**NEWS FLASH:** The TWS San Diego convention has been officially rescheduled for October 20–23, 2022. See page 18.


# Plum Lines

*The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society*

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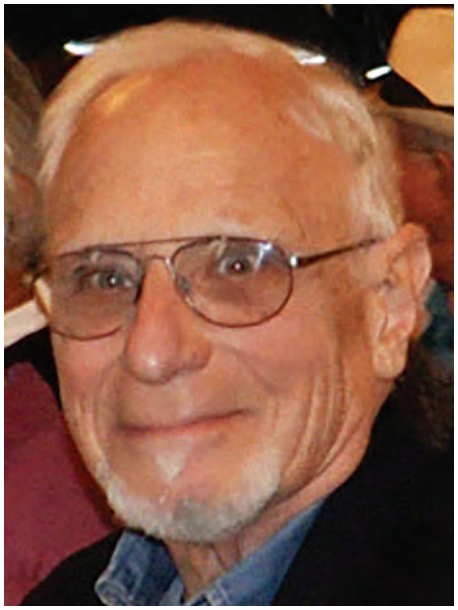
# David Landman 1931–2020

## by Elin Woodger and Max Pokrivchak

We were sad to learn that David Landman passed away on December 3, 2020, after a long illness. A man of great wit, possessing a clever facility with words, David was one of the founding members of the New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS) as well as a longtime member of TWS.

David was born in the Bronx in July 1931. He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War and, after graduating from New York University, studied at the New School of Social Research, New York City. There he met Harold J. Isaacson, who became his mentor and instilled a love of Chaucer as well as Mahayana Buddhism. David also came to embrace Jacobean theatre and studied medieval texts his entire life, frequently regaling friends and family with his sometimes obscure but always fascinating discoveries. In 1997 he served as an adviser for the Beaumont and Fletcher play *The Maid's Tragedy* at the Globe Theatre in London. These and other activities, both scholarly and spiritual, took place while he also taught English literature at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, for some thirty years. He formed long-lasting bonds with his students, many of whom he continued to mentor years after they graduated.

With his quick, dry sense of humor and abiding love of literature, it was no surprise that David was a keen Wodehouse fan and scholar. Beginning in the early 1990s and continuing until recently, he published close to fifty articles and reports in *Plum Lines* and also enriched the pages of *Wooster Sauce*. Among his contributions to this journal were book reviews, literary analyses, a moving tribute to Norman Murphy, convention reports, and revelations regarding Wodehouse's purloining of material from other sources.



*David Landman at the Remsenburg plaque dedication ceremony in 2012 (photo by Barbara Combs)*

In 1992 he demonstrated how Plum had appropriated entire passages from the works of Barry Pain. In "Fred Patzel: Pavarotti of the Piglot" (*Plum Lines*, Summer 2000), he described his search for a 1926 article describing the prize-winning hog-calling technique of the Nebraskan Fred Patzel—a description that was used word-for-word in PGW's short story "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!" (You can read the article at https://www.madameulalie.org/articles/patzel.html.)

A superb writer, David was conscripted as a coeditor for *Plum Lines* in 2001, and he assisted Ed Ratcliffe for the next two years. He and his wife, Elizabeth, were a fixture at numerous TWS conventions. At the 1995 Boston convention, he spoke on the topic "You, Too,

Can Croon in June: Wodehouse as Lyricist." In this he was assisted by one of his six children, Rosalind, who sang—beautifully—some of Plum's best lyrics to accompany David's commentary. The topic was especially close to David's heart as he was an aficionado of show tunes, jazz, and early music.

Though David spoke at only one convention, he contributed to several others as an actor and playwright in the original NEWTS skits. He portrayed Jeeves in both their 1995 Boston skit, "Agatha Agonistes," and their 2001 Philadelphia "Mirth of a Nation" skit, which he also cowrote. He wrote the scripts for their 1999 Houston skit, "Bertie and the Bum Steer," and their 2007 Providence offering, "Divine Providence," in which he brought down the house as Anatole, Aunt Dahlia's temperamental French chef. (He was such a success that he was invited to perform his Anatole monologue at the Boston Atheneum at a non-TWS event.) His final stage role was as Boodles the butler in the 2015 Seattle skit "Espresso Delivery."

David's intelligence, wit, generosity, and humility—such an integral part of The Wodehouse Society and the NEWTS for the past thirty years—will be sorely missed. We extend our sympathy and best wishes to Elizabeth and the Landman family as we honor and remember the joy David brought to us all.

# Vanderbilt Curators' Event

## by Anita Avery

I recently took part in a curators' event related to the Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University. For a glimpse, https://tinyurl.com/nro2ga2x takes you to the presentation that Vanderbilt Special Collections and University Archives did for their high-end donors and Friends of Vanderbilt Libraries. It was originally done as a Zoom event with curators and various invitees. They recently posted the curators' portion of the presentations on YouTube; only the first eleven minutes are relevant to the Wodehouse Collection.

After a greeting by event coordinator Mary Caton, there is a short introduction by University Librarian Valerie Hotchkiss, my original contact with Vanderbilt. (She also refers to my personal *Nancy Drew, Girl Detective* collection of 650+ items.) Following her introduction is the PGW presentation done by curator Rachel Lavenda (whom some of you met at the 2019 TWS convention in Cincinnati), a quick, five-minute look at highlights of the P. G. Wodehouse Collection.

# Letter to the Editor

In a previous letter to the editor (*Plum Lines*, Winter 2020), Elliott Milstein reported that he "sat bolt upright . . . as if stuck with a pin" upon seeing that the "jolly prof" (yours truly) mixed up Phyllis Jackson with Eve Halliday. And who can blame him? I can only respond with the immortal words of Keats (sort of):

St. Agnes' Eve – Ah, bitter chill it was!
The jolly prof, for all his feathers, was a-cold;

While I cannot recall who was St. Agnes's Eve, I should have known that our Eve was the future Mrs. Psmith. Dare I blame Wodehouse himself, who neglected to follow *Leave It to Psmith* with more tales of the young couple? With this early Nick and Nora engaged in adventures across England, their names would be forever engraved on our memories.

If Ben Schott is reading this letter, could such be your next book?

Sincerely,
David Leal, PhD

# Get Yer Books 'ere!

Nick Townend, one of our English members, and with a surname familiar to many, is selling 300 surplus items (including many pre-1920 items) from his Wodehouse collection. For a full catalogue, including first editions and reprints, with and without dust wrappers, in U.K. and U.S. editions, not to mention periodicals, plays, anthologies, sheet music, theatre programs, audio recordings, and books and articles about Wodehouse, please contact Nick. Prices start at £2, so there is something for everyone. Members who requested Nick's previous catalog (in 2016) will automatically be sent the current version. Some of the more scarce first editions for sale are pictured below. Nick can only accept payment in sterling, but such payments can be made via PayPal.

# *Nothing Is Simple in Wodehouse*

## by Gary Hall

Tony Ring has studied the works and correspondence of Wodehouse for thirty years. During that time, he noticed with increasing interest that there really is nothing "simple" in Wodehouse's writings or career. Tony says that if you come across a subject in any aspect of the canon that seems simple, think again!

The idea of making a compilation of examples of this phenomenon came to Tony in recent years as he found himself using this mantra more and more in responding to many inquiries that, one might think, could have been answered easily. Tony says, "Some seem so simple: How many books did Wodehouse write? How old were Jeeves and Bertie Wooster? Did Bertie wear a monocle? In which eye did Gally Threepwood wear his? Why did Arnold Abney, headmaster of Sanstead House School in *The Little Nugget* in 1913, suddenly reappear in Bertie Wooster's memory in *Much Obliged, Jeeves* in 1971, competing with Aubrey Upjohn for the title of headmaster at the prep school at which Bertie won his scripture knowledge prize?"

Most of the examples in this new collection are even more complicated, according to Tony, and have been selected to demonstrate some of the techniques which Wodehouse used to maintain the level of perfection he demonstrated throughout his career.

The breadth of Wodehouse's writing was immense, ranging from journalism, verse, essays, short stories, novels, plays (co-authored or adapted from a foreign language), lyrics and libretti for musical comedies (with a co-author), and so on. Tony postulates that one reason for the complexity of Plum's work is because so many of his ideas, plots, and characters, and so much of his dialogue, are repeated, sometimes in barely modified form, in works from more than one category.

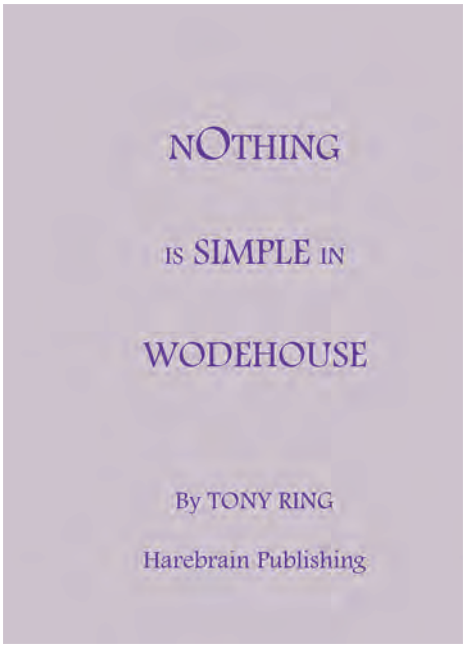
Tony's book attempts to clarify some significant topics—for example, the evolution of three early American magazine serials into much longer novels with different names. It explains why many of the existing studies believe that *The Prince and Betty* is the precursor to *Psmith, Journalist* when the truth was precisely the opposite. It compares the different titles of many of the stories in the 1923 books *The Inimitable Jeeves* (in the U.K.) and *Jeeves* (in the USA) as they appear in the original magazine publications—*Strand* in the U.K.; *Cosmopolitan* (or in one case, as nothing is simple, the *Saturday Evening Post*) in the USA—and then in the *Jeeves Omnibus*, published in the U.K. in 1931.

Tony notes that a number of Wodehouse's plays were clearly and legitimately based in part on previously published works of other authors in the USA and France; these are identified and explained. The book also demonstrates how, on a number of occasions, he (often with Guy Bolton) created both a play and a novel from a single plot.

One section describes the multiple uses to which the early novel *A Damsel in Distress* has been put, while others summarize the characteristics of recurring characters or families. One of the most intriguing chapters explains how and why he came to write a play about headhunters in 1949, and whether the proposed victim, Maisie, did indeed lose her head.

The final chapter finishes the book with a flourish by presenting what Tony believes to be the first appearance of an extract from a Wodehouse typescript, written at a time when a debate was raging as to whether he should publish a personal defense of his wartime broadcasts. Involving a parrot, two dogs, two Wodehouses, and a number of German soldiers, it illustrates his inherent good humor and is well worth a read.

The price of the book itself is a very modest £14.00, but the cost of postage to addresses outside the U.K. is regrettably high; to U.S. addresses it will be £19.35. If interested, please contact Tony, and in return he will suggest practical methods (such as PayPal) by which the total cost can be paid.



# Spies in the Offing

BY TODD MORNING

In the summer of 2013 and autumn of 2014, I published two articles in *Plum Lines* that focused on P. G. Wodehouse's relationship with Johann "Johnny" Jebsen. Jebsen was a German spy who was, in fact, a double agent, funneling valuable information to the British until his execution by the Gestapo in 1944. My articles came in response to Ben Macintyre's assertion in his best seller *Double-Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies* (Crown, 2012) that Jebsen and Wodehouse were friends. In my first article, I expressed doubts about this. Could Wodehouse have been friends with Jebsen, a mysterious figure deeply imbedded in the murky realms of espionage? One source described Jebsen as "a handsome man but slippery as an eel." I was joined in my skepticism by several members of The Wodehouse Society. The research for my second article revealed that Wodehouse did indeed know Jebsen. (I never discovered when and where Wodehouse and Jebsen met, however.)

The most intriguing item that I came across was a copy of a memorandum, found in the British National Archives, that was written in 1943 by Jebsen's contact in British intelligence, Charles de Salis. In his memo, de Salis stated that Jebsen (whose code name was Artist) had suggested that Ethel Wodehouse was a potential intelligence source. (The same memo stated, unsurprisingly, that P. G. Wodehouse was not cut out to be a spy.) Central to Jebsen's recommendation was this line found in the memo: "Artist thinks she [Ethel] may be a useful source as both she and her husband are in close touch with [Paul-Otto] Schmidt, Hitler's interpreter, who often talks to her of the conversations he has had to interpret between Hitler and the various foreigners who visit him." This raised two questions: were Plum and Ethel friends with Hitler's interpreter, and did Paul Schmidt reveal to Ethel the details of Hitler's private conversations? It seemed unlikely. Yet I had been proved wrong about a friendship between Wodehouse and Jebsen, and I thought the possible link between Wodehouse and Hitler's interpreter deserved further research. Admittedly, I've been pretty slow off the mark in my investigations: the six years that it has taken me to follow up on this proves that I am not secret-agent material.

Once I started my research on Paul-Otto Schmidt, I learned about two other possible German spies who had crossed paths with Wodehouse. Even before the war, Plum seemed to have a knack for running into men who, if not actual intelligence operatives, were suspected of being so by the authorities in Britain and America. This article summarizes Wodehouse's relationship with three men who worked for the Germans in various capacities. My endeavors were helped by the extensive digitization of the British National Archives collection, making many records easily accessible.

**Paul-Otto Schmidt**

Paul-Otto Schmidt was a career German Foreign Service officer who worked as a translator from the early 1920s until the end of the war. In the mid-1930s he became Hitler's chief interpreter and was present at diplomatic meetings before and during the war. He joined the Nazi party in 1943 (he claimed under pressure) and was arrested by the Allies in 1945. Schmidt was released in 1948 after testifying for the prosecution at the Nuremberg trials. In 1951 he published a memoir entitled *Hitler's Interpreter*. In this book, Schmidt gave accounts of his work as a translator for Hitler in meetings with such figures as Benito Mussolini, Neville Chamberlain, and the Duke of Windsor. He described his interrogations of Allied prisoners. He provided almost no information about his personal life.

*Paul-Otto Schmidt (center) interpreting for Philippe Pétain and Adolf Hitler, October 1940*

Part of the difficulty in finding information on Paul-Otto Schmidt is that he is easily confused with another man who worked for the German Foreign Office named Paul Karl Schmidt. Wodehouse's biographer Robert McCrum wrote: "It is at this point that the plot becomes almost Wodehousian in its complexity. The head of

the Foreign Office department that handled American press relations was Hitler's English language interpreter, confusingly also named Paul Schmidt, a stout, red-cheeked civil servant in his early thirties." As if to prove his point, McCrum seems unsure whether there were one or two Schmidts. Paul-Otto Schmidt was Hitler's interpreter, but he did not handle American press relations. The press officer was Paul Karl Schmidt. McCrum stated that Paul Karl Schmidt was a career diplomat. In fact, he was not a diplomat but, rather, a member of the SS. Paul Karl was thirty in 1941; Paul-Otto was twelve years older. Through diligent research, I discovered that Paul Karl was the one with red cheeks.

*Paul-Otto Schmidt interpreting for Édouard Daladier and Adolf Hitler at the Munich Conference (September 1938)*

In *Hitler's Interpreter*, Paul-Otto makes it clear that it was Paul Karl who headed the press section. Paul-Otto wrote of a tantrum by German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop over the placement of names in a communiqué: "In a fury that his name was put after Keitel's [a German general], Ribbentrop rang through to my namesake Schmidt, the head of the Press Section, and told him to have the order changed." In his September 1944 statement that he submitted to the British intelligence officer Major Cussen, Wodehouse wrote of his June 23, 1941, visit to the German foreign office where he met Hitler's interpreter, Paul-Otto: "I was introduced to Dr. Phil [PhD] Paul Schmidt, not to be confused with Dr. Paul Schmidt, the press director. Schmidt said he had read all my books and was very complimentary about them."

So we know that Wodehouse met Paul-Otto Schmidt on June 23, 1941. Did the Wodehouses meet with Paul-Otto Schmidt on other occasions, and did Schmidt share details with them about Hitler's private meetings? While in Paris, Wodehouse and his wife lived at the Hotel Bristol, a hotel popular with the German occupiers. Thomas R. L. Smith, in his Summer 2018 *Plum Lines* article on American intelligence efforts to track Wodehouse's wartime activities, wrote that "the Bristol was also the center of international money laundering and black-market activities."

In his memoir, Paul-Otto Schmidt referred to his interrogations of Allied prisoners: "I always drew up a report on the interrogations which, as far as I knew, was never used, since it stated facts which did not fit in with the official view. I used to write these reports in a room at the Hotel Bristol in Paris." In the British National Archives, I found a statement by Marcel Vidal, the manager of the Hotel Bristol, dated September 13, 1944, a few weeks after the liberation of Paris. Monsieur Vidal said that the Wodehouses did not mix with the Germans staying at the hotel and that "apart from ordinary courtesies, they did not speak to many people."

It is probable that Paul-Otto Schmidt came across the Wodehouses during his stays at the Hotel Bristol. Would Schmidt have talked to them about his work interpreting for Hitler? Schmidt made it clear in his memoir that he learned to be careful about sharing information. He described a conversation with a Canadian major in the prison camp: "The major escaped eight days after our conversation, and two months later an article by him about our talk appeared in England. I was glad that he did not repeat some of the rather indiscreet remarks I had made on the assumption that he would remain a prisoner until the end of the war." Schmidt also wrote that he had to be very careful at the Hotel Bristol, as he suspected that the headwaiter was passing information to the British through the French Resistance.

Time for a verdict: It is a fact that P. G. Wodehouse met Paul-Otto Schmidt at the Foreign Office in Berlin in June 1941. And it is probable that the Wodehouses and Schmidt came across each other at the Hotel Bristol in Paris. Based on the statement of the hotel's manager, however, the Wodehouses did not engage in long conversations with the Germans who were staying there. In addition, Schmidt, like most Germans, learned to be careful about sharing information or opinions with anyone, let alone foreign nationals. Charles de Salis's memo should be placed in the large file containing false intelligence reports that often emerge in time of war.

**Baron Raven Erik Freiherr von Barnikow**

*Baron von Barnikow*

While P. G. Wodehouse had just a passing acquaintance with Paul-Otto Schmidt, there is no doubt that he was friends with the possible German agent Baron Raven Erik Freiherr von Barnikow. (Definitely a name that makes you want to click your heels upon hearing it.) In

his 1944 statement to Major Cussen, Wodehouse wrote about meeting Barnikow at the Adlon Hotel in Berlin in June 1941:

> I wanted air so I went and walked in the courtyard and while I was there my friend Raven von Barnikow came out. With regard to Major von Barnikow I can't remember when I first met him, but I think it was in New York in 1929. He was our great friend in Hollywood paying long visits to us when he could get away to San Francisco where he was a stockbroker. . . . He told me that he had been trying to get me exchanged for a German manufacturer of screws who was an internee in England. He told me of his cousin Baroness von Bodenhausen to whom he was engaged to be married. This surprised me as the last time I'd seen him he had been engaged to Kay Francis, the motion picture star. He said he wanted me to go stay at the Baroness's home "Degenershausen" in the Harz mountains about 17 miles from Magdeburg. She would be in Berlin in a day or two and would take me down there. He said Werner Plack had told him I was being released so he had come to meet me.

In World War I, Barnikow (in some sources his name is spelled Barnekow) served in the German infantry, and in 1917 he joined the flying corps, becoming a decorated fighter pilot. During the war, he became friends with the famous aviator Ernst Udet. Barnikow and Udet remained friends after the Armistice. In the early 1920s, Barnikow came to the United States and married New York socialite Ingeborg Silken in 1924. They had one son but divorced in 1929. It's hard to pin down how Barnikow made a living in America. He may have worked for General Motors, and he claimed to own a company that manufactured diesel engines. Wodehouse got it right when he said that Barnikow was, for a time, a stockbroker in San Francisco.

The first time I read that Barnikow might have been a German spy was in a letter from the CBS reporter Harry Flannery to his British publisher, which came in response to a complaint by Wodehouse about his portrayal in Flannery's book *Assignment to Berlin*. In this letter, Flannery wrote:

> The late Erik Baron von Barnikow, who is represented by P. G. as "an old Hollywood friend," was one of Udet's men, who came to the United States in prewar days to make stunt flights, impress the United States people with their good fellowship, and thus obtain entry to United States airplane plants to study our methods. We were gullible and so Udet, chief of German plane design, and his assistant, P. G.'s "old Hollywood friend," were admitted to our plants and feted by us and P. G.

German agents were indeed active in the United States in the 1930s, and they focused on the aviation industry. Christopher Vasey, in his book *Nazi Intelligence Operations in Non-Occupied Territories* (McFarland & Company, 2016), describes how Udet, who was in charge of development in the Reich Air Ministry, asked German military intelligence to steal the plans for a bombsight being developed by the Norden company. This was accomplished by German agents working at Norden's Chicago plant. Vasey, however, does not mention Barnikow in connection with this or any other German intelligence operations.

My next source of information about Barnikow is through his connection with Kay Francis, who met him on October 24, 1937. I had heard of Kay Francis, but knew nothing about her. It is fair to say that she is largely forgotten these days, yet in the mid-1930s, she was Warner Brothers Studio's highest-paid actor (male or female), earning over $200,000 a year, despite the fact that most of her films have not stood the test of time.

Kay Francis's tempestuous Hollywood career and exceptionally energetic sex life are chronicled in *Kay Francis: A Passionate Life and Career* by Lynn Kerr and John Rossman (McFarland, 2006). In the chapter "The Actress and the Spy," the authors cover her relationship with Barnikow. Kear and Rossman write: "Barnekow probably was a German spy, but likely a reluctant one." They state that the FBI kept files on Barnikow, but they relate just one incident from these files. In a footnote, Kerr and Rossman mention that an informant reported a conversation where Barnikow had "nonchalantly mentioned" that he was interested in the development of poisonous gases. The authors add in the same footnote that "it should be noted too that one of the Baron's FBI files was destroyed." Granted, most people don't nonchalantly mention poison gases in conversations, yet this is hardly clear evidence that Barnikow was a spy. Kerr and Rossman also never explain what they mean by their phrase "probably a German spy, but likely a reluctant one." Christopher Vasey states that the Gestapo began operating in America in the late 1930s. Their mission was to force cooperation from Germans living in America. No source mentions that Barnikow was subject to intimidation from the Gestapo, however.

I read about a strange incident where Barnikow claimed that the Beverly Hills socialite Countess Dorothy di Frasso had accused him of being a Nazi spy. He was so incensed by this that he announced to the press he would sue her for slander. Countess di Frasso expressed puzzlement, telling the newspapers, "Someone must be mad. I never said anything of the sort." Would an actual spy bring attention to himself by approaching newspapers to deny that he was a spy? It seems doubtful.

How did a German-born San Francisco stockbroker become a fixture of Hollywood society? After the war, on June 28, 1946, the *San Francisco Examiner* published a surprisingly laudatory article about Barnikow. It described him as "a well-known figure in San Francisco, Burlingame, and southern California before the war." The article stated that even though he was an aristocrat, he was "not the phony kind who would prowl for weekend invitations from weak-minded rich widows." Included with this article was a photograph of a handsome, smiling Barnikow. Even in this black-and-white photo, the guy's charm comes through. In her fascinating memoir about the time Wodehouse spent at her mother's estate during the war, *P. G. Wodehouse: The Unknown Years* (Stamford Lake, 2009), Baroness Reinhild von Bodenhausen wrote of Barnikow: "He was outstandingly handsome, tall, slim with a rugged face, blond hair, full of fun, laughter, and jokes, with an amazing charisma. He bewitched every female from nine to ninety years. The sun rose when he entered the room and hearts raced when he looked at you."

Kear and Rossman paint an unflattering portrait of Barnikow. They quote from Kay Francis's diary: "Gave Erik another $1,000. That makes $1,300 all together. I wonder if I will ever get it back." At another point she wrote: "Worried stiff about money, about Erik being a bum." Barnikow's relationship with Kay Francis ended when he returned to Germany in 1939.

It is not known why Barnikow returned to Germany. Both Sophie Ratcliffe (*P. G. Wodehouse: A Life in Letters*, Norton, 2011) and Robert McCrum describe Barnikow as being "strongly anti-Nazi." Yet it is unclear why someone who was opposed to Hitler would rush back to Germany with war looming. The article in the *San Francisco Examiner* stated that he returned to claim an inheritance and was drafted into the Luftwaffe. Other sources contend that he returned out of loyalty to Ernst Udet and the German military. Again, Kear and Rossman have a different take: "Perhaps Barnekow's bigger problem, however, was that he presented himself as something he wasn't to Kay and her friends. He simply was not a wealthy industrialist war hero. To Germans who knew Udet and Barnekow, the latter was a sort of alcoholic loser who depended on Udet to find him jobs, give him money, and bail him out of difficulties." They go on: "Erik may have left the country for several reasons, including loyalty to his country. But he also realized his tissue of lies with Kay was unraveling."

If it is hard to pin down what Barnikow was up to in America and why he returned to Germany, his death is even more mysterious. Kear and Rossman and some other sources state that he committed suicide on December 8, 1941, in despair at the news that America had entered the war (although Germany did not declare war on the United States until December 11). The *San Francisco Examiner* reported that his plane had been shot down (no date is given). Robert McCrum writes: "It is said that his opposition to Hitler contributed to von Barnikow's suicide outside his Bavarian hunting lodge in 1942." Baroness von Bodenhausen presents the most complete account of Barnikow's decline. She portrays a man in an alcoholic downward spiral. Her mother paid for Barnikow's ever-increasing post-binge hospital stays. Bodenhausen writes that Barnikow shot himself at his family estate in Germany on October 25, 1942. On March 5, 1943, Wodehouse wrote to her mother:

> We were so delighted to get the photographs of our dear Raven. They are so exactly like him. But how sad his face looks, doesn't it? It's terrible to think how he must have been suffering all that time when he was on the coast. I look at the photograph and think how different he was in Hollywood, where he was always happy. It's one of the ghastly tragedies of the war that a man like him should have been sacrificed. It does seem a pity that he felt it his duty to join up again, because at his age he could have so easily stayed in America.

While Barnikow remains enigmatic, there is no doubt that he treated the Wodehouses with kindness and that they all indeed were friends. Both Plum and Ethel liked and trusted him. Yet it is suspicious that Barnikow just happened to come by the Adlon so soon after Wodehouse was released from internment. We have to wonder if Barnikow was expected to encourage Wodehouse to broadcast. Wodehouse, though, never said that the idea for the broadcasts came from Barnikow. He reported that it came from another German who spent a good deal of time, engaging in various lines of business, in southern California before the war: Werner Plack.

**Werner Plack**

In his September 9, 1944, statement to British intelligence, Wodehouse wrote of the first time the idea of broadcasting for the Germans was brought up. As I've mentioned, he described meeting Barnikow in the courtyard of the Adlon. After Wodehouse and Barnikow entered the hotel's lobby from the courtyard they met Werner Plack. Wodehouse wrote: "Plack asked me if I would like to broadcast to America. I said: 'Yes' and he said he would have me brought to his office the next day to arrange the details." (Wodehouse had already mentioned to Plack that he wished he could in some way thank his American readers for the letters of encouragement that they had sent to him while he was in the internment camp.) Wodehouse wrote of Plack: "I remembered Plack from Hollywood. I had never known him very well but had met him occasionally at parties."

An extensive file on Plack exists in the British National Archives. (This file was finally declassified in 2011.) Plack was born in 1907. He is described as having a strong build and an elegant appearance, but is also characterized as having a "rather ineffectual personality." Plack's wife, Marie, was born in South Africa in 1913. Plack came to America in 1928 and settled in Los Angeles. (I couldn't determine when and where Plack met and married Marie.) While in California, he worked at various jobs, including as a sales rep for a German wine importer. He performed duties for the German consulate, though his work was not documented, and he even pursued a career as an actor. IMDB credits him with a small part in one movie: a 1934 Universal release called *Madame Spy*. (Sometimes you can't make this stuff up.)


In the Harry Flannery papers at the Wisconsin Historical Society, I found a letter from the wine company that employed Plack. His former employers asked Flannery if he knew whether the FBI had been investigating Plack. Flannery replied by saying that at their first meeting in Germany, Plack complained that the FBI had kept him under near-constant surveillance. The files show that the FBI felt that Plack was a low-level agent collecting information on members of the expatriate German community in Hollywood while attempting to spread pro-Nazi propaganda. They pointed out that he claimed to be anti-Nazi but "associated extensively with persons of pro-Nazi views."

In August 1940 Plack left the United States by ship, heading first to Hawaii and then to Japan before making his way to Germany. American officials suspected that he was ordered back to Germany for disciplinary reasons. Plack's luggage was searched before his departure from San Francisco and again in Honolulu. The American authorities thought that Plack might have collected papers related to the "national defense of the United States." Some papers were confiscated and examined, but nothing incriminating was found. Traveling with Plack was another German, Johann Bernhard von Maltzan. If Plack was a low-level agent, Maltzan seems to have operated at a much higher level. British counterintelligence had been tracking the globe-trotting Maltzan since 1937, as his travels took him to Shanghai, Baghdad, India, Guatemala, the Azores, and the United States.

Back in Germany, Plack worked for the Foreign Office. His job was to work with members of the foreign press (particularly Americans), and he also dealt with Nazi sympathizers who broadcast on Nazi radio. (British intelligence called these broadcasters "renegades.") It is hard to pin down how P. G. and Ethel Wodehouse felt about Plack. Robert McCrum writes: "The closeness of his relationship to Ethel in particular is borne out by the fact that she became godmother to his son in 1948. In one of the very rare photographs from this episode in Wodehouse's life, Ethel and Plack are seen enjoying a joke outside a Berlin cafe while he [PGW] watches from one side. The haunting expression of embarrassment, disgust, and loathing on Wodehouse's face tells its own story."

Baroness von Bodenhausen, who saw the relationship firsthand, came to a different conclusion. In her memoir, she describes Plack's visits to her mother's estate when he came to spend time with the Wodehouses: "After the dreadful damage was done Plummie never indicated that he harbored resentment against Werner. Uncle Plummie was far too kind for that. He could not hate anybody. How benign and benevolent of him. Though I am sure Aunty Ethel thought differently." Despite this, the portrait of Plack in her memoir is of a man bursting with enthusiasm: "He entered the stage wherever he was with a bang. He was a bubble of joy. . . . Our peaceful life was full of waves when he came. Uncle Plummie had to emerge from his dreamland world and listen to Werner's stories and laughter. While Aunty

Ethel loved the distraction." She wrote of how Plack suggested that he and Wodehouse sample the excellent wine cellar at the estate, "Uncle Plummie was so pleased for he also liked a glass of good wine by the fireside."

Plack escorted the Wodehouses to Paris in late 1943 and checked them into the Hotel Bristol. Plack continued to make frequent trips to Paris, staying at the Bristol. The hotel's manager told British intelligence: "Mr. Werner Plack, a German official, frequently stayed at the hotel. I have seen him in conversation with Wodehouse, but as far as I could judge not in a very intimate way." Until the liberation of Paris, Plack seems to have helped the Wodehouses navigate the difficulities of living in German-occupied Europe. For instance, Major Cussen reported on an incident where Ethel briefly met the pro-Nazi renegade broadcaster John Amery (who was executed by the British for treason in December, 1945): "Later she heard that young man was known as Mr. Brown. Subsequently, Plack told her that she should never go and speak to him because Brown was really John Amery. Mrs. Wodehouse attributes Plack's remark to her to his [Plack's] desire not to involve them in any more trouble. She thinks that both Plack and his superior, Dr. [Paul Karl] Schmidt, were sorry for having lured Wodehouse into the difficulties caused by broadcasting."

As the war drew to a close, British intelligence sought information on Plack's whereabouts, suspecting that he had gone to Switzerland. Eventually, though, they stopped their search. A memo dated May 5, 1945, stated that Plack was not significant enough to be included on the postwar blacklist of Nazi officials subject to arrest.

As the British investigations of Plack ended, the Americans were just getting started. I came across news reports stating that American officials were searching for Plack as early as July 31, 1944. A Senate committee was investigating the attack on Pearl Harbor, and they hoped that Plack could provide information on Hans Wilhelm Rohl, a naturalized German-American citizen who had been contracted for work on the defenses at Pearl Harbor early in 1941. The U.S. wire services would occasionally run stories about the search for Plack in subsequent months. On August 24, 1946, it was reported that Plack was under American control in Germany. By this time, though, the committee's investigators announced they weren't sure whether they would seek Plack's testimony. (As far as I can tell, Plack was never called as a witness. The pandemic, however, prevented me from doing a full search of the *Congressional Record*.)

Later in the 1940s, Plack did come to the U.S. to testify for the prosecution at the treason trials of the Americans Mildred Gillars and Robert H. Best. Gillars and Best had broadcast radio propaganda for Germany. A March 16, 1948, wire-service photograph shows a smiling, relaxed, and nattily dressed Plack arriving at LaGuardia airfield, holding the hand of his young son.

Either Plack decided to stay in America after giving testimony or he returned to the States sometime later. We know that he was in the United States in March 1950. I came across newspaper articles which mentioned that the Montana Congressman Mike Mansfield had withdrawn a bill that would have stopped Plack's deportation to Germany. The article mentioned that a "Montana rancher" (how did Plack ever meet that fellow?) had requested that Mansfield sponsor Plack's residency request. Mansfield said he had not been told that Plack worked as an aide to Joseph Goebbels. (Not strictly true, but at that time Americans were in no mood to closely examine the organizational chart of the Nazi propaganda machine.)

Many years later, Plack gave interviews to Wodehouse biographers Richard Usborne, Frances Donaldson, and Iain Sproat, providing the details of how Wodehouse came to do the broadcasts. Baroness von Bodenhausen also met Plack long after the war. In her book she writes:

> Werner Plack was genuinely fond of Uncle Plummie. He felt protective towards him and, as he was to tell me in later years, he was deeply upset that he got Uncle Plummie into so much trouble. He had a deep guilt complex about the broadcasts, which had been entirely his idea. It was never his intention to hurt Plum. He was a kind man at heart, a fun person, flamboyant, an extrovert actor, constantly full of ideas.

**Conclusion**

According to the historian Michael Goodman, "The Second World War, unlike any other conflict before, can be classed as an intelligence war." Even before the war, it was recognized by the British and the Germans that Hollywood could have an enormous effect on American public opinion. It is perhaps not surprising that Wodehouse ran into intelligence agents both in prewar Hollywood and in German-occupied Europe. Despite the declassification of documents in this century, however, it remains difficult to get the full picture of what these men were up to, whether innocuous or inimical—good, bad, or ugly. Of course, more information undoubtedly exists in the extensive archives of the Junior Ganymede Club, but it is unlikely that those records will ever be digitized.

# Mike and Psmith at Cambridge: Which College?

## by David L. Leal, PhD

We learn in *Psmith, Journalist* that Mike and Psmith attended Cambridge University. Is that all we need to know about their education after Sedleigh? While this is important information, it only tells half the story. For Oxford and Cambridge students past and present, a key part of their experience is membership in a specific college within the larger university. But what is a college, and what was the college of our boys?

The British usage of the terms "college" and "university" can be unclear to Americans. Stateside, a college is generally a smaller campus focused on undergraduate teaching (e.g., Amherst College) while a university is larger and research-oriented, offering many undergraduate and graduate degrees (e.g., University of Massachusetts at Amherst). To add to the confusion, the word "college" has meanings beyond higher education, for example, the Electoral College, College of Cardinals, and the College of Arms.

The Merriam-Webster definition is not inaccurate but does not quite capture its full educational and social significance: "A self-governing constituent body of a university offering living quarters and sometimes instruction but not granting degrees, [for example,] Balliol and Magdalen Colleges at Oxford."

For students like Mike and Psmith, a college was the sun around which their 'Varsity life revolved. If they wanted to attend Cambridge or Oxford, they applied not to the university but to one of its colleges. If accepted, they were members of that college for their undergraduate career, and they lived within the college walls and obeyed its rules. The student lived in a quadrangle, ate at a hall, attended chapel, was subject to curfew, and received instruction through one-on-one tutorials with college fellows. If they rowed ("Wet Bobs") or played cricket ("Dry Bobs"), it was likely for a college team. If they needed a scholarship, a college was the likely source; Plum hoped to receive one from Oriel College at Oxford. While some students played for the university team (like Mike) or joined an exclusive club (like The Seekers), their college was their home.

All colleges were single-sex, so Mike and Psmith probably had limited interactions with female students. While women were allowed to study at Oxbridge by the 1870s, their numbers were restricted by the small number of new colleges founded for them. They were also subject to social restrictions and often mocked as overly studious "bluestockings," a term many scholarly women would proudly adopt.

*Girton College*

The first women's college in Cambridge was Girton College (1869), and the first two in Oxford were Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville College (1879). Although women could attend lectures and take exams, they could not receive degrees until 1920 at Oxford and 1947 at Cambridge. (We can catch a glimpse of their lives in Dorothy L. Sayers's *Gaudy Night* [1935], set in the fictional Shrewsbury College, Oxford. In Mavis Doriel Hay's *Death on the Cherwell* [1935], we can visit the fictional Persephone College, Cambridge.)

Your college marked you for life as a particular type of person, and such affiliation was on public display until the end of your puff. In Wodehouse's 1929 short story "Prospects for Wambledon," we are introduced to George Winstanley Murgatroyd, a contender for the local tennis trophy who is a "graduate of Cambridge University." No English reader would have been surprised to see him dressed in the raiment of his college days:

> About George's well-modelled shoulders there hung the prismatic scarf of his old college, loosely draped over the throat and blending subtly with the green, orange, and purple blazer of a dining-club to which he had belonged when at the University.

Note that no item of clothing references Cambridge in general. Today, Oxford and Cambridge sweatshirts are found only on tourists. Also note the slight sarcasm ("prismatic" and "blending subtly") used by Plum, who perhaps might have felt wistful when he saw such dress.


The fellows were the instructors and scholars of Oxbridge. Each held a college appointment ("fellowship")

and primarily taught the students of that college. Americans might call them professors, although across the pond, that term generally referred to the most senior faculty. *An Oxford Tragedy* by J. C. Masterman (1933) provides a fictionalized view of their world. It recounts a murder mystery from the perspective of a long-standing fellow whose life is wrapped up in his college.

The fellows would see a college as a self-governing, self-perpetuating, and almost timeless corporate body that existed to instruct its students—and to stock some of the best wine cellars in the kingdom. They received their sinecures early in life and lived a communal life paralleling that of religious orders. They resided in the college, ate at high table, socialized in the SCR (Senior Common/Combination Room), and sat in special choir stalls in chapel which, according to legend, were designed to allow a fellow to sleep while sitting up.

Until the late nineteenth century, fellows were obliged to take holy orders and prohibited from marrying. While some left for parish livings and a wife, others lived all their days in the college. By the time of Psmith and Mike, some would have married and lived outside the college, but changes came slowly to this traditional institution.

Oxford and Cambridge Universities evolved as collections of individual colleges that were founded and endowed over the centuries by monarchs, bishops, noble families, religious orders, and other wealthy and powerful individuals and institutions. The first was founded in 1221 (Blackfriars in Oxford) and the most recent in 2019 (Reuben in Oxford). Henry VIII founded Trinity College in Cambridge, and the Bishop William Waynflete founded Magdalen College in Oxford.

*Trinity College, Cambridge*

These two ancient English universities have some variations (Cambridge has been more centralized than Oxford), but the similarities outweigh the differences. The university was in theory the higher entity but in practice a rather abstract thing. It conferred degrees and had other curricular and examination responsibilities but played a limited role in the everyday life of the students and fellows.

In the time of Psmith and Mike, the university did not control who studied and taught at Oxford, as the colleges admitted students and hired fellows. Financially, the colleges were on their own, and the system was grandly inefficient because many resources that could have been provided centrally were duplicated in each college.

The colleges jealously guarded their individual and collective power and privileges, and even today the university can be overshadowed by its colleges. If a tourist in Oxford asked to be directed to the University, it would be difficult to point out a specific place.

Then as now, colleges had varying degrees of wealth and prestige, and a relatively small and poor college (Pembroke, Oxford) could be a very different place than a college across the street (Christ Church, Oxford). When two former Oxbridge students meet, their first question is inevitably "What was your college?" While the role of the colleges in shaping the Oxbridge experience may be declining, the affiliation remains meaningful.

What does this mean for Mike and Psmith? We know they were members of a college, as the end of *Psmith, Journalist* provides a tantalizing but vague glimpse of their life:

> It was a drizzly November evening. The streets of Cambridge were a compound of mud, mist, and melancholy. But in Psmith's rooms the fire burned brightly, the kettle droned, and all, as the proprietor had just observed, was joy, jollity, and song. Psmith, in pyjamas and a college blazer, was lying on the sofa. Mike, who had been playing football, was reclining in a comatose state in an arm-chair by the fire.

Psmith is in the driver's seat of their Cambridge adventure, as his father is paying the tab for both. Psmith would have wanted Mike to attend Psmith's own college, just as he convinced Mike to move from dull digs in Dulwich to his luxurious flat in Clement's Inn:

> I make you a business proposition. I offer you the post of confidential secretary and adviser to me in exchange for a comfortable home. The duties will be light. You will be required to refuse invitations to dinner from crowned heads, and to listen attentively to my views on Life. Apart from this, there is little to do. So that's settled.

This offer would undoubtedly have transferred to Cambridge: Mike must attend the same college as Psmith and continue his friend-in-residence role. While the text above does not clearly state this, the implication is clear.

So, did they graduate from Cambridge? Many Oxbridge students did not, ranging from those who,

like Claude and Eustace, were "sent down" (expelled) to those who saw no need to receive a degree. One clue is that Mike reluctantly took a job as a schoolmaster after Cambridge, which suggests he graduated. In another saga, Bertie noted that Bingo was able to get a job tutoring "the Glossop kid" because he received "a degree of sorts at Oxford, and I suppose you can always fool some of the people some of the time." If Bingo needed a degree to tutor this "pestilential" kid, Mike likely needed a degree to teach at a public school, although it was probably more of the Sedleigh variety ("school") than Eton College ("leading school").

Finally, which was the college attended by Mike and Psmith? As a son of the landed gentry, Psmith would have joined one of the larger, more prestigious, and wealthier colleges at Cambridge. While neither Psmith nor Mike covered himself with academic glory at Eton-Wrykyn-Sedleigh, this was no barrier to admissions for members of the genteel classes. To identify a specific college, we might begin by consulting contemporary data on college endowments. While such numbers are a century away from the world of Psmith and Mike, reputations and rankings change very slowly in higher education.

By far the wealthiest college is Trinity, and the colleges with over £300 million in endowments are St. John's, King's, Jesus, Peterhouse, and Gonville & Caius. As the home of Isaac Newton, Trinity had a scientific reputation that was unlikely to appeal to our boys. And Trinity may have been a little too grand for Sedleigh students, however respectable their families. A St. John's College is found in both Cambridge and Oxford and, while both are rich historically and financially, they are under-the-radar places. I doubt this would be the choice of the larger-than-life Psmith. King's College is dominated architecturally by its chapel and has historic connections to Eton, where Psmith sported on the green. That he was "superannuated" (flunked out) from Eton might put a damper on that connection.

Jesus College has extensive sporting grounds, which might have appealed to Mike, but less to Psmith. Peterhouse is small and has a long-standing reputation for conservatism, tradition, and crust. While this is deliciously refreshing in our era, I do not think it would quite suit Psmith. Gonville & Caius is known for its medical training, but his persiflage would not prosper in a profession that prescribes precision.

*King's College Chapel, likely not a hangout for Psmith*

This breezy romp through the wealthiest Cambridge colleges has failed to find one that fits with the Psmith and Mike we know and love. However, the next college in the endowment list is Trinity Hall, and according to the college's website:

> Bishop Bateman originally founded the College to promote the study of canon and civil law, probably due to the shortage of clergymen and lawyers following the Black Death of 1349. To this day, the College maintains a very strong tradition in the study of Law.

In his preface to *The World of Psmith* (1974), Wodehouse predicted Psmith's future: "My guess is that he studied law, became a barrister, was a great success and wound up by taking silk. He may even have become a Judge." The college would have less appeal to Mike, as the Cambridge cricket captains of his era were largely from Trinity College, not Trinity Hall. Nevertheless, the Trinity Hall cricket grounds are just a short walk away, and Mike was not one to look a gift horse in the mouth. And we know from *Psmith, Journalist* that regardless of college, Mike received his Blue ("with a century against Oxford to his credit").

The college is small but not without its charm. It backs onto the Cam, and the college website proudly notes the following quote from Henry James: "If I were called upon to mention the prettiest corner of the world, I should draw a thoughtful sigh and point the way to the gardens of Trinity Hall." A "thoughtful sigh" has a nice Wodehousian ring, does it not?

*Trinity Hall College, Cambridge, "the prettiest corner of the world," according to Henry James, and the most likely college for Mike and Psmith, per our illustrious Professor Leal*

> Mike did not like being in the bank, considered in the light of a career. But he bore no grudge against the inmates of the bank, such as he had borne against the inmates of Sedleigh.
>
> *Psmith in the City* (1910)

# The P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University

BY ANITA AVERY

BEGINNING WITH the 1915 silent films *A Gentleman of Leisure* and *Rule Sixty-Three*, there have been numerous Wodehouse works and collaborations on film. Six Wodehouse golf stories were adapted from *The Clicking of Cuthbert* (1922) as short silent films, produced by Stoll Pictures Productions. The Vanderbilt collection includes three of those on DVD: "Rodney Fails to Qualify," "Chester Forgets Himself," and "The Long Hole." The remaining three would be welcome additions to the collection: "The Clicking of Cuthbert," "Ordeal by Golf," and "The Magic Plus Fours."

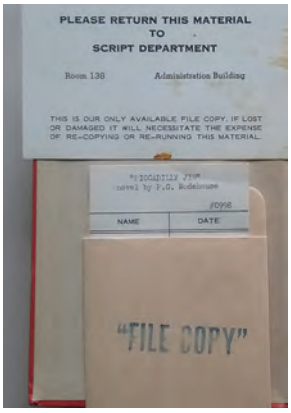
A 1989 Turner Home Entertainment VHS of the 1937 RKO Radio Pictures production of *A Damsel in Distress* (based on the novel of the same name) stars Fred Astaire, Joan Fontaine, George Burns, and Gracie Allen. With a screenplay by P. G. Wodehouse, E. Pagano, and S. K. Lauren, and with music and lyrics by George and Ira Gershwin, it makes for enjoyable viewing. In his book, *P. G. Wodehouse and Hollywood*, Brian Taves related that in a radio interview with Hedda Hopper, Wodehouse remarked that he was sorry that he hadn't met Allen earlier, saying that she was "one of the funniest women I have ever met."

Also in the holdings, courtesy of Tony Ring, is a privately produced DVD of *Mam'zelle Milliard*, an abridged version (with French intertitles) of the earlier (1919) silent film of *A Damsel in Distress*. The title reflects the married name of the film's female star. There is no known copy of the film in the Library of Congress, nor in any other library. A 2014 DVD of *Brother Alfred*, starring Gene Gerrard and Molly Lamont, is a reissue of the British International Films release from 1932. The screenplay by P. G. Wodehouse and Herbert Westbrook was adapted by H. Edwards and Claude Gurney.


The 1937 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film *Rosalie* (a VHS copy of which we've received) stars the romantic duo Nelson Eddy and Eleanor Powell. This marvelous film was the result of a stellar collaboration: book by W. A. McGuire and Guy Bolton, music by George Gershwin and Sigmund Romberg, and lyrics by P. G. Wodehouse and Ira Gershwin, and with Cole Porter's incomparable "In the Still of the Night" as a bonus. As a nod to the magic created when Jerome Kern melodies meet the lyrics of Wodehouse, one shouldn't miss the digitally remastered DVD of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's *Till the Clouds Roll By*, from 1946. Based on the life of Jerome Kern, from a story by Guy Bolton and screenplay adaptation by Myles Connolly and Jean Holloway, the film includes the title song and "Leave It to Jane," both with lyrics by Wodehouse and Bolton, and "Cleopatterer," lyrics by Wodehouse.



An exciting and truly unique item from the collection of Pat Levinson gives us a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the production process at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. At one time Pat's brother worked in the Script Department, which kept all manner of books, magazines, and script submissions for possible future films. In 1936, the studio released *Piccadilly Jim*, starring Robert Montgomery. Around 1970, deciding to clear out the accumulation of many decades, management invited employees to take what they wanted from "the pile." Pat's brother, exhibiting good taste, chose a well-preserved copy of the book *Piccadilly Jim*, complete with the Script Department's official library plate and check-out slip.




In years past, the Turner Classic Movies Channel has aired several Wodehouse-related films: *Just a Gigolo*; *The Passionate Plumber*; *The Man in Possession*; *Step Lively, Jeeves!*; *Thank You, Jeeves*; *Anything Goes*; *Tops Is the*

*Limit*; and three versions of *Show Boat*. In 2006, Myriad Pictures (U.K.) released a new *Piccadilly Jim* film. The collection would welcome these and any authorized publications of the many other Wodehouse films as well as upgrades to DVD format. Please consult Section J of the online database, scrolling down to J51, to see a listing of known Wodehouse-related films and the collection's holdings of same.

A good number of recent donations now being catalogued will bring the holdings to well over 800 in addition to more than forty TWS documents and ephemera. The online database may be seen at http://www.wodehouse.org/PGWCVU. Click on the gold navigation bar for links to all sections.

# OM Reflections: Muddle "C"

And so we come to the oft-praised (yet unproven) year of 2021, which is by many thought to be the antidote to and relief from the evil 2020. Of course, the river of time doesn't really respect such chronological signposts along the way, rushing as it does, spilling over the banks, splashing all over those on the rafts willying and nillying down the flood.

As Wodehouseans, we realize that there are some things (great literature, for example) so timeless that the end of one year and the start of another doesn't change this, that, or the other. So, as the COVID story moves to the vaccination chapter, and the Colorado and California conflagrations take a winter break, and a few other wild twists and turns—not to be mentioned in this short space—move to new (and better) phases, we still look forward to our bookshelf (real or virtual), and in 2021 we can still celebrate a stable truth: The works of PGW will light up our lives as they did for us in 2020. Ever onward.

# A Blandings Scarabesque

## by Graeme Davidson

*A version of this article was published in the U.K. society's* Wooster Sauce *in 2018, and we're happy to share Graeme's scarabesque with our TWS readers.*

A couple of years ago I was working on notes for a small archive of material chiefly comprising artwork by British artist-illustrator Bill Payne. The artwork was a progression towards his final design/image for the dust jacket (spine and front cover) of the U.K. first edition of *Galahad at Blandings* (Herbert Jenkins, London, 1965). On page 15, you'll see that the progression includes an early design showing Gally looking more like President Franklin D. Roosevelt than my idea of the raffish younger brother of Clarence, the 9th Earl of Emsworth. The final version shows Gally looking very different from that early iteration.

Interest in the development of the image prompted me to check into the eventual artwork for purposes of writing up notes on the artwork archive. Those checks surfaced the following information, which might interest *Plum Lines* readers.

The invaluable *P. G. Wodehouse: A Comprehensive Bibliography and Checklist* by Eileen McIlvaine, Louise S. Sherby, and James H. Heineman indicates that in a letter from Plum to Frank Sullivan dated March 22, 1965, Plum stated that the jacket [of *Galahad at Blandings*] "makes Gally look like a Beatle." Wodehouse was seemingly not an enthusiast of the book jacket, and this surprised me. I quite like the jacket; it is not unpleasing in its theatricality, and I cannot see much in the rendering of Gally on it that might be considered coleopteran.

I investigated and have concluded that the entry on the matter in McIlvaine might be judged misleading. Here are the key points that lead me to that conclusion.

(1) At the time of the letter to Sullivan, *Galahad at Blandings* was not yet published, though *The Brinkmanship of Galahad Threepwood* (the U.S. iteration of *Galahad at Blandings*) had been.

(2) The artwork used for the *Galahad at Blandings* dust jacket seems unlikely to have been determined/finalized by the date of Wodehouse's letter to Sullivan, judging from a letter from the illustrator, Bill Payne, dated February 24, 1965, which indicates that finalization of the eventual artwork for the *Galahad at Blandings* dust jacket was not on the immediate horizon.

(3) The image of Gally on the *Galahad at Blandings* dust jacket is that of a man who is either of advanced

years or is at least middle-aged, rather than a person of an age which a Beatle would have been at the time of Wodehouse's letter.

(4) The image of Galahad on the dust jacket for *The Brinkmanship of Galahad Threepwood* (the artwork used on that dust jacket being by John Alcorn, the award-winning American artist-illustrator) is that of a clearly younger man than Payne's rendering of Gally and (the monocle aside) is portrayed in garb that is at least somewhat more consistent with the garb of a Beatle than that shown in the Payne illustration.

It is those points which underpin my argument and conclusion that the image which Wodehouse was referring to in his letter to Frank Sullivan is the Alcorn rendering of Gally (on the dust jacket for *The Brinkmanship of Galahad Threepwood*) and not the Payne rendering (on the *Galahad at Blandings* dust jacket).

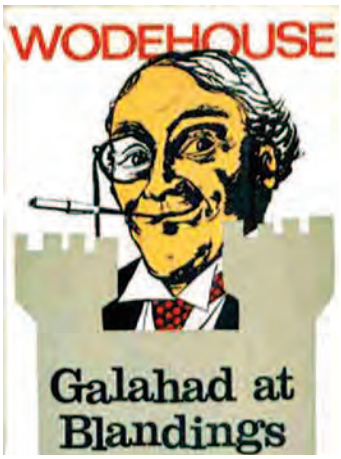
Admittedly, I have not seen the letter to Sullivan, and so do not know definitively what Wodehouse wrote in it. (If anyone knows its whereabouts, please pipe up.) There is some dependency, therefore, on data gleaned from the entry in McIlvaine. I accordingly acknowledge the possibility that Wodehouse's letter may have made mention of *Galahad at Blandings*.

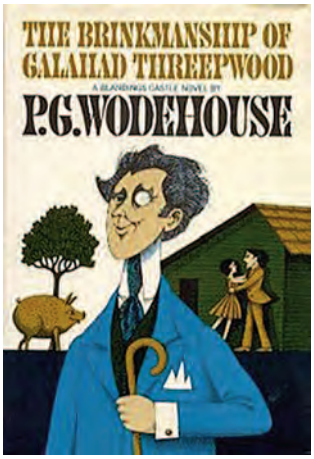
However, even if PGW did make such mention in the letter, I suggest that the artwork Wodehouse had in mind when making his Beatle comment was the Alcorn artwork for *The Brinkmanship* and not the Payne artwork for *Galahad at Blandings*.

Perhaps in Wodehouse's head, the name of the book, irrespective of whether it was the American iteration of the book or the English iteration, was *Galahad at Blandings* and therefore he used that title in his letter. Also, a random review of some of the references by Wodehouse to his books in his letters points to a tendency to use the U.K. titles rather than the U.S. titles, even before the days of Peter Schwed's intervention in titling American editions.

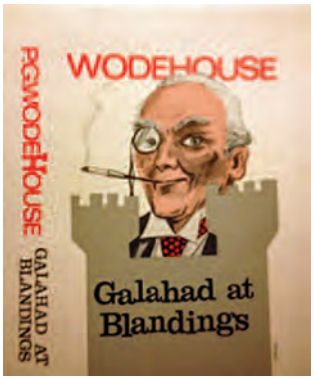
In any event, a letter of November 27, 1964, from Plum to J. D. Grimsdick (of Herbert Jenkins), published in Sophie Ratcliffe's ever-helpful *P. G. Wodehouse, A Life in Letters*, appears to put it beyond any reasonable doubt my theory that the McIlvaine entry misleads. (Thank you, Sophie.)

However, so that you might judge for yourself, independently of my argument above, which artwork you think Wodehouse had in mind when he made his Beatle comment to Sullivan, set out at the top of the next column are the images from the dust jackets for *Galahad at Blandings* and *The Brinkmanship of Galahad Threepwood*. Following those two items, and shown for




interest, is an early iteration of the dust-jacket design for *Galahad at Blandings* showing a Gally perhaps more inspired by the New Deal than by ways to help young star-crossed lovers (left, below). Also, (right, below) is another early iteration, which has an air of perhaps being inspired by the dust-jacket image by Roberts for


the U.K. first edition of *Summer Lightning*.

To my eye, the image on the top right might be thought to be a Beatle-ish figure, whereas the one on the left of the top row looks more like a fellow who might be godfather to one of the Beatles but not actually be, or look like, a Beatle himself.

Case closed.


There was, moreover, something in Freddie's personality, the quality of persuasiveness which had enabled him to sell dog biscuits to Wilks Brothers of Manchester and Beatle, Beatle and Beatle of Liverpool, that made him hard to resist.

"Life with Freddie" (1966)

# "The Case for Ukridge": A Response

## by Elliott Milstein

*Between the two of them, Elliott Milstein and Professor David Leal are furthering Ukridgean research, albeit from different perspectives. Let the debate continue!*

First of all, I must say that I am pleased that Professor David Leal has chosen me as his target, after taking on Norman Murphy in the Summer 2020 issue of *Plum Lines* (an article I enjoyed thoroughly). To be second after Norman is indeed an honor.

It would be churlish, then, under the circs., to express anything but gratitude for reviving interest in my talk nineteen years after it was given, but I still feel the need to take issue with the point of view presented.

In my talk (now a chapter in *A Plum Assignment* by myself and Curtis Armstrong), I looked at Ukridge the man, Ukridge the character, and the Ukridge stories themselves, each separately and differently. My primary concern is that, despite saying that I'm "not a fan of Ukridge the person [but I] find the Ukridge stories appealing," Professor Leal frequently quotes my criticisms of Ukridge as a person and interprets them as criticisms of the stories or of the character, even when I specifically compliment Wodehouse on his creation of this character and the brilliance of the writing.

Professor Leal does something similar with the reference he makes to Curtis Armstrong's introduction to my talk: assigning to him the idea that since he thought Ukridge was running dry as a character, he must also feel the same about Lord Emsworth and Jeeves. Knowing Curtis, I can say that such an inference is untrue. Curtis describes Ukridge as "brilliant as a comic character," thus anticipating a key point of my talk: Brilliant comic characters, when considered as real people, are often not particularly pleasant companions, such as Malvolio and Zaphod Beeblebrox.

Now, I don't know if Stanley Ukridge belongs in that company; other than his habit of cooking up schemes that get his friends in trouble, as well as his inability to distinguish between *meum* and *tuum*, he seems to be a pleasant fellow. But even in the following few instances where Professor Leal defends the man Ukridge, he goes far out on the limb of assumption.

"Selling the 'snake oil' of Peppo is not an impossible business model . . . and Murphy notes that this would not have been illegal at the time." Well, yes, not illegal, but, legal or not, selling a patent medicine that you know does nothing is not the work of a particularly admirable fellow.


Professor Leal says, "I think Ukridge intends to pay his debts one day. He once says to Corky 'Don't worry, you'll get your money back. A thousandfold,' and I see no reason to doubt him." Well, the good professor may see none, but I think most readers (as well as the other characters in the stories) have plenty of reason to doubt. The hyperbole of "a thousandfold" is funny because the mere return of capital itself is highly unlikely. Even the two examples Professor Leal gives where Ukridge does in fact pay back a small portion of a loan, both receivers of the money are astonished by the experience.

Professor Leal says that Ukridge "takes Corky to lunch at the Ritz (even if Corky must pay in the end, through no intentional fault of Ukridge)." This assertion is contradicted by Professor Leal himself, when he states earlier in his article: "The fact that Corky must pay for dinner at the end of the story because Ukridge 'inadvertently' left his money at home suggests his windfall had limits." You can't have it both ways.

Professor Leal also takes issue with my position that nearly all of Ukridge's business ideas are "schemes" or "scams". I came to this conclusion by trying to create a business plan for each of them, but invariably ran into problems because nearly all of them involved stealing something or using someone else's capital or stock without their permission, strategies which no business plan can properly value—because they are illegal. Professor Leal even excuses Ukridge's "misdemeanors" on the grounds that they are "non-felonious." Misdemeanor theft is punishable by up to one year in jail, and so still is not acceptable.

I must, however, compliment and thank Professor Leal for reminding us of the theory, put forward by Tony Ring (among others), that the events in *Love Among the Chickens* occur after the short stories (and that the later short stories occur during the same period as the earlier ones). When I wrote my talk in 2000, I had given no weight to this argument as it was unsupported by any internal evidence—i.e., there was no foreshadowing in the stories nor any reference to past events in the revised version of *Love*, which Wodehouse was working on while sketching out the first few short stories.

But with subsequent research performed while writing this response, I discovered that this was in fact Wodehouse's intent, as revealed in his letter to Bill Townend (June 27, 1922) in which he explains that he is planning a series of stories about Ukridge and says, "At the date of the series he is still unmarried." So Wodehouse does seem to think of *Love* as being in the future. Oh, if only Sophie Ratcliffe had published *A Life in Letters* ten years earlier! So on that point, thank you, Professor: I stand corrected.

Finally, I do agree (and this was part of the point of my talk—as well as explicit in Curtis's introduction) that more attention should be paid to the Ukridge saga and that we should not turn away from it because the protagonist is an unpleasant person. He is a great character, and so many hilarious and brilliantly written scenes take place in these stories. So if Professor Leal's article accomplishes that, then I say, "Well done, laddie; carry on, old horse!"

# The Little Church Around the Corner

## by Nick Louras

When the English actor George Holland died in New York City in 1870, it fell to his friend and colleague Joseph Jefferson to arrange the funeral. Jefferson found his task complicated by the somewhat disreputable status of the theatre in polite society. He enquired at the Church of the Atonement, an Episcopal parish near the theatre district, between Madison and Herald Squares. He was turned away. The rector told him, "I believe there is a little church around the corner where it might be done." Jefferson replied, "Then I say to you, sir, God bless the little church around the corner." This was the Church of the Transfiguration, another parish of the Protestant Episcopal Church, located on 29th Street, off Fifth Avenue. It had been founded in 1848 and was still under the direction of its first rector, George Hendric Houghton.

Reverend Houghton was sympathetic. Although not a theatre patron himself, he knew the prejudice that actors faced from experience. The *New York Times* reported that Houghton had been to a play only once in his life, at the age of fifteen: "He went with a cousin to the old Chatham Street Theatre. But the horror and grief of his mother at the time forever took away from him the desire to attend again." Houghton accommodated Holland's funeral, which he conducted with dignity. The kindness was never forgotten. The Church of the Transfiguration became New York City's actors' church, attended and patronized by the great stars of the nineteenth-century stage. Edwin Booth was a parishioner, memorialized in one of the stained-glass windows. In the early twentieth century, Fred Astaire was confirmed at the parish. In 1923 it became the headquarters of the Episcopal Actors' Guild, of which Basil Rathbone, Rex Harrison, Joan Fontaine, Tallulah Bankhead, and Boris Karloff were members. To this day the Church of the Transfiguration has a theatrical congregation who know it affectionately as the Little Church Around the Corner.

P. G. Wodehouse had a fond association with the Little Church. In 1914 he was living in New York City—a visit that had turned into a residence because of the First World War. In August of that year, he met Ethel Wayman, his future wife. By the end of September they were engaged. Wodehouse was pleased to discover that the Little Church's tradition of accommodating theatrical types extended to no-questions-asked weddings. On September 30 of the same year, the Wodehouses were married at the church. Throughout the rest of his career as a writer Wodehouse would pay tribute to the event and the church in his work.

The most spectacular reference appeared in the 1920 musical *Sally*, which Wodehouse co-wrote with Jerome Kern and Guy Bolton. A triple wedding at the finale is celebrated at the church, which necessitated reproducing the exterior on the stage of the New Amsterdam Theatre. The chorus in the finale sing, "Dear little, dear little Church 'Round the Corner, / Where so many lives have begun, / Where folks without money see nothing that's funny / In two living cheaper than one."

The church had already begun to appear in Wodehouse's novels by the time *Sally* premiered

*Manhattan's Church of the Transfiguration*

on Broadway. In the 1916 novel *Uneasy Money*, he describes the Little Church as "the only church that anybody could possibly be married at. It's on Twenty-Ninth Street, just around the corner from Fifth Avenue. It's got a fountain playing in front of it, and it's a little bit of Heaven dumped right down in the middle of New York."

In his 1922 novel *The Girl on the Boat*, Mrs. Hignett is confronted with a report of her son's marriage. "My son is not married," she says. "No," comes the reply, "but he's going to be. At eleven o'clock this morning at the Little Church Round the Corner!"

The mere sight of the Little Church serves as an omen of love in Wodehouse's 1927 novel *The Small Bachelor*: "And it was at this precise moment—just, dramatically enough, when the bus was passing Twenty-Ninth Street with its pretty and suggestive glimpse of the Little Church Round the Corner," that Hamilton Beamish notices "for the first time the girl in the seat across the way."

The 1952 novel *Barmy in Wonderland* ends with Drones Club regular "Barmy" Fotheringay-Phipps dictating a telegram "To the Rector, or Vicar or whatever he is, Little Church Around the Corner," while planning his wedding to Eileen "Dinty" Moore. "What ho, vicar, or rector as the case may be," he writes. "Clear the decks for big wedding in near future, my puss. The Phippses are coming—and I may add with bells on."

In his 1967 novel *Company for Henry*, Wodehouse strikes an elegiac note for the days of quickie showbiz marriages at the Little Church. Former chorus girl (and unlikely Wodehousian widowed aunt) Kelly Stickney recalls of her husband Theodore: "We were married a week later at the Little Church Around the Corner, and very happy we were, too, till he got that apoplectic stroke and passed on. You couldn't keep the poor angel off the lobster Newburg and caviar and of course the brandy helped quite a good deal. But, as I say, everything was fine while he lasted. You hear people knocking married life, but it suited me."

And it suited the Wodehouses. Their marriage lasted for over sixty years until Plum's death in 1975.

*On May 1, 1994, The Wodehouse Society dedicated a plaque in the Little Church to the memory of P. G. and Ethel Wodehouse, as documented in the Summer 1994 issue of* Plum Lines. *In the Spring 2011 issue, the topic of the plaque was revisited, triggered by the passing of Florence Cunningham, a society stalwart and a driving force behind the plaque project. You may see these issues (and all other* PL *archived issues), on the society's website at wodehouse.org. Thanks to new TWS member Nick Louras for reminding us again of this great landmark. —OM*

# A Few Quick Ones

In the November 9, 2020, "Culture" tab of BBC.com, John Self argued that "the fiction that makes us laugh the most is, paradoxically, often the most profound and intelligent." Mr. Self said that this fiction is not being rewarded: "Even the most celebrated comic novelist of the last century, P. G. Wodehouse, referred to himself—and was praised by others—in terms that made his work sound slight and insubstantial." Mr. Self mentioned Wodehouse's collection of letters (*Performing Flea*) and the famous quote from *Punch* magazine that said "to criticize Wodehouse is like taking a spade to a soufflé." In conclusion, the columnist summed up: "Iit was only twenty years ago that the U.K. got its own award for comic novels: the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize. . . . Yet even now, there persists a curious lack of confidence in the serious business of making us laugh: In 2018, the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize was withheld because none of the books was deemed funny enough. And no, this is not a joke." You can read the entire article at https://tinyurl.com/26skk9zj.

# TWS Convention—2022!

That wild and crazy TWS Convention Committee has pulled a magic luminescent rabbit out of a hat: There *will* be a TWS convention in San Diego, but not on the original 2021 dates. Instead, the convention will be held on October 20–23, 2022. The fabulous US Grant Hotel will be the venue, as originally planned for 2021. Stay tuned for more information, which will be posted on our website (www.wodehouse.org) and on Facebook (www.facebook.com/groups/182929785220053).

# This Hordern or That Hordern

In the Winter 2020 *Plum Lines*, in the regular column about the Vanderbilt collection, we identified James Hordern as Jeeves in the BBC Radio 1990 and 1992 radio dramatizations. Eagle-eyed Graeme Davidson ("I may be no detective, . . . but the subterfuge did not fool me") realized that this was not accurate. As Graeme put it: "The actor playing Jeeves, lightly hidden beneath, as it were, the crepe beard and whiskers of a false name, was not James Hordern but the great and unmistakable Sir Michael Hordern." Note that later in the article, Sir Michael is correctly identified.

# CHAPTERS CORNER

What is your chapter up to these days? Please send all news to Gary Hall. Note that webmaster Noel Merrill keeps chapter items posted on the society website. It's good to send advance information about upcoming events to Noel. Contact info for Gary and Noel can be found on the last page of this issue.

**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: Bill Franklin

This stalwart reporter must apologize for not getting signals into the dispatches for Whitehall in time for the previous quarter's journal. But a subtle reminder from an editor, and a reminder from a participant, rapidly set me to put pen to paper—or fingers to keyboard in this more modern era.

The Blandings Castle Chapter, which incorporates Silicon Valley (much like the *The Bridgnorth*, *Shifnal*, and *Albrighton Argus*, with which is incorporated *The Wheat Growers' Intelligencer and Stock Breeders' Gazetteer*) has taken a bit of the technology of the Valley and the distributed behavior enforced by COVID-19, and expanded our monthly meeting even further afield. The call, which occurs on the last Sunday of each month at 1 pm Pacific Time, is open to all right-minded Wodehouseans who care to join in our wide-ranging discussions. Recent guests, some who are now regulars, include members from the Northwodes, NEWTS, Chicago Accident Syndicate, the Pickering Motor Company, the Broadway Special, and others who do not specifically associate with a chapter. I need to also mention that a number of wonderful regulars are folks from the U.K. Society as well as a society member from eastern Australia (where our meeting time is Monday morning at eight o'clock).

While we do discuss how Wodehouse relates to the world, such as in the current viral sea shanty phenomenon, or how Wodehouse helps promote students to pursue a degree in Classics, we do also have conversation to catch up with each other. With all of the risks of COVID-19 and with many Wodehouse fans sheltering in place, it is nice just to know that we are all safe and well. We also like to compare our ages to predict vaccination time. I am happy to report that a number of folks on our January 31 call had either received a vaccination or had an upcoming appointment.

We have also had a number of recent authors talk about their upcoming books or publications. Paul Kent spoke with us in December about the most recent installment in his literary analysis of Wodehouse, *Pelham Grenville Wodehouse: Volume 2: Mid-Season Form*. And Neil Midkiff has shared a number of things going on over at madameulalie.org, which continues to be a great resource for readers and scholars.

Should any additional readers wish to join us in merry conversation or give us a recitation of verse or song, even of a sea shanty for that matter, just send me an email and we'll get you on the Zoom reminder list.

*—Bill Franklin*

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

**Capital! Capital!**
(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Parsons

**Chapter One**
(Greater Philadelphia area)
Contact: Mark Reber

Chapter One gathered on October 27 by Zoom, by Jove, by Jeeves. We turned our attention to a 1966 television adaptation of two Plum stories: the only surviving complete episode of *The World of Wooster*, a BBC three-season series that starred Ian Carmichael as Bertie and Dennis Price as Jeeves. Prior to our meeting, we all watched the YouTube presentation of one of the

episodes, "Jeeves and the Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace." Conversation began with speculation about the production: What was Wodehouse's role other than granting permission? Was it performed in front of a live audience or was canned laughter used? And so on.

There was general appreciation for the show, even when it strayed from the stories on which it was based—"Sir Roderick Comes to Lunch" and "The Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace." Several chaps commented on the deft way that nonverbal humor and character interaction took the place of narrative. There was, however, disapproval of Carmichael's un-Bertie-like monocle and the actor's age (nearing fifty). An incident in which Price's Jeeves lost his composure with Aunt Agatha was declared a mistake, not at all like Jeeves.

Finally, we honored the intentions of Claude and Eustace by each of us recalling and confessing to incidents (no doubt in the distant past) of having appropriated small items formerly belonging to others.

*—Mark Reber*

**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

On Saturday, January 9, a Junior Bloodstain was held at 11 am via Zoom during the virtual Baker Street Irregulars (BSI) weekend.

Aficionados of both Sherlock Holmes and the stories of P. G. Wodehouse, through the wonders of technology and the expertise of William Brown, were able to view "A Voice From the Past" from the 1975 *Wodehouse Playhouse*. There was an ensuing discussion, and Neil Midkiff shared screenshots of the story as published in the *Strand* magazine.

*—Elaine Coppola*

**The Den(ver) of the Secret Nine**
(Denver and vicinity)
Contact: Jennifer Petkus

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

**The Flying Pigs**
(Cincinnati area and elsewhere)
Contact: Susan Pace or Bill Scrivener

**Friends of the Fifth Earl of Ickenham**
(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)
Contact: Laura Loehr

**A Little More Bertie Than Jeeves**
(Waynesville/Sylva, North Carolina)
Contact: Beth Baxley

After joint meetings earlier in 2020, including attending Margaret Raether's play *Jeeves Saves the Day* in February, our chapter and the Melonsquashvillagers have grown so fond of one another that we simply had to convene on December 14 on Zoom.

It was a delightful e-meeting of minds; we discussed "Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit." This virtual bash was arranged by a compter-adept Melonsquash member who holds dual citizenship in our chapter.

Readers in North Carolina were Beth and Steve Baxley; their daughter, Lauren Baxley, and boyfriend Jason McMahan (both trained actors who raised the tone considerably); Rady Large; Jenny Shattuck; Jane Rigot; and Mary Jane and Stephen Curry. Melonsquashville readers, broadcasting from Knoxville, were Ken and Joan Clevenger and Audrey Duncan; from Alabama, Noel Merrill; and from Florida, Linda and Ralph Norman. Joyce and Debbie Dalton were a superb mother-and-daughter audience. Like Gally, we thrive on enraptured listeners.

Special thanks to Beth and Linda, who helped facilitate the scripts we used. Our chapter Zoomed again on January 11 and discussed another Blandings Castle novel, *Full Moon*.

*—Mary Jane Curry*

**The Melonsquashville (TN) Literary Society**
(Tennessee)
Contact: Ken Clevenger

**The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels**
(San Antonio and South Texas)
Contact: Lynette Poss
t

**The New England Wodehouse Th ingummy So ciety (NEWTS)**
(Boston and New England)
Contact: Lynn Vesley-Gross,

or Roberta Towner

The NEWTS meet at least quarterly in gatherings known as nottles. We Zoom-nottled in December, and a particularly good time was had by all. Stef Adams and Shannon Poe-Kennedy had cooked and baked delicious goodies and then delivered boxes of them to most participants to enjoy while Zooming. A remarkable beverage called a Boston Snowflake was packed in along with Plum Linzer cookies, petit fours, cheese straws, and many other treats. Thank you, Stef and Shannon! The intellectual dimension of the meeting was also at a high level. Notes on weather in various parts were compared. The conclusion was a rousing reading of the PGW short story "The Truth About George." Bets are being placed on a future NEWTS crossword championship.

*—Lynn Vesley-Gross*


*Newts nottling via the "Hollywood Squares" Zoom arrangement.*

**The Northwodes**
(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)
Contact: Mike Eckman

The Northwodes gathered on November 17 to discuss *If I Were You* (1931), a two-babies-switched-at-birth story. Questions of class, innate character, and nature vs. nurture really animated our discussion. A qualified happy ending: one got the title, one got the money, and they both got the right girl. Our Gilbert & Sullivan subset did see the book as a potential script for a three-act play or operetta. We'll be rich!

*The Inimitable Jeeves* was discussed on December 29. A favorite story was "Aunt Agatha Takes the Count," where Bertie for once had the advantage of Aunt Agatha. Bruce Willey pointed out that you can tell Bertie "won" in "Pearls Mean Tears" because he was doling out money as a reward to Jeeves. Maria Jette noted how Bertie, a good egg, is given slight regard by his friends even though he's a fine host, generous with money, pays for lunch, and willing to loan out Jeeves. Holly Windle noted Bingo's ridiculously wasteful telegrams, costing $30 or $40 in today's money. Karen Langenfeld wondered if Steggles switched the oranges, or could it have been Jeeves? Diane Madlon-Kay enjoyed the characters' willingness to bet on almost anything. Janna Kysilko related that when she was a horse-mad girl and friends were playing kick-the-can between races at the local horse track, the game became a cause for betting among spectators.

On January 26, the New Year was welcomed with a lively and enlightening discussion of *Joy in the Morning*. Dick Sveum pointed out that the dust cover and illustrations of the first U.S. edition were by Paul Galdone, who also illustrated the *Basil of Baker Street* series, which evolved into Disney's *The Great Mouse Detective*. Plimsolls intrigued Richard Rames and Mike Eckman, leading to a discussion of a ship's hull mark denoting the limit to which a ship may be loaded. This also got us talking about canvas shoes that get wet when water goes over the line on the shoe's rubber sole. Oh, the many paths we discover when discussing Wodehouse's works! Joe Dolson theorized that Boko Fittleworth represents Wodehouse himself. Bill Sipple asserted that none of Bertie's engagements were binding agreements as there was not a valid offer and acceptance and no meeting of minds. Nonetheless, the power of women is palpable as the corporate magnate Percy quakes at the idea of Agatha learning of his trip to the Fancy Dress Ball.

*—Mike Engstrom*

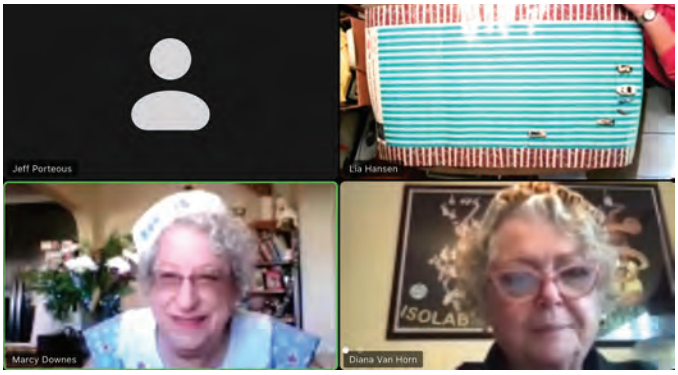
**The Orange Plums**
(Orange County, California)
Contact: Lia Hansen, or Diana Van Horn

Ahoy! Perennial nautical nebbish (and frequent shipwreck) Admiral "Fruity" Biffen here, reporting in via ship-to-shore.

Some traditions, such as the launching of great ships with the crash of champagne bottles across their bows, simply must be upheld. And so it was in this same maritime spirit that the O. Plummies uttered "Damn the torpedoes!" and committed to the challenge of holding their traditional holiday Boat Race Night (homemade PGW trivia board-game soirée) via the now ubiquitous Zoom virtual meeting platform.

We missed our beloved MC for this aquatic contest, Orlando Maltravers (Doug Kendrick, proprietor of the Perfecto-Zizzbaum chapter), by virtue of his being in the process of moving out of state, but we elected to soldier on without him regardless.

Intrepid Billie Dore (Lia Hansen) somehow figured a way to hook up a separate microphone and elevated camera so that all participants could enjoy a clear, steady video feed of the game board from her home.

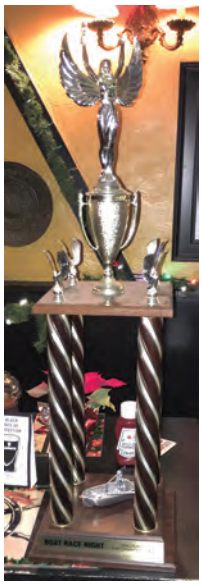



*The Orange Plums enjoy their virtual boat race.*

As in the past, prewritten and mostly multiple-choice questions had been submitted on index cards by chapter members prior to the game, content taken from PGW books read by the group throughout the year. Some were ridiculously easy, others were quite challenging or even inscrutable, but all of the questions were designed for maximum fun.

Being a boat race, the game had pieces that generally represented watercraft, though a shark and a couple of other marine odds and ends also appeared, including a tiny fruit basket. Given my nickname, this should have been mine, of course, but it was actually assigned to a member who couldn't join us for the gathering (Bobbie Wickham aka Nancy Helmick) and was therefore moved around the board for her. My game piece was actually a tiny Amity police boat, and since its little wheels frequently encouraged it to slide out of position, it was usually trained sideways, a nod to a stalwart old shipmate, Captain Wrongway Peachfuzz.

Game play was breakneck and enthusiastic as always. It should be remembered that in our contest, the first-place winner's prize is to *not* have to take home the gargantuan eyesore which is our winner's trophy—truly a hazard to pedestrians and traffic. That honor actually befalls the second-place finisher.



*The not-so-coveted Boat Race trophy*

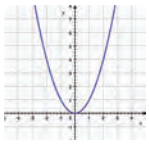
The wonderfully delicious irony of this year's competition? Yes indeedy, Bobbie/Nancy took the dreaded second place in absentia, with no opportunity to defend against this fate nor cheat her way out of it—as the rest of us so gleefully would have done. Arrangements are being made to have the monstrous behemoth safely delivered to her door via courier service, since none of the rest of us want anything to do with it.

Hearty congratulations, then, Nancy, and I hope all of you have enjoyed happy holidays—such as they were during this ongoing maelstrom.

I have the honor to remain your faithful servant,

*Admiral George J. "Fruity" Biffen (Jeff Porteous)*

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



**The PeliKans**
(Kansas City and vicinity)
Contact: Bob Clark

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

**The Pickering Motor Company**
(Detroit and vicinity)
Contact: Elliott Milstein

**The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club**
(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)
Contact: Allison Thompson


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

**The Plum Street Plummies**
(Olympia, Washington and vicinity)
Contact: Thomas L. R. Smith


**The Right Honorable Knights of Sir Philip Sidney**
(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
Contact: Peter Nieuwenhuizen

https://wodehouse-society.nl

The Knights were forced by the COVID-19 crisis to cancel the Fourth Annual Wodehouse Film Festival in Amsterdam. Alas! But to compensate for this loss, we started a series of "Wodehouse Talks" via Zoom. Bart Pepermans, a member of the Belgian Drones Club, kicked off the first session on November 12 with an analysis of the structure of the Mulliner stories. Just a week later, the Knights used this virtual platform to enjoy stories about P. G. Wodehouse told by his step-grandson Hal Cazalet during the Mumbai Literary Festival. And a few days after that, we were invited to join the live performance of *Uncle Fred Flits By*, presented online by the Dramatic Circle Hyderabad in India.

On December 9, Ole van Luyn spoke to us about the cocktails mentioned in the works of Wodehouse.

He explained that most of the drinks in the stories were highballs, like the famous Green Swizzle. Wodehouse's favorite was the dry martini; the most healing cocktail consisted of two parts gin and one part white vermouth. In *The Mating Season*, Wodehoue defined different types of hangovers: the Broken Compass, the Sewing Machine, the Comet, the Atomic, the Cement Mixer, and the Gremlin Boogie.

On January 12, our prolific translator, Leonard Beuger, inhabitant of the city of Zutphen, told us more about the life and works of Sir Philip Sidney, who became wounded in battle in 1586. Sidney was a gentleman and poet, and Wodehouse refers to him multiple times in the canon: "His need is greater than mine." [*For a full story of Sir Philip Sidney, see Peter's article in the Summer 2014 issue of* Plum Lines—*OM*]


*Sir Philip Sidney*

Two very accomplished Dutch men passed away recently. Waldemar Post was an illustrator of eleven book covers of Wodehouse novels, including *Getapte verhalen* (*Meet Mr. Mulliner*). In our society journal, we published several concept drawings of his covers, which are preserved in a Dutch Museum. We also lost Squire Ursul de Geer, a real gentleman as well as a television personality and theatre director, who was awarded in 1995 with The-Right-Honourable-Gally-Threepwood Award for Outdoor Chivalry.

In 2021 the Dutch P. G. Wodehouse Society will celebrate its fortieth anniversary with several activities, including a Wodehouse Poetry Event and a formal dinner.

*—Peter Nieuwenhuizen*

**Rugby In All Its Niceties**
**(Rugby, Tennessee Region)**
Contact: Donna Heffner

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

**The West Texas Wooster**
(West Texas)
Contact: Troy Gregory

# The Most Perfect Sentences

Several of our fellow Wodehouseans (including **Carol Knox** and **Jeff Porteous**) sent a link to a June 2, 2020, BBC culture article by Nicholas Barber about "The Man Who Wrote the Most Perfect Sentences." Barber opines that Wodehouse needs to be at the top of the list of "culture that makes people happy" because "he was better at it than any other writer in history."

Readers of our little journal know that if you begin to list Wodehouse's perfect sentences, you may never reach the end of that list. Barber lists a few, including what Hugh Laurie said was his favorite was from "The Story of Cedric": "The drowsy stillness of the afternoon was shattered by what sounded to his strained senses like G. K. Chesterton falling on a sheet of tin." Barber tosses a couple of others in, including this abridged one from *Right Ho, Jeeves*: "It isn't often that Aunt Dahlia lets her angry passions rise, but when she does, strong men climb trees and pull them up after them." And so many more. He throws in a few more of our favorites, about Scotsmen with grievances and stinging with a "tinkerty tonk." You'll find the article at https://tinyurl.com/y9hbocg7.

> "Brain," [Psmith] said to himself approvingly, "is what one chiefly needs in matters of this kind. Without brain, where are we? In the soup, every time."
>
> *Mike* (1909)

# Contents



# Officers & Volunteers

President
Bill Scrivener

Vice President
Maria Jette

Treasurer (dues payments):
Indu Ravi

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