



APRIL 2007

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 1

PUBLISHED TWICE A YEAR

EDITORIAL

In the previous *Ozwords* (October 2006) Sarah Ogilvie told the story of an Australian who collects quotations (or 'citations', the technical term) for the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Australian National Dictionary*. It occurred to me that some of our readers, who are primarily acquainted with dictionaries of the kind represented by the *Australian Oxford Dictionary* or the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, might not fully understand the nature of those larger dictionaries (the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Australian National Dictionary*) that lie behind them, and give them their authority.

The larger dictionaries are dictionaries based on historical principles. They record the history of a word, including its spellings, grammatical structure, and meanings, and they illustrate these with quotations from written sources. If you look at a smaller Oxford dictionary, and see the various senses given for a word, you might ask: 'how on earth do they know this?' Well, they know this because the larger Oxford historical dictionaries provide the evidence for these senses.

It is this collection of the evidence of the history of English words that has made Oxford dictionaries the world's pre-eminent dictionaries. In order to explain this further, I have asked Dr Bruce Moore to look at the history of the word *kangaroo*, the first Australian Aboriginal word to move into international English. A reproduction on page 2 of the beginning of the entry for *kangaroo* in the *Australian National Dictionary* will give readers unfamiliar with it a good idea of how citations are used.

Frederick Ludowyk
Editor, *Ozwords*

KANGAROO: A FIRST AUSTRALIAN BRUCE MOORE

The word *kangaroo* is the first and best-known borrowing of an Aboriginal word into English. In 1770 Captain James Cook was forced to make repairs to the *Endeavour* in north Queensland (near present-day Cooktown), after the ship had been damaged on coral reefs. During their seven-week stay Cook and his crew had contact with the local Aboriginal people, the Guugu Yimidhirr, and their language. On 23 June 1770 Cook reports in his journal that a new animal had been sighted: 'One of the Men saw an Animal something less than a greyhound; it was of a Mouse Colour, very slender made, and swift of Foot.' The following day Cook himself sees the animal:

I saw myself this morning, a little way from the Ship, one of the Animals before spoke off; it was of a light mouse Colour and the full size of a Grey Hound, and shaped in every respect like one, with a long tail, which it carried like a Grey hound; in short, I should have taken it for a wild dog but for its walking or running, in which it jump'd like a Hare or Deer.

Joseph Banks was the botanist on Cook's 1768–1771 voyage, and he first records his awareness of the new animal in his journal on 7 July:

We walkd many miles over the flats and saw 4 of the animals, 2 of which my greyhound fairly chas'd, but they beat him owing to the length and thickness of the grass which prevented him from running while they at every bound leapt over the tops of it. We observd much to our surprize that instead of Going upon all fours this animal went only upon two legs, making vast bounds just as the Jerbua (*Mus Jaculus*) does.

On 14 July one of Banks's men kills an animal:

Our second lieutenant who was a shooting today had the good fortune to kill the animal that had so long been the subject of our speculations. To compare it to any European animal would be impossible as it has not the least resemblance of any one I have seen. Its fore legs are extremely short and of no use to it in walking, its hind again as disproportionally long; with these it hops 7 or 8 feet at each hop in the same manner as the Gerbua, to which animal indeed it bears much

resemblance except in Size, this being in weight 38 lb and the Gerbua no larger than a common rat.

Banks's running head to this entry is '*Kill Kanguru*', and this is the first evidence of the word *kangaroo* in English. Three weeks later Cook's journal shows that he too has come to learn the word for this new animal, and on 4 August he records in his journal: 'the Animal which I have before mentioned called by the natives *Kangooroo*, or *Kanguru*.' This is the second piece of evidence for the word *kangaroo* in English.

Cook and Banks took this and other Aboriginal words with them back to England. Because of the unusual nature of this new animal, the word very quickly became widely known. It became known to the English lexicographer Dr Samuel Johnson, who produced his renowned *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755. In August 1773 Samuel Johnson and his biographer James Boswell were in Scotland. On 29 August they dined with the Rev. Alexander Grant, and Boswell in his *Life of Johnson* recounts how Dr Johnson introduced the topic of the kangaroo, and proceeded to imitate the creature:

The appearance, conformation, and habits of the quuadruped were of the most singular kind; and in order to render his description more vivid and graphic, Johnson rose from the table and volunteered an imitation of the animal. The company stared; and Mr Grant said nothing could be more ludicrous than the appearance of a tall, heavy, grave-looking man, like Dr Johnson, standing up to mimic the shape and motions of a kangaroo. He stood erect, put out his hands like feelers, and, gathering up the tails of his huge brown coat so as to resemble the pouch of the animal, made two or three vigorous bounds across the room.

The word was therefore well established in international English when in 1787 Joseph Banks gave a copy of his 'New Holland language', a collection of words he had taken from the Guugu Yimidhirr people, to Governor Phillip before the First Fleet left, and Phillip either mistakenly thought it had been taken down at Botany Bay or assumed, as many have done, that all Aboriginal languages were much the same.

Watkin Tench (a member of the marine corps on the First Fleet), writing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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kangaroo /kæŋgə'ru/, *n.* Pl. **kangaroos** but formerly also **kangaroo**. [Extended use of Guugu Yimidhirr *gaŋurru* a large black or grey kangaroo, prob. *spec.* the male *Macropus robustus*.]

1. a. Any of the larger marsupials of the chiefly Austral. fam. Macropodidae (see quot. 1956), having short forelimbs, a tail developed for support and balance, long feet and powerful hind limbs, enabling a swift, bounding motion. **b.** Occas. loosely, referring to any or all of the members of the fam. Macropodidae and Potoroidae: see quots. 1839, 1870, and 1970. **c.** The flesh or hide of the animal. See also WALLABY *n.* 1. Also *attrib.*

1770 J. BANKS *Endeavour Jrnl.* 14 July (1962) II. 94 Kill Kanguru. 1770 J. COOK *Jrnl.* 4 Aug. (1955) I. 367 The Animal which I have before mentioned called by the natives *Kangooroo* or *Kanguru*. 1787 *Hist. New Holland* 71 We found that the animal called *kangooroo* at Endeavour River, was known under the same name here [*sc.* Van Diemen's Land]. 1788 *HRA* (1914) 1st Ser. I. 31 Near one of these huts we found some of the bones of a kangaroo. 1789 A. PHILLIP *Voyage to Botany Bay* 104 Kanguroos were frequently seen, but were so shy that it was very difficult to shoot them. 1792 *Hist. Rec. N.S.W.* (1893) II. 799 Of the beasts, the kangaroo is found to be the best eating, exactly resembling venison. 1805 *Sydney Gaz.* 13 Oct., Sixty seven large Kangaroos were caught from the first to the 10th of September, and issued from the Store instead of Salt Meat. 1814 *HRA* (1916) 1st Ser. VIII. 167 Found the Kangaroo the dogs must have killed yesterday.

in December 1790, shows that the word **kangaroo** had become the generic term for the animal at the new colony, and when he sees one, writes naturally of it as a **kangaroo**: 'About one o'clock, the serjeant was awakened by a rustling noise in the bushes near him, and supposing it to proceed from a kangaroo, called to his comrades, who instantly jumped up.' Tench is one of the most acute observers at the new colony, and he is one of the first to realise that even close to Sydney the indigenous people speak different languages. In April 1791 he writes: 'Although our natives and the strangers conversed on a par, and understood each other perfectly, yet they spoke different dialects of the same language many of the most common and necessary words, used in life, bearing no similitude, and others being slightly different.' He is aware, too, that there is

something odd about the history of the word **kangaroo**. After explaining how for three years the colonists had mistakenly thought the local indigenous word **beal** meant 'good' when it in fact meant 'bad', he mentions Captain Cook's wordlist:

After this, it cannot be thought extraordinary, that the little vocabulary, inserted in Mr. Cooke's account of this part of the world, should appear defective; even were we not to take in the great probability of the dialects at Endeavour River, and Van Dieman's Land, differing from that spoken at Port Jackson. And it remains to be proved, that the animal, called here Pat-a-ga-ram, is not there called Kanguroo.

Tench wonders if Cook made a mistake in taking down the word **kangaroo**, but is aware of what he calls different 'dialects', and is

therefore prepared to countenance the possibility that the Sydney word **patagaram** ('kangaroo') might refer to the same creature as **kangaroo** referred to at Cooktown.

The indigenous people at Sydney were understandably confused by the white people who pointed at **patagarams** or **wallabies** and used the word **kangaroo** for them. The recently published second edition of *Australian Aboriginal Words in English* (ed. R.M.W. Dixon, Bruce Moore, W.S. Ramson, & Mandy Thomas) explains:

Members of the First Fleet employed the word *kangaroo* in talking to the local Aborigines, and must have used it in connection with a variety of marsupials. The Iora people thought they were being taught the English word for 'edible animal'; when cattle were unloaded the Aborigines enquired whether they were *kangaroo*. The story doesn't end there. When Europeans settled along the Darling River, the English word kangaroo (an original loan from Guugu Yimidhirr) was taken over into the Baaganndji language (with the form *gaanguru*) as the name for the introduced animal 'horse'.

The next step in the history of the word **kangaroo** was the development of Tench's slight worry into a firmly-held theory that Cook had been mistaken in his recording of the word. In 1820 Captain Phillip P. King visited the Endeavour River area where Cook had been, and took down a vocabulary list just as Cook had done. The surprising thing was that the word **kangaroo** did not appear on King's list, and for 'kangaroo' he listed the word **min-ar**. And so at a later date the most unlikely story developed that when Cook asked a Guugu Yimidhirr person the name of the animal he responded **kangaroo**, which purportedly meant 'I don't know' in Guugu Yimidhirr. *Australian Aboriginal Words in English* points out that the mystery was solved in 1972 when the linguist John Haviland studied Guugu Yimidhirr and found that King's word meant 'edible animal', and that he had probably pointed to a number of different kinds of kangaroo. The word that Cook collected referred to a specific kangaroo, probably the large grey or black kangaroo *Macropus robustus*.

With all this in mind, the beginning of the entry for the word **kangaroo** in the *Australian National Dictionary* is understandable. The headword is followed by the pronunciation. Then grammatical information about the plural form is given. The etymology, explaining the origin of the word, is given in square brackets. Then the senses follow, and, since this is

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a dictionary based on historical principles, the senses are given in the order they arose. And again because this is a dictionary based on historical principles, each sense is followed by a block of quotations illustrating how the word has been used in printed sources. We usually aim to have one quotation from each decade, but because kangaroo has been such an important word in Australian English, a good sampling from the early period is given, including the two quotations from Banks and Cook.

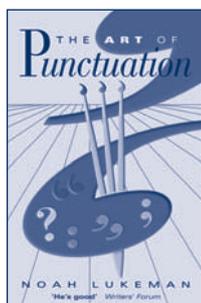
In addition to being the first borrowing, **kangaroo** has been one of the most productive words in Australian English. It has been used since the 1930s for the Australian international rugby league team, but before that it was used in the 1880s and 1890s for cricketers. It has been used in the names of plants and other animals: **kangaroo apple**, **kangaroo bush**, **kangaroo grass**, **kangaroo fish**, **kangaroo rat**, **kangaroo tick**, and many others. It has been used in a variety of other compounds: **kangaroo bar** ('bullbar'),

kangaroo jack ('a heavy-duty jack to lift logs etc. '), **kangaroo route** ('the Qantas route to London via Singapore'), **kangaroo start** ('a jerking start by a motor vehicle'), **kangaroo steamer** ('a stew made from kangaroo meat'), **kangaroo-tail soup**. Two compounds, interestingly, did not originate in Australia. A **kangaroo court** is 'an improperly constituted court having no legal standing, e.g. one held by strikers, mutineers, prisoners, etc.', and it first appears on the American goldfields in 1853. The term **kangaroo closure** is 'applied to a form of parliamentary closure by which some amendments are selected for discussion and others excluded', and is primarily used in Britain (Australian parliaments would talk about applying the 'guillotine'). The phrase **to have kangaroos in the top paddock**, meaning 'to be crazy', however, is exclusively Australian. As a verb, **kangaroo** can mean 'to hunt kangaroos'. It can also mean 'to leap in a manner resembling that of a kangaroo', and this is often used to describe a motor vehicle moving forward in jerks: 'Kangarooing our way

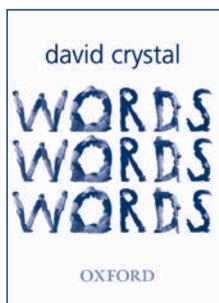
up the track in half-mile jumps. Stop, swear, fill, drive' (1968, D. O'Grady, *Bottle of Sandwiches*). Finally, it has also developed the figurative sense 'to squat over a lavatory bowl with one's feet on the seat': 'Please don't kangaroo the seat, our breed of crabs can leap six feet. (1964, A.H. Affleck, *The Wandering Years*).

Kangaroo continues to be a productive word in Australian English, and we will add more kangaroo material to the next edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*. The **kangaroo nugget** is a .9999 gold bullion coin of one ounce, minted in Perth from the mid 1980s. In 1995 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported: 'Australia's Kangaroo Nugget has become the world's highest selling gold bullion coin. The Nugget captured 27 per cent of the world market in 1994—narrowly outselling rivals from the US, Canada and Austria.' In Aboriginal English a **kangaroo marriage** is one not bound by Aboriginal or European law, described by one of our respondents as 'hop on, hop off, and hop away'.

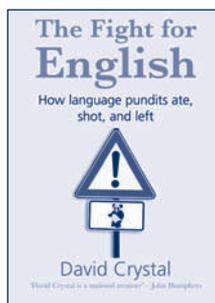
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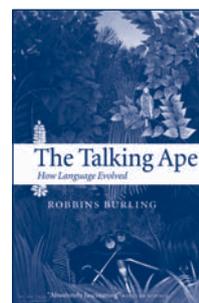
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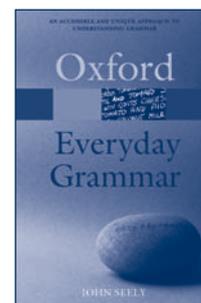
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We welcome readers' comments on their recent observations of Australian usage, both positive and negative, and their queries, particularly those not easily answerable from the standard reference books.

WHAT PRICE PLATYPI?

I was definitely taught at school that the plural of **platypus** is **platypi**. I see that some dictionaries give **platypi** as an alternative to **platypuses**, but I heard a discussion on radio where it was said that **platypi** is wrong.

D. Edgley, Qld

The poor old platypus has had rather a tough time with its name. It was variously called **duck-mole**, **duck-billed mole**, **duck-billed animal**, **duck-billed water-mole**, even by its genus name **ornithorynchus** (from Greek, literally meaning 'bird bill'), and once by the term **paradox** (since the scientific community found it as difficult to believe in an egg-laying mammal as we would in a viviparous chook!), before common usage settled on **platypus**. The term **platypus** was used by the English naturalist G. Shaw in 1799. **Platypus** is a Greek term, literally meaning 'flat-footed', and referring to 'the expanded webs of its fore-feet'. The plural of the Greek would be **platypodes**. We see this Greek **-es** plural in the word **antipodes**, used by inhabitants of the northern hemisphere to describe the inhabitants of the southern hemisphere (a sense that is now obsolete: it now denotes places rather than people in the southern hemisphere, especially Australia and New Zealand). The term literally means 'having the feet opposite', from *anti* 'against, opposite' and *pous, pod-* 'foot'. The first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) gave us this delightful definition of the obsolete sense: 'Those who dwell directly opposite to each other on the globe, so that the soles of their feet are as if they were planted against each other.' But people started noticing that there were some Latin nouns that ended in **-us** that had a plural in **-i**. These include: **bacillus** (plural **bacilli**), **cactus** (plural **cacti** or **cactuses**), **stimulus** (**stimuli**), and **syllabus** (**syllabuses** or **syllabi**). So surely, it was argued, the plural of **platypus** should be **platypi**! But as we have seen, this is a Greek word, and the **-i** plural is incorrect. Similarly, the word **octopus** (Greek, and meaning 'eight foot') is sometimes given the false plural **octopi**. With the exception of **antipodes**, all such Greek words form their English plurals quite regularly with **-es**. So it is **platypuses** and **octopuses**. ED.

I'LL GO HE

I'm attempting to write my memoirs and just used the expression, 'I'll go he'. Maybe you have covered this in an earlier mag.? I think it must have come from one of those kids' games such as hide and seek

where 'He' has to be the one who looks for the others. My use was: 'If that wasn't a sign, then I'll go He.'

M. Mitchell, WA

The children's game is listed in the OED, and **he** is 'the player who has the task of catching or touching the others'. In some versions of the game the pronoun **he** is replaced by **it**. The fundamental aim of the game is not to get caught and therefore not to become 'he'. The game itself is international. But what is fascinating about your letter is that you mention your own figurative use of the phrase 'I'll go he': 'If that wasn't a sign, then I'll go He.' Bruce Moore, from Victoria, knew the phrase, but other Centre members (NSW and ACT) did not. It may well be regional, but we have now discovered that it is an Australianism. Here are some Australian newspaper examples: 'I know they gave the official attendance as a bit under 11,000, but if there weren't 13,000 there I'll go he!' (*Hobart Mercury*, 13 October 2005); '(But) if we're not a great club, I'll go he. We're an unbelievable club' (*Sunday Age*, 2 July 2000); 'If subsequent anthologies of American short stories don't contain her "Cocktail Hour", "Locusts" or "Abattoir", I'll go he' (*Age*, 15 January 1994). Since the whole point of the children's game is 'not to go he', the assertion that the speaker is willing to go he of his own volition is a way of saying: 'if this is not obvious even to Blind Freddy then I'm glad to be punished.' ED.

\$64 QUESTION

I have a query about a commonly used phrase which I heard used in a radio interview the other day. The interviewee referred to 'the sixty-four dollar question'. I have always thought it was the \$64,000 question. Are you able to enlighten me on which is the original version and, irrespective of the value, what is the origin of this phrase?

J. Fisher, WA

The OED points out that the original term was **sixty-four dollar question**, and that this was 'originally the question posed at the climax of a US radio quiz for a prize of sixty-four dollars'. It was then used in a transferred sense 'to denote a difficult or crucial question'. The quiz show was called 'Take It or Leave It', and it was on CBS radio from 1940 to 1947. The transferred sense appeared very early, in 1942 in J.R. Tunis's *All American*: 'Here's the sixty-four dollar question. Will the team go to Miami?' The prizes apparently started at \$2, and then increased to 4, 8, 16, 32, and

finally 64 dollars, with increasingly difficult questions. The OED also points out that the variant **sixty-four thousand dollar question** also exists, first appearing in the transferred sense in 1957. It is possible that the increase was caused by inflation, although a new quiz show called 'The \$64,000 Question' ran on CBS television from 1955 to 1958. ED.

YES OR NO?

Has anyone else noticed that as a preliminary to responding to a question, people interviewed on TV often say 'yeah, no...' before launching into their answer. I find it confusing. Are they hedging their bets, or is it just to gain thinking time?

L. Grosse, ACT

This has been a feature of Australian English in the past ten to twenty years. There is an excellent study of the matter in an article titled "'Yeah-no He's a Good Kid": A Discourse Analysis of Yeah-no in Australian English' by Kate Burridge and Margaret Florey in *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 22 (2002), pp 149–71. Although yeah-no is often thought to be a feature of younger speakers, the researchers found it was most common in the middle-age group of 35–49 years. In some contexts yeah-no can enforce assent or dissent, as Burridge and Florey explain: 'For example, Melanie makes the comment "They're teaching linguistics in high schools next year". Bronwyn emphatically replies "yeah-no no I know!" In such cases *no* functions to strongly reinforce the agreement of *yeah* by removing any possibility of contradiction. The additional *no* has the effect of more forcibly dismissing any doubts'. It also occurs where a speaker picks up on a comment made earlier in the conversation. For example, after a long silence Mary resumes the discussion about her favourite television program with a 'Yeah-no I thought it was great'. In other contexts yeah-no does seem to be a hedging device, especially where the speaker is trying to avoid giving offence when contradicting, or when trying to avoid being a big-noter. One of the examples given is ironman Ky Hurst being interviewed by Tim Bailey who describes Ky's win in the competition as 'a phenomenal effort'. Ky responds: 'Yeah-no, that was pretty incredible I think ... I picked up some really nice waves coming through.' Ky accepts the compliment, but then modestly goes on to attribute some of his success to the beach conditions. ED.

Oxford University Press Australia, in association with the Centre, will be publishing a Word of the Month, starting in June. This will usually be a new Australian word, with an account of the kind of research the Centre has been conducting into it. It will be distributed by email, and if you would like to subscribe to the Australian Oxford Dictionary Word of the Month send an email to <wordofthemonth.au@oup.com>.

WEB PAGE

There have been some significant changes to the Dictionary Centre's webpage at <<http://www.anu.edu.au/andc>>. All copies of *Ozwords* from October 1996 are now available in electronic form. There is now a very full bibliography of studies of Australian English, divided into the following sections: (1) Dictionaries on Historical Principles; (2) General Books; (3) General Articles; (4) Accent; (5) Colloquialisms and Slang; (6) Regional Australian English; (7) Occupations and Special Groups; (8) Aboriginal Words in Australian English; (9) Aboriginal English; (10) Migrants; (11) Grammar and Syntax.

THOSE RABBITS AGAIN

In response to the letter concerning the phrase 'thank your mother for the rabbits' in last October's Mailbag, Professor G.A. Wilkes (known to many of our readers from his book *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms*) sent the following to the Editor:

If the possible Irish origin of 'Thank your mother for the rabbits' rests on the remark of Zoe Higgins to Bloom in *Ulysses* (Penguin edition, p. 428), it should be noted that when Bloom had previously asked her 'Are you a Dublin girl?', Zoe had replied 'No bloody fear. I'm English' (p. 389). Later, more specifically, she says 'I'm Yorkshire born' (p. 408), and identifies with the music of 'My Girl's A Yorkshire Girl' ('That's me' — p. 468) and leads the dancing to that tune (p. 469). Eric Partridge, in *A Dictionary of Catch Phrases* (1977), listed 'thank your mother for the rabbit' as 'brought to my notice by the late Frank Shaw on 14 February 1969, but without definition, date, *milieu*' (p. 208). Frank Shaw is acknowledged by Partridge as an 'authority on "Scouse"—the speech of the Merseyside'. More pieces for the jigsaw?

We are still trying to track down the biographical details of the British-born Canadian novelist John Mills, whose 1993 autobiography was titled *Thank Your Mother for the Rabbits*. I wonder if he is from Yorkshire or thereabouts?

RECEIVAL

Dennis Mouy alerted us to the use of the word **receival** in the *Weekly Times* (2007),



The Australian National Dictionary Centre is jointly funded by **Oxford University Press Australia** and **The Australian National University** to research all aspects of Australian English and to publish Australian dictionaries and other works.

and to the fact that a web search showed that the word is used infrequently outside Australia. **Receival** is in the OED and defined as 'the act of receiving, receipt, reception'. There are citations from 1637 to 1895, and the word is labelled 'now rare'. When we checked our files at the Dictionary Centre we found that the newspaper reading program that led to the book *Words from the West* in 1994 had produced good evidence for **receival** in agricultural contexts. For example, from the *Great Southern Herald* (a newspaper based about 300 miles south-east of Perth) in 1970 there is this: 'All receival points for grain in Katanning and surrounding districts have now closed down.' And from the Victorian-based *Weekly Times* mentioned by Dennis, in March 2007 we have: 'Many farmers warehouse grain off-farm at receival sites that pay all capital costs and overheads.' We found that the most common use of the word was in the compounds **receival point** and **receival site**, and these will appear in the next edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*.

OCKERS

The first edition of the *Australian National Dictionary* (1988) included **ocker** ('the rough and unsophisticated Australian male') and a number of derivatives—the verb **to ocker** meaning 'to behave as an ocker', the noun **ockerisation** meaning 'vulgarisation', the adjective **ockerised** meaning 'vulgarised', **ockerdom** for 'the world of ockers collectively', **ockerina** for 'a female ocker', and **ockerism** for both the 'behaviour characteristic of an ocker' and 'an Australianism'. The new edition of the dictionary will add the verb **ockerise**: 'Initsapparentquestto"Ockerise" the entire population, commercial TV these days invariably refers to Australians or indeed, anything Australian, as "Aussies" or Aussie"' (2000, *Canberra Times*). There is also the noun **ockerland**: 'And the Estonian lady, now utterly at home and joyous in

the ockerland of equality and freedom, would announce her joy and contentment: "My cobbers, in zis Orstrahlia, everything ees ripperrrrr." (1987, *Sydney Morning Herald*). And finally there is **ockerette**: 'Tonight, Julie is ready for some bedroom action for she is, bless her little **Ockerette** heart, "hotter than a deep-fried dim sim"' (2001, *Courier-Mail*); 'Feminism may have freed Australian women from the confines of gender stereotypes but it has created a new generation of "ockerettes" ... who ... admitted they swear, get drunk in public, go to football matches, drive aggressively, enjoy girls' nights out at the pub and offer to pay when out with a man' (2006, *Courier-Mail*).

ROUSEABOUT

Many thanks to all those who responded to our requests for antedatings. For example, our earliest citation for **rouseabout** meaning 'a general hand on a rural property, especially in a shearing shed' was 1881. Ian Beissel sent us this passage from the *Town and Country Journal*, 24 August, 1872: 'To the right of the woolshed are two well-constructed pine houses, having galvanized iron roofs. One of these is for the shearers, and is fitted with twenty-one bunks, in ship fashion: the other is for the "rouse-about" men.' The article also included an excellent illustration of the Australian sense of 'paddock': 'There are nine or ten paddocks altogether, and each paddock encloses an area of about twelve square miles.'

SHOOFTY

Shoofy meaning 'a look' is well established in Australian English, and is from Arabic. **Shoofy** is also an adjective in Australian English meaning 'dishonest, deceitful', and in this sense it is an alteration of **shifty**. In February 1990 the *Financial Review* reported that Bob Hawke had used this sense of **shoofy** as a noun: 'In the best tradition of Hawkespeak, he also invented another new word yesterday and sowed some confusion in replying to a journalist's question: "I'm not trying to do a **shoofy** by adjectivalling my way out of it, if I can put it that way."' Was it Hawke who turned the adjective into a noun, or was this simply a word that had been 'out there' for some time? In September 1993 Attorney-General Lavarch used it in the House of Representatives: 'Hence the implication no doubt is that it would be a bit of a **shoofy**, that we could slip it in early, and that it would be imposed on the incoming government.' Again, in the House in March 1995, Paul Keating used it: 'We are just pinning you down trying to put a **shoofy** over us—a sneaky one over us.' Is it a Labor-Party word? We would be grateful for other examples.

Bruce Moore

Director



DOES AUSTRALIAN SLANG STILL RHYME?

MARK GWYNN



The prominence of rhyming slang in Australia has often been highlighted by lexicographers, historians, linguists, and non-specialists alike. This form of slang has had such strong associations with Australia that in the US it was termed 'Australian argot' or the 'Australian lingo'. But just how characteristic of Australian slang is it? Has it ever been a major part of Australia's internationally recognised colloquial vocabulary? And if it has, does its prominence still continue today?

The first reference to rhyming slang as a distinct form of slang occurs in John Camden Hotten's *Slang Dictionary* of 1859, where he notes that 'the Rhyming Slang, or the substitution of words and sentences which rhyme with other words intended to be kept secret' had been introduced some twelve to fifteen years before. One of the best examples in international English is the word **raspberry**. This seemingly innocent word comes from rhyming slang **raspberry tart** = 'fart'. Ironically some of the best and most enduring rhyming slang words evolve (like **raspberry**) to have no rhyme at all. Take the Australian phrase **she's apples**, meaning 'it's fine, in good order'. This is derived from rhyming slang **apples and spice** (or **rice**) = 'nice'. A fine example of Australian rhyming slang is the phrase **to get the Richard** or its logical shortening **to get the dick**, meaning 'to be irreparably damaged' or 'to be made redundant'. This seems to be a variant of **Richard the Third** = 'turd', and is ultimately from theatrical slang **to get the bird** (or **goose**), meaning 'to be hissed or given a bad reception'.

In Australia's first comprehensive historical dictionary, the *Australian National Dictionary* (AND), there are some seventy rhyming slang entries. These represent only a small fraction of the more than 10,000 entries in the dictionary. The problem with rhyming slang (as with other forms of colloquial language) is that it rarely finds its way onto the printed page. Rhyming slang is less likely than some other colloquial language to appear on the printed page because by its nature it deliberately obfuscates and assumes an inside knowledge of the lingo. Intrinsically, rhyming slang is an oral form of expression, relying on the poetic qualities of rhyme and wit in the context of a 'theatrical performance'—a chance for the speaker to show his flare or to reassure others in his class or group that he is one of them.

Early examples of Australian rhyming slang recorded in AND include **rubbity dub** = 'pub' (1898), **Aristotle** = 'bottle' (1897), **Johnny Russel** = 'bustle', and (**jam tart** = 'sweetheart' (1892). Sidney Baker in

The Australian Language (1945) outlined the first references to rhyming slang in Australian magazines and newspapers, including a comment from *Truth* in 1900: 'Cockney slang is quickly displacing the old push lingo in Sydney.' The reference to 'Cockney slang' is important because a look at examples of rhyming slang in this period proves Baker's point that these are largely 'out-of-date Cockneyisms'. It is also significant that early references to rhyming slang in Australia only emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century, with our first written examples occurring in the very late nineteenth century (with the lone exception of **Jimmy Grant** = 'immigrant', first appearing in 1859). While the history of rhyming slang in Australia remains unclear, we can be sure that it was imported during the second half of the nineteenth century, and that it shared (at least initially) a common vocabulary with its British and colonial (or post-colonial) counterparts. **Jimmy Grant** has been recorded early in New Zealand, Britain, and South Africa.

The majority of Australian rhyming slang words, as recorded in AND, do not occur until the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. In other words, the frequency of Australian rhyming slang peaks around the time of the Second World War and the post-war period. In *The Oxford Dictionary of Rhyming Slang* (2002) John Ayto makes the point that rhyming slang has usually been the domain of men. In fact the 'golden period' of Australian slang is the 1940s, with the evidence showing that the armed forces were an important contributor. One has only to take a brief look at lists of rhyming slang to see that the main themes centre around drinking, sex, defecation, sport, and what on the whole has been traditionally associated with masculine pursuits and concerns. Ayto makes the salient point that while there are twenty rhyming words for 'wife', there is only one for 'husband'! In a manuscript initially compiled by the Australian war correspondent Gavin Long in the mid 1940s (and held at the Australian War Memorial) we can see that rhyming slang played an important role within the slang lexicon of the armed forces. While many of the words were shared with other English speakers, a number of Australianisms appear here for the first time: **comic cuts** = 'guts', **dead horse** = 'sauce', **Dad and Dave** = 'shave', **cow's hoof** = 'poof', **Martin Place** = 'face', **Nelly Bly** = 'fly'—and you can figure out **Donald Duck** for yourself.

What of rhyming slang today? In the forthcoming second edition of AND there will be some fifty new rhyming slang entries out of a total of approximately 5000

new entries. Many of these entries were not included in the first edition of AND due to lack of printed evidence. Out of this small total there are fewer than ten that have emerged in the years since AND's publication in 1988. These include **Lionel Rose** = 'nose', **jatz crackers** = 'knackers', and **Stuart Diver** = 'survivor'. Yet a brief search of the Internet will reveal a plethora of sites devoted to rhyming slang or word sites where rhyming slang forms a significant component of the lexicon. And indeed many examples of rhyming slang are said to be Australian in origin. Like Baker in the 1940s, I must report that many of the words listed in these sites are not Australian. The Australian content is often a small fraction of what is largely British rhyming slang (including many 'out-of-date Cockneyisms') and the fanciful imagination (to be kind) of the sites' makers and contributors. However, there are a small number of Australian rhyming slang words that continue to find their way into newspapers, magazines, Internet sites, and chat rooms. Take the word **Barry Crocker** in a *Sydney Morning Herald* article from 2006: 'It was a Barry Crocker of a year for Eddie McGuire.' Or the word **reginalds** in a 2004 *SMH* article: 'Thorpedo left the pearls at home and covered up his reginalds to kick off his latest joint venture.' From the 1970s Australian actor we have the rhyming slang **Barry Crocker** = 'shocker', which has been recorded since the early 1990s, and can be used elliptically, as in 'I had a Barry of a day'. **Reginalds** derives from **Reg Grundies** = 'undies'. In its shortened form we have evidence from the mid 1980s, while its rhyming slang parent has been recorded from the early 1980s. Reg Grundy was an Australian television producer.

With the rise of the Internet in the last decade, and with the medium of email, we can expect rhyming slang to still play a role in colloquial language. While the evidence points to a continued vibrancy in London—where you may have to be careful while going down the **Tony Blairs**, especially after a few **Britney Spears**—the jury is still out on the overall frequency of rhyming slang in Australia. There are still some who use the **Al Capone** or lend their **Germaine Greer** to hear the latest **John Dory** or get the **Tom Thumb**. But how many Australians use this language regularly or non-consciously? While the answer is probably only a relatively small number, rhyming slang's charm and verbal allure have not gone away, still giving it an important place in the Australian lexicon.

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GROUSE: IT'S THE EXTRA GROUSE

FREDERICK LUDOWYK



The Australian adjective **grouse** (also **the grouse** as superlative) means ‘very good of its (or her or his) kind; highly desirable; the best (frequently as **extra grouse**)’. A girl can be **grouse** or **the grouse** or even **extra grouse**; so can a guy, the weather, a footy match, beer, the colour of a car, or the conditions for standing thigh-deep in freezing water casting a fly (if, indeed, this example of masochism is what a fly fisherman does). Somehow it doesn’t feel right to say that conditions are **grouse** for composing a poem in ottava rima or writing this article on **grouse**.

Our earliest citation for the word is 1924 in *Truth* (Sydney, 27 April): ‘*Grouse*, something good.’ The definition isn’t particularly enlightening as to meaning and it gives the (perhaps unintended) implication that **grouse** is a noun. This 1944 citation is better: ‘You know them two grouse sheilas we’ve got the meet on with tomorrer night?’ (L. Glassop, *We Were the Rats*). The word has no connection with **grouse** meaning ‘grumble’ (nor, we may add, with **grouse** meaning ‘the pommy game bird of the Tetraonidae etc. etc. family’). In 1948 R. Raven-Hart caught the distinction between the two ‘grouses’ quite nicely: ‘Australians grouse wildly (“winge”, they would say: the word “grouse” is an adjective in Australian slang, and means “excellent”) about their post-war beer’ (*Canoe in Australia*). Some further **grouse** **grouses**: ‘Rosa! Me mate Johnny here reckons you’re a real grouse hunk of woman’ (1965, E. Lambert, *The Long White Night*); ‘The car was a striking “red pepper” (a grouse tomato red which everyone liked)’ (1973, *Australian Rodsports and Drag Racing News*, 2 March); ‘I dunno why you won’t let the White Leghorn [Australian slang for ‘a female player of lawn bowls’] move in here with ya. She’d keep the place in bloody grouse shape’ (1975, D.J. Townshend, *Gland Time*); ‘She’s a grouse sort of joint, this bloody Ceylon; do me’ (1979, D.R. Stuart, *Crank back on Roller*); ‘In this hotel where I’m staying, they’ve got a bar called the Rugby Bar. It’s full of allthis grouse rugby paraphenalia. It’s unreal’ (1998, R.G. Barrett, *Mud Crab Boogie*).

The formulation **the grouse** is a superlative, ‘the best’ (**grouser** and **grousest** being chimerical beasts). Hence 1987: ‘There’s nothing wrong with this room Mrs Perry. It’s the grouse’ (R.G. Barrett, *Boys from Binjiwunyawunya*). Barrett again in 1998: ‘I got an ensuite. Two beds, a lounge room, TV. The grouse’ (R.G. Barrett, *Mud Crab Boogie*). Another form of the superlative is the formulation

extra grouse: ‘Beaut. Wonderful. Our beer is “extra grouse”’ (1965, J. O’Grady, *Aussie English*); “Whisper’s” super colossal, humdinger, extra grouse, beaut competition for all the family’ (1967, *Kings Cross Whisper*, Sydney, no. 37). In the letters page of the *Bulletin* (12 January 1982) a correspondent takes Geoffrey Dutton to task:

Geoffrey Dutton reveals a gap in his vernacular when reviewing Colleen McCulloch (B, December 8). He is annoyed by her usage of ‘the grouse’ instead of ‘grouse’. My recollection is that ‘grouse’ was used in three forms. **1.** Grouse, as in ‘What a grouse lookin’ sheila’. **2.** Extra grouse, as in ‘That was extra grouse tucker, Mrs Dutton’, and finally the superlative degree: **3.** THE grouse, as in ‘I reckon a cold beer on a scorcher like this would be the grouse!’ Of course, youth in its enthusiasm will often use the superlative when comparative or positive forms would be more appropriate and I would imagine that in wartime bully beef could be extra grouse and even a sheila, under some circumstances could be the grouse.

There is floating around an adverbial sense of **grouse** and **extra grouse**. I have heard it on the odd occasion. I was told some years ago by a Canberra nurseryman that the *Osmanthus fragrans* I was regarding with deep contemplation ‘grows extra grouse in Canberra, only it’s too bloody slow’ (or words almost exactly to that effect); and again I heard a bloke (the context is again a vegetative one, I’m afraid) assure an elderly lady in a nursery that African ‘vi’lets’ ‘grow grouse, but you have to wick ‘em, see?’. (I couldn’t, alas, stay for the explanation of ‘wicking’, whatever that be. Some horticultural form of siccing? A weird Wiccan ritual involving candles on full-moon nights?) As far as I have been able to find out, there is only one written reference to the adverbial **grouse** and the context is not horticultural: ‘It suits yer grouse’ (1974, J. McNeil, *How Does your Garden Grow?*).

No one is certain where **grouse** in the sense ‘grumble’ ultimately comes from. It is possibly a variant of ‘grouch’, which also means ‘grumble’. And ‘grouch’, we know, is a variant of the now defunct ‘grutch’ with the same meaning. The onomatopoeic ‘grutch’ came into English from the equally onomatopoeic Old French ‘groucier’ or ‘grocher’ which meant ‘to murmur or complain’. All this is beside the point, however, since our grouse in the

sense ‘excellent’ is not related at all to the querulous and grouchy **grouse**.

Well if—and this is clear—**grouse** in the approbative sense does not come from **grouse** in the whingeing sense, where *does* it come from? Here we are on tricky ground. Most dictionaries opt out of the difficulty with the frustrating formula ‘origin unknown’. It is just possible, however, that the grouse **grouse** derives from the northern English and mainly Scottish dialect word **croose**. One of its many meanings is ‘pleased with oneself, cheerful, merry’ and another is ‘cosy, comfortable’ (*Scottish National Dictionary*). Hence, in the sense ‘cheerful, merry’: ‘And God! the men! Whaur could ye find/Sic hertsome lads, sae crouse and kind?’ (1917, John Buchan, *Poems*); ‘There still I saw the lads and lasses,/As crouse as ever o’er their glasses’ (1831, R. Shennan, *Tales*). In the sense ‘cosy, comfortable’ we have: ‘Thou’rt shelter’d warm and crouse’ (1804, R. Couper, *Poems*); ‘There’s no a hoose/Whaur ony wife/Should be sae croose’ (1915, T.W. Paterson, *Auld Saws*). The *English Dialect Dictionary* gives us this as one of the definitions of **croose**: ‘Bold, courageous, valiant; keen, eager’: ‘A cock is crouse in his own midding’ (1678, Ray, *Proverbs*). Another definition the dictionary gives is ‘pleased, happy, proud’: ‘Willy lookit unco croose, as he had a reet to do being the owner o’ sae mony pund notes an’ an auld pistol’ (1864, Latto, *Tam Bodkin*), and from north-eastern Yorkshire: ‘Sha wer varry cruse on her new dhriss.’ The *English Dialect Dictionary* too gives us the definition ‘Brisk, lively, cheerful, merry’: ‘As crouse as a new washen louse’ (1678, Ray, *Proverbs*). For the definition ‘Cosy, comfortable; cheery’ the *English Dialect Dictionary* gives: ‘An aa ithin wis trig an croose’ (1892, Burgess, *Rasmie*).

The pronunciation /kroos/ is mainly Scottish, the pronunciation /kraus/ (rhyming with ‘louse’) is mainly from northern England. The 20-volume *Oxford English Dictionary* has a citation as early as c.1400 for its definition ‘In somewhat high or lively spirits; vivacious; pert, brisk, lively, jolly’: ‘Heare are beastes in this howse, Heare cattes make yt crouse’—if you are a cat-lover, that is! (*Chester Plays* [although the extant version of the Chester Plays should probably now be dated c.1520—FL]). It is possible, I think, that Aussie **grouse** derives from **croose**, especially in its Northern English pronunciation. Indeed, we are now discovering that this is the area that has provided many Australian colloquialisms.

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 27: RESULTS

These were the instructions: Compose a sentence that contains all 26 letters of the English alphabet. The sentence must include an Australian place-name. The prizewinner will be the sentence with the fewest number of letters, with bonus points for cogency and wit.

Some entries were as brief as 28 words, but unfortunately did not make good or clear sentences. For length the cut off point proved to be 40 words.

Honourable Mentions (in the order of the number of letters the sentences contain): Quick jump doth vex lazy Bowen frogs! (30: G. Watson); Minx, why bed Vacy quartz jugs of plonk? (31: K. Shooter); Job with Zeehan quack for ex-vamp Gladys. (33: J. Dewar); Quick jigs vex war zany of Hampton badly (33: C. Symons); Zuytdorp half-axe gives woman quick jab (33: K. Ter Haar); Judy Zack's ex of Quorn bought up Milview (33: M. Manoy); Bloody quick wafting zephyrs vex Jimma (33: R. Ruhle); Vexed Meg Schwarzkopf quit day job in Lue (34: B. Arnold); Jabiluka campfire quiz-show vexed gentry (35: D. Butler); Jim Wat's sexy Quorn zebra-finch gulps vodka (36: M. Manoy); Gadzooks, never quit Jambin, foxy pale witch! (36: B. Hadinek); 'Crazy fight!' jokes avid Quilpie woman boxer (36: T. Colley); Bold Quorn wives pick guns to fix jazz rhythm (37: B. Jennings); A vexed wizard backs flighty jumper in Quorn (37: M. Kadd); Quite bad heavy-camp jokes faze ex-Wyuna girl (37: V.A. Praed); Schmaltzy jingles pique vexed fakir in Bowen (38: M. Kadd); At Buckland I have quart jugs of pink waxy maize (39: P. Jacovou);

2nd Prize (books to the value of \$50 from the OUP Catalogue): P. Harley, SA for: Big jackdaws vex the Quorn floozy MP (30: short and a cogent sentence).

1st Prize (books to the value of \$100 from the OUP Catalogue): M. Manoy, WA for: By Jove, six quilters of Ingham win prize duck! (37: longer, but bonus points for wit).

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 28

DEMONIACAL DEVILRY

Ambose Bierce published his *Devil's Dictionary* in 1911, and it included much material that he had published as a newspaper columnist in the previous thirty years. The dictionary offered comic, witty, cynical, devastating and satirical definitions, such as:

Abstainer A weak person who yields to the temptation of denying himself a pleasure.

Academe An ancient school where morality and philosophy were taught.

Academy [from **Academe**] A modern school where football is taught.

Adore to venerate expectantly.

Archbishop an ecclesiastical dignitary one point holier than a bishop.

Christian One who believes that the New Testament is a divinely inspired book admirably suited to the spiritual needs of his neighbor. One who follows the teachings of Christ in so far as they are not inconsistent with a life of sin.

Dentist A prestidigitator who, putting metal into your mouth, pulls coins out of your pocket.

Heaven A place where the wicked cease from troubling you with talk of their personal affairs, and the good listen with attention while you expound your own.

Learning The kind of ignorance distinguishing the studious.

Miss The title with which we brand unmarried women to indicate that they are in the market.

Politician An eel in the fundamental mud upon which the superstructure of organized society is reared. When he wriggle he mistakes the agitation of his tail for the trembling of the edifice. As compared with the statesman, he suffers the disadvantage of being alive.

Sabbath A weekly festival having its origin in the fact that God made the world in six days and was arrested on the seventh.

Scriptures The sacred books of our holy religion, as distinguished from the false and profane writings on which all other faiths are based.

There are online versions of Bierce's dictionary, including <http://www.alcyone.com/max/lit/devils>.

Your task is to construct Bierce-like definitions for any **one** of the following words or phrases:

branch stacking
coalition of the willing
ethical investment
core promise
global warming
intelligent design
Internet
metrosexual
podcast
mud slinging
multiculturalism
neo-conservative
salary sacrificing
sorry
weapon of mass destruction

ENTRIES CLOSE 1 AUGUST 2007.

Entries sent by email should also contain a snail mail address. All entries should be sent to the editor.

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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: 1 AUGUST 2007

Payment: The publisher reserves the right to edit or not to publish letters and articles submitted. There is no payment for letters. Payment for articles accepted for publication is by credit note from Oxford University Press for books from its list to the value of \$100.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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OZWORDS

Ozwords is published by
Oxford University Press
253 Normanby Road
South Melbourne VIC 3205
Web: www.oup.com.au
Email: cs.au@oup.com
Phone: 1300 650 616

Publisher: **Richard Harms**
in partnership with

The Australian National Dictionary Centre
The Australian National University
Phone: (02) 6125 2615
Email: Fred.Ludowyk@anu.edu.au
Web: www.anu.edu.au/andc

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ISSN 1321-0858