The ANZACS and their Words

Bruce Moore

The First World War suddenly brought together people from vastly different backgrounds, people who had no other reason than the fact of war itself for living together in extraordinarily close and intimate circumstances. It also had a profound effect on Australian English.

In the Introduction to his Digger Dialects (1919) W.H. Downing comments: ‘By the conditions of their service, and by the howling desolation of the battle-zones, our men were isolated during nearly the whole of the time they spent in theatres of war, from the ways, the thoughts and the speech of the world behind them.’ This sentence is interesting because it demonstrates the lexical inventiveness of wartime experience (this is the earliest recorded occurrence of the term theatre of war), and because it explains the reason for that inventiveness—since warfare is a new experience, those involved in it need a new language to adapt to their new situation and to construct ways of coping with it. When Tom Skeyhill in Soldier Songs from Anzac (1915) wrote: ‘We’ve forgotten all our manners/And our talk is full of slang’, he similarly points to the break between civilian and war experience and the need to find new terms that are able to express this experience.

It is inevitable that most wartime terms do not survive their wartime contexts, for the end of a war brings to an end the need for such terms. This is illustrated by the following terms from Downing’s Digger Dialects: belly-ache ‘a mortal wound’; boy-with-his-boots-off ‘a shell which bursts before the sound of its passage through the air is heard’; broken-doll ‘an inefficient staff officer returned to his unit’; camouflaged Aussie ‘an Englishman serving with the AIF’; to go into cold storage ‘to be killed during the 1916 winter’; lance-corporal bacon ‘bacon consisting of fat through which runs a thin streak of lean’. Most of the terms picked up by the soldiers from foreign languages likewise did not survive after the war. Yet whereas these terms have been lost, the First World War produced a number of major Australian cultural icons, especially the terms Anzac, digger, and Aussie.

The term digger in the military sense is a transferred use of the meaning ‘a miner on the Australian goldfields’. Throughout the twentieth century it retained the military associations established in the First World War (it was widely used during the Second World War, and during the Vietnam War the Americans still knew the Australians as ‘diggers’). The term has also undergone a widening of meaning: in many contexts ‘digger’ and its abbreviated form ‘dig’ are used devoid of their military connotations (as a synonym for ‘clobber’ or ‘mate’).

It was the First World War that produced the term Aussie for ‘Australia’ (1915: ‘A farewell dance for the boys going home to ‘Aussie’ tomorrow’), and for ‘Australian soldier’ (in 1918 the Sydney Truth writes: ‘We consider the term Aussie or Osie as evolved is a properly picturesque and delightfully descriptive designation of the boys who have gone forth from Australia’), and more generally for ‘an Australian’ or ‘Australain’ (1927: ‘Our much prized Aussie hats’).

Many other common Australian terms had their origin in the First World War. The firm J. Furphy & Sons Pty Ltd operated a foundry at Shepparton, Victoria, and water-carts were included among their products. These water-carts, bearing the name ‘Furphy’, were used in the First World War. Very quickly the term furphy came to mean ‘a rumour or false report, an absurd story’—perhaps because drivers of the carts were notorious for bringing rumours into the camps, or because the conversations which took place around the cart were sources of gossip and rumour. The term oil in the sense ‘information, news’ (a transferred use of ‘oil’ as the substance essential to the running of a machine) and its compounds dinkum oil, straight oil, and good oil all gained wide currency as services slang. The term possum for ‘position of
supposed advantage to the occupant; a place; a job’ is now so entrenched in
Australian English that few realise it had its origin in trench warfare as the term for
an individual soldier’s place of shelter or firing position. It is in First World War
Australian military contexts that souvenir in the sense ‘to appropriate; to steal;
to take as a souvenir’ first appears. The term plonk (probably a corruption of French
blanc in vin blanc ‘white wine’) appears to have begun its Australian career during
the First World War. It is also in First World War Australian military contexts that
many Australian idioms are first recorded: his blood’s worth bottling, give
it a burl, hop in for one’s chop, come a
gutsy, rough as bags.

The term Anzac appears in 1915 (in
C.E.W. Bean’s diary) as an acronym
formed from the initial letters of
Australian and New Zealand Army Corps,
originally used as a telegraphic code
name for the Corps. In the same year it
was used as an abbreviation for ‘Anzac Cove’ at Gallipoli, and then as a term for
the ‘Gallipoli campaign’. In 1916 it was
first used to refer to a member of the
Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
who served in the Gallipoli campaign. In
honour of the fact that they fought at
Gallipoli, the Anzacs were commanded in
1919 to attach a small brass ‘A’ above the
colour patch on their sleeve.

During the war the term ‘Anzac’ was
used in various compounds: an Anzac
button was ‘a nail used in place of a
trouser button’, Anzac soup was ‘shell-
hole water polluted by a corpse’, Anzac
stew was ‘an urn of hot water and one
bacon rind’, and an Anzac wafer was ‘a
hard biscuit supplied to the AIF in place
of bread’. These terms did not survive
their wartime contexts, although the
Anzac wafer survives transformed into the
Anzac biscuit (and, more recently, the
Anzac cookie).

One of the most recent widenings of
the word Anzac has enabled it to take in
someone who is not a soldier at all.
Anything but. This is the stereotypical
(and largely stereotypical) lean bronzed
Aussie male, perceived as the successor of
the dinkum Anzac (who, by the laws of
mythologising, must surely have been
lean, bronzed, and handsome too). Aussie
lifesavers are at the crux of the stereotype.
The nexus between the myth of the
dinkum Anzac and the myth of the
bronzed and burnished lifesaver is caught
allusively by that old warhorse Bruce
Ruxton: ‘RSL president Bruce Ruxton
called gay servicemen fairies at the RSL
State Conference. He said it was
‘unbelievable’ that the Australian
Defence Force allowed an army float in
this year’s [Sydney Gay and Lesbian]
Mardi Gras. Ruxton added, “The big
bronzed Anzac is now turning into a fairy”

It was during the First World War that
an extremely important compound was
formed. This was Anzac Day. The first
Anzac Day was proclaimed by the acting
prime minister George Pearce to be held
on 25 April 1916, and some 60,000 to
100,000 people took part in Anzac Day
activities in the Domain in Sydney. In
Egypt, Australian soldiers commemorated
the day with a religious service followed
by sports and entertainments. In London,
2000 Australian and New Zealand troops
marched through the streets to a service
at Westminster Abbey attended by Lord
Kitchener and the King and Queen. The
tradition continued, with marches of AIF
troops in various cities, from 1917 on. The
term Anzac march, however, is not
recorded until 1945, and Anzac parade
is first recorded in 1966. Preparations for
the first Anzac Day are reported in Truth
(Sydney) 9 April 1916:

What? We’re going to have an Anzac Day,
A night of Fireworks and Illumination.
For which ratepayers they will have to pay.
To hold high revelry and jubilation,
Strange conduct this is, truly be it said,
To hold a picnic o’er Australia’s dead.

This earliest quotation points to an
ambivalence in the concept of celebrating
death, and it is the beginning of a
complex series of ambivalences that have
surrounded the day, expressed most
clearly in Alan Seymour’s 1962 play The
One Day of the Year.
The term dawn service (sometimes
called dawn parade) is much later than
Anzac Day. Our earliest citation appeared
in the Annual Report of the WA Branch of the
Returned Services League 1929:
Anzac Day, 1929, will be historic, for
on that day the first commemoration took place at the
unfinished State War Memorial beautifully situated in King’s Park. It
was in the breaking dawn of April
25th, 1915, that Australian troops
landed on the beaches of Gallipoli.
Afterwards, both at Gallipoli and in
France, the hours preceding sunrise
were usually chosen by the High
Command for the launching of
some great enterprise. It was,
therefore, appropriate that the first
duty of the day should be to lay a
wreath on the unfinished State
Memorial at dawn in remembrances
of our dead comrades. ... The moon
hung low in the West whilst the grey
dawn peeped above the dim outline
of the Ranges. Eerie figures
stumbled over boulders strewn at
the base of the Monument, now
discerned against the crimson sky.
Below the sleeping city, and from
across the peaceful river a chill
Easterly wind. There is a hush, and
the first wreath is laid, followed one
by one until the loving task is done.
Momentarily heads were bowed,
and then the crashing shot from a
gun near by. The Reveille
completed the simple dawn service.

Whereas dawn service was a relative
latecomer on the scene, it has grown in
popularity, such that in some parts of
Australia the numbers attending the dawn
service rival those attending the Anzac
march.
HACKLING THE HECKLERS

At 7.15 or so on this beautiful morning of the 27th of October in the Year of Our Lord 1999, I happened to hear the ABC Radio talkback host [name provided] say to a distinguished guest (whose name I now forget) that something or other (which escapes my mind) would raise people’s heckles. I can’t remember her exact words, but heckles is what she said. Is this a new meaning of the word? Are my heckles being needlessly raised?

Ken Phillips
ACT

Loaning a lend

My daughter, who is fourteen, has this ...

grating expression: ‘Can I have a lend of this or that?’ ... She isn’t the only one. Her friends do it also. ... Is this just a fad of slang? or is it acceptable now to use lend as a noun? My dictionary is no help (perhaps it’s out of date).

Jenny B
NSW

WHEN THE COW KICKED AUNTIE

My mother and her siblings are between seventy and eighty years old and were born and grew up near Sale, East Gippsland. In about 1939 they moved to Geelong. As long as I can remember they have used a curious and, I think, funny expression that I have never heard used by anyone else. If something has not happened for a very long time, they say that it hasn’t happened ‘since the cow kicked auntie’. Now, I think this unusual expression must have originated earlier than the previous generation, because none of my mother’s aunts was ever called ‘auntie’. Indeed, they were quite formidable (and interesting) women, who either had nicknames like ‘Mungie’ and ‘ Mim’ (on her mother’s side) or were called by the more formal ‘Aunt Jan’ or ‘Aunt Kath’ (on her father’s). As far as I know, none of them was ever kicked by a cow. Moreover, I am told that it would be almost impossible to be kicked by a cow unless you were milking it, because the hind legs of cows can only kick forward.

I see that there is a reference to ‘auntie’ in the Australian National Dictionary, and wonder if this strange bit of folklore is worth noting in case someone else reports it.

Angus Trumble
Adelaide

We are not among your readers who have heard this engaging expression, I should be delighted to hear from her or him. It is too good to be a one-off. Ed.

WHY IS ALRIGHT AWRONG?

What is wrong with the spelling ‘alright’? My poker mates and I know it is wrong because my dictionary says so, and dictionaries are infallible like the pope. But why is it wrong? This is what we are arguing about.

J. Cook and Several Friends
Queensland

Dictionaries may pontificate as if ex cathedra but, unlike the fishermen of Rome, they are not infallible. Being involved in the endlessly fascinating business of dictionary-making, I can vouch for this as a fact. Alright is quite definitely (and illogically) awrong at present, but give it another ten years or so and it is almost certain to be alright. I say ‘illogically’ because we have already as canonically correct (not all ready, which is something quite else), altogether (not all together), almost (not all most), also (not all so), and so forth.

The word issue of alright is tackled by the editors of the New Oxford Dictionary of English (1998), and I am lazy enough to quote them. They point out: ‘The merging of all and right to form the one-word spelling alright is not recorded until the end of the 19th century (unlike other similar merged spellings such as altogether and already, which date from much earlier). There is no logical reason for insisting on all right as two words, when other single-word forms such as altogether have long been accepted. Nevertheless it is still considered by many people to be unacceptable in formal writing. In the British National Corpus around 5 per cent of citations for the two forms are for the one-word form alright.’

The British National Corpus is a carefully balanced selection of 100 million words of written and spoken English text in electronic form, available for computational analysis. At the Australian National Dictionary Centre we have our own corpus of contemporary Australian English, and it shows that the incidence of alright in Australian English is running at about 20%. Controlled analysis of documents on the Internet confirms the 20% figure for Australia, and demonstrates that alright is more common in Australia than in Britain or the United States. I hope that this info helps you and your poker mates. Ed.

IS A CHEF’S HAT A SOUFFLE?

A thorough search through Concise and Oxford Complex on CD has not revealed a special word/words describing a chef’s or cook’s hat. ... Do you know such a term, which I feel I may have come across but can’t recall?

Kishor Dabke
Melbourne

I too have this vague feeling that there is a specific name for the silly hat that a chef wears, but I cannot pin it down. Why this form of hat anyway? What is its history? Can any clever chef (or non-chefish person into headwear) help? Ed.
THE CONFERENCE

The conference 'Who's Centric Now? The Present State of Post-Colonial Englishes', held at the Australian National University last October, was highly successful. The papers presented at the conference will be published by Oxford University Press later this year. During the conference Gough Whitlam launched the new Australian Oxford Dictionary, describing it as 'the best dictionary we've had in this country'. It is the largest dictionary the Centre has produced, and it differs from most of our other dictionaries in including detailed encyclopedic entries. John Simpson, chief editor of the Oxford English Dictionary, gave a public lecture on the Thursday evening of the conference. In a ceremony that immediately preceded the public lecture, John was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Letters by the Chancellor of the Australian National University.

VALE PETER ROSE

Peter Rose has been Trade and Reference Publisher of Oxford University Press for ten years. He has overseen the publication of many of the Centre's dictionaries and other books, and has been a driving force behind the publication of OZwords. He resigned from OUP in March. He will be greatly missed both at the Melbourne headquarters of OUP and here at the Dictionary Centre in Canberra. We wish him every success in his writing career and his new life in Adelaide.

VOLUNTARY READERS

We have a small but enthusiastic team of people who do voluntary reading for us, collecting quotations from printed material as part of the research that will help us produce a new edition of The Australian National Dictionary. These readers keep an eye out for interesting uses of Australian words and meanings, and especially for new words. Country newspapers are a good source for these, but we find it difficult to gain access to them. If you would like to join the team, or would like more information about the reading program, write to Julia Robinson at the Centre, or email her at <Julia.Robinson@anu.edu.au>.

GOOSE CLUB

The goose club is an English tradition, a forerunner of the Christmas club. Members contributed to a fund that provided them with a goose at Christmas time. In Australia at the end of the nineteenth century there were goose and bottle clubs. In 1898 the Bulletin reported: 'Goose-and-bottle clubs are popular in Melbourne. Members pay in every week, and at Xmas get a goose and so much drink to take home. The affair is held at a pub.' At some stage in Australia the goose club transformed itself into a raffle. Our evidence shows that goose club raffles are especially common in Queensland clubs, although they have also been held in New South Wales. But we are not entirely sure what they entail. Can you help us out? And is the term used outside Queensland and New South Wales?

WINDSOR, BELGIAN, AND EMPIRE

Windsor, Belgian, and Empire sausages were discussed in the May 1999 number of OZwords. The anecdotal evidence is that these terms arose during the First World War to replace the German associations of German sausage and frie. Windsor sausage is a Queensland term, Belgian sausage is Tasmanian, and Empire sausage belongs to the Newcastle area. Brisbane-born poet Rhyll McMaster refers to 'sliced Windsor' in her 1986 poem 'Holiday House', but printed evidence for these terms is proving extremely hard to find. Can any readers help us out? Even newspaper advertisements would be useful to us.

SUICIDE NET

A suicide net or suicide dilly is a cone-shaped net made of fine mesh, used for catching crabs. The net is attached to a metal ring about a metre in diameter. Bait is placed in the net, and the ring is set firmly on the sea or estuary floor. The crabs try to get at the bait, and become ensnared in the net—thus 'suicide net'. We believe that the term is used in Queensland, but would be interested to know if it is used elsewhere. The corresponding term in some parts of Australia is witch's hat. Again, any early printed evidence for the term would be helpful.

DROP BEARS

The Centre recently completed a project for the new Australian National Museum, which opens in February 2001. It is an exhibition of forty-five Australian terms, with a brief account of their meaning and history. We included this definition (aimed very much at overseas visitors) for drop bear: 'An animal similar in appearance to a koala, but about 1.5 metres in height, with very sharp claws and teeth. They eat other animals, but they also have a taste for humans, especially overseas tourists. Their name derives from the fact that they lurk in trees, and drop down on their unsuspecting victims.' Our earliest evidence for drop bears is in Nancy Keesing's Lily on the Dustbin (1982), and she claims that they were invented during the Second World War to frighten American servicemen. But we have no evidence for the term before 1982. Can anyone help?

BROGGY

Do you know the phrase doing a broggy? It means producing a skid mark on a dirt road when riding a bicycle, broggy being the mark produced. When the driver of a car performs the same senseless manoeuvre, he or she is doing a doughnut. Most of our evidence for the term broggy comes from Western Australia. But what is the origin of the word? Some have suggested that it is a corruption of broadside, a shortening of broadside, but this seems implausible. Any ideas?

TWO CONFERENCES

AUSTRALEX, the Australasian Association for Lexicography, will hold its next regular conference on Monday 10 July 2000 at the University of Melbourne. You may obtain details at <http://www.canu.edu.au/linguistics/alex/> or get in touch with the Australian National Dictionary Centre.

In July 2001, the 13th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR) will convene in Melbourne. This is the first time in the forty-year history of the Society that it will meet in the southern hemisphere. The theme of the congress is Traditions and Transitions: Folk Narrative in the Contemporary World. Papers from Australia are now being sought. For further details contact Susan Faine, Director, Victorian Folklore Association, PO Box 1765, Collingwood, Vic. 3066, or email her at <folklore@connexus.net.au>.

Bruce Moore
Director
I suppose lexicographers are well aware that when a new dictionary is published those of us with a particular focus are eager to find out how our area fares. So it was with great interest that I viewed the about-to-be-released Australian Oxford Dictionary (1999) at the Australian, National Dictionary Centre (ANDC) in Canberra last October. My own interest is in the Irish language as it occurs in an English setting and in the etymological accreditation it receives in English language dictionaries.

For centuries now, Irish Gaelic words have contributed to the richness of English. Until recently many of these words had rarely appeared in print and, when they did, they were written according to English phonetics, losing their Irishness in the process. By the time the first English dictionaries focused on etymology, Irish Gaelic words had been anglicised to such an extent that they were often mistaken for English words. Furthermore, even when the Irish Gaelic origin was known, etymology was sometimes recorded as Anglo-Irish and not as Irish.

Times have changed. Revisionism has forced us to challenge some of our previously held assumptions. The result has been a gain for the recognition of Irish Gaelic’s contribution to the English lexicon. With this in mind, I happily perused the Australian Oxford Dictionary (AOD) at the ANDC, where I was undertaking research. I was delighted to see that the origin of the Australian colloquialism kip (the piece of wood from which coins are spun in two-up) included a reference to Irish cipín ‘a little stick’ and that gombeen (‘usury’) was now of Irish etymology and not ‘Anglo-Irish’—as had been the case with the Oxford English Dictionary (1968). Similarly gossoon (‘a lad’) has been correctly identified as Ir. in Bruce Moore’s AOD (from Irish Gaelic garsún). The colloquialism gob, which the Oxford English Dictionary had cited as ‘obscur’ and ‘possibly Gael. & Ir. gob’ in 1968, has made some progress in the AOD. It is no longer ‘obscur’, and the word ‘possibly’ has been replaced by ‘perhaps’. The word spree, however, is still ‘origin unknown’. It is likely that the Oxford English Dictionary will assign it an Irish origin in its next revised edition in the light of Irish Gaelic spraoi 1. ‘fun, sport’ 2. ‘drinking bout’ and our knowledge of the spread of the Gaelic-speaking Irish diaspora to the new colonies in the nineteenth century. The word spree as used in nineteenth-century Australian literature is certainly Irish in spirit. Those early settlers could only take so much hard work and isolation. So a couple of times a year they headed into the nearest town for a good spree. The word spree has been a favourite of nineteenth-century Australian writers, including Rolf Boldrewood. There are ten occurrences of spree in his Robbery Under Arms.

Of course general dictionaries cannot include all the words of a language.

Criteria are set, and words accepted or rejected in accordance with their adherence to such criteria. When the good people at the Australian National Dictionary Centre kindly gave me free rein to examine their databases, I was instantly drawn not to the collection of cards that formed the basis of their published dictionaries, but to the two ten-drawer filing cabinets located in the tea room and labelled rejects. I suspected that I might find many of my ‘Irish’ words in here, labelled ‘obscur’ or ‘unknown’. Many reject words have suffered that fate for being unique—that is, only one citation has been found. For my own research I was happy enough to find the single occurrence of ‘Bendigo Faugh-a-ballagh’ in the ‘reject’ file. William Howitt in his Land, Labor and Gold: or Two Years in Victoria (1855) noted this as a name given to thieves. More than likely the Bendigo faugh-a-ballagh were highwaymen or bushrangers. Were they Irish highwaymen I wondered. The phrase faugh-a-ballagh is a disguised Irish phrase fåg an bealach, literally ‘leave the road’ but usually used in the sense ‘get out of the way’. It is also an Irish warcry of sorts. It was written on the banner of Irish regiments in the American Civil War. Thomas Keneally has entitled one of his chapters in The Great Shame (1998) ‘Faugh-a-Ballagh’, the chapter providing an account of the origin of the Irish American regiments that fought under this named flag. However interesting the history of this phrase may be, and however intriguing to speculate on its particular use in Australia during the gold rushes, unfortunately it does not qualify as a dictionary entry.

Whereas evidence in the form of a number of citations is part of the criteria for the inclusion of a word in a dictionary, it does not necessarily follow that many citations will take a word over the line. Such is the case with the word dudleen—Irish duiddín ‘a short pipe’. My current research includes the compilation of a glossary of Irish Gaelic words in use in Australian literature. The entry for duiddín, to date, is as follows:

duiddín n. A short smoking pipe. Also in forms dhudeen, dudleen, dudun.
1845 James Tucker, Ralph Rashleigh 103: who only opened his oracular jaws to emit the smoke of his dhudeen. 1847 Alexander Harris, Settlers and Convicts 5: and the dudleen ... was in everybody’s mouth. 1851 John Henderson, Excursions and Adventures in New South Wales vol. 2, 112: and sometimes an old clay cutty, or dudun. 1859 William Kelly, Life in Victoria 140: a short pipe of the true ‘dudleen breed’. 1998 Thomas Keneally, The Great Shame 42: convict women ... smoking Brazil twist in duiddéens, clay pipes sometimes scarcely half an inch long.

The short pipe brought by the Irish made a small but significant contribution to the distinctive ‘look’ of the Australian colonials. Nineteenth-century English travellers and writers in the colony took detailed notes on what the colonial male wore: the short smock, dungarees, the cabbage-tree hat, and (it appears always) a short clay pipe in his mouth. The 1831 entry in my glossary is a description of Aboriginal use of the duiddín as a substitute for the traditional bone through the nose. I was explaining all this to a young editor at the Dictionary Centre, and attempting to put forward a case for the inclusion of duiddín in future Australian National Dictionaries, when he suddenly blurted out: ‘But it’s only a pipe, it’s not a word like Federation.’ With that I felt the might of an imperialistic giant foot squashing my small Irish ego. ‘Fåg an bealach,’ I said to myself. ‘I’m off on a spree.’

OZWORDS APRIL 2000 PAGE 5
Etymologists hazard theories about the origin of this Ausie (and Enzed) phrase and word, but in the end they are forced to fall back on the formulation which indicates (but certainly does not even begin to sound the deeps of) their frustration: 'origin unknown'.


Given this universal nescience, it is quite a relief to be given an explanation of the origin of _razoo_ which seems to make perfect sense. The explanation comes in the form of an affidavit from Russell L. Henry of Victoria, sworn on 22 December 1994:

As a 14-year-old, late 1929, at my Uncle William Ross's party I embarrassed the gathering by blowing wind inadverently. My Uncle took me into the hall, clipped my ear and as far as I can recall said words to this effect: 'If you have to let go an ARSE RAZOO you should always go into the garden before it happens.' When I enlisted in the Volunteer Militia with 4 Field Brigade on 1 November 1933 and [was] placed in 10 Battery in that unit, we had a lot of 1st AIF returned soldiers serving, aged in their late 30s, and I once heard them use the word _razoo_. This was the first time since four years back I had heard this strange word. I then asked my Uncle from which language this foreign word was derived. He told me that it was confined to Australian soldiers serving in France, and was a joke word between Australian infantry and American troops in the trenches circa 1918 based on the Yankee _raspberry_ also called a _razoo_—a burr or mouth-sound made to sound like a fart. ... I was an official World War 2 Unit Historian to assist Messrs (A.W.M.) Gavin Long and David Dexter with my history, published 1950 and reprinted 1987. During research of World War I unit histories, not one prints the expression _razoo_, which indicates that it was not widespread until just after the armistice 1918, until 1919 in Australia, but mostly in the erroneous manner that it was actually thought to be a brass coin.

It is perfectly understandable that _arse razoo_ should have been bowdlerised into _brass razoo_ in 1918 or 1919, especially if brass razoo was thought to refer to a coin, as Mr Henry avers. The use of the word 'brass' for a coin of small value goes back centuries. England uses the word (probably in that sense) as early as 1562 in _Peers Plowman_, and in 1526 William Tindale translates _Matthew_ 7:9 as 'Posses not golde, nor silver, nor _brasse_ yne youre gerdes.' And there is too, of course, the analogy with _brass farting_, an emphatic equivalent of _farting_ in depreciatory expressions: 1642: 'As bare and begragg as if he had not one _brasse farting_.' (Daniel Rogers, _Naaman the Syrian, His Disease and Cure_, p. 32); 1880: 'I care not one _brass farting_.' (Sir Walter Besant and James Rice, _The Seamy Side_, X. 78).

To add further weight to Mr Henry's etymology, the 20-volume Oxford English Dictionary has this to say of the word 'razoo': ' _razoo_, _var. razoo_ . . . (probably alteration of _raspberry_, which is an elliptical use of _raspberry tart_, a derivative sound.) ridicule; the arouse of indignation or the like, provocation; a sound of contempt, a "raspberry". Also in the phrase to _give the razoo_ to ridicule. _OED_ is too polite to spell it out, but _raspberry tart_ is rhyming slang for 'fart'. _Webster's . . . Dictionary of the English Language_ (1899) gives one meaning of _raspberry_ as a 'Bronx cheer' and defines _Bronx cheer_ as 'U.S. a vulgar spluttering noise made with the lips and tongue to show contempt or disgust.'

Given all this,—Mr Henry adds in an advertisement in the _Age_ (early 1995) 'Re: _razoo_ as coin. Its origin in war trenches, France, 1918, was from diminutive of American _raspberry_, mouth sound like a fart. ... Diggers changed 'Not worth a fart' to "Not worth a Razoo"—Mr Henry's etymology would seem to be watertight.

But I have a niggling worry. Or it may merely be a brass razooish cavil. All the early citations (the earliest we have is from 1919) use _razoo_ by itself. The collocation _brass razoo_ does not appear until 1968, nearly half a century later:
1919: 'Did you have any bank to kick off with?' "Not a _razoo_," returned his companion' (C. Drew, _The Doings of Dave_, p. 29); 1932: 'The town shrieked money, yet Ginger had not a "razoo" to his name' (W. Hatfield, _Ginger Murdoch_, p. 35); 1942: 'I thought you might allow a little more under the circumstances, Joe!' "Not a _razoo_", ' (L. Mann, _The Go-Getter_, p. 39); 1955: 'There's not one amongst them worth a _razoo_.' (D. Niland, _The Skirrel_, p. 69); 1965: 'My main worry was that when I did leave hospital ... I wouldn't have a _razoo_ to my name' (R.H. Conquest, _Horses in the Kitchen: True Tales of Outback Australia_, p. 61); 1968: 'But I reckoned you'd never get a _brass razoo_ out of the Commos.' (G. Dutton, _Andy_, p. 92); 1973: They didn't get any rain for three years, and the lousy government never gave them a _brass razoo_.' (F. Moorhouse, _Australian Stories_, p.30); 1982: 'For all their pestering they never got a _brass razoo_, she shrieks triumphantly' (Rodney Hall, _Just Relations_, p. 487); 1986: 'Two children knocked on the door ... with some cornflakes and milk and bread and butter. . . . The constable . . . thought we didn't have a "razoo" between us' (A. Bushell (ed.), _Yesterday's Daughters: Stories of our Past by Women over 70_, p. 101).

The sequence _arse razoo_ ("a fart") deodorised into _brass razoo_ and then shortened to _razoo_ plain and simple seems improbable to me. To give Mr Henry his due, however, he did say in his affidavit: 'It appeared that the "arse" part was seldom used, as Razoo had been misunderstood by most hearing it as a so-called "brass" coin, a myth, to indicate worthlessness or derision.'

The jury is still out on this one. It frustrates me to have to say of (_brass_)

_razo0_ 'origin (pace Mr Henry!) still in doubt'.
REALLY IS NOT ENOUGH
Two new words for the intensifier really are *fully* and *majorly*. Examples from Australian teenagers include: she is fully sick of the whole thing; he is fully in trouble; she is so fully tired that she crashed out at 9 pm; he is majorly infatuated with the idea of owning a Harley-Davidson. *Majorly* has been around for about five years and is an Americanism. *Fully* in this sense is very recent, and its origin hasn’t yet been determined. There have been other words for really, like *seriously* or *seriously rich*—also an Americanism. Some groups of teenagers eschew *fully* and *majorly* as lacking in style. But they are very widely used in the schools. Although *fully* is sometimes used by teenage males, it is especially used by teenage females. My data suggest that this is linked to the fact that teenage females are more expressive, or more exclamatory, than their male contemporaries.

POLLING IS REALLY ANGRY
For about the past two decades Queensland has been harbouring a strange neologism. The word is *polling* in the sense of ‘seething with anger’. It can be used in two main ways: intransitive: He’s *really polling*, i.e. ‘he’s really seething’; transitive + preposition: He’s polling after her, i.e. ‘he’s angry with her’. *Polling* in this usage is strange because it doesn’t have any obvious links to other uses of the verb *poll*, and in addition it seems grammatically odd: there are no other obvious expressions of anger which would fit. And the expression seems mainly restricted to the *ing* form of the verb. Odder still. There aren’t any reports of this usage outside Queensland.

ECHOPHRASES
Echo phrases—the term isn’t universally accepted, but it is the best there is—are phrases or two or more words where one or more sounds of the second part echoes one or more sounds in the first. Some echo phrases are full rhymes: namby pamby, art’s pants, bee’s knees, duck’s nuts, isy bisy, nitty gritty, lame brain. Some echo phrases are alliterative and repeat only consonants or vowels with imperfect matching of consonants: tail as a fairy’s phone-book, whom ham thanks Ma’am, jungle juice, rat race, road rage, Wild West.

Echo phrases are very old, probably at least as old as proverbs such as A stitch in time saves nine. They are found in many languages—indeed, I would be surprised if they didn’t occur in all languages. In English they number in their thousands. With the help of the radio listeners I have collected well over 3500. Some, like proverbs, are part of the perpetual fabric of the language. So are clichés like crystal clear or pull your punches. Others occur once and then fade away.

There doesn’t seem to be a definitive listing of echo phrases for English, so it is difficult to establish which of them are Australian contributions. Likely candidates include: laughing at the lagoon (we are good on alcohol and its effects), full as a gong, full as a footy final, ridy ridge, happy as Larry, good grab (a mark in AFL), Foster’s fart, fridge on the ridge (a girls’ school in Brisbane), park the prawn, Romper Stomper, shaggin’ wagon, shiksho of toot (the cricketer Shane Warne), bangs like a dummy door, vee vee (the VW car), Oarsome Foursome, rare as rockingham焉 move. And dozens more.

The exact functions of echo phrases are a topic for another day. What we do know is that they represent one aspect of creativity in language. We play with language, and one of the most fundamental forms of play involves patterns. Just think of nursery rhymes and skipping rhymes. Merely by making patterns, including echo phrases, we join up with some very ancient and visceral meanings of language.

BANYAN NIGHT
Some families in Australia have a *banyan night*, when the regular cooks down tools and the rest have to make do. The phrase comes from the navy. Several navies, in fact. In the RAN a *banyan* or *banyan party* involves putting a boat ashore and organising a barbecue, perhaps under the banyan tree, which is a large subtropical species of *Ficus*. In the Royal Navy a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8
PLACE NAMES

Australia has its share of aristocratic and royal British names: Adelaide, Victoria, Queensland, Queenstown, Albert Park, King George Square, Palmerston, once the name of Darwin, is now the name of a suburb there.

But the oldest capital name history is Melbourne’s. The city was formally named after Lord Melbourne in 1837. Before that time, however, a number of strange names were used for the capital of the Cabbage Patch: Batmania (after Batman; just as well it didn’t take, in view of Batman and Robin), Bearbrass, Bareport, Bareheep, Barehurp, and Bareberp. Those names are not the stuff of which Olympic cities are made. The Bareberp Cup in November? I don’t think so.

Roland Susse is Professor of Applied Language Studies in the Centre for Language Teaching and Research at the University of Queensland (Brisbane 4072, Queensland). He is an Honorary Research Associate of the Australian National Dictionary Centre. His language talkback programmes are on local ABC stations on Tuesdays, in the Northern Territory at 10.30, in Queensland at 11.30, and in Tasmania at 2.30. The URL of the web site which supports these language broadcasts is <http://www.cltr.uq.edu.au/linguistalkback>.

OZWORDS COMPETITIONS

Ozwords Competition No. 12: results

For this competition readers were asked to neologise wittily and well. And so they did. Our panel of expert coiners at the Australian National Dictionary Centre tested the incoming coinage by biting them and pronounced the following to be worthy:

Honourable mentions (in alphabetical order): Lianwe Evans of WA for socogenus n., the desultory manner adopted by certain people in power in the mistaken belief that they alone know what the masses really want; Carolyn Gordon of SA for euclifetus n., the uplifting nationalist feeling Australians get when they see depictions of ‘the Bush’; Colin Hinrichsen of Tasmania for prosterical adj. (of men) affected by a functional disturbance of the nervous system characterised by excitability and lack of emotional control. (Mr Hinrichsen adds: ‘My word is to counter the use of the word “hysterical” with the same definition but attributed predominantly to women and erroneously attributed to a disturbance of the womb [Greek hysteria womb]. “Prosterical” acknowledges hysterical behaviour in men and also erroneously attributes it to a disturbance of the prostate.’)

Second prize (books worth $50 from the OUP catalogue): Roger Dettman of SA for rogetthesaurus n., the last extant member of the dictionary family, but still enjoying a wide distribution. Characterised by a sturdy spine, a grossly enlarged but functional appendix, 1000 bold heads, yet only one brain.

First prize (books worth $100 from the OUP catalogue): Martin Pikler of Canberra for outcore n., to redefine a promise from ‘core’ to ‘non-core’ to avoid breaking a core promise (see corruption). -ing n., the process thereof.

Ozwords Competition No. 13

You are to imagine that a plethora of parliamentary polities in Canberra, fed up with the words of our national anthem Advance Australia Fair, has set up an Australia-wide competition for poets and poetraps to submit new words to fit the old tune as silk sock fits the foot, the winner to be declared Australia’s first Poet Laureate. The polittos’ grins against the old words, by the bye, is against one line in particular: ‘Our home is girt by sea’. To tell you why, let their spokesperson have the floor (courtesy of the ABC’s 7.30 Report, 30 February 2000):

spokesperson: Girt by sea? Now what, I ask myself bemusedly, is so special about that? It is an ineluctable attribute of islands that they should be girt by sea. It’s the surrounding sealessness of islands that makes them islands and not something else. One could with equal portentnousness praise our country by singing with awe: ‘Our home is capped by sky.’

So there you are, readers. Scrape your quokka puckers, sharpen your emu quills, have ready your Fraser Island sander, and scratch away! Be as jingoistic as you like—although I doubt anyone could match the inspirationally bloody jingoism of the second stanza of God Save the Queen in which God is not only an Englishman but a blue-blood to boot:

O Lord our God arise,
Scatter Her enemies,
And make them fall!
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks,
On Thee our hopes we fix—
God save us all!

Quot! Ed.

Entries close 30 June 2000.

Entries sent by email should also contain a snail mail address.