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EDITORIAL

Bill Ramson was the editor of the first edition of *The Australian National Dictionary* (1988) and the first director of the Australian National Dictionary Centre (1988–94). Since his retirement he has been working on a book that explores the development of *The Australian National Dictionary* and the historical development of Australian English.

In the introduction, Bill explains: 'This book is about the making of a historical dictionary of Australianisms, an enterprise which took the ten years prior to the Bicentenary to complete, and about the "lexical images" which can be created from an examination of certain combinations of those Australianisms. It seeks to demonstrate that the English language, as it has been used by Australians of European origin in the first two hundred years of their occupation of this country, and in particular the Australian additions to the vocabulary of English, as these are recorded in *The Australian National Dictionary*, provide a unique insight into the lives and history of Australians, and create a kaleidoscope of images and parts of images that may in their turn offer interpretations of Australian attitudes and the Australian way of life.'

It should also be said that the book provides a lively account of the events that led to Oxford University Press being appointed as publisher of the dictionary. *Lexical Images* will be published by OUP in August.

Frederick Ludowyk

Frederick Ludowyk
Editor, *Ozwords*

THE PERILS OF LEXICOGRAPHY

JUDITH ROBERTSON

The reliance of the lexicographer on the accuracy of existing dictionaries can lead to words known as 'dictionary words'. These are terms found only in dictionaries—they appear in no other publications (such as newspapers and novels) and are not in common use (if in use at all) in the community.

I was recently examining Jonathon Green's *Cassell's Dictionary of Slang* (1998). This work contains 70,000 words and phrases from a variety of English-speaking countries. In its Acknowledgements Green admits that 'the profession of lexicography is, inevitably, a plagiaristic one, a linguistic Pacman that moves on, gobbling up its predecessors as it goes'. But there are very real dangers in this kind of plagiarism.

For example, Green has the following entry: '**croaker** n. [1910s+] (Aus.) a newspaper'. He is saying that the term **croaker** meaning 'a newspaper' exists only in Australian English and has been used in Australia since the 1910s. Have you ever heard of it? I certainly had not.

So where did Green find it? This sent me off on a long trail of dictionary detective work. I next found **croaker** in this sense in a number of works by Eric Partridge. **Croaker** first appears in the supplement to the sixth edition of Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (1967) and has remained in all subsequent editions of this dictionary. The entry reads: '**Croaker** 7. A newspaper: Aus. low: since ca. 1910. B., 1942.' Whereas Green does not tell us the source for his entry, Partridge tells us that he took his entry from 'B., 1942'. This is his abbreviation for Sidney Baker's *Popular Dictionary of Australian Slang*, which appeared in separate editions in 1941 and 1943 (although Partridge always gives the date as 1942). Baker's entry reads: '**Croakers**: Newspapers.' But where did Baker find this information? I am quite sure that he took it from Cornelius Crowe's *Australian Slang Dictionary* (1895) for in this work we find the identical entry: '**Croakers**, newspapers.' Crowe was a constable in the Victorian police force from 1877 to 1897. He wrote the dictionary to enable the police to 'become conversant with the slang terms used by the rogue fraternity as a medium of communication with each other'. He felt a better understanding of the criminal cant would enable police to prevent crime.

What puzzled me here was that, although **croaker** appeared in a number of dictionaries, it did not appear in any other written sources—it is nowhere to be found in the database of Australian English at the Australian National Dictionary Centre. Is it that **croaker** is such a colloquial word in this sense that it is unlikely to appear in print? Did Cornelius Crowe and Sidney Baker know that it was being widely used in Australian speech?

Cornelius Crowe's *Australian Slang Dictionary* has been widely used by scholars researching Australian English. In spite of the book's title, it obviously includes words that are not exclusively Australian. But what scholars have failed to realise is the fact that almost every entry in Crowe's dictionary has been plagiarised from other dictionaries. The dictionaries on which Crowe appears to have drawn most heavily are: *The Slang Dictionary: Etymological, Historical and Anecdotal* (1874) edited by J.C. Hotten, G.W. Matsell's *Secret Language of Crime* (1859), and *The Slang Dictionary of New York, London and Paris: Collected and Arranged by a Well-known Detective* (attributed to Alfred Trumble) published in Chicago (1880). Crowe also used *Slang and Its Analogues* by J.S. Farmer & W.E. Henley (1890–1904) and *A Dictionary of Slang* by A. Barrère and C. Leland (1888).

Matsell's *Secret Language of Crime* and the anonymous *Slang Dictionary of New York* are not well known in Australia. The entries in both American dictionaries are close to identical, and both dictionaries were produced for the New York Police. The 1997 reprint of the *Slang Dictionary of New York* describes the work as 'the comprehensive dictionary to which novelists and historians turn to make the streets of 19th century America come alive'. Unfortunately, Cornelius Crowe turned to these American dictionaries to make the streets of nineteenth-century Australia come alive. In Matsell we find '**Croakers** Newspapers' and the *Slang Dictionary of New York* (hereafter SDNY) has the identical entry.

So here is the dictionary history of the word **croaker**:

Matsell (1859)	Croakers Newspapers.
SDNY (1880)	Croakers Newspapers.
Crowe (1895)	Croakers , newspapers

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THE PERILS OF LEXICOGRAPHY

JUDITH ROBERTSON

Baker (1941, 1943) **Croakers**:
Newspapers.
Partridge (1967 S) **Croaker** 7. A
newspaper:
Australian. Low:
since ca. 1910. B.,
1942.
Green (1998) **Croaker** [1910s+]
(Aus.) a
newspaper.

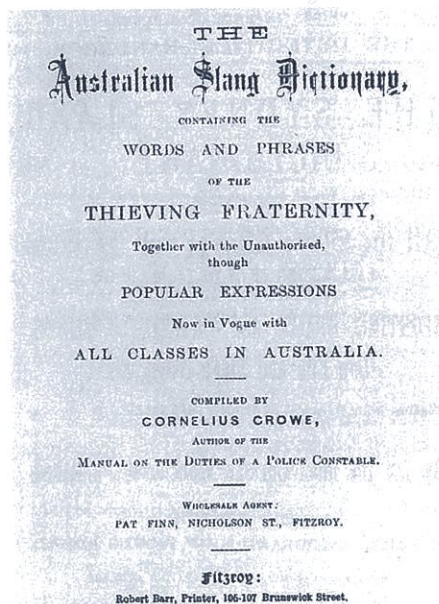
There is no convincing evidence that **croaker** is or ever was an Australian term.

Sidney Baker appears to have realised at some stage that he had been duped by Crowe's dictionary. Many of the words that Baker took from Crowe and put in his *Popular Dictionary of Australian Slang* (1941, 1943) do not appear in his most important lexicographical work, *The Australian Language* (1945). Unfortunately, the influential slang compiler Eric Partridge turned to the faulty *Popular Dictionary of Australian Slang* for some of his Australian words, and these errors have been perpetuated in subsequent dictionaries. Jonathon Green's reliance on Partridge has given a number of these 'dictionary words' a continuing life. For example, Green gives an Australian origin to twelve terms that Crowe directly copies from Matsell's *Secret Language of Crime* or the *Slang Dictionary of New York* (1880). In addition to **croaker** these words are: **bit** ('a jemmy, a crowbar'), **bower** ('a prison'), **chop up** ('a division of plunder'), **chopper** ('a blow to the back of the neck, given with the side of the hand'), **cop-busy** ('to hand whatever one has just stolen to a confederate or a girlfriend'), **goaways** ('trains'), **jade** ('a prison sentence of between 4 and 12 months'), **japanning** ('stealing cash-boxes'), **lion** ('to frighten, to intimidate'), **polisher** ('a gaolbird'), and **twist** ('to be convicted of a crime').

There is no Australian evidence for these terms. Their histories are identical. First, Crowe took them from Matsell or SDNY. Second, Baker initially thought they were Australian (because they were in Crowe) and published them in his 1941 and 1943 dictionaries, but soon changed his mind about their Australian status. Third, Partridge in 1967 took them from Baker's early work. Fourth, slang compilers such as Green have taken them from Partridge. These terms have appeared in six dictionaries from 1859 to 1998 (claiming Australian usage since 1895) with no evidence at all of their existence in Australian English.

The word **roofer** (meaning 'a hat') had a similar history, but Green recognised it as originally a US term:

Matsell **Roofer**. A hat.
SDNY **Roofer**. A hat.
Crowe **Roofer**, a hat.
Baker **Roofer**: A hat.
Partridge **Roofer** 2. A hat: Australian:
since ca. 1920. B., 1942.
Green **Roofer** 1 [19c+] (orig. US) a
hat



Title-page of *The Australian Slang Dictionary* by Cornelius Crowe, published in Melbourne in 1895 (photograph, Fisher Library, University of Sydney).

Other entries that Baker used from Crowe's dictionary are **barber** ('a hotel-keeper'), **battle the rattler** ('to "scale" a train, travel without paying'), **decker** ('a hat'), **dood** ('a pipe'), **federating** ('love making'), **fluff** ('a railway ticket'), **nineteener** ('a sharper or loafer'), **rabbit** ('a bottle of beer'), **schlog it on** ('to put on the price'), **tank** ('a pint of beer'), and **unbleached Australians** ('Aborigines'). I have not found earlier citations for any of these terms in dictionaries.

Federation does appear in the *Bulletin* in 1890 and may be the source of the term **federating**:

Bulletin — She (artfully): What's Federation mean, Charlie?

He (bashfully): Why, Nellie, if you'll become my wife, we shall be federated.

(Nellie is pleased with the explanation).

Whatever the case, this is the only external evidence for the existence of this term—except, of course, for the pattern we are now used to:

Crowe **Federating**, love-making
Baker **Federating**: Love-making.
Partridge **Federating**, vbl n.
Love-making: Australian:
C.20. Baker.
Green **Federating** [1900s–10s]
(Aus.) having sexual
intercourse.

Another interesting example is **dood**:

Crowe **Dood**, a pipe
Baker **Dood**: A pipe.
Partridge **Dood** 2. A pipe.
Australian: since ca. 1910.
B., 1942. Ex Aborigine?
Green **Dood** [1910s+] (Aus.) a
pipe. [Irish **dudeen**, a
short clay pipe]

Green has a plausible origin for the term, and Partridge's suggestion that it is from an Aboriginal language is most unlikely. The originally Irish word **dudeen** commonly appears in nineteenth-century Australian texts. But there is no non-dictionary evidence for the historical existence of **dood**, although it was common in the form **dudeen**. Baker ceased including this second group of terms derived from Crowe before 1966 and used **dood** only in the 1941 publication.

There is a very good lexicographical lesson to be learned from all this. Although it is common practice to use other dictionaries, and it makes sense to do so, the lexicographer who uses dictionaries without discretion is in great peril. And the lexicographer who uses only other dictionaries for evidence of the existence of a word is in greater peril.

A good dictionary is prepared according to historical principles. This means that the lexicographer collects evidence in the form of citations from written or printed sources. These citations will demonstrate the various forms the word has taken (for example, if the spelling has changed over time) and will give some indication of the contexts in which the word is typically used (for example, whether it typically appears in very colloquial contexts). They will also demonstrate that the word actually exists. This is the methodology of the twenty-volume *Oxford English Dictionary*. It is also the methodology of the *Australian National Dictionary* (hereafter AND).

Yet even apparent external evidence can have its perils. The AND has the following entry for **nailcan**:

THE PERILS OF LEXICOGRAPHY

JUDITH ROBERTSON

nailcan. [Prob. alteration of *nail-keg* (-*kag*) a small barrel containing nails; also (U.S.) a hat of similar shape.]

1. A container for nails.

1904 L.M.P. ARCHER *Bush Honey-moon* 39 Cold, soaking rain falling outside, and three scrub-cutters drawn up close to a *nailcan* filled with hot coals. 1956 T. RONAN *Moleskin Midas* 77 With his beefhouse completed, he got himself a killer from the Twin Hills side and picked up a *nailcan* beef-bucket from Sam Slack's deserted homestead.

2. See quot. 1955. Also **nailcan hat**.

1941 S.J. BAKER *Pop. Dict. Austral. Slang* 48 *Nail-can*, a tall (top) hat. 1955 N. PULLIAM *I traveled Lonely Land* 382 *Nail can*, a top hat. 1971 H. ANDERSON *Larrikin Crook* 2 The clerks sneered at in *Truth* and called suburban snobs 'going to the city every day on a first class ticket in a *nail can* hat and bum-banger coat'.

Although AND fails to mention it, the term **nail can** is in Crowe, where he defines it as 'a tall hat'. As you can see from the AND entry, Baker copied this in his 1941 edition of *A Popular Dictionary of Australian Slang*. He retained it in the 1943 and 1945 editions but then discarded it. True to form, Partridge took the term from Baker. And it is now in Green. AND has **nailcan (hat)** but with only three citations: Baker 1941, Pulliam 1955, and Anderson 1971.

We now know that Baker 1941 is not real evidence since it comes from Crowe 1895. What of Pulliam 1955? Nina Pulliam was an American newspaper reporter who travelled through Australia and published *I Traveled a Lonely Land*. She certainly gives **nail can**, 'a top hat', in her summary of slang at the conclusion of the book. Unfortunately, I have now established the fact that Pulliam took most of her examples of Australian slang directly from Baker's *Popular Dictionary of Australian Slang*. It therefore has no status as evidence. The last citation in AND is a quotation from *Truth* in H. Anderson's *Larrikin Crook*, a book about Squizzy Taylor, the Melbourne organised-crime boss who was killed in a gun fight by another criminal in 1927. The date for Anderson's citation (1971) is misleading as he is writing a historical document, but it does suggest that a search of accounts of Squizzy Taylor in the newspaper *Truth* in the 1920s might turn up a genuine

citation! If not, it seems very likely that this entry will have to be removed from the next edition of AND.

Without the aid of existing dictionaries, lexicography would be very difficult and laboriously time-consuming. Checking every entry used from other dictionaries would be almost as cumbersome, and the result could still be inconclusive, as I have shown in the case of **nail can**. However, the uncritical use of former dictionaries leads to errors being passed from one dictionary to another. With care, the inaccuracies will become fewer, and words that were only used regionally—or even invented—will no longer appear in future dictionaries. It is important to get history right, and the history of language is just as important as any other history.

[Judith Robertson is researching a PhD on Australian lexicography at the Australian National Dictionary Centre.]

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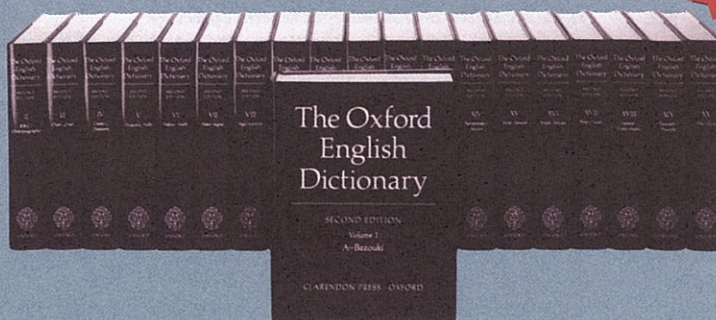
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We welcome readers' comments on their recent observations of Australian usage, both positive and negative, and their queries, particularly those not easily answerable from the standard reference books.

INAUSPICIOUS AUSPICING

I've seen a number of documents recently that refer to programs 'auspiced' by local government, which I think means that the program is funded or supported by the local government. Is this a real word? I'm sure it is easier to type as one word than to say 'this program is presented under the auspices of ...', but I can't see the point in inventing a new word when people could be more specific by saying 'supported' or 'funded' or something else. I've only seen it in Victorian state and local government writing, so it may be a local invention, but I'd be interested to know your position on this.

Keryn, NSW

Yes, *auspiced* is a verb-ing of the phrase *under the auspices of*, and it is spreading—there are more than 4000 documents on the Internet that use the form *auspiced*. More than half of these are Australian, but there is no regional concentration of the verb on Australian sites. Here are some typical uses: 'Campbell Town Health and Community Service is *auspiced* by the Tasmanian State Government'; 'The Australian Conservation Foundation is proud to have *auspiced* *Imagine the Future*'; 'VET *auspiced* sites will supply accurate, relevant and up-to-date information to prospective trainees'; 'Home-Start in Sydney is *auspiced* by the NSW Benevolent Society'; 'The Post Acute Care Program is *auspiced* by the Bendigo Health Care Group'. My position? *Auspiced* does sound barbarous when one first hears it, but it doesn't worry me. It fills a gap. Ed.

COMING HOME WITH A WET SAIL

I often hear sporting commentators describing a winning team as 'coming home on a wet sail', by which they mean they stormed to victory. This sounds very odd to me. Surely wet sails would make a yacht sail more slowly?

P. Miller, Tas.

The idiom is very common, and it is especially common in AFL, rugby, and cricket contexts. Here are some typical examples: 'Hawthorn *came home with a wet sail*, kicking six goals to two in the final quarter to end round 17 camped in third place on the ladder'; 'We're normally way out in front [of the other teams in the Pura Cup cricket] after Christmas, but now we've got to *come home with a wet sail*'; 'Sydney University Colts started off the day with three losses in the lower grades but *came home*

with a wet sail to take First and Second grades'. In Britain, the idiom is associated more with horse-racing than with team sports: '[Of a race at Ascot] Tony Beech was content to bide his time in the early stages and he *came home with a wet sail* up the home straight to beat Celtic Mission by two lengths.' The OED explains the origin of the term in its definition: 'to come with a wet sail: to make swift progress to victory, like a ship with sails wetted in order to keep close to the wind.' The OED provides two citations, one from a coursing context (i.e. the pursuit of game by hounds, especially greyhounds) and the other from a team sport: '1876 Coursing Calendar 326: Westeria, *coming with a wet sail*, rushed by and ultimately killed; 1901 Daily Express 18 Mar. 8/1: Bury, who was expected to *come with a wet sail*, went down before their local rivals at Bolton'. It would be interesting to know when *to come with a wet sail* became *to come home with a wet sail*. Ed.

CORKAGE, CAKEAGE, AND BREADAGE

I recently saw a newspaper report in which someone was complaining that a restaurant tried to charge a \$2.50 per person *cakeage* fee for cutting up and serving a birthday cake brought along to the restaurant by a group of diners. Is this variant of the corkage fee widely used?

R. Davis, NSW

I'm afraid so, and it seems to be an especially Australian sin. As with *auspiced*, Internet evidence shows that although the term *cakeage* is used outside Australia (I found three examples in California), most of the restaurants that advertise the fee are Australian. An Adelaide hotel advertisement explains: 'If you wish to provide your own cake we require a minimum surcharge of \$10 for less than 10 people to cover costs necessary to present the cake. We then charge \$1.00 per person to a maximum of \$50.00.' A reporter commented on this practice in the Melbourne Age in December 2001: 'We've had *corkage* for years. The practice of *cakeage* by restaurants is not unheard of (when they charge you for the right to bring, and have them serve, a cake). ... *Breadage* I have a problem with, but it's been heard of, too—sometimes as much as \$2 a person in an industry where most provide it free.' Ed.

PISS ANT & SPARROWFART

There was a mini series on telly a couple of years ago. I can't remember the name, but it was about convicts sent from

England to Tasmania. One of the characters was a boy who was known as Sparrowfart because he was so small. Well, I always thought that the word meant 'dawn', and a small person was a piss ant. (That was according to my uncle, an old digger from WWI.)

Ruth Iappolo, WA

Sparrowfart typically means 'break of day, very early morning', but it has also had the meaning 'a person of no consequence'. James Joyce in *Ulysses* (1922) writes: 'Miss This Miss That Miss Theother lot of sparrowfarts skitting around talkin about politics they know as much about as my backside.' *Piss-ant* means ant, and it has been in the language in that sense since the seventeenth century. Typical is the following usage from 1770: 'It seems the Pissants eat a great deal of corn in the ground.' At times it has been used to describe a small, inconspicuous, or insignificant person. A text from 1946 defines a piss-ant as 'a nobody, a small fry'. From the middle of the twentieth century the word has appeared most commonly in two idioms: *drunk as a piss-ant* 'very intoxicated' and *game as a piss-ant* 'very brave, courageous'. They occur especially in Australian contexts, although they are not exclusively Australian. Exclusively Australian is the verb, often appearing in the form *piss-ant around* meaning 'to mess around'. G. Hamilton in *Summer Glare* (1959) writes: 'Struth, you pissant around like a rooster that's too old.' Ed.

SHE'LL BE RIGHT

I have a question about *she'll be apples* or *it'll be apples*. I have never heard it said, and have only seen it in print. I am wondering whether it is still in use anywhere and what the origin was and where from. My understanding is that it means a little more than 'all right' or 'OK'; perhaps 'things will work out'?

L. Tucker, ACT

The aphorism *She'll be apples* is Australian and quite common. It means 'Everything is [or will be] fine'. It is most likely an elliptical use of rhyming slang *apples and spice* for 'nice'. The use of the feminine pronoun *she* to refer to inanimate objects and in impersonal constructions is also distinctively Australian. Our records indicate that the phrase is still widely used in Australia, although in 1985 the writer Blanche d'Alpuget commented that 'the only language problem her publisher had come across in her work was the phrase "She'll be apples"'. Ed.

BLACK BOBS

A writer to OWLS (Oxford World Language Service) alerted us to what he claims is a Tasmanian expression: 'I own a 1987 edition of the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* and cannot find in it any reference to **Black Bobs**. I am told they are/were the rather seriously inbred descendants of (runaway?) convicts who lived a secluded life in isolated areas around Ouse and Bothwell until not long ago. Never very numerous, I am told that they have now all but vanished. I have heard the term being used in Tasmania (its meaning seems to be unknown on the Australian mainland).' Is this just another Tassie joke? There is certainly a small town called **Black Bobs** in Tasmania, but we have no evidence at the Centre of any extended meanings. But then we came across a curious interchange during the proceedings of the Tasmanian House of Assembly Select Committee on Grocery Markets and Prices (1997). The chair of the committee asked for an explanation of the relationship between Statewide Independent Wholesalers and Tasmanian Independent Wholesalers. Part of the answer he received is: 'We [Statewide] are a joint operation. It is co-owned by Woolworths and the independents, Northern Wholesalers Cooperative Society, which trades as Tasmanian Independent Wholesalers. It is a little bit confusing, but Statewide is the entity that was set up when Roelf Vos, the individual, and Northern Wholesalers both had warehouses which we outgrew, and rather than build two new warehouses we decided to merge our operation, and we called it Statewide. It was probably about eighteen months later that Roelf Vos sold to Woolworths and therefore Northern Wholesalers gained a new co-owner in Woolworths.' Confused? A little later the following interchange occurred:

X. Through you, Mr Chairman—I am just a bit unclear. Woolworths is your major shareholder—60 per cent.

Y. Of this warehouse.

X. And 40 per cent is the Co-op. Is that right?

Y. That is right.

X. So Roelf Vos is Woolworths?

Y. That is correct.

X. So Woolworths own Purity?

Y. Yes, correct.

X. I see. This is a typical Tasmanian family—the Black Bobs type.

Laughter.

Y. That is correct.

Curiouser and curiouser! Can any readers provide more information, especially printed evidence?

CHAINS AND CHAINING

We have a lot of evidence for **pooling** compounds formed on the noun **chain**—

FROM THE CENTRE

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a chain of ponds, a chain of waterholes, and chains of lagoons, lakes, and pools—with the meaning 'a series of depressions in the bed of an intermittently flowing watercourse which continue to hold water after the connecting stream has dried up'. The evidence for this begins in 1799 and continues to the present day. But we have a shortage of evidence for **chain** as a verb in these contexts, as in: 'Dawdling down the Diamantina/Squandering days where the deep pools chain.' This 1926 quotation from the *Bulletin* is the only evidence we have for **chain** as an intransitive verb meaning 'of pools: to form a chain'. Does anyone have any further evidence of this, either earlier or later?

We have a similar problem with a much later sense of **chain** in Australian English, as illustrated by this 1989 quotation from Perth's *Countryman*: 'A contentious local story on chaining and burning along the Stirling Range National Park perimeter caused much discussion among its residents.' This illustrates the verb **chain** in the sense 'to clear (land), using a chain stretched between two bulldozers to flatten scrub, etc.' Oddly, our earliest quotation is from 1968, although we have a quotation for **chain method** (describing the chaining of land) dated 1960. Somewhere there must be pre-1968 evidence for **chain** as a verb or as the verbal noun **chaining**. Can anyone help us with this?

BRICK VENEREAL

I recently came across this Australian term in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (26 Feb.): 'The unique characters of NSW towns are at risk from the spread of Sydney's ubiquitous "brick venereal" project homes, a conference was told yesterday.' Although I had not heard it, the term is well documented in the Centre's database of Australian English. The earliest record

is from the introduction to Kathy Lette's 1988 play *Grommitts*: 'Most of this suburb suffers from brick venereal disease—blonde brick double-garaged houses with pedicured lawns.' Is it a term of the late 1980s? Does anyone have any earlier printed evidence of the term?

HUNGIE

In the *Sydney Morning Herald* (19 March 2001) there appeared the headline *Hey Joe, where's the hungie?* The story began: 'The small matter of the \$100 million plus that Joseph Gutnick owes Robert Champion de Crespigny ...' To someone who did not know the term, it was unclear whether the -g- was pronounced soft (hunjee) or hard (hunjee, as in Homer Simpson's famous 'Me soooo hungie'). We wondered at first whether it was an abbreviation and alteration of 'hundred', with the addition of the common Australian suffix -ie. But apparently it belongs to the vocabulary of the stock exchange and the futures market, and is a blend of hundred + G (in the sense 'grand i.e. one thousand' and pronounced *gee*). The sums do not quite add up. Is one hundred thousand now a million? We would be grateful for some elucidation and for any information on whether the term is used only in Australia.

PACKHAM PEARS

Katherine Barber, the editor of the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, recently asked us about the origin of the term Packham pear, a popular fruit in Canada. We found the information that the pear was bred by Charles Henry Packham in the 1890s but have been unable to find reliable information on his year of birth and year of death (the kind of information that is necessary for an etymology). Can anyone help?

RABBITOIR

David Nash pointed us to an interesting headline in the *Parkes Champion Post* (22 Mar. 2002): '“Rabbittoir” proposal gets green light from growers.' It introduces a story about a proposed rabbit abattoir for Bogan Gate in NSW. A website gives information about another rabbittoir in Australia: 'Australia now has its first “rabbittoir” and export meatworks, thanks to Robin Swift, a butcher from Victoria's Mornington Peninsula ... Mr Swift's company ... has now invested a million dollars in the rabbit processing plant, which is similar to a chicken processing plant.' This was posted on the Web in 2001, so it looks as if rabbittoirs (or should it be rabbittoirs?) are spreading as fast as rabbits.

BRUCE MOORE
DIRECTOR

CHUNDER: *verb*, to vomit. *noun*, **1a.** vomit; **1b.** an act of vomiting. **2.** in various transferred and figurative usages.

What is the origin of this Australian word? The two-volume *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1993) is quite terse about it: 'origin unknown', it says, avoiding speculation. And speculation there is in plenty. One theory (which I find implausible) is that the word is a truncation of 'Watch under!', shouted in warning by a person on the upper deck of a ship to those below when he is about to vomit over the rails. 'Watch under!' could, when yelled out (so the story goes), come to sound like 'wa-CHUNDER!' which in turn could easily have given way to **chunder**. Writing in 1965 in the *Times Literary Supplement*, London, 16 Sept., Barry Humphries expounds on the word and its putative origin:

His [the character Barry McKenzie's] favourite word to describe the act of involuntary regurgitation is the verb to chunder. This word is not in popular currency in Australia, but the writer recalls that ten years ago it was common in Victoria's more expensive public schools. It is now used by the Surflies, a repellent breed of sunbronzed hedonists who actually hold chundering contests on the famed beaches of the Commonwealth. I understand, by the way, that the word derives from a nautical expression 'watch under', an ominous courtesy shouted from the upper decks for the protection of those below.

The trouble is that there is no evidence to hand that ominously courteous people on the upper decks of ships ever cried the cry 'Watch under!' One would have thought that 'Watch out below!' would have been more natural a formulation for them to have used. But perhaps 'Watch out below!' would have taken them too long to cry out before the disgusting disaster occurred. In any case 'Watch out below!' spoils a perfectly good story, even if that story, as Pooh Bah expostulated anent something else entirely, 'give[s] artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative'.

In 1964 Barry Humphries wrote in *A Nice Night's Entertainment* 77: 'When I'd swallowed the last prawn/I had a Technicolor yawn/And I **chundered** in the old Pacific sea.' If the word **chunder** was 'not in popular currency in Australia' in 1964 or in 1965 when Humphries wrote his article in the *Times Literary Supplement*, it is common coinage now, and for that Australian English owes him (and his constantly chundering creation, Barry 'Bazza' McKenzie) a great deal of gratitude.

Another theory is that **chunder** is a truncation of 'Chunder Loo', which in turn is rhyming slang for 'spew'. *The Australian National Dictionary* assigns probability to this theory. 'Chunder Loo of Akim Foo', a tall, bald, smiling, endearing Indian from

Bengal, always accompanied by a fat koala dressed in the same fashion as Chunder, and usually shown riding a chariot drawn by three harnessed cobras, was the main character in a series of cartoons, accompanied by verses, drawn by Norman Lindsay (later by Lionel Lindsay) to advertise Cobra boot polish. The cartoons were very popular and ran in the *Sydney Bulletin* from 1909 to 1920. The cartoons were always immediately topical, dealing with the latest incidents in the war, the visit to Australia by the Prince of Wales, crises in cricket, bombshells in boxing, etc. A typical cartoon shows a chortling Chunder Loo presenting a bunch of horrified Huns with stacks of bills for the war just ended. The accompanying jingle reads as follows:

Chunder Loo
Of Akim Foo,
Ushers in the
Germans, who
Stare in horror
At the bills
Lying there in
Heaps and hills.
'Gott in Himmel!'
Wail the Huns,
And a wave of
Laughter runs
Round the room
When Chunder adds,
'There's a "COBRA"
Job, my lads!'
[All the other
Sorts he loses!
Cobra is THE
Stuff for Shoeses!]

This provenance of **chunder** is certainly more credible than the 'Watch under!' one. But it has a salient problem, the hoary old problem of the 'missing link'. All our earliest citations seem to have no connection with 'vomit':

1914: 'At the sign of the three onions Uncle **Chunder** the well known financier is prepared to do business' (*Geelong Racer: Paper of Troopship 'Geelong'*, 29 Oct. 2); **1917:** 'They envy the cut o' me, and all make a butt o' me/And sing out "Hullo, **Chunder-Loo**"' (*Rabaul Record: Newspaper of the Colony of German New Guinea, Occupied by Australian Military Forces*, 1 Aug. 5); **1918:** 'My guide ("**Chunder**") halted before a low, squalid-looking mud hut' (*Kia-ora Coo-ee: The Official Magazine of the Australian and New Zealand Forces*, Cairo, June 15/1).

It is worthy of note that the three citations above come from the Australian armed forces. This gives credence to the suggestion

made by H.W. Orsman in his *Dictionary of New Zealand English* (1997) that **chunder** may possibly derive from 'WWI. *chunder* a nickname for an Egyptian (? adaptation of *Chand(r)a*)'. Orsman directs us to the following citation, also from *Kia-ora Coo-ee* **1918:** 'So questioned "**Chunder**" (a wald, who, for a few piastres per week, acted as "batman" to myself and a couple of mates)' (15 June 15).

Our first citation for **chunder** in the probable sense 'vomit' comes as late as 1950: 'The way these bloody Nips go on. Makes you **chunda**' (Nevil Shute, *A Town like Alice*, 76). In our next citation (1964: Barry Humphries, *A Nice Night's Entertainment*—quoted above) the 'vomit' connection is unequivocal. And so it continues to be in all the subsequent citations; for example: 1964 'It is based on a comprehensive survey of students in the 17 to 22 age bracket who drink heavily and **chunder** frequently, and it therefore is a fair cross-sectional survey of the community as a whole' (*Woroni*, May 15 2/5).

The sense 'vomit' is unequivocal in citations for the noun as well: 1967 'One of the boys asked him about the **chunder** and the Gargler says modestly: "I never chundered in my life; I put it down and keep it down"' (Frank Hardy, *Billy Barker Yarns Again*, 37). Hence we get the adjectives **chunderous** and **chundersome** meaning 'sickening, vomit-inducing': 1971 '**Chunderous** new telly series. Anglo-Australian film interests are planning their biggest venture yet—Coronation Street Meets Bellbird' (*Kings Cross Whisper*, Sydney, cii. 3/2); 1971 'The Poms are rapacious, mean, cunning. Bazza is beery, **chundersome**, anal' (*Bulletin*, 4 Dec. 11/2).

We've canvassed some possible etymologies for **chunder**. A further possibility remains: that our word comes from British dialect *chunter* (which also exists in the forms *chunner*, *chounter*, and *chunder*). It is a verb that the *OED* says is 'Apparently of imitative formation'. It means 'to mutter, murmur; to grumble, find fault, complain'. Among the *OED*'s citations are the following: 1921 'A thin old woman ... was **chuntering** her head off because it was *her seat*' (D.H. Lawrence, *Sea & Sardinia* iv. 135); 1949 'You ... fog-blathering,/Chin-**chuntering**, liturgical ... base old man!' (Christopher Fry, *The Lady's not for Burning*, 27); 1957 'The baby stirred, and started **chuntering** and making little whimpering noises' (Nevil Shute, *On the Beach* i. 2). It's a possible derivation, certainly, but I don't think it a probable one.

Is it just a coincidence that Nevil Shute in *On the Beach* provides our earliest clearcut example of **chunder** meaning 'vomit' and this interesting use of British dialect *chunter*?

POTTERING WITH HARRY POTTER

COMPARING THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN VERSIONS OF J.K. ROWLING'S NOVELS

The texts of the Harry Potter fantasy novels sold in Australia are identical with the British versions, but for the American market J.K. Rowling's texts were edited by an American editor, Arthur Levine. Levine says:

I liked the title *Harry Potter* and the *Philosopher's Stone* but once I'd read the book I didn't feel it properly captured the spirit of the novel. *Philosopher's Stone* sounded at once more 'Indiana-Jones-ey' and more esoteric to me than the book actually was. So I asked Jo if she had any other ideas, and she mentioned *Sorcerer's Stone*, which I thought sounded just right. Yes, I guess it sounded more exciting—appropriately so, as the book itself is quite exciting.

Levine points out that there are 'words that have drastically different meanings in British and American usage, and therefore might be misunderstood. Hence, rather than have Harry Potter taken for a transvestite, we translated "jumper" as "sweater".' (In American English a **jumper** is a pinafore dress, especially as worn by a young girl.)

So how much change was necessary to make these novels accessible to an American audience? And if it was necessary to translate the texts into American English, do we need an Australian English version? In the following lists I have divided some of the changed words into semantic categories (food, technology, etc.). The British version is in the first column and the American in the second.

FOOD

British	American
ice lolly	ice pop
jelly	Jell-O
jacket potato	baked potato
sweets	candy
tinned soup	canned soup
puddings	desserts
biscuits	cookies
beetroot	beet
packet of crisps	bag of chips

Australians would understand all the British words, although many of us would use the Australian **lollies** rather than **sweets** and prefer **desserts** to **puddings**. The American **Jell-O** would not be understood here, and if someone mentioned **beet** we would be likely to interpret it as **silverbeet**. Twenty years ago **canned soup** was still recognisable in Australia as an Americanism, but it has become so naturalised that most Australians would regard both as acceptable. **Jacket potato** ('a baked potato served with the skin on') is probably more common in Britain than Australia, but we would know what is meant by the term and would not regard it as synonymous

with **baked potato**. The American **candy** is used increasingly in Australia, especially as the **candy bar** at cinema complexes, but it is still stigmatised as an Americanism. Similarly, **cookie** is being used more widely in Australia with its American sense of 'sweet biscuit', but it tends to be used primarily for a small, roundish, crumble biscuit (a cream biscuit is not a cookie; nor is a Tim Tam). Both **packet of crisps** and **bag of chips** would be understood in Australia, although **packet of chips** is more likely to be heard.

DOMESTIC

British	American
dustbin	trashcan
cooker	stove
sellotape	scotch tape
toilet	bathroom
wardrobe	closet
mummy	mommy

In this list, Australians would prefer the American **stove** to the British **cooker**. We would recognise **mommy** as strongly American and **bathroom** as a very American euphemism. We would not use **closet** as a synonym for **wardrobe** but would recognise the sense from the international idiom **to come out of the closet**. We would understand both **sellotape** and **scotch tape** but would be more likely to use **sticky tape**.

TECHNOLOGY

British	American
cine-camera	video camera
video recorder	VCR
windscreen	windshield
boot (of car)	trunk
bonnet (of car)	hood
torch	flashlight

Cine-camera is rarely heard in Australia, but both **video recorder** and **VCR** are used. Our car terms (**windscreen**, **boot**, and **bonnet**) follow the British. We would understand the American **trunk** and **hood**, but probably misunderstand **windshield** to mean a protective device on a front side window of a car rather than a synonym for **windscreen**. **Torch** remains more common than **flashlight** in Australia, although we might use **flashlight** for a very large electric torch.

SPORT/ENTERTAINMENT

British	American
cinema	movies
football	soccer
changing room	locker room
cracker hats	party hats
holiday	vacation

The odd one out here is the British **cracker hats**, which would not be understood in Australia. We prefer **soccer** to **football** because **football** refers typically to Australian Rules or rugby. The other terms could all be used by Australians, but we now typically use the American **movies** and the British **changing room** and **holiday**.

MISCELLANEOUS

British	American
newsreader	reporter
queue	line
bullclips	binder clips
fringe	bangs

This group reveals some interesting differences between the Englishes. In Britain **newsreader** means 'a person who reads out broadcast news bulletins', and this is what it means in Australia. In America the term **reporter** is used for this role, whereas in Britain and Australia the reporter is the person who reports news or conducts interviews, usually outside the studio. It is interesting that North Americans have no idea what a **queue** might be (apart from a nineteenth-century Chinaman's pigtail) and therefore wait for their footie tickets in a **line** rather than a **queue**. We would probably understand the terms **bullclip** and **binder clip**, but would usually call the object a **bulldog clip**. **Fringe** for hair cut so as to hang in a line over the forehead is standard in Britain and Australia, but most Australians would have heard of the American **bangs**.

In the following group we have a series of pairs of terms that are true synonyms in Australian English. I do not think that we would associate any of the terms specifically with British or American English.

British	American
sack (a worker)	fire (a worker)
do his nut	go ballistic
clapping them	applauding them
nutter	maniac
fortnight	two weeks
quits	even
drawn	tired
mad	crazy
Father Christmas	Santa Claus
cock-crow	dawn

There are few instances in which an Australian teenager reading a Harry Potter book in either the British or American versions would have trouble understanding the meaning. Although our inheritance is British English, Australian teenagers have had sufficient exposure to both British and American English via television and movies to be able to understand both Englishes fairly readily. On the other hand, American teenagers do not have very much exposure to non-American television, and perhaps there is a case for this edited version for the American market. Then, again, perhaps it would have been better to encourage American teenagers to get hold of a good dictionary!

If you are interested in seeing a list of all of the changes made to the Harry Potter novels, see <<http://www.popogo.com/hol/words/wordgallery1.htm>>

F.L.

OZWORDS COMPETITIONS

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 16:

RESULTS

You were asked to make up an interesting story about the origin of one of the following Australian phrases: **draw the crabs** 'to attract enemy fire; to attract unwanted attention, especially from the police'; **go for the doctor** 'to go "all out"; to abandon all restraint'; **give it the herbs** 'to give (a car etc.) more power'; **stir the possum** 'to excite interest or controversy; to liven things up'; **spit chips** 'to display extreme anger'; **have tickets on oneself** 'to be conceited'.

There were some excellent entries. Honourable mentions to **E.W. Castle** of SA and **W. Wetherell** of Qld. Members of the Centre found it difficult to separate the top three, but finally decided to award the following two entries a second prize of books worth \$50 each from the OUP catalogue. **Hans Hogerheyde** of Qld (who also submitted a good entry on **spit chips**) for give it the herbs:

Some elderly residents of the Wide Bay district of Central Queensland may remember the petrol bowlers of their youth, adorned with the figure of a woman, wearing a crown of cow's horns cradling a sun. The figure represented the Egyptian goddess Isis, the trademark of the 'Isis Petroleum Coy', one of several enterprises of the Monaro family of Maryborough (Qld), Italian immigrants who, in 1879, had settled in the Isis River district as bullock drivers and continued to be leaders in the local transport industry. In the early decades of the twentieth century, as the popularity of motorised transport increased, particularly among the young, the phrase 'give it the Isis' was often heard from the back seat, urging the driver on to greater speed. Rhyming slang substituted 'herbs and spices' for Isis. Thus, over time, 'give it the Isis' became 'give it the herbs'. Bankruptcy of the Monaro family in the Depression years saw the demise of the 'Isis Petroleum Coy', and few people alive today would remember this piece of Central Queensland history that lives on in the Australian vernacular.

Peter Harley of SA for **go for the doctor**:

It was many years ago that Thor, the Scandinavian god of thunder, war, and agriculture, was bringing down his wrath on his enemies, among whom was a group who manned the Viking ships, carrying out vicious raids on lands in Thor's kingdom. Thor managed to get all his other adversaries under control, but the Vikings kept picking away at his established battlements along the coast, until Thor got so fed up with it that he decided to forget about all his other problems and concentrate on the extermination of his pesky foes, the

Vikings. He tried everything, from pouring boiling oil (polyunsaturated) on those who were brave enough to try to scale the walls of his castle, to trying to seduce the marauders with the singing of beautiful maidens from the reaches of the battlements, but nothing seemed to work, until one of his brave followers decided that the best strategy was to prevent the enemy from getting on to land at all. Thus the idea was to storm the docks and slay the Vikings as they tried to leave their boats. The rallying cry went up, 'Go for the dock, Thor', which meant to the troops 'abandon all restraint', and because the Scandinavians pronounced 'Thor' as 'Tor' (there were no Icelanders in the domain at that time), over the centuries the shout has been corrupted to 'Go for the doctor'—a cry which means 'Go all out' in the sporting arenas of today.

First prize (books worth \$100 from the OUP catalogue) to **Jo McGahey** of NSW for **draw the crabs**:

It is not generally known that on the beaches of Gallipoli there lives, to this day, a very rare crustacean, a small red crab (*Gallipolicius rufus minor*). Now among the ANZACS who were stuck there for those terrible months in 1915, there was a young naturalist named Claude Townsend. One day Private Townsend was sent down the beach for more ammunition, and on the way back, he couldn't resist stopping to make some hurried drawings of these most unusual creatures. Naturally the Turks attempted to shoot him, but luckily Claude survived. From then on, throughout the campaign, whenever they wanted 'to attract enemy fire' and create a diversion, his mates would ask Claude to draw the crabs. Surprisingly, young Claude escaped death and returned to Australia, where he later became a famous naturalist. In the 1930s Claude's predilection for promenading along public beaches in the buff, ostensibly to draw the crabs and other forms of marine life, was always guaranteed 'to attract unwanted attention, especially from the police'.

Ed.

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 17

In 2001 the Washington Post ran a competition in which readers were asked to supply alternative meanings for various words. Some of the winning entries were: **abdicate** to give up hope of ever having a flat stomach.

willy-nilly impotent.

flabbergasted appalled over how much weight you have gained.

balderdash a rapidly receding hairline.

coffee a person who is coughed upon.

bustard a rude bus driver.

rectitude the formal, dignified demeanour assumed by a proctologist immediately before he examines you.

It is your task to choose an Australian word and supply an alternative meaning, or choose any word and give it an alternative meaning with an especially Australian flavour.

Ed.

Entries close 2 September 2002.

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

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