# AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DICTIONARY CENTRE

## The place-names problem

In Newsletter No. 2 (1989) notice was given that the Centre, in association with the Humanities Research Centre, was planning to hold a seminar, on 12 October 1990, to facilitate discussion of both a long-term study of Australian place-names and such short-term plans as might stimulate interest in and support for the long-term project. The seminar was advertised in appropriate bulletins and newsletters but, as this drew remarkably little response, was cancelled. In its stead a small group - John Atchison, Department of Social Science, University of New England; David Blair, School of English & Linguistics, Macquarie University; Graeme Clarke, Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University; Lynette Cole, Department of Geography, Monash University (representing Peter Spearritt, Centre for Australian Studies, Monash University); Bill Ramson, Australian National Dictionary Centre; John Ritchie, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Australian National University - met by invitation in the Centre to discuss a strategy for the future. This group agreed actively to support the establishment of a National Toponymy Project at the University of New England, the development of a detailed proposal which would focus on a long-term structure but facilitate short-term output and, with this available in outline, an approach to appropriate bodies for both sponsorship and funding. Further information from Bill Ramson.

## Ozlex? - nay, Australex

Newsletter No. 2 (1989) also reported on the first moves towards the formation of an association of lexicographers with Australasian interests. These were more successful. An interim steering committee - David Blair, Macquarie University; Tamsin Donaldson, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies; Roland Sussex, University of Queensland; Darrell Tryon, Australian National University; Bill Ramson, Australian National Dictionary Centre - prepared a draft constitution, drew up a mailing list and, with pardonable vanity but after due consultation, named the infant The Dictionary Society of Australasia. Invitations to membership were issued and an inaugural meeting scheduled for 26 September, on the day separating the conference of the Australian Linguistic Society and the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia. The response surpassed the wildest expectation:

by 25 September there were 78 financial members, a further 17 enrolling at the meeting. Good wishes abounded and even the odd donation came in. The meeting received the report of the interim steering committee and turned its attention to the draft constitution. Then, in one of those dramatic moments that every experienced chairman dreads, a name change was moved as an amendment, the inventive talents of a roomful of linguists demanded exercise, the apparently fusty 'Dictionary Society of Australasia' was swept aside, and OZLEX vied with ANZALEX and became AUSTRALEX - a name which, it was said, had both historical connotations - recalling Edward Ellis Morris's 1898 *Dictionary of Austral English*, in which title it meant both 'Australasian' and, poetically, 'southern' - and a modish acronymic quality which matched that of EURALEX. An Executive Committee was elected: Arthur Delbridge - President; Andrew Pawley - Vice President; Bill Ramson - Secretary; David Nash - Treasurer; Peter Austin, David Blair, and Tamsin Donaldson - Committee members; and it was agreed that a first aim was to facilitate communication between members by compiling a register of who was doing what and issuing an occasional newsletter. Further information from Bill Ramson.

## Advisory Committee

Professor Ian Donaldson, who has chaired the Centre's Advisory Committee since its inception, resigned as from 3 August 1990. Professor Donaldson is taking a period of Outside Studies Leave, followed by an equivalent period back in the Humanities Research Centre, and will take up his appointment to the Regius Chair of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh in September 1991. As Chairman of the Committee which reviewed the Australian National Dictionary Project and recommended the establishment of the Centre, and subsequently as foundation Chairman, Professor Donaldson played an important part in determining the character of the Centre, giving it invaluable support both at the time of conception and in the first two years of realisation. The Centre places on record its gratitude to Professor Donaldson, congratulates him on his new appointment, and wishes him well in that 'heych tryumphant toun' which has long nurtured one of the great centres of historical lexicography.

The Vice-Chancellor has appointed Professor Graeme Clarke, Director of the Humanities Research Centre from 4 August 1990, Chairman of the Advisory Committee. The Centre welcomes Professor Clarke.

## The Lexicon of Colonial Experience

The Centre, in association with the Humanities Research Centre, plans to convene an occasional series of conferences on the languages of Australasia. The first, to be held in February 1992 is entitled 'The Lexicon of Colonial Experience: The Australian and New Zealand Examples'. It will address the lexicon as recorded in AND and the forthcoming *Dictionary of New Zealand English*, and will be convened by Harry Orsman and Bill Ramson. Further information from Bill Ramson.

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## Comings and Goings

Harry Orsman visited the Centre in late May to discuss matters as various as formats and contracts. As one result Bernadette Hince, AND's Science Editor, spent a month in Wellington and continues to give advice.

Zhai Chungfang, from Liaoning Normal University, a Visiting Scholar in the English Department, has been a regular user of the Centre from April.

Joseph Reif, from Bar-Ilan University, Israel, will be a Visiting Fellow in the Centre for two months in 1991.

Hans Kuhn, who retires from the Chair of Germanic Languages in December of this year, has been appointed as a Visiting Fellow in the Centre for 1991. Professor Kuhn will continue his work on a dictionary and grammar of the major seventeenth century German author, Andreas Gryphius.

Manfred Görlach of Cologne, Editor of *English World Wide* has been offered a Visiting Fellowship in the Department of English and the Centre, for some time in 1991 or 1992.

Janet Williams took a break in July and August from writing encyclopaedic entries for the Australian edition of Joyce Hawkins' *Oxford Reference Dictionary* to take up a Saltire Fund fellowship at Robinson College, Cambridge, and to launch *A Day Estivall*, a volume of essays on the music, poetry, and history of medieval and renaissance Scotland and England in honour of Helena Mennie Shire, which she had co-edited. While in Oxford for further research, she visited the Dictionaries Department. She also attended (and gave a paper at) the Sixth International Scottish Language and Literature Conference at the University of South Carolina, Columbia.

Harriet Michell visited Oxford for ten days to familiarise herself with the state of the art before implementing the computerisation of the Centre.

## *Toot*, and the tooter the sweeter

The quiet and enclosed life of the Centre has its challenging moments, some of them provided by queries from those long-distance lexicographers engaged in preparing entries for the New OED of 2005. Most recently about *toot*, pronounced to rhyme with *foot* and clearly no relation to one of the many First World War frolics with French as recorded in *Digger Dialects* (see below). AND learnedly (but not with complete confidence, as is indicated by 'prob.') derives *toot* from the British regional dialect *tut* 'a small seat or hassock', recorded at OED2 sb.[1] 2. The current Oxford sleuth appears more comfortable with the suggestion that it is a simple contraction of *toilet* or that (to put it delicately) it is echoic (and so analogous with *thunderbox*, the quotation pedigree of which, incidentally, includes Auden and Isherwood (*Journey to War*) and Evelyn Waugh). We would be grateful for advice.

Other words on our search list, this time wanting citation evidence, are:

ask (n.)    (1990)
(as in *a big ask*)

flog (vb.)    to steal

megastar, megastardom   (1978)

Melburnian   (1876)

sammie/o, sambie/o    (1980)
Assessment of oral evidence required as well as quots.

rage <u>v</u>. and <u>n</u>.    (1980)
rager    (1972)
raging <u>vbl.n</u>.    (1980)

retrench    (1978)
(to make employees redundant)

nominate <u>v.intrans</u>. (1953)
(to stand for election, put one's name forward)

minkey    (1990)
(modified hockey for children)

Newcombe-ball
(volley ball for children)

## AWEG

AWEG, the *Australian Writers' and Editors' Guide*, Shirley Purchase's Australian revision of the *Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors*, is in the proof stage and due for publication in April 1991.

## Australianisation of ORD

The Centre's major commitment during 1990 has been to the preparation of an Australian edition of Joyce Hawkins' *Oxford Reference Dictionary*, an encyclopaedic dictionary with a difference, offering a more than usually discursive treatment of non-lexical items. Editing was completed in November and the dictionary will be published late in 1991.

## 1990 Publications

R.M.W. Dixon, W.S. Ramson, and Mandy Thomas
*Australian Aboriginal Words in English, their origin and meaning*, OUPA, pp.xi, 255

J.M. Arthur and W.S. Ramson
W.H. Downing's *Digger Dialects*, OUPA, pp. xiii, 257

Jay Arthur
' "What's Your Family"? Aboriginal English and Aboriginal Families" ', *English Today* Vol 6. No. 4 (October 1990)

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### National Corpus Project

An ad-hoc meeting was held in the Centre on 26 November to discuss the possibility of a National Corpus Project being established on a co-operative basis. Those present were: Avery Andrew, Cindy Andrew, David Blair, Paul Eggert, Joan Hughes, Harriet Michell, Andrew Pawley, Pam Peters and Bill Ramson.

Pam Peters described the Macquarie corpora, and reported on other Australian corpora, Harriet Michell the beginnings of the British National Corpus. It was noted that existing corpora were of the small to medium range and designed to meet specific needs.

It was agreed, in the discussion that followed, that there was a need for a large, multi-million word corpus, of spoken as well as written Australian English, developed by a consortium of interested parties, and available as a 'quarry' or resource for multiple purposes and users. The meeting agreed to develop a proposal, to invite other participants, and to seek ARC funding.