family has one: If yours doesn't, you must get one. The Percy of whom we speak is Lord Stockheath, Emsworth's nephew by his sister Georgiana Alcester. Percy is also first cousin to "young Algernon Wooster,"<sup>4</sup> who is either Bertie Wooster's very young uncle or the son of Bertie's uncle the Hon. Algernon Wooster. Wodehouse tells us, referring to Percy and Algernon (among others), that "there was nobody in the house who did not belong to the clan."<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Threepwoods and Woosters are family.

This one relationship makes truth of scores of others and from Wodehouse's point of view can only widen that vein of inherited looniness and aberrant learned behavior of which he is such a master. I contend that it is possible, if not probable, that Bertie's grandmother's first husband's name (Mannering-Phipps) was derived from the coupling of a Mannering great-grandparent (f.) with a Phipps great-grandparent (m.). Such is still common in families where the gender of newborns may not conveniently work out for continuing a proud family name. Any children would therefore be Mannering-Phipps. But it would also mean Lady Clara and Eggy Mannering (engaged to Ann Bannister,<sup>6</sup> who herself has endless English and American namesakes) would be family, as would Barmy Phipps and Lady Diana Phipps. You will recall she was Lady Diana Threepwood (so here is another Threepwood/Wooster link) who married Rollo Phipps.<sup>7</sup> So, too, would Gussie Mannering-Phipps be family,<sup>8</sup> he who is a relic of the late Cuthbert Mannering-Phipps and Julia, the very much alive ex-vaudeville artist who, after a spell at Aunt Agatha's charm school, is now indistinguishable from those to the manor born.

Let us deal briefly with Gooneratne and Fletcher's concerns re: Bertie's name and money. First, yes, reasonably he bears his father's first and last names. We know that his second name, Wilberforce, is taken from the horse who won his father a packet just before Bertie's baptism. Should we doubt this? I think not. This capacity for the exuberantly commemorative gesture apparently has been passed down from father to son, since Bertie himself at one point announces his intention to name his own first-born son (if any) "Green Swizzle" after one of his much-favored drinks.<sup>9</sup> Next, his fortune (Agatha's estimation is that Bertie has "too much money"<sup>10</sup>) was whatever remained of his share of the winnings made by his father, for his sister might have been left some too. We also know that his Uncle Willoughby, by all accounts a real player and thus undoubtedly regarded as simpatico by Bertie's father (who was a bit of a player himself), was left as trustee and guardian of Bertie's money while Bertie was still in his minority. It is probable that, finding Bertie to his liking and without heirs of his own, Willoughby bequeathed his estate to Bertie. Bertie could thus be nicely well off, and as Wodehouse himself would say, every little bit added to every other little bit makes just that little bit more. As an aside, apparently he doesn't waste it because Jeeves describes Bertie's finances as late as 1953 as "still quite sound."<sup>11</sup>

Continuing for the nonce with Bertie, consider Sir Roderick Glossop, that bird with the death-ray eyes. Bertie is related to Sir R., or soon will be, through Glossop's nephew Tuppy (engaged to Angela Travers, Dahlia's daughter and Bertie's cousin).<sup>12</sup> So presumably Roderick will soon be Angela's uncle-in-law and therefore family of the Woosters and thus family of the Threepwoods. Further, Sir Roderick is himself engaged to Lady Chuffnell and again is never disengaged, though Lady C. does express a reluctance, even a resolve, not to actually tie this knot until Roderick's scourge of a daughter, Honoria, leaves home for good! This may take a while. Indeed, we have not yet witnessed the blessed aisle-walk, since when it comes to Honoria, many are chosen but so far no one has answered the call. Honoria is thus by her mother's engagement virtually related to Bertie and thenceforth could assume a proprietorial right to draw him into her madcap schemes with all the terror this entails. However, it must be said that Sir Roderick, if unpleasant, is at least good for something. While he is himself neurotic to a degree—and this is putting it charitably—he is a certified loony-doctor and thus in constant demand by this extensive and dysfunctional family, which gains them a useful family discount.<sup>13</sup>

Other entanglements by marriage loom like storm clouds over Bertie's bachelor existence. For instance, Lady Chuffnell's nephew is Chuffy, one of Bertie's oldest friends. He eventually marries Pauline Stoker, who is yet another "ex" of Bertie's and from whom, like Honoria, he has miraculously escaped by a hairsbreadth. She is also Trouble. This means that by the intended Glossop-Chuffnell marriage (see above) she becomes just that little bit more proximate. And we're not finished yet with the Stoker complications because Pauline's sister Emerald marries Gussie Fink-Nottle,<sup>14</sup> the newt-sense. So back to Tuppy Glossop. He and Bertie are thus now both related to Gussie because, of course, Dahlia and Agatha are sisters. And while we're at it, Bertie is related to Florence Craye, a right royal pip (bad, as distinguished from a pipster, a pippin, or a pipterino, all of which are good) and another of Bertie's hardly credible near-misses. Her dad, Lord Worpleston, actually marries Aunt Agatha.

What heavy human baggage does Emsworth carry? Sir Gregory Parsloe for one, his archenemy in the "fat pigs stakes." They are related by Monica Simmons,<sup>15</sup> one of Lord E.'s pig people. She is cousin to Parsloe but eventually married to Wilfred Allsop,<sup>16</sup> Emsworth's nephew. Thus, regrettably, Parsloe is absolutely a Threepwood connection. It doesn't seem fair Emsworth should even have to speak to that bounder, let alone be related to him! Emsworth, like Bertie, operates from the most innocent of motives, while Parsloe has no scruples and a long and deep history of behaving badly. Emsworth's relationship to Parsloe is further complicated by Monty Bodkin, Parsloe's nephew, who for a while is Clarence's secretary.<sup>17</sup> This engenders weeks of turmoil for poor Clarence.

Clarence's life is polluted by secretaries, nephews, and nieces. Some secretaries (like Baxter) are double agents and villainous, but many simply have a vast capacity for causing grief. Jerry Vail<sup>18</sup> is one of the latter, married eventually to Penny Donaldson,<sup>19</sup> sister of Freddie Threepwood's wife. He is also Plug Basham's nephew, so Gally and Plug are now related by more than their similarity of interests. Then there is the always worthy but sadly impoverished Mike Jackson, who has married Connie's stepdaughter, Phyllis Keeble,<sup>20</sup> making Mike a nephew-in-law. Score one for Clarence, because Mike brings to the equation his devoted best friend, Rupert Psmith, a genuine force majeure who, like Gally and Ickenham, is an instinctive but benevolent meddler and becomes secretary to Lord Emsworth.

There is also this business of nieces. Clarence's niece Veronica Wedge marries Tipton Plimsoll,<sup>21</sup> who has never held a job in his life. But that's all right because

he has his own American money, so, useless as he may be, he poses no threat to the Blandings purse. Not so two other nieces, who marry into the clergy. Gertrude Alcester marries Beefy Bingham,<sup>22</sup> while Clarence's step-niece Myra Schoonmaker marries Bill Bailey.<sup>23</sup> Since marriages into the clergy are anathema to Connie, she dutifully fights long and hard to prevent them.

Now let's go to a truly questionable appendage. This is Alaric Pendlebury-Davenport, Duke of Dunstable and an early fiancée of Connie's. He proceeds through life in intimate familiarity with Connie and Blandings and ignores the earlier ruptured engagement as though he were there by right. He comes and goes without invitation, interferes without inhibition, and offends without apology. The good news is that his nephew, Horace Pendlebury-Davenport, marries Valerie Twistleton, sister of Pongo, and their uncle is Ickenham. So with this engagement Uncle Fred enters the picture, and aren't we glad he does! Uncle Fred's claim to interfering in the Blandings sphere is that—pay attention here—he is uncle to a woman (Valerie) who marries a man (Horace) who is the nephew of another man (Dunstable) for whom Connie has “a sisterly affection.”<sup>24</sup>

Not that this is the first affiliation between the Threepwoods and the Twistletons, only the latest. One of Emsworth's ancestors was Sir Pharamond, who “did so well at the battle of Joppa.”<sup>25</sup> His great pal and comrade in arms at the time was Ickenham's ancestor Sir Gervase Twistleton, who on the other hand overslept the day the battle was called so missed it.<sup>26</sup> It seems to me obvious that Clarence's forbear used up considerable energy in combat that day, energy which might have been passed along to his descendants. So Clarence has been more or less resting ever since, while Sir Gervase used up none and thus Uncle Fred has been overspending energy ever since. (The battle of Joppa is not well known, precursor as it was to the Battle of Arsuf. I yearn for more on this highlight of the Crusades.)

(Fred) Ickenham, like Galahad (Gally), has reached a certain age and temperament, and when one isn't available to straighten out a mess the other is. Of course, they like to have a little fun along the way but that's quite all right because, like Robin Hood, they live their lives altruistically, for the greater good.

*In Part 2, which will appear in the Summer Plum Lines, Jill explores how social change affected these ties that bind.*

## References

<sup>1</sup> Fletcher, John. “Bertie Wooster's Family Tree: Disentangling the Wooster Relations,” *Plum Lines*,

Spring 1990, 2–4.

<sup>2</sup> Gooneratne, Yasmine. “The Wooster Family Tree: Tying Up Some Loose Threads,” *Wooster Sauce*, March 2012, 12–15.

<sup>3</sup> Morris, J. H. C. “Lord Emsworth and his Family and Entourage,” *Thank You, Wodehouse* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd. 1981).

<sup>4</sup> *Something Fresh*, ch. 7

<sup>5</sup> *Something Fresh*, ch. 7

<sup>6</sup> *Laughing Gas*, ch. 3

<sup>7</sup> *Sunset at Blandings*, ch. 1

<sup>8</sup> “Extricating Young Gussie”

<sup>9</sup> “The Rummy Affair of Old Biffy”

<sup>10</sup> “Scoring Off Jeeves”

<sup>11</sup> *The Return of Jeeves*, ch. 5

<sup>12</sup> Many, incl. “Tuppy Changes His Mind”; *Right Ho, Jeeves; Much Obligated, Jeeves*

<sup>13</sup> *A Pelican at Blandings*, ch. 9

<sup>14</sup> *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*, ch. 15

<sup>15</sup> *Pigs Have Wings*, ch. 1, sec 3

<sup>16</sup> *The Brinkmanship of Galahad Threepwood*, ch. 11–12

<sup>17</sup> *Heavy Weather*, ch. 3ff

<sup>18</sup> *Pigs Have Wings*, ch. 4, sec. 2

<sup>19</sup> *A Pelican at Blandings*, ch. 11, sec. 2

<sup>20</sup> *Leave It to Psmith*, ch. 1, sec. 2

<sup>21</sup> “Birth of a Salesman”

<sup>22</sup> “Company for Gertrude”

<sup>23</sup> *Service With a Smile*, ch. 12, sec. 1

<sup>24</sup> *A Pelican at Blandings*, ch. 8, sec. 1

<sup>25</sup> *A Pelican at Blandings*, ch. 10, sec. 1

<sup>26</sup> *Uncle Dynamite*, ch. 9, sec. 3

## A Denver Chapter?

JENNIFER PETKUS hopes to form a chapter in Denver, and has created a website for the fledgling group. You can visit the site at <http://thedenverofthesecretnine.wordpress.com>. We wish Jennifer luck, and will list reports in the Chapters Corner section in future issues as appropriate.

## A Few Quick Ones

Oliver Kamm, in the August 4 *Times* (London), cleared up a misuse of the word *specious* by U.S. Senator John McCain. Pointing out that, in addition to meaning false and deceptive, it carries a connotation of attractiveness, Kamm quotes Bertie from *Joy in the Morning*, after Boko Fittleworth assures Bertie that he won't be caught by Stilton Cheeswright, the local constable. Bertie says, “Well, that was all right, as far as it went. His reasoning was specious, and it did much to reassure me.”

# Letter from England

BY ELIN WOODGER

THINGS HAVE BEEN relatively quiet in the Wodehouse world since my last letter, except for the excitement and controversy stirred up by the BBC's new television series *Blandings*. I am going to be diplomatic and simply say that although the series was not to my taste at all, I can (somewhat) appreciate the desire of its creators to attract a younger audience to Wodehouse through their adaptation. For those who may want to know more about why the writer and producers did what they did, it would be helpful to read Tony Ring's essay on the U.K. Society's website: <http://bit.ly/110DzOA>.

Shortly after the *Blandings* series premiered, Hilary Bruce and I had a chance to see a picture that will be of special interest to Wodehouse enthusiasts, especially those who have a few quid to spare.

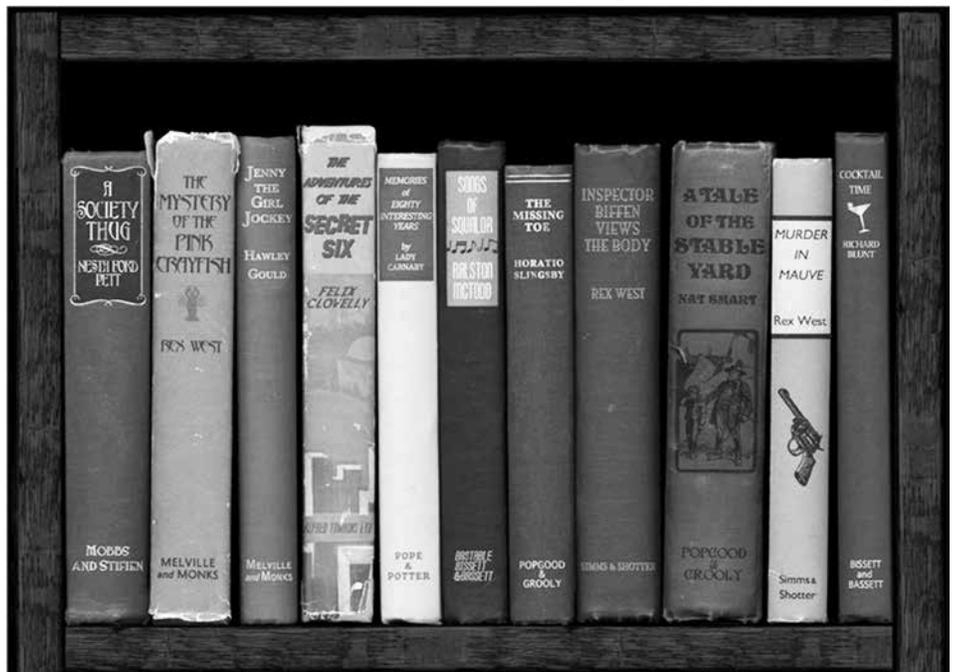
It all began sometime last year, when Edward Cazalet put an idea into the head of artist, printmaker, and Wodehouse fan Phil Shaw, who specializes in images of bookshelves that have an unusual twist to them. In some cases, the titles on the books that line his imaginary shelves are real, in others they exist only in fiction or in Phil's mind. From those titles, and employing books that he acquires at charity shops and used-book stores, Phil uses Photoshop to create striking prints of bookshelves whose titles are based on a theme (e.g., lines from Shakespeare or Underground Tube stops).

Edward, an admirer of Phil's work, suggested that he create an original print with a Wodehouse theme. After initial misgivings, Phil conceived the idea of four shelves filled with the books of such renowned writers from the PGW canon as Rosie M. Banks, Rex West, Leila J. Pinkney, Augustus Whiffle, and Alexander Worple, among others. To ensure he got it right, he enlisted Norman's help to create a lengthy list of fictional Wodehouse titles and, more importantly, to identify and eliminate those titles in the canon that sound Wodehousean but are quite real.

After that, it was a matter of choosing which titles Phil wanted to include on the shelves and how to represent them in book form. (He uses real books whose titles he replaces with new ones in fonts appropriate to

the book and the theme.) For his Wodehouse print, he incorporated 48 imaginary titles from the PGW canon, including such classics as *Strychnine in the Soup*, by Horatio Slingsby; *My Life on the Links*, by Sandy McHoots; *American Birds and More American Birds*, by Alexander Worple; *On the Care of the Pig*, by Augustus Whiffle; and, of course, *Mervyn Keene, Clubman*, by Rosie M. Banks.

Some Wodehouse fans might be disappointed by the absence of certain titles such as Florence Craye's *Spindrift*, and puzzled by the inclusion of more obscure titles such as *My Life with Rod and Gun*, by Col. Francis Pashley-Drake. But when you consider that there are some 200 fictional titles in the Wodehouse canon, then you can appreciate the considerable job Phil had on his hands in choosing just the right titles and books to suit his four bookshelves—and even forgive him for including one



Phil Shaw's image of a Wodehouse bookshelf

that doesn't exist in the canon (*Wee Tots Annual*, edited by Richard Little). You can also admire his ingenuity in matching titles to books; they are so well suited and so realistic that it seems hard to believe one cannot reach out and pluck a book from the shelf. And there's a lot of fun to be had in identifying the PGW books in which the invented titles appear.

The limited-edition 117 x 51 cm (46 x 20 in.) print is something every Wodehouse collector will want to own, though it comes at a high price: £1,200 (app. \$1,900). It can be purchased from the Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery ([www.r-h-g.co.uk](http://www.r-h-g.co.uk)), and if desired, it can be autographed by the artist. For further information, write to Rebecca.

# Thankfully Rescued from the Soup: The Unique Relationship Between P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster and Reginald Jeeves

BY MARGARET RODGERS

*We're thrilled that Margaret offered to share her senior thesis (Kenyon College, Department of English Literature, Spring 2011).*

FROM 1901, the date of his first published text, until his death in 1975, P. G. Wodehouse provided a continual supply of cleverly constructed comedic short stories and novels. Chock full of bumbling English gentry, ever-faithful valets, and stuffy, overbearing aunts, Wodehouse's work has delighted audiences through seven decades of social and historical change.

At the heart of the Wodehouse canon is Bertie Wooster, the epitome of an upper-class Edwardian English gentlemen, and his devoted and brilliant valet Jeeves. Over the course of eleven novels and numerous short stories, Wodehouse follows Bertie and Jeeves as they face the trials and tribulations of love, haughty aunts, and English countryside society. Whether in the midst of a diamond heist gone wrong or an encounter of the heart, Bertie unfailingly finds himself in terribly sticky situations from which only Jeeves can untangle him.

The relationship of Bertie and Jeeves is unique for the Edwardian social context Wodehouse chose to depict. Although, at face value, the relationship upholds the traditional values of a master and his servant, there are distinct differences that make this pair special. As Wodehouse explores the individual characters through his narratives, their relationship deepens, slowly diminishing the strict social boundaries. The duo becomes so close that their relationship shifts from a master and servant to an equalizing partnership. Four narratives, chronicled throughout Wodehouse's career—"Extricating Young Gussie" (1915); *Thank You, Jeeves* (1934); *Joy in the Morning* (1947); and *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen* (1974)—exemplify the trajectory of Bertie and Jeeves's relationship and how and why they come to form their unique bond.

Wodehouse, born in 1881, grew and matured in an upper-class Victorian and then Edwardian home. [*In fact, Wodehouse's family was upper middle class. It should be noted that the Victorian and Edwardian middle classes normally employed two or three servants. Even the wife of a low-paid bank clerk might have a live-*

*in maid.* —Ed.] As a boy, Wodehouse became familiar and comfortable with his family's staff below the stairs. Wodehouse learned early on that butlers, valets, and housekeepers were crucial cogs to the continuation of the lifestyle of the upper class. When Wodehouse published his first story in 1901, he wrote of a lifestyle he knew. This became particularly important when he began to write Jeeves and Wooster stories. His first story featuring the pair was published in 1915. Because this was during the First World War, many readers and critics saw this as Wodehouse's attempt to distract the population from the terrors of the war by reminiscing on a world before the war. However, Wodehouse maintained that he was only writing of a world and time that he fully understood and was comfortable with. This feeling became increasingly important as the twentieth century progressed and social and historical change abounded.

The Edwardian era is defined as the period during which King Edward VII reigned from 1901 until his death in 1910, although some extend it until World War I. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and the entrance into the Edwardian period marked an era of immense change in Britain that would continue through the early twentieth century. The Boer War, from 1899 through 1902, had shattered the invincibility of the British Empire. Other economies, such as the United States and Germany, were beginning to compete with Britain's. These political, economic, and social changes were seen as both frightening and exciting. Regardless of how one viewed Britain's untenable circumstances, one thing was certain: society, politics, and the economy would never be the same. Despite being on the cusp of inevitable change, the upper class in Britain saw this as a golden and nostalgic time. As a social class, they celebrated the style, sophistication, and tradition that had defined them throughout the Victorian period. To uphold their established hierarchal society during the Edwardian period, the upper class maintained a large domestic staff of housekeepers, ladies' maids, cooks, nurses, footmen, coachmen, butlers, and valets.

Before World War I, the population of domestic servants was huge. One and a half million female servants alone shaped the domestic workforce. The large

population of domestic servants at the upper classes' disposal romanticized and glamorized the life of the upper class for those in the middle and lower classes. In order to uphold the social hierarchy and tradition, a rigid formality between the servants and their masters was crucial. As the hierarchical ladder was upheld above the stairs, it was also mirrored below. Each servant had particular domestic tasks that were assigned to him or her. Male servants, butlers and valets in particular, were positioned at the top of the ladder. The wages of male servants were much higher than for females. Males were often used to show someone's wealth rather than for practical use. While butlers held the highest position on the servant's hierarchical ladder, valets were crucial to the individual males of the household. The valet, a "gentleman's gentleman," was often employed by bachelors instead of married men. The duties of a valet were not solely confined to maintaining his employer's closet or toiletries but included a whole host of tasks, such as hailing cabs or loading shotguns. In 1915, P. G. Wodehouse rewrote and expanded the role of the traditional valet when he created the now famous character of Reginald Jeeves. Wodehouse combined this social model with the traditional literary personality of the clever servant that had been featured in plays as far back as Aristophanes. By fashioning Jeeves from this particular social mode and adding this layer of literary tradition, Wodehouse produced a wonderfully new and creative character with enormous comic potential.

Similar to Jeeves's character, Bertie's persona was also inspired by a historical social type. Bertie is fashioned to be the typical English gentleman—wealthy, highly educated, and of high birth. He maintains high levels of elegance, class, masculinity, fashion, manners, and morals. To match his prescribed personality, a gentleman also engages in particular activities. During the day he calls on friends or friends call on him. In the evening, he participates in social drinking, card playing, or listening to music. On the weekends, he goes into the country for tennis or garden parties. Many of Bertie's physical and intellectual traits, such as his flashy clothes, schoolboy code, and classical education fit in with Wodehouse's use of this stereotypical character. Although Wodehouse used this historical model for Bertie, he saw the comic potential in some of these characteristics and activities.

During the early period of Wodehouse's Bertie and Jeeves writing, he established a character and narrative formula for the two that he would use almost exclusively for the entirety of those stories and novels. Bertie, a wealthy public-school and Oxford-educated bachelor is, "if not stupid, at least a bit slow; he is



*Margaret Rodgers effervesces.*

idealistic, moral, . . . nonintellectual, and lively. His pastimes include golf, riding, tennis, darts, practical jokes and bread-and-sugar tossing at his club, and reading mysteries and thrillers." (Kristin Thompson, *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes*, 1992, p.123) Because of these activities, in combination with his less than admirable intellect, Bertie constantly finds himself in trouble. Jeeves is the opposite. While he is of a lower-middle-class background, he is "intelligent, pragmatic, amoral, . . . and quiet. His pastimes include playing bridge at his club, fishing, gambling, sailing, swimming, and reading 'an improving book' at bedtime." (Ibid.) Jeeves's natural intelligence is so infallible that Bertie and nearly everyone around him relies on him. Wodehouse sets Bertie and Jeeves in traditional class roles, the rich bachelor and his valet, but the reversal in intellectual traits leads to their unique master-and-servant relationship.

An examination of the whole Jeeves and Bertie canon demonstrates that their particular master-servant relationship is an inimitable partnership. Although their dynamic is coated with traditional airs, their true relationship diverges from its stereotypical social framework. Their master-servant relationship is akin to an equalizing marriage rather than a true reflection of social hierarchy. Bertie, the wealthy master, stands as the husband, while Jeeves, charged with all of the domestic duties, is the wife. Like many marriages,

Jeeves and Bertie experience each other's character weaknesses as well as strengths. Their relationship goes through periods of difficulty as well as convenience and ease. As Wodehouse develops each individual character, the relationship deepens. As the two characters learn more about each other, a strong mutual respect and dependence grows. Bertie realizes that Jeeves's brilliance far surpasses his own wit and that he can be gracefully extracted from any situation imaginable because of it. Meanwhile, Jeeves's love for Bertie's hospitality and fierce loyalty intensifies every day. With every short story and novel, the pair continues to grow together into an emotional and spiritual equality that belies their traditional social roles.

In the earliest narratives, written in the 1910s and early 1920s, Jeeves and Bertie were still learning to understand and appreciate each other. In the earliest stories of the pair, Wodehouse had not fully developed the characteristics that later became his typical narrative formula. Jeeves had yet to become the savior of situations and Bertie had not fully grown into the dim and bumbling bachelor who always finds himself in need of rescuing. As early as the first publication of "Jeeves Takes Charge" (1916), and as the series continued into the 1920s and 1930s, Wodehouse firmly established his narrative and character formula. Typically in this formula, a friend or aunt of Bertie's seeks his help with a terrible situation. Because of his loyal nature, Bertie cannot refuse. Usually, these affairs send him out into the countryside, where all pertinent parties can easily gather. As the narrative continues, Bertie finds himself deeper and deeper "in the soup." Without fail, Bertie pleads to Jeeves's genius to save him. Inevitably, Jeeves is able to think of a plan to liberate Bertie and whomever else is in need. In the late 1930s, 1940s, and into the early 1950s Wodehouse decided to intermittently experiment with this formula. He proposed a Bertie without Jeeves in *Thank You, Jeeves* and vice versa in the later *Ring for Jeeves* (1953). After this period of experimentation, Wodehouse brought them back together and Bertie and Jeeves remained partners until their last appearance in 1974.

In addition to the social model of the master and his valet, Wodehouse looked to other literary relationships and narratives to inspire his own writing. The most notable parallel is the relationship between Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes and Dr. Watson. While Conan Doyle's work places him firmly in the detective and dramatic genre, Wodehouse saw the comic potential for similar characters and narrative formulas. Wodehouse alters Conan Doyle's structure of two socially equal characters sharing an apartment when he makes Bertie

the master and Jeeves the valet. However, Wodehouse reveals his comic genius when he establishes Jeeves as the true leader and guide in the relationship. Bertie stands in place of the Watson character. Like Watson, Bertie is typically the narrator. He bumbles after Jeeves, always at least two steps behind. Jeeves, the Holmes character, always manages to construct a brilliant plan to extricate Bertie from whatever situation in which he has found himself.

Wodehouse wrote his first narrative featuring the duo ("Extricating Young Gussie") in 1915; it appears in his collection of short stories entitled *The Man with Two Left Feet*. The story shows Wodehouse still in the process of creating and perfecting his character and narrative formula. For example, Jeeves, while obviously Bertie's man, has yet to become the gifted valet seen in later narratives and Bertie has yet to be fitted with his surname of Wooster. The story's premise is that Bertie's overbearing Aunt Agatha forces him to extract his cousin Gussie from an unsuitable marriage. The narrative begins before Bertie even rouses himself from bed. "It can't have been half-past eleven when Jeeves, my man, woke me out of the dreamless and broke the news." Waiting downstairs is the dreaded Aunt Agatha and her plan of removing Gussie from his difficult circumstance. Jeeves serves the two tea as Agatha explains that Bertie must go to America to save her darling Gussie. Once Agatha has left, Bertie informs Jeeves, "'We start for America on Saturday.' 'Very good, sir,' he said; 'which suit will you wear?'" With these three appearances, readers see Jeeves in a purely servant role. He woke his master, served him and his guest tea, and packed his suitcase. From this point on, Jeeves disappears from the story altogether. By showing Jeeves only in this particular mode, Wodehouse illustrates Jeeves's most basic character function as Bertie's valet. Because Jeeves's character is so underdeveloped in this first story, Wodehouse can expand and experiment with him in later narratives.

*Thank You, Jeeves* is the first full-length novel Wodehouse published with Jeeves and Bertie as the main characters. By this time (1934), Wodehouse had already written several short stories featuring Bertie and Jeeves and therefore had had ample time to develop and hone his character and narrative formulas. Writing a novel rather than a short story gave Wodehouse more space to explore his individual characters' potential, as well as their relationship. In this novel Wodehouse experiments with the boundaries of Jeeves and Bertie's relationship. One of these experimentations leads to Bertie's rebellious phase, in which he attempts to be independent of Jeeves. It begins with Bertie insisting

that the two rent a country cottage so that he can play his banjo uninterrupted. Jeeves, a fierce opponent of Bertie's love for the banjo, quits his service in protest:

There was a brief pause, and then Jeeves, whom I have nurtured in my bosom, so to speak, for years and years and years, gave a sort of cough and there proceeded from his lips these incredible words:

"In that case, I fear I must give my notice."

There was a tense silence. I stared at the man. . . .

"You actually contemplate leaving my entourage?"

"Only with the greatest reluctance, sir. But if it is your intention to play that instrument within the narrow confines of a country cottage . . ."

Although the reason for Jeeves's departure may seem ridiculous, the consequences are devastating for Bertie. Bertie without Jeeves is like a man without a life source. The bachelor fully depends on Jeeves, not only for packing his suitcase and other menial tasks but also to act as his better emotional and intellectual half. Deeply upset, Bertie rebels and tries to discount Jeeves for what he is. "Sticking simply to cold fact, what is Jeeves after all? A valet. A salaried attendant." During his rebellious phase, Bertie hires a new valet, Brinkley, and tries to devise his own schemes. However, both acts of rebellion turn sour. An intoxicated Brinkley nearly kills Bertie with a carving knife and burns down his cottage. Furthermore, his plan to resolve his problems only serves to dig him deeper. By the end of the novel, Bertie realizes and fully admits that "Jeeves always finds the way."

Jeeves also has his share of difficulties. After leaving Bertie's employment, he takes up with J. Washburn Stoker. Jeeves, however, finds it impossible to work for him because, as he says, "it has never been my policy to serve in the household of a married gentleman." He then immediately jumps at the chance to serve Bertie again. As *Thank You, Jeeves* shows, neither Jeeves nor Bertie can live without the other, and the pair is reunited. Later novels, such as *Joy in the Morning* and *Aunts Aren't Gentlemen*, will prove that Bertie's rebellious phase served to bring the two closer together and allow Wodehouse to fully settle into a concrete character and narrative formula.

*Joy in the Morning* was written during one of the most difficult and personally taxing periods of Wodehouse's life. Wodehouse published the novel in 1947, directly after World War II. In 1940, during an invasion of his

home at Le Touquet, France, Wodehouse was captured by the Germans and put into an internment camp. Upon his release from the camp in 1941, he agreed to broadcast some of his work on the radio to reach his American audience. Unfortunately, this would lead to devastating consequences. The Germans tricked him into airing the broadcast from Berlin. The rest of the world saw this act as collaboration with Nazi Germany; some went so far as to call it treason. In his naïveté concerning the Nazis, Wodehouse simply saw his broadcast as an opportunity to celebrate and popularize his writing. The political, social, and literary fallout he experienced was overwhelming. It took him many years to recover from this experience. Wodehouse began the novel *Joy in the Morning* before his time in the camp, and continued working on it after his release. It took him five more years to finish the novel. Despite his difficulties, the story is considered by some to be "the supreme Jeeves novel of all time." It represents the fully mature expression of Jeeves and Bertie's relationship and his graceful return to his former literary status.

In novels such as *Thank You, Jeeves*, Wodehouse experimented with different narrative scenarios in which Jeeves and Bertie were pulled apart or were at odds with each other. *Joy in the Morning*, however, illustrates the stabilization of their relationship. In the novel, Wodehouse weaves "together many of his best characters and themes. . . . [It] is an anthology of Wodehouse's favorite comic situations and he achieves the perfect union of style and content." (Robert McCrum, *Wodehouse: A Life*, 2004, p.329)

The plot follows Bertie and Jeeves when they travel to the country estate of his unbearable Aunt Agatha and her new husband, Lord Worplesdon. Bertie finds himself trapped with his dreadful ex-fiancée, Florence Craye, and her new beau, policeman Stilton Cheesewright. The narrative is full of typical Wodehousean debacles that land Bertie and his compatriots in the soup. Bertie's cottage is burned by his step-uncle's son, Edwin; an American businessman is locked in a potting shed; Bertie goes to the neighborhood costume ball in the stolen uniform of Stilton Cheesewright; Florence threatens to marry Bertie and leave Stilton; Stilton, fuming with jealousy, threatens Bertie's life. Somehow Jeeves is able to fix all these mishaps.

Through these many misfortunes Jeeves and Bertie remain a strong team who keep to the prescribed formula established by their creator: Jeeves, acting upon his keen insight into the "psychology of the individual," always comes to the rescue when Bertie finds himself in trouble. Finally understanding that he can never be as clever or quick-witted as Jeeves, Bertie

accepts his bumbling but ever-thankful persona. To express the maturity of their relationship, Wodehouse inserts several quotes throughout the novel from both Jeeves and Bertie articulating their particular roles. For example, when Bertie says, “I believe something is fermenting now inside that spacious bean. Am I wrong, Jeeves, in supposing that I can see the light of inspiration in your eye?” Jeeves responds, “No, sir. You are quite correct.” Wodehouse shows that Bertie understands that Jeeves will always think of something brilliant. Furthermore, Bertie constantly praises Jeeves by saying things like “you must have that brain of yours pickled and presented to some national museum.” Bertie’s constant praise and dependence on Jeeves reverses the traditional intellectual roles of the master-servant and therefore reveals how unique Bertie and Jeeves are.

As Wodehouse grew older, his health and age began to impede his work. He admitted to his editor that he began to find writing increasingly more physically difficult and was a “terrific effort.” Despite these handicaps, Wodehouse managed to publish one last novel featuring the famed duo before his death. *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen* follows Bertie and Jeeves into the country at the behest of Bertie’s doctor. The two go to Maiden Eggesford, where Bertie’s Aunt Dahlia also resides. What started as a quest for pure air and peace turns into a traditional Wodehousean fiasco involving two rival racehorses, Potato Chip and Simla; a cat that never leaves Bertie alone; cat kidnapping; and a marriage proposal to Bertie. As always, Jeeves manages to solve each of Bertie’s problems with grace and finesse.

During the narrative of *Aunts Aren’t Gentlemen*, Wodehouse solidifies the uniqueness of their relationship within the Edwardian social and historical framework. He is more outspoken about Jeeves and Bertie maintaining a social relationship rather than just a master-servant bond.

We struck a more social note.

“Did you have a good time last night, Jeeves?”

“Extremely enjoyable, thank you, sir.”

In another example, Bertie happens to see Vanessa Cook, a girl he had once asked to marry him. This spurs him into a monologue, commenting that while love and beauty, which would likely lead to marriage, is all well and good, it always seems to “wear off after a while.” Statements such as these prove Bertie’s commitment, not only to his bachelorhood but also to Jeeves as his only lifelong partner. Wodehouse’s last novel, therefore, serves to highlight the unique characteristics of Bertie and Jeeves’s relationship. Furthermore, it leaves

Wodehouse’s readers to fully understand the deep respect and love Bertie and Jeeves share for one another despite their differing social circumstances.

This last Bertie and Jeeves novel is a testament to Wodehouse’s consistency of narrative and character formula throughout the social upheaval and change that occurred during those years. He did, however, admit “it was hard to write with the same brio about Bertie and his manservant in the era of the Beatles, the Bomb, and the paperback edition of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.” Despite this concern, Wodehouse continued to write until his death in 1975.

How and why do a dim-witted English bachelor and his clever manservant, who embody their traditional Edwardian social framework, continue to be popular after so many decades of social and historical change? The answer lies in Wodehouse’s ability to capture, idealize, and invert the life of an upper-class bachelor and his valet during the golden time of the Edwardian period. Wodehouse’s narrative forms were always predictable, but Jeeves and Bertie’s adventures were always new. While readers never knew how Bertie would get himself in the soup or how Jeeves would extricate him, they always knew that eventually it would happen. Wodehouse not only displayed his comic genius by inverting the roles of Bertie and Jeeves, but, by doing so, he created an ever-dependable, human relationship that was unconfined to strict social rules of its historical framework.



“But, Jeeves, what a coincidence!”

“Not altogether, sir. I ventured to take the liberty of accosting Miss Bellinger on her arrival at the hall and recalling myself to her recollection. I then said that Mr. Glossop had asked me to request her that as a particular favor to him—the song being a favorite of his—she would sing ‘Sonny Boy.’ When she found that you and Mr. Glossop had also sung the song immediately before her, I rather fancy that she supposed that she had been made the victim of a practical pleasantry by Mr. Glossop. Will there be anything further, sir?”

“No, thanks.”

“Good night, sir.”

“Good night, Jeeves,” I said reverently.

“Jeeves and the Song of Songs” (1929)

# Raw Work at the Biographical Font

BY JOHN DAWSON

*This article was originally published in Wooster Sauce, December 2012. John thanks Norman Murphy for his “always valuable insights and contributions to this article.”*

WHEN HE was interviewing P. G. Wodehouse for his 1974 biography *Portrait of a Master* (Mason Charter, New York, 1974) David Jasen asked for whom he had been named. Wodehouse told him he had been named after a godfather, Colonel Pelham von Donop, and the two went on to discuss other things. When it came time to write his book, Jasen wrote: “The third son’s name . . . was the name of the baby’s godfather, Colonel Pelham Grenville von Donop.” There the matter rested, and subsequent biographers have repeated the story in good faith. There’s only one problem. There was no such person as Pelham Grenville von Donop.

Pelham George von Donop (1851–1921) was one of the sons of Edward Pelham Brenton von Donop, who retired as a Vice-Admiral of the Royal Navy. Pelham was educated at Royal Somersetshire College, Bath, and entered the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich in 1869. He was commissioned a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in 1871 and posted to the School of Military Engineering. He served in Hong Kong during the time that many of Wodehouse’s relatives were there: P. G.’s father, Henry Ernest (officially referred to as H. E.), and mother, Eleanor Deane Wodehouse, as well as Eleanor’s brother Walter Meredith Deane, who was Captain of the Hong Kong Police. Von Donop eventually became the Chief Inspecting Officer of Railways, a position he held until he retired in 1916. He represented the Royal Engineers at association football, appearing in two FA Cup Finals, and made two appearances for England. An athlete and cricket player of some renown, he also played tennis and won the West of England Championship in 1881, the year of P. G.’s birth; he also competed in the 1882 Wimbledon Championships.

No one yet knows details of the relationship between the Wodehouses and Pelham von Donop, but in the small, class-conscious British community in Hong Kong in the 1880s, a British Army officer would be highly regarded socially and would be the sort of person asked to be godfather to a British child in Hong Kong. Perhaps von Donop recommended Elizabeth College in Guernsey for the Wodehouse boys—his younger brother, Edward Brenton von Donop, had attended school there in 1873.

So where did “Grenville” come from? The answer is almost certainly found in P. G.’s grandfather’s history

of the family, *The Book of Dene, Deane, Adeane—a Genealogical History*, written by John Bathurst Deane and published posthumously by his daughter Mary (“Aunt Agatha”) Deane in 1899.

Hugh Deane was the fourth great-grandson of Sir John de Dene, Knight of the Shire for Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. Hugh married Elizabeth Newbury, with whom he had six sons; Richard Grenville Deane was descended from the third son Robert, and P. G.’s great grandfather, Charles Meredith Deane, was the son of the fourth son Henry.

Richard Grenville Deane was born in 1837. At the age of 18, while serving as Ensign in the 30th Regiment in the Crimean War, he was killed at the Storming of the Redan.

His nephew, also Richard Grenville Deane, was born in 1856 and joined and served as an ensign in the 30th Regiment as well. He died in Africa in 1876. With his death, the name Grenville ends in the Deane family, and I’ve been unable to trace it back further. It does seem likely that our Pelham Grenville was named in honor of one of these two Richard Grenville Deanes.

I asked my old friend Dave Jasen a few weeks ago about that conversation with P. G. back in the late 1960s. He was delighted to learn—38 years later—the rest of the story behind the name!



*Lt. Col. P. G. von Donop, R.E.*

# 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:



**W**E GATHERED on December 15 in the Knoxville area for a delicious lunch with homemade sweets contributed by everyone, and enjoyed a delightful reading of Wodehouse's "Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit." There were twenty jolly folks (I'm sure that it had nothing to do with the flowing sherry!), ready for Christmas, hoping for Plums under the tree and not just of the sugar variety. Linda and Ralph Norman even came up from Florida to read with us, which is pretty dedicated. Harry Hall stole the show with his Sir Roderick Glossop reading, proving again that there are no small parts, only small actors. Alan Lee and Bill Boys were super as Bertie and Jeeves, maybe not Fry and Laurie, but a close second. Ken Clevenger was pressed into service due to the highly regrettable illness of our own Oldest Member, Nancy Tanner. With a wonderful holiday story to read and superb browsing and sluicing, the Yuletide spirit was alive and well among our chapter.

We were to have met again on February 16 at Tea at the Gallery in Bearden (in Knoxville) to plan our public reading event scheduled for March 30 at Knoxville's Union Avenue Book Shop. To entice the reading public, we will offer dramatic readings of Plum's poems ("Good Gnus," "The Umpire," and "The Amateur Photograph"), prose (short excerpts from *A Damsel in Distress*, "Without the Option," *The Code of the Woosters*, and others), and a scene from the play *Good Morning, Bill*.

## 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:



*Specialist Mark Anthony mans the oars.*

**Y**OU WELL might wonder at the photo above, which seems to suggest a warmer climate than one would expect in the depths of winter. But as our correspondent neglected to include this happy snap in our last memo we thought you'd appreciate a glimpse of Broadway Specialist Mark Anthony merrily, merrily, merrily rowing round Central Park during our August outing.

When we met on November 30 at The Players, the Special was down a quart due to members having been felled by flu or the vapors, but we were happy to have Hannah Davies join us once again from London. It is our understanding that she is reassigned to New York in some stately capacity, perhaps diplomatic, perhaps MI6; it matters not—we were the better for her presence. Miss Postlethwaite was able to produce a Groucho Marx postcard to send to Susan Jasen, who was deemed to be most in need of cheering, and indeed we discovered at our subsequent January 19 gathering that she is in the process of obtaining a new knee. Our co-prez Amy Plofker brought a more decorous get-well card this time for Susan, and another for our colleague Lee Ballinger, who is also recovering from surgery.

More reports have reached us of wintry ailments too ghastly to be described. Most dismaying was the absence of our stalwart accompanist Lennie Metcalf, who had been engaged to play for the annual SongFest held at Luceil Carroll's Fifth Avenue aerie. Alas, Lennie

was suddenly in need of a new hip, but we were relieved to find Ron Rouillier stepping in to lead us at the grand piano. The accompanying photo manages to include all participants to such an extent that you can't see the piano for the chorus! Ron, a composer, arranger, and vocalist listed in *Who's Who in British Jazz*, took us from Music Hall Favorites to Broadway Standards and even to a couple of impromptu Wodehouse/Kern numbers.



*It's fun to be on Broadway, and especially in the Special.*

We intend to scour the internet for more Plum song sheets in an effort to smarten up our repertoire. (A particular highlight of the afternoon was Evelyn Herzog's rendition of "Cleopatterer" complete with a coyly coiled Serpent.) As always, we dined on Lucca's lovely buffet and were kept well-oiled by Michael, who poured with a liberal hand and an eagle eye. Best of all, the Broadway Special is privileged to have in Luceil a hostess of taste, wit, and *espièglerie* who makes this all possible. A big hand for the little lady, please!

Let's end on a very upbeat note. Two CDs should be available to us by press time: PS Classics ([psclassics.com/cd](http://psclassics.com/cd)) has issued a two-disc set of a revue entitled *The Land Where the Good Songs Go*, which was performed in 2010 at New York's Merkin Concert Hall. Thirty of Kern's songs are included with lyrics by many of his collaborators, but of course our delight will be in the title tune as well as "Go, Little Boat," "Nesting Time in Flatbush," "Bill," and even "We're Crooks"!

And if you're looking for a Plum Valentine, you could do no better than order *I Got Love—Songs of Jerome Kern*, again from PS Classics, a lovely treat from the thrice Tony-nominated soprano Rebecca Luker. (She sings on the first CD as well, and is remembered for her turn as Magnolia in the 1994 *Show Boat* revival.) The music was chosen for her cabaret show last summer and contains just two of Wodehouse's contributions, "Bill" and the saucy "Saturday Night" (a particular favorite of Miss Postlethwaite's). But the Broadway

Special can certainly recommend any compilation that features "I'm Old Fashioned," to say nothing of "My Husband's First Wife." Then there's always "April Fooled Me," which segues nicely into our anticipation of the April 20 performance of *Leave It to Jane* at Musicals Tonight! We look forward to seeing you there.

### Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)

Contact: Jeff Peterson

Phone:

E-mail:



### Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Herb Moskowitz

Phone:

E-mail:



**W**E CAME CLOSE to having a full house at our bimonthly meeting on November 18 at the Dark Horse Pub, with three new members joining us—Jake Blumgart, Alison McFall, and Charlie Kupfer. After hearty welcomes and introductions all around, members spoke of what they'd been up to since the last meeting, and President Herb Moskowitz told the newbies about Gussie, the newt we sponsor at the Philadelphia Zoo.

Jake Blumgart is a journalist who works for several area publications and may write an article about Chapter One and The Wodehouse Society sometime in the near future.

Charlie Kupfer is a professor of American Studies and History at Penn State, and after a fine repast he gave a fascinating talk on his recently published book about British-American relations in the mid-twentieth century: *Indomitable Will: Turning Defeat Into Victory From Pearl Harbor to Midway* (Continuum, 2012).



*Chapter One's guest speaker, Professor Kupfer*

In his book, Charlie writes of the special Anglo-American relationship and its strategic implications,

and cites several authors as symbols of that relationship, including Edward R. Murrow, Malcolm Muggeridge, J. B. Priestley, and P. G. Wodehouse, and their importance as propagandists. In fact, Charlie believes that Plum was second only to Winston Churchill in fixing a popular image of England in American minds. *Money in the Bank*, which was being serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post*, with the final installment published just after the attack on Pearl Harbor, is mentioned at length in the book. There is also a little joke just for Plum fans in the book's bibliography, so be sure to look for it!

Towards the close of the meeting, Patrick Pawliczek, one of the new owners of the Dark Horse, which is in the process of being converted into a Cavanaugh's, paid a visit (with a Neapolitan mastiff named Stuart). He welcomed us and assured us that they look forward to our relationship continuing in the same manner under the new management.

The next meeting was scheduled for January 20.

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



**T**HE CHICAGO ACCIDENT SYNDICATE has had two meetings since last report, which is understandable under the circs because of our planning for this year's convention at the Union League Club of Chicago. In addition to this planning (some of which must come as a pleasant surprise), we do a few readings and consume malt beverages at Bridie McKenna's in Highwood.

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



**A**JUNIOR BLOODSTAIN was held at the Roosevelt Hotel, New York City, on Saturday, January 12, 2013. Featured was the premiere performance of *The Riddle of the Starving Swine* by Gayle Lange Puhl (adapted for dramatic reading by William Hyder), with hand puppets by Ken Vogel. Gayle is from Evansville, Wisconsin, and William is from Catonsville, Maryland. Many enthusiastic Wodehousians and Sherlockians read the parts and manipulated the puppets in the jovial spirit of the playlet. The Dramatis Personae in order of speaking were:

- Dr. Watson 1 / The Narrator: Bill Hyder
- Dr. Watson 2 / The Narrator: Stu Nelans
- Dr. Watson 3 / The Narrator: Philip Cunningham
- Sherlock Holmes 1: Ken Shuttleworth
- Sherlock Holmes 2: Allan Devitt
- Sherlock Holmes 3: Burt Wolder
- Four Telegraph Messengers: Carol, Elaine, Joseph, and George
- Lord Emsworth: George Vanderburgh
- Beach: Ed Van der Flaes
- Lady Constance: Norma Hyder
- Angela, niece of Lord Emsworth and Lady Constance: Margret Fleesak
- Lord Heacham: Dick Sveum
- James Bartholomew Belford: Christopher Music
- The Empress of Blandings: Albert J. Danforth

The story was included in Gayle's first book (*Sherlock Holmes and the Folk Tale Mysteries*), which she also illustrated. The script is available, at no charge, as a nine-page pdf for those interested in reading it. Just write to George Vanderburgh.

Also introduced at the bloodstain was the new Clients pin designed by Laurie Fraser Manifold. The new lapel pin (illustrated below) was available at the Junior Bloodstain in New York on January 12, 2013, and will also be available at the Senior Bloodstain at the 2013 convention in Chicago in October.



*The new lapel pin of the Clients of Adrian Mulliner*

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



**T**HE DRONE RANGERS will be reading the following books this year.

- January 25: *A Few Quick Ones*
- March 29: *The Gem Collector*
- May 31: *Barmy in Wonderland*
- July 26: *Something Fresh*
- September 27: *Company for Henry*
- November/December (date to be determined): *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*

Our book meetings are at 7 P.M. (Central Time) on the last Friday of each month (except November and December).

This year we are trying something new. If you would like to attend one of our meetings but can't be here in person, try joining us over Skype. Do let us know in advance so we will have things set up at our end.

### The Flying Pigs

(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)

Contact: Susan Brokaw

Phone:

E-mail:



### Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham

(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)

Contact: Laura Loehr

Phone:

E-mail:



### The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: Lynette Poss

Phone:

E-mail:



**M**O/JE AMBASSADOR extraordinaire Liz Davenport has once again come through for the Mottled Oyster, introducing Plum to one of her book groups at the Maverick Library in San Antonio (see photo). Determined to spread the cheerfulness and light that is Wodehouse, our Ms. Postlethwaite is once again proselytizing away at the old stand. Probably due to her work, we have a new member.

December saw us gather at a new watering hole for the First Annual Passing of the Pig Ceremony. Thanks to member Janet Lilius, we now have a new tradition to cherish and perpetuate. Last year Janet presented the group with a lovely porcine Christmas ornament to help us celebrate the season. The lucky member to receive



*Liz Davenport spreads the word.*

the tree decoration for the year has the responsibility of remembering where it is come next December, so that the Empress can be passed on. We feel sure that each lucky winner is up to the challenge. Janet also gave us each a chip clip in the form of a pig this year. Some of us were seen wearing the clips proudly when we met recently.

To anyone in the outlying areas of San Antonio who might care to join us, we meet on the second Thursday of most months. It will be the third Thursday in February as it happens, but March will see a return to schedule. We would love to have you stop by!

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

(Boston and New England)

Contact: David Landman

Phone:

E-mail:



**S**O, INTO a bar walks this fellow with a newt on his shoulder.

“What do you call your newt?” asks the bartender.

“I call my newt ‘tiny.’”

“Why?”

“Because he’s my salamandridae!”

Well, you had to have been there. And if you had been there you would have participated in Ellen Donovan’s and Bob Norberg’s gala Yuletide party that seems to get better year after year. The highlight of the festivities was the grab bag which this year awarded a lucky party with the famous “No Button,” a button that says “NO!” five different ways when pressed five consecutive times. A perfect gift for the bride. We are, as you see, simple folk and have simple pleasures, which you are invited to share any time you’re in New England.

### The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler

Phone:

E-mail:



### The Pale Parabolites

Contact: George Vanderburgh

E-mail:

**O**N AN IRREGULAR basis, the Pale Parabolites meet at Massey College, 2 Devonshire Place, University of Toronto, for either lunch, tea, or dinner. Please contact us at the e-mail listed above if you are going to be in town to arrange to meet. We can draft an agenda

spontaneously and no minutes will be kept! Here is our official Pale Parabolite pin:



**The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation**  
(Los Angeles and vicinity)  
Contact: Karen Shotting  
Phone:  
E-mail:



CONTRIBUTING TO PZMPCo's holiday spirit was "Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit," as we raised a glass or two to celebrate the festive occasion at Le Grande Orange Cafe in Pasadena. We at Perfecto-Zizzbaum are proud of our Hollywood link to the Master, and chose Le Grande Orange because it is located on the site where Plum took his first step into the land that he called Dottyville-on-the-Pacific—the famous Santa Fe Depot in Pasadena. The scrumptious English muffins set the tone for the browsing and sluicing in store for us as we discussed the outcome of the judicious application of a long stick with a darning needle attached to a hot water bottle. Gloria continued her own Yuletide tradition of saluting John Mortimer along with Wodehouse by reading us an excerpt from *Rumpole and the Christmas Present*, in which Rumpole finds himself representing an alleged killer named . . . Honoria Glossop.

We meet the second Sunday of each month at 12:30 P.M. (May is an exception—we meet the first Sunday of May.) You will generally find us at Book Alley, 1252 East Colorado Blvd, Pasadena, California. Please contact Karen Shotting or join our Yahoo! or Facebook Group (either can be found by searching for "PZMPCo") for more information on upcoming readings and occasional changes of schedule and venue.

**The Pickering Motor Company**  
(Detroit and vicinity)  
Contact: Elliott Milstein  
Phone:  
E-mail:



THERE WAS SOME confusion regarding book choice for our end-of-year meeting. *Ice in the Bedroom* had been mentioned and agreed upon, but when it was discovered that it was a Freddie Widgeon book and no Freddie Widgeon stories had been read by the group, it was decided ex post facto to read some stories for the December meeting, and then we would read the novel for the following meeting.



*Pickerings picker about.*

Well, with all the chopping and changing, it was inevitable that wires would get crossed. Some members read several short stories, others read the book (or half the book), and still others paralyzed by confusion merely looked at each other with a wild surmise. Discussion on Freddie Widgeon—story or novel—was therefore somewhat truncated, much to Dicron's indignation. Having read nearly half the book, he was more prepared than ever to discuss it and declared no less than six times that *Ice in the Bedroom* is the best Wodehouse book ever. Other members decided to table the discussion until everyone had a chance to read half the book as well.

The group took the opportunity to discuss the upcoming year's reading and came to a consensus. For the next meeting, those who had not yet read any Freddie Widgeon stories were to do so, but everyone was to read *Ice in the Bedroom*, which, you may have heard, is "the best Wodehouse book ever." After that, it was agreed that over the past thirteen years the group has been meeting, the short stories had been given short shrift and we would make 2013 the Year of the Wodehouse Short Story. After *Ice in the Bedroom*, we would concentrate exclusively on short stories for the rest of the year.

As for the browsing and sluicing, the Pickerings continued the end-of-year tradition at Larry Nahigian's house and Uncle Amo's Armenian Eggs breakfast, a feast one cannot begin to describe. This year we added mimosas, which were imbibed rather heavily by many. Larry presented Elliott Milstein—much to his joy and appreciation—with a first edition of *Say It Isn't So*,

*Joe*, a collection of sports short stories, including the Wodehouse story "High Stakes," thereby increasing the value of his Wodehouse collection immeasurably. What a way to end the year.

Our next meeting was to have been on February 22 at the Warrens'. If you live in or are visiting the Detroit area, do come join us at a future meeting. The Wodehouse conversation is decidedly truncated and superficial, but the company is congenial and the food and drinks are terrific.

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

E-mail:



**The Portland Greater Wodehouse Society (PGWs)**  
(Portland, Oregon and vicinity)

Contact: Carol James

Phone:

E-mail:



**The Right Honourable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney**  
(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Contact: Jelle Otten

Phone:

E-mail:

**T**HE REPORT of our meeting on February 16 will be published in the Summer 2013 issue of *Plum Lines*. The next meeting of the Honorable Knights will be on Saturday, June 8, 2013, at 1 P.M. at Mulliner's Wijnlokaal, Lijnbaansgracht 266-267, Amsterdam.

In the meantime, we must report on some detective work that chapter chair Jelle Otten took upon himself. The project started when Murray Hedgcock (on the PGWnet e-mail forum) mentioned a *Times* article that stated that the Kaiser spent 21 years in exile at House Doorn, near Utrecht. As Murray says, "Rumor has long insisted that the ex-Emperor would delight in reading PGW at House Doorn to his generally baffled but obsequious entourage."

House Doorn now faces closure, as the Dutch state no longer wants to subsidize it. According to the *Times*, the house is "stuffed floor to ceiling with possessions transported there in 59 railway cars from the Kaiser's forty palaces and hunting lodges after he fled to the Netherlands." So the question became, "Do those possessions include a Wodehouse library?" Here's Jelle's report on the subject:

I received an answer from Cornelis van der Bas about the question of whether the last German Emperor (Wilhelm II, 1859–1941) had Wodehouse books in his collection in House Doorn. Cornelis is the curator of Museum House Doorn, and he told me that House Doorn still has a collection of five books written by P. G. Wodehouse! The five books are:

1. *The Code of the Woosters*
2. *The Girl on the Boat*
3. *Indiscretions of Archie*
4. *The Small Bachelor*
5. *Young Men in Spats*

*Indiscretions of Archie* was a birthday present given by one of the Emperor's sons, Eitel Friedrich (1883–1942). *Young Men in Spats* is originating from "Hermine's Hilfswerke," a fancy fair, which was annually organized for the benefit of poor people, by Hermine (1887–1947), Princess of Prussia. Hermine was the second wife of Emperor Wilhelm II.

For more information about House Doorn, please visit <http://www.huisdoorn.nl/eng/>.

**The Size 14 Hat Club**  
(Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Contact:

E-mail:



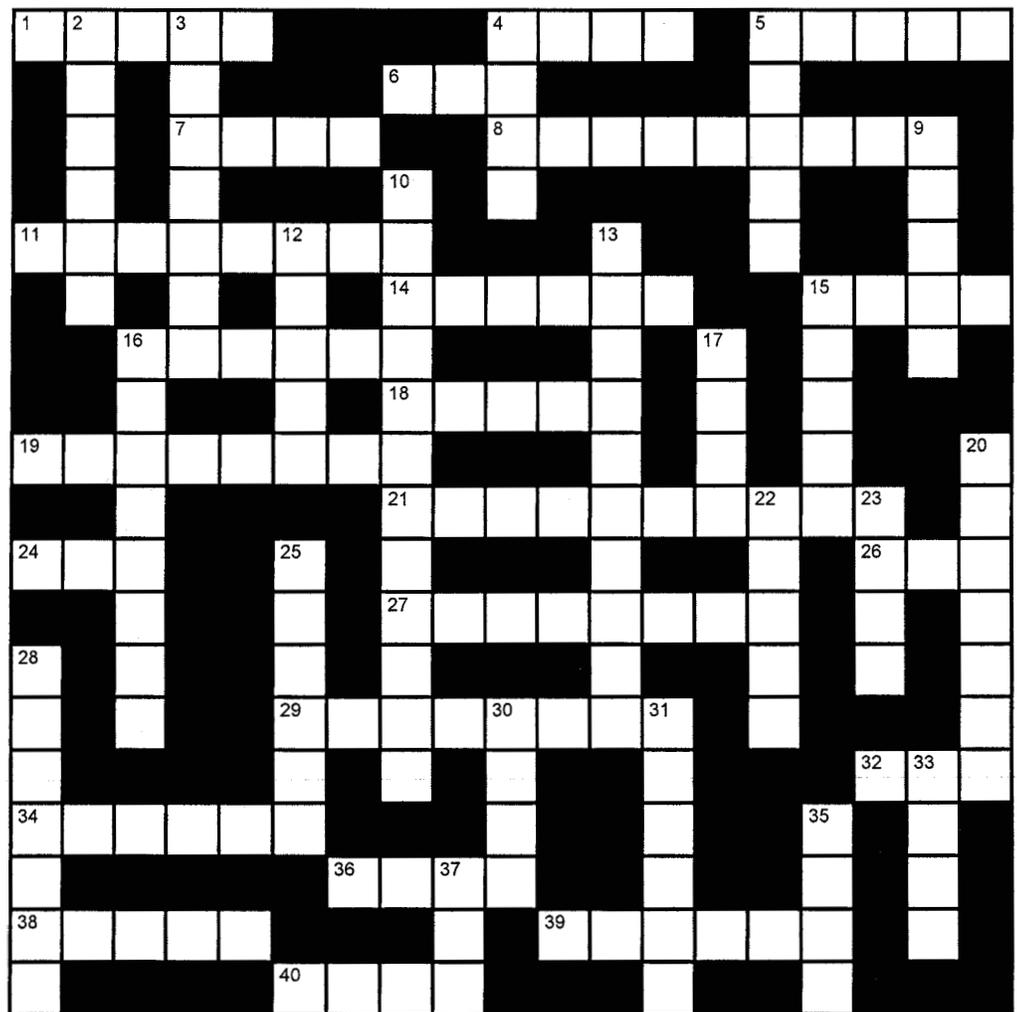
## What Did You Do on Boat-Race Night, Daddy?

**D**iane Madlon-Kay sent along an item from Max Hastings's *Did You Really Shoot the Television?* Max is the son of broadcaster and adventurer Macdonald Hastings and journalist and gardening writer Anne Scott-James, and this autobiography is a history of the family. In this quote, he's referring to his father: "In only one respect did his personal record disappoint me. From an early age, I was an eager and somewhat credulous reader of P. G. Wodehouse, whose works formed my image of how young English gentlemen comported themselves. One day I asked Father how many times he had spent the night in the chokey after, say, stealing a policeman's helmet or being discovered dancing in the fountains of Trafalgar Square. He assured me with some asperity that he had never served even an hour behind prison bars. This was a blow to my image of him as a man-about-town, a role which in all other respects he seemed to fill with assurance."

# Crosswords from Chicago

BY DAN GARRISON

*The year 2013 dawned clear and bright, and Dan decided to compose a few crossword puzzles to help us pass the time until we are welcomed to the Windy City for the biennial convention of The Wodehouse Society. You will receive the answers to this puzzle in the next issue, so you have plenty of time to fill this out. The convention will be held on October 17-19, 2013, at the Union League Club of Chicago; the registration form is available online at <http://wodehousechicago.com> and is also included as an insert in some of the Plum Lines issues leading up to the convention.*



## Across

1. Short wooden club
4. Wilmot, red-haired, impatient golfer
5. Right curve
6. Scratch per hole
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Mortimer, non-golfing joker
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Paterson, finds a treasurer by golf ordeal
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Holmes, loves Millicent Boyd
14. Ferdinand, loves Barbara Medway
15. American multimillionaire golfer
16. Clubhead movement before swing
18. Wood with concave head
19. J. \_\_\_\_\_ Banks, wins Brusiloff's admiration
21. George, suffers from severe loquacity
24. Where a hole starts
26. Merolchazzar's realm
27. Dwight, woos Evangeline Tewkesbury
29. Crew that delays
32. Pole in the cup
34. Wood shod with brass
36. J. Gladstone, exchanges Bobby Jones's baffle for Blizzard
38. \_\_\_\_\_ (U.S. ed.) Bingham, rival of Otis Jukes
39. Mid-iron crossed with mashie
40. Short approach shot

## Down

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Merridew, unsuccessfully courted by Vincent Jopp
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Blakeney, courted by Chester Meredith
4. Eunice, tyro golfer wooed by Ramsden Waters
5. Scottish golf champion McHoots
9. \_\_\_\_\_ (U.K. ed.) Bingham, rival of Arthur Jukes
10. Club historian
12. Two under par
13. Ernest Faraday \_\_\_\_\_, wins love of Clarice Fitch
15. Cyril, foul-weather golfer
16. Vera, courted by Horace Bewstridge in "Excelsior"
17. This rolls on the green
20. \_\_\_\_\_ Waters, solitary golfer with a weak mouth
22. One-hole lead
23. Cup in ground
25. Barbara, wins heart of a goof
28. Gets Ferdinand Dibble to propose
30. Mary, courted by Rollo Podmarsh
31. Copstone, aka The Frozen Horror
33. Not a wood
35. Ladies' Open champion, Mabel Somerset's cousin
37. Hit too high

# A Blooming Good Time with *Jeeves in Bloom*

BY THOMAS L. R. SMITH

**I**N A WORLD that has had foisted upon it such wretched Wodehouse adaptations as the BBC's *Blandings* series and Julian Fellowes's *Piccadilly Jim*, one approaches the next adaptation one hears about with mixtures of anticipation and dread. Anticipation, in the hope that the adaptation will, if not get it right, at least not be cringe-inducing. Dread, in that the most recent attempts to adapt Wodehouse may be further proof that Wodehouse is best left to the written word.

Thus, when news arrived in my electronic mailbox that a small theater company in Seattle was set to produce Margaret Raether's *Jeeves in Bloom*, an adaptation of *Right Ho, Jeeves*, this was how I approached it. But not to worry! Taproot Theatre's production, directed by Karen Lund, was the goods.

Matt Shimkus was Jeeves. Mr. Shimkus had the unenviable task of bringing Jeeves to life, and he did it wonderfully. Jeeves, of course, has all the best lines. Mr. Shimkus's delivery of those lines was spot on. I was especially impressed by his ability to arch the left eyebrow at just the right moment. He had the spirit of Jeeves. He did not make entrances; he shimmered into view.

Aaron Lamb was Jeeves's employer, Bertram Wilberforce Wooster. It is not often that one manages to use the word *vacuous* as a compliment. The word, according to Webster's, means "marked by lack of ideas or intelligence, or devoid of serious occupation." If you look it up in the dictionary, you might see the picture of Bertie Wooster played by Mr. Lamb. Shimkus and Lamb worked well together as Jeeves and Wooster. It was a wonder to behold.

Randy Scholz played Gussie Fink-Nottle, the newt fancier. Gussie is described as "fish-faced." Mr. Scholz exuded fish-facedness. He stole every scene he was in, particularly when he demonstrated the mating dance of the male newt.

Parker Matthews portrayed the French chef Anatole. Picture John Malkovich as Anatole. I need not say more.



Marianna de Fazio  
(Madeline Bassett) and  
Kim Morris (Aunt Dahlia)

Marianna de Fazio was Madeline Bassett. She came up short as Madeline, but that's not her fault. Ms. de Fazio is obviously an actress of intelligence and talent. It's just that it's challenging for a human being to be as empty and silly as Madeline.

When Stephen Grenley as Tom Travers made his first entrance, I was shocked to find Harry Potter's Hagrid in Brinkley Court. Of the evening's performances, his was the most difficult for me to get around. There was more East London about him than English country house. He did have a great moment, though. After Anatole has departed Brinkley Court, and Travers has had to suffer through a breakfast prepared by the second kitchen maid, he asks Jeeves for a bromo; Jeeves provides "a concoction of his own." Travers takes the potion, and without a word we see the wonder drug at work through Mr. Grenley's facial acrobatics.

Finally, Kim Morris plays Aunt Dahlia Travers. Ms. Morris is fine as an aunt, but I can't imagine that she ever rode with the hounds shouting "View halloo!"

The production was enjoyable. The audience was thoroughly entertained. I need to say that first, because one may get the wrong impression from what follows. I was not pleased with the set. It looked more like a 1950s cemetery contemplation garden than an English country house garden. I also had difficulty with some of the costume choices. Tom Travers, as I mentioned, entered the stage dressed like an English working man, not a member of the upper classes. For the formal dinner scene, the men wore tuxedo jackets with white tie. Tsk-tsk. But these were mere bagatelles. Taproot Theatre put on a wonderful little production of a well-crafted adaptation. Bravo!



Randy Scholz (left) and  
Aaron Lamb (right) as  
Gussie and Bertie



Gussie gets a bit ripe.  
Photos by Erik Stuhaug.

## Reality vs. Imagination

AFTER READING in the Winter 2012 *Plum Lines* about Sophie Ratcliffe's *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*, Irwin Rosen sent us a review of that work from the *Times Literary Supplement* of December 23 and 30, 2011. The review ends with a passage from an early (1899) letter from Wodehouse to a school chum: "I heard yesterday that Shakespeare was not alive. It steeped me in profound gloom. But I thought eftsoons that I was alive so it was all right for the Literature of the World." The reviewer (A. N. Wilson) states that "like many of the best jokes, it was true." There is much other praise of Wodehouse's work in comparison to several other twentieth-century British writers. Wilson also attempts to understand from the letters what he calls "Wodehouse's besetting fault as a human being."

He's referring, of course, to Wodehouse's ability to "see the world entirely on his own . . . terms, without realizing how those terms would impact on grown-ups." Mr. Wilson uses the adjective *infantile*, where we might say *lighthearted* instead. But the point is well taken, at first in regard to Wodehouse's time in Hollywood, and then in regard to the war years. Most intriguing is Mr. Wilson's focus on a comment from Wallace Stevens's "The Immense Poetry of War":

Stevens saw war and its propaganda as a time when "everything moves in the direction of reality, that is to say, in the direction of fact": therefore, a time when works of imagination are under most threat. . . . What others saw as "reality" is heart-wrenchingly demonstrated by the story of Wodehouse's war. We can now see with hindsight that what he did was harmless and . . . that the "realism" of those who persecuted him was barmy.

## Pity Our Diluted Proust

DANIEL LOVE GLAZER (nom de Plum Inspector Jervis) responded to "P. G. W. and the Frogs," Barbara Bowen's article in the Spring 2013 *Plum Lines*: "Ms. Bowen's article reminded me of the time my wife and I were in Paris and went to see a showing of *Shakespeare in Love*, in English, with French subtitles. At one point, someone says to an actor about to go on stage, 'Break a leg.' The subtitle displayed 'Bonne chance.' Wodehouse can't possibly be the same for [the French] as for English speakers. I suppose, though, that French might pity us for having to make do with translations of Proust."

## Child Psychology Counterpoint

BY NICK TOWNEND

I ENJOYED reading Paul Abrinko's article, "The Psychology of the Individual Child," in the Winter 2012 *Plum Lines*. Everything he writes is interesting, but I think that, because he has not considered all the evidence, his conclusions are faulty. The main lines of Paul's thesis can be seen in the following extracts from his article: "With very few exceptions, children are portrayed by Wodehouse as loathsome, incorrigible, odious brats. . . . Plum wrote about children the way he did in an effort to master his trauma (change his beliefs about himself). By repeatedly making bad children into absurd caricatures, he was also telling himself that children, and by extension himself, really are not intrinsically and categorically bad. To put it another way, he disconfirmed the painful beliefs he harbored about himself by turning his trauma into a farce." The one exception which Paul mentions is Gladys, from "Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend" (1928), whose portrayal he believes draws on Wodehouse's "relationship with his stepdaughter Leonora [which] had much to do with his shift in attitude towards children and the ability to see them (and by extension himself) in a more sympathetic light."

The evidence to which I believe Paul has not given due weight before forming his conclusions includes the following. Firstly, Wodehouse "saw his parents far more often than is commonly thought" ("New Information on PGW's Early Life," Norman Murphy, *Wooster Sauce*, December 2012, p.2). Secondly, Wodehouse was supremely happy at school at Dulwich: "To me the years between 1896 and 1900 seem like Heaven" (*Performing Flea*, entry for March 7, 1946). Thirdly, Wodehouse, as a young man about town in 1902–05, was friendly with the three young Bowes-Lyons sisters (born in 1888, 1889, and 1891), to whom he dedicated his first book, *The Pothunters* (Norman Murphy, *A Wodehouse Handbook*, Vol. 1, 2006, pp. 393–95).

Why is this evidence important? Well, among the "very few exceptions" not mentioned by Paul are all of Wodehouse's school stories, which comprised seven of his first twelve books, published between 1902 and 1909; in these, schoolboys are portrayed as real boys, not as "loathsome, incorrigible, odious brats." And among the other exceptions not mentioned by Paul are "a surprising number of Wodehouse's early short stories in the *Windsor* and the *Strand* [which] were narrated by twelve- to fifteen-year old girls . . . [and in which] he recounted a young girl's views on life and her emotions remarkably well" (Murphy, *ibid.*).

The conclusion I draw from this evidence is that from the very outset of his career, Wodehouse was perfectly willing and able to write about children in a realistic way when he wanted to write realistic stories, but that when he wanted to write humorous, farcical stories, he was equally willing and able to portray children as “loathsome, incorrigible, odious brats” and “absurd caricatures.” Benny Green said, “His infancy and childhood evidently having left him with no burning desire to retrieve them, Wodehouse virtually ignored both these phases, seeing them as little more than devices for comic relief, usually through the expression of a fastidious distaste.” (*P. G. Wodehouse: A Literary Biography*, 1981, p.31)

There might have been some faint satisfaction to be gained from feeling that one was the Idol of American Motherhood. Of this I was now deprived. Taking a line through the attitude of those Michigan specimens, it was only too plain that the sole emotion American Motherhood would feel towards me from now on would be a strong desire to bounce a brick off my head.

*Laughing Gas* (1936)

## Surprising Little Treasures

BY RAJA SRINIVASAN

ON A RECENT trip to merry old England, I paid a visit to an old bookstore, the name of which escapes me, in St. Albans. While rummaging in the old store, I came across a couple of new treasures, and of course I had to own them.

The first book is a small Penguin volume. It is slightly larger than a shirt pocket and fits in nicely in the inside pocket of my jacket. This volume of *The Crime Wave at Blandings* is just what the doctor ordered for the plane trip from San Francisco to Austin. And our own society president tried to pocket this in his visit to the lovely city of San Francisco. Just goes to show whom you can trust!

The second book was a bit more difficult to find; it was artfully hidden inside a box with eleven other short stories. The box containing the twelve stories was titled *Tales for Travelers: Short Stories by Great Writers*. One of the stories was “Uncle Fred Flits By.” Each one of the stories is printed just like a newspaper, but on better quality paper, and folds like one of those maps from the American Automobile Association. Handy for the traveler, indeed!

## Robert W. Creamer

ROBERT W. CREAMER of Saratoga Springs, New York, passed away in July 2012. He had been a member of The Wodehouse Society since 1996. His son James writes that Robert “did so enjoy Wodehouse. He saved the society newsletters and of course he treasured the letter he once received from the esteemed author.”

## A Wodehouse Society Brochure Unfolds

BY BOB RAINS

LAST MAY, an Egg, a Bean, and a Crumpet were sitting in the bar parlor of the Norfolk, England, equivalent of the Anglers’ Rest, browsing and slicing after an energetic morning of touring with the U.K. Society. One of us, we can’t remember which, said that what TWS needs is to reproduce itself. We blushed and added that we were not talking about reproducing in that way. Rather, we allowed that TWS needs to get the word out of our existence and the many fine and noble projects and diversions we undertake. It seemed to us especially important that TWS attract the younger set, a group in which, alas, none of us could reasonably claim membership. So, we said, let’s write up an advert extolling the many virtues of TWS and advantages of membership therein.

We parted ways, and, as these things go, each of us pursued other matters as spring turned summer, thence fall, with no forward progress being made. Finally, TWS President Clevenger drew himself up with his full military bearing and told the rest of us to stop skiving, so we did. The result is a new brochure for use by members of The Wodehouse Society. This brochure is suitable for distribution at local libraries, bookstores, community theaters, colleges, etc. The brochure is designed to be a trifold, so it should fit into regular display cases at most venues.

We now have a first print run of 500 brochures—in plum, of course—which are available for sharing among the ranks of TWS. There is room to add local contact information.

Any chapter or member of TWS wishing to spread the word in their local area may opt to use the electronic template and alter it as they deem appropriate and have it printed locally. To obtain a copy of the electronic template or a share of the initial printing, you may contact either Clevenger or Oily Carlisle (Bob Rains).

# My First Time: *Cocktail Time*, Anyone?

BY RAJA SRINIVASAN

DOES ANYONE remember their first ever “big book” that they had to read as punishment? I can recall with great clarity the day of the unique punishment dealt to me by my high school principal. I was thirteen years old and had just been dragged into his office for some slight disagreement between me and the school watchman. Let me explain.

The school was a stately old institution built and administered along the lines of good old Eton, called *Campion High School*, in Tiruchy, India, named after St. Edmund Campion. Our principal at that time was a Jesuit priest, one Reverend Father Royce Macedo—a twenty-minute egg if ever there was one, a person who was both loved and feared at the same time! There was a statue of St. Edmund Campion at the entrance of the school. The statue still stands proudly at the end of the main driveway today with a beautiful pedestal around it. In my day, it was surrounded by a bed of beautiful flowers—jasmine if I remember correctly. The compound walls were being given a coat of whitewash.



*The entrance to Campion High School in Tiruchy, India*

One of the workers was taking his lunch break, and the bucket of whitewash just happened to be near the statue. The majority of the school was in class, and a friend of mine and I were out visiting the little boys’ room. On a dare, I picked up the bucket and emptied it over the statue—the intent was to give it a coating, but being about four feet tall, I managed to get it only over the knees and the pedestal on which the statue was installed. Unfortunately I was caught by the watchman, who just happened to be outside the school looking in.

At that point, all good things came to an end. My so-called friend disappeared at the appearance of



*The statue of St. Edmund Campion, target of Raja’s whitewashing attempt*

authority in the form of the watchman. I was caught white-handed with the bucket still in my hands and my beautiful navy-blue trousers all stained with the whitewash. If anyone was drowning in evidence, it was me! Destruction to school property was and is still considered a capital crime! So of course I was hauled in front of the highest court of the land. Remember, this was a time when corporal punishment in schools was still the norm.

I was expecting a lot of pain, but not what was dealt to me. This was a stage in my life when reading books was a punishment. I would rather have been out playing cricket or throwing a ball against the wall! We played stick cricket, cricket against a tree as stumps, real cricket, and chair cricket with paper balls and a wooden ruler. In short, any time authority was not around was cricket time. I would have gladly taken twelve of the best from the bamboo cane, and the scars would have won me kudos from the whole school, all 1,300 kids. But what was meted out was intended to be much worse.

That enlightened individual, that gem among men, that twenty-minute egg, Rev. Father Royce Macedo, gave me a book and then told me I had exactly three days to read the book and present it to the entire class of 102 ninth-graders. I was instructed to not just tell the story but to do a critical analysis of the book. The book had over 180 pages of close type. There was nary a page with pictures on it. It was something that none of my friends had read before, and of course my peer group were all authorities on comics like *The Phantom*, *Mandrake*, *Tarzan*, etc. No one had even heard of the author—one Mr. P. G. Wodehouse. In short, I was forced

to read the damn book. Worst of all, on every page there were at least two or three words or phrases that I had not encountered before! Cursing Father Macedo (or Blackbeard as we called him because of his rich beard and a passing resemblance to the Pirate from the movie *Blackbeard's Ghost*), I spent three days reading the book and somehow stumbled through my presentation, making an ass of myself in front of the whole class. At the end of the presentation, Father Macedo presented me with the book and told me to think of it whenever I felt the urge to do some mischief again.

A few years later, in 1977, I was in engineering school and home for the holidays in the middle of a hurricane. It was pouring outside, and all my school friends had disappeared into various professions, schools, and other pursuits. At that time there was no TV. My mother commented on my restlessness and asked me to read a book. The only one in my room, other than textbooks, was the one given to me by Father Royce Macedo. This time I read it and found I was hooked. I could not put the book down.

The book was *Cocktail Time* by P. G. Wodehouse. I still have the original dog-eared Penguin edition that was given to me by Father Macedo in 1971. It was the first volume in my small collection and has pride of place. Wodehouse has written many other books, some of them with better story lines (like *Carry On, Jeeves*), and many of them with better characters, but my first and still favorite will always be *Cocktail Time*. I recall with laughter the small incident with the whitewash and the unusual punishment. One of these days, when I meet Father Macedo, I would like to remind him of his unique relationship with his students!

## A Reminder about Postal Forwarding

BY NEIL MIDKIFF

WE SEND OUT *Plum Lines* each quarter by first-class mail for several reasons. Most important, first-class mail is forwarded to a new address when our members move.

But if your *Plum Lines* issues keep showing up automatically at your new address, it can be easy to forget to let us know that you've moved. And after a year, that forwarding order will expire, sending your next issue wending its way back to California.

So won't you help us save time and money? Consider the yellow USPS forwarding sticker on the outside of your envelope as important an action item as

the yellow address insert reminding you to renew your membership. Be sure to get in touch with us whenever you move, at <http://wodehouse.org/membership/> or by writing to Ian, Kris, or Neil at the addresses in your mailing.

## His Pet Subject

*Chosen by Tony Ring and read by Karen Shotting  
on the bus to last year's historical marker dedication*

Oh, I'm not what you'd call a ripe scholar  
At Latin, I own, I don't shine,  
While Greek merely rouses my choler,  
It's not my particular line;  
I can't understand mathematics,  
Their beauty I quite fail to see,  
Whether simple addition or statics;  
But I fancy I'll get my degree.

I quaff the convivial pewter,  
Play cricket, and go to the boats.  
When I go—once a term—to my tutor,  
I seldom, if ever, take notes.  
Then, of course, there is Bridge after dinner—  
We play from eight thirty till three  
(I'm a very occasional winner);  
But I fancy I'll get my degree.

My tailor is pressing for payment—  
I tear up his bills with a sigh—  
And meanwhile, in beautiful raiment,  
I stroll in the Broad and the High.  
In that line, I don't mind confessing,  
There has never been much wrong with me.  
If a fellow can do it by dressing,  
I fancy I'll get my degree.

For, if I'm but garbed as is proper,  
If I don't wear a "bowler" with tails,  
If my notion of sporting a "topper"  
With praise the examiner hails,  
If there's nothing much wrong with my trousers,  
If my waistcoat is all it should be,  
I shall not stand a chance of a plough, sirs.  
Yes, I fancy I'll get my degree.

*From the Daily Chronicle, March 23, 1903. P. G. Wodehouse wrote this following a report from Tailor and Cutter suggesting a sartorial professor be appointed at Oxford, and correct dressing be taught as a regular subject.*

# Richard Briers

WE WERE saddened to learn of the death of the British actor Richard Briers on February 17 at the age of 79. Mr. Briers had been president of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) since its inception in 1997. He had a long association with the works of Wodehouse, having played Eustace Hignett in the 1961 film *The Girl on the Boat*, Uncle Fred in a radio version of *Uncle Dynamite*, Bertie Wooster in a number of radio and audiotape adaptations, and Gally Threepwood in the 1995 BBC TV movie *Heavy Weather*. He will be sorely missed.



*Richard Briers, 1934–2013*

## Contents

- 1 The The 2013 Chicago Convention: What's on Tap?
  - 2 The Tie That Binds, Part 1: The Wooster/  
Threepwood Connections
  - 4 A Denver Chapter?
  - 4 A Few Quick Ones
  - 5 Letter from England
  - 6 Thankfully Rescued from the Soup: The Unique  
Relationship Between P. G. Wodehouse's Bertie  
Wooster and Reginald Jeeves
  - 11 Raw Work at the Biographical Font
  - 12 Chapters Corner
  - 17 What Did You Do on Boat-Race Night, Daddy?
  - 18 Crosswords from Chicago
  - 19 A Blooming Good Time with *Jeeves in Bloom*
  - 20 Reality vs. Imagination
  - 20 Pity Our Diluted Proust
  - 20 Child Psychology Counterpoint
  - 21 Surprising Little Treasures
  - 21 Robert W. Creamer
  - 21 A Wodehouse Society Brochure Unfolds
  - 22 My First Time: *Cocktail Time*, Anyone?
  - 23 A Reminder about Postal Forwarding
  - 23 His Pet Subject
  - 24 Richard Briers
- 24 *Plum Lines Vol. 34 No. 1 Spring 2013*

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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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