

Ye Olde Plum News

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BERTIE'S CHILDHOOD

FAMILY

Full name: Bertram Wilberforce Wooster. His father had won a sum on a horse called Wilberforce and insisted on giving Bertram this name. (Much Obligated, Jeeves, 1971)

I used to have to recite it (Tennyson: The Charge of the Light Brigade) *at the age of seven or thereabouts when summoned to the drawing-room to give visitors a glimpse of the young Wooster. 'Bertie recites so nicely,' my mother used to say – getting her facts twisted.* (Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, 1954)

These memories are the only I've found about his father and mother. Once he mentioned a sister, but another time he claimed to have no siblings. Totally dominating are his memories from school or from holidays spent with relatives. A parallel to Plum's childhood.

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### NURSE

*I know Basingstoke. Bless my soul yes, know it well....I've stayed there as a boy. An old nurse of mine used to live at Basingstoke in a semi-detached villa called Balmoral. Her name was Hogg, oddly enough. She suffered from hiccups.* (The Mating Season, 1949) *When I was a child, my nurse told me that there was One who was always besides me, spying out all my ways, and that if I refused to eat my spinach I would hear about it on Judgement Day.* (Aunts Aren't Gentlemen, 1974)

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SOME OF HIS CHUMS

Boko Fittlewirth: Is called a bosom pal. "You've known Boko so long." "Virtually from an egg." (Joy in the Morning, 1947)

Kipper Herring: *When striplings he and I had done a stretch together at Malvern House, Bramley-on-Sea, the preparatory school conducted by that prince of stinkers, Aubrey Upjohn M.A., and had frequently stood side by side in the Upjohn study awaiting the receipt of six of the juiciest from a cane. ... "I would share my last bar of almond rock with you, and you would cut me in fifty-fifty on your last bag of acid drops. When you had mumps, I caught them from you, and when I had measles, you caught them from me. Each helping each."* (Jeeves in the Offing, 1960)

Angela Travers: *This cousin and I had been meeting freely since the days when I wore sailor suits and she hadn't any front teeth.* (Right Ho, Jeeves 1934)

Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright: *with whom I had plucked the gowans fine at prep school, public school and university.* (Much Obligated, Jeeves, 1971)

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### HOLIDAYS AT BRINKLEY COURT

This was the residence of Uncle Tom Travers, Aunt Dahlia and his cousin Angela. *When I was a kid and spent my holidays at Brinkley, we used to have fire drills after closing time, and many is the night I've had it jerk me out of the dreamless like the Last Trump.* (Right Ho, Jeeves, 1934)

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AUNT DAHLIA

I remember years ago, when you were in your cradle, being left alone with you one day and you nearly swallowed your rubber comforter and started turning purple. And I, ass that I was, took it out and saved your life. (Right Ho, Jeeves, 1934) *Do you remember when you had measles and I gave up hours of my valuable time to playing tiddlywinks with you and letting you beat me without a murmur?... when you were at that private school of yours I used to send you parcels of food.* (Aunts Aren't Gentlemen, 1974)

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### UNCLE TOM

*...reminded me of those postal orders, sometimes for as much as ten bob, which Uncle Tom had sent me in the Malvern House days.* (Jeeves in the Offing, 1960)

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PRIZE WINNER

I won the prize at my first school for the best collection of wild flowers made during the summer holiday. (The Inimitable Jeeves, 1923)

Bertie and Aunt Dahlia: *"I know Balaam's ass from soup to nuts... I once won a prize for Scripture knowledge." "I'll bet you cribbed." "Not at all. My triumph was due to sheer merit."* (Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit, 1954)

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### BICYCLE RACE FOR CHOIR BOYS

Bertie was a singer and a cyclist. *At the age of fourteen, while spending my holidays with a vicar of sorts who had been told off to teach me*

*Latin, I had won the Choir Boys' Handicap at the local school treat.* (Right Ho, Jeeves, 1934)

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THE BOSHER INCIDENT

Bertie and Gussie had some common memories: *"Major-General Sir Wilfred Boshier came to distribute the prizes at that school. ... He dropped a book. He stooped to pick it up. And, as he stooped, his trousers split up the back." "How we roared!" ... "It was one of the high spots of my youth."* (Right Ho, Jeeves, 1934)

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### BISCUIT INCIDENT

*One of these well-remembered moments in my own case was the time at my first private school when I sneaked down to the headmaster's study at dead of the night, my spies having told me that he kept a tin of biscuits in the cupboard under the book-shelf; to discover after I was well inside and a modest and unobtrusive withdrawal impossible, that the old bounder was seated at his desk.* (The Code of the Woosters, 1938)

*The Rev. Aubrey (Upjohn) had started to give a sort of character sketch of the young Wooster, which until now I had always looked upon as the last word in scholarly invective.* (Joy in the Morning, 1947)

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BOYSCOUT

"Were you ever a Boy Scout?" "Not since early boyhood." (Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves, 1963)

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### THE FIRST CIGAR

Lord Worplesdon was the second husband of his Aunt Agatha: *I had known him all my life. It was he who at the age of fifteen - when I was fifteen, I mean of course - found me smoking one of his special cigars in the stable yard and chased me a mile across difficult country with a hunting crop.* (Joy in the Morning, 1947)

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FRUIT OF EDUCATION

I hadn't kicked anyone since the distant days of school. (Joy in the morning, 1947)

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