



# Plum Lines

*The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society*

*Volume 40 Number 3 Autumn 2019*

## Wodehouse in Cincinnati

**A**NANTH KAITHARAM (nom de Plum Chimp Twist) started a PGWnet thread in May with this message: “In an idle moment (of which I have plenty) I thought it would be amusing to see what pithy references to Cincinnati I could find in the works of PGW, given the forthcoming shindig [the upcoming TWS convention in October 2019]. Here’s what I found so far.”

### *Hot Water*

It was some four hours later, when the hands of a watch which he had stolen in Cincinnati were pointing to twenty-five minutes after midnight, that Soup Slattery’s better self, which had been stirring uneasily within him ever since Packy’s departure, suddenly sprang to life and took charge.

### *Laughing Gas*

“Take Pittsburgh, for instance. They eat me in Pittsburgh. My last picture but one grossed twenty-two thousand there on the week. And that makes me very happy, because I think of all those drab lives in Pittsburgh being brightened up like that. And Cincinnati. I was a riot in Cincinnati. People’s lives are very drab in Cincinnati, too.”

...

“You like bringing sunshine into drab lives in Pittsburgh and Cincinnati?”

“I don’t care if Pittsburgh chokes. And that goes for Cincinnati, too.”

### *Sam the Sudden*

“It was at Midways, when I was nine. I had borrowed [a book] from the page boy, who was

### Raffling & Rummaging at the Upcoming Pigs Have Wings Convention

**S**END US YOUR RUMMAGE! We are now accepting items for the convention rummage sale: books, spats, martini shakers, bow ties, Drones ties, posters, jewelry, any item of Wodehousean interest. Send to: Bill Scrivener  
Also, if you have something really special you’d like to donate to our raffle, please send it to



the same address. All proceeds help to keep the society’s Convention Fund in the pink.

a great friend of mine, and it was about a man called Cincinnati Kit, who went round most of the time in a mask, with lots of revolvers. I had just got half-way in it when my governess caught me and I was sent to bed and the book was burned. So I never found out what happened in the little room with the steel walls behind the bar at the Blue Gulch Saloon. I didn’t get over the disappointment for years.”

### *The Little Warrior*

“It so happens that we shall go into New York with practically nothing against us. Usually you have half a dozen musical successes to compete with, but just at the moment there’s nothing. But the chief reason for not being discouraged by bad houses so far is that we’ve been playing bad towns. Every town on the road has its

special character. Some are good show-towns, others are bad. Nobody knows why. Detroit will take anything. So will Washington. Whereas Cincinnati wants something very special."

### *The Small Bachelor*

If, for instance, the girl had been tall and thin with shingled auburn hair, they would have spread the net at once for "Chicago Kitty." If, on the other hand, she had had a snub nose and two moles on her chin, then every precinct would have been warned by telephone to keep an eye out for "Cincinnati Sue." While, if only she had limped slightly and spoken with a lisp, the arrest of "Indianapolis Edna" would have been a mere matter of hours.

### *Our Man in America* (May 24, 1961)

Residents of Cincinnati, Ohio, say that it is perfectly delightful to observe how courteous in their manner husbands in that city have become towards their wives and brothers towards their sisters. Never a cross word or a dirty look. It seems that a new health salon has opened which advertises "special classes for mothers and daughters in judo, Karate, knife-wielding and quick drawing of the gun."

### *Our Man in America* (June 26, 1963)

The New York National League baseball club, known as the Mets, came into existence last year to fill the gap left by the New York Giants, who had migrated to San Francisco, and they celebrated their first season by losing a hundred and twenty games, a record. They are not doing much better this summer, but for some reason they are the idols of the local fans, 20,779 of whom turned out for their encounter with the Cincinnati Reds.

Baseball is supposed to be a game played by nine a side, but when the Mets are performing in New York the home team is augmented by the cash customers, who sit in what corresponds to the Mound at Lord's and when the situation seems to call for it throw apples, pears, bananas, beer tins and pop bottles at the visiting athletes. Their objective on this occasion was Frank Robinson, the Cincinnati right fielder, who eventually complained to the umpire, who told them they mustn't. They were stunned. If they couldn't throw apples, pears, bananas, beer tins and pop bottles at Frank Robinson, surely, they

argued, it was a setback to the Brighter Baseball movement the papers were always writing about. And he was there, wasn't he, like Mount Everest.

David McGrann (nom de Plum J. Hamilton Beamish) added: "Don't forget a dotted line connection between Cincinnati and Plum. He was quite fond of the soap opera *The Edge of Night*. The opening credits of that show featured a silhouette of the Cincinnati skyline (including our convention hotel, the Netherland Plaza). Why Cincinnati? Well, they weren't called soap operas for nothing. They were often produced by soap companies. Procter & Gamble is headquartered in Cincinnati."

## Saturday's Riveting Talks

THE GOOD FOLKS of the Flying Pigs have been busy as—well, flying pigs—organizing what is sure to be a corker of an enjoyable convention. And, as always at our conventions, there is a top-notch panel of speakers lined up, as well as a skit from the NEWTS. Here are the speakers, in alphabetical order, along with their tantalizing talk titles. It's going to be a great day, so if you haven't registered yet, do so now!

**Tim Andrew and Hilary Bruce:** "The Wodehouse Commemoration at Westminster Abbey"

**Anita Avery:** "The P. G. Wodehouse Collection at Vanderbilt University: Inception, Implementation and Legacy"

**Tad Boehmer:** "Something Borrowed: What Wodehouse Checked Out from the New York Society Library, 1951–1955"

**Paul Kent:** "Wodehouse and the Stuffed Eelskin of Fate"

**Michael Eckman:** "The Valet and the Heretic: Jeeves and Spinoza"

**Neil Midkiff:** "All His World's a Stage: Theatrical Jargon in Wodehouse"

**Peter Nieuwenhuizen:** "Of Pigs and Prawns: Wodehouse in a Dutch Monastery"

**Madelyn Shaw:** "Wardrobe Guide for the Female Impostor"

**Karen Shotting:** "Wodehouse and the Nuptial Spirit"

**Thomas Smith:** "The Song of Songs: Sonny Boy and Me" and

**The NEWTS Players:** "Porkopolis, a Porcine (and Human) Love Story"

# What to Do in Cincy (When You're Not Wodehousing)

BY CHRISTINE WANDS

CINCINNATI HAS a lot of nicknames. "The Queen City of the West" goes back to 1820 and was immortalized by Longfellow in his poem "Catawba Wine." It referred to the city being a bastion of civilization and order in a wildly expanding country.

In the nineteenth century, Cincinnati was called Porkopolis—it was the largest pork-producing city in the world. We used everything but the squeal, it was said. Pork by-products were used by many businesses, such as Procter & Gamble, maker of candles (then) and soap (now). We turned this reputation into a love affair with pigs. The pig theme led to such events as the annual Flying Pig Marathon and 2001's "Big Pig Gig," which featured large porcine statues all over town.

"The City That Sings" was adopted in 2012, when Cincinnati hosted the first U.S. location of the World Choir Games. There has been a long history of choral music here, mainly due to the large German population. Every trade had a choir—the bakers, the butchers, the grocers. There is a saying that if you have two Germans, you have a singing society and if you have three Germans, you have two singing societies. Large *saengerfests* (singing festivals) were held regularly, and Saengerfest Hall was built to house them in Over-the-Rhine, the German enclave north of downtown. It was later replaced by Music Hall, built to house the five-year-old Cincinnati May Festival in 1878. The May Festival—the oldest choral festival in the Western Hemisphere—grew out of the *saengerfests* and is still going strong 146 years after its founding.

Cincinnatians love the arts. In fact, Arts Wave, an arts funding institution, has been around for nearly a hundred years. It's sort of a "United Way for the arts": payroll deductions support hundreds of arts organizations in the region. Among them are the fifth-oldest symphony orchestra and the second-oldest opera company in the U.S. There is also a well-respected ballet company, a resident Shakespeare theatre, and several other professional theatre companies, including one that's won a regional Tony Award. There are places to hear good jazz and there are always performances at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music, which is a training ground for next year's Broadway stars. There are at least four places to go to see great art: the Cincinnati Art Museum, the Taft Museum, the Contemporary Arts Center, and the free art gallery at the 21C Hotel. All except the Taft offer free admission.

Other museums include the Underground Railroad Freedom Center, the Cincinnati Museum Center (housing a children's museum, a natural history museum, the Holocaust and Humanity Center, and the Cincinnati Historical Society), the Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame and Museum, and the Behringer-Crawford Museum across the river in Covington, Kentucky.

Cincinnatians love their beer. We're a hotbed of craft breweries these days, many with taprooms. We've been beer drinkers for a long, long time. When Carrie Nation came to town in 1901, it is said that she didn't bother to smash any local saloons—there were too many of them, even for temperance-loving Carrie and her trusty little hatchet. We're also lovers of bourbon since we're not that far from its origin to the south of us in Kentucky. Several new distilleries have cropped up in town lately.

To soak up all that beer and bourbon, Cincinnati's restaurants can supply whatever you'd like. This city is foodie heaven. We can supply the mundane (such as Cincinnati chili) or the sublime (such as dinner at Boca or L) and everything in between. Graeter's Ice Cream is a feast for the palate (and it's Oprah's favorite).

We have professional soccer, baseball, football, and hockey teams. The Cincinnati Reds, who fielded the first professional baseball team, are celebrating their 150th birthday this year.

And parks! We've got parks coming out of our ears. Well, not really, but there are 5,000 acres of city parks and 18,000 acres in Hamilton County parks. Closest to downtown is Smale Riverfront Park, with beautiful plantings, water features, and a terrific carousel.

Finally, the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, recently voted the number one zoo in North America, is a must-see. Once called the "Sexiest Zoo in America," it's famous for its effort to preserve endangered species at the Lindner Center for Conservation and Research of Endangered Wildlife (CREW). Its experts saved Fiona, the preemie hippo who weighed only 29 pounds at birth, by learning to milk a hippo and then creating a hippo milk substitute based on a detailed analysis of the real thing. Fiona now properly weighs over a thousand pounds.

There's a lot more to the Queen City than what I've told you here. Suffice it to say that it's a hip and happening place, with a dash of dignity. We've got something for everyone. I'm not a native Cincinnatian, so my unbiased opinion counts. I can honestly say that you should visit us. Soon. How about October?



# Convention Pins

Ian Michaud sent along an assortment of pins from past TWS conventions. He included a button from the games played at Boston 1995; the actual convention pin has been added in the top right corner.



## Earl “Baron” Fain



THE BEN SILVER CORPORATION of Charleston, South Carolina, “a Mecca for sophisticated men” for their wardrobe needs, announced the death of their director of institutional sales, Earl “Baron” Fain IV, on July 31, 2019. He had a long and excellent career at that company. For the Wodehousean connection, NEWT Jean Tillson (nom de Plum Pighooey) alerted us that Baron Fain was a Wodehouse fan, a member of TWS from 1992 to 2010, and helped design the TWS Wodehouse Drones Club tie. She also mentioned that Mr. Fain was always exceedingly helpful and a good chap all around. TWS indeed reaches far and wide. Our sympathies to his family and friends.

## All the Jackets Fit to Print—or Not

IAN MICHAUD told us of a website where “every conceivable cover of every conceivable Wodehouse book in every conceivable language is on display.” (This page seems to be inactive now, so we won’t provide the URL.) Ian goes on to say that Wodehouse was not always happy with the cover art provided for his books. In a 1945 letter to William Townend, Wodehouse wrote of his good relationship with his British publisher Herbert Jenkins, but said that “it is only their jackets that jar one, and I suppose you are apt to get a pretty foul jacket from any popular publisher. I sometimes wish I were one of those dignified birds whose books come out in grey wrappers with the title and author’s name on them and nothing else. God may have forgiven Herbert Jenkins Ltd. for the jacket of ‘Meet Mr. Mulliner,’ but I never shall.” (<http://wodehouse.ru/cover/e/39.htm>)

# The Mystery of McAlister/McAllister

BY BOB RAINS

IN IAN MICHAUD's excellent article "The Source of Angus McAllister" (*Plum Lines*, Autumn 2017), he posits that the source of Wodehouse's McAllister, who first appeared in *Leave It to Psmith* (1923), was Canadian humorist Stephen Leacock's 1914 collection *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*. Specifically, Ian points to the tale "The Love Story of Mr. Peter Spillikins," which includes an irascible Scottish character named McAlister, who is a gardener, who bosses his bosses (Mr. and Mrs. Newberry), who is always threatening to quit, who is fixated on gravel paths, and who won't allow his employers or their friends or relations to pick his flowers. Ian concludes that Wodehouse's McAllister "might have been a shout-out or tip of his hat to his friend Leacock." Surely that is one very strong possibility, but let me humbly suggest several others:

**The Mere Coincidence Postulate.** Maybe, but there are just too many similarities between the McAllister who blights Blandings Castle and the McAlister who lords it over Mr. and Mrs. Newberry. We can't just shrug these off as coincidence.

**The Stock Character Theory.** Is there a grand tradition in English literature of a quarrelsome Scot (by any spelling) who is an overbearing gardener, fixated on gravel paths, etc.? If so, Mrs. McCullough never taught us about him in English III at the Falls Church High School. Nor, for that matter, have I been able to find either "Scot" or "gardener" in any online list of stock characters. Cuckolded husbands, yes. Overbearing Scottish gardeners fixated on gravel paths, no.

**The Borrowing Explanation.** It is certainly neither unusual nor necessarily nefarious for authors to "borrow" from other authors. Arthur Laurents borrowed the plot of *West Side Story* from *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare borrowed his plot from *Palace of Pleasure* by William Painter (circa 1580). Painter plucked his plot from a poem, *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* by Arthur Brooke (1562). Brooke's plot was based on the novella *Giulietta e Romeo* by Matteo Bandello (1554). Or perhaps from *Historia Novellamente Ritrovata di Due Nobili Amanti* by Luigi Da Porto (1530). And so on and so forth.

**The Outright Theft/Plagiarism Hypothesis.** This we must firmly reject. First and foremost, we know Wodehouse to have been an honorable man. More specifically, we know that he legally acquired the right to transform Ferenc Molnár's play *Spiel im Schloss* into *The Play's the Thing*. There is no reason to think that

he would have consciously stolen Leacock's intellectual property.

**The Rental/Purchase Proposition.** Is it possible that Wodehouse paid Leacock for the rights to the character McAlister? While possible, there appears to be no evidence in the published correspondence of either author that this occurred.

**The Psychological Explanation.** We know that Wodehouse was well enough aware of Leacock and presumably his writings—which were published on both sides of the Atlantic—to have included a reference to him in *Love Among the Chickens* [see page 12] two years before publication of *Leave It to Psmith*. It is not unlikely that Wodehouse, as a fan and avid reader, would have read "The Love Story of Mr. Peter Spillikins" when it was published in book form almost a decade earlier. Unconsciously, the idea of an imperious, cantankerous Scottish gardener named McAlister may have stuck in his brain. As Shankar Vedantam explains in his 2010 book *The Hidden Brain*, "We all have mindless associations in our hidden brain that surface when we are not on guard."

**The Alias Analysis.** Now, here's what I think really happened. Given the tense relations between Mr. and Mrs. Newberry and their McAlister, along with the latter's threats to quit, it was perhaps inevitable that there would come an unfortunate parting of the ways, either a resignation or a firing. Dogged by a negative letter of reference from Mr. and Mrs. Newberry, McAlister was unable to find employment in North America. Running low on resources, he added an extra "I" to his surname, thus assuming a new identity without the necessity of altering his monogram. As the newly minted "McAllister," he then hopped a freighter to England. No doubt a harried and overworked inspector on the Southampton docks failed to notice the slight divergence between the immigrant's alleged name and that on his passport. Subsequently, the usually Efficient Baxter, not finding any adverse employment history of the supposed McAllister, confidently advised Lord Emsworth to hire him. The rest, as they say, is literary history.





# From the Archives: A New Reply to Professor Mooneyham's "Anachronism of the Comic Form"

BY DAVID DAMANT

*David Damant of Stamford, Lincolnshire, member of the Drones Club of London, sent comments in response to the academic piece we published in the Summer and Autumn 2015 Plum Lines issues: "Comedy Among the Modernists: P. G. Wodehouse and the Anachronism of the Comic Form," by Professor Laura Mooneyham White of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.*

IT IS IMPORTANT that the works of P. G. Wodehouse be considered in a broad context, as in the case of Professor Mooneyham White's incisive and powerful article. The Wodehouse canon should not be left in isolation, cut away from the mainstream—or perhaps one should say from other streams—of current and past literature. That is, one can wish that scholars would more often see comparisons and identities between Wodehouse and the various literary schools. I am certainly not qualified to comment on the validity of Professor Mooneyham's comparisons between Wodehouse and the Modernists, but when she explains the ways in which Wodehouse departs from the Modernist trend, that is in itself a valuable insight. My argument therefore resists the comment often made, that criticizing Wodehouse is like taking a spade to a soufflé. I would say that Professor Mooneyham uses a scalpel rather than a spade.

Nevertheless, I believe that this article is a case of *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark, and the omitted Prince is the fact that it is Wodehouse's prose that makes him "the best writer of English" of those alive when Belloc made the comment—and indeed he is one of the best writers of English ever. Belloc did not say that Wodehouse wrote the best novels or short stories in the English language but that he was the best writer of the English language. The purity of the prose shines through: in the case of the Jeeves and Blandings Castle stories in every paragraph, even every line. It is often said that no one can match Wodehouse. He was a very clever school boy—in for a scholarship at Oxford in the days when that was virtually the top thing to be achieved, but prevented from going up to university by the fall of the rupee, which was certainly sensational for the young Plum. He was also tremendously well educated, especially in that he was a classicist, subject to a relentless and perfect literary discipline. And, a most relevant point, his mind and vocabulary were

not subsequently infected by the tsunami of words and voices which now assail us daily. Many place *Joy in the Morning* as their favorite, and it should be remembered that he had finished that book at the beginning of World War II but could not publish it till after the war. Over those years, he polished and polished.

This only describes the gateway to the world shown to us by Wodehouse—his prose has content as well as purity. Mozart said that the flute concertos of Frederick the Great had content. So does (in many ways) the prose of Evelyn Waugh. (Waugh's content is social satire, and it was much admired by Wodehouse: "I am absolutely stunned by his brilliance. As a comic satiric writer he stands alone.") The content of the Wodehouse world is signposted by Professor Mooneyham when she mentions the reference by Colin MacInnes to the prelapsarian invulnerability of life in the Wodehouse world: but this is not a comment to be made *en passant*. It is central, the starting point. Evelyn Waugh wrote the most famous analysis of this amazing achievement:

For Mr. Wodehouse there has been no Fall of Man, no aboriginal calamity. His characters have never tasted of the forbidden fruit. They are still in Eden. The Gardens of Blandings Castle are that original garden from which we are all exiled. The chef Anatole prepares the ambrosia for the immortals of high Olympus. Mr. Wodehouse's world can never fade. He will continue to release future generations from captivity that may be more irksome than our own. He has made a world for us to live in and delight in.

I urge *Plum Lines* to seek other professorial comment from literary standpoints different from that of Professor Mooneyham, to continue to study Wodehouse across the full literary spectrum. As for a classical comparison, the public orator at the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford University on June 21, 1939, began his introduction of Wodehouse with: "*Presento vobis festivum caput—Petroniumne dicam an Terentium nostrum?*" In English: "I present to you that great humorist—should I say our Petronius or our Terence?" The orator continued: "Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, to be admitted, for honor, to the degree of Doctor of Letters."

# The Khurana Family



*Jasvir Khurana*



*Divya S. Khurana*

**T**HREE MEMBERS of the Khurana family of Philadelphia died in a private plane crash on August 8, 2019. The Khuranas were members of the Capital One chapter of The Wodehouse Society.

Jasvir Khurana, 60, was a professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at Temple University's Lewis Katz School of Medicine, where he studied bone disease. He also was a past president of the Pennsylvania Association of Pathologists.

Divya S. Khurana, 54, was a pediatric neurologist at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children and a professor at Drexel University College of Medicine. She was known for her study of the role that mitochondria play in epilepsy and autism and also was known for her specialized expertise in sleep medicine.

Jasvir and Divya both trained at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and moved to the United States more than two decades ago.

Kiran, their younger daughter, graduated last year from Harriton High School in Bryn Mawr, where she was on a nationally ranked squash team and was active in theater productions. There is one surviving daughter from the family.

The members of Chapter One were heartbroken to receive the devastating news of the accident. They described the Khuranas in glowing terms. Bob Rains recalled one incident: "At one of our meetings at Cavanaugh's Pub, Kiran was expressing disappointment that the pub didn't have eggs, beans, and crumpets on the menu. I pointed out that the Irish breakfast had eggs, beans, and an English muffin which is practically the same thing as a crumpet, and Kiran was willing to go with the flow. What a great kid!"

Our great sympathies to the surviving Khurana family members, the members of Chapter One who were friends with the Khuranas, and the medical community and citizens of the Philadelphia area and beyond.



*Kiran, Divya, and Jasvir Khurana*



## Treasurer's Report for 2018

BY INDU RAVI

<b>Balance as of December 31, 2017</b>	<b>\$22,618.86</b>
<b>Income:</b>	
Membership dues	\$13,748.75
Interest	\$1.51
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$13,750.26</b>
*****	
<b>Expenses:</b>	
Plum Lines	
production and mailing	\$19,400.02
PayPal fees	\$253.10
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$19,653.12</b>
*****	
<b>TWS Convention Reserve Fund<sup>1</sup>:</b>	
Balance as of December 31, 2017	\$5,000.00
Net convention subsidy	\$0.00
<b>Balance as of December 31, 2018</b>	<b>\$5,000.00</b>
<b>Total Balance</b>	
<b>as of December 31, 2018:</b>	<b>\$16,716.00</b>
<sup>1</sup> Included in the Total Balance	

# A Few Quick Ones

Unless otherwise credited, these items are courtesy of our prolific Quick Ones providers, Evelyn Herzog and John Baesch.



The June 2019 issue of *Catster* described two members of their Advisory Board as “mixed breed foster kittens, six weeks old.” Their names? Jeeves and Wooster! Also of note, senior editor Annie Butler Shirreffs celebrated her ten-year-old cat, Agatha.

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Last year’s *Tatler Schools Guide* described the head of Dulwich College (Dr. Joseph Spence) as “a remarkable chap who runs a remarkable school.” Dr. Spence was said to be “messianic about what he calls ‘free education,’ meaning that there’s no division between the curricular and the extra.” Dulwich, of course, is the school attended by P. G. Wodehouse from the age of twelve to eighteen.

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The Christmas 2018 issue of the *Spectator* had a new short story, “Jeeves and the Midnight Mess,” written by Ben Schott, author of the latest Jeeves and Wooster novel, *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*. Like the novel, the story was written with the permission of the Wodehouse Estate. In the story, Schott has used a classic Wodehouse plot device: Jeeves does not approve of Bertie’s new shirt studs. A modern joke is that all of the neighbors Bertie visits have the names and characteristics of modern British politicians. Enjoy it. <https://tinyurl.com/y34yugmp>.

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A *Washington Post* article of May 9, 2019 (“World, Say Hello to Archie” by Karla Adam and William Booth) referred to the name of the newest royal baby, the first son of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex (Prince Harry and Meghan Markle):

There’s something quite old-public-school, gentleman’s clubby, and polo pony about an Archie—an echo of a P. G. Wodehouse character in the fictional Drones Club, a chum to a Biffy, a Monty, and a Reggie. It’s also not far off from Bertie, a British royal nickname handed down over the years. An Archie could be a greatest generation Royal Air Force pilot in an ascot saving London in the Battle of Britain. Or a soccer hooligan. An Archie could be a city banker in a regimental tie ordering the Duck Eggs with Whiskey Sauce at the Wolseley.

Tony Ring informed us in July that he provided a donation of Wodehouse European translations to the British Library with the help of the archivist of their European Studies collections, Susan Reed. Ms. Reed has written a blog that concentrates on the varied artwork styles on the books. You can find it here: <https://tinyurl.com/y4twpv75>.

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Bob Rains noticed that Wodehouse was quoted in an item in the June 21, 2019, *Washington Post* Wit & Wisdom column: “I always strive, when I can, to spread sweetness and light. There have been several complaints about it.” (From Lord Ickenham in *Service with a Smile*)

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Appropriate to the discussion about the imminent placement of a Wodehouse memorial in Westminster Abbey is an article from the June 16, 2018, *New York Times International*. Entitled “Hawking Enters ‘Britain’s Valhalla,’ Where Space is Tight,” the piece describes the occasional controversy about who is chosen to be memorialized or interred in the Abbey. The process is not complicated, according to the Very Rev. John R. Hall, the Dean of Westminster: He says that it’s up to him to decide. Dr. Hall notes that “their lasting significance” is a major factor in the decision to admit writers or poets. The article includes some very interesting anecdotes and can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/y7y7cm8q>.

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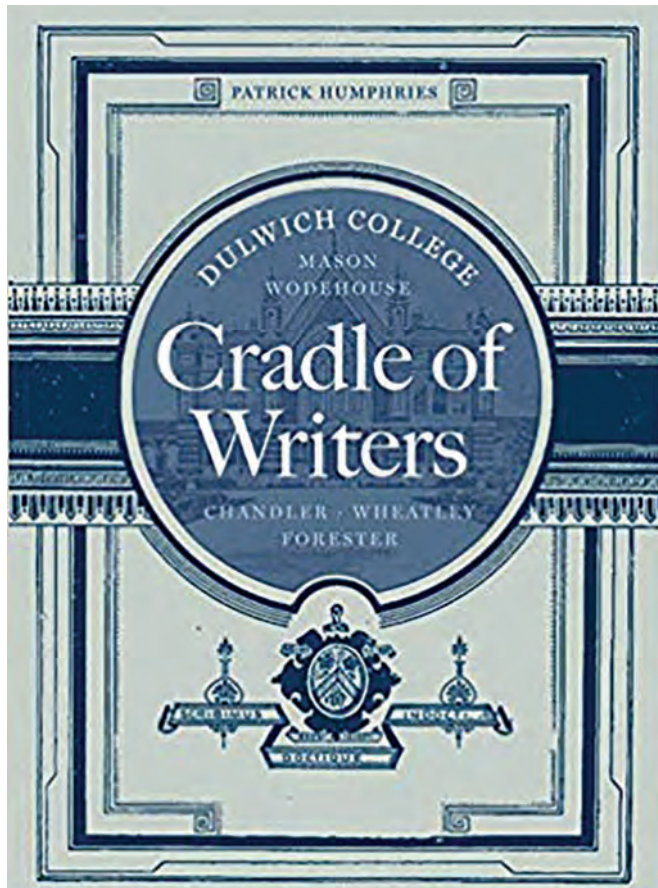
Spike gasped. His world had fallen about his ears. His excursion with Jimmy, the master cracksman, in New York had been the highest and proudest memory of his life, and now that he had met him again in London, he had looked forward to a long and prosperous partnership in crime. He was content that his own share in the partnership should be humble. It was enough for him to be connected, however humbly, with such a master. He had looked upon the richness of London, and he had said with Blucher, “What a city to loot!” And here was his idol shattering his visions with a word.

*A Gentleman of Leisure* (1910)



# Two New Books—Dulwich in Print!

IT WAS EXCITING to learn recently that Dulwich College has produced two new books that we have no doubt will be of interest to Wodehouseans everywhere. One—*Cradle of Writers: Mason, Wodehouse, Chandler, Wheatley, Forester*, by Patrick Humphries—highlights those Dulwich graduates who went on to become prominent writers, the best known probably being Raymond Chandler, C. S. Forester, and P. G. Wodehouse.



In sharp contradistinction to Gally, who liked nothing better than [the society of women] and in his younger days had always been happiest when knee deep in ballet girls and barmaids, [Lord Emsworth] had taken considerable pains to keep them at a distance. He could not hope, of course, to evade them altogether, for women have a nasty way of popping up at unexpected moments, but he was quick on his feet and his policy of suddenly disappearing like a diving duck had had excellent results. It was now pretty generally accepted in his little circle that he was not a ladies' man and that any woman who tried to get a civil word out of him did so at her own risk.

*Galahad at Blandings* (1964)

The other—*Our School Stories: Tales Inspired by Dulwich College and P. G. Wodehouse*—contains eleven short stories, of which nine are by Old Alleynian authors, one by a current Alleynian, and one by Joseph Spence, the current Master of Dulwich College. Alas, these books do not appear to be available outside England, so you may have to bribe somebody you know in the U.K. to get them for you, or you may try to get them through the Dulwich College shop (<https://shop.dulwich.org.uk/>). Good luck!



It was enough for Bertram. A moment before, I had been messing about with knotted sheets with a view to what you might call the departure *de luxe* and generally loafing about and taking my time over the thing. I now quickened up quite a good deal. It was borne in upon me that anything in the nature of leisurely comfort was off. In the next thirty seconds cats on hot bricks could have picked up hints from me.

*Thank You, Jeeves* (1934)

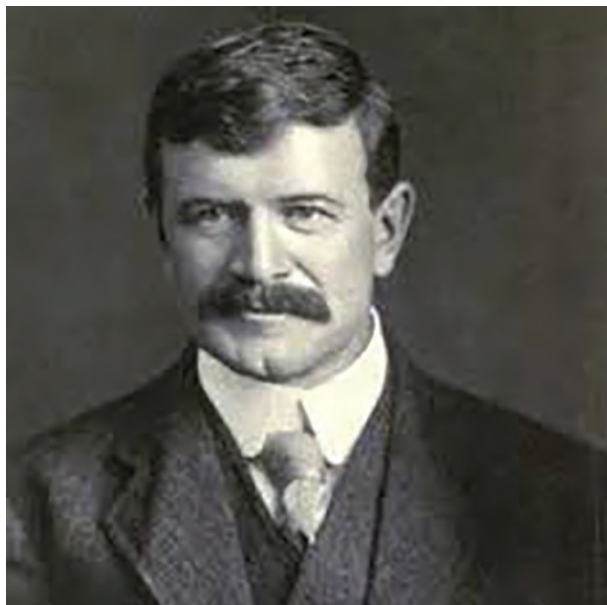
# Rivals of P. G. Wodehouse: Stephen Leacock

BY BOB RAINS

*I took the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1903. The meaning of this degree is that the recipient of instruction is examined for the last time in his life, and is pronounced completely full. After this, no new ideas can be imparted to him.*

—Stephen Leacock

STEPHEN LEACOCK was born in 1869 in Swanmoor, Hampshire, England, the third of what would ultimately be eleven children. His parents moved to Canada in 1876, and he “decided to go with them.” His father “took up a farm near Lake Simcoe, in Ontario,” but was unable to make a living at it. Leacock later wrote, “I saw enough of farming to speak exuberantly in political addresses of the joy of early rising and deep sleep, both of body and intellect, that is induced by honest manual toil.” Apparently exhausted by his sporadic efforts at farming and perhaps his procreative activities, Leacock’s father abandoned the family, leaving his wife to raise and, with help, provide for her football-team-size brood. Not surprisingly, Leacock became a lifelong hard worker, always determined to better himself.



Young Stephen Leacock, 1887

Leacock was educated at Upper Canada College, Toronto, and then at the University of Toronto, graduating in 1891. “I spent my entire time in the acquisition of languages, living, dead, and half-dead, and knew nothing of the outside world. . . . Very soon after graduation I had forgotten the languages, and

found myself intellectually bankrupt. In other words I was what is called a distinguished graduate, and, as such, I took to school teaching as the only trade I could find that needed neither experience nor intellect.”

In 1899, Leacock gave up school teaching in disgust. He entered the PhD program at the University of Chicago in economics and political science. He first became a “sessional lecturer” at McGill University, and then, after completing his doctorate, was promoted to full professorship.

In 1900, Leacock married Beatrix Hamilton. Like Wodehouse, Leacock was married in New York’s Little Church Around the Corner, and his wife, like Ethel Wodehouse, was an actress.

Leacock—known to his students as “Leaky Steamcock”—enjoyed a highly successful academic career, although he was an erratic lecturer. Sometimes he was brilliantly funny, but he could also be serious and deadily dull. No student wanted to skip a class and possibly miss the good stuff. A former student recorded that two of his classmates regularly sat in the back row and surreptitiously played tic-tac-toe whenever monotony set in. One day, one of the young men was absent. Before starting his lecture, Leacock turned to another student in the front row and said, “Mr. Jones, would you please go to the back row and play tic-tac-toe with Mr. Smith; he has no one to play with him today.”

In 1906, Leacock published his first book, *Elements of Political Science*, which became a classic in its field, was translated into eighteen languages (including Urdu), and was in wide use for two decades. Indeed, it was the most profitable of the many books he would eventually write. He had already begun another career as a public lecturer, mostly speaking on the topics of Canadian national unity and the glories of the British Empire. McGill University named him the William Dow Professor of Political Economy. In 1907 the Cecil Rhodes Trust sent Leacock to England and other dominions to promote imperial unity, and McGill granted him a year’s leave of absence. When he visited South Africa, he was shocked by the brutality of the British in the recent Boer War, including large numbers of deaths in concentration camps. Nevertheless, he remained a British loyalist to the end.

In addition to Leacock’s serious professional and political life, he had a sideline writing humorous sketches. As early as 1894, he was submitting articles to the Toronto humor magazine *Grip*. He self-published



his first book-length collection, *Literary Lapses*, in 1910, containing many marvelous characters. There is Lord Oxhead, who came from proud stock: "About him hung the portraits of his ancestors [including] Sir Ponsonby Oxhead who had fought with Wellington in Spain, and been dismissed for it." The lord's beautiful daughter, Gwendoline, "bore herself with that sweet simplicity which was her greatest charm. She was probably more simple than any girl of her age for miles around." The poor young curate Melpomenus Jones meets an "awful fate" (which I, for one, will not relate) because of his great difficulty in saying good-bye.

*Literary Lapses* was so successful that British publisher John Lane bought the rights to publish a trade edition in England. Leacock followed up the next year with *Nonsense Novels* (which are short sketches, not novels). In his preface to his next humor collection, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912), the closest Leacock ever got to writing a novel, he compared writing serious works to humorous ones:

Many of my friends are under the impression that I write these humorous nothings in idle moments when the wearied brain is unable to perform the serious labours of the economist. My own experience is exactly the other way. The writing of solid, instructive stuff fortified by facts and figures is easy enough. There is no trouble in writing a scientific treatise on the folk-lore of Central China, or a statistical enquiry into the declining population of Prince Edward Island. But to write something out of one's own mind, worth reading for its own sake, is an arduous contrivance only to be achieved in fortunate moments, few and far between.

Elsewhere, Leacock explained, "You just jot down amusing ideas as they occur to you. The jotting is simplicity itself; it is the occurring that is difficult."

Like Wodehouse, Leacock often published his stories first in magazines before bringing them out in book form. On one notable occasion, this created problems for him. The book version of *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* is set in the supposedly fictional town of Mariposa, which Leacock assures the reader in his preface is not a real town: "In regard to the present work I must disclaim at once all intentions of trying to do anything so ridiculously easy as writing about a real place and real people." The problem with this disclaimer was that when the book had first appeared as a serial in the *Montreal Star*, Leacock had used the real names of real people living in Orillia, the little town outside



Bob Rains and a bust of his subject at the Stephen Leacock Museum in Orillia, Ontario

which he had built his country home. In the book he often magnified their faults. Even the "fictional" name Mariposa was actually that of an old, small settlement a stone's throw from Orillia. Many of the local burghers were definitely not amused. In the words of Leacock biographer David Legate, "He was extremely lucky to escape libel actions."

Throughout his long career, Leacock continued producing book-length collections of humor on an almost annual basis, along with many works of serious non-fiction on subjects ranging from economics to Canada and the British empire, plus biographies of Twain and Dickens. By the time of World War I, his literary revenue had tripled his college stipend of \$4,500.

Leacock and Beatrix had one child, a son they named Stephen, born in 1915, who suffered from a growth deficiency which gave Leacock great concern. Beatrix died in 1925, and for the next twelve years, Leacock's niece, Barbara (Ulrichsen) Nimmo, lived in the Leacock household as its chatelaine, trying to make as normal a family life for father and son as possible.

Leacock has been criticized as an antifeminist, and his professed views on women, admittedly now a century old, were not what one might consider enlightened by today's standards. In his essay "The Woman Question" (1916), he wrote: "She lacks the physical strength for laying bricks or digging coal. . . . For the pursuit of business her head is all wrong. . . . There is nothing really open to her except one thing—marriage." But perhaps



one should not take these remarks too seriously. In the same essay, he argued that “Men can acquire means of support. They can hire themselves out and work. Better still, by the industrious process of intrigue rightly called ‘busyness,’ or business, they may presently get hold of enough of other people’s things to live without working. Or again, men can, with a fair prospect of success, enter the criminal class, either in its lower ranks as a housebreaker, or in its upper ranks, through politics.”

In his writings, Leacock repeatedly opined that college education was wasted on most girls. “The plain fact is that, after a girl has spent four years of her time and a great deal of her parents’ money in equipping herself for a career that she is never going to have, the wretched creature goes and gets married, and in a few years she has forgotten which is the hypotenuse of a right-handed triangle, and she doesn’t care.” Nevertheless, his niece Barbara Nimmo reported, “In everything he did in his own life, he encouraged women to develop their talents, and he helped them achieve their ambitions. . . . And he was so helpful to many of my friends and other women students, showing great interest in their careers. He was quick to write letters of recommendation and to offer them sincere encouragement.”

Like Wodehouse, Leacock had fun with names. In *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914), captains of commerce and finance hang out at the Mausoleum Club on Plutoria Avenue. The head of the faculty at Plutoria University is Dean Elderberry Foible. The law firm of the idle rich is Skinyer and Beatem. In *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, the dean of the local Church of England is the Rev. Mr. Drone. And so on.

Leacock produced some fine double-talk. In “How to Make a Million Dollars,” he explains, “You know, many a man realizes late in life that if when he was a boy he had known what he knows now, instead of being what he is he might be what he won’t; but how few boys stop to think that if they knew what they don’t know instead of being what they will be, they wouldn’t be?”

Leacock’s fellow humorists were among his many fans. In a tribute printed in the *Laugh with Leacock* anthology, Robert Benchley wrote: “I have enjoyed Leacock’s works so much that I have written everything he ever wrote—anywhere from one to five years after him. In case the proofreader thinks that I meant ‘I have read everything he ever wrote,’ please tell him that I really meant ‘written.’”

Wodehouse included Leacock stories in three humor collections that he edited or coedited. Wodehouse’s *A Century of Humour* (1934) includes Leacock’s “Soaked in Seaweed,” a sailor’s tale of a voyage with his captain, “a fine, sailor-like man from thirty to sixty, clean-shaven

except for an enormous pair of whiskers, a heavy beard, and a thick moustache.”

*The Best of Modern Humor* (1952), coedited with Scott Meredith, includes Leacock’s “Gertrude the Governess: or, Simple Seventeen.” Introducing the story, Meredith writes that describing Leacock as an economist and author “is putting excellence before genius—like describing Lincoln as a rail-splitter and American president.” Leacock’s humor is often sly and understated: Gertrude, he informs us, “had known neither father nor mother. They had both died years before she was born.” The poor girl has to fashion herself a dress out of a few old newspapers for the great ball. At one point during the evening, Gertrude has a tryst in the shrubbery with her beloved and emerges “disheveled and illegible.” (Pres. Teddy Roosevelt also admired “Gertrude the Governess”: in a political speech, he quoted a line from it in which the lovelorn hero “flung himself from the room, flung himself upon his horse and rode madly off in all directions.”)

Wodehouse and Meredith’s *A Carnival of Modern Humor* (1967) contains a Leacock spoof on Sherlock Holmes, “Maddened by Mystery, or, the Defective Detective.” Impersonating a dog in order to save the honor of England, to say nothing of a beautiful countess, the detective takes first prize but meets an unfortunate end.

Leacock had no qualms about bumping off his characters liberally, randomly, and inventively. No one was safe. In one story in *Literary Lapses*, a baby actually explodes, in a funny way, really. It is interesting that Wodehouse thrice selected Leacock stories in which characters meet unfortunate ends. Perhaps they were the sort of tales Wodehouse really wished to write but he figured that his public wouldn’t stand for it.

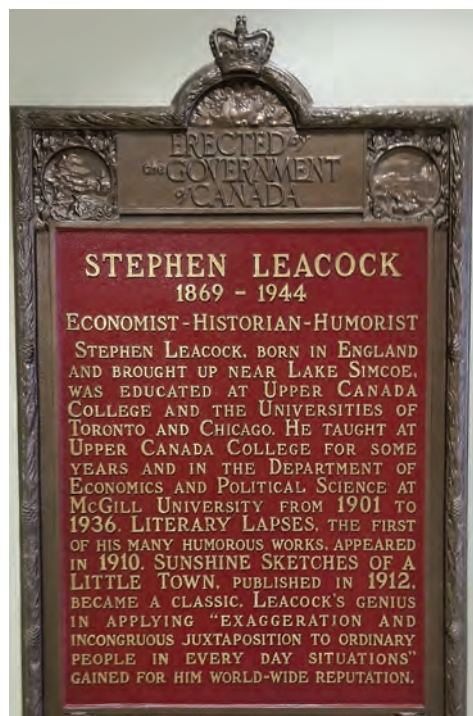
Wodehouse paid Leacock another tribute: In the 1921 version of *Love Among the Chickens*, the narrator, Jeremy Garnet, muses as “to what extent the work of authors is influenced by their private affairs.” He wonders, for example, “If Maxim Gorky were invited to lunch by Trotsky, to meet Lenin, would he sit down and dash off a trifle in the vein of Stephen Leacock?” Who can say? But surely this is high homage from one master to another.

The year 1935 was one of highs and lows for Leacock. In January, the International Mark Twain Society awarded him the Mark Twain Medal, and he gave the principal address at the Samuel Clemens centenary celebrations at the University of Missouri. But in June, McGill University informed Leacock that the Board of Governors had resolved that all teachers were to be retired upon reaching the age of 65 unless

the Board considered it in the interests of the University to retain their services. The Board did not consider it to be in those interests in the case of Leacock, and he was retired as of May 1936.

Leacock made a lecture tour to western Canada in the fall of 1936, resulting in his book *My Discovery of the West*, which won the Canadian Governor General's award. He continued writing until his death in March 1944, and several more collections of his "jottings" were published posthumously. Two years after Leacock's death, a group of his friends and supporters created the nonprofit Stephen Leacock Associates, which annually awards the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour for the best book written in English by a Canadian author. Recipients have included Robertson Davies, Mordecai Richler, and Stuart McLean. Today, McGill University's Stephen Leacock Building, erected some three decades after the university informed Leacock that it was no longer in need of his services, houses many departments in the Faculty of Arts, including Leacock's academic disciplines of Political Science and Economics.

For those of you whose appetites I have whetted to explore and enjoy Leacock, let me recommend the numerous paperback New Canadian Library collections of his works published by McClelland & Stewart Ltd., which are available in inexpensive used copies at [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com). Also available are used copies of *The Penguin Stephen Leacock* with an introduction by Robertson Davies and over 500 pages of some of Leacock's best pieces, among many other collections.



*A plaque commemorating Leacock's life and achievements at the Stephen Leacock Museum*

## Barry Phelps

FROM AN OBITUARY IN *WOOSTER SAUCE*  
BY TONY RING AND CHRIS MAKEY

**B**ARRY PHELPS passed away last December 1. He played an important role in spreading information about Wodehouse and his works during the 1970s and 1980s. He was a financial journalist who became a dealer in the works of Wodehouse. Phelps would send out lists of a wide variety of Plum publications, including U.K. and U.S. first editions and later reprints, magazines with Wodehouse content, anthologies, sheet music, and more.

He built a superb, wide-ranging collection of his own of almost 3,000 items, which he later donated to Dulwich College. Towards the end of the 1980s, Barry devoted considerable time to researching material for a book about Wodehouse, which eventually was published by Constable in 1992 as *P. G. Wodehouse—Man and Myth*.

Soon after the book's publication, he was elected as a councillor in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, a position he retained until 2010, serving a year as Mayor in 2004/2005. Barry was a member of The Wodehouse Society, a speaker at our 1993 convention, and an early member of the U.K. society.

In September 1984 Barry established The Drones, an occasional dining club for like-minded lovers of Wodehouse's writing, with an inaugural dinner at the Carlton Club. The Drones continue to meet two or three times a year.

Barry will be remembered by Wodehouseans for his tremendous enthusiasm for Wodehouse works, and for the passion that he put into collecting and writing about them.



# Letter from England

BY ELIN WOODGER



BY THE TIME this issue of *Plum Lines* hits mailboxes, we will be only a week or two away from the dedication of a memorial to P. G. Wodehouse at Westminster Abbey. This event has been a long time coming: Our founder, Bill Blood, first submitted a proposal for it back in 1986, and TWS petitioning continued unsuccessfully for the next three years. Three decades later, The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) finally came up trumps in obtaining the Dean of Westminster Abbey's approval for the memorial. The dedication on September 20 will be followed by a reception, and many Plummies will be in attendance, including some Big Names. Elliott Milstein will provide a report of the events for the next issue of *Plum Lines*, and those who attend the convention in Cincinnati will get to hear Hilary Bruce and Tim Andrew talk about all the blood, sweat, tears, and laughter expended in achieving this historic and well-deserved tribute to Plum.

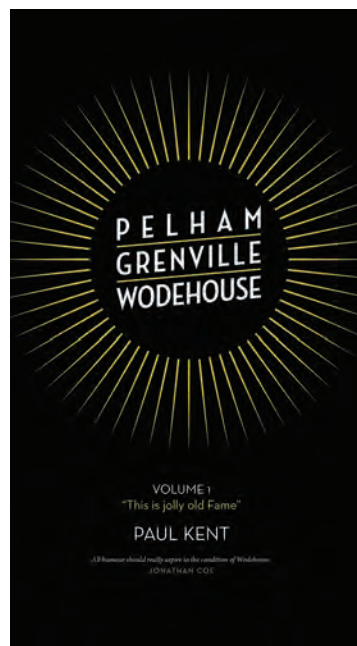
Alas, it has not been all sweetness and light. Certain groups and individuals have issued calls for Westminster Abbey to cancel the memorial, citing the Berlin broadcasts (which some continue to view as collaboration with the Nazis despite all the evidence to the contrary) and unfounded accusations that Wodehouse was an anti-Semite (based on writings that were interpreted out of context). Needless to say, this has marred what should have been the happiest of occasions. The UK Society has maintained a dignified silence throughout the controversy, as has the Abbey, and the memorial will proceed, thank goodness. Thus, although the negative press has resulted in a trying time for all involved, the outcome remains a positive one, and we are looking forward to what will be a great day for Plum.

That is the big news here in England. Otherwise the UK Society continues to chug along nicely with meetings at the Savile Club in Mayfair, held thrice yearly. For the past several years, our July meeting has featured a fiendishly clever PGW quiz devised by that clever fiend Paul Kent. This year the browsers and sluicers formed teams of anywhere from three to eight members and gave themselves winsome names (including the Youngest Members, the Bosham Bandits, and Ignominy in the Offing, among others). As Paul asked his dastardly questions, the room resonated with buzzing from the debates taking place, occasional yelps of triumph when the right answer came to someone, and inevitable bursts of laughter. When the questions

ended, papers were exchanged so that teams could mark each other, resulting in more noises of dismay or rejoicing as the answers were revealed. Well, I blush to tell you that my team, the Five Fotheringay-Phipps, won the quiz this year, having achieved 28 points out of a possible 38. Not too bad, given that some of Paul's questions were downright devious.

Speaking of Paul—who will be one of the speakers at the Cincinnati convention—he has been working for quite some time on a three-volume examination of Wodehouse's literary output, entitled *Pelham Grenville Wodehouse*, which is the cat's pajamas—and I should know as I had the pleasure of editing volume 1 for him. That volume—“*This is jolly old Fame*”—should be available on Amazon by the time you read this, but if it's not, be patient, it will be there soon. To give you an idea of the riches it contains, I can do no better than to quote from the book jacket: “Granted unprecedented access to Wodehouse's papers and library, lifelong enthusiast Paul Kent takes us on a comprehensive tour of Wodehouse's unique comic world and the imagination that created it. Volume 1 focuses on where that world came from and how Wodehouse shaped it, covering the full range of his achievements—not only his novels and stories but his musical comedies, song lyrics, poetry, journalism, and dramas.”

In short, it is a dashed terrific book, and with two more volumes to follow, we have some great reading to look forward to!



Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, Volume 1: “*This is jolly old Fame*” is the first of three that Paul Kent is producing, the fruits of his open access to Wodehouse's papers and library.



# Chapters Corner

**W**HAT IS YOUR chapter up to these days? Please send all news to Gary Hall (see back page). Note that webmaster Noel Merrill also keeps chapter items posted on the society website at [wodehouse.org](http://wodehouse.org). It's a good idea to send advance information about upcoming events to Noel. His contact information is on the last page of this issue.

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

E-mail:

**W**HAT FUN it was to meet at Bosu's Wine Shop in Waynesville, North Carolina, on Monday, May 23! The weather, the wine, the tapas, and most of all the company of drones led to an evening of delight.

I am prouder than Bertie when he won the Scripture Knowledge Prize to be the new president of our growing Wodehouse chapter. The fact that I was appointed when I wasn't there matters little. Thank you, especially Erin, for my policeman's helmet to mark the occasion. It's way better than a gavel, and I didn't get thrown in the jug without the option to bring it home.

We welcomed two new members to our chapter: Mary Jane and Stephen Curry. And we've heard from Jane Rigot, who will be moving to Brevard this summer, that she would like to join us after she moves. Welcome, welcome!

Our agenda consisted of talking about one of Wodehouse's best "crime" stories, "The Crime Wave at Blandings." Wouldn't it be a pleasant world if the worst crime waves consisted of using an air gun to pop Baxter in the bum?

We plan to continue meeting on the fourth Thursday of every month, with some exceptions, including the holidays. Contact me for details.

Our agenda for June was to discuss Plum's knighthood (KBE). Mary Jane reminded us that several of Wodehouse's characters have been honored: Among others, there's Sir Watkyn Bassett (CBE, always trying to steal away Anatole and silver cow-creamers); Roderick Spode (7th Earl of Sidcup, with "the sort of eye that can open an oyster at sixty paces"); and Sir Roderick Glossop ("with eyes that go through you like death rays").

Bassett and Spode are introduced in *The Code of the Woosters*, one of Plum's richest novels. We were to have

read (or reread) *Code* for summer fun and talk about it in June, sharing favorite phrases, etc.

—Beth Baxley

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



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



**Blandings Castle Chapter**  
(Greater San Francisco Bay area)  
Contact: Bill Franklin



**T**HE BLANDINGS CASTLE CHAPTER has been busy rebooting itself, as you all no doubt read in the Summer *Plum Lines*.

In early June we had a South Bay Pub Night attended by Tom and Dominique Wainwright, Neil Midkiff, Ian and Rose Stewart, Deb Marko, and myself. We discussed a number of things we could do as a chapter such as events, readings, theatre, and the upcoming convention. We also used my favorite icebreaker: "So, how did you come to Wodehouse?" Neil provided us all with a lovely overview of Madame Eulalie's Rare Plums at <https://www.madameeulalie.org/>.



Rose Stewart, Tom Wainwright, Ian Stewart, Neil Midkiff, Deb Marko, and Dominique Wainwright

On Saturday, July 20, we had a marvelous luncheon prepared by Deb Marko at our home in San Francisco. The gathering included some first-time Blandings Castle folks—Olivia and Jack Harmon (recently from

Johns Hopkins via London)—and some long-time members such as Ninad Wagle and Rowena Southard. We discussed cricket and how to choose the best initial story to introduce your significant other to Wodehouse. We learned how one of our newest members came to Wodehouse: Jack Harmon, at the age of seven, lost a battle with a wild salmon and wound up being pulled into a freezing river in Ireland. He was immediately bundled up in warm blanket and read “The Great Sermon Handicap” by a clearly loving father who knows how to raise a young gentleman properly.

On Saturday, August 3, nine of us gathered for our now annual Blandings Goes to Cricket event. The Marin Cricket Club Socials team again served as our host. In the spirit of sluicing, we chose to attend the match between the Marin Socials and the Napa Valley CC. We had quite a generous picnic spread and we spent a leisurely afternoon eating, dozing, reading, watching the match, and discussing the Master’s coverage of the Noble Sport. Here you can see Ian Stewart perusing a copy of Murray Hedgcock’s excellent *Wodehouse at the Wicket*, while Rose follows up by explaining some of the game to other members.



*Ian and Rose Stewart watching and reading*

In the fall, we hope to have a theatre outing and perhaps a reading. Blandings Castle is hitting on all cylinders!

—Bill Franklin

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



**Capital! Capital!**  
(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)  
Contact: Scott Daniels



**Chapter One**  
(Greater Philadelphia area)  
Contact: Herb Moskowitz



ON SUNDAY, July 28, sundry members of Chapter One gathered at Cavanaugh’s in Headhouse Square in Philadelphia, where the heat wave had eased, the air was clear, and the temperature was a relatively mild ninety degrees. The Headhouse Sunday Farmers Market was in full swing, with plenty of local produce.

Two of Wodehouse’s charming but problematic 1941 Berlin broadcasts were read aloud and discussed. Bob Rains provided direction and background, primarily drawing from *Wodehouse at War* by Iain Sproat and *Wodehouse: A Life* by Robert McCrum.

The discussants were uneasy that lighthearted talks were recorded under enemy control, even if there was no political content. The arguments, condemnations, and defense of PGW from 1941 to the present were discussed. Mitigating factors included Plum’s lack of awareness of the German intent and his naiveté in not recognizing how such broadcasts would be received by his countrymen in wartime. Although Wodehouse rued the broadcasts after the fact, many of his contemporaries defended his innocence. History has ultimately been kind to him over his misjudgment.

The next meeting will be at noon on Sunday, September 29, at Cavanaugh’s. We will watch excerpts from the 2004 movie *Piccadilly Jim*.

A very sad note: As the minutes were being prepared, we learned of the tragic deaths in an aviation accident of three members of the Khurana family, who were also members of Chapter One: Husband Jasvir, wife Divya, and daughter Kiran. We enjoyed knowing them and will miss them. We offer our condolences to the Khurana family. (See page 8 for more details.)

—Herb Moskowitz

**Chicago Accident Syndicate**  
(Chicago and thereabouts)  
Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison



**The Clients of Adrian Mulliner**  
(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes) Contact: Elaine Coppola



**T**HE CLIENTS OF ADRIAN MULLINER will hold a Senior Bloodstain on Friday morning (time and place to be determined), October 18, 2019, at the Pigs Have Wings convention in Cincinnati. Featured will be the playlet *The Rummy Affair of Tadpole Phelps* by Mike Eckman.

—Elaine Coppola

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



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



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



**T**HE FLYING PIGS chapter met on July 7 as our preparations for the 2019 convention this October in Cincinnati continue to unfold. Look elsewhere in this issue for an enticing article on Cincinnati and the joys to be found there. Our next meeting is August 25 at 4 PM at the Arnests' (Rick and Nancy). All hands on deck as we press toward the finish line, so if you've been waiting in the wings for an invite, please shoot Susan an email and you will be contacted posthaste with directions and invites to all future meetings plus volunteer opportunities for the upcoming convention.

—Susan Pace

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



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



**O**N SATURDAY, JUNE 8, the Melonsquashville (TN) Literary Society chapter met at the Morning Pointe Assisted Living Community in Powell, Tennessee, just

north of Knoxville. Harry and Joyce Hall, longtime adherents to our Wodehousian joy and mirth program, are now residents there. They arranged for us to use the community's activities room for our meeting. The program was a reading of "Unpleasantness at Bludleigh Court."

The readers were Harry Hall (a narrator), Alan Lee (Mr. Mulliner), Bill Watts (Sir Francis Pashley-Drake, young Wilfred Bassinger, Sir Alexander Bassinger), Fran Dotterweich (a narrator), Joan Clevenger (a poet), Mary Jane Curry (Charlotte Mulliner), and Stephen Curry (Aubrey Trefusis). We had several other attendees including two elegant Elizabeths, two delightful Daltons, and Paula. Tanya Hall Gheen, who was caring for Joyce, was also present, having just returned from a weather-delayed holiday by motorcycle to the Rocky Mountains. The dose of Wodehouse was timely and well received by all.

We were pleased to note that a sizable contingent of other community residents strolled or rolled in with us and seemed to thoroughly enjoy the show. Our readers set a high bar and had obviously practiced their lines and voice-projection skills for our dramatic presentation.

No word yet on the date of the next meeting. We are exploring the possibility of finding a pianist who would play the Jerome Kern music while we sing the wonderful Wodehouse lyrics from some of his Broadway hits.

—Ken Clevenger

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



**W**HILE YOU HAVEN'T heard from the Mottled Oysters lately, we are hard at it every first Saturday of each month in 2019.

Since January we've covered *Indiscretions of Archie*; *Psmith in the City*; *My Man Jeeves*; *Something Fresh*; *Eggs, Beans, and Crumpets*; *Not George Washington*; and *Bill the Conqueror*. (*Eggs, Beans, and Crumpets* was requested for 2019 since quorum was not met in 2018.)

In February, Janet, Liz, and Lynette were showered with cupcakes—lots of them—for their winter birthdays. Janet was ill and missed out. Everyone else in the group went home with goodies.

At our salons, we discussed the specific book's contents, themes, characters, and wit and humor (of course). We discussed how the cover art matched or mismatched the plot, especially in the Overlook editions. We compared which publishers we were



reading. Were errors in the text the fault of the editor, the printer, or the author? Was this nitpicking a result of not having adult beverages or food in front of us? Or an indication that the book had been read once too often?

Inevitably, a song reference, a line from Shakespeare, or a movie title came up. Bryan consulted the Internet on his smartphone and, oh, that reminded someone of . . . and we were off on the tangent train. In July, it was half-jokingly suggested that the book club title be changed to Mottled Oyster Book and Movie Club. During the summer, Randy, an artist in the group, asked about flowers blooming beyond the room's floor-to-ceiling windows. He incorporated them in a painting and wanted to know their name. A grassy area outside was rimmed with Texas wildflowers and live oak trees. It was as close to Emsworth's English garden as San Antonio will ever get.

While I cannot predict how our fall discussions will go, I can say that these will be on the table:

August: *The Coming of Bill*; September: *Right Ho, Jeeves*; October: Ben Schott's *Jeeves and the King of Clubs*; November: *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*; December: Christmas potluck.

The Mottled Oysters/Jellied Eels of South Texas meet monthly on the first Saturday at the John Igo Branch Library, 13330 Kyle Seale Parkway, at 2:00 PM. The library is located on the northwest side of San Antonio. If you are a Wodehouse fan living in or near San Antonio, or just visiting, please join us. We venture out for nourishment and tissue restoratives afterwards.

—Lynette Poss

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

(Boston and New England)  
Contact: Lynn Vesley-Gross,



or Roberta Towne

THE NEWTS SWARMED in June at the Ravi Manor House in historic Bedford, Massachusetts. The Nottle was optimistically planned as an outdoor bash. Many brought folding chairs to dot about the pleasancess. In scheduling the event, we were reminded of poor Mabel Steptoe of *Quick Service*, who discovered that when it came to garden parties, the strategic planning she had learned in her native California was distinctly different in England. Mrs. Steptoe's at Claines Hall ended in raining cats and dogs, so there was concern that NEWTS would meet that fate. On the day there was not a drop of rain, but there was unbearably hot weather by the standards of small reptiles accustomed

to cool Boston lakes and streams. The group was driven indoors, where revels proceeded with spirits undamped and a lavish spread was enthusiastically consumed.

Rehearsals continue for the NEWTS skit to be performed at the Cincinnati convention. Though cast and crew are sworn to secrecy, Hollywood gossip columnists are reporting it to be a boffo smash, sure to be a hit. Don't miss it!

A high point of the binge was when NEWT Elin Woodger Murphy was reached on an iPad and addressed us all from her home in London.

In air-conditioned comfort we had a group reading of the story "The Purification of Rodney Spelvin," interrupted at intervals by uncontrolled group laughter. Then the meeting wrapped up with a rousing game involving quiz questions and tossing stuffed toy newts around. The game might have been safer outdoors, but most of the important parlor furniture still was intact at the end.

—Lynn Vesley-Gross

**The Northwodes**

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



Holly Windle and Maria Jette hat it up.

ORGANIZED BY Mary McDonald, fifteen Northwodes met at Burger Moe's to vicariously attend the Run for the Roses at our annual Derby Day. We drew names of the horses from a hat for the nominal fee of \$1. Initial discussion of the horses, their names, and the current odds led to more erudite and wide-ranging subjects, including books and authors (Faith Sullivan has a new book coming in September), the inventive nickname generator unveiled by Bruce Willey, arts and performance, fabulous hats, and the history of antibiotics in the cure of tuberculosis.

After a tough race on a wet and muddy track, Maria Jette's horse, Maximum Security, appeared to have won,

but was disqualified for impeding other horses. The second-place horse, Country House (which sounded like a good Wodehousian name), was eventually declared the winner. Fred Muschenheim took home the pot with the intent to escape to some unnamed tax haven. The delay in declaring the winner did prove that we had a heroic waitstaff.



Maria Jette is left holding the nag.

While most of the nation sweltered, July 21 found fifteen cucumber-cool Northwodes at the Local West discussing *Mr. Mulliner Speaking*. The last three of the nine short stories in the book involve Bobbie Wickham, a niece of Mr. Mulliner. Bobbie is a lot of trouble and has successfully driven away one suitor per story by her behavior. The other six tales illustrate how deception, misplaced sensitivity to one's clothes, and intimidation by the aristocracy may lead to shame, disaster, misunderstanding, and perhaps a little wisdom. Researching the literary references in the stories led to a couple of the attendees reading Wordsworth's "We are Seven" and Mary McDonald distributing extracts from Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* that related a story of a troika passenger (a bride no less) thrown to the pursuing wolves.

We pondered the value of a social/economic network derived from going to public school (even Harrow) for the development of Plum's characters. We asked whether this sort of thing happens in the USA. Our Harvard and Yale grads claimed that it does not.

—Michael Eckman

### The Orange Plums

(Orange County, California)

Contact: Lia Hansen or Diana Van Horn



ATTENTION ON DECK! Admiral "Fruity" Biffen, swain of the seven seas, dropping anchor here with a report on the much-anticipated Brazil Nut Marksman competition recently held among those raconteurs of recreation, the Orange Plums. Our inspiration, you may recall from the Summer 2019 *Plum Lines*, was the rapier opening sequence of *Cocktail Time* wherein Uncle Fred takes out Beefy Bastable's top hat at long range with a slingshot-launched Brazil nut. For months we planned a replication of this curious debauch. We finally managed to stage it during our gathering in July. Of course, propriety dictated we attend first to the traditions of our regular monthly meeting. Our beloved cow creamer mascot, the Duchess, was on hand, this time celebrating the 4th of July in full Uncle Sam regalia. There was the usual browsing and sluicing plus a thoughtful discussion of "Jeeves in the Springtime," the Master's short story which had been the assigned reading for the month.



However, all that behind us, we soon deployed among the shade trees of the charming little park adjacent to our HQ restaurant at the train station in the city of Orange. Slingshots and ordnance (yes, certain large, South American-named seeds which I had mistakenly thought legumes) were quickly distributed among those present, and all were keen to get the competition cooking!

I must note here that, what with a city ordinance prominently posted strictly forbidding all manner of activities up to and including "propelled objects" (honestly, the only item absent from the prohibition



roster seemed a blanket “Having Fun”), we enthusiastic miscreants clearly risked at least an accosting by the local constabulary with an intimidating “Ho! What’s all this then?!” Nevertheless, we carried on without a care. All found their early rounds missing the mark, however, which we attributed to strong crosswinds, ammo disintegration in mid-flight, or perhaps just vestigial tremors from the recent Southern California earthquakes. All such interferences would no doubt have hobbled even Uncle Fred’s best efforts. But once the range was significantly shortened, the results that were logged were much improved. When the melee’s dust eventually settled, a clear winner was revealed in the form of our beloved Minna Nordstrom (Margot Churchill)—our first and only shooter to actually drop the target topper to terra firma—using some sort of trick shot she refused to reveal. Imagine! She proudly displays her coveted ugly trophy in the accompanying photo.



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**Y**OUR ALWAYS garrulous Orange Plums actually had no trouble plucking our usual gowans fine as we put on the feedbag at our HQ eatery in August because—and please don’t tell Jeeves—we just went ahead and talked with our mouths full! Actually, we were just as adept at talking through our hats, which is our more traditional means of group communication.

Compared to the usual battalion, ours was admittedly only a small and intimate group on hand for this particular gathering—a mere four of us (even if boisterous enough to be taken for thrice that number!), and the topic of c. was the first couple of stories related to Bertie’s bud Bingo—that lovelorn loonie—in the voluminous *World of Jeeves* collection. We’re now intent on discussing the rest of the Bingo stories in sequence

in the coming months, but are also putting plans in place to hold our famous Infant Samuel Toss and Boat Race Night games again in the near future. Meanwhile, of course, the divine Miss Postlethwaite, Dame Daphne Winkworth, and Adm. “Fruity” Biffen (Diana Van Horn, Marcy Downes, and Jeff Porteous, respectively) much look forward to the coming Cincy soirée, where it is rumored that porcine levitation will somehow be the order of the day. We can’t wait to meet many of you there!

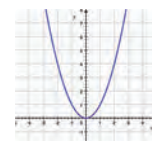
Till then, I have the honor to be, sirs and madams, nautically yours,

—Adm. George J. Biffen (*Jeff Porteous*)

### **The Pale Parabolites**

(Toronto and vicinity)

Contact: George Vanderburgh



### **The PeliKans**

(Kansas City and vicinity)

Contact: Bob Clark



### **The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation**

(Los Angeles and vicinity)

Contact: Doug Kendrick



### **The Pickering Motor Company**

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein



**T**HE PICKERINGS celebrated Cinco de Mayo with tacos and tequila at the Bieneman residence, their first time hosting as they are the newest members of our Chapter. The night was fine, their home was beautiful, the browsing and sluicing were beyond excellent, and a good time was had by all. The reading assignment was *The Code of the Woosters*, the third book in our series of the five best novels by P. G. Wodehouse.

The tequila loosened our tongues and the lawyers in the group started reminiscing about lawyers they had known who had gone to jail. The number was disconcertingly high. David revealed he is thinking of growing a ponytail. His wife, President for Life Luann, threatened to dye her hair pink if he did. And things went downhill from there.

In the discussion of the book, Sherry was of the opinion that the ending was a bit too short and quick.



It almost seemed like a *deus ex machina*. David put forth his theory that Stiffy Byng is a villain and not just a madcap modern girl. His argument sounded like the summing up at a criminal trial and Stiffy was found guilty by the jury. This led to a discussion of other Wodehouse villains and a debate about which is the most evil. This led to a discussion of theft and blackmail as recurring themes in Wodehouse. And this led to a discussion of lawyers we know who went to jail and you now know where *that* went.

Your humble reporter has continued his practice of looking up biblical and literary references in Wodehouse. There's an interesting one in Chapter 4 where Bertie refers to someone "stepping high, wide and handsome." It's an old American slang expression and also the title of a 1937 Hollywood musical with music by his old collaborator Jerome Kern. As *The Code of the Woosters* was published in 1938, Wodehouse was obviously writing it when the movie came out, so perhaps this is why the phrase popped up.

The next meeting was on August 4. The reading assignment was our fourth book in the series, *Leave It to Psmith*. The Pickerings are still debating what the fifth book should be. We all agree it should be a non-Blandings, non-Jeeves book, but after that the conversation becomes disputatious. So far the titles proffered are *Piccadilly Jim*, *Big Money*, *Money in the Bank*, and *Spring Fever*. We welcome suggestions from any corner of the Wodehouse World!

—Robert Walter

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FOR THOSE OF YOU who have been carefully following the exploits of the Pickering Motor Company, you will know that we are now nearly through our comprehensive read of PGW's best five novels. The August 4 meeting at the Milsteins' was not only a meeting to discuss the very best of them, *Leave It to Psmith*, but also to choose the fifth book (which all agreed needed to be a non-saga book, just to keep things even), a decision which, at previous meetings, created some significant controversy. Both discussions were quite spirited. Nearly all the Pickerings had, in fact, read this meeting's selection (a rare event) and all had something to say about it. Even those members who are not our more diehard aficionados of the Master spoke highly of the book, commenting on the clever plot, the brilliant writing, the humor, and, of course, the apotheosis of that great character Ronald Rupert Psmith. Several read their favorite passages, including Psmith's proposal and, of course, the flower pot scene.

For the fifth and final novel of the series, many choices were proffered by Pickering members. But when

the smoke cleared, the one that rang the bell and took the coconut (or cigar) was *Money in the Bank*, which will be discussed at our next meeting in November.

The summer meeting of the Pickerings is always a special one as the browsing and sluicing are generally pretty unrestrained. This year was no exception, with Elliott inaugurating his new barbeque grill and basically opening his bar of fine Scotches and bourbons to all comers. The meeting was especially graced by the arrival of two new members—Travis Bear and Scott Monty—who added considerably to the discussion, the festivities, and the general tone. Eschewing their previous lurker status, they are now full members of the Motor Company and we look forward to their enlivening presence from here on.

—Elliott Milstein



Pickering Charlie Bieneman, founding member  
David Warren, and new member Scott Monty

### The Pittsburgh Millionaires Club

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

Contact: Allison Thompson



### The Plum Crazyes

(Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and vicinity)

Contact: Betty Hooker



THE PLUM CRAZIES met at the home of Betty and Tom Hooker on June 2. We welcomed new members Nancy and Chuck Buckley, who joined Ed Hain, Marcia and Will Campbell, Bruce Montgomery, Diana and Mike Staab, and Andrea Jacobsen and Bob Rains for our usual scrumptious potluck lunch.

Afterward, we viewed the 1955 Four Star Production of “Uncle Fred Flits By” starring David Niven as Uncle Fred and Robert Nichols as Pongo. This was originally adapted by the BBC for a TV series called *Comedy Playhouse*. The script follows the short story closely. We enjoyed the production, and the 1950s TV advertisements were a bonus. A free download of this program is available online. Don’t miss it.

We gathered at the Oyster Mill Playhouse in Camp Hill on Sunday, August 25, for a performance of *Jeeves Takes a Bow*. This is the third Margaret Raether play that the Playhouse has produced with mostly the same cast members. Following an amusing production, we traveled to the Rock Bass Grill in Wormleysburg for food, fellowship, and fun.

—Betty Hooker

### The Plum Street Plummies

(Olympia, Washington and vicinity)

Contact: Thomas L. R. Smith



IT WAS COOL and overcast when Olympia’s Plum Street Plummies met at King Minigolf in the nearby town of Puyallup, Washington, for the fourth annual Wodehouse Open. There were five golfers in this year’s tournament: Gloria Garrett, Susan Dorsey, Tom Smith, Susan Spatola-Knoll, and Domenico Spatola-Knoll, Susan S-K’s husband.



*The Plum Street Plummies in action on the links*

The golfers turned out for battle and play was tight. While Susan Spatola-Knoll won the tournament with a 51, both Tom and Domenico were just two strokes behind at 53, while Domenico had two holes-in-one. Susan Dorsey finished with a 61. Gloria Garrett, the World’s Most Honest Scorekeeper, finished with a 63.



*Champion Plummie Susan Spatola-Knoll*

After golf, the Plum Street Plummies retired to British Bites on Main Avenue in Puyallup to present the trophy to the winner and to sample the British treats. Fun was had by all and most participants are plotting their strategies for the Fifth Annual P. G. Wodehouse Open.

—Tom Smith

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

Contact: Peter Nieuwenhuizen



ON JUNE 15, the Knights of Sir Philip Sidney gathered and the theme of our meeting was newts. We all know how well-beloved this aquatic member of the family Salamandridae, which constitutes the genus *Molge*, is by Gussie Fink-Nottle. We read snippets about newts from *Right Ho*, *Jeeves*, *The Code of the Woosters*, *The Mating Season*, and *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*.



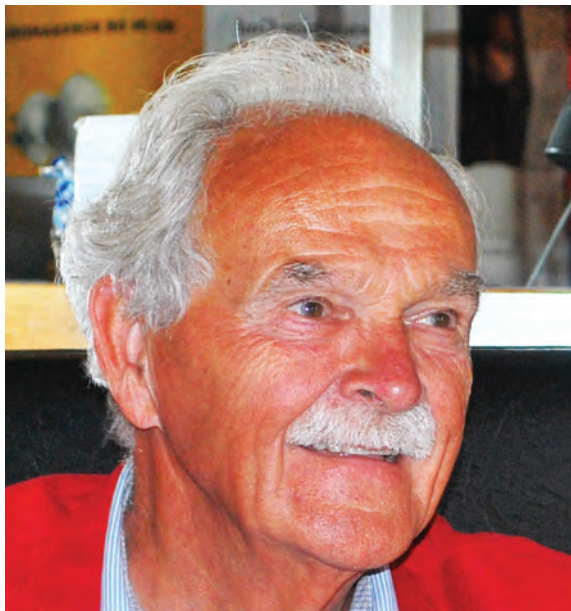
*Newt expert Sergé Bogaerts entertains and educates the knights.*

We then welcomed a genuine newt specialist: Sergé Bogaerts, winner of the 2014 Lenders Prize 2014 for herpetology and one of the premier newt specialists in



The Netherlands. Sergé spoke of the habits of newts: the way they live, eat, and breed. His conclusion was that Wodehouse must have had fair knowledge of newts because most of what he wrote about them is accurate. Although Gussie tends to take the newts with him on holidays, Sergé argued that newts like quiet and cool places and that transporting them causes a lot of stress, so there Gussie erred. At the end of his talk, Sergé presented a newt to the society, albeit a plastic one.

The Knights talked about the upcoming Third Wodehouse Film Festival in Amsterdam (November 16) and a European Wodehouse Tour in 2021, to celebrate the 40th birthday of the Dutch Wodehouse Society. Longstanding Knight Carel Coops (the fifth member of the society, Carel joined in 1982) told stories about the history of the society. Dramatist Leonard Beuger talked about the Margaret Raether play *Jeeves Intervenes* that he would like to stage in The Netherlands.



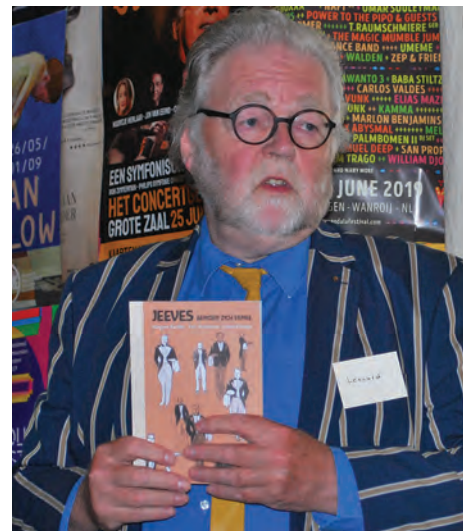
*Long-time Knight Carel Coops reminisced about the development of the chapter.*

Each Knight who was present received a special gift: a booklet called *Zijn eerste baan*, a translation by Marcel Gijbels and Herman van Riel of the Wodehouse story "Out of School" (1910), which had never been translated into Dutch before this recent work.

Finally, a Wodehouse reading club was established. The club plans to read specific Wodehouse novels and talk about them. We'll see how this will evolve.

The next regular meeting of the Knights will be on October 12, 2019, at 1 PM, at the Szmulewicz Restaurant, Bakkersstraat 12 (off Rembrandtplein) in Amsterdam.

—Peter Nieuwenhuizen



*Leonard Beuger suggested bringing a Margaret Raether play to The Netherlands.*

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



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



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



## Changing of the Mailing Guard

Neil Midkiff writes: Many thanks to the Pickering Motor Company of Detroit and vicinity, who have taken over the task of stuffing, stamping, and mailing the *Plum Lines* envelopes each quarter. For the next few quarters, they'll be using the existing inventory of window envelopes printed with my return address, but I'll only be seeing the ones that get returned in the mail.



# Further on Brazil Nuts



**J**EFF PORTEOUS (nom de Plum Admiral “Fruity” Biffen and scribe of the Orange Plums) sent along a cartoon of Lord Blicester getting his hat knocked off by the boy Egbert. This, of course, nicely fits the Brazil nut theme of the Orange Plums chapter’s recent gathering. This illustration was posted by Jack Dawson recently on the Fans of Wodehouse Facebook page. Jack told Jeff that it came from “The Masked Troubadour,” illustrated by Gilbert Wilkinson, in the *Strand* in December 1936. (This was later reworked as “Reggie and the Greasy Bird” for the *Saturday Evening Post*.)

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Quick Ones (unless otherwise credited) courtesy of  
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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