

*The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society*

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## P. G. Wodehouse Conquers Sweden

BY BENGT MALMBERG

**I**N 1964, in a letter to Georg Svensson, chief editor of the publishing house Bonniers, Wodehouse wrote:

I am glad of this opportunity to tell you how grateful I am to you for all the trouble you have taken to put me over with the Swedish public. I am so intensely spiritual that money means nothing to me, but I must confess that the cheques that Mr. Watt sends me for my Swedish sales do give me a gentle thrill. Whenever a book of mine is going what my publisher calls “slowly” in the USA, I cheer up because I know that everything is going to be all right in Sweden, thanks to you.

In 2012 we celebrated 100 years of Wodehouse in the Swedish language. In October 1912 the weekly magazine *Allers Familj-Journal* published “Ruth in Exile” as “Ruth i landsflykt” only three months after the original had been published in *Strand* (July 1912). It was possibly the first translated Wodehouse story in the world. A century later it was republished in the Swedish Wodehouse Society’s yearbook *Jeeves 2012*. In January 1913 the daily newspaper *Nerikes Alle-handa* translated and published “Spådomen” (“Pots o’ Money,” *Strand*, December 1912).

In 1920 the first Swedish translation of a Wodehouse novel (*Piccadilly Jim*) was published, and in the next five years, five more Wodehouse books were published in Sweden, each the first translation of that novel. By 1940, more than forty stories had appeared in Swedish



*Bengt Malmberg, one of many Swedish fans of P. G. Wodehouse*

magazines. Sweden has continued to be at the forefront of translation of Wodehouse, with the Swedish translation usually being the first or second translation of fifty Wodehouse novels over the years. With another fan, Tomas Prenkert, I have searched more than 4,500 magazines and many years of newspapers from 1912 onwards for translations of Wodehouse. So far we have found almost 100 short stories and four serialized novels, the first being *Jill the Reckless* (*Glada Jill*) from 1922.

The readers of the magazines evidently liked his stories, and so the editors were quite eager to bring them to their Swedish readers. Many stories were published very soon after their first appearance in English or American magazines. Through these publications, Wodehouse reached a large audience in Sweden.

For some reason, *Young Men in Spats* never appeared in Sweden, but magazines published all eleven stories shortly after the originals showed up in *Cosmopolitan* and *Strand* magazine. In 2010, with the permission of the Wodehouse Estate, we collected these in *Drönarhistorier (Drones Stories)*, which is the 79th Swedish Wodehouse publication. In 2011 Tomas and I edited another anthology, *Bland lordar och drönare (Among Lords and Drones)*, which includes fourteen PGW short stories that had been previously published only in Swedish magazines. In 2013 our society brought forth an anthology with my translations of Wodehouse's seven parodies of Sherlock Holmes stories. So to date we have 81 books in Swedish in 193 different editions.

Why did Sweden become the first country where Wodehouse's stories were translated? What made him so popular in Sweden as early as the 1920s, in a country with fewer than six million inhabitants, where German was the first foreign language one studied at school?

Humorous and detective stories were quite popular in Sweden a hundred years ago. Authors like Arthur Conan Doyle were well known, so editors kept an eye on what was published in England and the USA, and translations often appeared in magazines that sold over 200,000 copies. Through these periodicals, Wodehouse reached many readers, more so than through his published books. The combination of humor, love, and "crime" appealed to Swedish readers.

In 1933 Georg Svensson became chief editor of Bonniers, Sweden's leading publisher. A Wodehouse fan, he engaged Vilgot Hammarling to translate some of PGW's works. Hammarling had been the London correspondent for a Swedish newspaper. He spoke English like a native, he was a brilliant stylist, and he was familiar with every facet of British society. He knew clubs and pubs and he loved Wodehouse's novels. Hammarling's translations perfectly captured the spirit of Wodehouse, and his first book, *Leave It to Psmith*, went through twelve editions in 54 years. Further translations of several novels and short stories contributed to Wodehouse's popularity in the 1930s.

When Hammarling became counselor of the Swedish Embassy in London in 1938, Svensson found his successor, Birgitta Hammar, who had the same empathy with Wodehouse's style. She translated 48 Wodehouse books over 58 years. The last, in 1996,

consisted of twenty stories from *The Golf Omnibus*. Her translations were labors of love. She analyzed every sentence for allegorical nuances, hidden personal allusions, and quotations from classical literature.

To understand the popularity of Wodehouse in Sweden, you must appreciate the quality of the translations, and we were very lucky to have two brilliant translators. Yet, remarkably, a lot of Swedes still prefer to read Wodehouse in English.

Wodehouse never lost his Swedish readers after the Berlin broadcasts. In Sweden he was regarded as a true anti-Nazi since the late 1930s. Thus, in September 1941, when the left-oriented magazine *Folket i Bild* printed Wodehouse's article "My War with Germany" (*Saturday Evening Post*, July 19, 1941) under the headline "Mitt krig med Hitler" ("My War with Hitler"), it was with a positive introduction. It was illustrated with a drawing of Wodehouse in jail ironically smiling at a diminutive, surprised Hitler.

During the war, nine new Wodehouse books were published in Sweden. Among them was *Money in the Bank* (1942), which was published in English simultaneously with the first U.S. edition as well as in Swedish.

Thus far, hundreds of articles about Wodehouse have appeared in Swedish publications over the years, the latest in April 2012 in a magazine with half a million subscribers.

The film industry also wanted to benefit from his popularity, and in 1938 and 1945, two movies were made in Sweden based on his novels.

In 1984, four students (and golfing friends) at Uppsala University founded Wodehouse's Friends. This eventually evolved to become the Swedish Wodehouse Society, four years after the U.S. society but thirteen years before the U.K. society. New members of the Society had to make a speech about some interesting part of Wodehouse's writing, e.g., the Mulliner family, Wodehouse in theatre and musicals, the timetable to Market Blandings, Bertie Wooster's engagements, etc. In our yearbook *Jeeves* we try to publish research articles about Wodehouse and his life and work.

One ambition of the Society, now with about 220 members, was that Wodehouse should be posthumously awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. For many years the Society petitioned the Swedish Academy nominating him for the prize. However, the Academy kept insisting that Wodehouse did not fit their criteria, and after one of our petitions, they chose instead an unknown poet.

Eventually, after many appeals, the Academy in 2011 decided that no author would receive a posthumous Nobel Prize in literature. Sorry, Wodehouse!



“Wodehouse’s Friends” at a meeting on October 24, 1984, with two honorary members. In the middle of the front row sits Birgitta Hammar, translator of 48 Wodehouse novels, and Georg Svensson, chief editor at Bonniers for almost fifty years and publisher of about sixty novels in 140 editions.

So, Wodehouse’s writing came to Sweden over a century ago and has done well ever since. He is still very popular, and in Uppsala on November 1, 2013, Sweden enjoyed a world premiere of *Fore!*, a new musical play based on four of his golf stories. English artists John Fiske and Paul Kessel were responsible for the script and direction, and music from the 1930s was used for the score. After nine performances they staged it again in January and February of this year.

The latest theatre news is that *Perfect Nonsense* opened in Sweden on August 1, 2014, at a theatre north of Stockholm. The play has been translated into Swedish, and one of its authors arrived from England for the opening show.

Tomas and I continue researching the stories that were published in Swedish and English magazines. We have been searching stories in magazines and at libraries for ten years, and Tomas has created two websites. Both provide a wealth of information about Wodehouse in Sweden, and both have information for English-speaking visitors.

The first is a bibliographic website: [www.wodehousebibliografier.nu](http://www.wodehousebibliografier.nu). This site includes information about all editions of Wodehouse books in Swedish with pictures of their front covers; all publications of novels and short stories in Swedish magazines and newspapers; and a presentation of fifty biographical books about P. G. Wodehouse.

The second website, [www.wodehouseforskning.weebly.com](http://www.wodehouseforskning.weebly.com), presents academic research, including our

own, about Wodehouse in Swedish, with some articles in English as well. One article that might be of interest is “The Political P. G. Wodehouse,” which was previously printed in an abridged form in *Wooster Sauce*. It’s an intriguing study of Wodehouse’s own views, as well as commentary by his characters, on the political situation in the world. It would seem, according to the article, that Wodehouse was not as politically naïve as he is sometimes painted.

We also have our society website ([www.wodehouse.se](http://www.wodehouse.se)), which caters to the members of that group.

The conclusion to be drawn from all of this is that Wodehouse was, is, and will continue to be very popular in Sweden!

## Sforzandi Before Breakfast

BETH CARROLL found this in the August 2–3, 2014, edition of the *Wall Street Journal*, in Edmund Morris’ review of *Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph* by Jan Swafford: “You cannot do him justice unless you talk about his enharmonic modulations and syncopated sforzandi, but as soon as you do so, persons lacking the rudiments of music theory will protest much as Bertie Wooster did to his girl friend’s readings in applied ethics—‘not the sort of thing to spring on a lad with a morning head.’”

## Bibliomantic Chump

BOB RAINS found this in Mark Forsyth’s *The Unknown Unknown: Bookshops and the Delight of Not Getting What You Wanted*:

There’s always a strange feeling you get when you come across one particular line by chance. It feels somehow significant. That’s irrational of course, but humans are irrational creatures. Even the sturdiest, most down-to-earth chap will turn pale if he opens a book at random and sees the words PREPARE TO MEET THY DEATH.

This feeling is so deeply entrenched in human nature that many cultures have a practice called bibliomancy where you use books to predict the future.

I still practice bibliomancy myself. I do it with P. G. Wodehouse, who seems to have had an unerring knowledge of the inner workings of my soul. I just tried it, and found the line “I am a vapid and irreflective chump.”

It pains me to say it, but bibliomancy works.

# Wodehouse and the Spies—Continued

BY TODD MORNING

IN THE SUMMER 2013 issue of *Plum Lines*, I wrote a short article about the surprising appearance of P. G. and Ethel Wodehouse in Ben Macintyre's *Double-Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies*, a 2012 bestseller that deals with World War II espionage intrigues. In the article, I pointed out that Mr. Macintyre's account of Wodehouse's brush with the world of spies left a number of unanswered questions, and an editor's note at the end of article specifically challenged some of his assertions. All of this sparked my curiosity, and I decided to delve more deeply into the mystery. So, for the past few months, I've been sifting through photocopies of old documents, while nervously looking over my shoulder, fearing that I might stumble across an item that would cause me to become a marked man. (Okay, perhaps my imagination gets the better of me at times.)

First, a quick summary of my previous article. Wodehouse appears in *Double-Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies* because of his connection with Johann "Johnny" Jebsen, an agent for the Abwehr (German military intelligence) who became a double agent and turned vital information over to the British. Jebsen was arrested and killed by the Gestapo in 1944. Macintyre makes three assertions about Wodehouse and Jebsen: (1) Wodehouse and Jebsen became friends when Jebsen visited England before the war. (2) Jebsen gave money to Wodehouse when he and Ethel lived in Paris during the war. Macintyre also contends that this money came from a money-laundering scheme that Jebsen concocted. (3) Jebsen suggested to British intelligence that Ethel Wodehouse would make an effective spy because of her fearlessly expressed pro-British views and her acquaintanceship with Paul-Otto Schmidt, Hitler's interpreter. Not surprisingly, Jebsen dismissed P. G. Wodehouse as unacceptable spy material.

According to his book's footnotes, Macintyre's two sources for the Jebsen/Wodehouse connection are documents in the British national archives and the memoir *Spy/Counterspy* by the double agent Dusko Popov, published in 1974. At this point, I need to supply a little background information on the flamboyant Mr. Popov (or Tricycle as he was called by British intelligence). Jebsen recruited his friend Popov to the Abwehr in 1940. Popov, though, began working for the British as a double agent almost immediately; he also helped Jebsen funnel information to the British. Despite using *Spy/Counterspy* as a source, Macintyre expresses doubts about the veracity of some of Popov's accounts.

Macintyre writes: "His book, *Spy/Counterspy*, was vigorously written, entertaining, and partly invented. James Bond was all the rage, and the book contained scenes straight from the 007 playbook—gorgeous women appearing naked in his hotel bedroom, punch-ups with evil Nazis, the staking of thousands of dollars on the turn of a card. Popov was a conscientious spy who told his British case officers everything; none of these episodes appears in the MI5 files." Having read *Spy/Counterspy*, I can say that Macintyre has a point. My favorite scene involves Popov delivering a punch that sends a German officer skidding on his tail across a highly polished dance floor. This is a scene that probably owes more to comic books than reality.

Yet, despite Macintyre's skepticism about Popov's memoir, he cites it as the sole source for his assertion that Wodehouse met Jebsen before the war. In his book, Macintyre recounts a meeting between Jebsen and Popov in Belgrade in 1940. According to Macintyre, Jebsen and Popov spent a night whooping it up in Belgrade's nightspots, picking up a couple of chorus girls along the way. Then it gets interesting. On page 9, Macintyre writes that "at dawn the four sat down to a breakfast of steak and champagne. Jebsen told Popov that in the intervening years, he had become acquainted with the great English writer P. G. Wodehouse. With his monocle and silk cravat, Jebsen now looked like an oddly Germanic version of Bertie Wooster."

I double-checked this account of the meeting in *Spy/Counterspy*. In Popov's book, Jebsen is there, the girls are there, the steak and champagne are there, but Wodehouse is not mentioned. In fact, Wodehouse is never mentioned in *Spy/Counterspy*. Nor is Wodehouse mentioned in other books about Popov and Jebsen that I read for this article.

Does this mean that Macintyre got it wrong and there was no relationship between Wodehouse and Jebsen? The editor's note at the end of my previous article suggests that there was not a relationship, stating that Jebsen merits "no mention in any Wodehouse biography." This isn't quite true. Sophie Ratcliffe in her *Wodehouse: A Life in Letters* (which contains a great deal of biographical material) writes about Jebsen on pages 315–316. (More on this later.)

In order to uncover more of the mystery, we need to move to Macintyre's second assertion, that Wodehouse received money from Jebsen during the war. Unfortunately, Macintyre offers no source notes

for this assertion. That seemed to leave my investigation at a dead end until I read the 1944 official report by the British intelligence officer Major E. J. P. Cussen on Wodehouse's wartime activities. Much of Cussen's report focuses on Wodehouse's wartime income and includes statements written by both P. G. Wodehouse and his wife Ethel, listing the money they received from various sources. In a statement headed "Money Received in Berlin," Wodehouse listed as item number 5 "Money received from Jepsen in exchange for cheques on our American account . . . 8,000 marks." Assuming that Jepsen is actually Jebsen, this statement would seem to prove that Jebsen knew Wodehouse and that Jebsen did indeed give Wodehouse money. (Although we can question how close Wodehouse was to Jebsen since he got the spelling of his name wrong.)

Unfortunately, Cussen includes nothing about Jebsen in his report; the only place Jebsen's name occurs is in this one financial statement written by Wodehouse. Keep in mind that, however, that the use of double agents by the British was one of the most closely guarded secrets of the war. With the war still raging, it is doubtful that Major Cussen, even though he worked for British intelligence, would have been privy to the facts about Jebsen, let alone been allowed to include information about him in his report. Also note that Wodehouse wrote that the money from Jebsen was received in Berlin and not Paris, as Macintyre claims, and nothing is said about the source of the funds coming from illegal money laundering. (But let's face it, Jebsen would hardly have turned over the funds to Wodehouse with a cheerful "Here's some cash from my elaborate money-laundering scheme.") Still, since Macintyre supplies no evidence to back his claim, we have to believe (for now) Wodehouse's statement that the money was drawn from his American account.

I had better luck investigating Macintyre's final assertion that Ethel Wodehouse was suggested by Jebsen as a possible British spy. In a stack of papers that I received from the British archives, I found a photocopy of the report submitted by the MI6 agent Charles de Salis about Ethel. This report was based on information that Charles de Salis received from "Artist." (Jebsen's British intelligence code name was Artist.) Charles de Salis wrote: "P. G. Wodehouse and his wife are great friends with Artist, who helped them financially from time to time. They are at the moment in Paris. Mrs. Wodehouse is very pro-British and is inclined to be rude to anyone who dares address her in German. She has on occasion said loudly in public places: 'If you cannot address me in English don't speak at all. You had better learn it as you will have to speak it after the war

anyway.'" This is one that Macintyre got right, and he included the entire report from Charles de Salis in his book. Sophie Ratcliffe also refers to this report in *P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*. (By the way, there is no evidence that Ethel Wodehouse was actively recruited by British intelligence.)

Some of the information in Charles de Salis's report contradicts the Cussen report. About Ethel, Major Cussen wrote: "I expect to learn that she conducted herself in a flamboyant manner and that she accepted all attention paid to her from German officials." In his extensive biography of Wodehouse, Robert McCrum includes this quote from Cussen but does not mention the report from de Salis. The files dealing with Johann Jebsen were declassified on May 1, 2002 (McCrums book was published in 2004), and I don't know why McCrum chose not to include the Charles de Salis report, which offered the alternative and equally legitimate portrait of Ethel Wodehouse as an outspoken patriot.

Time to sum things up. Reviewing Macintyre's three assertions about the relationship between Wodehouse and Jebsen, we find that his first assertion that Wodehouse and Jebsen met before the war is not backed up by his own source. Dusko Popov's memoir *Spy/Counterspy* does not mention Wodehouse, despite being cited as his source by Macintyre. Jebsen must have met Wodehouse at some point, however, because Jebsen gave Wodehouse money during the war. In the list of funds he received in Berlin, Wodehouse includes money from "Jebsen." Assuming that Jepsen and Jebsen are the same person, we can surmise that Wodehouse knew the spy. Yet I could find no documents or information to back Macintyre's second assertion that Jebsen passed some of the money that he gained through his money-laundering scheme to Wodehouse. As for Macintyre's third assertion that Ethel Wodehouse was proposed to British intelligence by Jebsen as a possible spy, he was spot on with that one, and I've seen a photocopy of the actual report, received from the British archives.

Thus, in the course of my research I discovered a few more things about Wodehouse and the spies, but parts of the story are still murky. I suppose that's the way it is when you deal in espionage. All of this underscores something that I've discovered about Wodehouse: he can pop up in the most unexpected places. In fact, perhaps Wodehouse knew more about the world of spies than we suppose. In his story "All's Well with Bingo," Wodehouse includes these lines, voiced by Bingo: "But I take it," he said in a low voice, "that you mean me to hobnob with international spies and veiled women and so forth and observe their habits carefully, don't you? This will run into money. You know what

international spies are. It's champagne for them every time and no half bots, either." That sounds like firsthand knowledge to me. I'll have to dig through some more old documents.



## Poems and Phrases

I RECEIVED a copy (for the fair market price, of course) of two little gems: Norman Murphy's (Popgood & Groolley's) publication of Wodehouse's *Phrases and Notes* and Tony Ring's celebration of Wodehouse verse, *What Goes Around Comes Around*.

Norman has collected and annotated (quite remarkably) Wodehouse's notebooks of observations, quotes, reflections, and other bits. These notebooks were written by Wodehouse from 1902 to 1905 and, as Norman says, "demonstrate his attempts to build his reputation" and "shed much light on his social life."

I find the book fascinating to bounce around at random, and often turn to the annotations to get a little more insight. Some are simple observations ("Some people go to America in the spirit in which they would go to a zoo"); some are attributed quotes ("He looked like a sinful butler. Said by Mrs. Belloc Lowndes of Humprey Ward."); some are brainstorming ideas ("Name for hero: Pitt Willoughby, Major Barnico.") All in all a lot of treasure in a small space.

Tony chose and edited the collection of verse in *What Goes Around*, and he's chosen very well. The subject matter spans sport, entertainment, politics, crime, food, and romance. The majority date back over a century, and very few are to be found in general anthologies. A few verses of later origin are included to ensure that this will be a good full representation of Wodehouse's poetry throughout his life. Eric Midwinter and Tony have provided notes where they might assist the reader.

## Psmith in Pseattle

IN CASE YOU missed the announcement in the last edition of *Plum Lines*, the next TWS Convention (number eighteen, for those keeping count) is hosted by Pseattle's Anglers' Rest chapter and will be at the Fairmont Olympic Hotel in downtown Pseattle. It is still a ways off (October 29–November 1, 2015), but the Restitutes have many interesting and exciting things planned. While we don't want to spill the beans too early and jinx the whole thing, here are a few things you can look forward to:

### Semiguidded Tours of Pseattle

WALKING TOUR and Ferry Ride: A Pseattle Native will lead you through the streets of Pseattle to Colman Dock, where you will board a ferry to Bainbridge Island. You can linger or return on the next ferry to town. The trip will be repeated throughout Thursday and Friday.

Monorail to Pseattle Center and the Pspace Needle: Your guide will lead you on a trip through Pseattle's light rail and bus tunnel to Westlake, where you will board the Monorail to the Pseattle Center. Once at the Center, you will have several options of things to do or see on your own. The Center, the site of the 1962 World's Fair, is the home of the Pspace Needle, the Pacific Pscience Center, and the Experience Music Project and Pscience Fiction Museum (yes, all one thing). The trip will be repeated throughout Thursday and Saturday.

These tours do not require advance reservations but transit fares will be needed. Further information will be provided in future issues of *Plum Lines*.

### The Masqued Ball

BY COINCIDENCE or design, the Pseattle convention is scheduled for Halloween weekend, and the Saturday banquet is on Halloween night. While many conventioners dress as Wodehouse characters, we encourage you to come in costume. If you don't want to dress in character or wear a costume, that's okay, too, since masks will be provided.



# 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.

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**Anglers' Rest**  
(Seattle and vicinity)  
Contact: Susan Collicott



**Birmingham Banjolele Band**  
(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)  
Contact: Caralyn McDaniel



**Blandings Castle Chapter**  
(Greater San Francisco Bay area)  
Contact: Ed and Missy Ratcliffe



**The Broadway Special**  
(New York City and vicinity)  
Contact: Amy Plofker



**T**HE BROADWAY SPECIAL does not exactly languish in summer's warm embrace, but as we meet in even-numbered months only (um, mostly—there have been odd exceptions), and our beloved Players' staff take their holidays for the entire month of August, we usually are to be found in the Burman Room during the vernal section of June, when the air conditioning is likely to be newly conditioned. Thus it was that a surprisingly small troupe of Specialists toddled toward Gramercy Park

on Friday, June 13, to discuss the weather, the coming solstice, and the character of Aunt Agatha. Our book of days shows a ledger with only ten signatures: the usual suspects, a couple of newly arrived enthusiasts, and a lovely flowing depiction of a meandering stream meant to represent a member, sans vowels, consonants, or punctuation. (Whoever you are, we're sure you were charming—we think it was Sally.)

It soon became quite apparent that we should not expect the arrival of additional usual suspects when heavy weather and summer lightning arrived in their stead. A thunderous half hour or so might have led some to believe that Henry Hudson had sailed the *Half Moon* down from the Catskills for a game of ninepins at Chelsea Piers. What with the meteorological histrionics and a cozy "stranded in the storm" atmosphere, we immediately wandered a bit from our topic of Mrs. Gregson, though her character seemed to be playing its percussive motif above. Miss Postlethwaite's notes are copious but irredeemably incomprehensible, though we can testify that she did manage to offer birthday greetings to the poet Yeats, the thespian Basil Rathbone, and the novelist Dorothy Sayers. That much is certain, but any hope for our usual gimlet focus, crisp wit, and literary insight was pretty well gone with the wind, the rain, and, well, the gimlets.

Molly explained that this frightful weather might be conducive to the annual mating rituals of the horseshoe crabs on Plum Beach in Brooklyn. (Did anyone ever expect Plum to be in the thick of crustacean spooning? I think not!) Evidently the romancing couples are drawn by full summer moonshine but are new to the game and need some gentle assistance when passion causes them to flip in flagrante. John reminded us of the alluring, refined waltz of the Fink-Nottle newts, whose cavortings need no Masters and Johnson oversight. Eftsoons quoth he!

Yes, we wandered on and off-topic, but the Broadway Special is open to all meandering streams of consciousness, and had you been there you'd have enjoyed the ride as much as we did. We are delighted to announce that our August 9 meandering through Central Park sold out almost immediately; a report in the next *Plum Lines* will describe this annual outing as well as our traditional Wodehousian birthday salute back at the Players on October 17. For the latter, it will be drinks in the Grille at 6 PM, with the meeting and meandering in the Burman Room from 6:30 PM onward.

## Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)

Contact: Scott Daniels



## Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Herb Moskowitz



THE CHAPS of Chapter One met at Cavanaugh's, the usual sluicing spot in Head House Square in Philadelphia, on June 1. Chapter president Herb Moskowitz (Vladimir Brusiloff) began with an update from the latest issue of *Plum Lines* regarding the query as to whether Plum was the first to use "Elementary, my dear Watson" in print.

Next, society VP Bob Rains announced that the Plum Crazies (the brand-spanking-new South Central Pennsylvania chapter of TWS) would be sponsoring a production of *Jeeves in Bloom* at the Oyster Mill Playhouse, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, the first three weeks of June.

During lunch, the chaps viewed "The Smile That Wins" episode from the *Wodehouse Playhouse* series. Then Bob Nissenbaum began the discussion with a long quote on the consistency of Plum's novels and stories from David Jasen's introduction to *Full Moon*.

The discussion continued with the Chaps comparing the original story to the teleplay. Bob perceived an error in how Adrian Mulliner addressed his lady love in the teleplay, a mistake that Plum would have never made. Bob also mused on whether Plum had it in for baronets, going by the description of Sir Jasper Addleton. Janet Nickerson (Nobby Hopwood) suggested that baronetcies were originally created by James I/VI of England/Scotland to raise oof for the royal coffers. Many titles were awarded to nouveau riche types who had performed a monetary service to the Crown, such as paying off a prince's gambling debts.

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THE WEATHER REPORT promised storms, but it was a beautiful summer day as Chapter One's Chaps met at Cavanaugh's in Head House Square, Philadelphia, on July 27.

Diane Hain presented a brochure created by the Plum Crazies, the newest chapter in Central Pennsylvania. The brochures will be distributed to libraries throughout the area. It includes a description (like a mission statement) of the Society's aims, quotes from the Master, and some nice artwork and photos.

We welcomed new member Rebecca Reber with oh-so-very-proper introductions (including our noms-de-Plum). General conversation followed. Janet Nickerson (Nobby Hopwood) related that the Earl of Sandwich started a chain of shops called—The Earl of Sandwich!

The Philadelphia Zoo, which houses our Chapter One-sponsored newt, Gussie, sent us our annual certificate of sponsorship, a brochure, and pictures of the little fellow. A discussion ensued as to whether we should make a chapter outing to visit Gussie.

After a luncheon repast, Janet led a script-in-hand dramatization of the short story "Feet of Clay," followed by a lively discussion of the text and related matters, including the dates of publication, Plum's views of name-dropping, satire about "spiritual" authors, braggarts such as Captain Jack Fosdyke, the serious nature of golf, and the meaning of the word "love."

The next meeting will be September 28, 1 PM at Cavanaugh's.

## Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison



## The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Elaine Coppola



A JUNIOR BLOODSTAIN will be held on Saturday, January 10, 2015, during the BSI weekend in New York City. While we plan to have a short dramatic reading, we welcome brief papers on Wodehousian/Sherlockian topics. Please contact us if you would like to make a presentation. More details on the Bloodstain will be forthcoming.

## The Den(ver) of the Secret Nine

(Denver and vicinity)

Contact: Jennifer Petkus

AT THE MOST recent clandestine gathering of the Den(ver) of the Secret Nine, *The Luck of the Bodkins* met with universal approval. It did not have the body count of *Love Among the Chickens*, to which original member Mike objected, nor the sense of retracing old ground that member Ed confessed to

finding in *Joy in the Morning*. *The Luck of the Bodkins*, however, was praised as the very model of sweetness and light that one hopes to find in Wodehouse.

As usual, Shawn came prepared with copious notes. Joice came with several books and CDs pertaining to Wodehouse's considerable songbook, and she presented newest member Mike with her invaluable Unified Field Theory of Wodehouse diagram, which shows the relationships between all the stories.

Unfortunately, only eight of the Secret Nine could be in attendance; two were kept away by the Mother's Day snowstorm that had sent tree limbs snapping throughout Denver and the Front Range.

Various members asked informal quiz questions, including some to which the answer was not known beforehand. We also discussed the possibility of more frequent gatherings and may move to monthly meetings, although other commitments may cause scheduling challenges.

We also discussed another attempt at finding new members. Original Mike is looking into the possibility of our group attending a cricket game and inviting the local Sherlock Holmes and Jane Austen societies. Members are invited to visit the Colorado Cricket League to get an idea where games are played along the Front Range. Mike will try to find suitable dates.

Another obvious way to entice new players would be a golf tournament, but since we only have a few members who play, the next logical choice is miniature golf. It was suggested that the September meeting might be a good time for a miniature golf outing as the weather will be reliable.

Another suggestion was to find whether any local theater groups could be persuaded to stage a Wodehouse-related production. I said I knew of no current Wodehouse-related production, but today I discovered that the Town Hall Arts Center in Littleton will stage Cole Porter's *Anything Goes* (the original book was by Wodehouse and Guy Bolton) from November 14 to December 28. I'll see if it's possible for our group to do a cross promotion with the arts center.

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**T**HE LATEST CONCLAVE of The Den(ver) of the Secret Nine on July 13 produced only eight suspects, but we were glad to welcome Stan, a stalwart of Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients, to our group. We discussed P. G. Wodehouse's somewhat obscure novel *If I Were You*, which garnered almost universal approval from the group. If you're not familiar with this novel, be informed that it's a Wodehousean one-off, with I believe only a mention of the Drones Club to connect it to the larger world. It has been largely out of print, but a new

Overlook Press edition made it possible for our group to discuss it. Everyone enjoyed the story, though newer member Mike thought it just missed that indefinable something that raises it to the first rank. (I looked on him with pity.) Original Mike confessed that he was disposed to laugh out loud at reading the story, although he did think Wodehouse captured the Cockney patois of Syd Price only as a Hollywood, overly broad stereotype. (Being from London, Mike is perhaps the only member of our group to be able to judge this.) Stan said the story reminded him of the plot of a 1930s movie, but in a good way, and Larry said he especially noticed the paranoia about socialism and communism in the book. Joice and I agreed that although the eventual outcome of the story was predictable, the story and prose were so delightful it didn't encourage over examination.

We confirmed that our next meeting will be at 12:30 PM on September 14 at Pints Pub. We'll discuss *Mulliner Nights*, the first time our group has tackled the very large Mulliner clan and the first time we're reading a collection of short stories.

We tentatively decided that we'll hold a Wodehouse birthday tea on Saturday, October 18, at Wildflowers Tea Room in Broomfield (yes, Janette, we're thinking of you). I'll need an idea of how many people will attend because if our group is from ten to twenty people, we can use the separate Garden Room, although there is a \$50 room charge if we're there longer than two hours. If we're less than ten or more than twenty, we'll be seated in the main dining area. Tea service is from 11 AM to 2 PM. High tea is \$23.95 and luncheon tea is \$18.95. Groups of ten or more cannot pay with separate checks.

We invited Sherlockians, Janeites, Wodehouseans, and Anglophiles of every stripe to a cricket game on August 23 at Cornerstone Park in Littleton. More on that in the next issue. The Littleton Cricket Club was to host the Colorado Springs C.C.

In case you're wondering what the connection is with Sherlock Holmes, P. G. Wodehouse, and Jane Austen, you should know that the Sherlock Holmes Society of London regularly plays The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), and both Wodehouse and Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle were avid cricketers. Catherine Morland, the heroine of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, also played cricket. (She also played baseball, but that's for some future summer.)

**The Drone Rangers**  
(Houston and vicinity)  
Contact: Carey Tynan



### **The Flying Pigs**

(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)

Contact: Susan Brokaw



### **Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham**

(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)

Contact: Laura Loehr

### **The Melonsquashville (TN) Literary Society**

(Tennessee)

Contact: Ken Clevenger

**T**HIS NEW CHAPTER of The Wodehouse Society was formed on July 13, 2014. Why Melonsquashville (TN)? “Leave It to Jeeves” (first published in the February 5, 1916, *Saturday Evening Post*) opens with Bertie Wooster delivering an encomium on the omniscience of Jeeves. Bertie illustrates Jeeves’s depth and breadth of knowledge, and feudal willingness to share of his plenty, by comparing Jeeves to one of those “Johnnies” who sit at the Inquiries counter in Pennsylvania Station. The question for which an exact answer is almost unthinkingly provided instanter is “When’s the next train for Melonsquashville, Tennessee?”

Plum, almost never mean or cruel in print but always funny, means to gently mock the lost-in-the-woods rural nature of Middle America and its byways, at least to the mind of an Englishman still relatively new to America in 1916. The canon contains a few other references to Tennessee. One is a mocking lyric (“It’s a Long Way Back to Mother’s Knee” from the 1921 novel *Indiscretions of Archie*), but the conclusion has to be that for Wodehouse, Tennessee was essentially terra incognita.

And just as Wodehouse co-opted Sean O’Casey’s cheap dig in 1940 (“English Literature’s performing flea”), we accept “Melonsquashville” as a badge of honor, knowing our true merit and our devotion to Plum’s gentleness and greatness of language, which means the MSV word is *le mot juste*.

This newly proclaimed regional chapter owes a lot to the founding of the Birmingham Banjolele Band back in 2007 by Caralyn McDaniel. For many years her founding efforts preserved Wodehouse and The Wodehouse Society in the southeastern United States. We will keep our close connection with those wonderful folks.

But 2014 finds us a solid dozen or more for most of our events in the greater Knoxville, Tennessee, area. We’re growing like kudzu (it’s a southern thing; or like Topsy, to use a literary allusion). We sluice and browse: the annual summer meeting at the Crown & Goose Pub is a lovely, lively occasion. We’re blessed with skilled pianists and melodious singers within our membership, and thus we are often treated to the show tunes of Jerome Kern and the lyrics of Plum. And talks, yes, will Ken Clevenger ever run out of Wodehouse talks?

We do spirited, dramatic readings of short stories; this is perhaps our favorite activity. Our events frequently feature finger sandwich savories, sweets, and sometimes hot tea, but always sherry and port. We tend to meet in members’ homes, sometimes for a real meal (on one memorable occasion we were joined by Masha Lebedeva as our bearded guest for a reading of “The Clicking of Cuthbert”), and we sometimes give Wodehouse readings at the Union Avenue Book Store in downtown Knoxville.

So we have proclaimed ourselves to be the Melonsquashville (TN) Literary Society, a regional chapter of TWS. There were twenty-six of us at the Crown & Goose Pub in Knoxville when our proclamation was drawn up, and I am almost sure we were all more or less sober, even if I can not read all the signatures.

Our next event is on September 27, when we will reprise one of our past musical programs with Jerome Kern’s piano music and Plum’s musical comedy lyrics. On December 13 we will gather for some advanced holiday celebration and learn, perhaps, something about “Fish in Plum Sauce.”

### **The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels**

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: Lynette Poss



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

(Boston and New England)

Contact: John Fahey



### **The Northwodes**

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Kristine Fowler



**The Orange Plums**  
(Orange County, California)  
Contact: Lia Hansen

**The Pale Parabolites**  
(Toronto and vicinity)  
Contact: George Vanderburgh



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



**P**ERFECTO-ZIZZBAUM continues its mission to spread the sweetness and light that is P. G. Wodehouse. PZMPCo Nodders and Orange Plums are distributing the Society's trifold brochure, created by Oily and Sweetie Carlisle, in libraries and bookstores in Southern California. We were delighted to welcome Frank Thompson to our June feast of reason and flow of soul—he had been a member of our Yahoo! Group for over ten years but had never attended a meeting. We are hoping he does not wait another ten years before attending the next one.

We have selected our reading list for the upcoming months as follows:

August: What better midsummer reading than *Summer Lightning*?

September: Short stories from *Young Men in Spats*: “The Fiery Wooing of Mordred,” “Good-bye to All Cats,” and “Trouble Down at Tudsleigh.”

October: Punch ghost stories (*Mr. Punch's Spectral Analyses*)—1903 ghost stories by P. G. Wodehouse, available through that peerless website, Madame Eulalie ([http://www.madameeulalie.org/punch/Mr\\_Punchs\\_Spectral\\_Analyses\\_01.html](http://www.madameeulalie.org/punch/Mr_Punchs_Spectral_Analyses_01.html); follow the “Next in Series” link at the bottom for ten more stories).

We generally meet the second Sunday of each month at 12:30 PM. Join us at Book Alley, 1252 East Colorado Blvd, Pasadena, California. Join our Yahoo! or Facebook Group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PZMPCo/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/373160529399825/> for more information on upcoming readings and occasional changes of schedule and venue.

**The Pickering Motor Company**  
(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein

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



**The Plum Crazyies**  
(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and vicinity)  
Contact: Betty Hooker



**T**HE INAUGURAL meeting of the Plum Crazyies, a new chapter of The Wodehouse Society, took place on May 3, 2014. We live around Harrisburg, and we get together when the spirit moves us. Betty Hooker, the chapter's first president, provided these notes.

Members present included Bob “Oily Carlisle” Rains, Andrea “Sweetie Carlisle” Jacobsen, Betty “Aunt Jane” Hooker, Tom “The Reverend Aubrey Upjohn” Hooker, Harold “The Reverend Aubrey Upjohn” Piety, and Diane Hain. (It appears that we may have a surplus of Reverend Aubrey Upjohns and may need to hold a Scripture Knowledge contest to determine who is the more deserving reverend.)

Since 2011, following the convention in Dearborn, members of The Wodehouse Society residing in south-central Pennsylvania have been meeting informally to discuss our favorite Wodehouse writings while browsing and sluicing at each other's homes. On May 3, 2014, the founding members of the Plum Crazyies constituted themselves as an official chapter of TWS with all the rights, duties, and privileges granted under TWS Constitution, which “encourages the

establishment of chapters and branches in all countries of like-minded men, women, and children who possess a passable degree of literacy, a sense of humor which was not stifled at birth, a congenial disposition, and general agreement with the objectives outlined here.”

In honor of this historic occasion, the meeting took place at the home of Andrea Jacobsen and Bob Rains with a grand brunch worthy of Anatole, God’s gift to the gastric juices. A motion by Andrea Jacobsen to nominate Betty Hooker president and Diane Hain recording secretary was approved unanimously. In other business, Matilda, the teacup poodle, was appointed the Plum Crazy’s official mascot.

The Plum Crazy’s sponsored the June production of *Jeeves in Bloom* at the Oyster Mill Playhouse in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. Following the June 22 performance, the chapter held a “talk back” in keeping with the society’s mission to “keep the literary legacy bequeathed by Plum fresh in the public mind.”

**The Portland Greater Wodehouse Society (PGWs)**  
 (Portland, Oregon and vicinity)  
 Contact: Carol James



**The Right Honourable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney**  
 (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)  
 Contact: Jelle Otten

**S**ATURDAY, JUNE 7, was a beautiful day in Amsterdam, and the Honourable Knights welcomed several guests from abroad. Tony, Elaine, and Philip Ring were visiting from the U.K., and Arunabha Sengupta had driven over from Amstelveen.

The big news is that a new translation of one of Wodehouse’s works will be published in Dutch by IJzer publishing company, Utrecht, The Netherlands. A new Dutch Wodehouse publication is always terrific news, so we were thrilled to learn that Leonard Bueger has translated “Jeeves and the Unbidden Guest” into Dutch (“Jeeves en de Ongenode Gast”). The translation is illustrated with pictures of “Lego bricks,” with the original Wodehouse text (from the Gutenberg Project) in English by David Goeb. These pictures are really amazing. David built the Lego constructions in 2003.

“Verse is the thing,” said James Orlebar Cloyster in *Not George Washington* when he began to see the light. This quote was the guideline for our June 7 meeting. Tony Ring, who published *What Goes Around Comes*

*Around: A Celebration of Wodehouse Verse*, gave a talk about Wodehouse verses. Tony also described the spirit of the early twentieth century so we could better understand the context of the poems.



*The (blindfolded) cow creamer contest along the Amsterdam canal called Lijnbaansgracht.*

Lars van Eesteren then read for us his favorite Wodehouse passage from *Full Moon* about Lady Hermione as a servant.

The weather outside Mulliner’s Wijnlokaal was perfect for our Cow Creamer Contest. The contestants had to fill a cup with tea from a teapot. Subsequently they had to add a lump of sugar and an appropriate amount of milk from an antique Dutch cow creamer. Finally, the contestants had to mix all these ingredients to make a right proper English tea. An easy task, you think? Ha! The handicap was that you had to do it blindfolded. After many brave attempts by various contestants, one of our visiting English visitors, Philip Ring, was crowned the glorious winner.



*Victorious Philip Ring with two members of the jury*

For the Knights the afternoon passed in a flash. The next meeting of The Honourable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney will be on Saturday, October 18, in Mulliner's Wijnlokaal, Lijnbaansgracht 266-267 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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



## What Ho, Holmes!

**O**UR OWN Susan Diamond is the editor of *The Serpentine Muse*, the journal of the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes. Each year they do a “birthday writing challenge” and this year’s contest had Wodehousean overtones: The writers were asked to rewrite a Sherlockian passage in the style of either Wodehouse, Milne, or Jane Austen. We must give credit to Susan for sharing and to the contest winner, S. Subramanian, for allowing us to reprint. Subhu’s entry was first published in *The Serpentine Muse*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Spring, 2014)—and he also won the Milne entry!

Irene Adler was the only pebble on Sherlock Holmes’s beach. The pebble, he believed, was the *mot juste* for her—*mot juste* being an expression invented by a silly ass named Flaubert who, as is often the case with these ghastly outsiders, spoke French instead of English. Far be it from me to suggest that he (Holmes, I mean, not the blighter Flaubert) suffered any symptoms of being smitten. He was a pretty cold fish when it came to things like love and what one might, in a general way, shove under the rubric—if that’s the word I want—of Romance and Sentiment. All brain and no heart, so to speak. Love was all very well as a clue to what might make a bozo tick, but it had no other interest for him. It clogged the mind he believed, just as sand clogged the engine of the old two-seater. He viewed it as a treacly, cloying sherbet, the kind of awful mush that could make sane men lose their bally heads over girls who believed that the stars were God’s daisy chain. A calculating bird, if ever there was one. Reminds me of one of those gags Jeeves is forever trotting out, about “a levelling, rancorous, rational sort of mind that never looked out of the eye of a saint or out of drunkard’s eye.” (That, Jeeves tells me, is by an Irish cove by the name of Yeats.

Speaking of which, remind me to tell you sometime the story of those two Irishmen Pat and Mike.) Where was I? Oh, yes. Holmes and his poppet, Irene Adler. He had no use for her as an Object of Desire, even if he had no doubt that that frightful young half-portion (now sadly deceased) was a Queen of her Species.

## PGW Before He Was A++?

**J**OHAN BAESCH and Evelyn Herzog found an article entitled “Report on Reports” in the Spring 2008 *School Life*. In this piece, Sandy Mitchell discussed school report cards. While in Dulwich College, Wodehouse received a report that said: “He has the most distorted ideas about wit and humor; he draws over his books and examination papers in the most distressing way and writes foolish rhymes in other people’s books. Notwithstanding, he has a genuine interest in literature and can often talk with much enthusiasm and good sense about it. He does some things at times astonishingly well, and writes good Latin verses.”

## Feeding the Eager Public



Karen Shotting, president of *The Wodehouse Society*, donated 23 PGW *Everyman* editions to her local library. Here’s a picture of Karen (right) with the library branch manager, Nancy Kerr, and the donated books. Thanks to fellow PZMPCo nodder Doug Kendrick for the photo (on Karen’s camera). The event was publicized on the Santa Clarita Book Lovers Facebook page. The Wodehouse books that made up the library’s Plum collection were (Karen says) “pretty grungy,” so she hopes the nice new copies will encourage more readers!

# The Wilburfloss Mystery—Solved

BY NEIL MIDKIFF

AS WODEHOUSE’S character Psmith matured from his schoolboy days to adult life, he followed in his creator’s footsteps, first into a London-based international bank, then into a writing career in New York with a prominent side interest in boxing. The latter episode is chronicled first in Wodehouse’s autograph manuscript *Psmith, U.S.A.*, then in somewhat altered form for publication as the serial *Psmith, Journalist* in *The Captain* (October 1909–March 1910). A transparent ruse to disguise his identity as “Smith” in the American book version of *The Prince and Betty* failed to deceive attentive readers, and so when *Psmith Journalist* appeared between hard covers in England in 1915, Psmith resumed his own name as in the serial.

But one character name in this story underwent more interesting changes. Tony Ring discovered some years ago that the vacationing editor of *Cosy Moments* was named J. Filliken Wilburfloss in *Psmith, U.S.A.*, but renamed J. Fillken Wilberfloss in *Psmith, Journalist* (*Plum Lines*, Summer–Autumn 1998, and Appendix 5 of *Wodehouse With Old Friends*, vol. 7 of the Millennium Wodehouse Concordance). He suggested at the time that “it would be interesting to discover why it was changed.”

Reading the *Captain* serial from scans of the original magazine recently, I noticed one place in chapter 17 in which Wodehouse’s original spelling of Wilburfloss was retained. This seemed to indicate that the *Captain* editors or typesetters had worked from copy which kept the original spelling, but had failed to apply a last-minute name change in this one location. Why, though, had it been necessary to modify the spelling?

A quick Internet search found very few persons with the surname Wilburfloss, but surely the entire name was unlikely to be that of an actual person. A search on the full name, though, brought up a tantalizing reference to “J. Filliken Wilburfloss” as the name of a cartoon character, mentioned in two 1930s articles in the academic journal *American Speech*. But the author of those articles, Helen Tysell, matched that character with “D. Wig” as the name of the cartoonist, and that led nowhere. Fortunately, she mentioned the titles of

some of his comic strips as well, and after tracking bread crumbs of data through old newspaper scans and the websites and blogs of generous and dedicated cartoon fans, the original publication of J. Filliken Wilburfloss came to light.

Clare Victor Dwiggin (1874–1958), who signed his work “Dwig,” first used several of his recurring characters in a short-lived 1909 *New York Evening World* series of



Clare Victor Dwiggin’s comics ran in the 1909 *New York Evening World*.

single-panel comics called “School Days.” Blogger Allan Holtz tells the story at <http://strippersguide.blogspot.com/2012/06/obscurity-of-day-school-days.html>, and I am grateful to him for reproducing several of these fun-filled panels. The “egghead” schoolboy character holding a large book is labeled “J. Filliken Wilburfloss’ private class in esoteric poetry.” Other blogs showed that Dwiggin used the character name through the 1930s, and that he was quoted in 1945 as having been proud of inventing the name.

So how did the name get into Wodehouse's manuscript? Tony speculates "there may be one chance in a thousand that Plum met Dwiggin in New York, and in a drunken evening one of them came up with the name, which they both subsequently used." Far more likely, to my mind, is that Wodehouse had seen the name in the newspaper comic, filed it away in the recesses of his mind, and unconsciously used it when assigning a name to the fussy highbrow editor of *Cosy Moments*. On this theory, it seems likely that he then noticed the name in a later "School Days" panel, realized the unintentional borrowing, and wired *The Captain* to slightly alter the name for the British publication. In any event, the New York newspaper comic series had run its course by September 1909, before the serialization of *Psmith, Journalist* began in England, so the borrowing could not have run the other way.

Ian Michaud points out that when the newspaper plot was adapted as part of the American edition of *The Prince and Betty*, the editor's name was altered to J. Brabazon Renshaw, as if it had been realized that the last-minute British change would not be sufficient for American readers familiar with Dwiggin's cartoon.

The most astonishing fact about all this is that, thanks to the Internet and its many contributors of scans and data, a mystery that had been unsolved for over fifteen years could be tracked down in one day. For all of us who maintain volunteer websites and blogs, it's a pleasant reminder of the value of the work we share with the world.



*Dwiggin used J. Filliken Wilburfloss for almost thirty years.*

In every photographers' club in the Metropolis, from the Negative and Solution in Pall Mall to the humble public-houses frequented by the men who do your pictures while you wait on the sands at seaside resorts, he was being freely spoken of as the logical successor to the Presidency of the Amalgamated Guild of Bulb-Squeezers.

"The Romance of a Bulb-Squeezer" (1927)

## First Wodehouse Biography in German

IN EARLY OCTOBER 2014, Martin Breit's biography *P. G. Wodehouse: Gentleman der Literatur*, will be published—just in time to celebrate Plum and Ethel's 100th wedding anniversary. For the first time, the German-speaking audience will be introduced in their own language to the life and works of the great humorist. Apart from the story of Wodehouse himself and an introduction to his major characters, the book will feature a foreword by the renowned Swiss scholar Fritz Senn.

Martin Breit is a member of The Wodehouse Society, and he wrote his master's thesis about Wodehouse's cultural influence.

Contact the publisher at [info@roemerhof-verlag.ch](mailto:info@roemerhof-verlag.ch) or [www.roemerhof-verlag.ch](http://www.roemerhof-verlag.ch) to pre-order the book.



# The Oldest Member: Ninety Years and Going Strong!



*It behooves us as few things have ever behooved us to comment on the ninetieth birthday of the official Oldest Member of The Wodehouse Society. Ed hit that milestone on May 29 of this year. Here's a picture of Ed and his wife, Missy, at the 2011 Dearborn convention (photo by Elin Woodger). You can read about his current status in Elin's "Letter from England" (page 20). It was Ed who turned Plum Lines into the high-quality quarterly literary journal that it still strives to be today. While he may not officially be the oldest person on TWS's membership rolls (see the article about 102-year-old member Edwin R. (Bob) Adams in the Summer 2014 Plum Lines), our OM continues to be the inspiration for your current editor and Apprentice OM.*

**B**ORN ON May 29, 1924, Ed Ratcliffe worked for many years at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, where he met two other early TWS stalwarts, Len Lawson and Tom Wainwright. He and his wife, Missy, have two daughters and three grandchildren.

Ed took over the title of Oldest Member from TWS founder Bill Blood as editor of *Plum Lines* in late 1987, produced his first issue in February 1988, and stayed on for the next sixteen years. Assistant editors came and went but it was Ed alone who transformed *Plum Lines* from a mimeographed, stapled-at-the-corner newsletter into a witty and finely produced journal that was the primary factor in the society's tremendous growth in the 1990s.

When he stepped down as editor in chief at the end of 2003, Ed was made Editor Emeritus, but it was

universally felt that he should retain the Oldest Member title. The Winter 2003 issue of *Plum Lines* included a tribute to the OM consisting of testimonials from friends and colleagues in the society. If you would like a copy of that article, just let us know (contact info on page 24). In the meantime, here are a few excerpts from that article for your enjoyment, and so that Ed can feel again the warmth of the kudos that he deserves.

**Susan Cohen** (upon meeting Ed for the first time at the 1993 San Francisco convention, knowing that he was one of the nibs): "I approached him cautiously. No need for that! He was so friendly, so charming and witty that I was instantly convinced that TWS was the place for me."

**Sir Edward Cazalet**: "Thank you, Ed, for your magnificent work on *Plum Lines* over the years. Plum would have been so grateful to you for all that you have done."

**Dan Cohen** (who took over editorial duties from Ed): "After setting such a high standard for *Plum Lines*, you have abandoned your post after a mere sixteen years. Is this the Code of the Ratcliffes?"

**The late Jan Kaufman**: "'Infectious laughter' is a phrase that is more likely to be bandied about than experienced except when the subject is Ed, as his amusement is so contagious."

**David Landman** (who for some time helped Ed in the preparation of *Plum Lines*): "In moments of crisis, when all about him were broken and imperfect types, blind stamped and glazed as vellum, Ed retained his perfect binding and coolly emerged justified left and right. Hold Ed up to the light and you will see the watermark: Old Style Gentleman."

**Tony Ring** (editor in chief for ten years of *Wooster Sauce*, the journal of the U.K. Wodehouse society): "The journal is the external face of the society, the main reason why its members remain willing to pay an annual subscription. [Preparation of the journal] is a massive task, and Ed can be proud of what he has achieved."

**Norman Murphy**: "While the outside world saw Ed as a scientist, husband, and father, I saw a man born to play Lord Emsworth. I was right, and he's been doing it ever since—and better and better each time. His editing isn't so bad either."

Belated Happy Birthday to you, Ed, and we're looking forward to 2024, when we can celebrate your 100th in appropriate Wodehousean style!



# A Pilgrimage: P. G. Wodehouse's Gravesite

BY ARVIND SWARUP PATHIKI

Karen Shotting got permission from the writer of this online article, Arvind Swarup Pathiki, to reprint it in Plum Lines. Arvind's website is at <http://www.arvindswarup.com>. Karen says, "I think it's a lovely article, and it shows that the Remsenburg historical marker was seen and appreciated, and that it is accomplishing its purpose. I love it when that happens."

WODEHOUSE'S DEATH anniversary is on February 14. Over this long weekend I decided to take a trip to Long Island, where he lived for the last part of his long and illustrious life, to pay my respects at his gravesite. A little research on the internet taught me that he is interred behind a church in Remsenburg, New York. I drove up to Long Island and reached this almost deserted town with small roads. Failing to find any church nearby, after hovering around for a while, I spotted an elderly couple taking a walk in the cold afternoon and asked them the way to the church. "There are many churches here in this town. Do you know to which one you want to go?" "The one where Mr. Wodehouse—the great English writer—is buried." "We do not know much about the history here, but you can start with the closest one that is about a quarter of a mile down this same road." My guardian angel suddenly woke up from her afternoon siesta, and it came to pass that said church had a nice visible signpost with Wodehouse's biography.

I stood in front of the grave with folded hands and tears of happiness and gratitude in my eyes and said *sotto voce*, paraphrasing the epitaph, "Thank you for bringing joy to my life." I opened the book that I had



Our (obviously) helpful marker



A helpful hint from Arvind Swarup Pathiki

brought along: *The Inimitable Jeeves* (which, by the way, is my favorite Wodehouse, if there can be such a thing as a favorite Wodehouse). I stood beside the grave and read a few paragraphs. My original intention was to also leave the book respectfully at the site but I realized that the wind would have disrespectfully blown it away in no time. The graveyard was covered with snow, and I saw a pair of footprints leading to the gravestone. Somebody else had been here recently.

As a double tribute (in fact, a triple), it being President's Day, my journey took me through the Lincoln Tunnel and over the George Washington Bridge. Of course, it would be a sin to go to Long Island and return without having a Long Island Iced Tea. As often happens with Long Island Iced Tea, it was rather potent!

If you choose to visit, from the New York direction (which is how most folks travel to Long Island), once you get close to Remsenburg, while still on NY-27A, turn right on to S Country Rd and about a mile and a half down the road on the right side, you will find the Remsenburg Community Church. For Wodehouse fans, it's certainly worth the trip.

Dolly stood silent. Six separate blistering observations had darted into her mind like red-hot bullets, but she remembered in time that she was a lady and did not utter them. Contenting herself with a mere "Oh, is that so? Well, pip-pip," she turned and walked away, giving no indication of the vultures that gnawed at her bosom.

*Ice in the Bedroom* (1961)

# Plum and the Ominous Bird of Yore

BY DAVID LANDMAN



RAISED BY SURROGATE parents, he went on to become one of the most popular writers of his day, and one whose fame is likely to achieve a permanence accorded few writers. The purpose of his art, he claimed, was to give pleasure, not scientific truth. He was an excellent classicist, and the beauty of his prose can be traced to the classics. A single blemish marred his reputation, and he became the victim of malicious defamation that, while of no relevance to his writing or to truth, continues to dog his literary reputation. Seemingly aloof from the events of the day, he has been characterized as in retreat from reality. To counter this aspersion, we note that an admirer spoke of him as a disembodied spirit residing in a lofty place. He wrote of a couple named Roderick and Madeline.

Pelham Grenville Wodehouse? Not so fast. I have been describing Edgar Allan Poe.

Roderick and Madeline are the names of the twin brother and sister who infest a moldering ancestral mansion in Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." The house, badly in need of repair, features a vertical crack extending down the entire facade, a flaw that certainly would elevate eyebrows at the National Trust. In front of the house is a mountain lake or tarn ideally situated for a refreshing morning dip. Roddy has been in a funk lately, and in desperation has invited an old school chum (nameless forevermore, but let us call him Bertie) down for the weekend to cheer him up. But things take a messy turn. Madeline, a remarkably deep sleeper, is pronounced dead, and Rod and Bertie consign her to the family vault down among the wines and the spirits.

Poe, with the intent of introducing a Celtic element into his tale, probably drew the names Roderick and Madeline from Sir Walter Scott's poem "The Lady of the Lake," in which Roderick Dhu (the Black, but not shorts) is a suitor for the hand of Ellen, the lovely lady of the lake. His change of Scott's Ellen to Madeline is one of his many subtle touches of humor. Ticked off at having been interred alive (think of the inconvenience!), Madeline is certainly mad in both senses of the word. She claws her way out of the family vault, apparently damaging her manicure and other items in the process. Bloodied, she enters the drawing room where Roderick and Bertram are sharing a preprandial drink (Amontillado?) and, without a word, collapses upon her brother, bringing him down and, I suspect, if truth were known, a small bric-a-brac table on which was a porcelain statue of the Infant Samuel Goldwyn at Golf.

At that very moment the House of Usher, in admirable sympathy with its owners, chooses to collapse and, describing a pale parabola in the air, tumbles into the tarn, thereby rendering it permanently unfit for water sports.

Wodehouse's use of the names Roderick and Madeline is undoubtedly coincidental but a striking coincidence to say the least. Yet it is pleasant to speculate that "The Fall of the House of Usher" was a prescient description of the home life of Lord and Lady Sidcup.

I do not suggest that Poe and Wodehouse as writers are brothers under the skin. They are as different in style and subject as a duck and a daisy. There is, however, one area in which Plum and Poe are not as far apart as is popularly believe, and that is in temperament. The horror of Poe's tales in which beautiful women are disfigured or prematurely buried or both is decidedly not an expression of his personal demons but rather his evocation of the horror of living in a world from which something beautiful and essential to mental and spiritual health has been expunged. This beautiful element he often embodies in women variously named Lenore, Annabel Lee, Eulalie, Madeline, Eleanora, and, comically, Morella. The meaning of these variations on a name remains a mystery, but, for reasons too complex to discuss here, I suggest that by the names Poe intends what he would call "true" or "pure" poetry.

That said, when we disregard the slanders regarding Poe's behavior when drunk, his courtly demeanor was rather close to Plum's easy gentility. Poe in his intellectual life was cool as some cucumbers. He portrays himself as J. Auguste Dupin, the imperturbable and supremely percipient armchair detective in "The Purloined Letter" and elsewhere. In "The Man of the Crowd," Poe tells us exactly what his sober mind was like, a view corroborated by many who loved him:

For some months I had been in ill health, but was now convalescent, and, with returning strength, found myself in one of those happy moods . . . of the keenest appetency, when the film from the mental vision departs . . . and the intellect, electrified, surpasses as greatly its every-day condition. . . . I felt a calm but inquisitive interest in everything.

Calm and inquisitive? Norman Murphy for certain, and who else but Plum?

# An American's First Visit to a Cricket Match in England

BY LAURA LOEHR

TRAVELING TO London this past June in order to visit with family provided the added opportunity to attend my first cricket match—an experience, no doubt, not unlike an Englishman attending his first American football game. There was much anticipatory curiosity. I had had numerous demands by friends here on this side of the Atlantic to come back educated as to how a cricket match is played, so I duly took mental notes in order to fulfill those requests. I'm not entirely sure I can describe everything to them, but I did have a very good start, thanks to the tutelage of several Wodehousians. Chief among them was Robert Bruce, to whom I am indebted for an onfield crash course before the start of the match at Dulwich College on June 20. The (Wodehouse) Gold Bats were brave enough to take on the Dulwich Dusters on the lovely campus of Dulwich College on a beautiful day.

So now I can determine how the scoring goes, generally speaking, being able to confirm that a particular player had just earned four points, not six, from where the cricket ball landed. I know also that the referees (I could make them out because of the white overcoats and the hats they wore, quite different from the players, even though they're also decked out in white—Robert, Norman Murphy, and Murray Hedgcock put in impressive patience with this refereeing task) have coins in their pockets so as to count the number of pitches in each “over.”

Twenty “overs” later, everyone stopped for tea, assiduously organized by Elaine Ring, and it seemed to be much appreciated by the players and the assembled guests. Then on to another twenty “overs,” ending with an impressive score which declared the Dusters the winners. It all seemed very civilized, and there was much good camaraderie, which I took away as a major aspect of the game.

I must also say, as a Wodehouse admirer, that Norman's tour of the campus and introduction to the Wodehouse Library at Dulwich were added benefits to a very lovely visit at the school where P. G. spent many happy hours—and played a good deal of cricket.

[For those who would like to know more, check out <http://wodehouse.org/sidebar/cricketExplained.html>]



# Fresh Plums!

BY NEIL MIDKIFF

IF YOU HAVEN'T paid a visit recently to the website of Madame Eulalie's Rare Plums (<http://madameulalie.org>), you're in for a treat! Wodehouse fans who are eager to read everything he wrote will be heartened to see some newly discovered stories and articles and some previously uncollected variant versions of stories.

If you're not familiar with the site at all, you have an even bigger treat in store. Several researchers, editors, and collectors have devoted years of effort to presenting a great deal of the original magazine and newspaper versions of Wodehouse's early writings (pre-1923, public domain in the USA), together with original illustrations in most cases, along with commentary, annotations, bibliographic updates, and research articles. This effort is ongoing, so do check in frequently; click on the “What's New” link in the navigation bar for a list of fresh material.

Most exciting among the recent additions is “Rule Sixty-Three,” a previously-unknown short story from the *Novel Magazine*, a British pulp, in 1915. Charles Stone-Tolcher found it in an Australian university library, and the Wodehouse Estate gave their consent to publish it for the first time in nearly a century on Madame Eulalie. Arthur Robinson uncovered an article and seventeen previously unknown examples of Wodehouse's work as a sports reporter for the *Daily Mail*. I noticed a short-short story signed “P.G.W.” hiding in plain sight on the same page of the U.K. *Vanity Fair* as a poem listed in McIlvaine's bibliography. And John Dawson, Karen Shotting, Ian Michaud, Ananth Kaitharam, Norman Murphy, and Tony Ring are all actively helping with material and commentary for Madame Eulalie, in addition to the work they do on recovering, identifying, and annotating Wodehouse's contributions to the *Globe* newspaper. Raja Srinivasan was instrumental in the concept of what the website could become, and he continues to support it and the research efforts for it. Ananth gets most of the credit (though he won't mention it himself) for the design and implementation of the site. I've been proud to join in the effort for the last couple of years. Others who have assisted are credited on the site as well.

# Letter from England

BY ELIN WOODGER

IN MY LAST letter I mentioned some of the Wodehouseans who have been visiting London this year, and I'm happy to report that the stream shows no sign of abating. In June, my sister Laura arrived in time for the Dulwich cricket match (see her report on page 19), and she and I went to see *Perfect Nonsense* (the third time for me). In July, TWS vice president Bob Rains and his consort, Andrea Jacobsen, showed up for the UK Society's meeting in London on the 15th. (I subsequently enjoyed a very pleasant lunch with them.) Also present that night was Florida's McKelette Dowers, who was a bit late arriving because Norman had taken her on an abbreviated Wodehouse Walk prior to the meeting. (She had flattered him into it by writing to him about the time they had danced together at the Providence convention. Norman is a sucker for a good dancer.)

The two arrived just in time for the Parish Notices delivered by Chairman Hilary Bruce, and then came the evening's main event.

Entertainment impresario Paul Kent had arranged some particularly appropriate fun, given the hot and sultry summer day. It was his version of the Great Sermon Handicap, and how it worked was this: Paul would read an abridgement of Wodehouse's classic short story, and we were to guess how long it would take him to read it. With no idea of how much he had condensed the story, nor how much he might lengthen the proceedings with dramatic pauses or sips of his drink, the punters wrote down and turned in their bets.

After the two timers had been synchronized, the reading began—and ended 23 minutes, 9.86 seconds later. The winner, Nirav Shah, had betted a remarkably close 23 minutes, 5 seconds, but Americans scored well among the runners-up: Andrea came in second with a

guess of 23:27, while McKellette took fourth place with 23:47. Other guesses had ranged from 8:20 to 32:05, showing either profound confidence or a complete lack of faith in Paul's editing ability. It was a lot of fun.

In early August, Norman and I had the very great pleasure of getting together with Ed Ratcliffe and his daughter Gene. Alas, Ed's wife, Missy, hadn't been able to come over with them, but it was delightful to see



*Ed Ratcliffe and his daughter Gene in London town*

Ed again after nearly three years (he and Missy had been unable to get to the Chicago convention). Father and daughter had come over to drive around England for a couple of weeks, and they were only in London for a short time, so we were lucky to at least have dinner with them. It seems hard to believe that Ed recently turned ninety! You can take it from me that age has not withered him, nor has custom staled his infinite variety. He is, in short, in fine fettle, and I for one am looking forward to seeing him again in Seattle next year.



*Andrea Jacobsen and Bob Rains on their recent visit to England*

And the visitors keep coming. A date has been set to get together with Ananth Kaitharam (and Tony & Elaine Ring) for dinner in September, and an email arrived recently from Tamaki Morimura in Japan: She will be in Europe

for business at the end of August, and could she spend a few days with us in London? Well, she didn't have to ask twice; the guest room is already in order. And since she mentioned a desire to see *Perfect Nonsense*, it was the work of a moment for me to order the tickets. Yes, it will be my fourth time, but I haven't seen the current cast in action, and I'd like to compare and contrast with their predecessors before they take the show on tour in late September. I mean to say, why not?

# Jasper Fforde and P. G. Wodehouse

BY KAREN SHOTTING

JASPER FFORDE'S name may be familiar to many Wodehouse followers, either because they are fans of Mr. Fforde's novels (the Thursday Next, Shades of Grey, Nursery Crime, and/or Last Dragonslayer series) or because he was the 2004 winner of the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for his Thursday Next novel, *The Well of Lost Plots*. Diligent readers of *Plum Lines* may remember that Mr. Fforde's book *First Among Sequels* has been mentioned a couple of times because of its reference to his BookWorld characters enjoying tea in a Wodehouse setting ("the most perfect 1920s tearoom, nestled in the safe and unobserved background fabric of P. G. Wodehouse's *Summer Lightning*").

However, the *Summer Lightning* reference quoted above is just the tip of the Wodehouse iceberg in Mr. Fforde's writing: In *One of Our Thursdays Is Missing*, the sixth in the Thursday Next series, he has sprinkled Wodehouse allusions throughout the story with an almost prodigal hand. In fact, even before chapter 1 of the book, there is direct reference to Wodehouse on, of all things, a map.

To explain that reference and the other allusions, I must give a bit of explanation that will be old hat to those who have followed Ms. Next's adventures over the past years. So, if the old sweats would like to get a cup of coffee or take a quick snooze, I'll catch up with you under the map—take a look at it while you're waiting.

The Thursday Next novels are based on an alternate reality in which fictional characters live in a separate world called The BookWorld. There, when someone in the Real World is reading the book, the characters play out their written parts, but otherwise,

they live in the settings of the books (such as a *Summer Lightning* tea shop or the grounds of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*). *One of Our Thursdays Is Missing* tells of events in The BookWorld after its "remaking." Formerly



We thank Jasper Fforde for permission to reprint his map of The Book World.

(i.e., in the five earlier novels chronicling Thursday's adventures), The BookWorld had been organized as a Great Library, a vast building with 26 floors, which stored all published fiction for the readers in the Real World (see *The Well of Lost Plots*, p. 1). At the beginning of *One of Our Thursdays Is Missing*, The BookWorld's governing body (the Council of Genres) determined that it needed a clearer overview of how the individual novels sat within The BookWorld as a whole, so the C. of G. decided to "remake" it using a geographical perspective.

Thus was Fiction Island was formed (see map), with "Human Drama" in the center, "Comedy" just to the north of it, and other genres sprinkled about elsewhere. (MPs Expenses, Vanity, and Books-Only-Students-Read are among the smaller islands off the coast, along with one that is home to Lies, Excuses, and Fibs.)

If you look closely at the Comedy region of the map, you will see Mr. Ffordé's opening homage to the Master—"P. G. Wodehouse" is an actual physical location on Fiction Island, at the northern end of Comedy. (There's a lot of other clever stuff here that I will leave you to discover on your own.)

The map, however, is only the beginning. Early on, Thursday Next acquires a robotic "butler" who speaks "with the rich, plummy tones of the perfect gentleman's gentleman." When perfect gentleman's gentlemen are mentioned (even if they are nominally "butlers"), I have to ask myself if the writer may have had Jeeves in mind. Plummy tones, however, even those that emulate the perfect gentleman's gentleman, are not sufficient in and of themselves to warrant more than a lifted eyebrow and a pause by the Wodehouse aficionado.

Eyebrows, on the other hand, are another matter. Very early in the Bertie Wooster autobiographical material, we learn that Jeeves uses his eyebrow as a subtle indicator of his state of mind. In "The Metropolitan Touch," Bertie tells us that "Jeeves appeared perturbed. He allowed his left eyebrow to flicker upwards in a concerned sort of manner." In *Right Ho, Jeeves*, we are informed that Jeeves "allowed his right eyebrow to flicker slightly, which is as near as he ever gets to a display of the emotions." Likewise, in *Bertie Wooster Sees It Through*, Jeeves is "obviously shaking his head a bit over the young master's tardiness. His left eyebrow quivered perceptibly."

The robotic "butler" (Sprockett) in *One of Our Thursdays Is Missing* has a porcelain face, which is "bland and featureless" and has only one moving part—"his right eyebrow, which was made of machined steel and could point to an array of emotions painted in small words upon the side of his head." For example,

"his single expressive eyebrow quivered momentarily then pointed to 'Uncomfortable.'" His other emotions include "thinking," "doubtful," "contented," "quizzical," "peeved," and "happy." Jeeves, of course, does have a broader emotional range than Bertie sometimes gives him credit for—let us not forget that Jeeves went so far as to "smile paternally" in "The Great Sermon Handicap," and that upon his first sight of Bertie's scarlet cummerbund, Jeeves "shied like a startled mustang" ("Aunt Agatha Takes the Count"). He has happily shrimped in Herne Bay, and "peeved" may just be the mot juste for his attitude toward banjolele playing, purple socks, and Old Etonian Spats.

Sprockett is, admittedly, referred to as a "butler" for most of the book, but he doesn't actually buttle in the fullest sense of that word—he doesn't stick close to the old homestead greeting guests, supervising the footmen, serving at dinner and tea, and sipping old port in the pantry. Jeeves, of course, can buttle with the best of them, as he does in *Ring for Jeeves*, but Sprockett, like Jeeves, is more of a personal attendant; he accompanies Ms. Next in her travels, supplying cocktails and restoratives, and even going so far as to rescue the young mistress from the machinations of the nefarious "Men in Plaid." Thursday actually refers to him, at one point, as "a gentleman's gentleman," but the fact is that our heroine, being female, cannot have a *gentleman's gentleman*.

Sprockett also shares Jeeves's skill in disentangling unsuitable love matches. Jeeves's machinations are the stuff of legends: he does so early and often in the canon. The Wooster saga records the first instance of Bertie's escape from the clutches of Florence Craye in "Jeeves Takes Charge," with Jeeves opining that Bertie and Lady Florence were "quite unsuitably matched." (She is no more suitable in *Joy in the Morning* and *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*.) The red-headed menace Bobbie Wickham is also not considered a "suitable mate" in "Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit." Sprockett's efforts in the area lack Jeeves's artistry, but he does summarily dispatch Whitby Jett because his sketchy past makes him "*unsuitable*" (italics in the original).

Jeeves, and only Jeeves, has the recipe for his pick-me-up, a little preparation of his own invention, but Sprockett is able to administer a much-needed restorative to Ms. Next when needed. This libation gets only a passing reference and is not in a class with Jeeves's iconic pick-me-up (Worcester Sauce, raw egg, and red pepper, among other things), but then Thursday's need is considerably less than Bertie's—though confronted with a wide range of testing experiences, including murderous clowns and pursuing government agents,

she doesn't have to face Aunt Agatha or a morning head after a cheery night out at the Drones Club.

Bertie Wooster engaged Jeeves as his valet one memorable morning after one such cheery night, partly because of Jeeves's miraculous pick-me-up, but also because of his seeming ability to float into the kitchen, noiselessly like a healing zephyr. Jeeves, of course, never walks: he shimmers, flickers, and floats from Spot A to Spot B "like some form of gas." Sprockett is not able to flicker or float, or otherwise dematerialize, but he manages quite creditably to shimmer from a railway compartment when given the cue by the big boss that his presence is superfluous.

Sprockett's Jeevesian features are not our only clues that Jasper Fforde has read Wodehouse with some assiduity. There is a clever nod in chapter 9 to one of Wodehouse's most famous quotes from *The Code of the Woosters* ("I could see that, if not actually disgruntled, he was far from being grunted"). Mr. Fforde takes things a bit further and gives us five "Lost Positives," ("orphaned prefixless words") that are "defatigable scamps," "kempt and sheveled," but whose behavior is "peccable if not mildly grunted."

The unspeakable Roderick Spode, later Lord Sidcup, is given a quick passing reference—one of Sprockett's cocktails is called a "Sidcup Sling." Troublesome aunts merit a brief mention as something one has for life—along with flat feet and dimples. And Monty Bodkin's oft-repeated phrase "There are wheels within wheels" (*The Luck of the Bodkins*)—his way of explaining why, despite the fact that he has the stuff by the sackfuls, he must get a job and keep it for a year—is used, by my count, at least eight times, by three different characters in *One of Our Thursdays Is Missing*.

One other item, inconspicuously and innocuously lurking in the chapter headers of *One of Our Thursdays Is Missing*, also reminded me of P. G. Wodehouse. These headers contain excerpts from a sprightly little volume called *Bradshaw's BookWorld Companion*, obviously based upon the *Bradshaw* railway and travel guidebooks. Although Mr. Fforde probably did not have Wodehouse in mind when he conjured up this parallel guide for The BookWorld, I was reminded of Wodehouse's appreciation of the guide's inevitable inaccuracies. In "A Shocking Affair" (from *Tales of St. Austin's*) he had the following to say about it: "A good many members of the Bradshaw family possess a keen and rather sinister sense of the humorous, inherited doubtless from their great ancestor, the dry wag who wrote that monument of quiet drollery, *Bradshaw's Railway Guide*."

I am happy to confirm that Jasper Fforde is a Wodehouse fan. When I contacted him about this

article and asked for his permission to use the map, he graciously consented and confirmed that he is a huge fan, stating that "PGW is unfairly dismissed as a 'popular comedy writer' when he should be elevated to the stature of Dickens, Brontë, and Thackeray." He also tells me that he did have Jeeves (as well as J. M. Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton* and the Tin Man from Oz) in mind when he created the Sprockett character.

Sprockett, like the Tin Man, is not flesh and blood. Like Crichton, he is a butler that seeks only to serve, but it is his Jeeves-like mannerisms and the other Wodehouse nods that make this fun romp through The BookWorld an engaging read for Wodehouse fans. Jeeves "endeavors to give satisfaction"; from this standpoint, Mr. Fforde himself is Jeeves-like, giving us a satisfying nod to The Master. If you're interested in this series, I recommend starting with *The Eyre Affair*, which introduces Thursday Next and The BookWorld.

He broke off. The voice of Sebastian Beach had spoken at his elbow, causing him to leap like a lamb in springtime. Absorbed in his remarks, he had had no inkling that there were butlers present.

*Pigs Have Wings* (1952)

## Game of Thrones's Dahlia?

MICHAEL DEACON, in the April 4, 2013, *Sunday Telegraph*, said of Diana Rigg as Olenna Tyrell in *Game of Thrones* that, despite the robes, she is "still, quite plainly, Bertie Wooster's Aunt Dahlia. The magnificent imperiousness, the toying sarcasm, the brisk dismissal of waffle and flummery. . . . There's no mistaking it." If that weren't enough, she declares that her son is "an oaf." And, like Aunt Dahlia, "it's impossible not to like her." Sufficient evidence, we think.

## Nietzsche and Electric Cars

TOM SMITH, one of the hosts at our upcoming 2015 convention, helps prepare the *Hybrid Vehicle and Alternative Fuel Report* (published by the Washington State Department of Transportation) and so may have had a hand in the quote on page 4: "Your electric car won't make you sick. It won't kill you. And if Friedrich Nietzsche is to be believed, it may make you stronger." In the footnote, we find, from Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Gods*: "From life's school of war: what does not kill me makes me stronger"; then, from Wodehouse's "Jeeves Takes Charge": "You would not enjoy Nietzsche, sir. He is fundamentally unsound." Trust Tom to help enlighten the Washington DOT!

# What Wodehouse Character Are You?

**S**HANA SINGERMAN sent along an item from the *Washington Post* describing a page on the website BuzzFeed that will decide which Wodehouse character you most resemble based on a few questions. Your humble editor tried it and turned out to be Gussie Fink-Nottle. I may have to go in and adjust my answers a bit. Newts are all right in small doses, but I certainly was hoping to come out more Jeevesian. Here's the link for your own experiment: <http://www.buzzfeed.com/alexnaidus/what-pg-wodehouse-character-are-you>.

Her womanly sympathy was just what he felt he could do with at this juncture. Treading with infinite caution, he crossed to where she sat; and, having scanned the terrain narrowly for cats, sank down on the sofa at her side. And conceive his agony of spirit when he discovered that womanly sympathy had been turned off at the main. The girl was like a chunk of ice cream with spikes all over it.

“Good-bye to All Cats” (1936)

## Contents

- 1 P. G. Wodehouse Conquers Sweden
- 3 Sforzandi Before Breakfast
- 3 Bibliomantic Chump
- 4 Wodehouse and the Spies—Continued
- 6 Poems and Phrases
- 6 Psmith in Pseattle
- 7 Chapters Corner
- 13 What Ho, Holmes!
- 13 PGW Before He Was A++?
- 13 Feeding the Eager Public
- 14 The Wilburfloss Mystery—Solved
- 15 First Wodehouse Biography in German
- 16 The Oldest Member: 90 Years and Going Strong!
- 17 A Pilgrimage: P. G. Wodehouse's Gravesite
- 18 Plum and the Ominous Bird of Yore
- 19 An American's First Visit to a Cricket Match in England
- 19 Fresh Plums!
- 20 Letter from England
- 21 Jasper Fforde and P. G. Wodehouse
- 23 *Game of Thrones's* Dahlia?
- 23 Nietzsche and Electric Cars
- 24 What Wodehouse Character Are You?

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