



# Plum Lines

*The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society*

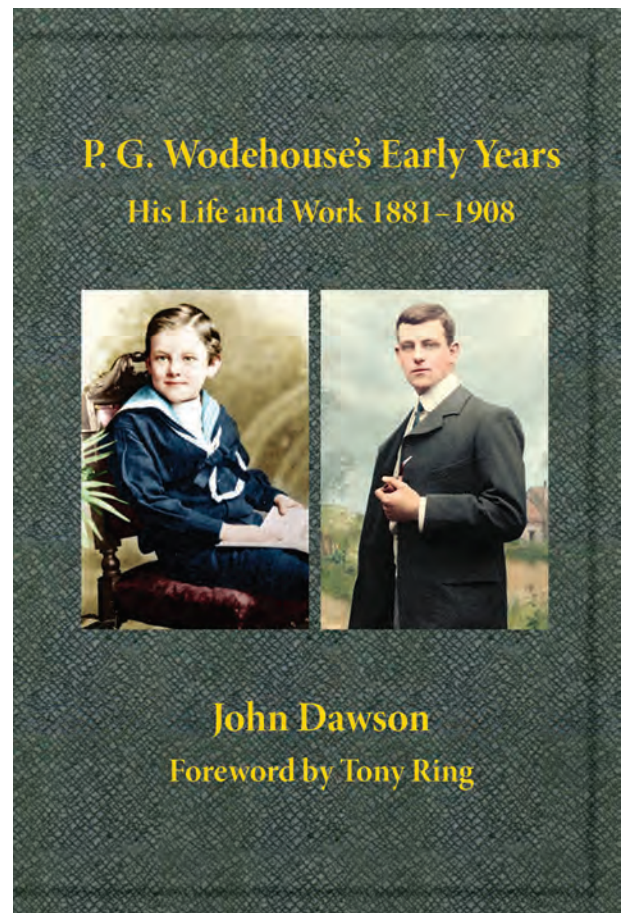
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## *P. G. Wodehouse's Early Years*

A NEW STUDY BY JOHN DAWSON

**A**T LONG LAST, and by popular demand, John Dawson has published his masterwork, *P. G. Wodehouse's Early Years: His Life and Work 1881–1908*. This first comprehensive and substantive account of Wodehouse's childhood and apprentice years as a London journalist features a trove of new research and unpublished photos from family and private collections; a complete transcription of his journal describing his work between 1900 and 1908; detailed notes on his early works; and a remarkable selection of never-before-published drawings and watercolors of Plum and his brothers executed by his mother from 1879 to 1895. The book incorporates commentary from the late scholar Norman Murphy, author of *A Wodehouse Handbook*. Neil Midkiff's imaginative book design has resulted in a pleasing, harmonious integration of pictures and text. Highlights include:

- An introductory statement by Wodehouse's step-grandson, Sir Edward Cazalet: "Plum Would Have Been Amazed."
- A foreword by Tony Ring, author and co-founder of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK): "The first in-depth study of Wodehouse's early life and writing achievements. This book has an abundance of new material relating to his early life and to the first eight years of his professional writing. Swathes of new factual information . . . will surprise even the well-read Wodehousean. What a coup John Dawson has achieved with this book."
- In Part I, an exploration of Wodehouse's life from birth through his arrival in London in September 1900. Eleven chapters are devoted to



his childhood, schools, parents, and immediate family. There is an extended discussion of his first literary influences—"A Booky Sort of Person"—as well as new insights into his early psychological development, including analysis and critical commentary of previous biographical accounts of this period.

- In Part II, a month-by-month reader's guide to every story, poem, and article published by Wodehouse from 1900 to 1908. Hundreds of descriptive entries are interspersed with newly researched accounts of his life and times; descriptions of his mentors, collaborators, and publishers; and detailed accounts of his first work in the theatre. Included are dozens of excerpts from his personal journals and first newspaper writings, supplemented with vintage photographs and illustrations.
- In Part III, a fully annotated, complete transcription of his journal *Money Received for Literary Work* (1900–1908). This journal is included by special arrangement with the Wodehouse Estate. Never before published, its inclusion here represents a milestone in biographical accounts of Wodehouse's career.

John tells us that “Wodehouse’s boyhood and early years in London have been underserved and, in some respects, greatly misapprehended by previous biographers. My hope is that the book will contribute to a new understanding of his life and work, and will foster a reconsideration of much of what has been written about his childhood.”

Some of you have already had a chance to read some of the book; preliminary versions of the early chapters of *P. G. Wodehouse’s Early Years: His Life and Work 1881–1908* were excerpted in *Plum Lines* issues from Autumn 2018 through Spring 2019. The work can be ordered from [lulu.com](http://lulu.com) at a cost of \$35 for the softcover edition and \$45 for the hardback. It is shipped from presses in six countries, including the U.K., which minimizes shipping costs. For ordering information, visit: [www.madameulalie.org/jdawson/wey.html](http://www.madameulalie.org/jdawson/wey.html).



*Michael Dirda (Wodehouse fan, member of our society, and book review editor for the Washington Post), gave a highly positive review of P. G. Wodehouse’s Early Years: His Life and Work 1881–1908. You may find the review at: <https://tinyurl.com/wp-pgwey>.*

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## San Diego Convention 2022

GREETINGS and salutations from your Convention Committee! We’re hoping this missive finds everyone healthy, vaccinated, and eager to attend the 2022 TWS convention in San Diego.

As reported by TWS president William Scrivener in the Winter 2020 *Plum Lines*, the decision to postpone this year’s convention did not come easily. There was much to consider and address, including our contract with the hotel and the safety of our members. Fortunately, we were able to resolve matters satisfactorily, with the result that the decision was made to hold our 21st convention on October 20–22, 2022, at the same venue as originally planned, the US Grant Hotel in San Diego.

The Convention Committee has therefore resumed its planning for all things 2022. Please mark your calendars! We feel that after more than a year of living in a somewhat tedious routine, the time will fly by and October 2022 will be upon us sooner than we think.

Upcoming editions of *Plum Lines* will contain a plethora of information about convention plans, and registration forms will be sent to members later this year. Look for articles by Max Pokrivchak about weekend activities and Maria Jette about speakers. Anticipate a whale of a good time as we enjoy browsing and sluicing together, being enlightened by Riveting Talks, and exploring the beautiful city of San Diego. It will be a convention for the ages.

Stay safe and stay tuned!



*San Diego, turf and surf—see you there!*



# A Few Quick Ones



Unless otherwise credited, these items are courtesy of our prolific Q.O. providers, *Evelyn Herzog and John Baesch.*

In the December 31, 2020, *Washington Post*, Wodehouse aficionado and stellar “Book World” columnist **Michael Dirda** told of how he is sorting through the reams of printed memorabilia that have accumulated in his house over the years (“Throwaway Lines in the Literary Life? Not Really”). In the process, he found many “precious artifacts” that show how difficult it is to get rid of our life’s collection of such “stuff.” One noteworthy item: “A photocopy of ‘The Marriage of True Minds,’ science-fiction writer Charles Sheffield’s brilliant homage to P. G. Wodehouse. In the story, Lord Emsworth and Empress of Blandings switch minds. No one much notices.”

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You may have passed up your opportunity to buy the Wodehouses’ property at 21 Basket Neck Lane in Remsenburg; it’s in contract right now for just under \$2 million. You might want to keep an eye out, just in case: <https://tinyurl.com/eef45dn4>.

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In the June 20, 2020, *Spectator*, Andrew Taylor described a few more “lockdown-friendly” classics to read, in this case crime stories. Describing Dorothy L. Sayers’s books as “slightly more cerebral pleasures” than Enid Blyton’s and Agatha Christie’s works, Taylor said that “her splendidly unbelievable protagonist Lord Peter Wimsey develops during the series from a Woosterish detective to a lovelorn, angst-ridden neurotic.”

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In the *Washington Post* of October 8, 2020, **Michael Dirda** asked, “Reality got you down?” and then told us how we can come to Middle-earth or Oz to lighten the load. He touched on how Sherlock Holmes fans always have an escape route and mentioned that “readers of P. G. Wodehouse know that the sun is always shining on Blandings Castle.”

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**Jeff Porteous** and **Carol Knox** sent an online BBC article about Eton College (“The School that Rules Britain”), which included this PGW mention: “Take that amiable idiot Bertie Wooster, whose status as an old Etonian is classic P. G. Wodehouse: affectionate rather than cutting.

Bertie attended Eton with fellow fops Marmaduke ‘Chuffy’ Chuffnell and G. D’Arcy Cheesewright, though even in Wodehouse-world the school had its standards. Asked in *Right Ho, Jeeves* whether he was at school with Tuppy Glossop, ineffectual denizen of the Drones Club, Bertie replied, ‘Good heavens, no. We wouldn’t have a fellow like that at Eton.’”

## Phrase Turner

**O**RANGE PLUM **Lia Hansen** found this in a Get Wit Quick online page by Benjamin Herrett (<https://tinyurl.com/kvkhr7xk>):

There are sentences that are so Wodehousian they ought to be inducted into the Drones Club. Such was this line from James Poniewozik’s nifty *New York Times* remembrance of the actress who played *Arrested Development*’s Lucille Bluth to perfection: “Any actor can roll his or her eyes at you. When Jessica Walter did it, you stayed eye-rolled at.”

Any writer can deploy a verb. When P. G. Wodehouse does it, you stay verbed. This is a great little conceit, one you can use in all manner of scenarios. When I drink a drink, I expect it to stay drunk. When the U.S. invades a country, it really stays invaded. And so on.

But what of the original source? It had to be Wodehouse, but where? Search engines were useless in solving this problem. Ultimately, a bit of research turned up the answer (in 1940’s *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*), and by including it here, I expect it to stay turned up: “Golly! When you admonish a congregation, it stays admonished.”

[Note: The story referenced is “Anselm Gets His Chance,” which was also published in *The World of Mr. Mulliner and in Vintage Wodehouse.*]

The Summer Sunday was drawing to a close. Twilight had fallen on the little garden of the Angler’s Rest, and the air was fragrant with the sweet scent of jasmine and tobacco plant. Stars were peeping out. Blackbirds sang drowsily in the shrubberies. Bats wheeled through the shadows, and a gentle breeze played fitfully among the hollyhocks. It was, in short, as a customer who had looked in for a gin and tonic rather happily put it, a nice evening.

“Anselm Gets His Chance” (1937)

# ROCKETT MAN

BY GRAEME DAVIDSON

A version of this article was published in the U.K. society's *Wooster Sauce* in September and December 2018. We're happy to continue to bring some of Graeme's insights to our TWS readers!

IN DECEMBER 2016, a *Wooster Sauce* quiz included the question: "Which former British Amateur champion golfer named his children Sandwich, Hoylake, St. Andrew [*sic*], Troon, and Prestwick?"

The answer to the question was the Wodehouse fictional character John Rockett, from the golfing story "Scratch Man" as it appeared in the U.K. edition of *A Few Quick Ones* (1959). A similar question and answer (with slight variation) could also be applied to the magazine versions of that story, "Tee for Two" (*Saturday Evening Post*, January 20, 1940, and *Strand*, September 1940).

In the magazine versions, also appearing as "Scratch Man" in the U.S. edition of *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* (1940), the golfer's first name is Walter, and he is described as being three times American and twice British Amateur champion. "He had called his children after the courses on which he had won renown, and they did not disgrace the honoured names. They were all scratch." His three sons were named Baltusrol, Wykagyl, and National; his daughters were Troon and Prestwick. The sons' names honour celebrated American golf courses; the daughters are named for British courses of similar renown.

For the 1959 collection *A Few Quick Ones*, with the title "Scratch Man," Walter is renamed to John, and there are differences between the U.S. and U.K. editions of the story. In the U.S. version, he was twice Amateur Champion and three times runner-up in the Open; his sons are Pinehurst, Baltusrol, and Winged Foot; his daughters are Minikahda and Merion. All five are named for American courses. In the U.K. book, British Amateur Champion is specified, and the children are named after five British courses as listed in the first paragraph above.

Wykagyl may not have quite the same history as some of the other clubs named, but a particular feature about its history, found in a history of the club on its website, may explain Wodehouse's selection of it for use. The Wykagyl golf course is part of the Wykagyl Country Club (located in the New York area), which was previously called the Pelham Country Club. (Its name was changed on June 15, 1905.)

Regardless of the variants, the quirk of a championship golfer naming his offspring after courses



on which he had won renown remains constant throughout the different renderings of the story.

There is a certain felicitous symmetry and neatness in the fact that the quiz question above was in the same issue of *Wooster Sauce* that contained tributes to the late Norman Murphy. Norman's towering achievements are well known: He highlighted and identified many characters and incidents in Wodehouse's writings as being frequently derived from or inspired by actual people and events, which Wodehouse then chronicled with light embellishment and some frothy, educated, and dextrous prose. All this leads me to the following.

Some years ago I purchased a painting of a Scottish landscape which had previously been owned by the son of James Braid. For the non-golfers among you, James Braid (1870–1950) is one of the gods in golf's pantheon of legendary figures. He was one of the triumvirate of golfing greats, along with the similarly revered Harry Vardon and John H. Taylor, who together totally dominated the game in the early part of the last century. Braid was frequently name-checked or otherwise invoked by Wodehouse in works such as *The Clicking of Cuthbert* (*Golf Without Tears* in the USA), *The Heart of a Goof* (*Divots* in the USA), *Doctor Sally*, and more. He won the Open Championship in Britain on five occasions (1901, 1905, 1906, 1908, and 1910) and was runner-up in that championship on four occasions, plus he had ten other top ten finishes in the Open.

In 1901, Braid became father to a son for the second time. That son was born on May 31, 1901, within days of Braid's first Open victory at Muirfield, Scotland (home of The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers), on June 6, 1901. In 1958 the same son bought the landscape painting that I purchased half a century or so later, and I wanted to learn more about him after I acquired the painting.

I discovered that Braid had called his son Harry Muirfield Braid. As to the Harry, I speculate that James Braid may have given his son this name as a nod to his fellow golfing great,



James Braid

Harry Vardon. What seems self-evident (it's not rocket science—but it might be Rockett science?) is why he called his son Muirfield.

Delightfully, I also discovered that James Braid was not alone among winning golfers in naming a child after a golf course which had witnessed a particular victory. A year or two back, while I was golfing in Biarritz with some chums (not Drones but solid chaps; together, we make up the Flying Divots), I decided to learn a bit about Biarritz's golfing history. I discovered that one of Biarritz's golfing greats—indeed, probably France's greatest golfing hero—was Arnaud George Watson Massy (1877–1950), the man who, on multiple occasions, won different open championships in various European countries. Massy—this is the biggie—was the first non-Briton to win Britain's Open—the Open. He won it at Hoylake in 1907 and had much more success in the Open.

Massy had a daughter who was born in 1907, within a week of his winning the Open that year. And what was her name? Margot Lockhart Hoylake Massy.

Wodehouse had French connections and played courses in France. He likely picked up French golfing lore, and that, along with his general golfing knowledge, made me think it not improbable that Wodehouse could have been aware of Massy's daughter's name. He was certainly aware of Massy himself, who is mentioned in Wodehouse's "Those in Peril on the Tee" (*Strand Magazine*, June 1927, and later published in *Mr. Mulliner Speaking*). That both Massy and Wodehouse named offspring of a champion golfer as Hoylake seems too incredible for it to be mere coincidence.

From the above, it becomes apparent that Wodehouse was not imagining wildly when he wrote of John Rockett as he did. Absent an incredible coincidence, Wodehouse was undoubtedly inspired by hearing of James Braid's child-naming, and perhaps also that of Massy. One wonders whether Braid and Massy were unusual or whether around their time there was a wider fashion for golf champions to name their offspring after scenes of their triumphs. If anyone knows of any other examples, please pipe up.

Even if no further examples are uncovered by me or others of a child named after a golf course by a premier (or any) golfer, I continue to be hugely tickled by the fact that it is now apparent to me that Wodehouse clearly was inspired by real events.

The matter of a real golfer naming, in the manner of Rockett, a child after a course on which he had a great victory does not appear to be covered either in Norman's splendid *A Wodehouse Handbook* or in Volume 1 (*Wodehouse in the Clubhouse*) of the similarly

wonderful *The Millennium Wodehouse Concordance*, by Tony Ring and Geoffrey Jaggard. It appears that this particular discovery of Wodehouse having again been inspired by real events may be a new revelation.

And, for prompting that particular revelation, I raise a glass by way of a toast of thanks and acknowledgement to Norman Murphy!

Writing all of the above prompted in my mind a further question that readers may also have been asking: If John Rockett twice (or thrice) won the Amateur Championship (British and/or U.S.) and was thrice runner-up in open championships (British or U.S.), was there a real golfer whose history, on the courses in question or other courses, exactly mirrors that?

My inspection of the tournament histories of the Open and Amateur Championships over the period 1860–1940 (i.e. the earliest tournament date to the story's year of first publication) comes up with the answer: No. Wodehouse was clearly inspired by elements of the deeds of certain championship golfers, but he was not slavish in mirroring them. He was, after all, writing fiction.

That said, Wodehouse's Rockett being inspired by a real player is certainly possible. At first I had thought that the kind of stellar performance that Wodehouse attributed to Rockett did not exist outside the almost fairy-tale worlds of Bobby Jones and Jack Nicklaus. However, the information available suggests that Wodehouse, in confecting Rockett, was inspired by the exploits of a small number of great players, and Rockett is something of a homage to those golfers.

I learned that Horatio (Horace) Hutchinson (1859–1932) and Harold Hilton (1869–1942) are the only two



Harold Hilton



Horace Hutchinson

players in the period under investigation who each won the British Amateur Championship at least twice, the first of the hurdles I have determined necessary for a real golfer to be a mirror image of Rockett.

Hutchinson won the British Amateur Championship twice and had three top ten finishes in the British Open Championship. Though sadly forgotten by many now, Hutchinson had a phenomenal success in the world of amateur golf. Such was his success and standing as an amateur player that it should come as little surprise to note that Wodehouse, in his preface to *The Heart of a Goof*, conjoins mention of John H. Taylor and James Braid with the name Horace Hutchinson. Later U.S. publications of *The Heart of a Goof* under other titles had the same, unaltered reference to Hutchinson in the preface. This speaks volumes as to Hutchinson's mythic standing at the time Wodehouse wrote that preface.

Hilton won the British Amateur Championship four times, won the British Open Championship twice, had many other high finishes in these tournaments, and won the U.S. Amateur Championship in 1911.

When addressing whether Wodehouse might have had Hutchinson or Hilton in mind when he concocted Rockett's golf success pedigree, it may be worth noting that both men had the initials H.H. Having an inkling of the way Wodehouse's quirky mind worked when he translated reality to fiction, I suspect that a similar double-initial thing might have been carried over by him into the story, if he was intending to mirror one of those two greats. Since he did not, that perhaps kicks Hilton and Hutchinson into the long grass as solo prototypes for Rockett. Furthermore, there is another reason to increase the handicap for either of them: It would appear that neither Hutchinson nor Hilton had children and therefore had no children who they named after a golf course.

Though not multiple winners of British or American Amateur Championships, an additional two golfers are worth mentioning here, given their incredible achievements—namely, John H. Taylor (1871–1963) and Henry (Harry) Vardon (1870–1937).

Taylor had enormous success at the British Open (winning five times) and was runner-up in the U.S. Open in 1900, but was not a multiple Amateur Championship winner, and therefore (by my rules) is not a candidate for a real player mirroring Rockett.

Vardon, too, had an impressively long and extensive run of successful championship play, with six wins at the British Open, and a triumph at the U.S. Open Championship in 1900, and runner-up the other two times he played there. However, Vardon was not a multiple winner of British or American Amateur

Championships, and therefore did not pass my first hurdle for a player mirroring Rockett.

Another golfer of particular note is Walter John Travis (1862–1927), a writer (highly regarded as an early golf writer), publisher, and amateur golfer. Travis had much amateur success (Britain and U.S.). There is one Wodehousean reason to shine a light on him here. It was Travis who said of golf: “As a disciplinarian and establisher of character, it is without a peer.” He also wrote: “It cultivates patience and endurance under adversity and yet keeps constantly alive the fires of hope. It is a leveler of ranks and classes: rich and poor alike meet on common ground.” These are sentiments which ring loud bells in the minds of readers of Wodehouse's golf writings.

A better-known golfing great also deserves honorable mention here. Robert Tyre Jones (1902–1971), better known as Bobby, had legendary golf success in the 1920s as an amateur (when “amateur” was considered superior and more gentlemanly than being a “professional” golfer).

It is, however, interesting to note that John Rockett's initials were J.R. And whom among the golfing great had those initials J.R., albeit reversed in order, which is the kind of thing Wodehouse might do in translating an inspiration from reality into fiction? Robert Jones.

Though Bobby Jones had three children, none of them were named after golf courses. For that reason, he, too, is consigned to the long grass as a solo prototype for Rockett. Still, as a prototype for a mighty golfing figure, I'm hard pressed to instance a better model than Bobby Jones, the man whose dazzling performances in competitive golf in those few years up to 1930 lit up the skies like an exploding firework, indeed a bit like a rocket, one that would still shine brightly in Wodehouse's mind when he wrote his short story.



Bobby Jones  
(Robert Tyre Jones),  
consummate  
American amateur  
golfer

Note: Graeme Davidson extends very appreciative thanks to Neil Midkiff for his valuable and helpful input into this article during the proofreading stage preparatory to its appearance here in Plum Lines.

# Daniel Love Glazer



Daniel Love Glazer

**A**FFABLE IS ONE of those words that you've mostly encountered in works of good literature. However, spending time with Daniel gave the word a context for many of his fellow Chicago Accident Syndicate members. His quiet presence, his offbeat and wry sense of humor, and the brown rice he often brought to the syndicate's gatherings fit so very comfortably—affably—into the group's gestalt.

It is with great sadness that we report Daniel's passing from this mortal coil on March 26 of this year. His absence will be keenly felt. The syndicate members will surely share many anecdotes about him when next they gather.

Daniel attended some of the TWS conventions, and notably preached a sermon in the Great Sermon Handicap at the Providence event in 2007. He had an adventurous youth, including his attendance at the Woodstock "Three Days of Peace and Music" Festival in 1969. He taught yoga and competed in chess tournaments. After a successful career as a computer programmer, he enjoyed an active retirement of teaching, playing chess, and reading voraciously. He will be remembered for his kind and gentle manner, his service to others, his intellectual curiosity, and his passion for jazz and the New York Yankees.

Daniel is survived by his wife, Karen Glazer, and many family members. Karen has offered his modest Wodehouse collection to the Syndicate's leadership triumvirate in hopes of it finding a valued place in another collector's home.



*There is no surer foundation for a beautiful friendship than a mutual taste in literature.*

"Strychnine in the Soup" (1931)

# Dorothy Swanson



Dorothy Swanson

**T**HE NEWTS are sad to report the passing of Dorothy Swanson on May 13, 2020. She was a lovely and gracious lady, with a gentle nature and an understated sense of humor. The NEWTS fondly remember the wonderful "nottles" at the townhouse owned by Dottie and her husband Bud, who preceded her in death. They also hosted many wonderful holiday celebrations at their clubhouse. With abundant food, delicious baked goods from Dottie's kitchen, and a well-decorated tree with gifts nestled under it, the chapter members all enjoyed the company and the atmosphere.

Dottie loved travel and was devoted to her grandchildren. She was also a volunteer for many years at Emerson Hospital in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a leader of the Westford garden club, and involved with the League of Women Voters. TWS offers our sympathies to Dottie's family; she will be missed.

# The P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University

BY ANITA AVERY

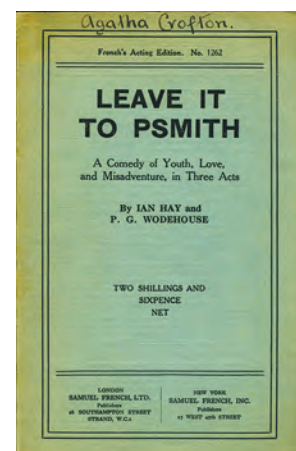
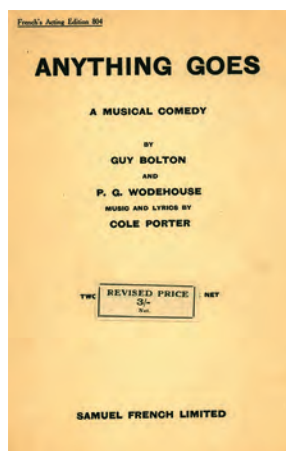
Here is Anita's quarterly article about this collection that came into existence in 2019 and that we believe is the premier perpetual American accumulation of Wodehouse's works and Wodehouse-related items. Thanks to the vision of several members of TWS, and to Anita's tireless oversight, the collection continues to grow and prosper.

**C**URTAIN UP! The spotlight is on the collection's holdings of published plays and unpublished typescripts of plays authored or adapted by Wodehouse, as well as plays adapted from or based on his works.

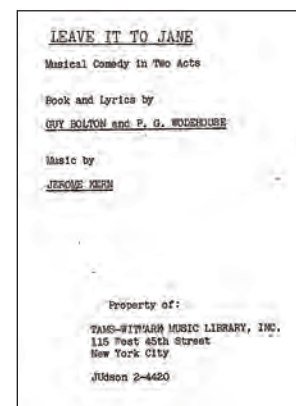
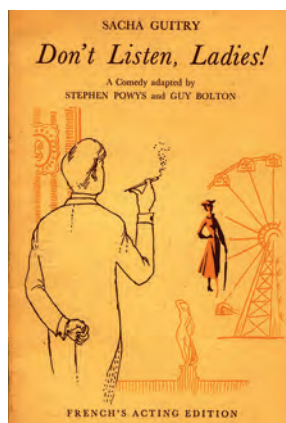
The earliest is a Methuen first edition of *Good Morning, Bill* (1928), adapted by Wodehouse from the Hungarian play *Doktor Juci Szabo* by Ladislaus Fodor. Following that is a Samuel French first issue of *A Damsel in Distress: A Comedy of Youth, Love, and Adventure, in Three Acts* (1930) co-authored by Ian Hay and Wodehouse. The two teamed up again for *Leave It to Psmith: A Comedy of Youth, Love, and Misadventure, in Three Acts* (1932), also a Samuel French first issue. *Candle-Light* (1934) was adapted by Wodehouse from Siegfried Geyer's play of the same name. Until an earlier edition is acquired, our copy is a ca. 2019 reissue of the play, which has been out of print for several decades.

French's Acting Edition *Anything Goes* (1936), by Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse, is notable as one of only two published Wodehouse musical libretti. This script of the play, with lyrics for the songs, is a first-edition variant, being identical with the first edition except for the addition of a sticker worded "Revised Price 3/- Net." Another significant item is the rather scarce *Plays of the Year 1948-1949* (1952) with dust wrapper, containing the first publication and only hardcover printing of *Don't Listen, Ladies!*, adapted by Stephen Powys (a pseudonym used by Wodehouse) and Guy Bolton from Sacha Guitry's French play *N'écoutez pas, Mesdames*. The holdings also include French's Acting Edition of *Don't Listen, Ladies!* (1952).

An interesting unpublished typescript of libretto and song lyrics appears to have been compiled from rehearsal scripts for the 1960 revival of *Oh, Kay!* (book by Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse, lyrics of the 1926 production by Ira Gershwin) for which Wodehouse wrote several new lyrics. Another unpublished typescript of libretto and lyrics from Tams-Witmark



Several of the many items in the Plays and Adaptations section of The P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University



Music Library, ca. 1977, is *Leave It to Jane* (book by Guy Bolton and P. G. Wodehouse, lyrics by P. G. Wodehouse), which includes the lyric of "A Peach of a Life," not used in the 1959 off-Broadway revival. *Four Plays* (1983), published by Methuen, is a very good omnibus volume, containing *The Play's the Thing*; *Good Morning, Bill*; *Leave It to Psmith*; and *Come On, Jeeves*. All of the above plays were donated from the splendid collection of Arthur Robinson.

Playlets by Bertram Fletcher Robinson and P. G. Wodehouse, each a lampooning review of the news of 1903 through 1906, originally published in the *Daily Express*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The World*, were compiled by Paul R. Spiring in *Bobbles & Plum: Four Satirical Playlets* (2009).

In recent years, many new productions adapted from or based on the works of Wodehouse have been launched. *Perfect Nonsense* (2013), based on *The Code of the Woosters*, touts itself as "A new play from the works of P. G. Wodehouse by the Goodale Brothers." A series of plays, adapted by Margaret Raether from the stories of P. G. Wodehouse, have delighted numerous audiences: *Jeeves in Bloom* (2011); *Jeeves Intervenes* (2014); *Jeeves*



*Takes a Bow* (2015); *Jeeves at Sea* (2017); and the most recent outing, *Jeeves Saves the Day* (2020), which has been produced but not yet published. Another as-yet-unpublished adaptation is the 2015 *A Damsel in Distress*, described as “A New Stage Musical” with book by Jeremy Sams and Robert Hudson, based on the novel by P. G. Wodehouse and the play by P. G. Wodehouse and Ian Hay, and music and lyrics by George Gershwin and Ira Gershwin.

Please feel free to advise us of new titles in this category. We will be interested in any published or unpublished typescript formats of new productions. For an overview of holdings and desired acquisitions in the collection’s Section C (Plays and Adaptations), consult the online database at <http://www.wodehouse.org/PGWCVU>. Click on the gold navigation bar for links to all sections. For further information, contact [anitaavery@verizon.net](mailto:anitaavery@verizon.net). As the collection continues to grow in breadth and depth, we give our sincere thanks to all who have contributed to this project.



## *Letters to the Editor*

I WAS HAPPY to see your addendum to Nick Louras’s article on The Little Church Around the Corner as I was hoping he would make reference to TWS’s plaque in the article. The first time I ever set foot in that Church of the Transfiguration was for the plaque installation and dedication ceremony, but I have returned many times since. Whenever I found myself in the Flatiron District of New York, I would walk the extra few blocks to visit it. More often than not, the church was closed and the door locked, but even standing in the courtyard gave me a feel of that “little bit of Heaven dumped right down in the middle of New York.”

I made a point of returning to the church on September 30, 2014, the centenary of the Wodehouses’ wedding, for a private little ceremony of my own (or not so private, as I filmed and shared it on social media). Knowing the church was often locked during

the week, I made arrangements with the rector and was pleasantly greeted by the archbishop, who informed me that many weddings are conducted in the church and “brides frequently quoted from this plaque” during the ceremony. One can only hope that such activity has helped to swell the ranks of Wodehouseans and perhaps even members of this society.

Sincerely,  
Elliott Milstein

REGARDING THE current discussion about the merits and demerits of Ukridge, it occurs to me that the use of his name provides an indication of how he was viewed by his former Wrykyn schoolmates.

Elsewhere in the canon, old schoolmates and Young Men About Town either called each other by their first names, as in Hugo (Carmody) or Horace (Pendlebury-Davenport); a diminutive of their first names (Bertie, Monty, Freddie, Sam, Bill); a diminutive of their surnames (Sippy Sipperley, Chuffy Chuffnell); some sort of jokey nickname associated with one of their names (Kipper Herring, Stilton Cheesewright, Stinker Pinker, Blister Lister, “The Biscuit” Biskerton); or a descriptive or whimsical schoolboy nickname (Pongo, Oofy, Boko, Barmy, etc.).

This also carried over to members of the older generation. When highly respectable middle-aged clergymen, all former schoolmates, met up in the Buck-U-Uppo stories, they once again became Boko, Pieface, and Catsmeat, just like the old days. When Lord Emsworth encountered old schoolmate Roderick Glossop for the first time in decades, he immediately recognized him as Pimples. Even when not schoolmates, the names stick. To Gally Threepwood, Lord Tilbury was still Stinker Pyke. Sir Aylmer Bostock and Major Brabazon Plank were still Mugsy and Bimbo to Lord Ickenham. Uncle Fred was still Barmy to Bimbo.

But when Ukridge’s old schoolmates Garny Garnet, Corky Corcoran, Tuppy Tupper, Loony Coote, and Boko Lawlor spoke to or about S.F.U., he was always Ukridge; never Stanley, Stan, Ukie, or an old schoolboy nickname. The only other similar major character I can think of is Psmith, but in his case it was a matter of personal preference. Almost the first thing he did after introducing himself to Mike was express the hope that he would *not* be addressed as Rupert. A later attempt by a fellow wage slave at the bank to call him Smithy was not well received.

The evidence of the nickname (lack of) and first name (avoidance of) suggests to me that despite his outsized personality and the obvious entertainment value he must have supplied to his schoolmates, Ukridge

was probably a bit of an outsider at Wrykyn, somebody who didn't quite fit in with the group.

Sincerely,  
Ian Michaud

I REGRET THAT this is so tardy, but I've only just read Bob Rains's latest "Rivals of Wodehouse" article in the Winter 2020 *Plum Lines* (about Richard Armour) and simply had to write to say that it was a total delight! Not just because of the wonderful subject matter and laugh-out-loud excerpts/samples, but because of Bob's own superb writing as well. I firmly believe in giving credit where it's due: well done, sir! This was, to my mind, the most enjoyable "Rivals" piece yet.

Sincerely,  
Jeff Porteous

MY THANKS for another most readable issue, just arrived, with all sorts of quality content.

First, my thanks to David Leal for at last making it clear to this alien just what a "college" is in your part of the world. I suppose I could have scoured the internet for an explanation, but for some reason never did so, leaving me for years (I turned ninety recently) to wonder just what the difference is between college and university. So now I know!

And, second, Todd Morning's study on PGW's relationship with various Germans was of special interest for the involvement of Baroness Reinhild von Bodenhausen, who has lived in [England] for years and has become a family friend, stemming from my German wife's interest in her background.

Reinhild is a couple of years Petra's junior, but they shared wartime memories, even if one was the daughter of an aristocrat and the other of an engineer. Reinhild's father worked in the huge Lueneburg Heath factory producing something like a third of all the gunpowder used by the Nazi forces in World War II. The factory was well known to the world, but never bombed by the Allies, it is thought because of links with American big business. Strange things happen, or don't happen, in time of conflict.

Can we assume that Reinhild will see this article? She is a member of the U.K. society.

Best wishes for today and tomorrow.

Sincerely,  
Murray Hedgcock

*With Murray's passing just weeks ago (see page 23), this last note from him takes on great poignancy. It was always good to hear from Murray, who never failed to bring humor and insight to all exchanges.—OM*

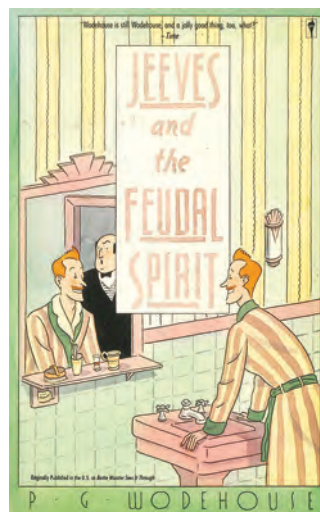
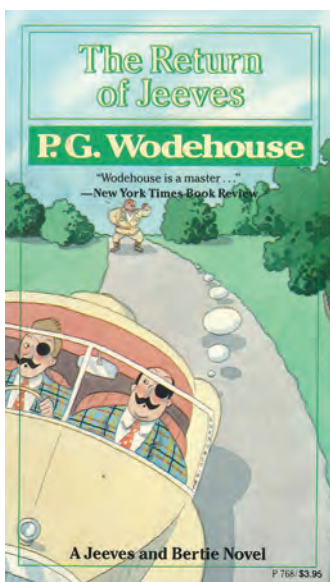
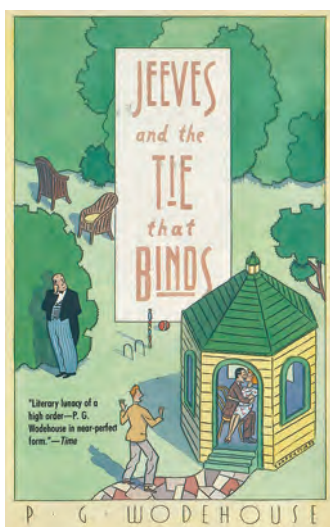
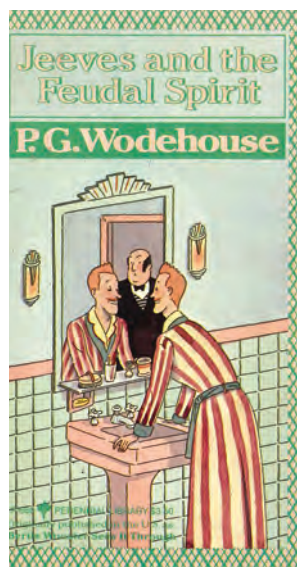
## Wodehouse Cover Illustrator Steven Guarnaccia

INTERVIEW BY BOB RAINS

LONGTIME READERS of *Plum Lines* with memories far better than my own may recall a modest notice appearing in the Autumn 1993 issue announcing an exhibition at the HarperCollins Exhibition Space in New York City, entitled "Jackets for Jeeves and Wooster," featuring the work of artist Steven Guarnaccia. Guarnaccia, who is also an illustrator, designer, writer, and teacher, as well as a snappy dresser, created covers for nine Jeeves novels for HarperCollins, plus *The World of Wooster* short-story collection. Through the good offices of our mutual friend Professor Nicola Lucchi, I was honored to connect with Guarnaccia and learn more of his life and work.

Let's offer a little background. Guarnaccia grew up in suburban Connecticut. As a child, he was twice stricken with rheumatic fever, leaving him bedridden for two years. During those difficult years, he spent all of his time reading and drawing. He was a very good student, was accepted by Brown University on early admission, and then, in his own words, left by "early withdrawal" after two and a half years. While at Brown, he took courses on and off at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and learned Italian at the Università per Stranieri di Perugia (University for Foreigners at Perugia), but somehow never managed to collect a college degree.

Guarnaccia's accomplishments and accolades are too numerous to catalog here in full. His illustrations have appeared in the *New York Times* (where he was the art director for the Op-Ed page for several years), in *Rolling Stone*, and on Hallmark cards. He designed Christmas cards for NYC's Museum of Modern Art, watches for Swatch, and murals for the cruise ship Disney Magic. He has authored and/or co-authored and/or illustrated numerous books, some with very Wodehousean titles: *A Stiff Drink and a Close Shave* and *Hi-Fi's and Hi-Balls*. Notwithstanding his lack of an educational imprimatur, Guarnaccia taught for six years in the School of Visual Arts MFA Design program. In 2005, he became an Associate Professor in the Illustration Program at the Parsons School of Design and served as the director of that program for seven years. He retired from Parsons in January 2021 and now has emeritus status. Not bad for a dropout. In a 2019 interview with Gil Roth for the *Virtual Memories Show*, Guarnaccia said that he had always wanted to do book jackets. Which brings us to the matter at hand.



Guarnaccianisms, from top to bottom, left to right, in reading sequence: *The Cat-Nappers*; *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* (rack); *Jeeves and the Tie That Binds* (trade); *Thank You, Jeeves*; *The Return of Jeeves* (rack); *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* (trade)

Q. At about what age did you discover Wodehouse? Would you call yourself a Wodehouse fan? Were you a Wodehouse fan before you began the HarperCollins commission for the Wodehouse covers?

A. I was already something of an Anglophile in high school, having discovered and loved the books of Evelyn Waugh and Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*. But I somehow had missed Wodehouse—I knew of him but hadn't read him. I probably was aware that there was a comic English archetype named Jeeves, but Bertie Wooster was an absolute stranger to me. Today I am most definitely a Wodehouse fan, entirely due to discovering him through the Harper commissions. I collect vintage Wodehouse books and read him probably with more sheer pleasure than I read any other writer.

Q. How did the Wodehouse commission come about? Who approached whom? Did you have any say as to which Wodehouse books you would illustrate? Were you familiar with any of those novels before you began the assignment? Did you read the novels as part of creating the cover illustrations?

A. When I was commissioned to illustrate the covers, I was known as an editorial illustrator who also designed and illustrated book covers. I imagine I was called because my work referenced the imagery of the early twentieth century, but with a more contemporary feel. The art director at the time wasn't fond of the books—he found them overdone and too arch, I think. Harper and Row had only acquired the rights to some of the books (perhaps as a trial balloon to see how they did before acquiring other titles).

Being offered these covers was my opportunity to read Wodehouse for the first time. I regularly read the books for which I was illustrating the covers. I fell in love with the books and with Wodehouse's writing through working on the project over the years.

Q. Jeeves and Bertie have been portrayed many times on the stage, the screen, and the little screen. Did you have any of their portrayals in mind as you approached your commission?

A. I was aware of Arthur Treacher's turn as Jeeves, for some reason. He was certainly a model for my design of the character. Other than that, I didn't know the other portrayals (the Fry and Laurie version came out after I made the covers), and I hadn't at that point seen any of the other covers made for the books over the years. My inspiration for Bertie was actually the Belgian comic character Tintin, with his shock of red hair. One online commentator said about my design of Bertie that he "never saw Bertie Wooster as a ginger."

Q. Many Wodehouse illustrators preceded you. The Ionicus covers for Penguin spring to mind. Do you

think you were influenced by any or all of them, either consciously or otherwise?

A. I hadn't really paid attention, to be honest. It's only since designing the covers that I've begun to notice and collect past editions.

Q. All the Wodehouse books you have illustrated feature Jeeves. Do you or HarperCollins harbor some prejudice against the Blandings saga, Mulliner stories, etc.?

A. I suspect that Harper started with the books that featured already familiar characters. My sense is that had the first round of books done well, they might have expanded the series.

Q. Other than selecting the titles for you to illustrate, did HarperCollins give you a free hand? Did you generally provide just one illustration for each cover or more than one for HarperCollins's consideration?

A. I was given a very free hand (perhaps too free given some of the inconsistencies you note later on in your questions). I don't think the editors were really paying very close attention. My usual way of working is to draw one or two roughs for presentation, focusing on different aspects or moments in the book for which I'm illustrating the cover.

Q. Some of the Wodehouse books credit you for cover design and illustration; others name you only for cover illustration. Some of the illustrations are signed by you, e.g., *Stiff Upper Lip*, *Jeeves* or *Jeeves in the Morning*; others, like *The Cat-Nappers*, are not. What is the significance to these differences? As the designer of a book cover do you decide on the proportions or orientation of the illustration? Do you choose the palette of the cover or the font for the cover text?

A. I don't really remember why some of the covers were signed and some weren't, but it was probably by chance rather than by design. Usually, the cover designer comes in only once the trim size (the proportions of the book), number of pages, etc., have been decided. In the case of the Wodehouse books, I was given free range within the picture area to come up with a color palette and visual ideas. I had recently discovered traditional Japanese printed papers and their patterns seemed oddly appropriate for a series of Anglocentric books. The art director was delighted with them, and they were used for many of the covers. For the trade paperback editions, I hand-lettered the titles and author name.

Q. Do you have a standard method for approaching a cover-design project? What medium did you use to produce the Wodehouse illustrations? Did you use any software program to create or complete those covers? If you were doing those covers today, would you use a computer program?

A. I read the book and tried to pull from the text the moment that seems both to encapsulate the story and that provides a compositionally strong cover image. I'm a confirmed pen-and-ink and watercolor artist. I love the feeling of a pen nib on 100% rag-toothed watercolor paper and dragging a brush loaded with color over its surface. The covers were created long before creating art on a computer was commonplace. In any case, my working method today is much as it was then.

Q. Turning to specific books, in *The World of Jeeves*, one notices on this splendid cover that we can only see Jeeves's face and not the back of his head where Bertie keeps telling us that his brain sticks out. Was this a conscious omission on your part? Did you fear that if we saw his elongated cranium, he might appear freakish rather than as a genius to put Einstein to shame?

A. Well, I would have had to extend Jeeves's portrait around to the back cover, which wasn't possible!

Q. Your cover for *The Return of Jeeves* features the bookmaker Honest Patch Perkins (Bill Rowcester) and his assistant (Jeeves) being chased by Captain Biggar after Honest Patch welded on a bet. It is a strong image, but why are Rowcester's and Jeeves's mustaches ginger in the book but black on the cover? Artistic license?

A. Though I would love to claim artistic license as the excuse, I'm afraid it was probably simply due to a lapse of memory.

Q. Another mystery: On the mass-market (rack) edition at the bottom of the cover in bold print appear the words "A Jeeves and Bertie Novel." But what is unusual about this Jeeves novel is that Bertie never appears onstage; rather, he is off at a school "designed to teach the aristocracy to fend for itself." The role normally taken by Bertie is occupied by Bill Rowcester. Do you imagine that some ill-informed Harper's adman innocently slapped this label on the cover and is more to be pitied than censured, or is this a frightful example of false advertising designed to gull a gullible public?

A. I suspect that this is due to the possibility that publishers don't always read the books they publish.

Q. For *The Cat-Nappers*, a similar question arises. The all-important cat referenced in the title is described as "black in its general color scheme but with splashes of white about the ribs and also on the tip of its nose." Why is the cat on the cover not generally black, but instead an orange tabby?

A. Guilty!

Q. The cover of *The Cat-Nappers* shows Bertie and Jeeves masked and apparently stalking a cat in a horse barn. The image does not represent any event in the story, but it does include the main characters,

human and otherwise, involved in the plot. Was the scene primarily your take on the plot or drawn at the direction of the publisher?

A. I take full responsibility for this choice. I guess I was feeling confident (or foolhardy) enough at this point, and familiar enough with the characters, to imagine a scene not explicit in the book.

Q. Your cover for *The Mating Season* appears to portray an incident in chapter 6 where Bertie, pretending to be Gussie, who is in stir, and Esmond Haddock have been perhaps overindulging in port. They are exuberantly singing variations on “A-hunting We Will Go.” In the book, they are surprised by Aunt Daphne at a point where Esmond has climbed onto the table and Bertie is standing on a chair swinging the port decanter like a baton. On the cover both are on the table, and it appears to this observer that the interloper is a cook or possibly Queenie the parlormaid. Sir, can you explain yourself?

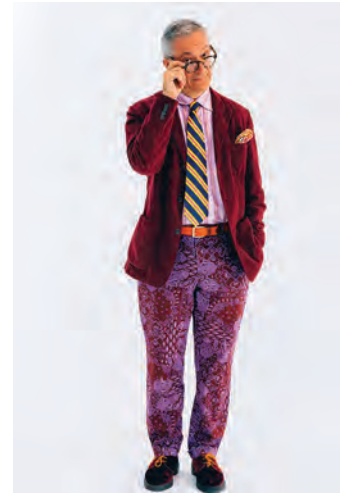
A. Aunt Daphne was waiting in the wings and had not yet made her entrance? Bertie had asserted his independence from the text and exercised his right to dance on the table with Esmond? Of course, one of the pleasures of Wodehouse is that no one has a mind of his or her own in the books—Wodehouse calls all the shots and keeps a tight rein on the plot.

Q. On *Jeeves and the Tie That Binds*, your cover appears to portray a touching scene at the end of chapter 12 where Bertie comes across Florence Craye’s fiancé, Ginger Winship, in a summerhouse with Magnolia Glendennon “locked in an embrace so close that it seemed to me that only powerful machinery could unglue them.” In your portrayal, it appears that Jeeves is nearby lurking behind some shrubbery. This is not in the text. Is Jeeves in your drawing just because he is the omniscient observer of all things or for some other reason?

A. Yes, I assume that Jeeves is ever and always hovering; we could say omnipresent.

Q. Another mystery: the cover of the mass-market (rack) edition shows Bertie standing on what appears to be a straight, red-bricked walkway. On the cover of the trade edition, the walkway is curved and appears to consist of multicolored flagstones. Did you draw it both ways, or has someone at Harper taken liberties?

A. The trim size for the trade editions was different, and as the art had to be redesigned to fit the new dimensions, I took the opportunity to rethink some of the illustrations. I’ve always liked crazy paving and so took the opportunity to include some here as a metaphor for the circuitous plot, in place of the straight and narrow path.



On the left, Steven Guarnaccia and interviewer Bob Rains; above, Mr. G. sports some cover-appropriate style.

Q. *Thank You, Jeeves*: We see in your cover the tragic scene in chapter 1 where Jeeves leaves Bertie because of a dispute over the latter’s banjolele playing. In the book, Jeeves leaves Bertie’s London flat because he cannot abide the idea that Bertie is planning to move to a cottage in the country where he will continue his musical endeavors. However, in your cover, they are already in the country when Jeeves abandons ship. Why?

A. I liked the idea of showing an exasperated Jeeves leaving, and showing the interior and exterior simultaneously. I couldn’t make it work in an urban setting, so, as in other instances, I played fast and loose with the text, I’m afraid.

Q. *Jeeves in the Morning* has a great cover. But is that Florence Craye glowering at the front door and Boko and Nobby canoodling in the bushes? I suppose it might have been too risqué to have pictured Stilton Cheesewright emerging from the river in the altogether, his uniform having been pinched by Jeeves. But, admit it, surely you were tempted, no?

A. Actually, a naked Stilton is just coming out of the river at the extreme left of the picture, just outside the frame.

Q. *How Right You Are, Jeeves*: The cover illustrates a scene at the end of chapter 15 where Bertie, against Jeeves’s advice, had been planning to push Aubrey Upjohn into the lake so that Kipper Herring could save him. Instead, Poppet the dachshund precipitated both himself and Bertie into the depths, and Wilbert Cream dived in to save Bertie and dog. Phyllis Mills and Bobbie Wickham are in attendance. In your picture, Poppet remains on dry land, and a woman we see from

behind is watching. Why the alterations from the text, and is the watcher Phyllis or Bobbie? Since Bobbie is described as having hair “ruddier than the cherry,” is it Phyllis?

A. Lo, after these many years, I can but try to reconstruct what was going on in my mind at the time. I seem to remember that I wanted to have Poppet gleefully mocking his rescuers—perhaps I imagined him already back out of the water and on dry land? I will admit that in most cases I was more interested in making an interesting illustration than in being faithful to the books. I say this somewhat abjectly, given who is interviewing me and where this interview will appear.

Q. *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*: Your cover does not appear to have been literally drawn from a specific incident in the novel. It is true that in chapter 8 Bertie and Sir Watkyn Bassett meet up in Totleigh Towers and that Stiffy Byng’s Aberdeen terrier Bartholomew appears on the scene. But this encounter happens in the middle of the night, Sir Watkyn is wearing a bright purple dressing gown, and Bertie is not carrying the black amber statuette which is the cause of so much trouble. He did, however, manage to knock over and destroy a grandfather clock. So, why the changes from the text? Did you want to spare delicate readers the image of Sir Watkyn so adorned? Or, perhaps, to avoid the implication that *SUL, J* is one of those juicy, lewd affronts to the high-minded?

A. See previous reply.

Q. Your *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* cover splendidly captures the recurrent motif of Jeeves’s disapproval of Bertie’s moustache. Given the self-satisfied look on Bertie’s face, should we assume that the cover reflects the opening scene when Bertie is proud of and defends his moustache, rather than the closing scene when he informs Jeeves, with a passing pang, that he will lather the upper lip, take razor in hand, and part with his pride and joy?

A. Yes, at the moment depicted, Bertie is still enamored of his new undergrowth.

Q. If you could choose another Wodehouse book to design a cover for, what would it be?

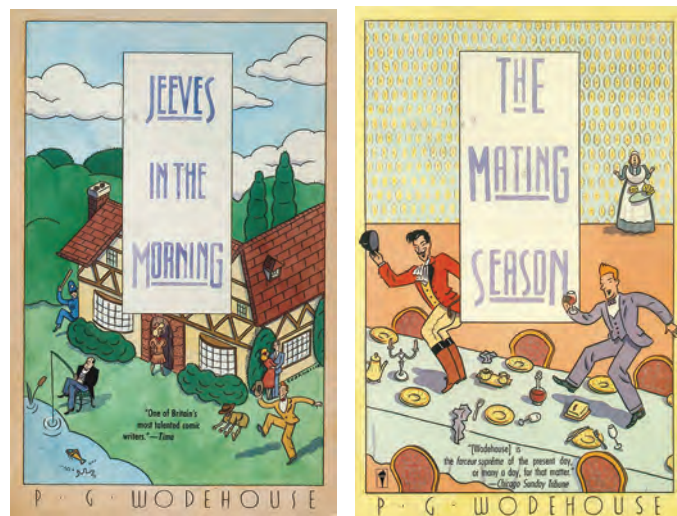
A. *The Luck of the Bodkins*: the Mickey Mouse candy container, Mabel Spence, Albert Peasemarch. Need I say more?

Q. Are you now, or have you ever been, a card-carrying member of The Wodehouse Society? And, if not, would you accept a gift membership as a token of our appreciation?

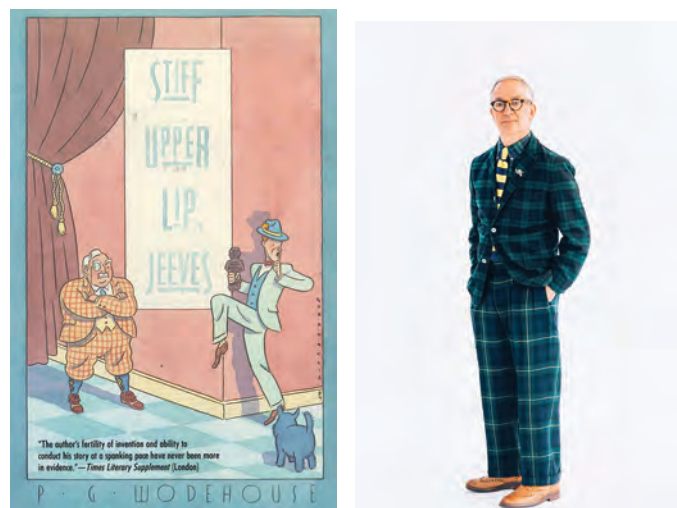
A. I am not, but I’d be honored! That said, I should note that, as a boy, I wanted to be a member of the Baker Street Irregulars, but I soon realized I wouldn’t want to

do the homework involved. I loved reading but hated puncturing the pleasure by writing themes for school and taking tests on what I read. However, though I read every book for which I illustrated the cover, I took the occasional liberty with the facts. I presume no card-carrying Wodehousean would countenance such indiscretion? So the question I put to you is, would The Wodehouse Society even have me as a member?

*Postscript: After much introspection and soul-searching, I decided (as a TWS board member) that, in light of Steven Guarnaccia’s artistic contributions to the canon, he shall become a most honored member of TWS and that in this one case we will even waive the entrance examination, which we are confident he would, in any event, have passed with flying colors.*



*Let the secrets now be known: Bob Rains’s insightful interview and Mr. Guarnaccia’s explanations help us understand how sometimes the cover is drawn to provide the spirit of the story, if not necessarily to match the detail of the plot.*



# *P. G. Wodehouse: The Unknown Years* by Baroness Reinhild von Bodenhausen

REVIEWED BY TODD MORNING

IN JUNE 1941, P. G. Wodehouse was released from internment and deposited by the German authorities at the Hotel Adlon in Berlin. In many ways, Wodehouse was at a loss, and he made a number of bad choices. He gave two interviews where he made statements that were not well received in Britain and North America, and he agreed to do a series of broadcasts over Nazi radio. Baron Raven von Barnikow, an officer in the Luftwaffe and a friend of Wodehouse from Hollywood, stepped up to help. (See the Spring 2021 *Plum Lines* for more information on the Baron.) Barnikow arranged for Wodehouse to stay at Degenershausen, the country estate owned by his fiancée (and first cousin), Baroness Anga von Bodenhausen-Degener. Anga was anti-Nazi, had Scottish ancestors, and spoke English; her estate, isolated in the Harz mountains, was barely touched by the war. At Degenershausen, Wodehouse found a welcome refuge. He stayed there in the summers of 1941 and 1942. Anga was happy to welcome Wodehouse and never asked for payment.

In 2009, Anga's daughter, Baroness Reinhild von Bodenhausen, published a memoir, *P. G. Wodehouse: The Unknown Years*, about his time at Degenershausen. Reinhild was ten when Wodehouse arrived at her mother's estate. In her introduction, she notes that the memoir is partly based on her own childhood journal, which she kept with the encouragement of "Uncle Plummie." Despite the book's title, these years are not completely unknown as Reinhild had given interviews to the Wodehouse biographers Frances Donaldson and Robert McCrum. Yet her book provides additional information and a wealth of anecdotes.

Although she spoke no English, Reinhild immediately took to the visitor. She wrote that Wodehouse "was quite a serious man and took us children seriously. This made us feel very important and grown up." Wodehouse developed a friendship with Bwana, Reinhild's little dog. Bwana's favorite spot soon became Uncle Plummie's desk, where he happily sat whenever Wodehouse wrote there.

Reinhild was fascinated by Wodehouse's working methods, which extended to his walks around the estate: "He would clasp his hands behind his back, then he would talk to himself. Sometimes he would burst out laughing. He had obviously thought out a new amusing scenario for his stories."



*Baroness Reinhild von Bodenhausen  
at a 2009 book signing in London*

Soon after he arrived, Wodehouse offered to play records of the German radio broadcasts he had completed up to that point. Reinhild's mother was horrified, telling her visitor that the broadcasts were being used as propaganda. Wodehouse was surprised and deeply upset by this revelation. Reinhild writes: "In the following days, Uncle Plummie replayed his records over and over on the veranda. . . . Sometimes he stopped to lift the record needle to place it back and to listen again to certain phrases. He was clearly in anguish, as we children could see."

Robert McCrum wrote that the broadcasts stopped after Ethel Wodehouse came to Degenershausen in July. Reinhild contends that, before Ethel's arrival, her mother traveled to Berlin and met with Nazi officials, informing them that the broadcasts must stop. Reinhild writes: "I do not know who she saw but I do know that it took a lot of courage for her to see whoever it was." She points out that this was not easy for her mother: "Now she had to face the music on behalf of Uncle Plummie. She was a very emotional person, which at times made life difficult for her. She was a volcano of passions, but certainly above all she was full of courage."

With the burden of future broadcasts lifted, Wodehouse settled into life at Degenershausen. He continued to write, took long walks, and helped the resident French prisoners of war with their chores on the estate. Ethel had arrived on July 21, 1941, along with the Wodehouse's dog Wonder, described by Reinhild as "the notorious Pekinese." Ethel quickly became bored with country life. She offered to teach Reinhild

English, “but soon grew tired of this dreadful task and laughingly gave it up.” Then came an offer to make daily flower arrangements. This also quickly palled. It may have come as a relief to Ethel when Anga closed Degenershausen for the winter because of the lack of fuel. The Wodehouses returned to Berlin.

Ethel is often portrayed as the practical Wodehouse, navigating Nazi-occupied Europe while Plum stayed in the world of his plots and characters. Reinhild, however, relates an incident in which Ethel acted incredibly silly and could have landed in serious trouble. A military parade was scheduled to proceed down the street in front of the Hotel Adlon, and the guests were invited to watch from the balcony. As the forces marched past, the Germans on the balcony snapped their arms in the Nazi salute. Ethel, meanwhile, raised Wonder’s paw and said, “Hu Hu, Wonder, say Hu Hu, be a good girl, say Hu Hu.” Reinhild writes that “Germans had been arrested and put into concentration camps for lesser offenses.”

Plum, on the other hand, was not always removed from practical matters. Reinhild was tutored by a series of mediocre governesses, and her education suffered. Wodehouse tried to step in:

Uncle Plummie remonstrated my mother, “Anga, this cannot go on.” Together they came to my school desk in my room and my Uncle Plummie looked at my lessons. “Really, Anga,” he said reproachfully, “this is not good enough for her.” He considered a thorough education an important asset in everyone’s life. My mother just laughed, but Uncle Plummie was not amused. This time he did not laugh with her.

The Wodehouses returned to Degenershausen in the summer of 1942. In 1943, however, the estate was requisitioned by the German Foreign Office. The increasing Allied bombing of Berlin meant that a remote location was needed to store the Foreign Office archives. The Wodehouses did not return to the estate and the Nazis eventually moved them to Paris. With Degenershausen now completely overrun with government officials, the war no longer seemed a distant event to Reinhild. In fact, it came directly to Degenershausen on April 17, 1945, when American soldiers attacked the German garrison that was stationed there. After a brief skirmish, the Foreign Office files and Degenershausen were in the hands of the American army. The French prisoners made it clear to the Americans that Anga had treated them with great kindness. The American commander insisted that Anga and Reinhild accompany his troops back to the

American lines. He explained that Degenershausen was in an area designated for Russian control. As a beautiful German aristocrat, Anga faced brutal treatment at the hands of the Russians. Reluctantly, the family left their estate with the column of American army trucks.

The book’s final chapters describe what was a difficult postwar period for Reinhild and her mother. Degenershausen was confiscated by the East German government. With great difficulty, Anga managed to reclaim her collection of Impressionist paintings, but these had to be sold at bargain basement prices in order to keep food on the table. Anga died in 1976. Reinhild married and lived with her husband in Africa, later settling in Virginia. From what I can tell, she may now be living in England. Reinhild sold her Wodehouse-related papers (including her journal, her mother’s journal, and letters to and from the Wodehouses) to the Morgan Library in New York. Reinhild saw Ethel for the last time at a celebration at the Morgan Library in 1981. Ethel was 96 years old by that time and no longer remembered Reinhild or her time at Degenershausen.

Although the book was written many years after the events of the early 1940s, Reinhild conveys the excitement that a young girl felt when the famous English author came to stay. The memoir’s occasional departures from standard English do not detract from the book. Instead, readers will feel that Reinhild is telling the story directly to them (with some German inflections). She offers one fascinating anecdote after another about Auntie Ethel’s and Uncle Plummie’s wartime visits. It is a valuable addition to accounts of this period of Wodehouse’s life.

The first time I heard about *P. G. Wodehouse: The Unknown Years* was when its publication was announced in the Summer 2009 issue of *Plum Lines*. Since the book was published in Sri Lanka, I presumed that obtaining a copy would be complicated and I didn’t pursue it. However, while I was researching Baron Raven von Barnikow for my article “Spies in the Offing,” for the Spring 2021 issue of *Plum Lines*, I realized that my only hope of finding a firsthand account of the mysterious Baron was to track down Reinhild’s memoir. The book is no longer in print, and prices vary wildly from used book sources. I was able to find a fairly inexpensive copy, but some copies on offer are frighteningly expensive. Unfortunately, few American libraries own this book, although I was pleased to learn that Vanderbilt University includes a copy in their Wodehouse collection.



# Chapters Corner

WHAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? Please send all news to Gary Hall (see back page). Note that webmaster Noel Merrill keeps chapter items posted on the society website. It's good to send advance info about upcoming events to Noel; his contact information is 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



## The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity) Contact:

Amy Plofker



## Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)

Contact: Susan Parsons



AT THE CALL of our chair, Rev. Susan Parsons, the Caps gathered in a Zoom Room on the evening of February 21 for a theatrical reading of "Honeysuckle Cottage," as adapted for the stage by Ed Powell. The dramatis personae comprised:

Narrators: Susan Parsons, Shana Singerman,

Andrea Jacobsen

Mr. Mulliner: Victoria Kennedy

James Rodman: Ed Powell

Beautiful Girl: Linda Lillo Norman

Dying Man & Col. Carteret: Bob Rains

Toto and William (canines): Lenny Goldstein  
(our very own Mel Blanc)

Rose Maynard: Freda Kirkham

Apple-Cheeked Housekeeper: Sandra Goldstein

Dr. Brady: Bruce Montgomery

McKinnon and Gooch: Gary Buck

Producer/Director/Spiritual Adviser: S. Parsons

Also in attendance but hiding under a bushel basket: Jeff Peterson, Ken Clevenger, Scott Daniels, and Beth Baxley. All were in agreement—or held their tongues—that the event was great fun and that the only thing that could possible improvement would be if we could get together in three dimensions.

Now that we have reveled in "the roar of the greasepaint, the smell of the crowd," we are looking forward to our next adventures in thespianism.

—Susan Parsons

## Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Mark Reber



[It seems that we've missed a few Chapter One reports over the last months. We're catching up below! Apologies to all!—OM]

THE FRIENDLY and wide-ranging preliminary discussion addressed at our December 1, 2020, Zoom meeting included diverse subjects such as Thanksgiving, knock-knock jokes, the perils of overly aggressive electronic devices, and so on. Corresponding Chapter One member Murray Wilson's comments prompted an appreciative discussion of an old favorite, Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*.

The official topic for the meeting was "Return to New York," from the *Jeeves and Wooster* series. Stephen Fry's portrayal of Jeeves drew mixed reviews from us, but we agreed that Hugh Laurie's Bertie Wooster hit the spot with natural and genuine haplessness. Overall, the production was impressive, but the former New Yorkers among us were amused by the use of city and beach settings from neither New York nor Long Island.

A few specific scenes from the episode prompted discussion. Supervising and directing the "kidnapped" child (from the story "Fixing It for Freddie") to pronounce "Kiss Tuppy" in the desired manner must have been a daunting task. We enjoyed the story line revolving around the Slingsby soup recipe and the amusing jingle that was not in the original story, "A Spot

of Art.” We assumed that the change in the subject of the portrait (from Bertie to Aunt Agatha) was legitimate artistic license to facilitate the inclusion of the plot from “The Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace.”

—Robert Sloan

OUR CHAPTER gathered with its usual good humor on January 19, 2021. The focus of our conversation was *The Girl on the Boat*. All agreed that, although the book was uneven in tone and lacked the polish of Wodehouse’s more mature works, it had exuberance, delightful language, and plenty of laugh-out-loud situational humor. Mark Reber pointed out that, as in later novels, this one abounds with literary quotations. However, since there’s no Jeeves here, they have to be spread out among the other characters.

We discussed Wodehouse’s lack of enthusiasm for lawyers, doctors (except Dr. Sally, who was originally the creation of the Hungarian playwright Ladislav Fodor), and other middle-class professionals. We noted how Sam, the brash young hero, seems to be an emerging PGW stock character and a rank opportunist, and how Bream, the suitor who “looks more like a parrot than most parrots,” gets short shrift.

We tackled the topic of seaside towns, and how Bingley-on-Sea and Bramley-on-Sea are Wodehouse’s depictions of a real place called Bexhill-on-Sea.

Before the meeting ended, we revisited the issue of how to address material in Wodehouse, and most other humorists from earlier times, that offends current standards. Not surprisingly, we never achieved a consensus on this topic.

—Carolyn Daffron

THE ZOOMERS of Chapter One gathered in high spirits on Fat Tuesday, February 16, 2021. No virtual rolls were actually tossed, but many chaps appeared buoyed by having recently received their COVID vaccinations.

Bob Rains raised important chapter business, including our group’s historical obligation to support the wellbeing of Gussie, the newt at the Philadelphia Zoo whose glass home bears his given name and an acknowledgment of Chapter One’s sponsorship. Normally we offer cash donations for Gussie’s upkeep at our bar-parlor gatherings. Because the virtual nature of our meeting prevented the passing of paper oof, we decided that gifts for Gussie could be mailed to our newly appointed treasurer, who would then gather and forward them to the zoo as a collective donation.

The designated topics for this meeting were selections from *Plum Pie* and anecdotes that originally appeared in *Punch* under the heading “Our Man in

America.” We strayed from talking about these, however, to consider a question raised by David Ruef: “What actually makes something funny and why does slapstick work?” Discussion touched upon Mark Twain, James Thurber, Charlie Chaplin, the Marx Brothers, Nichols and May, Don Rickles, Seinfeld, and Wodehouse. Michael Ladenson recalled Elaine May’s definition of comedy, which was based on the difference between the simple action that occurs when one character shoots another in a drama and the many steps that have to take place when the same thing occurs in a comedy.

It was also mentioned that comic writers (and actors who appear in stage and screen comedies) tend to be overlooked when awards are presented and are often held in lower esteem by their colleagues.

—Mark Reber

ON MARCH 16, 2021, we discussed the 1995 BBC film version of *Heavy Weather*. Overall, the Chaps agreed that this film is an enjoyable and faithful adaptation of the novel, with no major liberties taken. Richard Briers, fondly remembered from the earlier TV series *Good Neighbors*, is especially effective as Galahad Threepwood. For some of us, sisters Constance and Julia are scary enough to be true to life.

Our opinions were divided on Peter O’Toole as Lord Emsworth, an acting role for which he apparently expressed particular fondness. While he fits the tall and thin description in the novel, his Emsworth is played too broadly, with too frequent chewing of scenery, to compare favorably with our sense of the character.

The importance of the role of Beach as the butler at Blandings led us to discuss and compare him with Jeeves. Overall, we thought Beach to be a more realistic character, more avuncular, kinder and less intimidating, a more natural mover of the plot, but less universally successful in scheming and problem solving. We especially enjoyed Beach’s scene listening to the radio while soaking his feet and enjoying a glass of very fine port. Also positively noted was his direct action with the Empress in the finale.

We were cheered to watch this version of a Blandings novel. We appreciate that so many producers, scriptwriters, and directors have chosen to interpret Wodehouse works, even when they don’t completely hit the mark.

We expressed the hope that we may soon be able to resume live Chapter One meetings at Cavanaugh’s Pub in Headhouse Square. When this happens, we will endeavor to find a way for out-of-town members who have been joining us on Zoom to continue to do so.

—Robert Sloan

**T**HE BLANDINGS aficionados of Chapter One gathered for a virtual session on April 20, 2021. Mark Reber opened the meeting by announcing that \$190 in gift checks had been forwarded to the Philadelphia Zoo to provide ongoing food and housing for our chapter's adopted newt, Gussie.

After some wide-ranging conversation, we turned our attention to stories in which Lord Emsworth gains the courage to openly defy Lady Constance: "Pig-hoo-o-o-ey!" and "Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend." Members read favorite passages aloud. Dialogue from the first story was performed by Karen and David Ruef, Michael Ladenson, and Steve Wieland with a verve that would have appealed to Plum during his Broadway years. Many beloved quotes were also read from the second tale.

Mention that Rudyard Kipling had remarked that "Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend" was "one of the most perfect short stories ever written" evoked agreement and disagreement. But we all found ample pleasures in this tale.

Discussion then touched upon how Wodehouse addressed issues of social class in his writing. Two members recalled their own childhood experiences when their suburban families hosted inner-city children as part of New York's Fresh Air Fund. Those endeavors were considered far more gratifying and generous than the one-afternoon Blandings Parva School Treat.

—Mark Reber

**T**HE SUNSET of a spring evening on May 18, 2021, spread graciously over Pennsylvania. Chapter One Zoomers, however, chose to remain indoors at their computers, chatting about three early Wodehouse stories: a 1905 school story entitled "Shields' and the Cricket Cup" and two comic tales from 1910, "By Advice of Counsel" and "The Good Angel."

Many Chaps found the complex cricket details in the first story a bit daunting. "By Advice of Counsel" was faulted as an extended vaudeville-type anecdote, but praised for its un-Plumlike narrative voice. "The Good Angel" was noted to be a source of later Wodehouse ideas, such as holding a below-stairs wager on which suitor was likely to win the heart of the lady of the house. The butler was judged to lack credibility for his lower-class speech (adding and dropping the letter "h" like Eliza Doolittle).

We discussed ways that we might return to in-person chapter meetings, but decided to defer this step, most likely until 2022. In the meantime we will continue our virtual meetings. When in-person gatherings are finally resumed, these will be alternated with Zoom

sessions, so that our geographically far-flung members can continue to participate.

Attending were Tom and Betty Hooker, Steve Wieland and Susan Barr, David MacKenzie and Hope Gaines, Bob Rains, Ben Wieland, Bob Sloan, Mark Reber, Michael Ladenson, and Will Campbell.

—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



**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



o

**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



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

Contact: Ken Clevenger



**The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels**  
(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: Lynette Poss



**The New England Wodehouse Th ingummy So ciety**  
(NEWTS)

(Boston and New England)

Contact: Lynn Vesley-Gross,



or Roberta Towner

**T**HE NEWTS met in mid-April, a time traditionally avoided because of Mud Season here in the Northeast, but given that Zooming doesn't require putting on wellies and tramping about, we had a good and dry turnout. One member happily sipped a cocktail called a Chrysanthemum while the rest of us writhed in envy over our own bottled water.

We rallied to read the first act of *The Play's the Thing*, a Ferenc Molnár play adapted by Wodehouse in 1926. The territory was familiar to Wodehouse from his years on Broadway: a playwright of advancing years (he is "on the shady side of 50" at a time when Wodehouse himself was on the sunny side) concocts a way to save the engagement of a young composer to a charming prima donna. The fiancée has been overheard at 2 AM receiving the advances of a pompous older actor. How will our hero the playwright fix everything? The Newts are eager to learn at our next meeting, although of course there's a Wikipedia page for the plot.

—Roberta Towner

**The Northwodes**

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Mike Eckman



**T**HE NORTHWODES met on Zoom on March 3, 2021, to discuss *A Damsel in Distress*. Chivalry is the mot juste for this story, as George Bevan falls in love with Maud, finds she loves another, and agrees to help her get her man. All turns out well for almost everyone. Many watched the 1937 musical film version with Fred Astaire, Joan Fontaine, and Burns & Allen.

Per Maria Jette, showbiz lore names George Gershwin as the inspiration for George Bevan. Lord Marshmoreton is much like the Earl of Emsworth: Both have controlling sisters, love their castle's gardens, and tend their own rose beds. Janna Kysilkos theorized that Plum had special animus for young boys: Blighted Albert the pageboy is a lot like Edwin the boy scout, an annoying snerd. Mike Eckman and Maria both observed how everything is managed by the castle's staff, while its residents and guests are pawns. For George and Maud, and for Marshmoreton and Billie, we predicted happy marriages, but we weren't so sanguine about Reggie and Alice. Like Florence Craye and Bertie, he's her pet project rather than a love match.

On our April 22, 2021, Zoom call, we discussed *Full Moon* (1947). Bruce Willey showed the Paul Galdone illustrations from his first edition, which have an inappropriately rotund Clarence. Jim Pogue liked the way Freddie grew from a vapid silly ass into a man of pith who, as his uncle Galahad notes, thinks on his feet. Holly Windle loved Pru's extended musings on drowning herself in the pond à la Ophelia and noted how Gally's unusual elan is ascribed to his (almost Tennyson) "rising on stepping stones of dead whiskey and sodas to higher things." Per Bill Stipple, the story shows that the financing of Bill's pub is determined by family and connections; in America it would be determined by risk and benefit.

Maria asked if anyone had tried barley water. None had. Plans are afoot to get some. Many of the group found Galahad Threepwood and Uncle Fred similar. Karen Langenfeld's theory is that Uncle Fred and Gally are Wodehouse introducing himself into the plot.

—Mike Engstrom

**The Orange Plums**

(Orange County, California)

Contact: Lia Hansen, or Diana Van Horn

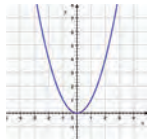


**A**HOY THERE! Admiral Biffen here, this time with a quickie update on the doings of the Orange Plummies. As I write this and send it out over the wireless on the maritime band, we have only just moments ago finished our May meeting—notable for both its gathering of a mere three of our dozen or so members, and for the fact of our decision to make this, we hope, our final Zoom gathering. After the same pandemic delay endured by the rest of you, we've decided—having now all been double-vaccinated—to finally make our next meeting in person. The plan is

to meet at our favorite former watering hole in Orange (Ruby's) and settle in at our outside tables for our devoutly-to-be-wished reunion. It will be pure joy in the morning—er, rather, afternoon—to be together once again. There will no doubt be hugs all around, and we shall be discussing the first four stories in *Blandings Castle and Elsewhere*. Wish us luck, me hearties!

I have the honor to be your obedient 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



**T**HE PICKERING MOTOR CO. met via Zoom on a cold St. Valentine's Day. It was also the anniversary of Plum's death. The reading assignment was *The Small Bachelor*. Elliott and Elyse joined us from Florida, where they were "dipping [their] toes in snowbirdism." Tad joined us from Massachusetts, where he was visiting a friend. Zoom does have some benefits.

Your humble scrivener stated that the character Beamish reminded him of Psmith. He was a knowledgeable adviser to the hero. The difference is that Psmith was a friend and adviser to Mike, a straight character, while Beamish was friend and advisor to George Finch, a comic character.

The novel is based on the play *Oh, Lady! Lady!*—and it shows. Some passages can be visualized as being played on a stage. A good example of this is the scene where Sigsbee Waddington tries to sell some worthless

stock to Garroway. That scene was not in the play, but we could visualize it being played on stage. It looks like a precursor to Soapy Molloy selling worthless oil stock in later books.

Plum had two of the characters marry at The Little Church Around the Corner, site of his own wedding.

Mike noted that, in chapter 7, Wodehouse mentioned the scientists of the ancient world and their philosophy of time. He thought the author was showing off his classical education. He probably was, but it is nice to know that someone besides me remembers Tycho Brahe, the great Danish astronomer. You learn lots of stuff reading Wodehouse.

We discussed whether any of Plum's books or plays written around the time of the Spanish influenza pandemic mentioned it. [Note: PGW mentioned it in *The Adventures of Sally* and some short stories and essays.—OM] We wonder if contemporary novelists will mention the current pandemic in their novels.

—Robert Walter

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



**W**HILE LOCKDOWN meant that we could no longer foregather to throw rolls at each other, the Millionaires have been Zooming with high success, like the chamois of the Alps leaping from crag to crag. We gather every two weeks to read aloud works from the Master. We finished *Joy in the Morning* in April and have moved on to *Young Men in Spats*.

We investigated spats, being that it is a rather funny word. Wikipedia has a nice article on spats. Also, on YouTube, a search on "spats 1920s" will lead to videos about gentlemen's attire of that period. One of these videos suggested that the best place to buy spats was Etsy. Spats fell out of fashion in the 1920s, and the stories in *YMIS* were published in the mid-1930s, so Wodehouse was clearly keeping us in the prewar styles.

—Allison Thompson

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



**The Plum Street Plummiess**  
(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>

**T**WENTY-SEVEN DUTCH WODEHOUSEANS gathered on February 13 via Zoom. We enjoyed the talk by honorary member Tony Ring in England about his new book *Nothing Is Simple in Wodehouse*. Tony told us how an uncle sparked his interest in PGW at the age of eleven by giving Tony his first Wodehouse novel. He described examples of the various Wodehouse complexities from his new book. An enthusiastic discussion followed.

Some members had prepared another Anatole dish that was recently written up in the society’s magazine, *Nothing Serious*. This tasty treat was *velouté aux fleurs de courgette*, which we know from *The Code of the Woosters*. The *velouté* was easy enough to find, but it was difficult this time of year to get hold of the flowers of a zucchini plant. Still, against all odds, the eager chefs succeeded in preparing the soup according the Escoffier directions.

In other action, member Yvonne Heijkants read her favorite Wodehouse fragment from “The Man Who Disliked Cats,” and another new Dutch Wodehouse stamp was presented.



*Knight Yvonne Heijkants*

Finally, the Knights watched the 1995 movie version of *Heavy Weather*, with a rather over-the-top Peter O’Toole as Lord Emsworth and Richard Briers as his brother Gally Threepwood.



*Peter O’Toole channels Lord Emsworth, more or less.*

**O**N MARCH 13, Peter Nieuwenhuizen spoke to us about the early prewar production of Wodehouse in lyrics, plays, movies, serials and books.

\*\*\*\*\*

**O**N APRIL 14, Vikas Sonak spoke about Wodehouse pastiches and homages, like those of Cyril Northcote Parkinson, Peter Cannon, Margaret Raether, Sebastian Faulks, Max Barrett, Ben Schott, Ian Strathcarron, Kyril Bonfiglioli, and Chris Dolley. We expect the offshoots will continue apace.

—Peter Nieuwenhuizen

**Rugby In All Its Niceties**  
(Rugby, Tennessee Region)

Contact: Donna Heffner



**The Size 14 Hat Club**

(Halifax, Nova Scotia) Contact: Jill Robinson



**T**HE 14ERS are alive and kicking up here, and clinging to Wodehousean levity in these difficult times.

Having come across what must be very rare copy of “Wodehouse on the Niblick,” the 14ers hosted a symposium on it. This is a scholarly piece in which Wodehouse explores the physics behind the design and purpose of the niblick. The Master refers fleetingly to this work in his story “Jane Gets Off the Fairway.”

Our band of fish-enhanced brains have decided that, while the genius of PGW was to invent rescue heroes

(Jeeves, Gally, Uncle Fred, Psmith, etc.), this genius was inspired by his understanding of the particular talent of the niblick. The niblick is a tool devised and used specifically for getting a careless, unlucky, or simply bad golfer out of a jam. With proper skills, the niblick works every time. So, too, Wodehouse heroes are adept at crafting a way out of seemingly disastrous situations, rescuing the deserving victims, and thereby proving their prowess. And all because of a golf club.

Respectfully submitted by Tongue-in-Cheek reviews,  
—Jill Cooper Robinson

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



## Murray Hedgcock

BY GARY HALL



*Murray Hedgcock*

**M**URRAY HEDGCOCK (nom de Plum “De Freece”), a longtime patron of of UK Wodehouse society, passed away in May this year at the age of ninety. Murray was Australian by birth but lived in the U.K. for the last several decades. He grew up in the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria, Australia, and his first discovery of Wodehouse was when he read “The Ordeal of Young Tuppy.”

Like Wodehouse, Murray started work in banking but soon turned to journalism because it allowed him more time to watch cricket.

There are many wonderful anecdotes from many of Murray’s friends and acquaintances. *The Times* (London) printed a fascinating, thorough history of him (see <https://tinyurl.com/ve92m2wu>), though you must be a subscriber to read the entire article. Following

are comments from some of the many who wrote on PGWnet and elsewhere about Murray.

*Tony Ring*: “Murray was a loyal member of our society, and attended most of our dinners and the London evening meetings. He was a very keen cricketer. He was a long-standing member of the Marylebone Cricket Club (the most prestigious cricket club in the world), and, after publishing an article in *Wisden Cricket Monthly*, he expanded his research ambitions to produce the acclaimed annotated omnibus *Wodehouse at the Wicket*, which was published in 1997. Murray was loved by everybody who knew him—an intelligent, gentle, interesting man who had merged his two major interests (Wodehouse and cricket) in a way which has been of benefit to so many people. We shall miss him.”

*Patrick Kidd* (from the *London Times*): “Lord’s will be a slightly less lovely place this summer after the sudden death . . . of the journalist and cricket-lover Murray Hedgcock. . . . Murray first came to Britain in 1953 to watch the Ashes. When his money ran out, he got a job on a south London newspaper because it came with a press pass for the Oval. . . . He helped to form the society’s cricket team, the Gold Bats, writing regulations for their match against the Sherlock Holmes Society that reflected the Laws in 1895 and his own taste.”

There was much more commentary in various forums and publications about Murray. The internet email forum PGWnet turned to the concept of a rolling, round-the-globe toast for Murray, courtesy of an idea from Noel Merrill. After a bit of back and forth with various contributors, during which ideas were proposed that might include Wodehouseans getting an opportunity to tipple twice in Murray’s honor, the toast commenced on May 9, 2021, on GMT+1 (British Summer Time) at 1800 hours (6 PM). It then rolled around the globe, with many aiming for that time—or any other time that worked for them. You are welcome to raise a belated toast to Murray.

It is of note that Murray did not drink alcohol (or swear or drive automobiles). In fact, his most likely drink for such a toast would have been orange juice, which somehow seems appropriate.

I had the pleasure of meeting Murray once in person, in 2010 in London, around the time of the U.K. society’s dinner that year. I’ve had the good fortune to follow his wit and wisdom through PGWnet and through email exchanges. He was a pillar of our Wodehousean culture, and we’ll miss his unique take and gentle humor on topics of any sort. Our sympathies to his family.

In closing, I’ll quote fellow Aussie Noel Bushnell, who said, upon raising his toast to Murray, “Dash, dash, and blast it—who will be our resident wowser now?”

# The Funniest Golf Stories

IT'S AN OLDER ARTICLE, but it's just as timely now as ever: "The Funniest Golf Writer Who Ever Lived," by Peter Andrews, in the May 1994 issue of *Golf Digest*. We printed the entire article in the Summer 1997 issue of *Plum Lines*, which you can read on the [wodehouse.org](http://wodehouse.org) *PL* archives. Or visit <https://tinyurl.com/o5ce1276>. The timing is right to reread this.

My love of golf alone would qualify me to enjoy Mr. Andrews's words. But it's also relevant to mention that my first Wodehouse book was *The Golf Omnibus* and my first story was "The Clicking of Cuthbert." So, as summer blooms (in the Northern Hemisphere, at least), here's a sampling of Mr. Andrews's article:

Funny golf short stories are as rare as baseball movies that make sense. In the history of the English language, there have been perhaps 40. The good news is they are easy to find because P. G. Wodehouse wrote 35 of them. There have been a number of nonfiction writers on golf who can be called great, but when it comes to fiction, there is Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, and you search the horizon in vain for his equal. . . . Wodehouse golf stories still make us laugh after all these years, which should come as no particular surprise, for he is the most popular writer of light fiction ever known. He is read in every language that has a discernible grammar. . . . Like a Mozart sonata, each [golf tale] is a tiny miracle gone in a second, leaving behind a line that lingers sweetly in the memory.

—OM

## Contents

- 1 *P. G. Wodehouse's Early Years*
- 2 San Diego Convention 2022
- 3 A Few Quick Ones
- 3 Phrase Turner
- 4 Rockett Man
- 7 Daniel Love Glazer
- 7 Dorothy Swanson
- 8 The P. G. Wodehouse Collection  
at Vanderbilt University
- 9 Letters to the Editor
- 10 Wodehouse Cover Illustrator Steven Guarnaccia
- 15 *P. G. Wodehouse: The Unknown Years*
- 17 Chapters Corner
- 23 Murray Hedgcock
- 24 The Funniest Golf Stories
  
- 24 *Plum Lines* Vol. 42 No. 2 Summer 2021

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*We appreciate your articles, research, Quick Ones, and other observations. Send them to Gary Hall via e-mail or snail mail at the addresses above. Deadlines are February 1, May 1, August 1, November 1.*

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