



Plum Lines

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

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Pigs Fly in Cincinnati

The Flying Pigs chapter put on a topping shindig in the Queen City of Cincinnati, October 18–20. The convention had 140 attendees, and the erudition, friendships, comestibles, and beverages were flowing like the Ohio River. Here are reports by the intrepid scribes who took notes so that those who couldn't attend could get a vicarious thrill—and so that attendees will remember the events of those too few, too fast days, even if they did have a few quick ones.

Come Together

BY GARY HALL

FOR MANY PLUMMIES, the BB Riverboat cruise was the first opportunity for us to gather. There were two busloads of cruisers. Earlier during convention week, the temperatures had been a bit brisk, and many of us were carrying extra layers of clothing, only to find that we had an absolutely pristine, perfect day for our Friday cruise, with calm waters and virtually no wind. No life preservers (unless you count the beverages) were needed during our tour of the Ohio River. We traveled under many a colorful bridge, including the John A. Roebling (a predecessor to the Brooklyn) and the pedestrian-only Purple People Bridge.



Robert Bruce and UK society chairman Hilary Bruce enjoy the sun and Cincinnati skyline on the riverboat cruise.



What a happy throng! The banquet is the can't-miss event of any TWS convention, and everyone spiffs up quite nicely.

Our captain and tour guide regaled us with historical anecdotes and other tidbits about both the Ohio and Kentucky sides of the river. The multilevel riverboat had a top deck without a roof. Many of us enjoyed the open air and sun, while others took to the middle decks or the luxury lounge below.

There was a great deal of meeting and greeting and eager anticipation of the next two days. Everything went swimmingly, so to speak, including the bus transportation, though some of us chose to take advantage of the day to walk back from the Kentucky riverbank to our downtown hotel. (You'll hear more about that delightful venue on p.5.) Back at the hotel, we collected our terrific goodie bags, signed our names for the Tome, bought some items from the rummage sale, stuffed the raffle-ticket boxes (with raffle tickets, of course), and made bids on the silent auction treasures.

Friday evening dusked, it was a long time 'til rosy-fingered dawn, and most of the joyous Wodehousean crew descended upon the Continental Room at the

luxurious Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza Hotel. Foodstuffs were delightful and plentiful, though the Maryland crab cakes were in extremely high demand. Camaraderie flowed with the wine, mixed drinks, and plum sauce. Acquaintances were reacquainted. New friends were made. The Queen City Sisters sang delightful a cappella tunes to us, à la the Andrews Sisters, and even engaged the crowd to sing along on a couple of melodies.

Flying Pigs spokesman Bill Scrivener welcomed us, and TWS President Tom Smith, in his last day wielding that awesome, unchecked power held by the society prez, gave us hints of what was to come.

As the hotel staff shooed us out at the official end of the evening, so that they could get the room all nifty for the morning Riveting Talks, some gravitated to the hotel bar (where they found good jazz and liquid refreshment) and kept the party alive. All in all, it was a wonderful start to the convention, and the conventioners nestled all snug in their beds with visions of Plumisms dancing in their heads.



We were properly entertained on Friday evening by the Queen City Sisters. The revelers were soon joining along in song.

Riveting Talks—Morning

BY BOB RAINS

FASHIONISTA Madelyn Shaw provided us with useful instruction in the form of “A Wardrobe Guide for the Female Impostor.” A female private eye might slip into Blandings Castle in the guise of a parlormaid or personal secretary, but while the slipping might be easy, it could be harder to know just what slip or corset or camisole she would have to wear—and at what time of day—in order to escape detection or social faux pas. And where, among her unmentionables, would she be able to secrete the all-important flask or equalizer? How about fabrics and hemlines and color schemes? The mind boggles. Using images from *Downton Abbey* and from real life, Ms. Shaw showed us just what the well-dressed female impostor had to bring along in her carry bag.

Outgoing TWS President Thomas Smith then gave us an in-depth history of “The Song of Songs: Sonny Boy and Me.” Our fearless leader delved into why

Wodehouse selected “Sonny Boy” as a MacGuffin. Like any good academic, Pres. Smith posited two competing theories: (1) economy of words (because his audience would all have been familiar with “Sonny Boy”) or (2) an axe to grind against Buddy DeSylva and Jerome Kern. And, like any good academic, he declined to answer his own question.

Paul Kent, author of the just-released *Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, Volume 1: “This is jolly old Fame”*, addressed “Wodehouse and the Stuffed Eelskin of Fate.” The Wodehouse estate gave Paul access to Plum’s private library, which contained several volumes regarding spiritualism and the beyond. To what extent was Wodehouse a believer in life beyond death? How many seances did he attend, and why? Was fate for Wodehouse beneficent or a stuffed eelskin or simply whatever worked as a plot device in any given situation?

Michael Eckman edified the crowd with “The Valet and the Heretic: Wodehouse and Spinoza.” Mike noted that despite his several references to Spinoza, Jeeves never actually quotes him. Could it be that the Master had never actually read Spinoza? After Mike gave us some examples of Spinoza’s theories and writing style, one could hardly blame even Jeeves for giving him the miss-in-baulk.

To wed or not to wed: Karen Shotting regaled us with her talk “Wodehouse and the Nuptial Spirit.” If Wodehouse was so happily married, as he appears to have been for decades, why did he make most of his heroes not only bachelors but marriage-phobic? And if they were so afraid of marriage, why did they keep getting engaged? For the benefit of the mathematically impaired among us, Karen reported that Bertie was engaged a total of sixteen times, including to three unnamed fiancées. (Well, they probably had names; we just don’t learn who they were.) Could it be that Bertie simply never found the right girl?

Our morning talks ended on a supremely high note, with Tim Andrew and Hilary Bruce reporting on “The Wodehouse Commemoration at Westminster Abbey.” A year ago, we learned that the Dean of Westminster had reversed prior refusals and agreed that Wodehouse should be honored with a memorial stone in the Abbey, alongside such notables as Shakespeare, Austen, and Chaucer. But this consummation devoutly to be wished was not achieved by mere happenstance and wishful thinking. Rather, it was the product of great and sustained effort by our sister organization, The P G Wodehouse Society (UK). To a standing ovation, our guests revealed a photo of the newly installed memorial stone recognizing Wodehouse as “humourist, lyricist, novelist, playwright.” Well done!



Riveting Talks—Afternoon

BY BETTY HOOKER

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING the lunch break, the business meeting was the first order of affairs. The election of officers and a few other items were the topics at hand. Tom Smith concluded his sparkling run as president of TWS and handed the baton (and all of the presidential regalia) over to Bill Scrivener. Maria Jette took on the title of vice president. Unanimous acclaim preceded both of these elections. Ian Michaud will carry on as membership secretary—though he is looking for a protégé to train in those duties. (See Ian’s contact info on page 24 of this issue.) Finally, Indu Ravi will continue in her role as treasurer. Hear, hear!

The other big business news was the announcement of the 2021 TWS convention—in San Diego! See page 19 for more details.

The talks resumed, and Anita Avery brought news of a very important TWS initiative (see page 8) on this side of the pond—the establishment of the P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University. Anita, a charter member of TWS, approached Vanderbilt University to see if there was interest in establishing a collection of Plum’s works, and the university responded positively. Gems from Anita’s personal library form the basis of the collection. The project is in its inaugural stage but already contains unique manuscripts, first editions, and other treasures. Donations of rare items are welcome.

Good news for future society presidents: The Tome, a weighty history of The Wodehouse Society’s doings from its beginning, will be deposited at Vanderbilt, thus relieving our chief officers of the responsibility of toting the now-fragile Tome to and from future conventions.

Following on the library theme, Tad Boehmer, Curator of Rare Books at Michigan State University, presented “Something Borrowed: What Wodehouse

Checked Out from the New York Society Library, 1951–1955.” This institution is a private library founded in 1754, and Wodehouse visited it frequently before he moved to Long Island. He checked out approximately nine hundred books over the course of a few years, and the list of these books is still available. Tad received permission from the Wodehouse estate to view, photograph, and study this record—a monumental task. Tad explained that the handwriting was difficult to decipher and that only the first three letters of each book were recorded. He used detective work to figure out the titles. Many of the books were mysteries. Wodehouse also checked out humorous books written by competitors.

Next, Peter Nieuwenhuizen demonstrated similar skilled detective work in his talk “Of Pigs and Prawns: Wodehouse in a Dutch Monastery.” Peter reminded us of Plum’s references to Sir Gregory Parsloe-Parsloe and the story of the prawns in *Heavy Weather* and *Summer Lightning*. Plum omits details; “the customers” are baffled. Two students at a school at a Carmelite Monastery in Holland were so intrigued by this lingering mystery that they wrote a letter to Wodehouse asking for elucidation. However, there was an error in the Dutch translation the boys were using, and “prawns” was translated as “deer.” Peter showed us Plum’s kindly response. Plum told the boys that he couldn’t help them. He just made the story up and didn’t know the story of “the deer.”

While the definitive story of the prawns remains a mystery, Neil Midkiff brought us back to a less enigmatic aspect of Wodehouse’s art in his presentation “All the World’s a Stage: Theatrical Jargon in Wodehouse.” Neil pointed out that Aunt Agatha asked Bertie Wooster to “kindly exclude from your conversation all that is suggestive of . . . the stage door,” but Bertie didn’t heed her advice. Because Plum had a long and intimate connection with the theatre, it’s no surprise that many of his stories and novels had backstage settings. But theatre jargon such as “understudy,” “prompt book,” and “scenario” is common not only in Bertie’s speech but also in many of the stories that aren’t otherwise concerned with the stage. Neil provided a short link, <http://tinyurl.com/pgw-stage>, to a web page at Madame Eulalie with links to the stories and other items referenced in his talk.

The afternoon talks concluded with “Porkopolis, a Porcine (and Human) Love Story,” written by Max Pokrivchak and presented by the NEWTS Players. As in all good Wodehouse works, after overcoming formidable difficulties, the skit’s character—including the pigs—lived happily ever after.

We All Get Together on Saturday Night

BY JEFF PORTEOUS

AHOY, SHIPMATES! Your favorite waterlogged wretch here, Admiral George J. “Fruity” Biffen (a pal of old Gally’s, don’t you know), bunged in as cub reporter among the more experienced denizens of this esteemed Fourth Estate enterprise to deliver a dispatch from our fleet’s most magnanimous maneuvers, the Saturday night Fancy Dress Ball at the TWS Pigs Have Wings convention.

Ahem. Where does a proper regaler possibly begin? The reception, I suppose—held just outside our breathtaking banquet room, with the proceedings permitting all costumed comers to make staggered (even before imbibing!) individual entrances. And what grand displays of creative fluffery they were! We had two (count ’em!) colorful parrots of Uncle Fred persuasion, as well as—continuing the avian bent—four musketeers with feathered headgear (said characters honoring old lyrics by the Master, it was explained). There was also a singular walking collection of every Bertie apparel item to which Jeeves had ever raised an eyebrow, plus—well, it’s pointless to go on. I will happily let Barbara Saari Combs’s stunning shutterbugging (and she’s a bit of a stunner herself!) herewith do the heavy lifting in the itemization and description departments—pictures, of course, being worth reams of further words. Non-costumed attendees were likewise dressed to the nines.

All on board then sashayed collectively into our banquet bonanza. The wondrous fare, as anticipated, would’ve done Anatole proud, and it was certainly everything one would expect from the very same galley that serves the grub at the five-star Orchids Restaurant berthed in the hotel lobby. (Most attendees had already tested the waters of this distinctive dining; certainly all had at some point dropped anchor in the establishment’s watering hole to partake of its potent potatoes.)

Quickly discovered among our table settings were printed Night Orders listing the events scheduled for the evening: Welcome; Greetings from Abroad; Toasts and Awards; Dinner; Costume Parade and Announcement of Winners; Results of Silent Auction and Raffle Drawing; and After Dinner Musical Entertainment.

Soon the ceremonies were underway at full steam with the official introduction of the society’s new president—Bill Scrivener—followed by some sage words from its outgoing figurehead, Major Tom Smith. Well-deserved recognition was offered to Tim

Andrew and Hillary Bruce for their admirable work in shepherding the installation of a Wodehouse memorial stone in Westminster Abbey to honor the Master. The Dutch society president (Peter Nieuwenhuizen) also gave his greeting and thanks for the hospitality. Then the august presentations began. *Plum Lines* editor Gary Hall led us in a toast to our departed comrades. This was followed by Elin Woodger and Bill Scrivener presenting the prestigious Norman Murphy Award to a deserving yet humble Neil Midkiff (see page 20).

Soon it was time to parade all costumed characters before the judges, ensuring that each had his or her day in court. Breathless wagering was conducted among the attendees, of course, but fortunately Rupert Steggle was not noted among those present to nobble the proceedings. The full roster of deserving winners appears on the next page, but when all votes were tallied, victorious highlights included the very same musketeers, proud parrots, and sartorial nightmares mentioned earlier—plus a number of other qualifying hazards to pedestrians and traffic.

Then came announcements of the Raffle and Silent Auction winners—those delighted to be taking home such varied collectibles as ceramic pigs, silver tea infusers, Toby jugs, Dutch stamps, and much more—including, of course, the inevitable Wodehouse collections. All proceeds from these sales and donations were to be delivered directly into the TWS coffers in support of our society’s future convention endeavors. So, as with stuffing ballot boxes, everyone was happy to have given, and given often.

The end of the evening came quite literally on a high note: the vocal soarings of Maria Jette with her pianist partner Dan Chouinard, performing rousing renditions of songs familiarly referred to in the Wodehouse canon—all evoking the enchantment of the Sirens to this shipwrecked old salt.

All in all, it was a binge to stagger scalawags fore, aft, and amidships, and I, for one, can’t wait to weigh anchor and make San Diego my next port of call.



*Toasting the night away:
Karen Shotting and Bill Franklin*



*Kate Wilcox and
Karen Benson*

Costume Prize Winners, More or Less

By the time the costume prizes were handed out at the banquet, our judges had been doing what most of us were doing: having a couple of quick ones. It's possible some awards have been misstated or overlooked, in which case please send corrections to the editor!

Historical Lyrical Adaptation: Four Musketeers Joe Coppola, Elaine Coppola, George Vanderburgh, Carol Cavaluzzi

Abstraction: Anne Bienamen and her illuminated dress as God's Daisy Chain

Flights of Fancy: Parrots Diana Van Horn and Lynn Vesley-Gross

Jeeves's Nightmare: Marcy Downes in cast-off clothes

Multimedia Inspiration: Katherine Jordan and James Risner as Marvel Comics's Peggy Carter and Jeeves variant Edwin Jarvis

Buttercup Days: Tamaki and Ririko Morimura

Go-Getter: Diane Madlon-Kay as a Donaldson dog biscuit

Metaphysical: Anita Avery and her accessory to spread sweetness and light (a decorative book that opened up to reveal lighted battery-powered votives and candy)

Golfing Attire: Mike Engstrom



Anita Avery's
Sweetness and
Light Book

One could read the outcome of the 2019 Not-So-Ffiendish Quiz: winner Jean Tillson, second place Elin Woodger, third place Indu Ravi and Kris Fowler tied.

Then the moment arrived: the skit by our hosts, the Flying Pigs. Nine members of the chapter performed *How Pigs Have Wings*, written and directed by Nancy Arnest and narrated by Rick Arnest.

Fed up with fat pig contests, Winifred (Dawn Bruestle) wants to enter her sow, Queen City Kate, in a swimming pig contest in Cincinnati. She travels to the city with Gerald (Doug Bruestle) on a riverboat, from which they admire the beautiful surroundings (cleverly enacted by others using moving scenery—great job!). While on the boat, the swineherd Whiffle (Christine Wands) reveals the Queen's dietary allocation of brown rice, sweet potatoes, and lemon juice. However, a bag meant for Gerald—containing Cincinnati chili and Graeters raspberry chocolate-chip ice cream—is accidentally swapped with the Queen's bag. The race begins, and it's a fierce swimming contest with Porcinella Princess, Trotter's Envy, Snout Fellow, God's Daisy Chain, and newcomer Queen City Kate. The Queen's meal of chili and ice cream does the trick: She swims so fast that she looks like a flying pig, and she wins the race! That, then, is the story of how pigs can fly on a Cincinnati diet. Other skit performers were Susan Pace, Katherine Jordan, Susan Jordan, Corey Blake, and Bill Scrivener.

After this entertaining skit, there was a tour through the Hilton Netherland Plaza Hotel. It was built in 1930 for John Emery by Walter Ahlschlager and William Starrett for seven million dollars. The hotel and the Carew Tower were designed to be a "city within a city." "Netherland" does not refer to The Netherlands, but to the space between the Ohio River and the hills. Famous visitors were Winston Churchill, Elvis Presley, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bing Crosby, and John and Jackie Kennedy. Doris Day, just fifteen years old, started her career in the Pavilion Nightclub on the fourth floor.

All rooms and galleries are decorated with incredibly detailed, handcrafted work. There are beautiful murals of Apollo and Artemis in baroque style, chandeliers, wall scones, a ziggurat-shaped fountain with a ram's head, Rookwood pottery, art deco motifs, and gold-plated mirrors. It is simply amazing! To conclude the tour, we visited the Observatory Deck for a fabulous view of the city on a beautiful day.

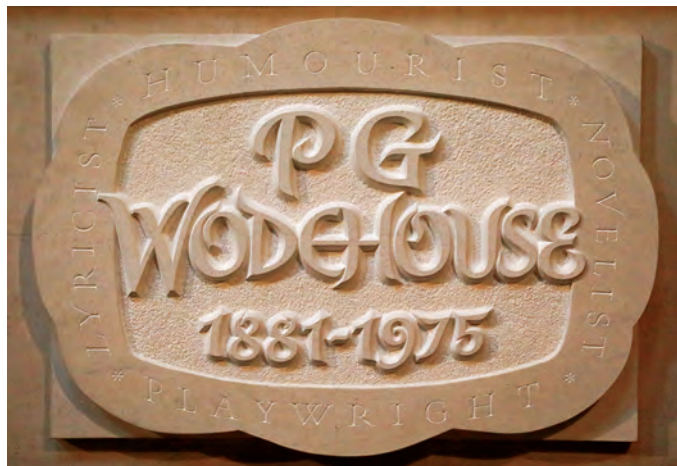
And then, too soon, came the farewells: merry, tearful, and fond. But we know that we'll soon gather again at the 2021 TWS convention in San Diego, and these old friends and new acquaintances will share yet another Wodehousean adventure.

The Merry Brunchers BY PETER NIEUWENHUIZEN

THE SUNNY MORNING started at 9 AM with a lavish brunch in the Hilton Continental Room, with piles of eggs & b., barrels of coffee, and the occasional orange juice (Gussie's favorite drink). There was a lively discussion about the lovely music by Maria and Dan, the riveting talks, Cincinnati chili, and other highlights.

Oh, What a Night!

BY ELLIOTT MILSTEIN



*The Wodehouse memorial at Westminster Abbey
(photo courtesy Andrew Dunsmore / Westminster Abbey)*

ONE WONDERS if the organizers of the ceremony for the Dedication of the Memorial Stone to P. G. Wodehouse at Westminster Abbey would have chosen another day than September 20, 2019, had they known that worldwide “Global Climate Strike” demonstrations were planned for the same day. The Abbey sits across the street from the Palace of Westminster (the houses of Parliament), where the estimated 100,000 protesters gathered. You couldn’t swing a cat without hitting at least a dozen teenage climate activists. Nonetheless, I think the organizers picked the perfect day: sunny and warm with a pleasantly cool breeze.

And besides, by the time the vast group of tourists—along with the somewhat smaller group of Wodehouseans—began to line up at the western entrance of the Abbey to file in for the Evensong service which preceded the dedication, the climate crowd had pretty much dispersed, the shouting and chanting was done, and only the detritus of such a gathering and the general milling about of but a few thousand participants remained. As we shuffled into the magnificent, millennium-old abbey, the eighty or so Wodehouseans attending the service were separated from the throng to a special seating area, allowing easy movement at the conclusion of the service to where the dedication ceremony would take place.

During the beautiful service—which was primarily the singing of hymns and prayers—I couldn’t help but think of the Mulliner story “Anselm Gets His Chance.” As I looked around the abbey—especially the great western stained-glass window as the setting sun shone through—I felt just like dear Miss Postlethwaite (our emotional and devotional barmaid) at the beginning of

that story when she says, “I do adore evening service in the summer. It sort of does something to you, what I mean. All that stilly hush and what-not.” Not to mention the angelic choir giving us its very best.

The Evensong service concluded, and we moved to the South Transept near Poet’s Corner, where we were joined by another 200 or so ticket holders who had eschewed the religious part of the proceedings and come only for the dedication. Along with the mixed multitude came various VIPs from The P G Wodehouse Society (UK); participants in the ceremony; the Cazalet family; other luminaries, including the U.K. society’s royal patron, HRH The Duke of Kent; and, finally, the Dean of Westminster (the Very Reverend Dr. John Hall) with a coterie of assorted clerics.

It was the Very Rev. who kicked things off with a brief history of Westminster Abbey and how the over three thousand people buried and/or memorialized there came to be so, before moving on to why it was meet and fit that P. G. Wodehouse should join them. He gave a brief description of the process for being so honored—noting how few of those memorials were to poets and authors—with a more detailed explanation of how Wodehouse in particular came to get his final due, noting that Wodehouse’s stone is “but a sword’s throw away from his beloved Shakespeare’s.” (Did Dr. Hall write his own speech? If so, he knows his Wodehouse!)

Following this, there were readings from Wodehouse’s works by Alexander Armstrong, Martin Jarvis, and Lucy Tregear—actors and Wodehouseans all—along with songs performed by Hal Cazalet and Lara Cazalet, accompanied by Stephen Higgins on the piano. Mr. Armstrong, president of the U.K. society, then gave the official address, an all-too-brief tribute that barely touched on the highlights of Wodehouse’s accomplishments in literature, the theatre, and the press (“His achievements in any one of these careers would be



*The Very Reverend Dr. John Hall
leads the service before the dedication.*

(photo courtesy Andrew Dunsmore / Westminster Abbey)

enough to earn him lasting renown”), and summarized his “prodigious output” by numbering his novels, short stories, plays, lyrics, and more. He reminded us all of 1917, that great year for Wodehouse, when he had five shows running simultaneously on Broadway, and the equally great year of 1928, when he had three new plays in London’s West End, “a feat unequalled to this day.”

Mr. Armstrong began his address with the famous anecdote of when, near the end of Wodehouse’s life, the curator of Madame Tussauds decided to include him in the famous wax museum, which Wodehouse called “a supreme honor.” Mr. Armstrong concluded by stating that that honor has now been eclipsed: “So, Tussauds, we see your wax and we raise it to stone.”

The high point of the service had now arrived. A select group was invited to walk the twenty or so paces down the South Quire (or “Choir” if you prefer) Aisle to stand in front of the new memorial, placed on the wall next to Mr. Richard Dimpleby (who, coincidentally, was also rather ill-used by the BBC during the war), with tributes to Dame Sybil Thorndike and Noël Coward on the floor before Wodehouse.

The limestone memorial was designed by Stephen Raw, with the inscription cut by Annet Stirling, and it is brilliantly done, honoring Plum in a manner that reflects his personality: light, plain, and simple, with his name and dates in a bold, cartoonish, Victorian script, and a summary of his achievements—“Humourist, Novelist, Lyricist, Playwright”—modestly carved around it.

Accompanied by HRH, Dr. Hall dedicated the stone “in thankful memory of Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, and of all that he achieved and contributed to the joy of life.” Flowers were laid in front of it by David Cazalet (eldest of the great-grandchildren) and Hilary Bruce (chairman of the U.K. society). After the select few had returned to their seats, the actors rendered several nifty PGW quotations, including one of my favorites: “She fitted into my biggest arm-chair as if it had been built round her by someone who knew they were wearing arm-chairs tight about the hips that season.” Then one last song from the Cazalets and Mr. Higgins—a beautiful and touching rendition of “My Castle in the Air”—and finally the service concluded with more prayers and good wishes from the dean.

Where the ceremony brought goosebumps, the celebration afterwards brought laughter and conviviality. We each walked past the newly dedicated stone, then repaired to an upper room where everyone was greeted with wine and hors d’oeuvres and all was gaiety, joy, and a profound sense that we had participated in a deeply important and solemn occasion. As such, we needed more speeches, readings, and songs. And we got it in

good measure. Hilary Bruce led off with a short speech, briefly explaining how it all came about and thanking all participants. Hal delighted us with more songs and the actors with more readings.

In the midst of the fun and frivolity, Sir Edward Cazalet treated us with his memories of visiting his grandfather and grandmother in Remsenburg on annual summer visits with his sister Sheran (who, unfortunately, was unable to attend the ceremony due to ill health). Edward recounted what the Wodehouses’ typical day was like in the early 1970s: from Plum’s early rise and daily dozen and working habits to Ethel’s “pretty lethal martinis” in the evening, their dinner together, his early departure, and her much later bedtime. He gave a number of examples of how “devoted Plum and Ethel were to each other,” including sharing one of the intimate notes they left for each other (and which he admitted to pinching from the kitchen wastepaper basket). He concluded by remarking “that the main characteristics which really marked Plum out were his particular combination of genius, industry, kindness, and utter humility” and how “profoundly honored” he would be with this final tribute.



The celebration after the dedication: Lucy Tregear, Alexander Armstrong, Hal Cazalet, and Lara Cazalet (photo courtesy Katy Photography)

After that, there really was only one last thing to be done. Every Wodehousean event I have ever attended in the U.K. inevitably ends with Lara Cazalet giving us another rendition of “Bill,” a song she covers better than anyone. Was it just my imagination that the version she gave us on this evening when her great-grandfather entered the select pantheon of writers in Westminster Abbey was by far the most moving? I don’t think so, based on the glistening eyes and tears about the room. The party broke up slowly, as most people were loath to let go of the moment. I described it in my first tweet after the event as “magical,” and indeed it was: the final coping stone to the just tributes of this great man. Anyone who takes up the challenge of doing Norman Murphy’s London Wodehouse Walk will now need to supplement it with a critically important side trip to the South Quire Aisle at Westminster Abbey.

The P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University

BY ANITA AVERY



Anita Avery's great efforts contributed to the establishment of the Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University.

THOSE OF US who answered Bill Blood's 1980 invitation to join him in the formation of The Wodehouse Society had no idea what the future might bring. His hopeful prediction in the first newsletter was that the fledgling society would grow and "spread the laughter and happiness of Plum's humor to others." He then wrote: "Just give us another year or so!"

And here we are, nearly forty years on.

Now, in collaboration with Vanderbilt University Library Special Collections and University Archive, The Wodehouse Society is pleased to announce The P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

The goal of this project is twofold: to preserve a comprehensive collection showcasing the history, diversity, and depth of works by and about Wodehouse; and to provide a place for scholars and lovers of Wodehouse to peruse and research the evolution and development of his craft, spanning many genres and decades. To our knowledge, there is no publicly accessible Wodehouse collection in the United States of the breadth and depth envisioned for this endeavor.

The 2015 Seattle convention provided the catalyst for this project. In a conversation with Ken Clevenger and Bob Rains, this aging member speculated that if the planned donation of my Wodehouse collection to a university library seemed a good idea, imagine what might be possible if more TWS members were to pool the best of their collections to form a Wodehouse archive or collection in the United States.

Ken agreed to help craft a proposal of same, and Bob encouraged us to explore the possibilities. Over the next year, the mission statement and well-defined scope envisioned for the collection took shape. Tad Boehmer's offer to hand-deliver the proposal put in motion a chain of events and contacts that led to its acceptance in 2017 by Vanderbilt University Library. The official name would be The P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University. The initial donations would be from my personal collection. Arthur Robinson, college reference librarian, Wodehouse scholar, and TWS member—the perfect chap for the job—agreed to help curate and vet the books and other items being offered.

While collecting everything wouldn't be feasible, Vanderbilt generously approved the proposed parameters of the collection, notably the various formats and items that would be accepted and the quality standards for the holdings. The primary goal is to acquire U.K. and U.S. first editions of works by or about Wodehouse, with dust wrappers when possible. Because acquiring first editions of rare/early titles with dust wrappers would be difficult, firsts without wrappers, or "closest to first" editions could be accepted, with hopes of a future upgrade. Taking these variables into account, and reflecting a realistic approach to collecting items spanning more than a century, we developed guidelines regarding the collection's date range, condition, and dust-wrapper requirements. In general, the more recent a publication, the higher the requirements for condition and wrappers.

Shortly after curation of the initially offered collection began, Arthur decided to donate major portions of his outstanding collection. This was terrific news! Drawing from the best of both collections would strengthen the quality of the first collection holdings at Vanderbilt. Over the next year, hundreds of books were sorted, compared, and vetted. Numerous lists were made of the various categories and formats of Wodehouse works. The large volume of items required that the collection's structure be defined.

The "bible" of many Wodehouse collectors is Eileen McIlvaine's *P. G. Wodehouse: A Comprehensive Bibliography and Checklist* and the later 2001 *Addendum*. The *Bibliography* is divided into various sections, each devoted to a specific type of works: novels, omnibus volumes, books about Wodehouse, periodicals, dramatic works, music, etc. The McIlvaine numbers assigned therein have become the internationally accepted standard for identifying specific editions and

issues of works by or related to Wodehouse. Organizing the collection along those lines provided consistency across the board, shared terminology, and codification of the items that were sought.

For purposes of collecting items in categories not contained in McIlvaine, three sections were added to the framework of the collection: (1) Television; (2) Ephemera and Collectibles; (3) Journals and Newsletters. Working within the structure established by McIlvaine also provided the template for keeping track of what had been donated to the collection and what was still needed. As is usual, donated items will be catalogued in the Vanderbilt system. But to make it easier for TWS members and other donors to know what is still needed, The Wodehouse Society is hosting an online database devoted to the collection.

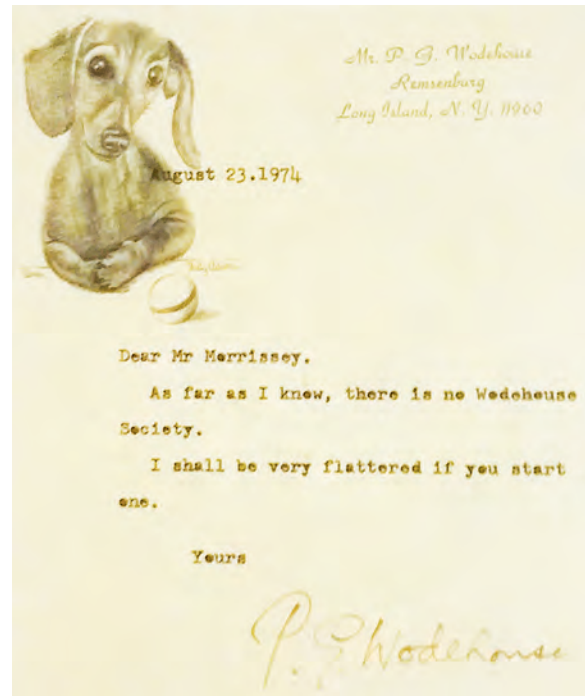
Ananth Kaitharam set up the first several spreadsheets, which was a great help while this utter novice got up to speed on Excel. The Wodehouse Society's webmaster, Noel Merrill, then added the crowning touch by converting the various spreadsheets into a beautifully organized webpage. Visitors to the website can easily browse the collection, see what is there, and consider donating one or more items from their collections.

"What Ho!" greets visitors to the home page at <http://www.wodehouse.org/PGWCVU>, which describes the collection and how to use the database. Clicking on the gold navigation bar on the left of the page displays the links to the nineteen sections in the database. Each has an explanatory preface followed by a database for that category. Most section databases list all known items in that category desired for the collection. When items are donated, details of condition, wrappers, and special notes are entered into the database. For sections having hundreds of items, such as periodicals and sheet music, items will be listed on the database when they are donated.

Thus far, over 270 items have been received by Vanderbilt, another 200 await shipment, and nearly one hundred back issues of *Plum Lines* have been donated.

One of the collection highlights is a 1974 Wodehouse letter, long in the care of the TWS NEWTS chapter (see photo). This letter and also the TWS early records book (The Tome) were presented to Vanderbilt University Librarian Valerie Hotchkiss, who, with two other staff members, was in attendance at the recent convention in Cincinnati.

Donations of books and other items are tax-deductible. Should an upgrade copy of a title be acquired, the original can be returned to the donor. To the Wodehouse scholars and authors among



From humble beginnings: PGW's reply in 1974 to a query about the existence (or lack thereof) of a Wodehouse society

us, autographed copies of your Wodehouse-related publications would be most welcome additions to the collection.

The groundwork has been laid, the initial donations are in place, and the stage is set. Just as The Wodehouse Society started small and grew into a body of notable purpose and accomplishment, this partnership with Vanderbilt University gives TWS the potential to build what promises to be the most comprehensive publicly accessible Wodehouse collection in the United States, beginning a legacy of preserving and spreading the sweetness and light of Plum's long and illustrious career.

Reflect again on Bill Blood's words of insight: "Just give us another year or so . . ." We hope you will visit the online database of The P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University, and come back often to check on the progress being made, at: <http://www.wodehouse.org/PGWCVU>.

Please feel free to contact Project Leader Anita Avery with questions regarding the collection.



This is Jolly Old Fame

BY GARY HALL

I'VE READ many Wodehouse books and books about Wodehouse. I love the language and characters and stories. By promoting awareness of PGW, I guess I hope that his humor and light can help save the world.

If I want to get a dose, I read Wodehouse himself, because there's nothing like that style and form and joy. So when I leaped into Paul Kent's new work, *Pelham Grenville Wodehouse: Volume 1: "This is jolly old Fame,"* I hoped to get that same bounce. Paul offers in his Author's Note that he'll "try to deliver a tour of Wodehouse's genius" that Wodehouse would not think of as "ghastly" or "rot." This note immediately caught my attention.

Well, Paul has vastly exceeded that goal. The brightness and breeziness of the tour that he has delivered has the same feel as Wodehouse books. I found it terrifically enjoyable reading, with sincere sweetness and light and with concepts and explanations that generally reverberated with me.

Much of the intent of this work is to attempt to understand why Wodehouse continues to appeal to so many around the world when so many of his peers and other English literary figures have faded from popular view and only inhabit British literature classes. As Paul says, "Given that Wodehouse's world was deeply anachronistic for most of the time he was creating it," the fact that the works continue to thrive is "a remarkable feat and cause for celebration." That celebration is obvious in Paul's loving and honest treatment of what forms and drives Plum's works. The author sets out to show that it's not just because the works are very funny and well written, but that "the whole is somehow greater than the sum of the parts."

After "A Brief Circumnavigation of Wodehouse," the chapters are laid out in overlapping timeframes, based on their topic. For example, "The School Stories" covers, of course, 1902–1911; "Wodehouse the Lyricist" spans 1904–1934; "Wodehouse on Broadway" hits the short but productive period of 1915–1922; and other chapters cover the gamut while focusing on certain aspects—for example, "Wodehouse at Work" from 1919 to 1975.

Each chapter is rich in exposition. For example, in chapter 5 ("Alternative Realities"), Paul points out how Wodehouse avoided melodrama: "Plum's own agenda was not to convince, or to tug at heartstrings quite so shamelessly, but simply to entertain." It's not "melodrama's augmented reality, but an alternative reality altogether." Absolutely, I say. In fact, readers

of Wodehouse would note that he created multiple alternative realities, some overlapping, some unique to a certain novel or group. We all find our favorites among the canon and dwell in that alternative reality without ever confusing it with our actual reality. Yet the cheer and human insight of those invented realities inform our view of how to bring joy to our challenging and sometimes dark and worrisome "real" world.

In the "Language of the Theatre" chapter, Paul helps us see how Wodehouse's experiences as a lyricist at a relatively young age "helped his prose style cohere faster and far more effectively . . . than it had done up to that point. More importantly, lessons of that time became a template that stayed with him, gently refined but remarkably unaltered, for the rest of his life." Realizing that he himself was not made for the stage, Wodehouse instead brought the theatre to his prose in all its wonder and glory and terror and bliss. Or, as Paul describes it, "Plum was fascinated by the bravery of that solitary figure there in the spotlight, giving his all in front of 'that sullen, glowering, set-jawed throng' that could raise the performer's spirit to the rafters or tear his self-esteem to pieces seemingly on a whim."

There is so much more that I cannot do justice to it in this short review. Paul Kent's effort is a delightful work, complex and full of revelation throughout. And yet for me, the best part of reading this is the tone that somehow simulates Wodehouse's in an academic work. This is not a chore to read but a happy, educational adventure that simply entertains. I eagerly await the next two volumes.

Pelham Grenville Wodehouse: Volume 1: "This is jolly old Fame" can be ordered on Amazon or directly from the publisher, Can of Worms (www.canofworms.net/shop).

Tying One On

THE WODEHOUSE SOCIETY is considering placing a new order of the society's Drones Club tie. If we can get a commitment for at least 24 from society members, we will order and sell the ties at cost, plus shipping and handling. The prices of the ties are:

- Regular tie: \$78 each
- Extra-long tie: \$88 each
- Bow tie: \$68 each



Inquiries should go to Tom Smith. What style you could sport at the 2021 convention!

Memories of the Pigs Have Wings Convention

All convention photos, here and elsewhere in this issue, are by Barbara Combs, except:
 DB = Debbie Bellew DR = David Ruef EW = Elin Woodger JP = Jeff Porteous PN = Peter Nieuwenhuizen
*What can I say except that Barbara Combs, the Dream Rabbit,
 is an awesome resource and unselfish friend for the convention issue!—OM*



*South from Alaska:
 Judith and James Muller*



*The Boy in Blue:
 Richard Alonso*



*Ahoy! Jeff Porteous
 and Elin Woodger (JP)*



*The NEWTS consult
 with the Bard before
 their performance.*



*Our favorite fashion
 consultant, Madelyn Shaw*



*Membership Secretary
 Ian Michaud*



*Max Pokrivchak
 and Cindy McKeown*



*One of
 the four
 brave and
 prizewinning
 musketeers:
 George
 Vanderburgh
 struts his
 stuff.*



*Karen Shotting stepping
 out in style*



*Peter Nieuwenhuizen offers a nut to
 Lynn Vesley-Gross.*



*Noel Merrill
 merrily
 banjoleles
 along.*



*Susan Parsons
 and Ninad Wagle*



*Costume prizewinners
 Katherine Jordan and
 James Risner (PN)*



*The
 oofkeeper:
 Indu Ravi,
 TWS
 treasurer*



Ananth Kaitharam



Susan Garrett



*The Chicago Accident
 Syndicate comes to Cincy:
 Tina Woelke, John Coats,
 Shana Singerman*



*Freshly anointed TWS
 president Bill Scrivener*



Tiara Twins: Karen Shotting and Deb Bellew



Tad Boehmer makes the world a happier place with each smile.



The formal side of NEWT John Kareores



Our officially unofficial photographer extraordinaire (Barbara Combs), on the other side of the camera for a change, with Vikas Sonak



You can't swing a cat without hitting a member of the Northwodes: Mike Eckman, Kris Fowler, Joel Langenfeld, Karen Langenfeld, Mike Engstrom



What's better than one parrot? Diana Van Horn and Lynn Vesley-Gross



Pam Hanlan and Steve Wilson settle in.



Frits Smulders waits to board the boat.



Up on the roof: The post-brunchers tour the observatory atop the hotel. (DB)



An All-British lineup: Kate and Tim Andrew, Paul Kent, Hilary Bruce



The Rajas in a merry mood: Dhanam and Gopal



Outgoing TWS President Tom Smith continues his extensive "Sonny Boy" research.



Glamor visits the convention.



Dirk Wonnell and Tim Andrew hobnob with the dashed beautiful Susan Brokaw.



Lord Emsworth—I mean, Tom Hooker—and his wife Betty represented the Plum Crazyes.



Neil Midkiff and Karen Shotting demonstrate how to handle Cincy food.



Orange Plums Donna Myers (honorary member), Diana Van Horn, Jeff Porteous, and Marcy Downes



Susan Bellamore



Jean Tillson and Elin Woodger relax amidst the chaos.



Vanderbilt's Curator of Special Collections Rachel Valenda with our Tad Boehmer



Carl Bulliard ready with the next witticism



Donna Myers behind the shrubbery



The OM's "A Few Quick Ones" heroes: John Baesch and Evelyn Herzog



David Ruef, in a jacket of which Jeeves would undoubtedly disapprove, with wife Karen, a real pipterino (DR)



Golf attire at the costume parade: Mike Engstrom strikes the pose.



Can it get any better? Easy answer: No, it cannot. Pianist extraordinaire Dan Chouinard and virtuoso TWS songbird Maria Jette



Hal Brayman and Marita Ott



Bill Hood and Deb Arnold beam at the banquet.



Winged Pigs registration honchos Nancy Arnest, Susan Pace, Doug Bruestle



The Very Rev. Wendell Verrill



Bag ladies and bag men: The Flying Pigs prep your goodies.



Angela Curtis in living color



The Bieneman family in full force



What happens on the boat stays on the boat—but what did the Dream Rabbit say to A Crumpet?



Monica Eckfield and Paul Abrinko bring their joy to another convention.



Diane Madlon-Kay goes for the gold as a Donaldson Dogbiscuit.



Tamaki Morimura reprises her Buttercup Day costume, this time with daughter Ririko.



NEWT Roberta Towner



Andrea Jacobsen



People's Choice: Anne Bieneman as God's Daisy Chain



The NEWTS cast in full regalia, with moon (EW)



What the well-dressed golfer wears: Steve Wilson



Katy McGrann shows that her first choice is David McGrann, and he seems to concur with her choice.



Jim Hawking and friend



Ken and Joan Clevenger in the luxury seats busing to the boat.



Gary Hall and Linda Adam-Hall plumbing it up



Susan Parsons brightens the room.



Hosts Christine Wands and Dawn Bruestle welcome you to the banquet.



Omnipresent conventioners Joe and Elaine Coppola with Carol Cavaluzzi

"It's gonna be big!" Elliott Milstein announces the 2021 San Diego TWS Convention.



Chapters Corner

WHAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? Send all news to Gary Hall (see back page). Also, webmaster Noel Merrill keeps chapter items posted on the society website, so it's a good idea to send him notice of upcoming chapter events. Noel's contact information is on the last page of this journal.

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: Scott Daniels



Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area) Contact:

Mark Reber



CHAPTER ONE members convened at noon on November 10 at the usual haunt, Cavanaugh's Headhouse in Philadelphia's Society Hill neighborhood. The intended focal point for the meeting, a reprise by Herb Moskowitz of a prior presentation on PGW's *A Damsel in Distress*, had to be abandoned at the

meeting's outset due to a nonfunctional elevator that stranded Herb at street level, necessitating a bit of ad hoc agenda adjustment.

James Hawking, who had been to Cincinnati for the recent Pigs Have Wings TWS convention, delivered an impromptu recap of the festivities there, with added color commentary provided by Bob Rains. All in attendance were looking forward to the convention's riveting talks finding their way into future *Plum Lines* issues.

The brief business portion of the meeting centered on discussion of a possible change in meeting venue to a more ADA-accessible site. Pending identification and notification of an acceptable alternative site, Cavanaugh's will continue as the chapter's meeting location. We set January 26, 2020, for the next meeting, at which we will again plan to have Herb Moskowitz's *A Damsel in Distress* presentation anchor the agenda.

The meeting concluded with a group viewing of a *Wodehouse Playhouse* production of "The Truth About George," the Mulliner story recounting how it was that George Mulliner overcame his stammer.

—Mark Reber

Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison



The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes) Contact:

Elaine Coppola



ON FRIDAY, October 18, 2019, a Senior Bloodstain was held at 10 AM in the Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza Hotel during the Pigs Have Wings convention. A congenial gathering of aficionados of Sherlock Holmes and P. G. Wodehouse stories enjoyed a reading of "The Rummy Affair of Tadpole Phelps," written by Michael V. Eckman.

—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



THE FLYING PIGS were thrilled to host the 2019 TWS convention and introduce all who came—oldest to youngest—to our beautiful city. Through divine intervention, we even managed to have decent weather throughout. After collapsing for a few days, we held an elegant cocktail party in November to celebrate. The next meeting will be in 2020, date to be determined. To all those in the area who are lurking on the sidelines: Now is the time to take the plunge and join us.

—Susan Pace

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

IN SEPTEMBER, our chapter enjoyed an outing hosted by our gracious Melonsquashville neighbor chapter (see below) in Knoxville, Tennessee. The festivities included an afternoon of song, with piano and harp accompanying great Wodehouse lyrics. Joy and laughter abounded.

In February, our chapter plans to attend the NC Stage Company production of Margaret Raether's *Jeeves Saves the Day*, based on various Wodehouse stories. This is the fourth adaptation that NC Stage has performed; the first three were excellent. The play will run from January 27 to February 23, 2020.

On March 11 at 8 PM, we will attend a production at the Papermill Lounge in Sylva, North Carolina, of

Plum's short story "The Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court." The story will be presented in old-fashioned, live-radio-show style, with costumes, sound effects, music, etc., by the Run of the Mill Radio Players. Like Bertie, we have a lot of fun, with hardly the need for a morning restorative!

—Beth Baxley

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



The Melonsquashers host the More Bertians in general hilarity.

ON SATURDAY, September 21, we met at the Morning Pointe Assisted Living Facility in Powell, Tennessee, just north of Knoxville. Harry and Joyce Hall made special arrangements for us to use the facility's activities room and piano for our meeting and, marvelously, recruited supremely talented Knoxville musician Anne Jackson to play the piano and harp and longtime friend and choir member Linda Walsh to sing the songs with Harry.

We reprised a Wodehouse/Kern musical program that we have not done for several years. Harry and Linda sang "A Peach of a Life" from *Leave It to Jane* and "You Said Something" from *Have a Heart*. TWS website gurus Lucy and Noel Merrill, who are quite the songbirds themselves, then favored us with two Wodehouse numbers. Noel did the ever-popular "We're Crooks" from the revue *Miss 1917*, and Lucy did "Rolled Into One" from *Oh, Boy!* Harry, as a soloist, also did "Peaches" from *Miss 1917*, and "Ain't It a Grand and Glorious Feeling" from *Oh, Boy!* As a special treat, Anne Jackson entertained us with her harp.

Ken Clevenger had some comments to make about Wodehouse in the theater and the shows from which the several songs were taken. We were very pleased to have a contingent of Morning Pointe residents sit in with us and enjoy the show.

The next meeting date had been scheduled for Saturday, December 7, at the Clevengers' home in Alcoa. Great cheer and joy and Wodehousean spirit will again be shared among us.

—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

THE NEWTS CONVENED in September in Roslindale, Massachusetts—which looks from any distance a lot like Boston—at the home of Max Pokrivchak and Cindy McKeown. The first order of business was a seriously organized rehearsal of our skit for the TWS convention in Cincinnati, written by the same redoubtable Max. The rehearsal was held outdoors, of course, because of the pigs (see photo). One of the cast members had to call in from the other side of the pond for the rehearsal, making it quite the International Event. After skit practice, we had an inspired group reading of the story “Jeeves Takes Charge.” The tale ended happily as usual, and members scattered to begin writing their own memoirs, not forgetting the afternoon’s incidents in which the shrimps got into the apple and peach pies and the telegraph bells rang randomly.



The happy couple in wedded bliss (not to give away the ending or anything)

On a fine October afternoon, the NEWTS performance came off a piggy hit at the Hilton Netherland

Plaza. Your reporter heard many compliments from the convention attendees, although possibly they were just added after the long day of scholarly talks and relieved to see something simple to comprehend: parallel weddings between an American girl and an English boy and between a pink Cincinnati pig and a Black Berkshire long known to us all. Our thanks to Fr. Wendell Verrill for overcoming his scruples and officiating both human and porcine knot-tyings.

—Lynn Vesley-Gross

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



HALF A DOZEN Northwodes met on September 8 to discuss *The Adventures of Sally*. Everyone had plenty of time to share reactions to the book, and the consensus was that it is a light and likeable romance that does not try very hard to be a comedy. Sally Nichols is a modern, unmarried girl eking out a living as a taxi dancer in New York City in 1920. She’s feisty, friendly, attractive, smart, and charming, and a popular resident of a boardinghouse busy with theater people resting between roles. By the end, Sally has married the wholesome Lancelot “Ginger” Kemp, and the two of them are raising expensive lap dogs on Long Island. The group couldn’t remember Ginger’s real name, which led to a long and interesting discussion of famous folks with completely different real names, Harry S. Truman and Ulysses S. Grant, to name but two.

In other news, Northwode Faith Sullivan (author of *Good Night, Mr. Wodehouse*) launched her new book *Ruby & Roland* at a signing attended by several other Northwodes. Also, ten of us attended the Pigs Have Wings soiree in Cincinnati, with five of the ten being first-time attendees at a TWS convention.

—Mike Eckman



*Fred and Monica Muschenheim,
Mary McDonald, Faith Sullivan*

The Orange Plums

(Orange County, California)

Contact: Lia Hansen or Diana Van Horn



ADMIRAL BIFFEN here, checking in with an update on the Orange Plums, who continue to discuss the full slate of Bingo Little stories in great depth while simultaneously making plans for two separate holiday gatherings: one on December 7 to accommodate our relocated-to-the-East-Coast lost lamb, Karen Shotting, when she's next in town, the other to mount our now-traditional annual Boat Race Night Blowout on December 28.

On the docket for early in the New Year will be our next—also now traditional—Infant Samuel Toss. Paul Kent kindly (if indirectly) informed us at the convention that “toss” was perhaps not the best term to employ for said activity, even when innocently meant merely as a descriptor for throwing things lightly in a competitive spirit. Look up the term as Brit slang, fellow Yanks, and you'll see why we shall be strictly “bunging” Infant Samuels in the near future and thereafter.

We should note that the O. Plummies were thrilled to find themselves well-represented at the convention—Diana Van Horn, Marcy Downes, Karen Shotting and even self, take a bow—and were as a result still more pleased to have collectively made many new friends, adding the likes of Katy and David McGrann and Donna Myers, among others, to our burgeoning chapter roster as Honorary Plums of O. We lobbied hard to bring Bill Graff, former Perfecto-Zizzbaumite, into our fold as well. Further on a personal/personnel note, the convention highlight for yours truly was to finally meet longtime e-pal Elin Woodger in person, while also getting to know her madcap best buddy Jean Tillson. Heartfelt thanks while I'm at it to everyone's favorite photog, the delightful Barbara Combs, for her exhaustive work in documenting all the fun.



There is likely no cow creamer with a better and more varied wardrobe than the creamer that belongs to the Orange Plums.

Never a chapter to skimp on style, our final news item here is to note that our beloved silver cow-creamer mascot, The Duchess, attended our Halloween-themed October meeting costumed as fan favorite Marilyn Moonrow in the infamous sidewalk grate scene from *The Seven Year Itch*.

Nautically yours as always,

—Adm. George J. Biffen (Jeff Porteous)

The Pale Parabolites

(Toronto and vicinity) Contact:

George Vanderburgh



The PeliKans

(Kansas City and vicinity)

Contact: Bob Clark



The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Doug Kendrick



The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein



The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) Contact:

Allison Thompson



The Plum Crazyes

(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and vicinity)

Contact: Betty Hooker



The Plum Street Plummies

(Olympia, Washington and vicinity)

Contact: Thomas L. R. Smith



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



AT THE LAST gathering of the Knights of Sir Philip Sidney on October 12, we had the pleasure of having honorary member Tony Ring as our guest. Tony came to our meeting from England with his wife, Elaine, and it is always a joy when they visit!

Tony gave us a brilliant report on the Wodehouse Memorial ceremony at Westminster Abbey that took place on September 20, 2019. Everyone was thrilled to hear about the tribute, especially the address given by grandson Sir Edward Cazalet describing his view of the daily life of Ethel and P. G. Wodehouse in Remsenburg, New York.



Master translator
 (English to Dutch)
 Leonard Beuger



Then the moment arrived to talk about another honorary member. For more than twenty years, Leonard Beuger has been our society translator for the Wodehouse works into (modern) Dutch. Through Leonard's work, nine books have been published in translation, and eight additional translations are waiting for a publisher, as are twelve short stories. In addition to this tremendous work, Leonard produces a weekly podcast in Dutch, each episode featuring a Wodehouse story, at <https://moderndutch.nl/wp/>. Leonard is a master in his own right and an example to us all of true dedication to the world of Wodehouse. Our chapter president praised Leonard and gave him a certificate and a pin with a silver microphone, the latter of which was a reference to his weekly podcasts.

We were then allowed to see the concept of the new Wodehouse 2020 postage stamp, drawn by Donald Duk, son of the late Wim Duk, our now-departed

Oldest Member. The stamp is entitled "A Wink at the Postman." Leonard then led us in discussion of the proper translation of *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* and the difference in friendship that these three types of characters can express.

All of our members went home with a copy of the magazine *Mooi Limburg* from November 1933, which includes a translation of *Carry On, Jeeves* in Dutch, two years before the translation was published as the book *Knap jij 't maar op, Jeeves!*

The next meeting of the Knights will be during the Third Wodehouse Film Festival in Theatre Perdu in Amsterdam, where we will eat tapas and watch some Wodehouse movies: a recently discovered Wodehouse parody on "The Nodder" and two premieres.

—Peter Nieuwenhuizen

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



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



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



TWS Goes to San Diego in 2021!

ONE OF THE highlights of the recent convention was the announcement of—the next convention! Elliott Milstein, chair of the Convention Committee, announced at the Saturday business meeting that TWS will go to San Diego in 2021. The committee is trying a novel approach by holding the binge in a city that does not have a TWS chapter. Given the track record of successful conventions, and the power of online communication, we expect a brilliant time for all. Where in the World is Pelham? San Diego! will be held October 15–17, 2021, and details will be shared in the coming months. After the delightful time in Cincinnati, and at so many of our gatherings, we'll be ready for the sun and fun in San Diego two years from now. See you there!

The Inimitable Neil

BY ELIN WOODGER

DID YOU EVER have one of those moments where everything you were planning to say went right out of your head, and instead of dazzling the masses with your eloquence, you simply muttered a few words and then stumbled offstage? That is what happened at the Saturday night banquet during the recent convention, when TWS president Bill Scrivener brought me up to the podium to help present the Norman Murphy Award to Neil Midkiff.

For those members who may be unfamiliar with this award, it was created by Tom Smith in 2017 to honor my late husband, Norman Murphy, whose researches into PGW's life and work, and keen desire to share all that he knew with anybody who would listen, made him a legend within the wide world of Wodehouse fans. The award consists of an impressive certificate and a medal that has an image of Norman on one side and a pipe and stack of books on the other, together with the words "To Elucidate and Educate" (effectively Norman's credo). It is now presented at each TWS convention to somebody who has (as stated on TWS's website) "provided singular service to the Society or . . . made significant contributions to Wodehouse scholarship." In 2017, Gary Hall and I were enormously chuffed to be the award's first recipients.

Prior to the Cincinnati convention, I learned that Neil Midkiff would receive the 2019 Norman Murphy Award, and Bill asked me to join him in presenting it to Neil at the banquet. Delighted, I immediately started thinking about what I would say. It all sounded great in my head, but my mistake was in not writing it down. I'm told my few words were fine, but I know I did not do Neil the least bit of justice, so here I am to give him the praise he really deserves.

Back in the early 1990s, those of us who were subscribers to the fledgling mailing list PGWnet couldn't help but notice that one particular chap out in California had what amounted to an encyclopedic knowledge of the Wodehouse canon. When I attended my first convention, in San Francisco in 1993, I made it a point to seek out this Midkiff chap and get to know him a little better. Twenty-six years later, he still impresses me with the depth of his knowledge, not just in all things Wodehouse but in many other areas as well. And he is not just erudite, he is also talented and fun, playing the piano for singalong sessions at numerous conventions prior to the Marie Jette / Dan Chouinard era.



Neil Midkiff is the 2019 recipient of the Norman Murphy Award for his great accomplishments in the world of Wodehouse over so many years.

In 1996 Neil began editing Chapters Corner for *Plum Lines*, and within a few years he was providing other editorial assistance to Ed Ratcliffe. From 2002 to 2003, he did the layout, during which time he redesigned the masthead to its current look. Since then, with Gary Hall at the journal's helm, Neil and I have shared proofreading chores on *Plum Lines*, frequently engaging in some, er, interesting long-distance discussions as we have debated minute points of grammar or punctuation, each of us citing proof from our favorite sources, with poor Gary often caught in the middle of our sometimes lively debates and having to choose which viewpoint he favors (always with a Solomonic wisdom).

Meanwhile, Neil became the society's de facto treasurer when he took over management of the database from Tom Wainwright in 2000. Others subsequently assumed the financial responsibilities, but Neil continued to oversee the database while also singlehandedly producing the mailing sheets and dues notices, stuffing envelopes, and mailing *Plum Lines* to members. (NB. Earlier this year, members of the Pickering Motor Company took over the stuffing and mailing duties, given Neil a well-deserved permanent break from the chore.)

On top of all this, a few years back Neil took it upon himself to photograph all the pages of the Tome, which contains records of the society's earliest years

and subsequent history, thus preserving it digitally for all time.

Now, all that merely describes Neil's service to The Wodehouse Society. His contributions to Wodehouse scholarship have left innumerable Plummers babbling with gratitude. His phenomenal memory and attention to detail have served him—and the rest of us—well over the years as he has researched, recorded, and explained so many things even remotely related to PGW and his works. For years Neil's personal website included concise and accurate lists of Wodehouse's novels and short stories, as well as specific lists of the Jeeves & Wooster and Blandings stories and novels; all these lists are now included on the Madame Eulalie's Rare Plums website (see www.madameeulalie.org/neil/index.html). He has been an indispensable contributor to both Madame Eulalie and to the Globe Reclamation Project, and he recently completed work on a revised edition of *Who's Who in Wodehouse* with Dan Garrison.

A few years ago, when Norman was working on his last book, *The P. G. Wodehouse Miscellany*, he needed somebody besides myself to not only proofread the manuscript but fact-check it. We agreed there was only one possible person to turn to: Neil Midkiff. With his customary generosity, Neil went through the manuscript with unerring precision, finding and correcting some errors, pointing out problems or inconsistencies in the writing, and otherwise making numerous suggestions that greatly improved the book.

Is it any wonder that I was so pleased when I learned that Neil would be this year's winner of the Norman Murphy Award? Or that I became so tongue-tied when trying to talk about him during the award presentation? There is simply so, so much to say about him that the words failed me entirely. Few within the society have known just how much of a hero Neil has been for us over many years. Now, with this tribute, he has gained the recognition he so richly deserves.

Thank you, Neil!

No Guilty Pleasure

TIM KEARLEY AND SHANA SINGERMAN reported simultaneously that John Lithgow referred to PGW in the "By the Book" section of the October 24, 2019, *New York Times*. His reply to the query "Do you count any books as guilty pleasures?" was: "I would say anything by P. G. Wodehouse is a secret pleasure. He's the only writer who reliably makes me laugh out loud. But there's no guilt involved: He was a fabulous writer."

What Was That Noise? A World War!

BY KEN CLEVENGER

THE STUDY OF Wodehouse and war, any war, is always interesting. *Indiscretions of Archie* is a great example: Published in 1921, it is a "novelized" series of loosely connected short stories. In 1920 they had been published in *Cosmopolitan* in the U.S. and in *Strand* magazine in the U.K., beginning less than two years after the 1918 armistice that ended World War I.

In *Wodehouse: A Life*, Robert McCrum writes that "Wodehouse hardly ever referred to the First World War." Many Plum fans, especially those who limit themselves to Jeeves and Wooster or Blandings tales, would doubtless agree. But in the stories that make up *Indiscretions of Archie*, the zeitgeist, or at the very least the language, of the Great War permeates the book.

"To be demobbed" was usually a soldier's dream, and Archie was one of the millions to be demobilized—i.e., released from military service and returned to civilian status. Another WWI reference is found in "napoo," an assertion of the negative. Norman Murphy, himself an ex-Army officer, explained its use as a corruption of the French phrase "*Il n'y en a plus*"—that is to say, "There is no more."

In *Indiscretions of Archie*, we read of Archie having a rare brain wave: "Like some great general forming his plan of campaign on the eve of battle, Archie had the whole binge neatly worked out inside a minute."

This mention of rank calls to mind Archie's status as a second lieutenant. Daniel Brewster, the owner of the Hotel Cosmopolis, is Archie's nemesis and wealthy father-in-law. In one of the happier scenes, Brewster at last takes a liking to Archie and says that he ought to have been a general. In fact, Archie had started even lower than lieutenant. When a pretty girl mistakes his good intentions in following her across New York City, Archie finds himself confronted by her riled-up boyfriend, Augustus "Looney" Biddle, whose left hand, with which he clearly intends to punch Archie, is the size of a young leg of mutton. Archie reflects: "The only person [he] had ever seen in his life who looked less friendly was the sergeant-major who had trained him in the early days of the war, before he had got his commission."

In speaking of the war, the usual shorthand reference is "France." Once it is "in the recent unpleasantness in France." The role of France is as a place of greater danger than that facing Archie now. We also read of

being “out in France” and “back in France.” In sequence, these references occur when a publicity-seeking actress menaces Archie with a pistol, when Archie’s wife wants to know some “really good swear-words” to work off her pique, and when facing the prospect of telling the not-yet-reconciled father-in-law that Archie’s brother-in-law’s fiancée is a chorus girl.

Two locations in France get mentioned specifically. The first concerns the story of John Smith, aka the Sausage Chappie, whom Archie had met at the site of a famous American attack on German lines in 1918. It is a poignant tale as Archie describes it:

“We met outside St. Mihiel in the war. You gave me a bit of sausage. One of the most sporting events in history. Nobody but a real sportsman would have parted with a bit of sausage at that moment to a stranger. Never forgotten it, by Jove. Saved my life, absolutely! Hadn’t chewed a morsel for eight hours.”

...

That sausage, coming at the end of a five-hour hike, had made a deep impression on [Archie’s] plastic nature. Reason told him that only an exceptional man could have parted with half a sausage at such a moment.

The second specific location referenced is also classic. To say you were at Armentières, a horrific weeks-long 1914 battle, is rather like saying you were at Pearl Harbor or Bastogne, or even D-Day in WWII. For a veteran, it is enough to say you were there. Wilson Hymack, a fellow stuck in an uncle’s business office when he wants to be a composer, met Archie “in the neighborhood of Armentières during the war.” It forms a bond.

We think of Wodehouse as an apolitical author, willing to use politics and politicians for humor but little else. The German military strategist Carl von Clausewitz said that “war is the continuation of politics by other means.” So it should not be surprising that several of Wodehouse’s war references also address the politics of the Great War. Archie is, while personally impecunious, solidly in the English gentleman class. He befriends a “dark, sinister-looking” Italian waiter, Salvatore. Wodehouse describes the circe: “Even before the war and its democratizing influences, Archie had always lacked that reserve which characterizes many Britons; and since the war he had looked on nearly everyone he met as a brother.” Recollect the pretty girl noted above who nearly got Archie punched by Looney

Biddle. A further aspect of her story is that she had handed Looney his hat and meant to make him sweat. Looney is the star pitcher for the Giants but, notoriously, pitches poorly after she has displayed her disdain for his affections. Naturally, Archie has a bet on the game that fateful day and has followed her, hoping to get her to “restate her war aims.” The international combatants in WWI tended to publicly proclaim their purposes in fighting the war—their “war aims” (for example, President Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” address)—in terms calculated to win friends and influence people, if not always stating strict and objective truth.

Another political example also sheds light on the Sausage Chappie story noted above. Washington “Washy” McCall is the teenaged son of Cora Bates McCall, a food reformer (think Laura Pyke from “Jeeves and the Old School Chum”). The boy, fed on fruit and nuts, is so entranced by the delectable aroma of Archie’s room-service meal that Archie invites him to share the food. As Wodehouse writes: “[Washy] ate like a starving Eskimo. Archie, in the time he had spent in the trenches making the world safe for the working-man to strike in, had occasionally been quite peckish, but he sat dazed before this majestic hunger.”

This echo of the Wilsonian battle cry to make the world safe for democracy is re-echoed when Archie has to defend the Sausage Chappie (who lost his memory of his past after he “stopped one”—that is, was wounded—at St. Mihiel) against his father-in-law’s hardhearted desire to toss him out of the Hotel Cosmopolis as a tramp. The tale is told in classic Plum dialogue:

“But where is he to go?”

“Outside.”

“But you don’t understand. This chappie has lost his memory because he was wounded in the war. Keep that fact firmly fixed in the old bean. He fought for you. Fought and bled for you. Bled profusely, by Jove. *And* he saved my life!”

“If I’d got nothing else against him, that would be enough.”

“But you can’t sling a chappie out into the cold hard world who bled gallons to make the world safe for the Hotel Cosmopolis.”

A great strength of Wodehouse’s writing is his inventive similes. Here, however, they fall short of the usual high standard. “Shells” predominate, as when a thrown pie “burst like a shell.” Later, in a cabaret scene, a singer’s final high note “screched” like a shell, and

then the applause that followed was like the “shell’s bursting.” Slightly more inventive is the report of the food reformer’s talk and her “colored pictures of what ’appens inside the injudicious eater’s stummick who doesn’t chew his food.” It is “like a battlefield.”

Off the battlefield, the effects of the Great War on the home front are noted with references to the “war-tax” as a nifty, “food restrictions” as a source of civilian hunger, and “pre-khaki” as a description of society before dull uniforms invaded the scene.

But the essence of war is on the battlefield, and Plum’s references to the tactics of war abound. The solution to a personal problem is presented as a “relief expedition.” When the pistol-packing actress and her bulldog are both momentarily distracted, Archie realizes that “with both sections of the enemy’s forces occupied,” he could safely withdraw. When Archie seeks shelter from a chasing mob in a grubby clothing store, “the place was a cloth morgue, a Sargasso Sea of serge” and “in these quiet groves of clothing a regiment could have lain hid.” This sought-for refuge is the product of his soldierly experience. In the face of the threat from the mob, Archie reacts: “He must take cover. Cover! That was the wheeze. He looked about him for cover.” There is a war story of a soldier jumping into an already occupied depression in the ground while under fire and criticizing its merits as cover. The first fellow there says, like Archie when suggesting his scheme to showcase a new singer (Miss Spectatia Huskisson, of Snake Bite, Michigan): “If you know a better ’ole, go to it.”

To rise under fire, even just to seek better cover, is a courageous act. The common courage of soldiers at war is related often in *Indiscretions of Archie*. Reverting to the pistol-packing actress Miss Vera Silverton, who threatens to shoot him if he leaves her room, Archie refers to his years at war as “chappies popping off things like that at me all day and every day” and, in a classy, courageous exit line says, “So loose it off and best o’ luck.” And recall when Looney Biddle attempts to assault Archie, Plum paints a word picture of Archie’s pluck: “He was no poltroon, and he had proved the fact on many occasions during the days when the entire German army seemed to be picking on him personally.”

Of course, one cannot help but feel the odd butterfly in the “stummick” as one awaits the command to go over the top, to attack, in the parlance of WWI. “Archie found himself bracing his muscles and holding his breath as he had done in France at the approach of the zero hour, when awaiting the first roar of a barrage.” The roar of a barrage, or at least a single shell thereof, is likened to the sound of the high note held by Spectatia

Huskisson as she ends Wilson Hymack’s song “Mother’s Knee,” at the Hotel Cosmopolis. She holds it, according to Plum, “as some storming-party, spent but victorious, holds the summit of a hard-won redoubt.”

The exercise of the virtue of courage is not unrewarded in life or fiction. Archie has “many defects,” but “a lack of courage was not one of them.” Wodehouse describes him further: “His somewhat rudimentary intelligence had occasionally led his superior officers during the war to thank God that Great Britain had a Navy, but even these stern critics had found nothing to complain of in the manner in which he bounded over the top.” And, as in all Wodehouse tales, the hero wins through in the end.

In penning *Indiscretions of Archie*, Plum clearly heard the language of the Great War and its incidents, and used them masterfully. Just as he would use the language and incidents of golf, the Broadway theater, and Hollywood movie studios to make his fictional stories topical and as real as his fictional world and characters could be, Wodehouse could use the language of war to breathe realism into his scenes and characters.

Ickenham’s Magnificent Midriff

BY DAVID LANDMAN

AS A YOUTH I diligently followed Charles Atlas’s isometric regimen of pitting muscle against muscle, hoping that my abdomen would in time come to resemble a baker’s tray of a half-dozen risen kaiser rolls. No such luck. But I doubt that, even had I succeeded, neither I nor any other fictional character, not even Battling Billson or Arnold Schwarzenegger, could match the six-pack Frederick Altamont Cornwallis Twistleton, 5th Earl of Ickenham, modestly conceals beneath his robes of state. How do I know this? The secret to Ickenham’s magnificent midriff is to be found in the pages of *Service with a Smile* (1961).

We get our first hint of Lord I’s remarkable musculature when, in chapter 4, the peer, who lay meditating in a hammock, spotted Lord Emsworth making toward him and—get this—“sat up with a start of surprise.” Now I have reposed in the canvas embrace



of many a hammock, and take my word for it, sitting up with a start is not in the realm of possibility unless one has the abdominal development of the century.

Furthermore, for the normal human being (me), getting out of a hammock with a shred of dignity left is simply not in the cards. One tries to debouch and the hammock hauls one back in its clutches. Captain Nemo had much the same experience with his giant squid. I have found that the easiest way of exiting a hammock is to roll sideways until you find yourself face down on the ground. But Ickenham is proof against such humiliation. In chapter 5 he rises from suspended recumbency “courteously”—a feat I would give a lot to witness.

There are other instances in the novel where Ickenham merely rises from hammocks or chairs without tearing a ligament or at least having to boost himself by pressing his hands down on his knees. But in chapter 7 he achieves the summit of torso technique by rising from a hammock “with a lissome leap.”

Lissome leap, indeed! We stand in awe and raise our corsetry in a salute to Ickenham’s magnificent midriff.



The Wodehouse memorial in Westminster Abbey (see page 6; photo courtesy Andrew Dunsmore / Westminster Abbey)

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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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