

BY THE WAY



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THE WODEHOUSE MENAGERIE

The Wodehouses were great pet lovers, and Plum's correspondence is full of references to the dogs and cats, in particular, which were living with them at the time. In this *By The Way* Norman Murphy has listed those he has been able to identify, together with some suggestions on their possible fictional counterparts.

P G Wodehouse wrote three stories using a dog as the narrator: *Gone Wrong* (in *The Cecil Aldin Book*, otherwise unpublished) and the two episodes of *The Mixer* (in *The Man Upstairs*). They read realistically because Wodehouse understood dogs. When a dog plays a part in the action, eg Smith in *The Girl on the Boat* or Patricia in *Quick Service*, the reader knows exactly why it does so.

1897

Bob, a mongrel, the family dog at Stableford.

Norman Murphy suggests: he may be the original of the mongrel Bob in *Love Among the Chickens*.

1903

Tony, his landlady's terrier.

1906

Two Alsatians whose names are unknown were reportedly living in the same household.

1914

Pete, a puppy.

Two cats, of which one was named Mitzi.

1917

Sammy, a French bulldog.

Norman Murphy's query: was Sammy named after the friendly bull-terrier in *Mike*?

1920

Angus, an Aberdeen terrier.

Norman Murphy suggests: Angus may have been the model for Stiffy Byng's Bartholomew. In his introduction to Elliott Erwit's *Son of Bitch*, PGW wrote that Angus had a 'way of standing in front of me and looking at me like a Scottish preacher about to rebuke the sins of his congregation'.

1921

A kitten and a parrot, both anonymous.



Plum with a Peke, believed to be Wonder

Norman Murphy comments: Bill, the parrot in *Jill the Reckless* and Leonard, the one in *Ukridge Rounds a Nasty Corner*, could well be based on this parrot.

1921 or 1922

Rudolph, a dachshund.

1922

A Pekinese puppy, name unknown.

Norman Murphy believes: it was Denis Mackail, a Peke enthusiast, who introduced Wodehouse to Pekes when they met in 1921.

1927

Susan, a Peke who was still alive in 1933.

Norman Murphy comments: Susan appeared under her real name in the Blandings short story *The Go-Getter*.

1929

Susan and her puppy Winks, (affectionately, Winky).

In 1932, he dedicated his novel *Hot Water* to 'Maureen O'Sullivan with love from Ethel, Leonora, Miss Winks, John-John and the Author'. John-John was Maureen O'Sullivan's Peke which was residing temporarily with the Wodehouses at the time.



Plum with Jed, the dachshund

1933

Susan, Winky and a 'house full of Ethel's adopted cats, all having kittens'.

1934

Winky and Boo, who belonged to their daughter Leonora.

1936

Winky and Wonder, a new Pekinese puppy. Wonder, who lived until 1951, was one of the reasons why they stayed in Le Touquet, since they could not bear the prospect of quarantine for six months.

1940

Winky, Wonder, Coco (a parrot) and Mrs Miffen, another Peke and another reason for staying.

1949

Wonder and Squeaky, Guy Bolton's white Pekinese which he gave to Plum.

Norman Murphy believes: Squeaky's habit of screaming with delight when she met someone she liked is mirrored in Pomona, Mrs Spottsworth's dog in *Ring for Jeeves*.

(Guy Bolton had written most of the play on which *Ring for Jeeves* was based.)

1951

Squeaky and Bill, a foxhound who was still alive in 1957.

1955

Squeaky, Bill and Poona, a cat.

1957

Squeaky, Vicky (another Peke), Bill, another unnamed foxhound, a dachshund (possibly named Jed), and a cat.

Norman Murphy thinks: Jed is a good model for the dachshund Poppet, in *Jeeves in the Offing*.

1958

Jed, a new dachshund presumably named after his predecessor.

Norman Murphy wonders: Why were Squeaky and Vicky given to a Mrs Burnett to look after in 1958 or 59, with no other Pekinese recorded as living with the family thereafter?

1961

Jed, Debbie, a Boxer and unnamed cats.

1965

Jed, Debbie, and two cats, Blackie and Ginger

1966

Four dogs, names and breeds unknown and two cats.

1973

Ethel took two dachshunds, names unknown, 'on trial'.

1974

Boy, a dog of unknown breed and Minnie, a mongrel given by a neighbour.

1975

Another animal, Enoch, assumed to be a dog, is mentioned on the pets memorial stone at the Bide-a-Wee cemetery.