

# OZWORDS

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## EDITORIAL

Excellent news for logophils (a nonce word which we intend to mean 'addicts of words and language'). The first issue of *NZWords*, the New Zealand equivalent of *Ozwords*, is now out. It is the newsletter of the New Zealand Dictionary Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, and is published by Oxford University Press, New Zealand. Editor Tony Deverson tells us that 'NZWords intends to keep readers informed of all aspects of the research and publication activities of the NZDC and to publish informative articles on New Zealand lexical topics' and that he welcomes 'questions and observations about this country's distinctive words and usages'. This first issue includes a speech given in celebration of Harry Orsman's magnificent *Dictionary of New Zealand English*, which has just won the Montana Medal, New Zealand's biggest literary prize. Future issues of *NZWords* will be available free of charge on application by snail mail to the Subscription Manager, *NZWords*, PO Box 11-149, Ellerslie, Auckland (email: patternsd@oup.com.au).

If our readers (all logophils, I know) have not come across an admirable and entertaining radio programme called 'Lingua Franca' serendipitously, we urge them to tune in to it. It is hosted by Jill Kitson and is dedicated to the exploration of words and language. It is broadcast on ABC Radio National at 2.45 p.m. each Saturday and is repeated at 11.45 a.m. the following Tuesday. 'A great feast of languages', as Shakespeare said.

Frederick Ludowyk

Editor, *Ozwords*

## OF BOONDIES, BELGIUM SAUSAGES, AND BOGANS

THE ROLE OF REGIONALISMS IN AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH

BRUCE MOORE

In recent years we have discovered that there is much more regional variation in Australian English than hitherto suspected. The Centre's publications *Words from the West* and *Tassie Terms* are testament to this. Will regional words survive in the global village?

### A STONE BY ANY OTHER NAME...

Tim Winton in *Cloudstreet* (1991) writes: 'There were always Pickles kids and Lamb kids up one end of the street throwing **boondies** or chasing someone's dog.' **Boondie** is a Western Australian word meaning 'a pebble or stone'. In other parts of Australia various words are used for the same object. In Victoria it is **yinnie**, and this term has spread to Tasmania, southern New South Wales, and parts of South Australia. In northern Victoria and southern New South Wales the term **brinnie** is also used. In northern New South Wales and parts of Queensland the corresponding term is **gibber**. **Connie**, from *corn(elian)*, is an Australian term for a type of playing marble, but in northern Queensland it also developed the sense 'a stone'. New South Wales and Queensland have another term for a small pebble or stone, and this is **goolie** (a term which in the mining industry is also used for a large boulder).

The word **gibber** is a borrowing from the Aboriginal language Dharuk, which was spoken in the Sydney region. It is also used to describe a rounded, weather-worn stone of arid inland Australia (as in the compounds **gibber country** and **gibber plain**), varying in size from very small stones to huge boulders. **Boondie**, **yinnie**, and **brinnie** are possibly from Aboriginal languages, but we are not certain about this. What about **goolie**? *The Australian National Dictionary* suggests that it is also possibly from an Aboriginal language, but there is a problem with this theory because of the presence of another **goolie** in the English language. This is the word meaning

'testicle', which probably derives from a Hindustani word *goli* meaning 'a bullet, ball, pill'. Both words refer to a small round object, and perhaps both go back to the Hindustani word. The problem here is that **goolies** in the sense 'testicles' would have been a taboo term earlier this century. In British dialect (Norfolk and Suffolk) there is a word *gull* which in the form *gull-stones* means 'a game played with rough stones as marbles', and it is just possible that this is the origin of **goolie**. Our evidence indicates that all these regional terms for 'a small stone' are surviving.

### A SAUSAGE BY ANY OTHER NAME WOULD BE JUST AS TASTELESS

Again in *Cloudstreet* Winton writes: "I wouldn't have wasted pork on this family," said Lester with a creasyfaced wink. "Slice of **polony**, maybe." Here we enter the mysterious world of the nomenclature of Australian sausages. Not the snag varieties of sausage—we are concerned here with the large sausages, sold cooked and usually in slices, and with about as much piquancy to the taste as wet blotting paper or tofu by itself, the kind of sliced meat which is the perennial standby of long-suffering children's sandwiches. Although the various names do not refer to precisely the same items (some are blander than others), they are all certainly at the 'blotting paper' end of the sausage range. **Polony** is a Western Australian term. We suspect that it is an alteration of **Bologna sausage**, 'a large smoked sausage made of bacon, veal, pork-suet and other meats, and sold ready for eating'. The Western Australian word **polony** is merely a pronunciation alteration of **Bologna**. Other Australian 'blotting paper' sausages, however, have been transformed as a result of political events. **German sausage** is a term used widely in south-east Australia, as is **Strasburg**, often shortened to **Straz**. But during the First World War anti-German feeling in Australia was vehement. Town

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DICTIONARY CENTRE  
A JOINT AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
AND OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS PROJECT





# OF BOONDIES, BELGIUM SAUSAGES, AND BOGANS

names, even street names, with German associations were changed. In South Australia 'Gruñthal' was changed to 'Verdun', after the name of the town in France where a prolonged German offensive was repelled in 1916. 'Germantown' in NSW became 'Holbrook', in honour of Commander Norman Holbrook whose submarine sank a Turkish cruiser. In some parts of Australia the sausage suffered a similar chauvinist fate. In Tasmania, as German troops rolled into Belgium, the Tasmanians got rid of German associations from their **German sausage** and called it **Belgium sausage** instead. In the Newcastle area they started calling it **Empire sausage**. Unwittingly following the example of name-changing Aussie sausages, the British royal family in 1917 changed its name from the very German *Saxe-Coburg-Gotha* in response to the anti-German sentiments of their subjects: one and all the royals made themselves respectably British *Windsors*. It tickles me that Queensland followed suit with its sausages, naming its inedibles after the royals, and so the Queensland term **Windsor sausage** was born. At the outbreak of the War **German sausage** was also known as **fritz**, from the common nickname for a German, but this ceased in most parts of Australia, and is now used only in South Australia. Another name for 'blotting paper' sausage in New South Wales is **devon**, and this is probably the result of similar anti-Fritz sentiment. Some of these regional terms survive, but the sausages known as **Belgium**, **Empire**, and **Windsor** are on the endangered species list since the terms are not used by the large supermarkets. The supermarts have a lot to answer for.

## A BOGAN BY ANY OTHER NAME WOULD STILL BE A BOON

Does Australian English continue to produce regional terms? In the 1970s in Sydney the term **westie** arose as a contemptuous epithet for a person from

the western suburbs (e.g. Blacktown or Parramatta). The western suburbs were perceived as socially disadvantaged, and the term therefore encapsulates the class prejudice of the socially advantaged. In my *Lexicon of Cadet Language* a respondent describes a **westie** as someone who 'wears jeans, ugh boots, a black windcheater, with smokes kept on his arm'. Do these types exist elsewhere in Australia?

In the 1980s the term **bogan** became common among adolescents, and developed two senses. The first sense was

Beyond these the landscape changed suddenly. It was still flat, and the houses all the same as one another, but they were poorer houses, small shabby fibro ones with their paint all washed away, their scraggly yards full of dust and weeds and rusting pieces of iron. I was nervous; it looked like the kind of place you might find Bogans hanging about, the kind of place you could get bashed up. ... Sure enough, in the yard of a house across the street, I saw a gang of Bogans in tight jeans and long checked shirts, mucking about with a big fancy car, vintage model, complete with brass lamps and running-board. I felt sure they'd ripped it off: for one thing, they were taking off the number plates.

Judith Clarke, *The Heroic Life of Al Capsella* (1988)

popularised by the character Kylie Mole in the television series *The Comedy Company*. Kylie defined a **bogan** as 'a person that you just don't bother with. Someone who wears their socks the wrong way or has the same number of holes in both legs of their stockings. A complete loser.' This is the equivalent of the Australian **dag** or the American **nerd**, **geek**, and **dork**. In some parts of Australia, however, especially in Tasmania and Western Australia, and now in

Victoria, the **bogan** became the equivalent of the **westie**. A report on Tasmanian adolescent peer groups in *Youth Studies* (1992) describes bogans as wearing westie-type clothes ('tight torn stretch jeans ... heavy metal T-shirts, flannels') and manifesting westie-type behaviour: 'Vandalism, smoking, drugs, drinking cheap deathbags (cask wine), driving around in hotted-up cars.' In Hobart itself, the bogan is also called a **Chigga** (or **Chigg**), named after the suburb Chigwell (presumably as socially disadvantaged as Blacktown or Parramatta in Sydney). The term **bevan** is used in some parts of Australia, and appears to be synonymous with **westie** and **bogan**, but its regional distribution is as yet unclear—it is certainly used in Queensland and Tasmania. An article in the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* in 1988 lumps **bevans** and **bogans** together and describes them as follows: 'This group is characterised by their common dress ... tight T-shirts with a logo relating to the brand of car they drive or detest, old blue jeans, ugh boots (replaced by rubber thongs in summer) and the obligatory packet of cigarettes shoved up one T-shirt sleeve.' In Canberra, however, this class is known as **booners** (or **boons**). In 1990 the *Canberra Times* reported: 'Guys mainly have long hair and wear Metallica shirts, girls wear tight, black jeans, flannelette shirts and ugboots. The most noticeable characteristic ... of boons [is] a tendency to pick fights.'

These terms are all Australian, providing evidence that Australian English continues to generate new words. In an article on page 6, Felicity Cox argues that the Australian *accent* will hold its own because of its role in constructing an Australian identity. The same holds true for Australian *words*. Regional identity would seem to be almost as important as national identity in Australia (ask a Tasmanian!), so that while some regionalisms will inevitably disappear (as will some Australianisms), there is evidence that regions are continuing to





**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.**

## NEW KILLER

Reader **T.L.** of NSW wrote to me recently asking whether the pronunciation /dip-theer-ree-uh/ for the disease diphtheria was now being accepted by dictionary makers as an allowable variant. We list this pronunciation in the third edition of *The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1997), but point out that it is considered incorrect by some people. The 'correct' pronunciation is, as **T.L.** implies, /dif-theer-ree-uh/, but the /dip/ variant is now gaining wide acceptance. Reader **Gareth Smith** of Western Australia wrote that his dictionary (unspecified) gave the pronunciation of off as /awf/. Gareth commented that he had never heard that pronunciation in Australia. I'm not surprised. It doesn't exist in Oz, the powers be praised! Awf is an awfully upper-crust toffee pom pronunciation. The Queen, no doubt, awfs all the time, even when she is in Awstralia. I am sure, Gareth, that first, your dictionary is pretty long in the tooth and, secondly, it was intended for poms, even though marketed in Oz. Recent *English Oxford dictionaries* give the pronunciation /oʊ/ as their preferred pronunciation and relegate /awf/ to second place. While on pronunciation I should mention that I have heard quite a few people pronounce nuclear as new killer (one of them, sad to say, an ABC announcer). It may well be a new killer, but it is illiterate to pronounce it as such. /nyoo-klee-uh/ is the only allowable way to go. **Ed.**

## GETTING FURTHER FROM FARTHER

Please tell me when to use 'farther' and when to use 'further'. This pair may even provide you with stimulus for another article. Thank you.

**David Grant**  
Vic

The distinction between farther and further (each can be adjective or adverb) was introduced by grammarians in the nineteenth century. They had a lot to answer for, those grammarians! Prior to their meddling both words had the same meaning and farther was just a spelling variant of further (as was ferther etc.). Thus in *Cursor Mundi* (c.1300) we find, 'Help him or thu ferther wend' ('Help him before you go any further'), and in c.1520 we find *Godolphin* writing, 'I could

not macke no fferder serche'. Our grammarians insisted that farther (adj. and adv.) be used when it acts as if it were the comparative of far (adj. and adv.), thus 'the farther shore', 'I can spit farther than you', and that further be used when the sense far is not present at all ('I need no further hints, I'll go'). The same is meant to apply to the superlatives farthest and furthest. The rationale behind this thinking, I suppose, is that there was originally a comparative of far and this was farrer. It was displaced by farther (and by further, I need hardly add). By the bye, farther can never now be used in the sense 'moreover' ('Farther, there is the problem of...') or as a verb ('She hoped the Victorians would farther her cause').

My advice is that you use further in all senses and let farther recede into the further distance—it is either fussily literary or prissily pedantic now. Out of idle curiosity I did an Internet search for both words and found that in the UK and Australia there were roughly about 99.4% who 'furthered' and only about 0.6% who 'farthered'. Oddly (but I can't quite make sense of the figures), there seem to be many more 'fartherers' in the USA. 'I pray you, beare with me: I cannot goe no further' (*As You Like It*). **Ed.**

## IRISH vs COCKNEYS

With regard to your article on Aitch and Haitch in the June 1998 issue of *Ozwords* ... why blame the Irish in Australia? Cockneys drop their whatevers all the time and surely they had more influence in early Australia than Irish nuns and monks?

**Sam Weller**  
Qld

Bless you, I don't blame the Irish at all. Perish the thought! (By the bye, is your name really Sam Weller or are you a *Pickwickian*?) Nor do I blame the Cockneys. The dropping of the letter **H** is a distinctive marker in the Cockney dialect. This raises the interesting metaphysical question: can one 'drop' an /h/ which one didn't have to begin with? The *Oxford Companion to the English Language* has a delightful quotation from *Robert Barthrop* and *Jim Wokveridge's* book *The Muver Tongue*:

Cockneys drop h's. So do the French. ... The teacher's case is that

'h' should be sounded on English words because this is the established practice. So it is—but not among Cockneys. They know that h's are there and put them in in writing; but to use them in speech is 'talking posh'. Their omission does not lead to misunderstanding, except by non-Cockneys. ... One Sunday morning ... I sat in a bus behind a man who had his little boy of about four on his lap. The child had a picture-alphabet book, and the father was explaining it carefully; when they came to h, the picture was of a hedgehog. The man said: 'That's an edgeog. It's really two words, edge and og. They both start with h.'

I haven't a clue as to who had the greater influence on the development of Australian English, the Irish or the Cockneys. I shall research the question and write to you if I unearth anything of interest. **Ed.**

## ANCIENT JEANS

To settle an argument, could you tell me where the word jeans for 'denim trousers' came from? I say that the garments were first made by an American named Levi whose first name was probably 'Gene', but my husband says the trousers were probably invented by a Frenchman called 'Jean' whose idea was then pinched by the Yank. I was originally American and my husband was originally French. ... We are both old Ozzies now and we both love *Ozwords*.

**Mrs M. C.**  
NSW

Your husband is wrong. That to begin with. But I'm sorry to have to tell you that he is closer to the truth than you are. Geographically, at least. The word jeans came into English from Genoa via the medieval Latin name for that Italian city, Janua. Genoa manufactured a kind of coarse twilled cotton cloth which the English called jenes fustian, later shortened to jeans etc. Thus, in 1567, the *Sarum Churchwardens' Accounts* mention 'ij yerdes of Jene fustyan', and in 1577 the *Registry of the Archdeaconry of Richmond* makes a note of 'ij yardes of whitt geanes'. Garments, including trousers, made of this material, were also called jeans (variously spelled). I'm delighted that you both love *Ozwords*. **Ed.**



## A NEW DICTIONARY

*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, published by Oxford UK, will appear in Australian bookshops in November. It is the first English dictionary written from scratch by Oxford University Press for more than 70 years. It was created over six years by 30 editors and more than 60 world-wide consultants.

One of the most important new tools used to compile the *New Oxford* was 'corpus' evidence. A *corpus* is a large database of texts in electronic and searchable form. The editors had access to some 200 million words of contemporary English, covering both written and spoken English. With this new technology, for each word the editors could scan 20 years' worth of reading in seconds to see exactly how a word is used and what it means. They also used the corpus evidence to check on points of disputed usage. For example, in the battle between **all right** (the correct form) and **alright** (the incorrect form), the corpus evidence revealed that only in about 5% of cases was the incorrect form used, confirming the fact that it is still not an acceptable alternative. Our own corpus evidence at the Centre reveals a rate of almost 20% for the incorrect form, indicating that it is more common in Australian English than in British English.

*The New Oxford* is also the first genuinely international dictionary of English, reflecting the status of English today as a world language. Oxford lexicographers throughout the English-speaking world—America, Australia, South Africa, and elsewhere—used email to keep in close touch on a daily basis throughout the project, to compare notes on points of meaning and usage. The Australian National Dictionary Centre was closely involved in this part of the project, and Australian English is very well represented in *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*.

## OXLEX in 1999

The Australian National Dictionary Centre and Oxford University Press, in association with the Humanities Research Centre, will host a conference on English in post-colonial societies at the Australian National University from 27 to 29 October 1999. There will be a range of papers dealing with the role of regional Englishes in countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, etc. John Simpson, editor of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, will give a public lecture during the conference. Further details in the next issue of *Ozwords*.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Professor Graeme Clarke was chair of the ANDC Advisory Committee from 1988 to 1997, and all members of the Centre

# FROM THE CENTRE

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL  
DICTIONARY CENTRE

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.

benefited greatly from his guidance and support. Professor Iain McCalman, Director of the Humanities Research Centre at ANU, took over as chair in 1998. The Advisory Committee meets twice a year, and its role is to monitor and offer advice on the direction of the Centre's research. The other members of the committee are: the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, ANU (Professor Paul Thom); the Head of the Department of English and Theatre Studies, ANU (Dr David Parker); the Head of the Department of Linguistics, ANU (Dr Tim Shopen); Professor Bruce Bennett, Head of the School of English, University College, ADFA; Professor Joe Lo Bianco, Director of the Centre for Language and Literary Policy Research, ANU; Dr Bruce Moore, Director of the ANDC; Mr Ray O'Farrell, Director of the Education Division of Oxford University Press, Australia and New Zealand (OUPANZ); Mr Marek Palka, Managing Director, OUPANZ; Professor John Ritchie, Director of the Australian Dictionary of Biography, ANU; Mr Peter Rose, Trade and Reference Publisher, OUPANZ; and Mr Richard Samson, Director, Academic Division, OUPANZ.

## NORK

This Australian term for a woman's breast appeared in the early 1960s. The popular etymology concerning its origin was supplied by Sidney Baker in *The Australian Language* (1966), when he associated it with the NSW butter manufacturer, the Norco Co-operative—at one stage a cow's udder was featured on the wrapping of its butter. This has never been a convincing story, and we marked our entry in *The Australian National Dictionary* 'of uncertain origin'. We received a letter from Fred Parkes who offers a different explanation:

By chance I came across the entry **norks** in your dictionary, saying it is Australian slang for women's breasts,

origin unknown. I can set you right, having been around when the expression started. 'NORKS' is the abbreviation for the New Orleans Rhythm Kings—a famous band of the 1920s. They were frequently referred to as the NORKS by members of Len Barnard's Famous Jazz Band in the 1950s (several recordings on the Australian Swaggie label). Somehow, a member of that band (and I don't know which member) used the expression when referring to one of the dancer's big tits, and the word seemed so appealing in that context that the whole band started referring to tits as norks. Within a short time the expression had spread throughout the Australian jazz scene and then gradually to the jazz followers among the general public. It originated in Melbourne, at the Mentone Lifesaving Club. The Len Barnard band had a regular Sunday night gig there for some years. ... The expression was used in the band as a disguised way of drawing attention to big tits.

Can any readers offer further information on the history of this Australian word?

## PLACE NAMES PROJECT

For some decades the need has been felt for a systematic study of Australian place names, but past plans never came to fruition. Now things are moving. The Australian National Place Names Project has recently got under way with a pilot project based at Macquarie University, with support from the Australian Academy of the Humanities. Flavia Hodges has been appointed as research fellow to work on methods and possible management structures during a pilot phase leading to a full-scale launch in 2000. The project is working closely with the Committee for Geographic Names in Australia to extend its work in recording and standardising place names by providing information about their origins and meanings. It is hoped to carry out the first detailed studies in the Macleay basin in northern NSW and in the ACT. Anyone who would like to know more about the project or the society being set up to support its aims should contact Flavia Hodges at the School of English, Linguistics, and Media, Macquarie University, NSW 2109 (phone 02 9850 7937, fax 02 9850 8240, email [f.hodges@pip.elm.mq.edu.au](mailto:f.hodges@pip.elm.mq.edu.au)). The Project also has a website, under development at <http://www.elm.mq.edu.au/ling/npnp/npnpmain.html>

BRUCE MOORE, DIRECTOR



# SPEAKING FLUENT AMERICAN

HOW TO IMPRESS OTHERS WITH YOUR COMMAND OF THE AMERICAN ACCENT AND SYNTAX

RODERICK MCCALLUM

I may be imagining it, but do I detect that there are now more American accents around than native Australian? For example, there are air media announcers whose accents waver between tinges of American and normal Australian. I wish they would make up their minds as to what they would like to be.

Having spent some time living in the States, and having returned to my native Australian soil with my neutral accent untarnished, I am in a unique position to give help to tyros who wish to swap their native lingo for genuine American. So if you wish to give the Big Impression that you have spent so much time in the US that your accent and syntax have been irrevocably altered, please read on. Follow these rules, and even though you may never have left Kangaroo Island, you will come across as a fluent speaker of American.

First, let us study a little cameo of an Australian reporter at the International Airport in Sydney, welcoming Mr Harry Smith from Minnesota, USA.

*'Good morning, sir. I see you have just arrived to visit our country. Did you have a good flight?'*

*'Yah. Sher did! Thad Qwannus is some air lahn.'*

*'Interesting that you chose Qantas, sir. Any particular reason?'*

*'Yah. Pahl suggesded id.'*

*'Paul? Not our Mr Keating, surely!'*

*'Nahd Keeding. Id wurz yer Pahl Hawgun. "Pudda shrimb onna borbie." Thad gah. We toog id as a personal invite. He sher comes acrahss well. "Hairy Smath," he seemed to say, "Hairy, ged yer ass over to Orstrellia. You'll hev a bahl!"'*

*'Yes, our Mr Hogan has certainly set records for bringing tourists to Australia.'*

*'Rekkerds? Ah'll say! But he's sich an inneresding feller. Thad Crahcodahl Dundee. Grade! Jist grade! Anywee. Muss go. There's no lah abowd geddin ouda here an sein yer bewdiful siddy?'*

*'No law at all, sir, and thank you for speaking with us. That was Mr Harry Smith of Minnesota.'*

*'Thass pronounced Minnie Soda, by the way, Mac, an hevva neece dee!'*

As you may have noticed, there are a few very basic rules for speakers of American to follow. First: never pronounce the letter **t** unless it starts a word. Either

ignore the **t** or use a **d** in its place. Note the word *interesting* in the example above. The **t** is ignored, so the first part of the word is **inner-** instead of **inter-**. Then, instead of **-ting** we say **-ding**. A **t** in the middle of a word becomes a **d**. The word *shuttle* becomes **shuddle**, *brittle* would be **briddle**. Even the great Karl Haas in his 'Adventures in Good Music' pronounces Beethoven as **Bayd-o-ven**.

Second: the letter **r**, particularly on the end of a word, needs to get a good, heavy serve with the tongue towards the back of the mouth and pressed hard against the side of the teeth. Try it.

Third: the sound **ah** translates as **or**. Remembering the second rule above, try pronouncing the word *hard*. It comes out as **hord**. The word *part* becomes **port**. Conversely, though, the **o** comes out as **ah**. For example, *pop* becomes **pahp**. *Flop* is **flahp**. I was mystified, however, to find that the words for long winter underwear (the antique *long john*) were pronounced as **lawng jahn** on a particular episode of *M.A.S.H.* Very puzzling, I know, but there are always irregular nouns and verbs to be learnt if one is to become fluent.

I have never been able to understand how *record* ever became **rekkerd**. Consider the following sentence: *The man chopped a cord of wood and set a record*. In American this would be **The man chahpped a cord of wood an sed a rekkerd**.

And why is **ew** sometimes pronounced as **oo**? The sentence *A few like stew* would come out as **A few like stoo**. By all the rules of logic it should have been **A foo like stoo**.

A short **a** as in *parrot* or *carrot* gets treated as an **air**. Remembering the hard **r** described above, these two words become **pairt** and **cairt**. You will have noticed American commentators on the Gulf War referring to **Air-rubs**.

When we pronounce an **aw** sound, as in *ball*, *call*, or *law*, the fluent American-speaker translates this to **ah**, such as **bahl**, **cahl**, or **lah**.

Words that finish in **awk** are usually sounded as **ok**. For example, *walk* is **wok**, *talk* is **tok**, and *hawk* would be **hok**. Remember that rousing finale from *Oklahoma!* where Curly sings that he would **sid ad nide an tok, and watch a hok maigin lazy circles in the skah?**

But let's try out your new knowledge. Translate the following into American:

**Betty and Tom set a record by walking into the city.** Here's what your translation should have been: **Beddy an Tahm sedda rekkerd by wokkin inda the siddy**. Congratulations if you got it right, but if you didn't, please don't despair. Practice makes perfect.

One more exercise and then you're on your own. Translate into English the following: **If yer sher thad speegin Uhmurrian will give staydus to whud peeble may thing uv you, taig Rahd's shord course. Iddle turn Orstrellians inda gen-you-wine Yangs!** Not easy, was it? Here's how it translates: *If you're sure that speaking American will give status to what people may think of you, take Rod's short course. It will turn Australians into genuine Yanks.*

This article may have set the unsteady feet of some air media announcers on the first rung of the ladder to success. It touches only on the basics and fundamentals, however. As with any language, you must devote hours listening to native speakers. In Australia this is easy as most of our airwaves carry the sounds of America.

An episode of *Sesame Street* on television showed a muppet wearing an oven glove and dealing with the construction of the word *hot*. There were two sets of letters, both glowing red with heat (thus the need for the muppet-sized glove). One letter was **h**; the other set consisted of **o** and **t** joined together to form **ot**.

**Huh!** exclaimed the muppet as he pushed the hot **h** towards the centre of the screen. **Ot!** he said as he transferred his attention to the other letters.

**Huh ... ot.**

The letters came closer together.

**Huh ... ot.**

Almost there.

**Huh. Ot.** And he pushed them both together to form the word.

**HAHT!** he exclaimed in triumph.

You have to put logic on the back-burner when you study American, but spare a thought for the kids in the States who not only have to figure out differences such as *Bough* and *Cough* but have to learn all the irregularities of their American pronunciation as well! Good luck!

**Roderick McCallum** is a writer from South Australia.



# AUSTRALIAN VOWELS : AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

DR FELICITY COX

SPEECH HEARING AND LANGUAGE RESEARCH CENTRE, MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY, SYDNEY

The Australian English accent is differentiated from other varieties of English mainly by the pronunciation of vowel sounds. There are some consonantal differences, but it is primarily the vowels that give our accent its distinctly Australian flavour. At the Speech Hearing and Language Research Centre (SHLRC) at Macquarie University in Sydney there is a long tradition in describing and researching the Australian English accent. The work is based on acoustic techniques and provides objective information on the structural characteristics of the dialect. Observations of Australian English vowels have given us detailed insight into variations that occur within the dialect and how Australian English (AusE) differs from other English dialects.

If we compare AusE with the dialect generally considered to be our primary external standard, Received Pronunciation of British English (RP), it is possible to describe a range of distinctive vowel differences between the two. The front vowels in AusE, as in the words *HID*, *HEAD*, and *HAD*, are all raised relative to the same vowels in RP. This means that the vowel in the word *HID* is rather closer to the *HEED* vowel than in RP. The vowel in the word *HEAD* is closer to the *HID* vowel than in RP and the vowel in the word *HAD* is closer to the *HEAD* vowel than in RP. The vowels in the words *HARD* and *HUD*, which are back vowels in RP, are more fronted in AusE and therefore closer to the *HAD* vowel. The high *HUDE* and *HOOD* vowels are very similar to one another in RP, but these two are quite distinct in AusE.

There are also diphthong differences between these two varieties. The rising diphthongs occur in the words *HADE*, *HIDE*, *HOYD*, *HOWD*, and *HODE*, and the centring diphthongs occur in the words *EAR* and *AIR*. The *EAR* and *AIR* diphthongs in AusE are often pronounced with negligible offglide so the production is rather like prolonged *HID* and *HEAD* vowels. The glides in the *HOWD* and *HODE* vowels have different orientations in RP relative to AusE and the *HADE*, *HIDE*, *HOYD* vowels have undergone a process of shift such that AusE *HADE* is similar to RP *HIDE* and

AusE *HIDE* is similar to RP *HOYD*. These differences may in some instances lead to misunderstanding, such as by the unfortunate woman who believed she was being sent home from the hospital 'to die' after being informed that she was 'going home today'.

Australia and its neighbour New Zealand share many of these vowel differences with RP; not surprising as we are descended from rather similar dialect stock. The similarities between AusE and New Zealand English (NZE) are so great that speakers of other dialects often cannot differentiate between the two. Indeed, there have been many occasions where New Zealanders have been cast in foreign films to play Australians and vice versa. However, speakers of either New Zealand or Australian English are very unlikely to confuse the two. There are many salient features that are essential in characterising these two regional dialects of English. The rising diphthongs are essentially the same for both AusE and NZE and display the same range of variation. The differences between the two dialects reside primarily in the short front vowels and in the centring diphthongs. In NZE the centring diphthongs *EAR* and *AIR* have merged for most young speakers whereas in AusE these two vowels remain very distinct, and there is no suggestion in our research of any merger in progress. In NZE the vowel in *HAD* is quite close to the AusE *HEAD* vowel, and the NZE vowel in *HEAD* is very similar to AusE *HID*, although a length difference remains. NZE *HID* has moved to a more central location and is similar to the schwa vowel (a short form of the *HERD* vowel) whereas AusE *HID* remains close to *HEED*. The central *HID* vowel is probably the most salient differentiating feature of NZE. It is the speech sound most parodied by Australians imitating New Zealanders in phrases like 'fush 'n' chups' (although this vowel quality is a gross exaggeration). There have been various reports in recent years about a NZ influence on AusE, along with the suggestion that AusE is becoming more like NZE. After extensive investigations at SHLRC into the vowel sounds of both dialects we have not found any evidence of this phenomenon. Our work has

involved numerous studies to track vowel change in progress and has involved analysis of speakers from a wide range of social groups. We find no evidence of centralised *HID* and no evidence of *EAR/AIR* merger in AusE. The short front vowel raising, which is characteristic of NZE, is socially and regionally variable in Sydney and cannot be said to represent a change toward NZE. Australia and New Zealand maintain an amicable sociocultural rivalry, and this rivalry cements the linguistic differences between the two nations. Australians don't want to sound like New Zealanders, and New Zealanders certainly don't want to sound Australian.

This rivalry is keenly illustrated by the linguistically aware graffiti artist who, upon encountering **NZ SUX** boldly emblazoned on a wall at Bondi Beach, replied with his spray can **AUSTRALIA NIL**.

The dominant external cultural force impacting on Australia at present is North America. However, even this megaculture, whose influence continues to have a profound effect on all facets of Australian life, has not affected our pronunciation. The resistance of AusE pronunciation to American pressures reinforces the notion that our accent is the most salient marker of identity and nationalism. If the all-pervasive North American influence cannot affect our pronunciation there is little likelihood that New Zealand can have an impact, even given the large numbers of New Zealanders currently living in Australia. So we must lay the NZ influence theory to rest. The differences between the two dialects remain intact and presumably will continue to serve as a mechanism for maintaining our cultural distance.

Language is a dynamic symbol of identity and culture. Linguists have the exciting task of describing the current status of the language, mapping the progress of change, and discussing the relationships between linguistic and social factors. Language provides important insight into the individual and national psyche.



## THE DINKUM OIL ON DINKUM WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

**Dinkum** and its variant **fair dinkum** are quintessentially Australian terms. Compare the somewhat old-fashioned **jonick**, meaning (as does **dinkum**) 'fair; genuine; honest; true'. We know that **jonick** is an Aussification of British dialect **jannock**, 'fair(ly), straightforward(ly)': 'Square jonick, I kid you not!' Where does **dinkum** come from?

顶金  
DǐNG JĪN

DǐNG JĪN vs DING KAM

We frequently hear the furphy that **dinkum** is Chinese. In 1984 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported: 'Jim Kable believes that "dinkum" may come from the Cantonese expression "din kum" meaning "real gold". It would have come, he says, from Chinese workers during the gold rush.' This furphy is still often repeated. On an Internet site, *Business Review Weekly (Interactive)* 23 - 31 July 1997, I came upon a review of an art exhibition in Canberra called *Above and Beyond: Austral/Asian Interactions*. The reviewer had

this to say:

In their catalogue essay, curators ... say that the word 'dinkum' derives from the Cantonese for real gold, perhaps a vestige of the Chinese influence on Victorian gold fields. Above and Beyond underlines that, in terms of forming our cultural identity, the 'dinkum' art of the Heidelberg School of Sir Hans Heysen was relevant a long time ago.

It is true that one of the meanings of the Mandarin word **dǐng** is 'very; most; extremely', hence in Mandarin 'extremely gold' would be **dǐng jīn**, but this collocation can't possibly be the progenitor of our Aussie **dinkum**. Cantonese comes closer to putative parenthood with **dīng kam** ('top gold'). The trouble is that we haven't a shred of evidence that this collocation was ever used by the Chinese, whether on the goldfields or out of them. It seems to me that the marriage of **dīng** and **kam** was not solemnised by the Chinese at all but was a shotgun wedding performed by European amateur etymologists trying to explain where the devil our Aussie **dinkum** sprang from. One can almost hear them say, 'Let us "Leave our

pribbles and prabbles, and desire a marriage" of Ding and Kam' (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*). However, all the evidence to hand leads to the conclusion that (apart from a single word **pakapoo**, which is the name of a Chinese gambling game) Australian English did not borrow any words from Chinese. Furthermore, where there is British dialect evidence for the provenance of an Australian word, this is usually to be preferred. A surprising amount of Australian slang derives from British dialects.

In the dialects of Lincolnshire and Derbyshire there is a word **dinkum** (**dincum** in Derby) which means 'work; a fair share of work'. It is not widely recorded, but there is an 1891 record from a coal-miner who says 'I can stand plenty o' **dincum**', that is, 'I can put up with any amount of fair work'; and from north Lincolnshire there's the record of a person who says 'You have gotten to do your **dinkum**, soã you understand'. The first record of the word in Australia has this meaning. It occurs in Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* (1888): 'It took us an

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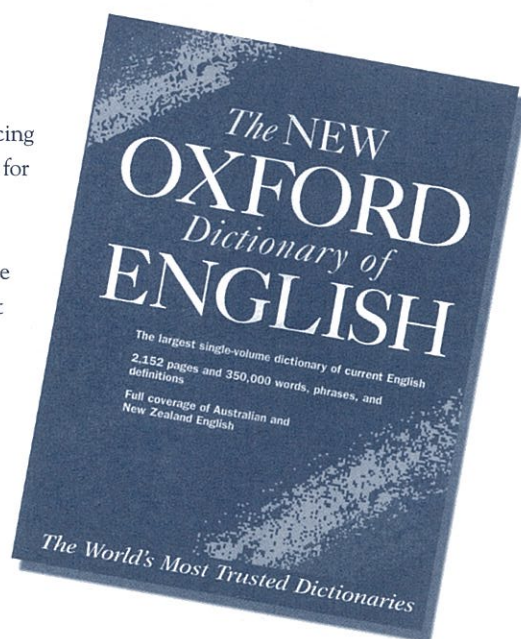
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## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

hour's hard **dinkum** to get near the peak', that is, 'an hour's hard work'.

More importantly, in the north Lincolnshire dialect we have the idiom **fair dinkum**, which means 'fair play', 'fair dealing', 'that which is just and equitable'. In fact, the notion of 'fairness' has always been associated with **dinkum**. It is from that connotation of 'fairness' that the particularly Australian meaning 'reliable, genuine, honest, true' developed in the first decade of this century. It first appeared in writing in 1908, in E.G. Murphy's *Jarrahland Jingles*: 'When up I brings me plumber's kit/An' gives 'em **dinkum** gabbie'.

There was an interesting development of the word during World War I. **Dinkum** was used as a noun to describe an Australian soldier. In 1917 the war historian C.E.W. Bean writes:

The sort of Australian who used to talk about our 'tinpot navy' labelled the Australians who rushed at the chance of adventure the moment the recruiting lists were opened 'the six bob a day tourists'. Well, the 'Tourists' made a name for Australia ... The next shipment were the 'Dinkums' — the men who came over on principle to fight for Australia — the real, fair-dinkum Australians.

Throughout the war, the term **dinkum** continued to be used for an Australian

soldier, but it disappeared in this sense almost immediately the war ended.

By the end of the World War I the term **dinky-di** had appeared as an intensified version of **dinkum**. And at about the same time we get the development of expressions such as **dinkum Aussie** and **the dinkum oil** (which first appears in C.J. Dennis's *The Moods of Ginger Mick* in 1916).

By the late 1970s the phrase **dinky-di Aussie** had become so firmly established that the 'Aussie' bit could be omitted as superfluous. Thus in a 1981 headline we read that 'Bob Ansett's a born-again dinky-di now'.

F.L.

# OZWORDS COMPETITIONS

## Ozwords Competition No. 9: results

I was surprised to find that more than 90% of entries to our limerick competition concentrated sardonically on the egregious Ms Hanson. Then again perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised at all. Second prize (\$50 worth of books from the OUP catalogue) to **Jeni Warburton** for her entry:

**Little Johnny to Pete whispered, 'Pst!**

**D'you know what the battlers have mst?**

**More subtle attax,**

**Like a new type of tax,**

**So, let's slug 'em for more than they've GST.'**

First prize (\$100 worth of books from the OUP catalogue) to **Yasmine Gooneratne** for her entry:

**Said a fishwife from Queensland, 'Again**

**I exhort fellow-Strayans in pain,**

**Wake up to the Asian**

**Attack on our nation—**

**Xenophobia? What's that? Please explain?**

Her second entry was quite as good:

**'Youse Abos are plain botheration,'**

**Says Ms Hanson, the Queen of One Nation.**

**'Here's some orange hair dye,**

**Learn to talk just like I,**

**And we'll give youse your own reservation.'**

[By the bye, I was taken cheerfully to task by two readers (Austin Hussey and Justus Angwin) for my limerick on 'Bicester'. I invented that charming English village on the direct analogy of 'Leicester' and on other such oddities of English place-name pronunciations as 'Pontefract' (pronounced 'Pumfret'), oddities I was utterly delighted to discover when I spent a year

touring the length and breadth of Britain in an old bomb a few years ago photographing medieval misericords and wall-paintings. I was pained to be told by Austin and Justus that 'Bicester' does in fact exist and is not a tiny village at all but a largish town about 12 miles north-east of Oxford. My apologies to all Bicastrians (if in fact they are called 'Bicastrians' and not 'Biscuits' or something such) for having taken their name in vain. Next time I invent an English village I shall call it 'Boojum' (pronounced 'Pertwee'). Oh, and there is a real village in northern Yorkshire called 'Crackpot' on Whitaside Moor. Been there. And I remember well the village of Piddlehinton near Puddletown on the River Piddle (down south somewhere near Charminster, I seem to recall). I love English place names.] **Ed.**

## Ozwords Competition No. 10

There was fury in the ACT recently over the Carnell Government's proposal for a new slogan to appear on the numberplates of cars—**Feel the Power of Canberra**. And there were snickers and hilarity in South Australia a while ago when the government there innocently proposed that their new numberplate slogan should be—**Going All the Way in SA**. Your challenge is to come up with a numberplate slogan that satirises an Australian State or Territory. Nothing as straightforward as **NSW the Premier State**, please. Wit and satire, as Bertie Wooster was wont to say, are 'of the essence'. **Ed.**

Entries close 31 January 1999.

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