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The Source of Angus McAllister

BY IAN MICHAUD

WHEN P. G. Wodehouse threw open the gates of Blandings Castle to the general public for the first time in the 1915 novel *Something New* (U.S.) / *Something Fresh* (U.K.), the Castle's head gardener was a shadowy figure known only by his family name, Thorne. We hear about Thorne for the first time in chapter 3 when Lord Emsworth, visiting London and being invited to admire Mr. Peters's prized scarab, is distracted by thoughts of home when he glances out the window at a man wheeling flowers in a barrow:

Flowers! Lord Emsworth's mind shot back to Blandings like a homing pigeon. Flowers! Had he or had he not given Head Gardener Thorne adequate instructions as to what to do with those hydrangeas? Assuming that he had not, was Thorne to be depended on to do the right thing by them by the light of his own intelligence? Lord Emsworth began to brood on Head Gardener Thorne.

And, so brooding, Lord Emsworth absentmindedly drops Mr. Peters's prized scarab in his pocket, thus shifting the book's plot into high gear. Thorne remains offstage in the first Blandings novel, although the gardener (unnamed this time) does get another brief mention amounting to a half-sentence in chapter 7: "He (Lord Emsworth) potted about the garden in an old coat—now uprooting a weed, now wrangling with the autocrat from Scotland, who was theoretically in his service as head gardener—dreamily satisfied, when he thought of them at all, that his guests were as perfectly happy as he was."



ANGUS McALLISTER CAME OUT OF THE POTTING-SHED AT FORTY-FIVE MILES PER HOUR UNDER HIS OWN STEAM.

Reginald Cleaver's illustration from the Strand's 1928 publication of "Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend"

That's all we know about head gardener Thorne. By the time we visit Blandings again in 1923's *Leave It to Psmith*, Angus McAllister is installed as head gardener and ruling his domain with an iron hand. We learn in subsequent stories—most notably 1924's "The Custody of the Pumpkin" and 1928's "Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend"—that Angus is short-tempered, is prone to resign at the slightest provocation, and holds strong views on gravel paths (he likes them) and on members of the family picking "his" flowers (strongly opposed).

As a general rule, the procedure for getting flowers out of Angus McAllister was as follows. You waited until he was in one of his rare moods of complaisance, then you led the conversation gently round to the subject of interior decoration, and then, choosing your moment, you asked if he could possibly spare a few to be put in vases. The last thing you thought of doing was to charge in and start helping yourself.

"Lord Emsworth and the Girl Friend" (1928)

Where did Angus spring from? Well, let's see what Wodehouse's friend Stephen Leacock was doing while Plum was writing *Something New/Fresh*, which began appearing as a *Saturday Evening Post* serial on June 26, 1915. On November 18, 1914, the *New York Times Book Review* introduced Leacock's new book, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, to its readers.

In chapter 5 of this story collection, "The Love Story of Mr. Peter Spillikins," the title character, an amiable young New Yorker with far too much money and not nearly enough brains, is invited to a country house party and is being shown around the grounds by his host.

"Excuse me just a minute," broke off Mr. Newberry, "while I smooth out the gravel where you're standing. You've rather disturbed it, I'm afraid."

"Oh, I'm awfully sorry," said Mr. Spillikins.

"Oh, not at all, not at all," said his host. "I don't mind in the least. It's only on account of McAlister."

"Who?" asked Mr. Spillikins.

"My gardener. He doesn't care to have us walk on the gravel paths. It scuffs up the gravel so. But sometimes one forgets."

It should be said here, for the sake of clearness, that one of the chief glories of Castel Casteggio lay in its servants. All of them, it goes without saying, had been brought from Great

Britain. The comfort they gave to Mr. and Mrs. Newberry was unspeakable. In fact, as they themselves admitted, servants of the kind are simply not to be found in America.

"Our Scotch gardener," Mrs. Newberry always explained, "is a perfect character. I don't know how we could get another like him. Do you know, my dear, he simply won't allow us to pick the roses; and if any of us walk across the grass he is furious. And he positively refuses to let us use the vegetables. He told me quite plainly that if we took any of his young peas or his early cucumbers he would leave. We are to have them later on when he's finished growing them."

"How delightful it is to have servants of that sort," the lady addressed would murmur. "So devoted and so different from servants on this side of the water. Just imagine, my dear, my chauffeur, when I was in Colorado, actually threatened to leave me merely because I wanted to reduce his wages. I think it's these wretched labour unions."

"I'm sure it is. Of course we have trouble with McAlister at times, but he's always very reasonable when we put things in the right light. Last week, for example, I was afraid that we had gone too far with him. He is always accustomed to have a quart of beer every morning at half-past ten—the maids are told to bring it out to him, and after that he goes to sleep in the little arbour beside the tulip bed. And the other day when he went there he found that one of our guests who hadn't been told, was actually sitting in there reading. Of course he was *furious*. I was afraid for the moment that he would give notice on the spot."

"What would you have done?"

"Positively, my dear, I don't know. But we explained to him at once that it was only an accident and that the person hadn't known and that of course it wouldn't occur again. After that he was softened a little, but he went off muttering to himself, and that evening he dug up all the new tulips and threw them over the fence. We saw him do it, but we didn't dare say anything."

"Oh no," echoed the other lady, "if you had you might have lost him."

"Exactly. And I don't think we could possibly get another man like him; at least, not on this side of the water."

Leacock's McAlister (spelled, you will have noted, with only one "l") remains offstage and doesn't get involved in Mr. Spillikins's love story, so that's all we know about him. But it certainly leads to speculation that Wodehouse remembered him and his eccentricities when he added Angus McAllister to the Blandings Castle payroll eight years later in *Leave It to Psmith*. Keeping the name McAllister with a slight spelling alteration might have been a shout-out or tip of the hat to his friend Leacock.

For Wodehouse and Leacock were certainly friends and colleagues, both contributing to the American magazine *Vanity Fair* at the same time. Barry Phelps tells us in chapter 9 of his book *P. G. Wodehouse: Man and Myth* that, on their return home from Hollywood in 1931, the Wodehouses visited Leacock at his home in Montreal, where the Canadian was a McGill University political science professor. Phelps is silent on the mode of transatlantic transportation on that trip, but Plum and Ethel were celebrity passengers on the maiden eastward voyage of the new Canadian Pacific liner *Empress of Britain* (the second of three C.P. liners with that name) which sailed from Quebec City on June 6.

In the March 2, 2006, edition of the *McGill Reporter*, writer Maeve Haldane toured the Leacocks' old home, which was at that time on the market. Then-owner Mary-Louise Engels told Haldane, "When Leacock and P. G. Wodehouse were together, people thought, 'Oh, what a wonderful event,' but it was apparently very quiet." Perhaps the two wits were shy, she speculated, or did not wish to upstage each other.

Wodehouse certainly read Leacock books as they came out. A treasure trove of 95 previously unknown Wodehouse book reviews for *Punch* recently came to light thanks to the diligent research of Arthur Robinson. The reviews themselves are unsigned and the magazine's archives usually listed four or five contributors providing book reviews each week. But it's usually possible to make an educated guess about Wodehouse's contribution, both from the writing style and from the order the contributors were listed.

For example, in the November 26, 1913, issue of *Punch*, Wodehouse was the first of four contributors listed in the archives. I don't think there can be much doubt who wrote that week's opening review:

In the modern literature of humor, Mr. Stephen Leacock is what the Harlequins used to be in Rugby football. He takes risks. Sometimes he will try for a joke where a more cautious man would have perceived that no joke was. But far more frequently he will extract humor of the

finest kind from absolutely nothing, and score, so to speak, a try from his own goal-line. In his latest book, *Behind the Beyond* (Lane), he is in brilliant scoring form. I can see *Behind the Beyond* breaking up many homes; for no family will be able to stand the sudden sharp yelps of laughter which must infallibly punctuate the decent after-dinner silence when one of its members gets hold of this book. It is Mr. Leacock's peculiar gift that he makes you laugh out loud. I am a stern, soured, sombre man, one of those people who generally show that they are amused by a faint twitching of the lip; but, when Mr. Leacock's literal translation of Homer on page 193 met my eye, a howl of mirth broke from me.

And so on for another 110 words. It's a pity that in 1913 Wodehouse hadn't started his habit of abbreviating things (whisky and s., eggs and b., etc.), or he might have been the first man to use LOL in print.

[You may find the Leacock books at <http://tinyurl.com/arcadian-adv> and <http://tinyurl.com/behind-beyond>.]



Reginald Cleaver's illustration from the Strand's 1924 publication of "The Custody of the Pumpkin"

[The morning sunshine] fell on the baggy trousers-seat of Angus McAllister, head-gardener to the ninth Earl of Emsworth, as he bent with dour Scottish determination to pluck a slug from its reverie beneath the leaf of a lettuce.

"The Custody of the Pumpkin" (1924)

Charles E. Gould Jr.

WODEHOUSEANS everywhere were saddened to learn of the unexpected death of Charles E. Gould Jr. on June 28, following surgery for a fractured leg. A charming and exceptionally witty man, Charles possessed a wide-ranging fund of knowledge on a variety of subjects, and was a respected authority on P. G. Wodehouse. His books included *What's in Wodehouse* (a collection of puzzles, quizzes, and facts about Wodehouse and his works) and *The Toad at Harrow: P. G. Wodehouse in Perspective*. He was also a book dealer with a specialist line in Wodehouse's works.

Born on May 3, 1944, in Kennebunkport, Maine, Charles graduated from Bowdoin College in 1967 and earned his M.A. in English Literature at the University of Connecticut in 1968. After teaching for two years at his alma mater of Hebron Academy, he spent 35 years teaching English literature and composition at Kent School in Kent, Connecticut. Over the years, in addition to his book-dealing business, he wrote columns for *Book Source Monthly* (a professional journal devoted to antiquarian and rare books) as well as verses for the journal *Light Quarterly*. He was a member of both the U.S. and U.K. Wodehouse societies and, despite his claim of being an indifferent scholar, wrote numerous articles for *Plum Lines* and *Wooster Sauce* that were both scholarly and humorous. Charles also spoke at three conventions of The Wodehouse Society, in 1991, 1995, and 2007.

After retiring from teaching, Charles moved back to his home in Kennebunkport, where, in addition to pursuing his various interests in literature, poetry, and opera, he worked on his model railroad and restored reed organs and antique furniture. His wife, Carolyn Skidmore, predeceased him in 1986, and he is survived by his long-time partner, Jane E. Duncan, as well as a sister, Susan Hennessey, and brother-in-law, Richard Hennessey.

We will have additional memories of Charles in our Winter issue.



Collecting A. L. Burt Editions of Wodehouse

BY JOHN GRAHAM

THIS PAST October 15, on the 135th anniversary of Wodehouse's birth, Charles Gould issued his 35th (and, sadly, due to his recent passing, his final) annual catalogue of Wodehouse first editions, reprints, and related collectibles. The catalogue cover showed a near-fine copy of the dust jacket of *Indiscretions of Archie*, reprinted in 1923 by A. L. Burt Company in the same format as the 1921 Doran first edition. I was surprised by the low asking price of \$200, because I had recently been offered a slightly grubby first edition in a nearly identical wrapper at more than fifty times that price. As a book collector and academic economist, this got me curious about reprint prices and more generally about A. L. Burt, who I knew had reprinted more than two dozen Wodehouse titles in the 1920s and 1930s. I turned to abebooks.com to check current book prices and to Google to see what I could learn about the publisher.

According to brief entries in Wikipedia and biblio.com, New Englander Albert Levi Burt was working as a travelling salesman in 1883 when he made his first venture into publishing by reprinting some well-known dictionaries, manuals, and reference books. In 1889 he branched out into clothbound literary classics and contemporary fiction. The following year he officially began A. L. Burt Company, which was fully incorporated in 1902. The company prospered by acquiring reprint rights from other publishing houses, including A. C. McClurg; Appleton-Century; Bobbs-Merrill; George H. Doran; Doubleday, Doran; and Little, Brown. Albert Burt died in 1913 and left the company to his three sons, who continued their father's business until 1937, when they sold out to Blue Ribbon Books.

A. L. Burt Company published hundreds of authors whose literary marks have faded into oblivion. But they also reprinted quite a few authors who remain recognized literary figures, including Sax Rohmer, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Zane Grey, Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, and Arthur Conan Doyle. Their Tarzan and Sherlock Holmes titles in dust jackets still command a hefty price. Burt reprinted their first book by Wodehouse (*A Damsel in Distress*) in 1922, acquiring the rights from George H. Doran, who had issued the first American edition in 1919. In all they would reprint 28 Wodehouse titles first published in America between 1915 and 1936 by Appleton; Dodd, Mead; George H.

Doran; Doubleday, Doran; Macmillan; and Little, Brown. In nearly all cases, Burt reissued these books using first-edition printing plates as well as the original front cover dust jacket artwork.

For the advanced Wodehouse collector, Burt's most desirable (and hence expensive) reprints date from the early 1920s. These include *A Damsel in Distress*, *The Little Warrior*, *Indiscretions of Archie*, *Three Men and a Maid*, *Mostly Sally*, and *Jeeves*. These six titles, all first published by George H. Doran, almost never survive as first editions in original dust jackets, so acquiring a Burt reprint in a jacket that is nearly identical to the first is an attractive option. Like Archie, all six titles in their first-edition jackets would command four-figure or five-figure prices today, but a Burt reprint can often be found for a few hundred dollars, although some dealers ask more. Of the six titles, not unexpectedly, *Jeeves* went through the most printings, and was the one Wodehouse title also reprinted by Blue Ribbon books in the late 1930s. Burt reprints of Wodehouse titles from the late 1920s and early '30s often sell for \$100 or less, reflecting the greater availability of surviving first editions. Even still, they remain an attractive and considerably less expensive alternative to a pricey first edition for many collectors.

Only one Burt reprint did not use the first-edition artwork for its dust jacket. This is *Something New*, first published by Appleton in 1915, with a dust-jacket illustration of an eerie-looking Blandings Castle by F. R. Gruger, who had drawn the magazine illustrations when the story was serialized in the *Saturday Evening Post*. After several Appleton printings (McIlvaine records three, but Charles Gould maintained there were four), the copyright and the printing plates were acquired by Dodd, Mead, who reprinted the book at least once in 1930. In 1931 Burt acquired the rights and book plates from Dodd, Mead. I have never seen a Dodd, Mead reprint offered in dust jacket, but Burt's dust-jacket artwork in orange, olive green, and black, credited to Arthur Hawkins, has a lively art deco look. Many Wodehouse collectors are likely to find this an attractive edition to own, even those lucky enough to possess the rare Appleton first.

If Burt had only reprinted 28 titles, its legacy would probably warrant no more than a brief footnote

in the history of Wodehouse publishing. However, Burt's lasting claim to fame is that it also published the first American edition of *The Man with Two Left Feet*, which, as most *Plum Lines* readers know, includes the first Jeeves short story. The English edition had been published by Methuen in 1917. Burt's version, with a somewhat different mix of short stories, did not appear until 1933. In small print at the bottom of the title page is the following text: "By Arrangement with Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc." Burt's first printing is clearly marked "First Edition" at the bottom of the verso of the title page (as noted in McIlvaine's but not Jasen's bibliography). Burt reprinted the book one time, removing the first-edition notation from the second printing. I have not had an opportunity to

compare dust jackets from the two printings. The front-cover artwork by Harry Beckhoff is certainly the same on the two printings, but the advertisements on the inside flaps and list of books on the back cover might be different. As I write this column in late July, two copies of the first edition in dust jacket are available on abebooks, one for \$650 and the other for \$1000.

Burt was not the only publisher in America to reprint Wodehouse in hardcover editions (Triangle Books reprinted *The Luck of the Bodkins*, *Brinkley Manor*, *Heavy Weather*, and *Thank You, Jeeves*, while Grosset & Dunlap reprinted *The Intrusion of Jimmy* and *Piccadilly Jim*), but it was certainly

the most successful. At least for Wodehouse collectors, there is nothing comparable to these reprints in the U.K. market, as Plum's primary English publishers, Herbert Jenkins and Methuen, issued their own reprints. In America, the hardcover reprint market came to an abrupt end in the late 1930s with the rise of the paperback book. Embodying this new market was the Pocket Books edition of *Jeeves*, from November 1939. On the verso of the title page of the first printing is this statement: "*Jeeves* was originally published by George H. Doran Company, which later became Doubleday Doran & Company, Inc. In its regular edition it sold about 7,000 copies. Later, it was reprinted by A L Burt Company, and in this reprint edition sold about 16,000 copies." As Wodehouse himself notes in *Over Seventy*, the Pocket Books *Jeeves*, priced at 25 cents, would go on to sell more than two million copies.



Charles Gould's 35th Wodehouse catalogue

Letter from England

BY ELIN WOODGER

IT HAS BEEN a long time since I last wrote a Letter from England for *Plum Lines*. This one will be mostly a personal missive, for which I hope readers will forgive me.

But let's start with news of recent activities on this side of the pond. Especially noteworthy is the exciting news that The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) has a new president: Alexander Armstrong. "Who he?" I hear you ask. Well, he is a very popular television personality in the U.K. with many feathers in his cap: busy quiz show presenter, actor, comedian (see *The Armstrong and Miller Show*), host for the Classic FM radio station, singer who has released two albums, and author of five books (thus far). In other words, a really talented guy! Mr. Armstrong has been a Wodehouse devotee since his childhood, when his father first read "The Great Sermon Handicap" to him and his siblings—and by gum, the chap himself can write, as he proved with a delightful piece in the March issue of *Wooster Sauce*. The Society is really celebrating its coup in acquiring him as its president.

Speaking of celebrations, the UK Society marked its twentieth anniversary this year with a two-part, full-color retrospective in the March and June issues of *Sauce*—well worth buying a membership for! And in January there was a wonderful musical event at the British Library to celebrate that institution's acquisition of the Wodehouse Archive, which had been assembled with great love and meticulous care over several decades by PGW's grandson, Sir Edward Cazalet. The story of the archive and the event at the BL (which featured Hal and Lara Cazalet, Robert McCrum, and Sophie Ratcliffe) deserves a full article unto itself; I can only refer you to the March *Wooster Sauce*, as well as the Society's website (www.pgwohousesociety.org.uk), if you would like to know more about it.

My primary purpose in writing this column since moving to England almost sixteen years ago has been to report on Wodehousean news over here. I was rarely able to do that without mentioning Norman, of course, since not only was he the founder chairman of the UK Society and one of the world's leading Wodehouse scholars, but he was also the joyous reason I moved to England in the first place. And of course mine was not the only life he affected. He made a deep mark on Wodehousean scholarship, not only with his books, articles, walks, and talks but also with the ways he helped others in their own researches. Norman would

answer any questions, even the simplest ones, with detail and often great humor. Oh, how he loved to answer questions! The most enjoyable Wodehouse Walks for him were the ones where his audience peppered him with questions or comments—and hung onto his every word as he entertainingly provided the answers. Like any great showman, he loved to be appreciated.

So I was tremendously moved and entertained by all the tributes that were paid to him at the UK Society's meeting on February 15 this year—an evening devoted to Norman that would have deeply touched, tickled, and embarrassed him in equal measure. There was much laughter as numerous folks shared stories of his eccentricities, his machine-gun style of speaking, his flypaper mind, and his obsessive need to share all the knowledge he possibly could. I am deeply indebted to Paul Kent, Murray Hedgcock, Hilary Bruce, Robert Bruce, Elaine Ring, Tony Ring, James Hogg, Patricia O'Sullivan, Lesley Tapson, and others who shared their memories. I am especially indebted to Edward Cazalet, who moved me to tears not only with his tribute to Norman but also with a very special presentation, which requires a little background.

Back in 1993, when Norman stepped down as chairman of the UK Society, there was a celebratory dinner at which Edward Cazalet presented him with a silver matchbox, inscribed "PGW," which had belonged to You Know Who. It was one of Norman's most treasured possessions.

Well, at the meeting this past February, after saying some absolutely lovely things about Norman, Edward paused and then hearkened back to February 14, 1975, when P. G. Wodehouse died in hospital, sitting in a chair, with a pencil in his hand and pen by his side—working to the very end. Edward kept and cherished that pen and pencil, even putting them into a presentation case embossed with the words: "This pen and pencil belonged to P. G Wodehouse and were being used by him before he died in 1975 at Remsenberg" [sic]. When he was in the process of turning his archive over to the British Library, he held back these special items—after all, the sentimental value alone was priceless, and he had always indicated he would never give them up.

So imagine my astonishment when Edward presented me—ME!—with that very pen and pencil. In making this incredibly generous gesture, he honored not only me but also Norman, and to this day I remain a blubbing idiot in my gratitude to him. Thank you so much, dear Edward.

Finally, I also want to thank David Landman, whose obituary of Norman in the Winter 2016 *Plum Lines* captured so much of Norman's unique character and

reminded us all not only of his endearing eccentricities but also of his extraordinary generosity. I am equally grateful to Murray Hedgcock for his detailed obituary in the December 2016 *Wooster Sauce*, which cast further light on the multifaceted human being whom I had been so proud to call my husband and best friend.

Those and other obituaries, the hundreds of cards and letters I received after Norman's death, the tributes paid to him at the UK Society's meeting in February, and the one that will be paid at TWS's convention in Washington this October—all are reminders of what an impact Norman made on so many lives. It is an impact that will resonate for many years to come.

There floated out upon the summer night a strange composite sound that sent the birds roosting in the trees above shooting off their perches like rockets. Angela's clear soprano rang out like the voice of the village blacksmith's daughter. Lord Emsworth contributed a reedy tenor. And the bass notes of Beach probably did more to startle the birds than any other one item in the programme. . . . The next moment the sacking that covered the doorway was pushed aside, and the noble animal emerged.

"Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!" (1927)

My First Time: Is There a Wodehouse in the House?

BY RICK ARNEST

YOU MIGHT SAY my family was founded on PGW. And you could not be said to be wrong.

Not, of course, founded *by* PGW. Let's start at the beginning: We stem from a cadet branch of an upstart colonial family who were big in tobacco back then.

The Wodehouse thing started with my father. When he met his mother-in-law-to-be (a South Londoner of rather stern mien, born at the turn of the last century, and generally known in the bosom of the home as Aunt Agatha), he charmed her into accepting his suit of her daughter by his sustained imitation of Bertie Wooster. She could not keep a straight face. This was the basis of their close relationship.

During those years he tracked down as many Wodehouse novels as he could. As fast as he laid his hands on them, and as soon as I could read, I devoured all of them. This may well explain why, when I came into my inheritance, I gave some 200 Wodehouse books to

the Pigs Have Wings chapter of TWS, to be a reference library for that group.

I have heard that English literature is modeled either on the language of the King James Bible or on the works of Shakespeare. I sense that my literary model is based on our well-beloved Pelham G.

I had begun—egged on, no doubt by the sterling examples of Psmith and Lord Ickenham—to model my attitudes (and some of my actions) on those of various Wodehouse characters. I never lost sight of the difference between the impossible and the merely unlikely, but I often go for the latter, following the footsteps of these role models. This was, perhaps, to my detriment, as I found them funny in ways my peers did not. They would notice me looking into space with an inane grin on my face, babbling about how so-and-so was "acting just like Pongo Twistleton." They withdrew, so to speak, the hems of their garments, and told their friends. I was just a bit beyond the pale and not their friend.

At the time I was too young to realize the depth of the pit I had dug. Even now, my wife looks at me like a pie-faced idiot when I let a phrase taper off into inanity (intentionally or not), or make an obscure reference that can only be explained by my asking her to read another of "those" books.

I no longer have the entire canon at my fingertips, but it forms an essential and permanent substrate to my life. Having the Wodehouse collection gave me a sense of continuity. As my family moved from hither to yon, new friends were always an issue. But a library was always there. Soon after the boxes were unpacked and the books met the shelves, I would meet someone who could be conned into reading *Something Fresh*—then asking for more of the same. Family life was enriched by a never-ending stream of catchphrases and references to various portions of the canon.

When I was eleven, I was taken on a cruise. For what seemed an interminable time, I was forced to amuse myself by reading and rereading a dog-eared Penguin paperback of *The Little Nugget* that some benighted soul had left onboard. I leave it to those who know me best to determine the degree to which the exploits of this execrable kid poisoned me.

Even today my young sister, now fast approaching her dotage (as are, I confess, we all), easily regales a family gathering with a choice smattering of selections drawn from the works of this inestimable author. In a word, she channels Madeline Bassett to a T, and has always been able to do so.

I sense I've done enough damage here. I'd best make a noise like a hoop and roll away.

Alfred Duff Cooper Meets P. G. Wodehouse

BY MICHAEL ECKMAN

IN P. G. Wodehouse's 1949 novel *The Mating Season*, Bertie Wooster is fearful that Madeline Bassett will again eye him as a potential husband once she finds that her fiancé Gussie Fink-Nottle has been sentenced to "fourteen days without the option at Boshier Street police court" for a dawn wade in the Trafalgar Square fountain. Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright brings Bertie this disturbing news but also tells Bertie that Madeline will not read the name of her beloved in the police court section of the newspaper. Catsmeat goes on to explain that "Gussie, showing unexpected intelligence, gave his name as Alfred Duff Cooper."

Among the false names used in the canon, the choice of Alfred Duff Cooper would carry a special meaning for Wodehouse, especially in a work written after World War II. But if the use of the name indicates that Wodehouse carried a grudge against Cooper, there is evidence that the feeling may not have been mutual.

Alfred Duff Cooper (February 22, 1890–January 1, 1954) was a Conservative politician and author who, among other posts, served as Minister of Information in 1940–41 and ambassador to France in 1944–47. Cooper wrote biographies of Talleyrand and Haig as well as his autobiography, *Old Men Forget*. While Minister of Information and ambassador to France, Cooper made decisions that adversely affected Wodehouse. Seeing "Alfred Duff Cooper" in the police court section of the newspaper might have brightened Wodehouse's day.

In *Duff Cooper: The Authorized Biography*, John Charmley writes that Cooper was given the minister position "on the assumption that as a good speaker and a man of letters it was the sort of thing he would do well." But "the Ministry of Information (MOI) was a new creation and lacked both direction and clear functions; Duff attempted to deal with these problems, but administration was never his strongest suit." Also, he took the post in May 1940 just as the war was turning against the Anglo-French alliance. "His bellicose nature was, however, well-suited to rally morale at such a dark hour."

After Wodehouse made his broadcasts from Germany in 1941, Cooper had to consider how the British press should react. Charmley reports that the matter came up at one of Cooper's lunches with journalists in early July. Francis Williams dates the lunch as being after the German invasion of Russia, which Lady Donaldson, in her official biography of Wodehouse, confirms: "A good deal of brandy and

vodka had been taken." William Connor ("Cassandra" of the *Daily Mirror*) complained about the favoritism shown to American journalists by the MOI and said that they did not let him broadcast for "fear that he might attack some of their pets." Williams, who was at the lunch, recalled: "Duff-Cooper [sic] who by now had consumed a good deal of brandy, denied having any pets and was thereupon attacked by Cassandra for doing nothing about P. G. Wodehouse." The argument ended, according to Williams, with Cooper inviting Connor to broadcast on Wodehouse. According to Charles Graves, who was also there, "Cassandra then offered to broadcast to America himself, knocking Wodehouse for his tax evasion. . . . Duff Cooper jumped at it."

The BBC did not want to broadcast Cassandra's "scurrilous, vulgar, cheap, and nasty piece of character assassination, written in his usual venomous style." Cooper, however, ordered the BBC to air it and was applauded by the media for doing so.

Naturally, Cooper's part in this decision to broadcast might well be enough for Wodehouse to consider the unfavorable use of his name in *The Mating Season*. There was, however, another instance when a decision by Cooper vexed Wodehouse. After being appointed ambassador to France and moving to stay in the Hôtel Bristol in Paris, Cooper recorded in his diary for September 28, 1944:

Beck [the local MI5 man], who is going to London tomorrow, came to see me. He told me that P. G. Wodehouse is living in our hotel—the Bristol. I knew that he was here, but not that he was at the Bristol. Beck, very wisely, was afraid that if the press got hold of the story it might cause difficulties both here and at home. If the English people were told that Wodehouse was living in luxury on the same floor of the same hotel as the British Ambassador, they would not be best pleased; and the French people might also say that if he were a Frenchman he would have been locked up long ago. I rang up Victor [MI5 head of counter-sabotage] who said he would do what he could to have Wodehouse removed from the hotel.

By October 3, Cooper stated in his diary that Wodehouse had been moved, but that the press had gotten hold of the story before the move.

Being deprived of one's hotel room would also be a reason for Wodehouse to remember Cooper and to retaliate against him. Cooper's memory of Wodehouse appeared to be shorter. Proving the truth of the title—*Old Men Forget*—Cooper's 1953 autobiography does not mention Wodehouse. Possibly, after reviewing all of the intelligence reports on Wodehouse, Cooper felt it best to let the matter fade away. Had Cooper held a grudge, he certainly could have mentioned Wodehouse, if only to recount the trouble he caused by his broadcasts from Germany. Conveniently, not mentioning the incidents also meant that apologies were not required.

A Durable Fire: The Letters of Duff and Diana Cooper 1913–1950, edited by Artemis Cooper, was published in 1985, and one of Cooper's prewar letters does mention Wodehouse. On January 16, 1927, Cooper wrote to his wife, Diana:

Sweetest and Best. I had arranged last night to go to Broadway with Victor and Bridget. Victor had undertaken to get another girl but no girl could he get—so we were three. I had a snack at the Garrick on my way to the theatre. During my hasty meal I sat next to a man whom I thought charming. He was humble and shy. We discovered we had both been in America and discussed that country. Because he was humble I became patronising—and when I left I casually asked the head waiter who the gentleman was I had been sitting next to—"Mr. P. G. Wodehouse." I wished I had been nicer.

I have seen the original letter in the Churchill Archives at Churchill College in Cambridge and found that Cooper's original spelling of the name was "Woodhouse."

There is no indication of whether, in 1941 or 1944, Cooper remembered that Wodehouse was that "charming" gentleman whom he met so many years before the war. Had he remembered, might he have treated Wodehouse's case with more thought and care? After the events of 1941 and 1944, Cooper again may have stated, "I wished I had been nicer."

It couldn't have gone better. I have never actually seen a shepherd welcoming a strayed lamb back into the fold, but I should imagine that his manner on such an occasion would closely parallel that of this female twenty-minute egg as she heard my words. . . . It would not be putting it too strongly to say that she beamed.

The Mating Season (1949)

Curtis Armstrong's Revenge

NEWS MEMBER Max Pokrivchak tells us that Curtis Armstrong, who has regaled us at TWS conventions with his Mullineresque tales as a Hollywood insider, has a new memoir, *Revenge of the Nerd*. The biography focuses mostly on his time in front of the camera in such films as *Risky Business*, *Ray*, and (of course) *Revenge of the Nerds*. He recounts his joy at discovering and devouring the works of both Wodehouse and A. C. Doyle. Curtis gives a shout-out to pal (and past TWS president) Elliott Millstein, who even as a pup touted the Blandings saga while Curtis professes to have always been more of Bertie and Jeeves man. Curtis's recent reading at the Brookline Booksmith was highly enjoyable and informative, and well-attended by Wodehousians, Sherlockians, and others who believe that being a "nerd" is a noble calling.

Wodehousean Staying Power

OUR MEMBERSHIP secretary (Ian Michaud) tells us that the average duration of all our current memberships is twelve years. We have well over fifty memberships (more than seventy individual members, when couples are counted as two) who joined before the summer of 1991, when the database went to a quarter-by-quarter membership.

Ian says that he believes this Wodehouse habit is not going to turn out to be a passing fad. The loyalty of our membership is surely one indication of that!

Stephen Fry's Insight

ON THE OCCASION of Stephen Fry's 60th birthday, the *Telegraph* published several of his wittiest and most thoughtful quotes. The accomplished actor took time, of course, to laud Plum once again:

I have written it before and am not ashamed to write it again. Without Wodehouse I am not sure that I would be a tenth of what I am today—whatever that may be. In my teenage years, his writings awoke me to the possibilities of language. His rhythms, tropes, tricks, and mannerisms are deep within me. But more than that, he taught me something about good nature. It is enough to be benign, to be gentle, to be funny, to be kind.

An Unnecessary Never-Ending Search

BY ELIN WOODGER MURPHY

IT WAS WITH a mixture of interest, amusement, and exasperation that I read Troy Gregory's article proposing that Blandings is rooted in Bridgnorth (*Plum Lines*, Summer 2017). I'm sure *PL* readers will understand why my attention would be riveted by articles of this nature. I was, after all, joined in wedded bliss to the man credited with finding Blandings in the first place. Of course, I am prejudiced in the matter, but I was persuaded by his arguments long before I met and married Norman Murphy.

I therefore consider it my wifely duty to respond whenever anyone takes it upon him/herself to present findings that presume to identify a specific location for Blandings Castle. I do this with the full understanding that everyone is entitled to their opinions, but also with the feeling that these well-meaning souls are missing the point entirely: The geographical location of Blandings Castle is unidentifiable and ultimately unimportant.

Wodehouse himself said that Blandings was "a sort of mixture of places" he remembered (*The Observer*, October 10, 1971). It was on this basis, plus years of research and actually walking the grounds where Wodehouse once walked, that Norman came to the conclusion that most of the Blandings estate can be found at Weston Park in Shropshire, while the castle itself, as well as its famous yew alley, is manifest in Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire. But he never situated Blandings in one definite real-life spot.

When we contemplate the number of places where Wodehouse lived, and how many aspects of those locales found their way into his books, we are reminded that his imagination was inspired in multifaceted ways. Consider the importance of Hunstanton Hall in Norfolk, Cheney Court and Corsham Court in Wiltshire, and Emsworth and surroundings in Hampshire: Elements of these and other locations he knew and loved can be found in dozens of Wodehouse stories.

Admittedly, Shropshire takes center stage in any discussion of Blandings, for there is no question that our legendary castle is located somewhere within that county. Shropshire was very close to Wodehouse's heart. As a young man he stayed with his parents in Stableford often, and he walked all over the countryside, becoming familiar with Bridgnorth, Shifnal, and other places that are known or believed to have played a role in his creation of Blandings and its environs.

Likewise, nobody questions the importance of Bridgnorth. Norman himself wrote about it; it was one of the stops on the Wodehouse Millennium Tour in 2000; and, as Mr. Gregory points out, in a letter dated April 12, 1963, Wodehouse had written: "I have always pictured Blandings as somewhere near Bridgnorth in Shropshire, where I lived as a boy." Mr. Gregory says PGW wrote this "evasively," but it seems straightforward enough to me. Blandings was a mixture of places Wodehouse had known; Stableford, a place he had loved, was near Bridgnorth, one of many influences in the Blandings canon. Simple, what?

But is Bridgnorth necessarily the heart and soul of Blandings, as Mr. Gregory seems to claim? Simply because Wodehouse had referred to the "Bridgeford races" in *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* is no real argument; he was forever adapting real place names to create fictional ones in his stories, something Norman pointed out repeatedly. And I'm sure Norman would not have disputed a connection with the old Bridgnorth races, of which Wodehouse undoubtedly would have been aware. Such connections were an inevitable part of PGW's writing processes. There is nothing revelatory in this.

So we come to Apley Hall—one of numerous great houses in the area. We have no idea if Wodehouse ever visited Apley, but we can assume it is possible, given its proximity to Bridgnorth. Years ago, Ann Wood decided that Apley was Blandings, and as Mr. Gregory points out, even Norman considered it for a while, but ultimately rejected it. Years later, Daryl Lloyd and Ian Greatbatch used a computer program to determine that Apley was Blandings, and Mr. Gregory cites their determinations as conclusive. But even they subsequently conceded that there were flaws in their work.

To refute this Apley argument once and for all, let us revisit what Norman had to say about it.

1. Blandings Castle is an early Tudor building with a tower. Apley Hall was built in 1811 and has no tower to speak of, simply impressive-looking turrets that mislead people into thinking they are real crenellations.

2. Lloyd and Greatbatch used a view of the Wrekin, the Severn running through the grounds, a boating lake, and a 45-minute drive to Shrewsbury as criteria in their attempt to identify the location of Blandings. As Norman pointed out in an article for *Wooster Sauce* last year: "One can see the Wrekin from as far as Winter Hill in Lancashire and Cleeve Hill in Gloucestershire. There are boating lakes in at least five of the estates nearby, while the 45-minute drive to Shrewsbury is more easily

achieved from Weston Park than Apley Hall since the route is straight along the A5, the old Roman Road.”

3. As for the Severn, Norman noted that it “is named only once in the Blandings stories (*Leave It to Psmith*): ‘Away in the blue distance wooded hills ran down to where the Severn gleamed like an unsheathed sword.’ That does not sound to me like grounds ‘bounded by the river Severn.’” Furthermore, as Norman wrote in “Horrible Heresy Halted” (*Plum Lines*, Autumn 2003, p. 23), at Apley the river is “so near the house you could fall into it.”

4. Apley also lacks other key features, as Norman recorded in 2003: “There is no lake, no boathouse, no cottage in the wood, no kitchen garden with a pond, no road to Shrewsbury so near a motorbike can wake Lord Emsworth, no village at the gates (Blandings Parva—Weston-under-Lizard in real life), no cedar tree, no terraces, no rose gardens.”

5. In the stories, the nearest train station was in Market Blandings. But Apley Hall had its own railroad station (from 1862 to 1963): Linley Halt, directly across the Severn. (Apley Forge, the old station house, is still there.) The issue of railroad time tables has bedeviled Wodehouse scholars for years—there are articles in *Plum Lines* and *Wooster Sauce* to prove it—and further complicates the notion of Bridgnorth as the center of the Blandings world.

I will not recap Norman’s arguments for Weston Park and Sudeley Castle as the two best candidates for the “sort of mixture of places” that Wodehouse used to create Blandings Castle; they have been enumerated many times over the years, and to me they are truly conclusive, based on Wodehouse’s own descriptions of the castle and estate rather than a few randomly selected criteria.

Norman had a distinct advantage in his research: he went to the places where Wodehouse had lived and visited, and he saw what Wodehouse himself saw all those years ago. As he was fond of saying so often (ad infinitum, in fact): “Time spent in reconnaissance is never wasted.”

So enough of this nonsense of trying to fix one specific geographical point for Blandings. It is enough to know that it was somewhere in Shropshire, that it comprised numerous aspects of places Wodehouse had known and loved in his life—and that it has brought joy to millions of readers for a century and counting. Who really needs more than that?

Wodehouse on Crime

TWS MEMBER Greg Darak tells us that Dorothy L. Sayers reviewed detective fiction for the *Sunday Times* in the 1930s, and her reviews have now been collected in a book published this year: *Taking Detective Stories Seriously: The Collected Crime Reviews of Dorothy L. Sayers* (Tippermuir Books Ltd., Perth, Scotland). Browsing through it, Greg ran across this:

I once said idly to Mr. P. G. Wodehouse that, with his amazing knack of plot-spinning, he ought to be able to write a first-class detective story. His reply was to the effect that he had thought about it, but that to bring such exquisitely artificial creatures as Bertie Wooster and Jeeves into contact with real crime and real corpses would be an artistic error and throw the whole thing out of key. He was, of course, perfectly right.

If you’re interested in the book, Greg mentioned that the Dorothy L. Sayers Society website is selling it.



Good for What Ails You

BY BOB RAINS

When you find that you’ve become shirty
Because life has been treating you dirty,
Then it’s time to succumb
To a strong dose of Plum
And be soothed by the antics of Bertie.

When you’ve learned that the whole world
deceives
And your aching soul silently grieves,
Do not feel forsook;
You’ve got a Plum book.
Restore your sore tissues with Jeeves.

When your team has dropped in the standings
And you’ve suffered from life’s bumpy landings,
Do not have a cow;
Remember that sow
And bask in the blessings of Blandings.

The Plum Tree

BY MARTIN BREIT



Under the Wodehouse-Linde in Degenershausen

LATE IN JUNE 1941, after being interned for ten months in a former lunatic asylum in Upper Silesia along with 60 other men, and subsequently staying in Berlin, P. G. Wodehouse was brought to Degenershausen, a rural estate in what is today Saxony-Anhalt. If you go there now, you immediately understand why this was the perfect haven for the author: located at the foot of the Harz mountains and very isolated, you hear nothing but the birds and the bees in the wonderful flowery meadows of the English-style landscape park.

The manor house where Plum and Ethel spent the summers of 1941 and 1942 as guests of the Baroness of Bodenhausen was demolished decades ago, but the beautiful park has been recreated and is now run and maintained by volunteers. One of them, Dr. Reinhard Kunert, a tree enthusiast, had the idea to honor the illustrious guest by baptising a lime tree, at one of Plum's favourite spots, with his name.

After a long period of planning by a small committee, the event took place on May 20, a sunny day, and saw a gathering of about 20 Wodehousians, Degenershausians, and others. Not a huge crowd, you might say, but nevertheless a good start to promoting an author still relatively unknown in Germany and his unique connection to a hidden rural gem. The barn at the park entrance, which serves as the visitors' centre, now offers plenty of pictures and information on Plum and his stay at Degenershausen.

The event began with a screening of rare footage of Plum, Ethel, the inhabitants of Degenershausen, and numerous dogs shot in the summer of 1942—six truly touching minutes that brought the past back to life. A



*Ethel and P. G. Wodehouse
during their stay at Degenershausen*

few minutes later, an information board was unveiled outdoors, showing a quotation from one of Plum's letters to the Baroness: "I suppose you will get this at lunch time when you are out on the verandah looking at my lime tree."

Then followed the main event of the afternoon: the baptism of the lime tree itself. As Wodehouse's German biographer, I had the honour of officiating at the ceremony along with Maria von Katte, who had lived on the estate herself long ago. As a champagne bottle would have damaged the tree (and the event's budget), we used watering cans to fulfil our duty. With them, we circled the tree and some geocachers, who at that moment were busy fumbling around in the tree trunk and took no notice of the important and historical event going on.

Although the "P. G. Wodehouse-Linde," as it is called, is already past its prime, it has taken precautions to ensure its own longevity: a few days prior, it was discovered that one branch had not only managed to touch the ground, but also to put down its own roots. And the gardeners had done their bit by taking cuttings of the Wodehouse-Linde; a small number of descendants already exist.

Right after the baptism, a park tour was held; full of information on trees and the past, it was coloured by the occasional Wodehouse anecdote. A coffee break was welcomed by all the guests and, in the afternoon atmosphere, Maria gave an energetic reading of a freshly published German translation of the famous Market Snodsbury prize-giving. This was the perfect moment to remember that, 100 years ago, the first German Wodehouse book was published—one more reason to celebrate.

Plum now has a permanent presence in Degenershausen, and for me it was a rare opportunity to meet other German society members. Hopefully, this was not the last time.

More from Mr. Brookfield's *Reminiscences*

BY KAREN SHOTTING

THE LATE Norman Murphy, in his article “Borrowing from Brookfield,” shared with us an important discovery that he made while sorting through Richard Osborne’s notes. For those of you who missed Norman’s excellent article, he found among those notes a letter that caused him to seek out and read Charles Brookfield’s *Random Reminiscences*. (Thank goodness for the British Library!) According to the letter, Wodehouse stated he had enjoyed and “used them extensively.” Norman went on to list seven instances of PGW’s use of ideas from Brookfield’s reminiscences. (See *Plum Lines*, Autumn 2016, pp. 10–11.)

I decided that I could do no better thing than to follow in Norman’s footsteps (anyone who has done so knows the value of this exercise), and, armed with the information provided at the end of the article that this volume is available online, it was but the work of a moment with me to download it and give it a perusal. Skipping lightly over the first part, which Norman had characterized (quite correctly) as dull, I found that the latter portion produced additional worthy nuggets.

In chapter 12, Brookfield recounts a story about a group of performers—a vocalist, a pianist, and a comedian—who agree to provide weekly entertainment to an elderly, wealthy man in exchange for a share in his estate upon his death. We need not concern ourselves with the pianist and the vocalist because, though talented artistes, their talents are not germane to our inquiries. It is the comedian’s forte—imitations of farmyard animals—that interested me strangely. His signature bit may sound familiar to the Mr. Mulliner fans amongst us (*italics added*):

The comedian . . . laid an imaginary egg on the sofa, then *ran round the room cackling a maternal pæan*, and finally *stood on the sofa and flapped the sides of his evening coat*, and *crowed himself purple in the face*.

His performance—which included hen-like sounds, described thus: “*Br-t-bt-bt-bt-bt!*”—delighted his host.

Mr. Mulliner’s nephew Archibald is likewise famous for his imitation of a hen laying an egg. In “The Reverent Wooing of Archibald,” Mr. Mulliner regales his companions at the Anglers’ Rest with the story of how Archibald’s talent is instrumental in winning him the heart of Aurelia Cammerleigh. The performance begins with the soft crooning of the mother hen, which

soars into the upper register; and finally swells into a *maternal pæan* of joy. . . . Following which, it was Archibald’s custom to *run round the room, flapping the sides of his coat, and then, leaping onto a sofa* or some convenient chair, to stand there with his arms at right angles, *crowing himself purple in the face*. . . . Love thrilled through every “*Br-t-t-t-t!*” that he uttered.

The hen-imitator story was the gift that kept giving for Wodehouse. He went on to give us two more stories featuring Archibald and Aurelia—“Archibald and the Masses” and “The Code of the Mulliners.” He also used the hen-laying-an-egg motif in *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*, a play he wrote in 1929 with Ian Hay (N. T. P. Murphy, *A Wodehouse Handbook*, Vol. 1, 2nd edition, p. 84.)

Chapter 12 of Brookfield’s reminiscences also contains a story called “Le Médecin Malgré Lui” (“The Doctor Despite Himself”). This one is about an old soldier who goes to visit an acquaintance whom he has not seen in quite some time and is nonplussed by her very odd behavior. As he is leaving, the woman’s sister, a Mrs. Chalmers, meets him on the stairs and notices that he seems preoccupied and embarrassed and wants to leave quickly. She goes in to see her sister, who had been waiting for a doctor. Mrs. Chalmers asks if the doctor had been to see her. The sister replies:

“He called just now. You may have met him in the hall.” (Mrs. Chalmers began to guess at the cause of the gallant General’s discomfiture.) “He was a stupid little man,” the elder sister went on. “He came bounding into the room, and greeted me with all the effusion of an old friend. I let him look at my tongue, which seemed to puzzle him. And then I said, ‘*Perhaps you would like to see my knee,*’ and I showed it to him. He stuck his eyeglass in his eye in a most affected way, and exclaimed: ‘*Devilish fine, ’pon my honour!*’”

Bertie Wooster suffered similar discomfiture when he was mistaken for a doctor in the short story “Indian Summer of an Uncle.” His Uncle George, Lord Yaxley, had become enamored with young Rhoda Platt, a waitress who was, obviously, not of the noblesse, a fact that made her unacceptable to Aunt Agatha. The hapless Bertie is sent to buy her off, as had been done

earlier in Uncle George's career with a barmaid from the Criterion. Upon Bertie's arrival at Wisteria Lodge, East Dulwich, young Rhoda is conspicuous by her absence. He is greeted by a rather large woman with orange hair and a magenta dress who informs him that Miss Platt is ill. The following dialogue ensues:

"Miss Platt has influenza?"

"That's what we think it is. But, of course, you'll be able to say. But we needn't waste time. *Since you're here, you can be taking a look at my knee.*"

...

"What do you think of that knee?"

Well, of course, one has to be polite.

"Terrific!" I said.

The matter is soon cleared up after Bertie declines to examine this cheery soul's spine ("It can't be done. Not spines. Knees, yes. Spines, no."), and Bertie is able to retire from the lists without having made the offer of gold and without the perturbation suffered by the general in Brookfield's story.

Wodehouse once wrote: "I find nowadays the only way I can get plots is by reading someone else's stuff and working from there. . . . I don't think there is any objection to basing one's stuff on someone else's, so long as you alter it enough. After all, all one wants is motives." (Quoted from a letter dated May 6, 1937, in *A Wodehouse Handbook*, p. 84)

I think we should all be pretty chuffed that Brookfield's reminiscences provided P. G. Wodehouse with such a gold mine of motives.

Pass the Wodehouse, Please

CAROL KINNAIRD noted that the new movie *The Exception* stars Christopher Plummer as Kaiser Wilhelm II. The action takes place in 1940 while the Kaiser lives in exile in the Netherlands. He is visited by Heinrich Himmler, who tries to persuade the Kaiser to return to Berlin, presumably to be a propaganda tool of the Nazis. At dinner the Kaiser asks Himmler if he would care to see the Kaiser's collection of first-edition Wodehouse. Himmler ignores the offer and excuses himself from the table, breaching the protocol of leaving before royalty.

Apparently those who ignore the treasures of Wodehouse also have poor table manners.

Chapters Corner

WHAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? Tell the Wodehouse world about your chapter's activities! Chapter representatives, please send all info to the editor, Gary Hall (see back page).

Please note that our webmaster, Noel Merrill, tries to keep chapter activities posted on the society website. So, it's a good idea to send information about upcoming events to Noel on a timely basis. 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: Neil Midkiff



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: Herb Moskowitz



THE CHAPS of Chapter One met at Cavanaugh's, the usual sluicing spot in Philadelphia, on May 7. Dottie Hoffman (Rockmetteller Todd) brought in two books, *The Code of the Woosters* and *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, to pass on to members. Herb borrowed the

former, and the latter was given away through a game of “Who’s Older.” Betty White was the lucky soul who took that volume home.

After luncheon, a dramatic reading of the Mulliner story “Came the Dawn” was presented by Steve Wieland, who kindly divvied up the lines so that everyone who wanted a part could have one. John Baesch (Earl of Droitwich) began the reading with a “message from our sponsor for ‘Mulliner’s Buck-U-Uppo Tonic.’”

After the reading, a few Plummies posited that the appearance of the Hollywood talent scout was a bit in the line of the old *deus ex machina* plot device. However, it was agreed that the story, set in the 1920s, was a send-up of earls, butlers, pretty girls, the marriage market, and Hollywood.

ON JULY 9, the Chaps stepped out of the bright sunny Philadelphia summer and into Cavanaugh’s, overlooking the Head House Square farmer’s market, which was full of people carrying sour cherries and exotic dogs.

The main presentation was a screening of the *Wodehouse Playhouse* TV adaptation of “Mulliner’s Buck-U-Uppo.” In the post-screening discussion, several authors were compared to Wodehouse. Members posited that Angela Thirkell was influenced by Trollope and influenced Wodehouse in turn. Mark Twain, particularly *Huckleberry Finn*, was mentioned. Bob Rains had written a recent piece for *Plum Lines* about the Don Camillo stories by Giovannino Guareschi, comparing them to Wodehouse stories about priests.

We noted Wodehouse’s social and religious satire, such as “orphreys on the chasuble” and missionary work in the U.S. And is the bishop’s warning to Augustine about marriage perhaps addressed to Plum’s wife Ethel? Other questions were considered, such as what did he think of the upper class? Was he admiring, mocking, and/or perhaps fondly satirizing them?

The next meeting will be held on September 17. Rebecca Reber will talk about some of the more problematic aspects of the society that Wodehouse described, particularly its casual racism.

Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison



A WINDY YET lovely June afternoon found us gathered at the spacious home of Susan Diamond and Allan Devitt in lovely Bensenville. We nibbled and

imbibed in our usual workmanlike fashion (no surprise there) while Lily and Juno (the latter being our newest honorary canine member) foraged for the odd nibble. There were no readings from the Master this time, but there was sparkling and enlivening conversation from a gathering enlarged by several new attendees.



The members of the Syndicate at their conspiratorial best

We had company joining us from far and wide . . . and wider. Barbara Brotman, who covered our 2013 convention for the *Chicago Tribune*, drove out from the suburb of Oak Park. Beth Ireland and her husband, Jerry Engel, drove in from Indiana. (She’s a retired flight attendant and Wodehouse fan, and he’s married to a retired flight attendant and Wodehouse fan.) And the lovely and blazingly bright Chiatra Agrahar joined us all the way from India. Well, maybe not all the way from India just for us. She’s doing her doctoral thesis at UIC in theoretical physics (hence the “blazingly bright”) and she’s clever enough to have shared some of her theories without making any of us feel the least bit thick. I, for one, am convinced that the young lady thrives on a diet weighted heavily toward seafood. Jeeves would surely approve.

As I sign off, here’s hoping to catch up with you all in D.C.

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Elaine Coppola

THE CLIENTS of Adrian Mulliner will hold a Senior Bloodstain during the Mr. Wodehouse Goes to Washington convention. The Bloodstain is scheduled for Friday, October 20, from 4 PM to 5 PM at the Hamilton Crowne Plaza Hotel.

The program will include remarks by Peter Blau, BSI, of the local Sherlockian society, the Red Circle.

The agenda will feature a dramatic reading of “The Bayswater Boarding-House.”

Our beautiful pin, designed by Laurie Fraser Manifold, will be on sale for \$10. All local Wodehousians/ Sherlockians as well as conference attendees are invited!

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



**THIRD, NOT QUITE ANNUAL
 WODEHOUSE/HOLMES/AUSTEN
 CRICKET OUTING**



Please join The Den(ver) of the Secret Nine,
 Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients
 and the Jane Austen Society of North America
 at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 27*
 on the cricket pitch at Cornerstone Park in Littleton
 to watch the Fort Collins Cricket Club vs the Littleton CC

Water, tea (hot and cold) and lemonade will be provided as well as some shade. Please bring cookies, scones, veggies, cheese and finger sandwiches, either to greedily consume yourself or to share with others. You might also want to bring something to sit on. There is a nearby restroom. Please, no alcohol. Plenty of parking.
 *The match begins at 2 pm.



*The Den(ver) of the Secret Nine set up for their cricket match.
 (Full report and more photos next issue)*

THE DEN(VER) of the Secret Nine, Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients, and the Jane Austen Society of North America gathered at 1:30 PM on Sunday, August

27. Where? On the cricket pitch at Cornerstone Park in Littleton, Colorado. For what purpose? To watch the Fort Collins Cricket Club vs the Littleton CC, of course!

Our next meeting will be on September 10 and will include a discussion of Wodehouse's 1917 short-story collection *The Man with Two Left Feet*, which contains the short story “Extricating Young Gussie,” the first introduction of Bertie, Jeeves, and Aunt Agatha—sort of. The collection is available at both Project Gutenberg and Librivox. Full report to follow.

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



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



NOT MUCH going on here at the moment. The Flying Pigs have been taking the summer easy. We're looking forward to the upcoming convention in D.C. and we plan to resume activities in the fall. We welcome any PGW enthusiasts in the area.

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



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



WELL, WHEN YOU gather together about twenty Melonsquashville (TN) Literary Society members, you expect gaiety and laughter, and there was certainly no shortage of g. and l. at the Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church in Knoxville on July 15. And with two new members, as well! Many thanks to Fran for arranging the meeting hall. And thanks also to the S. H. P. Church for recognizing the worth of Wodehouse's masterpieces in re our personal edification.

We sidled up to the buffet around noon and found well-stocked nosebags for all, what with each trying to outdo the others with delicacies of the day. Feeling well-sated, we launched into the two main events of the day.

A showing of a portion of the BBC *Jeeves and Wooster* episode “Comrade Bingo” kicked things off, with the church’s audiovisual equipment oiling the wheels on this front. Only a portion was shown, as the episode in question combines two Wodehouse stories, “Comrade Bingo” and “Jeeves Makes an Omelet.” A dramatic reading from “Comrade Bingo” followed (accounting for a substantial portion of the aforementioned gaiety and laughter) with readers Linda, Ralph, Mary Jane, Stephen, Harry, Tanya, David, Nick, Bill, Ken, and Joan. The laughter was mostly supplied by the appreciative audience consisting of Debbie, Joyce, Charles, Pat, Fran, Audrey, Elizabeth, and Joyce. Notable in his contribution was Nick, a reader at his first meeting. We hooked a live fish here!

A comparatively serious discussion of the differences in the text and the TV adaptation followed. A continuum of opinions was presented about the degree of adherence to the original that one expects from adaptations, thus justifying our claim to be a literary society, and not simply a group who eats, chats, and reads Wodehouse. We even had a poster showing hot spots in London, such as the Drones Club, etc., and how they all seem to make a circle around Mayfair. In addition, we saw examples of all the cash Jeeves found on Bertie’s dressing table, along with notes on its value. Thanks to Ken for the poster and the cash.

Our next gathering will be on Saturday, September 16. Full report to follow, but expect to hear about us reading from “The Great Sermon Handicap” with women reading the male roles and vice versas.

The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels

(San Antonio and South Texas)

Contact: Lynette Poss



The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)

(Boston and New England)

Contact: John Fahey



THE NEWTS have neglected reports for a bit, but here’s our catch-up. We nottled last fall, on October 1, 2016, at the Roslindale home of Max Pokrivchak (aka Terry Kitchen) and Cindy McKeown (aka Penny

Nichols). The food and drink were first class, as would be expected at a nottle, and our gracious hosts made us all feel right at home. Little did we know at the start just how much.

After indulging on much cake and ale, we were just settling in for the more serious agenda items when our hosts announced they needed to go to the mechanics to pick up Cindy’s car. They told us to just settle in, continue with the proceedings, make yourself at home, and we’ll be back in a jiff. And off they went.

NEWTS as a rule are a flexible lot, able to adapt to changing environments. They showed their true mettle here, taking their hosts’ wishes at their word, and proceeded to make themselves at home. It started innocently enough, perusing the books on the shelf, then proceeding to the CDs. And then bedlam ensued.

A surprising amount of silver was unearthed. One wouldn’t have thought Max and Cindy the type to go in big for silver. There are certain things one learns about another only by living with them, or rummaging through their belongings when they’re not at home.

The lookout raised the alarm, and all were assembled in the front room when Max and Cindy walked in. Pleasantries were exchanged, someone kindly asked after the car (it’s doing well by the way). And then Cindy smiled.

Smiles can provoke a wide range of emotions. Some can be cynical, some can be cruel. And some can be uplifting. Cindy’s smile was in another category. Her smile provoked simultaneous feelings of remorse and redemption, helplessness and hope. It was what some would call a smile that wins.

The meeting shortly came to a close and the assembled rose and made their way to depart. Max and Cindy stood by the front door, offering fond parting wishes. And Cindy’s smile beamed like a beacon in the night, illuminating not just the way but the soul. To say this had an impact on the assembled is an understatement. As they passed out the front door, each NEWT in turn deposited on a side table the almost-pilfered sundry books, CDs, various items of silver, and vintage T-shirts.

The standout item, though, was a table lamp deposited by an aunt. But not just any table lamp. The base of this lamp depicted George Washington crossing the Delaware.

At this point I can hear the readers saying, “Oh, come now. Do you expect us to believe that Max and Cindy would own a table lamp depicting Washington crossing the Delaware?” Well, what if I were to tell you one of the characters on the boat bore a striking resemblance to the Infant Samuel at prayer?

As to how the aunt was attempting to smuggle the table lamp out of the house, propriety prevents me from speaking further. However, I will offer the opinion that had conscience not intervened, I think she would have pulled it off.



Founding NEWTS gather for a photo during the 25th anniversary nottle, at which some two dozen chapter members enjoyed high tea.

The NEWTS assembled on April 23, 2017, to celebrate their 25th anniversary. And the NEWTS did it in style, having high tea served in the clubhouse at Ellen Donovan's and Bob Norberg's abode in Danvers, Massachusetts.

The standout event of the festivities was a talk on Reggie Pepper, delivered by our own Max Pokrivchak, aka Terry Kitchen. He quickly caught and sustained the gathered flock's attention, and received well-deserved and enthusiastic applause at the conclusion, though opinions are mixed as to whether said applause was for the content and presentation of the talk, or because it was ended, enabling the gathering to get back to the serious business with the food and drink. In any event your intrepid reporter can comfortably state Max's presentation was informative, entertaining, and solidly convention-worthy.

Tea was a main focus of the day, and we had in our midst an expert. Jaganathan Ravi, known to all simply as Ravi, knows tea like no other. He held a small gathering in rapt attention as he discoursed on the history and qualities of a considerable number of teas, offering that for his tastes Ceylon held the top spot.

All this talk of tea made your intrepid reporter desirous of a cup. I've always been partial to Earl Grey, and while Ravi's tea insights were provoking, Earl Grey was what I desired. So in pursuit of my desire I turned toward the tea table, to find it partially surrounded by aunts.

Where Ravi has knowledge and insight into tea, the aunts have "opinions." And one aunt was demonstrably holding aloft the pot of Ceylon, much like a detective who's just collared the guilty party. The pot of Earl Grey was shoved off to a far corner of the table, having been summarily dismissed by the gaggle of aunts.

Astute readers who are fans of detective novels will no doubt have caught two important details thus far reported: (1) The table was partially surrounded by aunts, and (2) The pot of Earl Grey was shoved off to a far corner of the table.

This presented both a challenge and an opportunity. The opportunity was that the desired pot was far removed from the aunts. The challenge was that one had to sidle around the aunts to get to that pot without attracting the aunts' attention. The solution, of course, was to make oneself invisible. Mustering my wizard-like and contortionist skills, I became what I thought was invisible. Unfortunately, to all others, in particular to the aunts, I was anti-invisible.

At this point, the gathered aunts directed toward me a gaze which would have peeled paint from the walls. The paint on the walls, which, truth be told, was beginning to look a bit worn, whispered a quiet hallelujah at having been spared.

I would now like to reintroduce Ravi into the scene. Ravi seemed to have the surreptitious skills I lacked. Desirous of a cup of Ceylon tea, currently in possession of one of the aunts, Ravi shimmied up, deftly held his cup under the spout, and through mental manipulation was able to conjure the aunt holding the Ceylon into pouring the perfect cup of tea. He then shimmied away, invisible to all. Meanwhile, I continued to be the target of a large degree of disapproval by the gaggle of aunts.

Later that evening, back in the safety of our home, Elise asked whatever possessed me to imitate the mating ritual of a newt in front of the aunts. And since that day the aunts have been noticeably cooler towards me, tending to keep their distance. Which some might call a positive development, so all in all it was a successful celebration.

That, my faithful readers, is the oolong and short of it. And we are now all current with the stream of NEWTS news.

The Northwodes

(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)

Contact: Mike Eckman



MINNESOTA'S Northwodes marked their annual Kentucky Derby Day celebration in fine fettle on May 6. Organized by heroic heroines Mary McDonald and Joan Barnes, a rowdy yet cultured crowd of fifteen to twenty enjoyed food, drink, convivial conversation, and a bit of a flutter on the gee-gees at Burger Moe's, a watering hole of repute and renown in St. Paul.

Style, as at Churchill Downs, was the most lasting memory of the day, since the race—exciting, historic and important as it is—only lasts a little over two minutes. Sporting natty hats of various ilks and arrayed in the finest threads, the Northwodes as a group outshone all other assembled derby observers.

At least a few mint juleps were among the cooling refreshments that lubricated the gathering. We became quite boisterous when welcoming back our chapter's head gardener, Kris Fowler, from her year-long research leave, spent mostly in London. But emotions rose even higher for the race itself. An actual hat full of money was wagered, and as the derby was run, taciturn and polite Minnesotans excitedly shoved friends and table mates aside for better views of the big-screen TV, cheering for their horses. Always Dreaming won and Bruce Willey, new to the Northwodes chapter, pocketed the hefty purse. We even got a little bit of chapter business done—multitasking as it is known in the real world.

Our next gathering was the book salon on Sunday, July 9, and it drew a dozen or so avid readers who participated in a wide-ranging discussion of *Indiscretions of Archie*, including debates about Archie Moffam (pronounced “Moom,” don't ya know); his friends; his affectionate wife, Lucile; her father, who was also the intimidating hotel owner Daniel Brewster; and Archie's upfront status as a veteran of the Great War. Kris Fowler is absolutely the best as her encyclopedic and authoritative knowledge is wondrous and humbling to behold. Since this is one of the very few Wodehouse plots in which someone actually gets pregnant, we even ranged into musing who would have been a good wife for Bertie Wooster. (Emerald, or even Pauline Stoker, or the actress Marion Wardour who was hiding from Claude and Eustace in “The Delayed Exit of Claude and Eustace”?). A consensus was not reached.

One of the many notable highlights included the tracking down of the mystery word “waukeesis,” which occurs in *Love Among the Chickens*, *Indiscretions of Archie*, *The Little Warrior*, and “Jeeves and the Chump Cyril.” In context it's pretty clear that the meaning is “feet.” Although a quick Google search didn't explain very much, it turns out that Waukeezee is/was a shoe company out of Northampton, England. Thanks to Barbara Sippel, who put in the extra digging. It's a

fun word and may have been chosen by the company because it sounds like “walk easy.”

We're all looking forward to the next meeting and next year's Derby Day!

The Orange Plums

(Orange County, California)

Contact: Lia Hansen



WHEN KAREN SHOTTING visited the Orange Plums in July, she commented that we should win a prize for being the chapter with the most paraphernalia. We do have a few bits and bobs. We have as our mascot the Duchess of Deauville, a “silver” cow creamer that has attended every meeting since the group's inception. The duchess has a court of friends, including two ceramic pigs that came from the Psmith in Pseattle convention.

We also have miscellaneous articles necessary for two games that we created. We decided that we should have a board game to play, so we created the Oxford Boat Race game. We have a game board that is meant to resemble the Thames, individually decorated boats, dice, question cards, and a spectacular trophy.

We enjoyed this game so much that we created another, the Infant Samuel at Prayer Toss, in which we line up and toss our ISaPs into English bobbies' helmets. There is also a trophy for this game.

While we were reading *The Luck of the Bodkins*, Lottie Blossom so charmed our group that two members brought faux pet alligators in baskets to some of our meetings. It occurs to me that the management and staff of the eating/drinking establishments that we frequent are a very accommodating group of people.



Here is a photo of some of the Orange Plums after playing the Infant Samuel at Prayer Toss. The creator of the trophy, Marcy Downes, is center left. The winner of the trophy, Margot Churchill, is center right. We

are all wearing our helmets. Can you tell which one is authentic?

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 PICKERINGS gathered at the home of Sue and Dicron Mahakian. The Mahakians have raised the bar when it comes to satiating the hunger and thirst of the chapter members. The evening's entertainment began when Larry gave us a demonstration of his skill with a carving knife. It was informative. Your humble scribe's carving technique has improved as a result.

The conversation drifted to Comedy Central's *Detroiters*. It is filmed in our lovely city and we discussed the inside jokes only a real Detroiters will get. We are glad it will get a second season.

Elliott regaled us with tales of his visit to Australia and Indonesia. Apparently, Australia is very big. Who knew?

The reading assignments were two Mulliner short stories: "Archibald and the Masses" and "The Code of the Mulliners." The first concerns a rather dim Mulliner relative discovering that there are people who want bread and cannot afford it. His valet is a closet revolutionary who tells him of the suffering of the masses. Archibald Mulliner goes to Bottleton East to view the situation and discovers it is not as glum and gloomy as his valet had led him to believe. Wodehouse then has him get into all sorts of trouble before the inevitable happy ending.

This led to a comparison with "Comrade Bingo," another Wodehouse short story that features leftist revolutionaries. They are not pleasant people in Wodehouse's view.

The Mulliner code states that only a woman can break an engagement; a gentleman cannot. This is a recurrent theme in Wodehouse. Bertie Wooster, of course, takes the same position. Due to a complicated mistake, Archibald Mulliner believes he must induce his fiancée to break their engagement. His mistake is discovered and his engagement survives.

The next meeting was August 5.

The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)



The Plum Crazyes

(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and vicinity)

Contact: Betty Hooker



ON AUGUST 13, 2017, the Plum Crazyes met at the home of Bob "Oily Carlisle" Rains and Andrea "Sweetie Carlisle" Jacobsen for an afternoon of food, drink, wide-ranging conversation, and Wodehouse. Bruce Montgomery's presentation "P. G. Wodehouse's Lyrics, Part 4: Dancing and Places and Considering the Lyrics Themselves" is the final installment in his exploration of Wodehouse's contribution to the modern American musical. Bruce identified several innovations and conventions characteristic of Wodehouse's approach to lyrics. Wodehouse fit rhymes to music without sacrificing conversational style and he preferred simple settings ("a little bungalow"), internal rhymes, slang, and other forms of modern expression. An inspiration to other librettists, Wodehouse earned praise from eminent contemporaries, including Ira Gershwin, Oscar Hammerstein, Alan Jay Lerner, Johnny Mercer, and Sheldon Harnick. Lorenz Hart, who scorned the simple rhymes of Tin Pan Alley, admired Wodehouse's ability to fit words to music. Bruce played several selections to highlight his remarks, including "In Our Little Paradise" (sung by Maria Jette & Dan Chouinard); "Shimmy with Me" (Hal Cazalet & Sylvia McNair), and more.

In other news, Bob Rains, president of TWS, reviewed some of the events planned for the upcoming convention.

The Plum Street Plummies

(Olympia, Washington and vicinity)

Contact: Thomas L. R. Smith



ON JULY 15, 2017, the Plum Street Plummies held their Second Annual P. G. Wodehouse Open at Marvin Road Minigolf in Lacey, Washington. Six golfers gathered to play eighteen holes on the finest (and only) miniature golf course in Lacey.

This year's turnout doubled the attendance of last year. The six golfers were Thomas L. R. Smith, Gloria Garrett, Owen Dorsey, Susan Dorsey, Sarah Wiley, and Joseph Goodwill.



The Plum Street Plummies putter about.

The players divided into threesomes. Sarah, her son Joseph Goodwill, and Thomas formed the first group; the Dorseys and Gloria formed the second. For the first two or three holes, it seemed to be an equally matched group; however, Owen and Gloria quickly moved ahead of the pack. After 18, Owen improved his game sufficiently to score 30 on the back nine for a total of 64. Gloria matched her score on the front nine, giving her a total of 68. Susan had the best score for the back nine at 27. However, added to the front nine, she finished the match with 70. In the other threesome, Sarah matched her score on the front nine for a total of 80. Joseph took two strokes off his score on the front nine for a total of 84. Last year's champion, Thomas, limped home with a total of 95.

After the tournament, the players went to Red Robbin, a local tavern, for the presentation of the trophy, browsing, and sluicing. Thomas Smith, organizer of the tournament and the winner of the First Annual Open, presented the trophy to Owen Dorsey. Owen gets to keep the trophy until next year.

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

IT WAS A sunny Saturday on June 10 when the Knights and members of the Dutch Wodehouse Society came together in Restaurant Szmulewicz in Amsterdam.

Ronald Brenner reported about his adventures with members of The P. G. Wodehouse Drones Club of Belgium. Recently, the Belgian Drones organized a two-day old-timers rally through Belgium and northern France. The guest of honor was the Duke of Arenberg. The rally, called the 2nd Arenberg Trophy, featured visits to several castles in Hainaut, Belgium. These included Beloeil Castle (owned by the Prince de Ligne), Le Roelx Castle (owned by Prince de Croy), and Chateau Fort-d'Ecaussinnes Lelaing. A special visit was made to the site of Wallers-Arenberg coal mines in Artois, northern France.

Ronald told us that he had a great time at the rally, and he suggested that the Knights organize a similar event sometime in The Netherlands.

Peter Nieuwenhuizen reported that as president of the Dutch Wodehouse Society, he has been invited to attend the birthday party of Her Royal Highness Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, who is the patroness of the Dutch society. This invitation is a great honor. Peter intends to make it to Clarence House in London in order to attend the party and to present an official group photograph of our society.



Arunabha Sengupta, who is a cricket journalist, told us that he planned to visit the holy ground of Lords in London, home base of the Marylebone Cricket Club, in order to meet with Murray Hedgcock, who knows everything about Wodehouse and cricket.

Elsbeth Westerman arranged a competitive Wodehousean challenge. The scene was that Bertie Wooster comes home early in the morning after a party with heavy champagne drinking. He is smashed and he is drooping in his chair. The challenge for Jeeves is to pick Bertie up by giving the most effective pep talk.

Dick Vleeschkruijer played the part of Bertie Wooster. Several members took up the challenge by playing the part of Jeeves. According to our jury, it was Hans Muller who pepped up Bertie Wooster in the most effective way.

Our Wodehouse researchers Herman van Riel, Marcel Gijbels, and Peter Nieuwenhuizen discovered in the October 14–15, 1904, Dutch newspaper *Middelburgsche Courant* a translation of a Wodehouse story. The title of the story is “Een schoolavontuur,” which translates to “A School Adventure.” This story was published as “An Afternoon Dip” in April 1904 in the British *Pearson’s Magazine*. All present members received a copy of this early Wodehouse translation.

The next regular meeting of The Knights will be on October 7, 2017, in Restaurant Szmulewicz, Bakkerstraat 12 (off Rembrandtplein) in Amsterdam.

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

Contact: Donna Heffner



THE RUGBY, TENNESSEE, chapter, Rugby In All Its Niceties (RIAIN), met on the evening of Saturday, June 24, for a fairly raucous meeting/dinner at the Harrow Road Cafe in Rugby. The highlight of the evening was the singing of a slightly modified version of “God Save the Queen” in honor of the birthday of Historic Rugby’s new board chair, Bill Branch, who received the honor with scarcely a tremor. A vote was taken and consensus reached that partaking of German chocolate birthday cake was permissible even though it is not strictly of British origin.

Discussion ensued; we agreed to present a dramatic reading of “Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court” to an unsuspecting public in the Rugby Visitor Centre & Theatre. (See details below.) RIAIN members were pressured into accepting various character parts.

The meeting adjourned, and some stalwart members then practiced Irish road bowling, a “sport” much enjoyed by Rugby residents and guests which involves throwing cannonballs down the main highway in a manner of which we feel sure Plum would have approved.

THE RUGBY WODEHOUSE READERS gave a spirited and well-received reading of “Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court” on the evening of August 19 on the stage of the Rebecca Johnson Theatre in Rugby. Even with a few last-minute contretemps (one member tried twice to gain permission to “rap” his part, for instance),

all went exceedingly well, and the readers gave it their all. We were heartened by the guffaws, giggles, and occasional outright laughter from the audience (who were frisked for rotten tomatoes as they entered the theater). Our first attempt at reading Plum’s wonderful works went so well, in fact, that there has been several requests for a Christmas reading during the “Christmas at Rugby” festivities coming up in December, and plans are therefore being made (www.historicrugby.org).



RIAIN members Rick Murphy as Mr. Mulliner and Stephen McClure as Aubrey Trefusis



RIAIN member George Zepp gave it his all as Narrator 3, and in socks that likely would not have been approved by Jeeves.

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



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



Corrections Corner

IN THE Summer 2017 issue of *Plum Lines*, we inadvertently moved the Plum Crazies (central Pennsylvania) to southern California. In this month's Chapters Corner, we properly moved them back.—OM



P. G. Wodehouse at Degenershausen in 1942
(See Martin Breit's article on p. 12.)

Guareschi and Friends

BY BOB RAINS

ON JULY 23, first lady Andrea Jacobsen and I visited the tiny Italian town of Brescello, which is famous for having been where the Don Camillo movies (based on Giovannino Guareschi's stories) were filmed. There is an old piazza with the church and campanile (bell tower), the People's Palace, a museum, and statues of Don Camillo and Peppone across from each other.



Bob Rains and Andrea Jacobsen visited statues of Guareschi's characters: Peppone (left) and Don Camillo (right).
(See Bob's article on Guareschi in the Summer 2017 Plum Lines.)

Mr. Wodehouse Goes to
WASHINGTON

WHAT IS A Wodehouse convention like? There are two ways to answer. One is to list all the events you'd find there. For example, this October's convention in Washington, D.C., will begin with the wonderful music of Maria Jette and Dan Chouinard, followed, of course, by Charleston lessons. The next day will be a marathon: seven riveting talks, a costume contest, a silent auction, and a grand banquet, capped by a keynote address from Michael Dirda. The last day, we will wind down with a languorous brunch and a clever play by Ken Ludwig and the Plummy Players of Washington.

There is a second way to answer the question. A Wodehouse convention is a bit like reading Wodehouse himself. Initially, you see the wit and you are amused, but over time your mood lightens and lightens until you are filled with good will and cheer. Does the phrase "sweetness and light" mean anything to you?

So what should you do? There is only one correct answer to that question. Complete the registration form on our website (www.wodehouse.org), print it, and send it to Scott Daniels as fast as possible.

A curious expression came into Angus McAllister's face—always excepting the occupied territories. It was the look of a man who has not forgotten Bannockburn, a man conscious of belonging to the country of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. He made Scotch noises at the back of his throat. "Y'r lorrudsheep will accept ma notis," he said, with formal dignity.

"The Custody of the Pumpkin" (1924)

Just picture yourself sitting in D.C. with a herd of thirsty Wodehouseans, gently tapping your glass to get the waiter's attention. Don't miss out!

A Jolly Good Rummage

THERE ARE MANY treats in store for those attending the upcoming convention in Washington, and among them is the traditional rummage sale. As TWS cognoscenti know, fundraising has been a regular part of TWS conventions since 2001. All proceeds from raffles, auctions, and rummage sales go into the Convention Reserve Fund, which helps us to keep convention costs down. Therefore, members' contributions of items to sell or auction are not only welcome, they are essential.

So this is a call to action. Please donate what you can to our rummage sale—from books (especially of the Wodehouse variety) to magazines, clothing, and bric-a-brac, as well as items specially created for the occasion (e.g., Wodehouse-related notecards). Anything that is in good shape and appealing in some way would be welcome for the rummage sale—but no junk, please.

Please make sure you send your items in plenty of time to arrive prior to the convention. Then come to Washington and have a jolly good rummage through all the treasures on the tables. You're bound to find something worth taking home!

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John Baesch and Evelyn Herzog.

We appreciate your articles, research, Quick Ones, tales of My First Time, and other observations. Send them to Gary Hall via e-mail or snail mail at the addresses above. Deadlines are February 1, May 1, August 1, November 1. If you have something that might miss the deadline, let me know and we'll work something out.

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