AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DICTIONARY CENTRE

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The good news and the bad

The good news is that the University has found sufficient funds to appoint Harriet Michell, formerly Head of The Faculties Computer Unit, as Senior (but the only) Programmer in the Centre for two years. The bad news is that, almost as soon as she had them up and running, one of our two Suns went walkabout. It has now been replaced and we are about back to where we were before. Fortunately we lost none of the material held in the computer - the full text of OED2 and of the *Concise Oxford*. Those who know the Cottage would be surprised at the Fort Knox-like character it now evinces, being comprehensively barred and lit up at night like a gin palace. They may get in again, but they won't get out!

Meanwhile the keying-in goes on. Dorothy Savage has joined Betty Warner at the job, the Western Australian file is in and awaiting analysis, and work has begun on the Aboriginal English and Victorian files simultaneously.

The Lexicon of Colonial Experience

The first of a series of conferences on the languages of Australasia, this was to have been held in February 1992 and was to have addressed the contents of AND and the forthcoming *Dictionary of New Zealand English*. It has had to be postponed indefinitely because of the uncertainty over when the latter will be published.

Toot, and its origin

Alan Peterson picked up the last Newsletter's note on *toot* so that the columns of the *Sydney Morning Herald* reverberated to its sound. A number of etymologists have written in to the Centre, none more distinguished than Frederic Cassidy, Editor of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*. Interestingly two SMH readers fancied a German origin, one suggesting that *tut* was in use in Germany to mean 'toilet', another, more specifically, reporting that *tut* was used as familial slang for 'fart' in Vienna in the 1920s. While the latter would appear to be simply a metaphorical use of *tuten*, 'to play a wind instrument', we can find no dictionary record of the former. One correspondent looks forward to the day when the word, 'easy to pronounce, honest, unisex, and innocently forthright', will take the world by storm, suggesting that 'this "toot" of the short u sound is a very old one which survived in the British Navy, and still exerts an oblique and cryptic influence in the use of "head" for shipboard toilets via the rhyming slang of "head and foot"'. Equally hazardous is the derivation remembered from south Wales in the 1920s and 1930s, from the word *tooty*, meaning to 'squat'. Another correspondent remembers it from the play *The Legend of King O'Malley*, first performed in 1970, and two correspondents locate it in Sydney nursing parlance - one remembering it from the Royal Hospital for

Women in 1954/55, another from 'a large Sydney hospital in 1963'. (AND's earliest citation, you will remember, is 1965.)

But pride of place goes to Frederic Cassidy, who cites the well-known (in the USA) jingle -

Beans, beans, musical fruit,
The more you eat, the more you toot.
The more you toot, the better you feel,
So eat your beans at every meal.   -

and suggests that 'the person who produces a mere /tut/ has obviously not eaten enough beans'.

Partridge declares it as 'Aus., orig. feminine: since ca. 1950', which seems to confirm the nursing origin (though Partridge's editor, Paul Beale, confuses things by adding that the word in this sense is pronounced /toot/, and is not to be mistaken for one rhyming with *foot* and meaning 'excrement'. Altogether we are not much further on: except that the AND derivation from *tut*, 'a small seat or hassock' would seem more and more unlikely, the probability being that it was a nursing genteelism for 'toilet'.

Of pogy pots and menhaden

A recent 'pop' article on words which might or might not get into the new edition of the *Shorter* mentions, amongst the many words the retention of which will cause others to be omitted, *pogy*, which dates from 1888, and is defined as *menhaden* ('corrupted from Narragansett Indian *munnawhatteang*'), a 'U.S. fish of the herring family.., much used for manure and producing a valuable oil'. And, suddenly, the penny dropped: could this be the origin of the earlier Western Australian *pogie*, used in the compound *pogie pot* (or *tub*) to refer to 'a vat in which oysters are left to decompose before being boiled down, pearls being removed from the residue' and described in AND as 'of unknown origin'? (AND having rejected one proposed derivation, profferred in a recent book, that from *poogie* 'a Malaysian flute, blown through the

nose to avoid defilement of caste'). Once again, Frederic Cassidy came to the rescue, in a letter of 20 March, this time with corroborative evidence: 'Various fish of the family Sparidae range up and down the North Atlantic coast under the name of *porgy*, or in *r*-dropping pronunciations *pogy* or *paugie*. Recent etymologists seem to prefer the Spanish-Portuguese *pargo* as the source but I think it's multiple, or at least double, as the abbreviation of (*scup*)*paug* with familiarizing -*y*/*ie*. The *paugie* of New England is the menhaden, used, as you know, for fertilizer, and these fish were (perhaps still are) used for exactly that. Further, they were boiled down, at times, presumably in pots. The last step (a guess): *paugy-* or *pogy-pots* being introduced to the pearling industry--a nautical one, broadly speaking--by New England or other American seamen sailing to Australia.'

AWEG launched

The Australian Writers' and Editors' Guide, edited by Shirley Purchase and prepared in the Centre, was launched at a small function in the Chancelry ANU on 9 April. The speaker was Graham Grayston, Editor of the 4th edition of the *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* (Australian Government Publishing Service). The following paragraphs are excerpted from his speech:

'It is always a major event when a new Oxford University Press reference work makes its appearance; and the event we are celebrating today is certainly no exception. *The Australian Writers' and Editors' Guide* was, if I may say so, long overdue. It is very important that every country should have its own reference works in which one can find, first and foremost, information about different aspects of the country -- people, places, both well known and not so well known, abbreviations, acronyms, and many other things. That importance cannot be overemphasised.

Having edited the fourth edition of the AGPS *Style Manual for Authors,*

Editors and Printers, I know only too well what a tremendous amount of work, frequently quite nerve-racking, is involved in preparing a publication of this kind. It is, after all, impossible to be too accurate and equally impossible to be too painstaking in the pursuit of total accuracy. One particular dilemma facing editors is what to leave in, what to leave out and, of course, what to put in. The operation might sound simple enough, but I can assure you that it isn't. You know for a fact that your decisions won't please everybody. There will, for example, always be someone who bemoans the omission of something which he or she deems to be absolutely vital.

It would be strange indeed if I didn't mention how pleased I am to see that reference is made in *AWEG* to the AGPS *Style Manual* and that we agree on a number of important points. For example, the preference for the *-ise* spelling in words such as 'organise'. Happily, however, the *-ize* spelling is recognised as a valid alternative, and not proscribed in the way that the *-ise* spelling is in the UK edition. It's good to avoid, where possible, both proscription and prescription. That this book does so to a large extent is, I think, one of its particular strengths. As far as I can see, proscription is confined to forms that are definitely wrong -- for example, 'accidently' instead of 'accidentally'; that's a common error.

Spelling, and more particularly spelling reform, is, as we all know, a subject of great concern and even considerable emotion for some people. I don't want to become embroiled in any controversy, so I'll limit myself to just two things. First, I found it interesting that in this book, as in the UK version, the *-or* spelling in words such as 'colour' is labelled 'US'; in other words, its well-documented use in Australia is not acknowledged. At least, that's the conclusion I think I'm supposed to draw. Secondly, I was intrigued by the way the building we are in at this moment spells its name. So, naturally, I looked it up in *AWEG*;

and sure enough, that spelling was there, and with an indication that it was peculiar, in Australia at least, to the ANU. That is just one illustration, but a good one (I think), of the comprehensiveness of this book.'

The following excerpt is from Shirley Purchase's reply:

'Collins' *Authors and Printers Dictionary* has been a much treasured aid to authors and editors since the early years of this century, and wherever I have worked as an editor there has always been a copy on the shelf. Since 1981 it has been known as the *Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors*.

When Bill Ramson asked me whether I would be interested in preparing an Australian version - that is, cutting out the entries of local British interest and replacing them with entries covering Australia, the Pacific and near Asia - I was delighted at the prospect. A book that was already useful could be made more so to people working in this country. An uncertain editor would be able to turn to it to check not only the spellings of Addis Ababa and Wedgwood but also those of Woolloongabba and Rolf Boldrewood.

I did not know what I was letting myself in for. Neither, I think, did OUP. Six months half time work turned into twelve months, and the final copy went to the publisher at the beginning of 1990. It was never simply a matter of cutting out and inserting. Every entry that remained had to be looked at carefully to ensure its appropriateness in an Australian context. For instance, *pannikin* was there but for us it is not a little pan but a metal drinking vessel. *Layby* was there, but Australians are much more familiar with that as a method of payment than as a siding on the highway. Percy Grainger was there - quite accurately described as an American composer born in Australia. But because for a long time he was probably the only Australian composer anyone had heard of, he had to have his nationality restored.

Even after many editions, however, no amount of work can completely eliminate the Edwardian flavour of this guide - this touch of *The Forsyte Saga.* I believe that is part of its charm, and helps to make it a good browsing book.

There were three special things for me about working in the Kingsley Street Cottage on this project. One was that I learnt a great deal about dictionaries - how they differed in emphasis, how they were set out, what some ignored and others included, how editions differed one from another. We would have teatime discussions on problem words as they came up. Did you know that the spelling *racquet*, as in tennis racquet, is regarded as incorrect everywhere except in the *Macquarie Dictionary? Racket* is the preferred spelling, but because the former is so universally used in Australia we decided to give it respectability.

The second special thing was that in researching the names of people and places to go into the guide I greatly increased my knowledge of history, geography, art and literature. I admit to indulging myself a bit with the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* which must be the perfect bedside book.

Finally there was the company in the cottage - always encouraging and stimulating - a great bunch of people. I thank them all.'

femocrat

Ian Donaldson, recently returned from abroad, has suggested that the perception of *femocrat* is that it was originally Australian. Sara Dowse recently talked of its earlier history in *Australian Society*, believing that it was first coined by Babette Francis in 1976 or thereabouts, writing in the *Toorak Times*, and that it was a pejorative term. Babette Francis confirms this, but is unable to supply the evidence - as is the editor of the *Toorak Times*. Can any of our Victorian readers help?

Dawn Service

Jay Arthur, burrowing away in the War Memorial Library, has found the following, tangibly the first, citation for *dawn service*, in the Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1929 of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia, W.A. Branch:

'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 ideas of the Executive at first were quite simple. Just a small party of delegates to be headed by the State President. We made no elaborate plans, yet nothing could be more appealing or impressive than the short silent service. No flags, no speeches, just sincerity. From 5 a.m. flashing headlights of motor cars pierced the gloom outside of King's Park gates, throwing into relief the figures of old and young silently making for the rendezvous. Tramp, tramp, the old rhythm of marching troops came through the early morning mist. 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.'