

The quarterly journal of The Wodehouse Society

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*See page 20 for news about the 2009 convention:
A Little Wodehouse on the Prairie!*



What Ho, Comrade!

BY SUSAN BROKAW

Inspired by Masha Lebedeva's eight-part series in Wooster Sauce on Russian references in Wodehouse, as well as the three supplementary issues of By The Way with hundreds of PGW quotes, Old Home Week in Moscow was a rousing success. Here we have the report from the erudite and well-traveled Susan Brokaw.

THANKS TO THE organization and attention to detail by members of The Russian Wodehouse Society—specifically, Masha Lebedeva and her assistants, Lena Lebedeva, Dmitry Pritykin, and Irina Alexeeva—our August trip to Moscow for the society's "Old Home Week" was a bit of a vacation, but mainly a 500-level cram course in Russian literature, history, art, cuisine, and architecture. E-mail correspondence with Masha began nearly nine months in advance of the event. She gathered our input on scheduling, choice of possible venues, and preferences of accommodations, transportation, and the amount of desired "down time." With all of Masha's preliminary spadework and the tendency for Wodehouseans to, as *Plum Lines* editor Gary Hall put it, "oil through bureaucracy," we had a wonderfully memorable week.

On the Sunday evening of our arrival, my husband Dirk Wonnell and I were met in the lobby bar of the Hotel Budapest (the official Old Home Week lodging) by Masha and several other attendees: Jelle Otten from the Netherlands and Hubert and Marie Lasson from France. There we received our subway tickets, city map, and bound booklet describing the week's activities. From the hotel bar we walked to Elki-Palki, a nearby restaurant, for the welcome dinner. There we joined other Muscovite members of The Russian Wodehouse Society and another fellow OHW attendee, Elena Kirillova from the Volga region of Russia. It was there that we first sampled *kvass* (a mildly alcoholic quaff), *mors* (a substantial cranberry juice), and blini with caviar and sour cream, as well as an extensive array of cold salads and fish, often encased in cubes of clear gelatin. Afterward, we set out for a little jaunt around our "neighborhood," with the illuminated ruby glass stars of the Kremlin winking in the night sky. Soon, however, the



The intrepid Old Home Week crew in front of the onion domes of St. Basil's Cathedral in Red Square. From left: Hubert Lasson, Jelle Otten, Elena Kirillova, Masha Lebedeva, Helen (the interpreter), Susan Brokaw, Dirk Wonnell, Marie Lasson

(Photo from Susan Brokaw)

combined effects of a late meal and jet lag had us heading back to the hotel for the night.

Monday began our week of tours, walks, and day trips. On our first day, we made our way to the Moscow Kremlin and Armory via the metro. Seen through the eyes of an American midwesterner, the Moscow metro system had the precision and reliability of a guillotine. Fortunately for our limbs, Masha herded us like sheep, making sure we were all together before boarding, because once the doors of a subway car started to close, any errant appendage still blocking the way was subject to amputation. No chirp of “Mind the Gap,” no warning bell, just a brief delay to allow boarding and disembarking and then, WHAMMO! Shut tight as a drum and rocketing forward at what seemed 90 mph.

“Aline, my pet, it’s no good arguing. You might just as well argue with a wolf on the trail of a fat Russian peasant.”

Something Fresh (1915)

Once at the station closest to the Kremlin, it was a short and pleasant walk in a park-like setting to the gates of the Kremlin. There we experienced the first of many



Lenin oversees a stop in a Russian pub. From left: Hubert Lasson, Marie Lasson, Masha Lebedeva, Lena Lebedeva, Susan Brokaw, Jelle Otten (Photo by Dirk Wonnell)

times we witnessed Masha fully realized as our “fearless leader.” In this role, she would encounter a uniformed official at a gate, fan out tickets for inspection like a poker hand, exchange Russian words along with a few accompanying hand gestures, and suddenly the velvet rope would be unclasped and the knot of Wodehouseans would be allowed to “oil through.” We were met by an English-speaking interpreter who guided us through the museum rooms filled with artifacts treasured by the



The Taj? No, it is the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the largest cathedral in Russia. (Photo by Susan Brokaw)

czars and Russian Orthodox Church hierarchs: silver- and jewel-encrusted gospel covers, incredibly intricate icon frames, ermine and sable robes of state, carriages, weapons, and unbelievably delicate creations by Fabergé. We then walked around outdoors within the Kremlin walls. For someone who had always assumed the Kremlin was simply a collection of drab government buildings, it was stunning to find so many onion-domed cathedrals. Afterward, we toured the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, recently rebuilt and reopened as the largest cathedral in Russia. It stands majestically on a site that was, during Khrushchev’s tenure, an open-air swimming pool that was built atop a crater left when the original cathedral was destroyed in the troubled times of Stalin. From the top of the cathedral we had commanding views of the Moscow River and the whole of urban Moscow. We ended our first day with a boat trip on the Moscow River.

We started Tuesday with a guided bus tour of the city. It was an excellent way to see a panorama of the Kremlin, Red Square, Moscow State University, the Novodevichy convent, and Lubyanka Square with the former KGB headquarters.

Anything modern was taboo, unless it were the work of Gotsuchakoff, Thingummyowsky, or some other eminent foreigner.

The Head of Kay’s (1905)

We stretched our legs in Red Square and had a good look at the exterior of the iconic St. Basil’s Cathedral, with its domes and polychrome decoration. Next was the melancholy Novodevichy convent. The lake on the convent grounds inspired Tchaikovsky to write *Swan Lake*, and in the park is a sculpture of Robert McCluskey’s famous children’s work, *Make Way for Ducklings*,

presented to the children of Russia by former first lady Barbara Bush. Our tour guide, Elena, was excellent, her knowledge vast, and her command of English superb. After lunch we donned paper booties and toured the Moscow home of the great Russian singer, Feodor Chaliapin, famous for his rendition of "The Song of the Volga Boatmen." From there it was back to the Hotel Budapest for a late afternoon restorative.

He looked like a Volga boatman who has just learned that Stalin has purged his employer.

"Excelsior" (1950)

Wednesday's highlight was the afternoon's mini-golf tournament that followed an early morning visit to the museum-estate of writer Leo Tolstoy. The organizer of the tournament, Dmitry Pritykin (a member of The Russian Wodehouse Society), is ranked 10th in Russia's mini-golf federation. He and my husband Dirk, a golf aficionado, bonded over golf stories like twin souls. Dirk even changed into his plus fours, long socks, and argyle vest for the event. We were assigned to foursomes, given a putter each, and placed at staggered tee boxes to begin the tournament. I am very proud to announce that yours truly brought home the winning gold medal for the United States, besting second-place finisher Elena Kirillova and bronze medalist Masha. We ended the afternoon with a pleasant walk in the park of Kolomenskoye, a place Jelle remembered from a prior Moscow visit. It was there that some of us got a glimpse of a Russian Orthodox evening service in progress. It was a profoundly moving experience.

Thursday and Friday were given over to our day excursions. On Thursday we were bused to Serednikovo, the country mansion of the Russian Romantic poet and writer Mikhail Lermontov. Following a tour of the home and a box-lunch picnic overlooking the estate's pond, we performed a reading of "The Clicking of Cuthbert." Masha was a most excellent sport portraying Vladimir Brusiloff in fabulous fake zareba. Friday's trip to the museum-reserve of Anton Chekhov was my favorite. The house was cozy and warm, with his collection of seed and vegetable catalogs arrayed on his desk in a way that made one think he had just stepped into the kitchen for a cup of tea before returning to plan his early spring plantings. The gardens and orchards are still being cultivated and have an appealingly intentional disarray of annual flowers admixed with perennial herbs and ripening vegetables. Chekhov's little doctor's office was built just beyond the main house, and has its own physic garden. Friday evening several of us enjoyed the entertainment of the Moscow Circus.

The week ended on Saturday with a trip to the lands of the State Museum-Reserve Tsaritsyno, the center of which is Catherine the Great's palace, the largest in Moscow. We walked the extensive grounds and visited the museum, which contains the most complete collection of 20th-century Russian paintings.

... he emphasized the grievous pain it gave him to think that one of his flesh and blood should deliberately be embarking on a career which must inevitably lead sooner or later to the painting of Russian princesses lying on divans in the semi-nude with their arms round tame jaguars.

"The Story of Webster" (1932)

The tour came to an official end Saturday evening at a wonderful farewell dinner at the beautiful Café Pushkin. We toasted new friends and great memories, laughed, and shed a few tears. And we were presented with a unique commemorative of the week, a 2009 wall calendar with 12 months of original Wodehouse characters conceived and drawn by Raya Ivanovskaya, a Russian Wodehouse Society member.

On Sunday morning it was back to Domodedovo airport for an American Airlines flight to Chicago and a late-night connection to Cincinnati. For their hospitality, generosity of time, and energy, we must thank our Russian hosts: Masha, Dmitry, Anna, Natalya, Mikhail, Irina, and Lena. And thanks, too, to Jelle, Marie, Hubert, and Elena, our fellow travelers, for enduring our pitiful broken French and nonexistent Dutch and Russian tongues. We hope to see you all again!



The fearless leader of Moscow's Old Home Week, Masha Lebedeva, in one of her most famous disguises
(Photo by Susan Brokaw)

A Mulliner Menagerie: Nos. 2 & 3

BY KEN CLEVENGER

As you recall, in the Autumn issue of Plum Lines, the ever more eminent Mr. Clevenger introduced a series of articles about all that is reptilian, mammalian, or fowlish in the Mulliner universe. We continue this series with his study of the amphibious aspects of those stories.

No. 2 (Amphibians, Part I)

FOR THOSE of you with a small flutter on, at the S. P. it was 3-1 Dogs, even Cats, 8-5 Fowl, and 100-8 All Others as to the next “Mulliner Menagerie” topic. And if you had put your bob on Amphibians, you would have scooped a neat 12 shillings, if my math is correct.

The Amphibian section features frogs, toads, turtles, tortoise, and a single newt. We do not know the newt’s marital status. I mean to say, in the Mulliner stories, a newt only makes one appearance. This is perhaps understandable given the not inconsiderable role newts play in the affairs of Wodehouse’s Bertie and Jeeves in conjunction with Gussie Fink-Nottle. Perhaps the Master consciously reserved newts for Gussie.

Aptly, in “The Code of the Mulliners” a newt is instrumental in inducing Jane Todmarsh to break her engagement. It appears that her betrothed managed to drive Jane, himself, and a Pommery Seven into a duck pond. Thereafter, Jane “had given the young man his freedom within two seconds of spitting the first newt out of her mouth.” The phrase “the first newt” foreshadows other newts, but they are merely implied newts, and not to be countenanced in this strict menagerie.

Frogs, however, play a fine variety of roles. The best, perhaps, are the two occasions in which it is the insertion of a frog or a few frogs into some pompous person’s bed that the heroine (inevitably) proposes as a cure for stuffiness, as seen in “The Right Approach” and “The Passing of Ambrose.” On one occasion frogs appear as the fondled pet of boyhood (“Something Squishy”). On another memorable occasion, the frog, as food, appears in a quote from Mark Twain’s *A Tramp Abroad* (“The Awful Gladness of the Mater”). As an aside, and as a past chronicler of Wodehouse’s gastronomic chops, I must note that this 1879 Twain quote, as a literary device, is remarkably similar to several menus that Wodehouse has his characters imagine to restore that replete feeling after a period of enforced depletion.

Jumping back to frogs, my personal favorite frog in the (hors-d’) oeuvre is that frog in “Darkling (A

Threnody)” from “Came the Dawn.” I am a great admirer of Plum’s poetry and share with Roland Morseby Attwater in “Something Squishy” a “horror of crawling and slippery things.”

I had hoped to include turtles, tortoises, and toads in this episode but find the writing slow going and imbued already with sufficient warts, so I will close for now and leave you to await “Amphibians, Part II” with bated breath.

Fortunately, Ken had the next part ready before we went to press, so we proudly present the matched set! –Ed.

No. 3 (Amphibians, Part II)

THIS “MULLINER MENAGERIE” stuff is addictive. Sure, strong men and beautiful women say they can read it or leave it alone, so if you are reading these words, it is proof that you are either (a) a strong man, (b) a beautiful women, or (c) addicted. You are free to draw your own conclusion.

It is sad to say that given the glamour of newts and the joy of frogs, toads fail to cut a wide humorous swath. Toads are to frogs as the East Dulwich Wilberforces are to the Essex or Cumberland Wilberforces, or even the cadet branch of the family in Shropshire for that matter. Still, in the Mulliner stories a toad was once given as a wedding present. Suffice it to say that the gift giver in “The Right Approach” was substantially inebriated and in the company of his American publisher in London. But the thoughtful groom-to-be had the presence of mind to appreciate the toad’s possibilities if inserted into the butler’s bed. And, with frogs and “nameless creeping things,” toads feature in “Darkling (A Threnody)” that poetic paeon to pickles. In “Monkey Business” Wodehouse also finds room for a reference to that classic Kipling image of a beaten and broken man, cast down by fate’s cruel hand, the toad beneath the harrow.

Turtles are remarkably varied in Mulliner, at least in the food subcategory. Turtle soup and mock turtle soup are served up in “Another Christmas Carol” and “The Voice from the Past,” respectively. Clearheaded readers may suggest that mocking the turtle amounts to an unkindness to animals, very much against the tenets of this feature, but as a rationalist I hasten to point out that, once in the soup, to be mocked is moot. It seems

a significant challenge to make turtles romantic, but in “The Castaways” Wodehouse managed to make “fishing for turtles on the same mid-Pacific isle” an image of love’s fatal attraction. And, as Wodehouse had a staunch Anglican upbringing, the classical, if impenetrable, biblical line about the voice of the turtle is cited in “The Bishop’s Move.”



Tortoises appear in two capricious ways: as tortoiseshell glasses several times in the canon (technically as a lorgnette in “Strychnine in the Soup”) and as a tortoiseshell comb in “The Reverent Wooing of Archibald.”

In all, amphibians, as defined here, appear in 13 of the Mulliner stories. Only cartoon animals, animals with given names, rabbits, and gorillas have fewer appearances. Fowl, for future reference, appear most often. Only eight of the 43 stories are free of fowl. In the next episode of “Mulliner Menagerie” I intend to consider the least common, cartoon animals—if I can find my box of crayons.



In another moment she would be looking at him through her lorgnette: and England was littered with the shrivelled remains of curates at whom the lady bishopess had looked through her lorgnette. He had seen them wilt like salted slugs at the episcopal breakfast-table.

“Mulliner’s Buck-U-Uppo” (1926)

Convention 2011?! Hurrah, Pickering!

YES, INDEED! Who says that The Wodehouse Society doesn’t plan ahead? Not the Pickering Motor Club, certainly. This chapter has been awarded the honor of hosting the 2011 TWS Convention in Detroit. Dates are still being worked out and will probably be settled in a few weeks’ time. Stay tuned for more information in the coming months and for full details at the official announcement in St. Paul at the 2009 convention.

Providence, the Butler, and the Sleuth!

IN THE AUTUMN issue of *Plum Lines*, John Dawson revealed his discovery of a previously unknown illustrated short story by P. G. Wodehouse entitled “Providence and the Butler.” John has now located the entire story, and he is very excited to let you know this exists. While we do not yet have explicit approval to print the story in its entirety, we’ll be working in that direction. Stay tuned!

Apples and Plums

RENEE WELLMAN writes that, as she was browsing the new applications available for her iPhone, voila! There was a listing of books, including (so far) *A Damsel in Distress*, *Piccadilly Jim*, *The Intrusion of Jimmy*, and several others. Renee says, “I guess I’d best get the new 2.0 software for my phone, just so I can have a Plum on hand at all times!”

Vladimir Brusiloff proceeded to sum up.

“No novelists any good except me. Sovietski—yah! Nastikoff—bah! I spit me of zem all. No novelists anywhere any good except me. P. G. Wodehouse and Tolstoi not bad. Not good, but not bad. No novelists any good except me.”

And, having uttered this dictum, he removed a slab of cake from a near-by plate, steered it through the jungle, and began to champ.

“The Clicking of Cuthbert” (1921)

Wodehouse for the Birds: A Quiz

BY WILLIAM (TOM) THOMAS

A bit of fun from Tom Thomas. Answers on page 22.

EITHER P. G. WODEHOUSE liked birds, or he enjoyed fooling his readers into believing he did. As a master plot innovator and word artist, he expertly deployed birds while setting scenes in diverse landscapes. We know that all is well if birds are singing their anthems of joy, chirping their madrigals, offering their evensongs, stalking their morning worms, or twittering and rustling in the ivy. Indeed, when they put their minds to it, choruses of birds on wedding days trill Mendelssohn's "Wedding Song."

But birds can also set a somber tone, as when they abruptly stop singing; when vultures visit the breasts of aggrieved Promethean hosts; or when ravens, magpies, and owls serve as omens of death, misfortune, and doom. We also meet birds not at their prime, as when stuffed and on display in London homes, rural cottages, castle libraries, and country estates. Where better for Rupert Psmith to hide Lady Constance's stolen necklace in *Leave It to Psmith* than inside a stuffed bird in the gamekeeper's cottage?

Wodehouse employed more than 60 avian similes and metaphors, from the commonplace (chicken feed, mad as a wet hen, wild goose chase, like a duck to water) to the more interesting (lark on the wing, snipe-like flight, blue-bird asleep at the switch, like a hawk scattering doves). And he used bird names for dozens of his creations, including race horses and ships, weekly papers and scholarly tomes, nicknames and pen names, novels and short stories, and country homes and public houses (oh, so many of these). We shouldn't overlook the multipurpose "Lord love a duck" that sprang more than 70 times from the lips of 25 characters, with George, sixth Viscount Uffenham, holding the record at 35 exclamations.

Here's a quiz that might enhance appreciation of Wodehouse's feathered interests. Unfortunately, we can't answer every question that arises in the canon. Albert Peasmarch's noncopyrighted "Cor lumme, stone the crows" raises two that we, like Lord Ickenham in *Cocktail Time*, might have asked: "What crows? And why stone them?"

1. Which avian interest do these persons share: Marcella Tyrrwhitt, Ukridge's aunt Julie, chauffeur Bolt's wife, and Augustus Keggs?



- (a) Caring for a pet canary
- (b) Collecting birds' eggs
- (c) Raising chickens for domestic consumption
- (d) Subscribing to Mammoth Publishing Company's *Our Feathered Chums*
- (e) Watching ducks on the Serpentine

2. In retaliation for cabinet minister A. B. Filmore, a guest at Agatha Gregson's country house in Woollam Chersey, reporting that he had been caught smoking, her son Thomas maroons Filmore on an island in the estate's lake. Agatha notices that Filmore is missing and sends Bertie Wooster to find him, and soon the two are held hostage atop a summerhouse on the island by one of a nesting pair of birds that dislike being disturbed. Once again, Jeeves comes to the rescue in "Jeeves and the Impending Doom."

Lord Ickenham also learns that birds on island retreats value their privacy when he tries to bury a letter revealing the author of that riveting novel *Cocktail Time* on an island in the lake at Sir Raymond Bastable's Hammer Hall. A bird he encounters there unceremoniously ushers him back to his boat before he can bury it. Bastable follows Ickenham to the island and experiences the same bird's opinion of visitors by having to swim to shore.

Which temperamental bird gets to know Filmore, and which one becomes familiar with Ickenham?

- (a) corncrake
- (b) duck
- (c) goose
- (d) swan
- (e) vulture

3. Why does Ronnie Fish think disparagingly of Percy Pilbeam as a “cuckoo in the nest” when *Summer Lightning* brings them together in Mario’s restaurant? Dolly and Soapy Malloy use the same expression to describe Jeff Miller in *Money in the Bank*, and Bill Oakshott applies it to his uncle, Sir Aylmer Bostock, in *Uncle Dynamite*.

4. Madeline Bassett, George Mulliner, Galahad Threepwood, and George Uffenham encounter at different times, and with differing results, the crossword puzzle clue “Australian bird” with a three-letter name. This bird is closely related to the one with which Sir Redvers Branksome refuses to be confused in *Money for Nothing*, when his daughter extols the virtues of iron-rich spinach: “Are you under the impression that I [should] browse on iron [and] tuck away a few doorknobs [while I’m at it]?” Madeline, George, and Gally correctly name the bird. Can you?

5. After a mysterious female tells Tubby Vanringham she will come out of hiding along the Walsingford Road when he announces his arrival by imitating a specific bird, Tubby asks the Walsingford Hall butler if he happens to know that bird’s call. Pollen responds, “Tolic-gow-gow, tolic-joey-fair, tolic-hickey-gee, tolic-equay-quake, tuc-tuc-whizzie, tuc-ruc-joey, equay-quake-a-weet, tuc-tuc-wheet.” Tubby makes a feeble attempt to comply with her instructions in *Summer Moonshine*. What bird did she tell him to imitate?

6. Wodehouse’s untitled first story, written in 1888 at age seven, is a tribute of fewer than 100 words to a bird whose song enralls and delights other woodland creatures. Wodehouse in later years wrote of this bird bubbling and trilling, chanting blithely, singing evensong, adding to the landscape’s appeal, and being imitated on the stage. Can you name this common bird?

7. Archibald Mulliner is widely considered to be London’s best imitator of a particular bird in “The Reverent Wooing of Archibald.” He’s not to be mistaken for Wilmot Mulliner, who in “The Nodder” comes to Mabel Potter’s defense at a Hollywood movie studio on the correct enunciation of a cuckoo’s call. Can you name this bird?

- (a) cushat dove
- (b) hen
- (c) skylark
- (d) starling
- (e) whippoorwill
- (f) wood pigeon

8. In *Money for Nothing*, at about dawn on a fine July day, Lester Carmody is stranded on a second-story windowsill at his family’s Rudge Hall when his ladder falls as he is faking a burglary in a scheme concocted by Soapy and Dolly Molloy. While there, he is visited by birds of eight species, including a curl bunting, a Dartford warbler, a jackdaw, and a spotted flycatcher, before his nephew Hugo comes along and replaces the ladder. Thinking quickly, Carmody says he thought he had seen a bird’s nest under an eave and wanted to investigate. Hugo understands him to say he had seen that bird nesting, leading to an animated discussion in which Hugo points out that those birds nest in April, not in July, and Carmody repeats his assertion of seeing only a nest. This leads Hugo to confide in others that his uncle is delusional. What bird do they have in mind?

9. Two supercilious swans grace the attractive ornamental water at Mulberry Grove in Valley Fields. Their names, please!

- (a) Cassandra & Cassanova
- (b) Daphnis & Chloe
- (c) Edith & Gwen
- (d) Egbert & Percy
- (e) Tristan & Isolde

10. Which of these gentlemen is an amateur ornithologist?

- (a) Orlo Porter, Bertie Wooster’s acquaintance at Oxford
- (b) Howard Saxby, literary agent
- (c) George, sixth Viscount Uffenham
- (d) Alexander Worple, magnate of the jute business



11. Wodehouse attributed avian characteristics to many of his characters, ranging from hawklike faces to pigeon-toed feet. Agatha Gregson at times resembles an eagle, an owl, and a vulture, and a disconcerted Lord Emsworth could pass as a stuffed parrot leaking sawdust. Mr. Mulliner's second cousin's wife and Lord Bastable's sister share the habit of cocking their heads to one side like a canary and asking "What?" when spoken to. Wodehouse claimed that individuals in one profession are inclined to resemble certain birds, specifically naming the cassowary, duck, owl, parrot, ptarmigan, sparrow, and vulture. Whom did he have in mind?

- (a) French casino owners
- (b) Hollywood producers
- (c) London solicitors
- (d) Market Blandings innkeepers
- (e) New York financiers

12. What bird does Herbert "Billy" Graham in *The Cat-Nappers*, George Cyril Wellbeloved in *Service with a Smile*, and Scopes in *The Pothunters* favor as quarry? At a higher social level, French chef Anatole is said in *The Code of the Woosters* to be at his incomparable best with this bird during hunting season in England.

- (a) duck
- (b) guinea-hen
- (c) partridge
- (d) pheasant
- (e) prairie hen
- (f) quail
- (g) turkey
- (h) woodcock

13. What sobriquet does Bertie Wooster bestow on each of these giants of literature: Byron, Lucretius, Shakespeare, Tennyson, and Tolstoy? Wodehouse's characters apply variations of this term at least 410 times under a wealth of circumstances to living, dead, or fictional persons, with its connotation ranging from highly flattering to deeply pejorative.

14. In *A Pelican at Blandings*, which bird does Galahad Threepwood plan to imitate as the signal for Johnny Halliday to meet at the Empress's sty to exchange fake and real paintings of a reclining nude? This is the same species that Lord Ickenham plans to imitate in *Cocktail Time* to let Albert Peasemarch know he is outside his window in Hammer Lodge at midnight to deliver "a secret government document," which is the same letter Ickenham wants to bury in question 2 above.

15. Among them, Sebastian Beach, Lord Brancaster, Lady Lakenheath, Jerry Moore, and Mr. Roddis of the Cedars own four parrots. Which person has a different kind of bird, and what is it?



P. G. Wodehouse: The Dulwich Factor

BY MARGARET SLYTHE

This is an abbreviated version of the paper that Margaret, the former Head of Library and Archives at Dulwich College, delivered at the Divine Providence convention.

I WANT TO tell you about the Dulwich of Plum's day so that you can understand a little of what it meant to him. The school was founded by Elizabethan actor Edward Alleyn in 1619, which is why Dulwich boys are called Alleynians, and was restructured as the Dulwich College Foundation, which opened to just 68 boys in 1858. There were 600 by the time Plum arrived in 1894.

We start with the extraordinary man who was Master of Dulwich from 1885 to 1914, Arthur Herman Gilkes. By the time Plum arrived, Gilkes had turned Dulwich into one of the most admired schools in England. As headmaster, he steered his charges into following his own exceptional values: "Education is to supply a boy with other and better things to think of than himself—and to fit his mind properly to appreciate them" and "a teacher's real success is gained by overcoming not ignorance so much as selfishness." He always took one form each year as well as teaching the Upper Classics side. His most lasting legacy was considered to be the individual seminars he held on world literature, assigning the boys to write essays which they read aloud to him the next week. "Akin to suicide" Plum called it at first, but he came to value it highly. Gilkes was a good man with a horror of conceit in all forms and would not tolerate swearing; he hated slang and smoking.



Dulwich College

Dulwich was a rich source of copy for Wodehouse—the boarding rituals, the fortnightly letters home, the writing of the weekly essay and then translating it into other languages. Upon Gilkes's arrival at Dulwich, he trained 30 prefects to serve the school, and with his guidance, he expected them to mete out just punishment. His most-remembered advice to prefects was: "Order them about, they like it, they like it!" If parents were asked to remove a boy, it was only because of bad behavior over a long period and when Gilkes had tried every other remedy.

The boys saw more of him than any Master before or since. He did all he could to lessen the gap between the dull boy and the most brilliant, encouraging everyone. At prize-givings, so generous was his praise for the unsuccessful, it was often difficult to know who had won the prizes.

By 1897 there were 700 boys, of whom almost half were boarders, and it was the boarders who spent half their lives on the pitches and filled most of the teams. No games were compulsory, and they were run by captains of teams, of which there were dozens. Staff intervened only by invitation.

Many of you will have seen the photograph of the Dulwich College playing fields, taken on Founder's Day in 1895, principally because 14 games of cricket were in progress. On each Founder's Day, Gilkes would stride out in top hat and tails, hand his umbrella to a bystander, and spend a few minutes umpiring each and every game. He was a fine cricketer and, with his height, 250 lbs., and long grey beard, an awesome presence. He made Founder's Day an event never to be forgotten. No one forgot his Great Hall assemblies either.

So—Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, age 12½, in grey-flannel bags [trousers], black blazer, and blue-and-black striped cap, henceforth known as Wodehouse minor, was delivered to the school on an April morning in 1894. The School Sergeant Major escorted him and three other new boys to a classroom where they were seated by a master who then set them a piece of Latin prose. As they looked nervously at it, in came Gilkes

in cap and gown; he spoke softly to the master in charge—"and we knew that we very much wanted to pass the examination," as one of those new boys wrote. Plum would have sat the examination for entry to the College at his prep school; this Latin text was to place him in a suitable set. And we know how well he did that morning by the form he joined; they were all older than him by some months. Plum's brother Armine, older by two years and a truly outstanding classics scholar, had been at the College for over two years and would not have been too pleased to discover Plum in a form just one below.

The boarding houses were all full when Plum arrived, and he was given lodgings with one of the masters, H. V. Doulton, Principal of Music, Armine's piano teacher and opening bat in the staff cricket XI. After a few weeks' lodging with Doulton, Plum moved into Ivyholme, one of two Middle School houses where Armine was a boarder. When Armine moved to an Upper School boarding house, Plum blossomed, both in the classroom and on the sports field, though his selection to the first cricket XI was delayed for two years; one Wodehouse was enough on any team, he was told. When Plum moved into Elm Lawn, an Upper School house and now the Master's home, he was just short of his 16th birthday and as contented as any schoolboy can be. At Elm Lawn each boy shared a bedroom with one or no more than three boys—with open fires in winter, a kettle for tea or cocoa, a toasting fork, a twice-daily delivery of bread, milk, and what the boys called "spreads" such as dripping, meat extracts, or honey. In the morning there was porridge and bacon, with eggs on Sundays. There was the Buttery in the Centre Block for milk and jam or chocolate "splits" during morning break, and "warm" cake for afternoon tea; and there was a meat meal and often sponge or suet puddings with jam or syrup, served at long trestle tables in the Great Hall at 6 p.m.; this was commenced with Grace, always in Latin. There is still something special about several hundred boys standing silent before the indescribable din of them all sitting down to eat.

Plum—now known as Podge to his friends—shared a bedroom with Bill Townend in the attic of Elm Lawn for four terms. They used the basement study room to do their prep. [homework] with Plum working with his back to the window, as he told us, "to eliminate distractions." It is more likely that his eyesight was already causing him problems. In Plum's day, boys with serious illnesses such as diphtheria or scarlet fever were taken to the Sanatorium, while the more common mumps and measles were treated in the sick bay of the boarding houses. It comes as no surprise

to hear that Plum visited the house sick bay inmates with treats and constant updates on games results, and he read to the bedridden. He certainly had both mumps and measles very badly in his mid-teens and claimed to have mumps again equally seriously while he was working at the Bank. He never mentioned the connection between these illnesses and impotence, but he did acknowledge his relief that he still had his sight and was not profoundly deaf. When you read the reports of his sporting achievements in the *Alleynian*, the school magazine, one can only wonder—how did he see the cricket ball he was facing? How did he box so competently? Thank heavens he didn't attempt to shoot.

So how did Gilkes and Plum connect? While Armine modeled himself on his father, Gilkes was genuinely concerned to discover that Wodehouse minor seemed to be of little interest to either parent—and that neither brother had any knowledge of how Peveril, the eldest of the Wodehouse boys, was faring at the school in Guernsey they had all attended. The Master “took up” Plum in ways he might not have welcomed. For instance, Gilkes had established the Dulwich College Mission in the Walworth Road, a club for deprived South East London boys, and nominated Plum as a monitor to raise and collect funds for it. Each Sunday afternoon, Gilkes would cycle to the Mission to teach the boys basic learning and social skills, or if he had company—and he often had Plum with him—push his bike each way. Plum asked to cycle, too, but his deteriorating eyesight was of concern to Gilkes. The best thing about the Mission for Plum was getting into the boxing ring and teaching what he himself had been taught.

Gilkes also monitored Plum's academic seesaw. Why did his place in class lurch from 4th to 25th so readily? Gilkes knew that he must send boys to university properly prepared. We know from Bill Townend that Plum talked on any and every subject for hours, then dashed off his prep. But as Plum's responsibilities in the school grew, Gilkes knew he could trust him when high jinks went on in Elm Lawn or classroom, to make sure things did not get out of hand, and that no one was hurt.

Plum was proud of Dulwich, and he was, as Gilkes wrote in his final report, “an extremely useful boy around the school”; Bill Townend called him “one of the most important boys in the school.” School is a place of structure and opportunities—Wodehouse understood this immediately and thrived. And the house system, living with boys both older and younger, suited him. It was, as he said, the closest he got to a normal family.

Now we come to Plum not going to Oxford. We know that Gilkes told him that he was of scholarship

material but needed to do some serious work. And work he did for a scholarship at Oriel, Oxford, to a program closely choreographed by Gilkes. Precise 3,000-word essays, set texts, individual interpretations—all were part of the weekly session in the Master's study. Raymond Chandler, A. E. W. Mason and C. S. Forester also benefited from Gilkes's individual focus.

As the examination approached, Ernest Wodehouse wrote to say that his son would not be going to university. Gilkes would certainly have invited him to discuss this alarming turn of events. He knew that a scholarship came with tuition, full board, books, and stationery; in addition, both Armine and Plum had won Dulwich scholarships of £10 a year, and this continued through university. This at a time when the salary of an assistant master was £150 per year and that allowed the employment of domestic help.

What is known is that Ernest did not come but instead sent Armine with the stark message: Their father was concerned about his diminishing pension and with four sons to bring up, another son at university was out of reach.

Did Armine, possibly Corpus Christi's ablest classical scholar ever, not wish for the renewed distraction of a younger brother at Oxford, even at another college? Possible, but highly unlikely. That Peveril, the eldest, and Richard, the youngest, might still need substantial support? Almost certainly. But the Oxford scholarship would have made Plum self-sufficient. And once he was at the bank, his father matched his salary with an allowance of £80 a year. One thing is certain—Plum never recovered from this cruel decision; it was right up there in the horror stakes with the wartime broadcasts and Leonora's death.

We know that Plum declared that he would not have become a writer had he gone to Oxford. I don't believe that. He would always have written, but he would certainly have broadened his range.

I will end with the Centenary in 1981. At my job interview, the then Chairman of Governors, Lord Wolfenden, said, “Dulwich needs to make reparation to PGW for wavering in their support of him when it was most needed.” In fact, I soon discovered that the school had behaved better in response to the wartime broadcasts than had been supposed. Honors boards bearing PGW's name had been carefully stored away and in due course replaced. His much-read autographed books were removed from library shelves and placed in brown paper covers in the archive. And after the first few stunned weeks, the College had acted, through a number of Old Alleynians (OAs) on both sides of the Atlantic, as a catalyst for public support. Dulwich boys



The Dulwich crest

defenders who interpreted this as collaboration, albeit a manipulated one.

Before the broadcasts, Plum's wretched experiences as an internee and his stoical qualities had made him a hero to his Dulwich friends; OAs were concerned for him and proud of him. Now he had to convince them to stay with him; and during the postwar years, they mostly did stay with him. The great affection and loyalty Plum had shown to the school, and especially to the cricket and rugger teams, was not forgotten; those on the touch-line missed him—as did readers of the *Alleynian* who enjoyed his amusing contributions.

The Pierpont Morgan Wodehouse Centenary exhibition in New York in 1981 was followed by one at the National Theatre in London. While the then Master of Dulwich College, David Emms, and I were at the London preview, reading the first page of Plum's Account Book, his Herbert Jenkins publisher, Derek Grimsdick, said quietly, "That is among some things which I should like to hand to Dulwich College." When it seemed clear that Plum would never return to London, Grimsdick had asked him what he should do with the filing cabinet full of his papers. "Take it home with you," said Plum. Grimsdick had thought little of these treasures until Jimmy Heineman approached him for exhibits. Derek Grimsdick was by then terminally ill. David Emms invited him to lunch at Dulwich, and in a quiet ceremony, Grimsdick handed over the precious account book, hundreds of Townend letters, typed manuscripts, and much else. Already in the archive were the many editions of PGW's full-length stories which his U.K. publishers have sent to the College since *The Pothunters* of 1902. We had truly become the Wodehouse Library.

Not only did I have Derek Grimsdick to ask about Plum but also two of the oldest OAs, Jack Le Tall and Bill Grey. Both officers in World War I, they were Plum's first defense over his not signing up for combat in 1914. His eyesight would have made active service impossible, they firmly stated.

are reared on a code of Fate—learn to take whatever life throws at you. But the struggle was not helped by Plum's letter to the *Alleynian* in summer 1945. Desperate to make amends to his Alma Mater, it is an uncomfortable reminder of Plum's poor judgment of his situation: "But I see now, I was tricked into these talks" was a bitter blow to his friends and

Ethel and her grandson, Edward Cazalet, acknowledged Plum's love of the school with generosity, providing two Upper School scholarships—one in PGW's name and one in that of Lady Wodehouse—and a complete refurbishment of the Library and Archive. The desk and contents of Plum's Remsenburg study had been shipped to Dulwich in 1977 and installed in the school library. For the Centenary year, Madame Tussauds loaned the PGW waxwork of which he was so proud, and I placed him in his memorial study, seated in front of his favorite typewriter, with specs and pipe in hand. Imagine my astonishment when I heard his old friends Jack Le Tall and Bill Grey having a chat with him: "Well Plum, you and we have seen a lot; are you back with us now?" It was affectionate and very moving.

Finally, in December 1981, Edward Cazalet formally opened the Wodehouse Library at Dulwich College, and also, if I may say so, the best Wodehouse exhibition ever. We were treated to an amazingly mature performance of *Jeeves*, rewritten for the boys by Andrew Lloyd Webber. Afterward, Edward said, "Well we've done it, it will all quieten down now." Largely due to this wonderful society, it hasn't.



Plum at Dulwich

Important Announcement: *Plum Lines* Schedule Change

IN THE INTEREST of providing *Plum Lines* on a schedule different from that of *Wooster Sauce* (the quarterly publication of the U.K. society), we've decided to move *PL* a couple weeks earlier. **Contributors, columnists, and Chapters Corner scribes, this means you'll need to send the Spring 2009 articles by February 1.** While this first time there will be inconvenience and a cramped schedule, the end result will be a good one, not only for the readers of both journals, but for the breathless editors, who often provide assistance or advice to each other across the pond.

Chapters Corner

IT'S FUN BEING with other fans and reading about what others are doing. So please use this column to tell the Wodehouse world about your chapter's activities. Representatives of chapters, please send all info to the editor, Gary Hall (see back page). If you're not a member of a local chapter but would like to attend a meeting or become a member, you may get in touch with the contact person listed.

Anglers' Rest

(Seattle and vicinity)
Contact: Susan Collicott
Phone:
E-mail:



Birmingham Banjolele Band

(Birmingham, Alabama, and vicinity)
Contact: Caralyn Campbell
Phone:
E-mail:



Blandings Castle Chapter

(Greater San Francisco Bay area)
Contact: Ed and Missy Ratcliffe
Phone:
E-mail:



The Broadway Special

(New York City and vicinity)
Contact: Amy Plofker
Phone:
E-mail:



WHEN OCTOBER rolls around, if you belong to a coterie like the Broadway Special, you gather with your chums in places like The Players or Porter's (named for Cole Porter) to celebrate PGW's nativity. One year it occurs to you that you could invite your chums over to your place for a really bang-up bash, and, since you have a piano, you could also invite a particularly amiable musician along to coax the throng into warbling favorites from the standard songbook along with "Happy Birthday, Plum." Oh, and your son-in-law is a renowned chef who owns three restaurants and can cater a groaning board that browsers will describe as Anatolian. This was the case on October 19 when Luceil Carroll invited the Special to her glamorous Fifth Avenue apartment overlooking an autumnal Central Park, and her friend pianist Lennie

Metcalf shared his encyclopedic knowledge of show tunes and British music hall and Wodehousean ditties. In these lovely surroundings, books were not confined to the library but were strewn temptingly on window seats and coffee tables, art was artfully displayed above sofas and mantels, and gleaming silver was laid out on polished mahogany. A barman greeted each of us with cocktails and champagne and continually shimmered about the room topping off glasses and offering hors d'oeuvres as Special members chatted and sang. This was indeed an elegant event, and the consensus of the fortunate guests was that Luceil, Lennie, and chef Luca should be prevailed upon to make this very merry Plum birthday a cast-iron annual event. We certainly could get used to this style of gracious living as guests of a very stylish lady, Luceil Carroll.



Lennie Metcalf tickles the keys. (Photo by Phillip Shreffler)

Capital! Capital!

(Washington, D.C., and vicinity)
Contact: Jeff Peterson
Phone:
E-mail:



ON SUNDAY, September 21, a large group of Capital! Capital! members met at a Washington, D.C., restaurant for an evening of dining and friendship with fellow Wodehouse aficionados. The presenter for the evening was Brad Foss, who is now retired after 28 years with IBM. Most of his career was focused on the large mainframe computers in Europe and Asia, including two assignments in Paris. (Not bad.) He challenged the chapter with questions about odd words, slang, and antique references from Wodehouse's books, familiar 80 years ago but unusual today. For example, see if you can explain the following words, names, and expressions: gudgeon, gorblimey, bimbo, of the first water, Harry

Lauder. (For answers to our little quiz, see page 17.) Brad also asked chapter members to compete by quoting a favorite phrase from a Wodehouse publication. The winner walked home with the prize of a bottle of Veuve Clicquot champagne. (Not bad, either.) CapCap met again on Sunday, November 16, to hear a presentation by former CapCap member Ken Clevenger on the characters “Wooster and Wimsey,” the latter, of course, being Dorothy L. Sayers’s bon vivant fictional detective, Lord Peter Wimsey.

Capital F.O.R.M.

(Friends Of Ralston McTodd—Ottawa and vicinity)

Contact: Megan Carton

Phone:

E-mail:



Chapter One

(Greater Philadelphia area)

Contact: Susan Cohen

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:



BIG SMELL, not pig smell. We usually meet in a small private room but this time were forced to meet in the restaurant’s main dining room because there was a bad smell permeating the private room. We were deeply relieved that the smell was there before we arrived because we don’t want to be known throughout Philadelphia as the Black Berkshire Pig Chapter of The Wodehouse Society.

Our members were urged to go to the Philadelphia Zoo on Zoo Adoption Day. After all, we members of Chapter One are the proud adoptive parents of the Zoo’s newts. And we don’t let the parents of big animals push us around. A Mandarin newt is as good as anybody else and twice as interesting.

This meeting was chock full of activities. Andrea Jacobsen, Sweetie to you, is an ardent baseball fan who compiled a Wodehouse baseball quiz, mixing players who sound like Wodehouse characters with Wodehouse characters who sound like players. We had to figure out which was which. For years John Baesch and Evelyn Herzog have given us funny and fascinating articles on Wodehouse from the British press. This summer the article-sending reached an absolute epiphany, and Dan Cohen went through the entire summer’s treasure trove, then gave John and Evelyn a copy of *Pigs Have Wings* as a grateful thank-you from Chapter One.

In honor of the spectacle in China last August, we held our own Wodehousean Olympics. Everyone

brought a sports quote from the master. These quotes were clever, impish, and frequently surprising. Denise Nordheimer made some money for Rupert Steggles by taking third place in a Fourth of July Egg Toss. In the end, everyone in Chapter One was a winner. Dan found several faux gold and silver medals on patriotic ribbons at the local craft shop. Four bucks for the whole lot, but they looked smashing around the necks of Olympic champion Wodehouse quoters and that’s what counts. Our next meeting was to be November 9.

The Chicago Accident Syndicate

(Chicago and thereabouts)

Contact: Daniel & Tina Garrison

Phone:

E-mail:



IN JULY 2008, the Syndicate held a meeting at which they invited Daniel Glazer to read his entry for the Brotherly Love Sermon contest at the 2007 Divine Providence convention. Immortalized in the picture below, you can see Dan and Tina Garrison, Susan Diamone, Allan Devitt, and Gail Wagner-Miller (photo by Katherine Lewis, the esteemed president of the chapter). The Syndicate is something of a traveling PGW-themed road show, meeting at the homes of different members or even at the English Garden at Chicago’s Botanical Gardens. Our most recent meeting was December 6 at a local Irish pub.



Daniel Glazer reads to the local Accident Syndicate flock.

The Clients of Adrian Mulliner

(For enthusiasts of both PGW and Sherlock Holmes)

Contact: Marilyn MacGregor

Phone:



The Drone Rangers
 (Houston and vicinity)
 Contact: Toni Oliver
 Phone:
 E-mail:



The Flying Pigs
 (Cincinnati area and elsewhere)
 Contact: Susan Brokaw
 Phone:
 E-mail:



The Mottled Oyster Club / Jellied Eels
 (San Antonio and South Texas)
 Contact: Lynette Poss
 Phone:
 E-mail:



WELL, THE BIG DAY has come and gone, ever to live in the annals of the Texas chapters of The Wodehouse Society. Saturday, October 25, dawned auspiciously with a temperate reading on the old thermometer, a sunny sky, and a gentle breeze stirring the air.

At last 2:30 P.M. arrived, and with it, the roadster containing Toni, Sylvia, and Susan from Houston. The Mighty Oysters evidently had the male contingent of the Drone Rangers quivering in their ostrich boots, as we were able to welcome only three stalwart Rangers, all of them members of the fairer sex. But I must say they represented their group most nobly. Witness the photo on page 15, showing Toni and Sylvia gloating with their first and third prizes from the Wodehouse Knowledge Competition. Jan, an Oyster, proudly represents the Mottled folk with her red ribbon, while Zoila displays proof of her prowess with Egg and Spoon, and Alan, Robert, and Clark show off authentic Wodehouse Cricket patches, thanks to the generosity and foresight of Ephraim H. Gadsby III.

Due to careful vigilance on the part of the Oysters, and perhaps also to the limited number of Rangers present, no Oyster was tripped, (wo)man-handled, fed extra rations or libations, or otherwise nobbled in the Mixed Members Open Egg-and-Spoon Race. Bryan undoubtedly came in first, but Zoila, having had to wait her turn, was the person still making her rounds after the others had retired from the field, so the medal was awarded to the "last standing." In the photo on this page, Susan, with egg in spoon firmly gripped, tries to hustle by our Liz, but she can't quite make it around the pith helmet. Clark and Robert won their patches by setting up the cricket game. (Clark is a Plummy, and

Robert represents the San Antonio Cricket League, who lent us equipment and support.) Toni also won a patch by her valor in showing up on the field (or pitch, or whatever), and Alan shone as the best sport for remaining to enjoy the rest of the festivities despite injuries sustained in the heat of battle. "All I remember is a blur of pink, before I fell to the ground in agony," Alan is reported as saying. (Hmmm. . . . Is there not a penalty for roughing the batter?) The Mottled Oyster won the cricket match, by the way, once Toni retired to the tea tent, where Liz, Janet, Zoila, Jan, and I awaited to serve our treats of cucumber sandwiches, watercress sandwiches (thank you, Clare!), shortbread, and home-made scones (thanks Liz and Janet!), among other delights—on plum-colored paper plates, of course.



*Did you ever see a Drone Spooning? Or an Oyster Egging? Leading, from left: Susan Garrett, Liz Davenport. Behind, left to right: Bryan Lilius, Jan Ford
 (Photo by Lynette Goss)*

The Mothers' Sack Race was called for lack of participants, and the game of Persian Monarchs had to be canceled when no one had change for my million-dollar bill. I distinctly remember that Susan even went so far as to impugn its authenticity! (When we Oysters travel abroad, we do like to behave with some civility toward our hosts, I'd just like to point out.) Also on the pitch that day were Clare, Randy, Ephraim, Bryan, and grandsons Nathan and Jacob, with Grandma Janet to cheer the whole gang on. Thanks to the plum-colored clappers provided by Liz, raucous applause could be heard far and wide.

We did so enjoy meeting Toni, Susan, and Sylvia and do not for one minute begrudge them the disproportionate taking of our prizes, no matter how much they may have smirked in ill-disguised disdain. In 2010, Texas History shall be revisited (2009 being a convention year), perhaps in Houston, with a nice game

of croquet? Or perhaps the Men's and Ladies' Mixed Animal Potato Race might be an enjoyable contest for us all. That is a challenge, Drone Rangers! Not to mix metaphors, don't you know, but the gauntlet has been thrown down, and the ball is in your court.



Oysters and Drones show off their prizes! Standing, from left: Jan Ford, Sylvia Bernicchi, Zoila Valentino. Seated, from left: Clark Adams, Toni Oliver, Alan Ashworth, Robert Johnson
(Photo by Lynette Goss)

The New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS)
(Boston and New England)
Contact: David Landman
Phone:
E-mail:

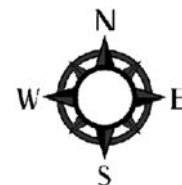


THE EARLY SUMMER meeting of the New England Wodehouse Thingummy Society (NEWTS) was held at the home of president emeritus Anne Cotton. In attendance were four members of the Canine Auxiliary: Anne's two prize flat-coated retrievers [see *Plum Lines* 29.1 (Spring 2008) p. 7], Emma and Merlin; Lynn Vesley-Gross's mountainous Bernese mountain dog, Otto; and a miniature something that looked like a detached moustache looking for its upper lip, but who, by exerting considerable personality, was acclaimed spokesperson for the pack. A formal introduction was sadly omitted, and your correspondent was thus barred by social propriety from inquiring the charmer's name or breed.

Gripping entertainment was provided by Rosemary and David Nolan, who gave a dramatic reading of an Eliza story by Barry Pain. An unexpected sensation was a display of glamour photos of Anne Cotton as a "super" in a Metropolitan Opera performance of *Die Fledermaus*. "Oh, you kid!" about sums it up.

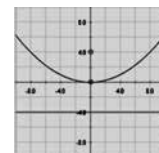
An autumn meeting at the home of Indumathi and Jagannathan Ravi featured savory Indian cuisine and a video of SNL's "take" on Sarah Palin. The NEWTS began a reading of Plum's play *Leave It to Psmith*.

The Northwodes
(St. Paul, Minneapolis, and vicinity)
Contact: Kristine Fowler
Phone:
E-mail:



THE NORTHWODES took a break from convention planning for our annual Birthday Toast to Wodehouse on October 15 (natch). Several new members joined old regulars at the Happy Gnome in St. Paul for chatting over the statutory browsing and sluicing. Amazing coincidences were discovered (e.g., Harold Hughesdon is a deacon at Dave Fritz's church), and at least one item from the Great Northwodes Lending Library was passed directly from returner to new borrower. A holiday dinner will be next on our social agenda; everybody knows what's on our business agenda.

The Pale Parabolites
(Toronto and vicinity)
Contact: Peter M. Nixon
E-mail:



THE PALE PARABOLITES . . . those who are seeking the Pale Parabola of Joy . . . whatever that may be. The Pale Parabolites' motto is *nil admirari*. Like the Empress of Blandings, the Pale Parabolites take things as they come and marvel at nothing.

The Pelikan Club
(Kansas City and vicinity)
Contact: Sallie Hobbs
E-mail:



The Perfecto-Zizzbaum Motion Picture Corporation
(Los Angeles and vicinity)
Contact: Karen Shotting
Phone: 661-263-8231
E-mail:



OUR LOS ANGELES chapter celebrated its eighth anniversary in June of this year with tea at the Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, notable for excellent browsing and sluicing and its collection of old

silver, including a cow creamer. We were fortunate to have as our guests two members of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK) from Wellington, England.

We have been experimenting with different formats and times for our meetings, which are on the second Sunday of each month. At the July and September meetings we viewed a couple of episodes of the *Wodehouse Playhouse*, *A Bit of Fry & Laurie*, and most of *Thank You, Jeeves* (with David Niven and Arthur Treacher). We returned to our reading format in October and November. Our annual holiday tea, on December 14, is scheduled for 12:30 P.M., and we will be returning to the Huntington for it. For news regarding the chapter's activities, contact Karen Shotting or sign on to our Yahoo group, PZMPCO, the Perfecto Zizzbaum Motion Picture Company (very low traffic).

PGWinWNY

(Buffalo, New York, and vicinity)

Contact: Laura Loehr

E-mail:



WHAT HO, Fellow Wodehouse Fans! Six Wodehouse admirers got together for our inaugural lunch on October 18 to salute PGW in WNY (western New York). We had a "silver" cow creamer centerpiece and everyone received a replica of the Empress of Blandings complete with pig pen! Luckily, no one threw rolls so we can return to that restaurant in the future. Those in attendance discussed how they became interested in Wodehouse and what they particularly liked about him. It was noted that because all of his writing is of a comic nature, his wonderful style is sometime overlooked. Other items discussed included the many lyrics PGW has written for popular songs; the Bertie and Jeeves TV series; the very large number of books, plays, and movies Plum wrote or cowrote; the upcoming Wodehouse convention in St. Paul; and regional interest in our fledgling chapter. A PGW neophyte asked us to recommend novels and short stories with which to get started. Some ideas included *Joy in the Morning*, *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, "Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo," and "The Great Sermon Handicap." That combination should prove irresistible to the newbie.

We plan to get together some Sunday in January. We'll have a potluck lunch, and watch a Bertie and Jeeves video. One participant has offered to have the meeting at her house. For those who were not there, we would be interested to find out the best days and times for you to meet. Keep in touch!

The Pickering Motor Company

(Detroit and vicinity)

Contact: Elliott Milstein

Phone:

E-mail:



You may have heard that all the Detroit car companies are in trouble, needing billions of dollars just to make it through the year, on the verge of bankruptcy, laying off tens of thousands. Well, it is not entirely true. The Pickering Motor Company is alive and thriving. Not only do its members meet regularly, chewing through such classics as *Joy in the Morning* and *Money in the Bank*, browsing and sluicing like nobody's business (putting away an entire fifth of vodka—before noon—at the last meeting), planning holiday parties and further mischief, but indeed planning a vast expansion of activity.

In case you haven't heard, Pickering has taken on the joyous task of hosting the 2011 Wodehouse Society Biannual meeting and all members are excited as get-out at the prospect, planning a shindig of Olympian proportions. And we WON'T need a federal bailout!

Watch this space over the next three years for details (and see page 5 for more information).

The Portland Greater Wodehouse Society (PGWs)

(Portland, Oregon and vicinity)

Contact: Carol James

Phone:

E-mail:



The Size 14 Hat Club

(Halifax, Nova Scotia)

Contact: Jill Robinson

E-mail:



The Soup & Fish Club

(Northern Virginia area)

Contact: Deborah Dillard

Phone:

E-mail:



"You told them you were expecting to sell a hundred thousand copies?"

"We always tell them we're expecting to sell a hundred thousand copies," said Russell Clutterbuck, letting him in on one of the secrets of the publishing trade.

French Leave (1955)

Treasurer's Report for 2007

BY KRISTINE FOWLER, OUTGOING TREASURER

Yes, yes, we're acutely aware of the fact that this Treasurer's Report for 2007 is coming to you in the last month of 2008. But think of the excitement when, in a few short months, you'll see the 2008 Treasurer's Report! You must enjoy these little pleasures.



Balance as of December 31, 2006

\$19,069.13

Income:

Membership dues	\$11,572.62
2007 Convention income	\$40,950.33
Drones Club ties (orders filled from inventory) ¹	\$703.00
Plum Lines back issues, index	\$0.00
Interest, misc.	\$13.60

Total Income

\$53,239.55

Expenses:

Plum Lines production and mailing	\$11,206.67
2007 convention general expenses	\$40,950.33
Correspondence, supplies, other	\$185.83
Drones Club ties (shipping)	\$9.20

Total Expenses

\$52,352.03

TWS Convention Reserve Fund:

Balance as of December 31, 2006	\$8,013.74
raffle, auction & rummage sale excess proceeds	\$1,420.37
Balance as of December 31, 2007	\$9,434.11

Total Balance as of December 31, 2007

\$21,377.02

¹ No stock now remaining.



Not-So-Dry Storeroom

DIANE MADLON-KAY writes: "I came across a humorous Wodehouse quote that might interest the readers of *Plum Lines*. It is from: "Dry Storeroom No. 1. The Secret Life of the Natural History Museum," by Richard Fortey (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2008), p.17: 'On the other hand, if you had transgressed one of the rules, you earned a particular stare that P. G. Wodehouse described as "basilisk" when emanating from one of Bertie Wooster's more terrifying aunts.'"

Answers to Cap! Cap!'s quiz

gudgeon: Joking term of endearment based on a small slender European freshwater fish often used as bait by anglers.

gorblimey: Exclamation of "God blind me."

bimbo: A word that originally applied to male "featherheads" but has changed gender to refer to females with similar mental talent.

of the first water: Attributing the highest rank based on the actual meaning; the highest quality of gemstones, especially of diamonds and pearls.

Harry Lauder: Scottish music hall comedian who was popular in the U.K. and USA (from his many trips) and who may be recognizable to the younger generation if they were gardeners familiar with the shrub *Corylus Avellana* "Cortorta," otherwise known as "Harry Lauder's Walking Stick."

Letter from England

BY ELIN WOODGER

BOOK LAUNCHES and festivals, cricket matches, jolly meetings, a formal dinner, and pigs at shows and pubs—such are the ordinary, everyday activities to be found here in England, to help while away those long, dull hours between TWS conventions. Yes, it has certainly been one of those years, positively drenched with Wodehouse.

Let's start with the book launches. In my last letter I reported on the picnic that Arrow Books threw in central London to celebrate its new line of Wodehouse paperbacks. That was in May, and the next month a number of U.K. Society members trooped down to Dulwich to attend the launch of Jan Piggott's history of Dulwich College. Jan is one of the school's former archivists, and the 400-page history he has written will certainly help to settle all bets regarding everything you ever wanted to know about Dulwich College but were afraid to ask. Wodehouse is mentioned on some 47 pages, and there is a five-page section devoted to him alone. It's quite an impressive book, and it can be ordered at www.dulwich.org.uk/shop.

Then there was the Guildford Big Read, in effect the launch of the Guildford Literary Festival. Though the festival itself wasn't until October, the day-long Big Read on June 28 was intended to inaugurate the fun by celebrating the works of—who else but the great writer born in Guildford, P. G. Wodehouse? It was a lovely, sunny day; Arrow gave away hundreds of their new books; and there were songs and fun galore, including pig racing. Alas, I cannot report on the festival itself, which included an evening dedicated to “A Celebration of P. G. Wodehouse” on October 24. However, I am told it was a huge success, including as it did songs and readings by such luminaries as Hal and Lara Cazalet, and a talk by Society stalwart Tony Ring. Tony also gave a presentation at the Havant Literary Festival in September, so he has been a busy man.

Speaking of celebrations, Everyman's Library has now published a total of 60 Wodehouse titles in its series of hardback books. To mark that milestone, in late October there was a champagne reception held at the historic premises of the publisher John Murray, a house where the leading lights of 19th-century literature once gathered in force (the current occupant is John Murray VII). Norman and I were fortunate enough to be invited, and in addition to the heady sensation of rubbing elbows with some of the 21st century's leading literary lights, I was rather awed to see the fireplace



Norman Murphy, triumphant, after winning third place in the Novice Pig Handlers competition. (Photo by Tony Ring)

where John Murray II famously burned Lord Byron's memoirs, fearing they were too scandalous.

But enough of books—let's talk cricket. June saw the start of the season, and the Society's team, the Gold Bats, were drawn in their first two matches—first against the Dulwich Dusters, and then against the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. For the latter game it was, perhaps, no surprise to see Bill Franklin show up from California. (It is remarkable how often Bill's business trips occur at a time when the Society has something on!) It must be said, however, that he wasn't present for the Gold Bats' other major match of the season—nor were Norman and I, for that matter, being



Hilary Bruce and Jean Tillson participating in the award presentation for Berkshire Champion of Champions. (Photo by Tony Ring)

away in Cumbria at the time. Nevertheless, on August 3 the team met the Hollywood Golden Oldies, which is loosely connected with the Hollywood Cricket Club (of which Our Hero had once been a member). The day was grey and drizzly, and I am told the Golden Oldies were a bit jet-lagged, so this may have accounted for their loss to the Gold Bats. But of interest to all Wodehouseans would be the fact that the Society's team was captained that day by Wodehouse's godson, Mike Griffith—whose father had named him after the book *Mike*. There were two other matches besides these, which the Gold Bats won, and the team also joined forces with the Siegfried Sassoon Society for another match (and another win).

In the midst of all this cricketing, the Society held a meeting in July at the Arts Club, where the special guest speaker was renowned Wodehouse biographer David Jasen, over from New York. David gave a fascinating talk on Wodehouse's theater career, noting with regard to his adaptation of Molnár that "Plum should have been made an honorary Hungarian."

September rolled around, and with it came the Royal County of Berkshire Show in Newbury, where every year the U.K. Society sponsors the prize for the Berkshire Champion of Champions. This year former TWS president Jean Tillson happened to be visiting, and she was honored by being asked to help Chairman Hilary Bruce present the prize to the winner, a boar named Fair Oaks Peter Lad II. The photo does not reflect the length of time it took to get the pig stand still long enough to have the official photo taken!

As if this were not excitement enough for the Plummies in attendance, my spouse, upon learning that the next competition would be for novice pig handlers of any age, cried, "I've got to try that!" Off he dashed to borrow a pig and a white coat from a friend who was willing to let him show her champion sow, Truffle. To move the pig around the show ring, one has to utilize a large board and a curved stick, and Norman soon got the hang of it, well enough to earn him a yellow rosette for third place. He then proceeded to scratch Truffle's back with the stick, and she keeled over onto the ground in pure bliss, much to the amusement of onlookers. But we were even more amused afterward when, proudly holding his rosette aloft, Norman announced, "Ladies, I am now available for breeding!"

The pig theme continued when Jean and I took a trip down to Emsworth and then, before returning home, decided to check out a pub we had heard of. After a lengthy search we found it, in Copythorne, just west of Southampton: the Empress of Blandings. The brewery director (David Hoare) is, as might be guessed, a dedicated Wodehousean, and such is his attention to

detail that the pub sign features an illustration from *The Pig—Breeding, Rearing and Marketing*, by Sanders Spencer, which Wodehouse had seen on visits to Hunstanton Hall in Norfolk (where the Empress was, figuratively speaking, conceived). On the outside of the pub there is a Wodehouse quote describing the Empress, and David has promised to look into the possibility of serving Berkshire pork—the Emsworth Paradox lives!

Berkshire pork was, in fact, served at the Society's formal dinner two years ago; this year it was loin of Welsh lamb. The dinner took place on October 23, again at Gray's Inn, and I was stunned when I learned that I would be sitting with the Duke of Kent (cousin to the Queen) on one side and Dr. Shashi Tharoor (author and former under-secretary-general of the United Nations)



*Elliott Milstein, Tamaki Morimura, Bill Franklin, Robert Bruce, and Kris Fowler prior to the U.K. Society's formal dinner at Gray's Inn
(Photo by Tamaki's camera)*

on the other. "Cor lumme, stone the crows!" I said to myself, but it turned out I needn't have worried, as they couldn't have been more delightful. In fact, everybody in attendance clearly had a whale of a time, what with the historic surroundings of Gray's Inn, a superb meal, and the usual outstanding entertainment arranged by Tony Ring. Americans who came over for the shindig included former TWS president Elliott Milstein and current prez Kris Fowler, as well as—of course—Bill Franklin. And from Japan we had Tamaki Morimura, whose visit in March with other members of the Fearsome Four I reported in my last *Plum Lines* Letter from England (Summer issue).

The year is not over yet! As I write this, we are looking forward to the last meeting of the year at the Arts Club, which will feature the annual general meeting and a talk by author and radio presenter Nigel Rees. It seems a giddy, never-ending round of Wodehousean pleasure. But that's the way we like it.

Gee, Pa! It's A Little Wodehouse on the Prairie!



WELL, YES, it's the theme of the TWS convention happening in St. Paul next summer (June 12–14, to be exact). But, in a deeper and truer sense, what is a little Wodehouse on the prairie, coming right down to it? What images and connotations does it conjure up in your mind, which you are inspired to capture in an essay, sonnet, watercolor, needlepoint, ballad, diorama, neo-vorticist sculpture, or interpretive dance? Go to it! **Realize your vision of a little Wodehouse on the prairie—in any medium—and submit your contest entry to the Amalgamated Northwodes Literary Society and Arts Board at www.northwodes.org.** (If you feel your diorama will be difficult to ship, a photo or video submitted by the May 31 deadline may suffice for judging purposes, until you bring it in your carry-on.) Contest winners will be announced, amid appropriate fanfare, at the convention and subsequently immortalized in *Plum Lines*.

Whilst your creative juices percolate, here are some procedural tools for your left brain.

To-Do Lists for the 2009 TWS Convention

Category A, choose one:

1. Register. See the registration form included in this issue, or print it out from www.wodehouse.org or www.northwodes.org.

Category B, choose two:

1. Plan your trip. Consider the calendar of events (see the recap below) as well as extracurricular activities you might want to tack on so you can take full advantage of this journey to the Land of 10,000 Lakes. (The *New York Times* gave some suggestions recently at www.tinyurl.com/6e4csm.)

2. Make your reservation at the elegant, historic St. Paul Hotel (www.saintpaulhotel.com (800-292-9292; ask for The Wodehouse Society rate, group code 414138).

Category C, choose all that apply:

1. **Design your contest entry** depicting “a little Wodehouse on the prairie” and submit it (or a facsimile thereof) at www.northwodes.org by May 31.

2. **Collect items for the rummage sale:** duplicate copies of Wodehouse books, surplus Drones Club ties, Plummy crafts (you did notice Jean Tillson's delightful

See the registration form included
in this issue; register now!

refrigerator magnets of Wodehouse book covers at the Providence sale?), etc. Proceeds to benefit The Wodehouse Society Convention Reserve Fund.

3. **Consult the convention organizer if your chapter aspires to present a reading or skit, or if you have some burning results of Wodehouse research that you'd like to reveal to the world.**

4. Concoct your masque and draperies for the Saturday banquet costume competition. Categories are strictly confidential (not to say ad hoc and ex tempore) to prevent nobbling, but just to give you an idea, prizes have been awarded in the past for most obscure character, best representation of a book title, and most thorough accessories.

5. Look up what “cricket whites” are and ransack your wardrobe accordingly.

6. Practice attaching bells and braiding your hair.



Canterbury Park (photo by Beth Rutzebeck)

Convention Schedule:

Friday, June 12: Optional activities include an early-morning guided bird walk, a rather later-morning self-guided tour of F. Scott Fitzgerald's neighborhood, an exhibit of Wodehouse magazine stories at the University of Minnesota (which also has one of the world's largest Sherlock Holmes collections—members of the Senior Bloodstain take note!), and of course the much-anticipated Cricket Experience. Any and all of

these activities to be followed by a convivial dinner at the St. Paul Hotel, with accompanying entertainment.

Saturday, June 13: Wodehouse talks interrupted by breaks for sustenance, with a skit and the Dread Business Meeting thrown in somewhere. The day to culminate in the banquet—costumes encouraged—on board the *Betsey Northrup* riverboat cruising the mighty Mississippi, to the foot-tapping strains of the Barbary Coast Banjo Band. It is TWS's 30th anniversary after all, and all the stops will be pulled out.

Sunday, June 14: Brunch with a little light entertainment (a chapter reading?); afterward, a Bingo Little-approved jaunt to the Canterbury Park horse races (transportation provided—if you'll need a lift straight to the airport from the parade ring, we can arrange that). Reluctant farewells for those on a short timeline; grassroots revelry continuing for the rest.

The Oldest *Living* Member

BY GARY HALL

TOM GRUNDNER has taken a new approach to the golf stories of P. G. Wodehouse. In his book *The Oldest Living Member Tells All: Lessons on Life, Love and Golf* (Fireship Press, 2007), Tom has reworked ten of the most popular PGW golf stories in a more modern vernacular.

Here's Tom from the introduction: "The purpose of this book is to bring some of these long hidden stories to the modern American golfing public. . . . The problem is that these stories . . . do not 'read right' to the modern eye. The paragraphing, sentence structure, terminology, spelling . . . too often jar the reader into putting the book down."

Tom's vision then led him to update these stories to his version of 21st-century language, without (in his words) "losing their style and especially their humor." Hence, the reader will not see the terms *mashies* or *niblicks*, for example. "It would be idle to say" becomes "It would be silly to say," and "old grey flannels" becomes "old grey cotton pants." And so on.

Those of us who are captured by the original versions and delight in the originality and quality of Wodehouse's language may prefer to stick with version A. Still, the essence of the stories remain intact, and love still always triumphs.

So, we must give Tom his due. If his book, with its slightly modernized phrasing, sneaks past someone's defenses and implants the Plum bug, then he has accomplished a good thing.

Wodehouse On Stage: Winter 2008–Spring 2009

BY AMY PLOFKER

Plummies: If you spot an upcoming bit of PGW-related theatre, send the info along to Amy.

THERE ARE a few upcoming theater events which may interest Wodehouseans. Three are from well-known sources (Washington Stage Guild, Stage West, and Musicals Tonight!), while the others sound like promising newcomers to the Wodehouse scene.

The **Washington Stage Guild**, struggling while they wait for their new theater to be finished, will present a single reading of *Candle-Light*, which PGW adapted from a **Siegfried Geyer** play in 1929. Experts such as Brian Taves and David Jasen imply there isn't much truly Wodehousean dialogue in *Candle-Light*, unlike *The Play's the Thing*. Still, this may be the chance in a lifetime to hear it performed and find out for yourself!

Stage West, in Fort Worth, Texas, veteran of three well-received Jeeves adaptations, including *Right Ho, Jeeves* in 2007, is promising audiences plot continuity by choosing *The Code of the Woosters* for 2008. Stage West follows the past example of City Lit in Chicago, which used to delight natives and cause extreme jealousy in non-natives by putting on yearly, fruity adaptations of Wodehouse stories. In fact, these seem to be the same **Mark Richard** adaptations as shown at City Lit! With a run stretching from Thanksgiving to New Year's, it sounds like an ideal antidote for too much turkey and fruitcake (all that chasing round Totleigh Towers, you know).

Musicals Tonight! has yielded to New Yorkers' pleas for another PGW musical, and they have cannily selected the delightful 1922 *The Cabaret Girl*. True to this company's mission, *The Cabaret Girl* is a little-known gem, new to Wodehouseans unless you were lucky enough to catch it in San Francisco in 2004.

The Play's the Thing will also have a single reading in New York City, with an as-yet undetermined but potentially illustrious cast. Moving west, *By Jeeves* is seeing a revival in Michigan, while *Oh, Kay!* plays in Petaluma, California.

Disappointingly, the **Joe DiPietro** adaptation of *Oh, Kay!* (new title: *Nice Work if You Can Get It*), which was to try out in Boston this winter and move on to Broadway in the spring, is postponed indefinitely due to production problems. Let's hope it will rise on the stepping-stones of its dead self, but we're not holding our breath.

Details for these events follow:

Candle-Light (reading)

December 8, 2008

The Washington Stage Guild's Reading Series

The Mead Theatre Lab at Flashpoint

916 G St. NW (between 9th & 10th Sts.), Washington, DC; call 240-582-0050, email info@stageguild.org, or visit www.stageguild.org for information or reservations.

This play by Siegfried Geyer, adapted by Wodehouse, retains a continental feel. It's an upstairs-downstairs comedy unfolding as masters and servants become entangled in the others' affairs.

The Code of the Woosters

November 28, 2008–January 4, 2009

Stage West

821 W. Vickery Blvd., Fort Worth, TX; for tickets or more information, visit www.stagewest.org or call 817-784-9378.

You know the plot. And if you don't, go read it!

The Cabaret Girl

March 3–15, 2009

McGinn/Cazale Theatre

2162 Broadway (between 76th & 77th Sts., above Sephora), New York, NY; for tickets or more information, visit www.musicalstonight.org or www.smarttix.com, or call smarttix at 212-868-4444.

This 1922 musical features music by Jerome Kern and lyrics & book by George Grossmith and Wodehouse. It was a goodish hit in London but has been produced in the USA only once before (in 2004 by San Francisco's 42nd Street Moon). It's the story of a musical comedy actress looking for work in London while being courted by an aristocratic young man. Part of the Musicals Tonight! series, these are concert performances with minimal sets and costumes, but great acting and singing. Wodehouse songs include "Shimmy With Me," "Mr Gravins—Mr Gripps" and "You Want the Best Seats, We Got 'Em."

The Play's the Thing (reading, followed by reception)

April 6, 2009 (tentative)

The Acting Company's John McDonald Salon Series

Baruch Performing Arts Center

East 25th St. (between Lexington & 3rd Aves.), New York, NY; call 212-258-3111 or visit www.theactingcompany.org/salon/ for more information.

This is a hilarious farce about a play within a play. Turai and Mansky, writers of hit operettas, bring their composer, Adam, to an Italian castle as a surprise for their leading lady and Adam's fiancée, Ilona. Adam is

surprised to find Ilona in the arms of another man. Turai struggles to reunite the lovers, keep his writing team together, and finish a new play all in one day.

By Jeeves

April 22–May 17, 2009

Oakland University, Meadow Brook Theatre

207 Wilson Hall, Rochester Hills, Michigan; for tickets or more information, visit www.ticketmaster.com or call 248-377-3300.

The Andrew Lloyd Webber/Alan Ayckbourn musical adaptation of Jeeves and Wooster stories. Lighthearted and fun, it is generally agreed that *By Jeeves* doesn't seem totally true to the original (Bertie is shown as a complete idiot, and the plot becomes more a random farce than a typically well-thought-out Wodehouse plot). But with that caveat, even dyed-in-the-wool Wodehouse fans can enjoy it.

Oh, Kay!

April 24–May 10, 2009

Cinnabar Theater

3333 Petaluma Blvd., Petaluma, CA; for tickets, call 707-763-8920; for more information, visit www.cinnabartheater.org or call 707-763-8920.

This 1926 musical features music by George Gershwin, lyrics by Ira Gershwin, and book by Wodehouse & Guy Bolton. It's the story of English bootleggers in Prohibition-era Long Island, with Lady Kay falling for the estate's apparently married Jimmy Winters. Alas, no Wodehouse songs, but Gershwin greats include "Clap Yo' Hands," "Do, Do, Do" and "Someone to Watch Over Me."

. . . these were stern, implacable men, utterly incapable of taking the broad, charitable view and realising that a fellow who comes on a platform and starts reciting about Christopher Robin going hoppity-hoppity-hop . . . does not do so from sheer wantonness but because he is a helpless victim of circumstances beyond his control.

The Mating Season (1949)

Answers to

Wodehouse for the Birds: A Quiz

1. (a) All four are canary fanciers.
2. (d) Both island dwellers are swans.
3. Some cuckoos lay eggs in nests of other species so

the hosts will raise the hatched cuckoos. Ronnie thinks Percy is trying to break up his home with Sue Brown, even before it is established. The Molloyes think that Jeff's impersonating J. Sherington Adair in Ashley Hall justifies the reference. Bill owns Ashendon Manor, but Sir Aylmer has been referring to it as "my house." The word *cuckold* derives from this bird's behavior, as described by another English-born author of some renown in *Love's Labour's Lost*: "The cuckoo then, on every tree / Mocks married men; for thus sings he— / Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo! Oh word of fear, / Unpleasing to a married ear!"

4. The emu is a tall, flightless bird akin to Sir Branksome's ostrich.

5. This characterization of the linnet's variable song is by far the most detailed of the dozens of vocalizations, many of a single word, that Wodehouse worked into his stories. N. T. P. Murphy in *A Wodehouse Handbook* (2006) reports that Wodehouse owned a book whose author spelled out this version of the linnet's song, syllable by syllable.

6. His early accolade to the thrush can be read in the standard Wodehouse biographies.

7. (b) Archibald's lengthy imitation of a hen laying an egg emphasizes the recurring melodic phrasing, "Charawk-chawk-chawk-chawk."

8. Carmody says he thought he saw a swallow's nest. Wodehouse in this humorous account identified some of the bird species by their common names and some by their Latinized scientific names, which suggests he was writing with a bird book at hand.

9. (d) Egbert and Percy reveal their personalities in *Big Money*.

10. All of them merit that distinction. Porter is an enthusiastic bird-watcher, as evidenced by his begrudgingly taking time from watching a Clarkson's warbler in *The Cat-Nappers* to warn Bertie Wooster about inflicting his society on Porter's betrothed.

Saxby enjoys visits to country estates with their wealth of bird life, as in *Cocktail Time*, and he also enjoys speaking to anyone who will listen about the habits of hedge-sparrows, meadow pipits, water ouzels, and other birds he has known.

Uffenham, thanks to his studying the book *Wonders of the Bird World*, can compare the courting habits of

young men with those of the great bustard and the herring gull in *The Butler Did It*.

Worple authored the book *American Birds* and is working on its sequel, *More American Birds*. Jeeves suggests that Corky Corcoran could more easily tell Worple, his benefactor, of his engagement to Muriel Singer if someone would ghostwrite *The Children's Book of American Birds* under her name and include plenty of praise for Worple's ornithological acumen. The ploy works well in "Leave It to Jeeves," so well that she marries Worple.

11. (c) The legal eagles in London are the multiple-bird look-alikes in *Biffin's Millions*.

12. The four men would agree upon (d) pheasant, although the three poachers would have no qualms if given the opportunity to bag a partridge, and the other birds listed also find their way to dinner tables in Wodehouse's world.

13. Byron and Lucretius were "gloomy sorts of birds," Shakespeare was a "brainy bird," while Tennyson and Tolstoy were merely "a bird" or "that bird." Wodehouse must have smiled when he wrote that Mike Cardinal's friend thought Cardinal was "a good-looking bird."

14. Galahad specifies the white owl, although he says he might imitate the brown owl instead, but he meets Johnny before imitating either of them. Ickenham emphasizes that he will hoot like a white owl and not a brown owl. We don't learn how well he performs, if at all, but Peasmarch has the letter in his bedroom the following morning. We evidently should not underestimate the interest in imitating owls, even if the ones Wodehouse named don't exist in nature. Mr. Mulliner's cousin Clarence explains in "The Romance of a Bulb Squeezer" that an owl's call is far more complex than "Tu-whit, to-who." Mavis Mulligan (née Llewellyn) tries to convince others in *Girls, Pearls, and Monty Bodkin* that Monty is the inside man for a planned burglary at Mellingham Hall and is preparing to signal his accomplices by imitating the brown owl. Boko Fittleworth warns Bertie Wooster in *Joy in the Morning* that he risks being mistaken for the pestiferous Edwin Craye by whistling like the lesser screech owl, which Edwin imitates to announce his presence.

15. Beach, the individualist, owns a bullfinch. These pets are not to be confused with Lord Ickenham and Lord Shortlands, both of whom feel like caged skylarks when confined to quarters.

Wodehouse, Anyone?

KATHERINE LEWIS (aka Lady Constance), who currently reigns as president of the Chicago Accident Syndicate, noticed our recent call for articles for *Plum Lines*. She suggests a column that lists sightings and sounds of Plum heard in everyday life.

In Katherine's recent readings, for example, she mentions numerous oblique references to place names often used by PGW in John Buchan's *Three Hostages*. Also, Beverley Nichols (a prolific writer about gardens, among other things) wrote *Down the Kitchen Sink*, an autobiographical memoir in which he constantly refers to his valet as Jeeves.

We know that *Wooster Sauce*, the parallel publication of The P G Wodehouse Society (UK), prints a quarterly list of recent media references to Wodehouse.

So, what say you, *Plum Lines*-ians? I glean a variety of online items from Google alerts, the e-forum PGWnet, and elsewhere. But I'm glad to print what you send me in regard to Wodehouse sightings. You may e-mail or mail them to me; see the relevant addresses on this page. For those of you who don't have the time or inclination to write an article, this is a terrific way to contribute to *Plum Lines*.

We would also love to see more "My First Time" articles, about initial encounters with Wodehouse.

There it is, as Katherine said to me, and we have shoved in our oars, for what it's worth. Make of it what you might.

—Ed.

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We appreciate your articles, Quick Ones, My First Time tales, and other observations. Send them to Gary Hall at the addresses above!

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What magic there is in a girl's smile. It is the raisin which, dropped in the yeast of male complacency, induces fermentation.

The Girl on the Boat (1922)