

OCTOBER 2003

VOLUME 10 NUMBER 2

PUBLISHED TWICE A YEAR

EDITORIAL

The publication of this issue of *Ozwords* coincides with two other important publications from Oxford University Press. A new edition of *The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* is discussed on p. 5, and Simon Winchester's book about the history of *The Oxford English Dictionary* is discussed on p. 6.

Early in 2004 Oxford University Press will publish the latest in the Australian National Dictionary Centre's lexical monograph series. *Bardi Grubs and Frog Cakes: South Australian Words*, by Dorothy Jauncey, is the third of the Centre's books on regionalisms in Australian English, following *Words from the West* and *Tassie Terms*. The five hundred South Australian words in the book are based on the evidence of quotations from books, newspapers, magazines, and other similar sources. The quotations span written records from 1835 to 2003, and the words have been grouped thematically into chapters. The order of these chapters follows a rough chronological spread from the first inhabitants of what became 'South Australia' to the lifestyle of the present day.

We were saddened to learn of the recent death of the Australian linguist and lexicographer George Turner. He wrote the important book *The English Language in Australia and New Zealand* (1966), and edited a number of Oxford Australian Dictionaries. He edited the second edition of the Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary (1984), and the first edition of the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1987). In 1989, with his wife Beryl Turner, he edited the first edition of the *Oxford Australian Paperback Dictionary*.

Frederick Ludowyk

Frederick Ludowyk
Editor, *Ozwords*

WHAT WE WEAR DOWN-UNDER! MARK GWYNN

As a kid growing up on the beaches of Wollongong I was frequently told by my mother to rinse the sand out of my **dps** and hang them on the line. It was only later that I found out that this seemingly innocent word (pronounced *dee pees*) for swimming costume (the kind that Thorpie wore before donning the bodysuit) was an acronym for **dick pointers**. I also discovered that the acronym was almost exclusively used in Wollongong—confirming my growing belief that we speak a different dialect in that part of Oz. Further research revealed a plethora of Australian terms for this iconic article of men's beachwear, the numerous terms for which can only be compared with the Inuit's inventiveness in describing snow. But this should come as no surprise when we consider that most Australians live near and frequently visit the beach.

The evolution of the swimming costume from **neck-to-knee** to **dps** reflects a history of cultural attitudes to the body and to the beach in Australia. Thorpie's bodysuit or **fastskin** would probably have created less controversy in the first years of the twentieth century, when various state and council laws required swimmers to wear a costume that went from the neck to the knees. Other laws banned swimming at beaches between the hours of 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. In 1911 the New South Wales Government set up a Committee on Surf-bathing, whose recommendations included making bathers choose the quickest route to and from the water, and creating sunbaking enclosures. One of the ordinances deriving from this committee became known as the 'mackintosh rule', which required bathers who had just left the water to wear an overcoat or mackintosh (L. Huntsman, *Sand in our Souls*, 2001). The mayors of Manly and Waverly councils provoked an outcry when their proposed regulations called for men to wear skirted costumes. A poem by Crow's Nest called 'The Skirt Scare at Manly', published in the *Daily Telegraph* on 27 September 1907, is only one of the many responses recorded in the local newspapers of the time:

In the land of Topsy Turvy
The Women are donning shirts
And the men in the seaside places
Have taken to wearing skirts.

Sing hey, for the whiskered women
In trailing skirts encased
Sing ho, for the dainty fellows
And clasp them round the waist.

After a large protest in Sydney that included male swimmers wearing ballet skirts, embroidered petticoats, and sarongs, the proposal for the swimming skirt was dropped.

When Australians did venture into the surf in these early years they had a number of Standard English words to describe what they wore. Words including **costume**, **attire**, **gown**, **trunks**, and **suit** were used in England and were often qualified by 'swimming' or 'bathing'—hence **swimming costume**, **bathing attire**, **bathing costume**, etc. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) provides evidence from the nineteenth century of words including 'costume', 'drawers', and 'trunks' that refer to a swimming costume. The evidence points to the growing use of the beach in England and also provides clues to the kind of clothes English bathers were wearing. The use of familiar clothing terms to describe the swimming costume was perfectly logical given that people often wore whatever could be adapted for the requirements of bathing and modesty. There were no standard costumes—what were undergarments one day could become a swimming costume the next. And due to the almost puritanical view of the body held by many people at the end of the nineteenth century, efforts to cover up the body could become quite ridiculous. A typical women's swimming costume from this time consisted of a full-skirted, knee-length dress, long bloomers, and stockings—a costume that could require up to nine metres of fabric (A. Joel, *Best Dressed*, 1984). Cultural attitudes to public bathing and the vocabulary used to describe experiences at the beach in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century were imported from England.

A growing interest in swimming in the early years of the twentieth century brought to public attention the issue of acceptable and non-acceptable swimming costumes in Australia. In the first decade of the century the Australian Annette Kellermann pioneered the brief one-piece swimming costume while performing high dives at the Melbourne Aquarium. She went on to make attempts at swimming the English Channel, performed vaudeville aquatic acts in Chicago, and was judged the 'perfect woman' out of ten thousand contestants in the USA. Everywhere Kellermann went her swimming costume attracted much attention and controversy. In 1907 she was arrested on a Boston beach for wearing a one-piece swimming costume. Another woman who became prominent in the one-piece swimming costume was Australia's first female Olympic gold medallist Fanny Durack. Before winning the hundred metres event at the Stockholm Olympics in 1912, Durack had controversially flouted the New South Wales Ladies' Amateur Swimming Association's directives by working with lifesavers on the line and reel at Coogee beach. The association's president told the *Sydney Sun*:

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

We are essentially a clothes-wearing people. ... It is immodest for ladies to appear on open beaches amongst men in attire so scant that they would be ashamed to wear the same dress in their own drawing-rooms (as quoted in H. Gordon, *Australia and the Olympic Games*, 1994, p. 80).

The notoriety and publicity surrounding these celebrities and the influence of fashion led to calls in Australia for restrictions on public bathing. As we have already seen, a number of regulations were introduced before the First World War to discourage the wearing of immodest swimming costumes. Manufacturers of swimming costumes and costume patterns reinforced this conservative attitude; one common swimming costume was the **Canadian costume**. It consisted of a pair of woollen knickers extending halfway down the thighs and a sleeveless guernsey, usually in dark blue with white contrasting bands (A. Joel, *Best Dressed*, 1984). Both men and women wore this costume in the first decades of the twentieth century. At the Australian National Dictionary Centre (ANDC) we have evidence of the term **Canadian bathing costume** from 1914, but I have not yet determined if this word is Australian, or why 'Canadian' is used in this context. The multi-piece and two-piece costumes became less fashionable and by the 1920s David Jones was advertising the 'Orient One-piece Canadian Costume from ten shillings and six pence'. But while the less cumbersome one-piece swimming costume became more popular, there were many who believed that it was too revealing. A common practice of men before and after the First World War was to wear **Vs** over the costume. These were like an athlete or circus performer's trunks and, although worn ostensibly for decency, they only served to accentuate the male anatomy. The demand for a swimming costume that was prescribed by the authorities and that could stem the tide of experimentation laid the foundations for the **neck-to-knee** costume.

The first Australian word used for a swimming costume, **neck-to-knee**, indicates the competition between the forces of imported English culture and the newly emerging Australian culture. *The Australian National Dictionary* (AND) has evidence of **neck-to-knee** from 1910, although it cites a 1902 *Government Gazette* that says:

All people bathing in any waters exposed to view from any wharf, street, public place, or dwelling-house in the Municipal District of Manly, before the hour of 7.30 in the morning and after the hours of 8 o'clock in the evening, shall be attired in proper bathing costume

covering the body from the neck to the knee.

Even with these restrictions an increasing number of Australians were going to the beach in the years leading up to the First World War. In 1906 the first Surf Life Saving Club opened—in Bondi—with many others soon following. The increase in the number of Australians visiting the beach meant that the legal prescriptions regarding swimming were often challenged and in a sense the word **neck-to-knee** is not simply descriptive but intimates the restrictions that enforced its use. Many photographs and drawings of people at the beach in the early years of the twentieth century show that the prescribed **neck-to-knee** was competing with other more revealing costumes. It is in this period when the prescribed dress codes were being challenged that we find the first evidence of the Australian words **togs**, **swimmers**, **bathers**, and **cossies**.

The word **togs** is an abbreviation of the sixteenth-century criminal slang **togeman**, meaning 'coat'. **Togeman** itself comes from the Roman 'toga', which comes from the Latin **tegere** 'to cover'. The first citation for **togs** in the OED dates from 1708, when it was still considered a part of the flash language of the criminal underworld. Later in the eighteenth century **togs** was used as slang or humorously for clothes—the OED has a 1779 citation for this sense. So by the time the First Fleet left Portsmouth bound for Botany Bay there were many aboard who knew this word. But it is not until 1918 that we have our first written evidence of **togs** used in a swimming context. The citation comes from the *Kia-ora coo-ee*, which was the official magazine of the Australian and New Zealand armed forces: 'Some of the Queenslanders are revelling in the opportunity of getting out in this hot weather in their bathing togs!' By 1930 in Australian English **togs** had become synonymous with 'swimming costume' and had lost the general meaning of 'clothes'.

The next evidence the AND has of an Australian word for swimming costume is the simple abbreviation **cossie**, first recorded in 1926. The evidence for **cossie** points to the still common use of 'swimming costume' and 'costume' in Australian English between the wars. **Cossie** is a less cumbersome and less formal way of denoting an item of clothing used primarily for pleasure. Other early examples of Australian words for swimming costume show this tendency of shortening a word or modifying the meaning of an existing word. The OED marks **swimmers** as a chiefly Australian word, although the first evidence for it comes from an English newspaper in 1929. Our first evidence for **bathers** comes from Katharine Susannah Prichard's

Haxby's Circus (1930). In the eighteenth century, **bather** was used to describe someone who had a bath. By adapting these existing nouns used to describe a person who swims or bathes to the clothes worn while swimming or bathing, the Australian vocabulary was able to keep pace with new cultural attitudes to swimming and, importantly, to the fashion emerging on the beach.

In 1928 the MacRae Knitting Mills in Sydney began manufacturing woollen swimming costumes known as **speedos**. The company produced a knitted navy-blue woollen one-piece swimming costume in the same style for men, women, and children. The one-piece streamlined **Speedo** paved the way for other fashions. Men continued to roll their swimming costumes down to their waists even though topless swimming costumes were not legal on many beaches until the 1930s (1938 for Melbourne). **Speedo** initiated and adapted to changes in fashion and the name became synonymous with the swimming costume. The men's brief one-piece trunk in the **V** shape became the hallmark of **Speedo**, worn by Olympic swimmers and life savers Australia-wide. Swimming trunks had existed since the previous century and were worn at the beach with other garments, or were worn alone by the more daring swimmers. However, with all the council and government regulations, they were not a common sight on public beaches before the 1930s. In this decade many councils removed the **neck-to-knee** regulations and the men's trunk-style **speedo** would make its full impact on the beach in the following decades. All the puritans' fears proved correct, with the Australian man's anatomy on proud display, albeit behind the proverbial fig leaf of fabric.

Many of the early terms for swimming costume in Australia were the same for both sexes (what they wore often amounted to the same thing) but with changing fashions and the popularity of the men's trunk-style costume, the terms were applied largely to them. Partly because the **speedo** style of costume proved practical and comfortable in the surf and in the swimming pool, they soon became the most popular swimming costume for Australian men and boys. Many boys grew up calling this particular swimming costume their **speedos**, **cossies**, **bathers**, **togs**, or **swimmers**. All these Australian words are descriptive—they describe something in terms of an article of clothing or through association with bathing and swimming. They are all words specific to the object they describe. The next generation of Australian words for **speedos** highlights what the object covers—the male genitals. Because many of the following words are or were considered

WHAT WE WEAR DOWN-UNDER!

MARK GWYNN

vulgar, or colloquial at best, the earliest evidence we have at the Australian National Dictionary Centre is not a clear indication of when these words were first used. Many of them probably emerged in the decades following the end of the Second World War, most likely in the 1960s and 1970s, when challenges to sexual taboos were controversially played out in the public domain. This is the period when bikinis and even topless women were seen regularly on the beaches of Australia.

The earliest evidence at the ANDC of a term emphasising what is covered by the costume (i.e. the genitals) is the word **slugos**, from a 1972 edition of the Australian surfing magazine *Tracks*. The word is probably formed from 'slug' meaning 'penis' (originally from Australian Navy slang), and from the last syllable of **speedos**. Another possibility is that the word refers to the appearance of having a slug in your **speedos**. We have evidence that this word is still in use today, although the citations have moved away from the surfing context, and there is growing evidence for **sluggers**. While I can remember, and still use, the word **dps** ('dick pointers') from the late 1970s, there is currently only evidence

of it from the Internet in the last couple of years and from previous responses to *Ozwords*—but there are certainly quite a few people in Wollongong who still use it! Our first evidence of **dick-stickers** is similarly late, coming from a 1993 edition of the *Sydney Morning Herald*: 'At Whale Beach the boys strutting like roosters in bright board-shorts and "dick-stickers" (Lycra underwear-style togs named for their clinging qualities when wet).' We have evidence of **dick togs** from 1994, and the Internet provides numerous examples of the acronym **dts**. One of the more inventive terms from recent years is **budgie smugglers**. The ANDC has evidence of this one from 2000, and it is probably based on the international English **grape smugglers**. The Australian penchant for abbreviating has already manifested itself in this neologism, with **budgies** being heard in the recent television series *Australian Idol*. The Internet has also provided evidence of *budgie huggers*. Other Australian words that seem to have emerged in the 1990s and that we are only now beginning to record at the ANDC include **meat hangers**, **lolly bags**, **ballhuggers**, **noodlebenders**, and **lolly catchers**.

The Inuit people have had practical reasons for developing an extensive vocabulary to describe snow and ice features. In Australian

English the numerous terms for the men's **speedo** costume are more a result of fashion and sex. The early terms, including **togs** and **cozzies**, reflect the growing popularity and emerging culture of the beach and swimming. The growth of later terms, including **dps** and **budgie smugglers**, shows a common characteristic of English words associated with sex in that they generate many synonyms. The diversity of these terms is also reflected in their apparent regionalism. **Togs** is more likely to be heard in Queensland and Victoria, for instance, whereas **cozzies** and **swimmers** are more likely to be heard in New South Wales. While it is hard to determine with any accuracy when and where all these terms came from, they do present us with an interesting story about the role of the swimming costume in Australian culture. And in Australia, if men fear the brevity of their **speedos** or are confused about which term to use, they can always wear the more modest board shorts: 'I promise I will not wear speedos, dick togs, dick stickers, or dick pointers. I should be able to find a pair of boardies' (quoted from the Internet).

[Mark Gwynn is a researcher at the Australian National Dictionary Centre.]

Own the World's Greatest Dictionary...

Defining over a million words, in twenty volumes, The Oxford English Dictionary is the ultimate authority on the English language—and now it can be yours at a fraction of its normal price.

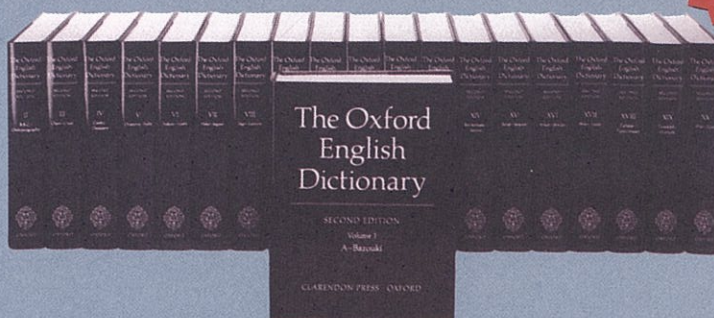
International Scope

- ✓ Covers words from across the English-speaking world—from North America to Australasia
- ✓ Includes words taken into English from other languages

Breadth and Depth of Coverage

- ✓ Provides in-depth information on over half a million words
- ✓ Offers the best in etymological analysis
- ✓ No other dictionary gives you more: 20 volumes, 21,730 pages, 62.6 kilos, 291,500 entries, 47,100 main entries for obsolete words, 2,436,600 quotations, 139,900 pronunciations, and 219,800 etymologies!!!

Oxford English Dictionary... the last word on words



20 Volumes
RRP ~~A\$5495.00~~
A\$2003!

CD-ROM
\$395

Authoritative

- ✓ The international authority on the English language

A Unique Historical Record

- ✓ An unsurpassed guide to the meaning, history, and pronunciation of words—both present and past
- ✓ Traces the usage of words through 2.5 million quotations from a wide range of international English language sources—from classic literature and specialist periodicals to film scripts, wills, and cookery books

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.oup.com.au

'Australia's Most Trusted Dictionaries'

TO ORDER:

Contact Oxford University Press Customer Service:

Phone: 1300 650 616 • Free-Fax: 1800 813 602

Email: cs@oup.com.au



MAILBAG

Letters are welcome. Please address letters to: Frederick Ludowyk, Editor, Ozwords,
The Australian National Dictionary Centre, Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200
Email: Fred.Ludowyk@anu.edu.au Fax: (02) 6125 0475

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.

BONZER BEER

Firstly the word *boshter*. I seem to remember a non-alcoholic beer being named 'Boshter Beer' and wondered if a word that I probably presumed to be a proper noun was in fact used in the sense of **bonzer**.

John Nield, SA

This letter refers to the lead article in the last Ozwords, which examined the possible origins of the Australian **bonzer**. *Boshter* and **bonzer** are synonymous, of course. I asked John whether he could find out for me when and where the term *Boshter Beer* was used. After a great deal of research, John got back to me with the following information: J.A. Williams' *Boshter Beer* was first made in South Australia in 1906, *boshter* being slang for 'extra good'. In 1912, J.H. Foureur applied for a trademark for his *Boska Shandy* (*boska* being a variant of *boshter*) and Williams had a *Boshter Shandy* on sale. I am deeply indebted to John for this (and very much more) information, which he painstakingly gleaned. **ED.**

KATH AND KIM

My daughter tells me that Kath and Kim's version of 'ropeable' (i.e. 'gropeable') has become part of the daily speech in her office. She thinks this one may become part of the language. It has a slight distinction from 'ropeable', which is (apparently) used about someone else—e.g. 'the boss was ropeable'—while 'gropeable' refers to oneself—'I was gropeable about the new restructure.'

S. Lever, ACT

Television shows often send words and phrases out into the wider community. The Simpsons (sad to say) gave us **doh!** The recently published Oxford Dictionary of English added **lovely jubbly**, a phrase used to express delight and admiration. It comes from **lubbly jubbly**, a 1950s advertising slogan for Jubbly, an orange-flavoured soft drink. This was adopted for use in the British television series *Fools & Horses*, and from there found its way into wider British English. The term **bada bing** (or **bada bing bada boom**), an exclamation used to emphasise that something will happen effortlessly and predictably, derives from the American television series *The Sopranos*. The most famous Australian example is the word **ocker**, which derives from the name of a character in the television series *The Mavis Bramston Show* (1965–68). It is always difficult to predict whether a word of this kind will survive once the television series ends. In addition to **gropeable**, Kath and Kim has given us **hornbag** and phrases such as 'I like what I see'. There are also such 'non-standard' forms as **pacifically** (for 'specifically'), **effluent** (for 'affluent'), and

foxmorons. And there is the mangling of vowel sounds, especially in the phrases **Look at moy**, **look at moy please** and **It's noice**, different, unusual. A Sydney Morning Herald journalist has labelled them **sh'ockers** (a blend of *sheila* and *ocker*), and it will be interesting to see whether that word takes off too. **ED.**

WHITHER GAY?

The word 'gay' used to mean 'happy, carefree, joyful', as in the old song 'A bachelor gay am I' (which does not mean that he's after the fellers). Then it came to mean 'homosexual'. Now I hear my grandchildren (12 and 14) using it to mean something that is 'boring' or 'not liked'. Is this a new sense?

Mrs C.S. Qld

It is certainly a new sense in Australia. The old meaning 'happy, joyful' is now completely dead, to be met with cadaverously only in historical contexts. Wordsworth, for example, feeling uplifted by daffodils, wrote: 'A poet could not but be gay/In such a jocund company'. (I remember the sniggers I received from my students at their idea that daffs could induce homo sensations!) The dominant meaning today is **homosexual**. Young people still use the word in this sense, but the interesting fact is that they also use it in the sense **boring**. This is especially evident on Internet discussion sites, where the two senses are used at different points without any evidence of a tension between the two. Here are some typical Australian Internet uses with the sense **boring**: 'Boring, boring, gay, boring, boring'; 'flavourless chips man, so gay'; 'All I have to say is that these questions this month are so GAY that I only bothered to answer three'. It is not clear exactly how and when this new meaning arose, but the evidence points to its having arisen in America. For those with Internet access, there is an interesting discussion of this new sense at <<http://www.linguistlist.org/issues/13/13-498.html>>. **ED.**

SHOON

Re: 'shoon' as an archaic form of 'shoes'. Do you know the origin of this? Anglo-Saxon? Norse? It came up while I've been writing some memoirs of primary school days. It was in an old poem about a pixy or something which I can't remember.

R. England, Vic.

First a 'kinde of historie', since your question points to some interesting facts about the history of the English language. In the Old English period (before 1066) there were two main ways of forming the plurals of nouns. There was one main category of nouns called 'strong nouns', and they formed their plural by adding **-as** to the

end of the singular (one *stan* 'stone', but two *stanas*); the **-as** ending developed into our **-s** ending for the plural (*stone*, *stones*). There was a second main category of nouns called 'weak nouns' that ended in **-a** if they were masculine, or **-e** if they were feminine, and they formed their plural by adding **-n** or **-an** to the end of the singular (one *steorra* 'star', but two *steorran*, one *sunne* 'sun', but two *sunnan*); this developed into an **-en** ending in the Middle English period. In the Old English period there were hundreds of nouns that formed their plural with **-an**, but the history of English has been for almost all of these **-an** plurals to change allegiance and join up with the **-s** mob. The only original **-an** plural to survive into modern English is *oxen*. But there are also some Johnny-come-latelies—nouns that were strong nouns in the Old English period but that developed parallel weak-noun endings in the Middle English period. In Old English the word *cild* 'child' had zero inflection in the plural (one *cild*, two *cild*), or sometimes an irregular **-ru** (two *cildru*), which eventually developed into *childer* (as in *Childermass*, the Mass commemorating Herod's massacre of the hapless infants). But in the twelfth century, by analogy with the still-surviving **-en** plurals, *childer* added **-en** and became *child(e)ren*, thus making it a triple plural. A similar process of analogy produced *brethren* in the thirteenth century. What then of *shoon*? The word *shoe* had always formed its plural by adding **-s** in the Old English period (one *sco*, two *scos*), but in the thirteenth century, again by analogy, it formed a second plural, *shoon*. These two forms existed side by side until well into the eighteenth century, when *shoon* went the way of all but a handful of **-n** plurals. I don't quite recall your 'old poem about a pixy', but an eighteenth century ballad about the drowning of a mob of noble Scots sailors laments: 'O laith, laith were our gude Scots lords/To wet their cork-heel'd shoon' [to wet their cork-heeled shoes]. Such fastidiousness! **ED.**

DISS

On Australian tellie someone said recently, 'Don't you dare diss Harry Potter!' What does 'diss' mean? Any comments?

P. Kelly, WA

The verb **diss** (also spelt **dis**) started off as American Black English. It means 'to disparage, to speak disrespectfully of', and is probably an abbreviation of **disrespect**, perhaps with some influence from **dismiss** or **disparage**. It appeared in the early 1980s, and is especially associated with rap music. More recently it has developed into a noun, meaning 'disrespectful talk' ('a lot of **dis** about Prince Harry'). Although primarily an American word, it is certainly used in other parts of the world, especially among teenagers, including our own. **ED.**

A reminder that the fourth edition of the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* was published in October. The vocabulary of international English continues to expand rapidly. Computing and electronic communication are still the areas in which the expansion is most clearly taking place. The previous edition of this dictionary (1997) included the 'new' terms *Internet* and *World Wide Web*. The present edition recognises the appearance of *DVD*, *SMS*, and *text message*. From the semantic area of computing and new technology also come *copyleft*, *cybercafe*, *cyberphobia*, *cyberpunk*, *datacasting*, *e-book*, *mouse potato*, *predictive text*, *vapourware*, *webcam*, *webcast*, *widget*, *XML*, and *zip*. The terrorism and wars of recent years have provided terms such as *asymmetrical warfare*, *embedded*, *ground zero*, *9/11*, *sky marshal*, and *weapon of mass destruction*. Sport has provided terms such as *air ball*, *blood doping*, *canyoning*, *criterium*, *fastskin*, *sky surfing*, and *zorbing*. Yet the new words come from all spheres, as illustrated by the following selection: *asylum seeker*, *barista*, *call centre*, *carbon credit*, *cattle class*, *claymation*, *economic migrant*, *economy class syndrome*, *erythropoietin*, *fire ant*, *genetically modified*, *glycaemic index*, *reality television*, *SARS*, *transgenic*, *24/7*, and *wedge politics*. American slang continues to be an important influence on English worldwide—this edition includes, for example, *ho*, *booty*, *schmatte*, *trailer trash*, and *yada*. Yet Australian English continues to produce its own terms. Some of the Australianisms that were not in the previous edition include *aspirational voter*, *bevan*, *branch stacking*, *budgie smugglers*, *Canberra bashing*, *chop chop*, *clog wog*, *drop bear*, *esky lid*, *irukandji*, *mates rates*, *mugachino*, *netta netball*, *roo ball*, *scroggin*, *secret men's business*, *sluggos*, *stolen generation(s)*, and *walla rugby*.

CROOK IN TALLAROOK

G.A. Wilkes in *A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms* describes the phrase **Things are crook in Tallarook** as 'a catchphrase for any adverse situation'. Such phrases containing place names are very common in Australian English, and Wilkes lists the following: 'Bugger all at Blackall'; 'There's no work at Bourke'; 'Got the arse at Bulli Pass'; 'No lucre at Echuca'; 'In jail at Innisfail'; 'Things are weak at Julia Creek'; 'Things are crook at Muswellbrook'; 'The girls are bandy at Urandangie'. Sidney Baker in *The Australian Language* lists a number of these and some others: 'Got a feed at the Tweed'; 'No feedin' at Eden'; 'Everything's wrong at Wollongong'; 'Might find a berth in Perth'. He traces these expressions back to the depression of the 1930s, when they had very real meaning for people travelling about the country in search of work. A radio caller offered 'There's nothin' doin' at Araluen'. Do any readers know of similar phrases?

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.

DINKS

The difficulties we have in finding written evidence for some colloquial Australian words is well illustrated by the regional terms for 'a lift on a bicycle (or a horse) ridden by another'. The term known Australia-wide is **dink**, but there are regional variations. In southern New South Wales it can be **dub**, and in the area between Mildura and Hay **pug** appears. In north-eastern New South Wales there is evidence for **bar**. In South Australia we find **donkey** and **dinky**. Apart from **dink**, these terms have only very rarely been discovered in written sources. Does anyone have any evidence for them in books, magazines, newspapers, etc.?

FATHER OF FEDERATION

Sir Henry Parkes is now popularly known as the **Father of Federation**. But was he always so known? A 1901 book on the federation movement comments: 'The statue of Sir Henry Parkes as the Father of Federation was appropriately decorated, and bore his motto, "One People One Destiny".' The title is therefore very old, but our records appear to indicate that in the following eighty or so years the title was largely forgotten, and that it was only after the Bicentenary celebrations of 1988 that the title was resurrected. Is this true, or is it that our records are inadequate?

FOREIGN ORDERS

In 1996 the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption published a *Practical Guide to Corruption Prevention*. One of its hypothetical descriptions of the development of corruption in the workplace began in this way: 'Bob works as a fitter in the engineering division of a large government department. He is a conscientious worker and his performance reports have always been above average. The manager of the engineering division is

a vintage car enthusiast and president of a car club. He often brings his vehicle parts to the workshop and has some of the fitters work on them. Bob had no major objection to this for a time. However, his view began to change when the manager's *foreign order* jobs started to take priority over the real work of the section.' **Foreign order** was a new term to me, though I understand that it has been around for some time as a euphemism for using the resources of one's workplace to do private work. We would be grateful for any pre-1996 printed evidence of the term.

DOUBLE PLUGGERS

Towards the end of an interview Prime Minister Howard did with a Darwin radio station in August 2003, the presenters gave the prime minister 'a pair of genuine Noonamah Pub double pluggers' as an indication of what people might be able to buy with the \$4 a week tax cut they received in the Budget. How common is the term **double pluggers**? In July 2002 the Western Australian ABC reported that as part of the Year of the Outback there was to be a 'thong muster' at Carnarvon: 'Forget the cattle, sheep, and donkeys—it's time to rustle up those old double pluggers—dust off the ole flip flops and send them to Carnarvon for what's believed to be the world's first Great Aussie thong muster.' So we now know that double pluggers are thongs, though it is interesting that this news item also uses the term **flip-flops** (and we have had some recent evidence that the New Zealand term **jandals** is being used in Sydney!). But **double pluggers** are not your ordinary thongs. A caller to ABC Radio Northern Tasmania described them as the 'Rolls Royce of thongs'—apparently they have two anchor points for the thong on each side of the base. Can anyone point us to written evidence for this term before the mid 1990s?

STACKS ON

We have been looking at the phrase **stacks on the mill**. As a cry in a schoolyard game, where children pile up on top of a victim, the chant is sometimes expanded to **stacks on the mill, more on still**. Recently, we have seen the phrase abbreviated simply to **stacks on!** The phrase is also used in descriptions of ball games, especially Aussie Rules, when a number of players pile up in attempting to get at the ball. The children's game is possibly a survival of a game formerly played in Cheshire, which 'consisted in getting a man down on the ground and then others falling on the top of him till there was a complete pile or stack of men' (*English Dialect Dictionary*, 1912). The original name of the game was 'more sacks to the mill', and 'sacks' appears to have been corrupted at some stage to 'stacks'.

BRUCE MOORE
DIRECTOR

Simon Winchester will be known to many of our readers as the author of *The Surgeon of Crowthorne*, a book published in 1998. The American surgeon Dr W.C. Minor, a murderer, paranoid schizophrenic, and inmate of the Broadmoor Asylum in the Berkshire village of Crowthorne, was one of the volunteer readers for the Oxford English Dictionary project. He was one of the most prolific and useful of the volunteer readers, providing citations from 1881 to 1902. The focal point of the book is Dr Minor, but readers also get glimpses into the working methods of James Murray, who was editor of the dictionary from 1879 to 1915, and into the mysterious world of historical lexicography.

In his latest book, *The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary* (OUP 2003), Simon Winchester gives us the whole history of the Oxford English Dictionary project. Firm plans for the dictionary were laid out in 1860, but the project was not completed until 1928. The first editor, Herbert Coleridge (grandson of the poet), wrote in 1860: 'I confidently expect ... that in about two years we shall be able to give our first number to the world' (the dictionary was to be published in parts). In 1861 Coleridge died of tuberculosis at the age of 31. Twenty-two years later, in 1882, the dictionary's most famous editor, James Murray, wrote: 'The great fact ... is, that the Dictionary is now at last really launched, and that some forty pages are in type, of which forty-eight columns have reached me in proof.'

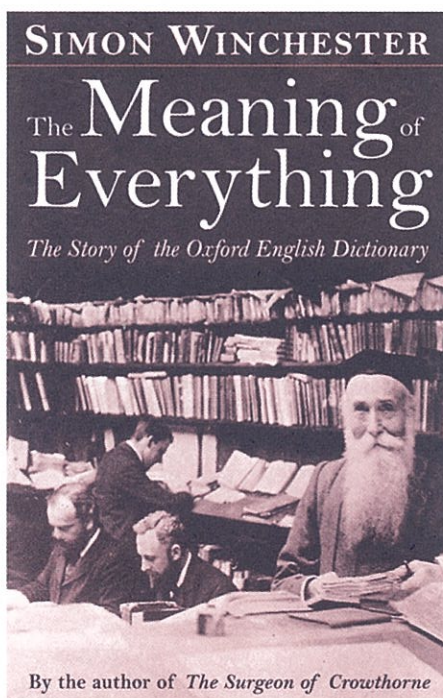
One of James Murray's first acts on becoming editor in 1879 was to reactivate the volunteer reader program, which had languished in the preceding years. In the Preface to Volume I, Murray lists and thanks the many hundreds of readers who had provided quotations that illustrated the ways particular words were used. Winchester lists some of them:

Thos. Austin, 1650,000 quotations; Wm. Douglas, London, 136,000; Dr. H.R. Helwich, Vienna, 50,000; Dr. T.N. Brushfield, Sallerton, 50,000; T. Henderson, MA, Bedford, 40,000; the Rev. J. Pierson, Ionia, Michigan, USA, 46,000.

One of these volunteer readers was an Australian, although curiously he is not mentioned in the list of acknowledgments. This was Edward Ellis Morris. The Oxford-educated Morris arrived in Australia in 1875 to take up the position of Headmaster of Melbourne

Church of England Grammar School. In 1884 he became Professor of Modern Languages and Literature at the University of Melbourne. In 1898 he published *Austral English: A Dictionary of Australasian Words, Phrases, and Usages*. The existence of this book can be attributed directly to James Murray's appeal for volunteer readers for the Oxford dictionary project. Morris explains:

That great dictionary is built up out of quotations specially gathered for it from English books of all kinds and all periods; and Dr. Murray several years ago invited assistance from this end of the world for words and uses of words peculiar to Australasia, or to parts of it. ... The work took time, and when my parcel of quotations had grown into a considerable heap, it occurred to me that the collection, if a little further trouble were expended upon it, might first enjoy an independent existence. Various friends kindly contributed more quotations: and this Book is the result.



Morris's contribution to the *Oxford English Dictionary* can often be gauged by comparing the quotations in his dictionary with those for the corresponding entries in the OED. They are often identical for the early years of a word's existence, suggesting that Morris was a very important source for the Australian material. In the Preface to *Austral English* Morris thanks James Murray for looking over the proofs of the

book: 'The Master himself,—the Master of all who engage in Dictionary work,—Dr. Murray, of Oxford, has kindly forwarded to me a few pithy and valuable comments on my proof-sheets.' An example of these comments can be seen in the entry for the word **creek**, which in Britain means 'a small bay or harbour on a sea coast; a narrow inlet on a sea coast or in a river bank' but in Australia and the United States means a 'stream or tributary of a river': 'Dr. J.A.H. Murray kindly sends me the following note:—"Creek goes back to the early days of exploration. Men sailing up the Mississippi or other navigable river saw the mouths of tributary streams, but could not tell without investigation whether they were confluences, or mere inlets, creeks. They called them creeks, but many of them turned out to be running streams, many miles long—tributary rivers or rivulets. The name *creek* stuck to them, however, and thus became synonymous with tributary stream, brook" '.

Simon Winchester provides some fascinating snippets of information on the endearing eccentricities of the various makers of this great dictionary:

- Early dictionary editor, Frederick Furnivall, was the inspiration for Kenneth Grahame's 'Ratty', who corrects 'Toad's' grammar in *The Wind in the Willows*.
- *Oxford English Dictionary* editor James Murray tried to train cows around his native parish to respond to being called in Latin.
- Dr W.C. Minor, an American surgeon, imprisoned for murder on Broadmoor, England, was the most prolific of early contributors to the Dictionary. 'We could easily have illustrated the last four centuries from his quotations alone,' wrote Murray.
- Napoleon's nephew Louis-Lucien Bonaparte was one of the contributors from across continents.
- J.R.R. Tolkien (of *The Lord of the Rings* fame) spent a whole year pondering over the correct definition of the word 'walrus'.

When Bill Ramson began the editing process for *The Australian National Dictionary*, a dictionary very much modelled on the structure of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, one of his starting points was certainly Morris's *Austral English*. If you enjoy Simon Winchester's *The Meaning of Everything*, you would also enjoy Bill Ramson's *Lexical Images: The Story of the Australian National Dictionary*, published by Oxford University Press in 2002.

WILD HORSES RUNNING WILD

CHASING OUR BRUMBY

FREDERICK LUDOWYK

In previous issues of *Ozwords*, Dymphna Lonergan has suggested that a number of Australian words have unrecognised origins in Irish. She has looked at **sheila**, **didgeridoo**, and **clauber**. Elsewhere Dymphna has suggested that the Australian word **brumby** 'a wild horse' is also from Irish, from an Irish word that still exists in Irish English as **bromach** 'a colt', and that in Irish inflected forms also appears as **bromaigh**. Is this Irish origin convincing?

The first point to note is that **brumby** appears relatively late in Australian English. The first evidence for the term in *The Australian National Dictionary* (AND) is from the *Australasian* (Melbourne) in 1880: 'Passing through a mob of mulga, we saw, on reaching its edge, a mob of horses grazing on the plains beyond. These our guide pronounced to be "brumbies", the bush name here [in Queensland] for wild horses.' Yet by 1885, in another magazine, *Once a Month* (Melbourne), it is suggested that **brumby** is a New South Wales, rather than a Queensland, term: 'I came to the conclusion that he was a "Brummy"—the New South Wales name for wild horses.' It has always interested me that the spelling **brummy** is used in this second appearance of the term in 1885, for only five years later the Australian word **brummy** meaning 'counterfeit; sham and often showy; cheaply made' appears in the *Sydney Truth*: 'It is down on the "brummy" parsons and shark lawyers.' This **brummy** is traditionally derived from **Brummagen**, a form of 'Birmingham', a city attracting various negative stereotypes, including the production of counterfeit coins. **Brumby** in the sense 'wild horse' was very quickly used figuratively in the general sense 'wild', and the AND lists the following passage from the *Sydney Truth* in 1890 as the first such transferred use: 'It is wonderful to witness the number of sky-pilots [a priest, who guides people to heaven], devil-dodgers [another nineteenth-century term for a clergyman] and brummy parsons who visit the House.' It is interesting that there seems to be some blurring of **brumby** and **brummy** here, and it may well be that the first citation given for the transferred sense of **brumby** (though with the spelling **brummy**) in AND really belongs under **brummy**.

There have been various theories about the origin of the word. Some have suggested that it is from an Aboriginal language. E.E. Morris in *Austral English* (1898) notes: 'In its present shape [the word] figures in one aboriginal vocabulary, given in Curr's "Australian Race" (1887), vol. iii. p. 259. At p. 284, *booramby* is given as meaning "wild" on the river Warrego in Queensland.' This is the language of the Pijara (or Pidjara or Bidjara) people of the region at the headwaters of the Warrego and Nogoia Rivers in southern Queensland. This origin

was popularised by Banjo Paterson in an introduction to his poem 'Brumby's Run' (printed in the *Bulletin* in 1894 and in *Saltbush Bill, J.P., and Other Verses* in 1917): 'Brumby is the Aboriginal word for a wild horse. At a recent trial a New South Wales Supreme Court Judge, hearing of Brumby horses, asked: "Who is Brumby, and where is his Run?"' The first two stanzas of the Paterson poem attempt to answer the judge's question:

It lies beneath the Western Pines
Beneath the sinking sun,
And not a survey mark defines,
The bounds of 'Brumby's Run'.

On odds and ends of mountain land
On tracks of range and rock
Where no one else can make a stand
Old Brumby rears his stock.

A letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1896 repeats the Warrego connection: 'Among the blacks on the Lower Balonne, Nebine, Warrego, and Bulloo rivers the word used for horse is "baroombie", the word "a" being cut so short that the word sounds as "broombie", and as far as my experience goes refers more to unbroken horses in distinction to quiet or broken ones.' There is clearly a traditional view that **brumby** has its origin in an Aboriginal language, but tradition is not evidence for the origin. No other words were borrowed into Australian English from Pitjara, and although this does not prove that **boramby** is not the origin of **brumby**, I think it likely that what we have is a chance similarity between **brumby** and an Aboriginal word meaning 'wild', a word that appears in only one word list.

Another Queensland connection, this time with a place name, was proposed in an article in the *Bulletin* in March 1896:

'Brumby' ... is derived, writes a *Bulletin* correspondent, from Baramba, the name of a creek and station in the Burnett district of Queensland. In the early 1840's this ... station was formed, and a choice lot of mares with three or four stallions were sent to stock the place. ... The total abandonment of the station and most of the stock ... occurred within two or three years. It was from remnants of this stud that the wild horses on the Lower Burnett and the head of the Brisbane descended from being the 'Baramba horses', got by easy stages to be called 'Barambas', and finally 'Brumbies'.

While the place names are certainly real, if the story were true I think we would expect to see some evidence of the intermediary forms, but there is none.

A common suggestion is that **brumby** derives from the proper name **Brumby**. This theory was also noted by E.E. Morris in *Austral English* in 1898: 'A different origin was, however, given by an old resident of New South Wales, to a lady of the name Brumby, viz. "that in the early days of that colony, a Lieutenant Brumby, who was on the staff of one of the Governors, imported some very good horses, and that some of their descendants being allowed to run wild became the ancestors of the wild horses of New South Wales and Queensland". Confirmation of this story is to be desired.' Morris leaves little doubt that he is highly suspicious of stories of this kind. Coincidentally, the ANDC received a letter from New Zealand recently claiming a New Zealand connection through the proper name: 'Years ago my mother knew Rex Brumby who lived in Richmond NZ near Nelson. She sent me with a message to him, and when speaking, I said "Isn't a brumby an Australian wild horse?" He replied "yes, it's named after my father who used to capture them for remounts for the Australian Army.' But if these horses were for the Australian Army, this would have to be much later than the first appearance of the word **brumby** in 1880. In any case we can't allow the Kiwis to pinch more of our words—they've already tried it with **pavlova**!

But there are many potential eponymous Brumbys. I have seen mention of a Colonel Brumby who bred horses in Victoria, some of which escaped and became **brumbies**. I have heard anecdotal evidence of a similar Mr Brumby who lived in the Brindabella Range outside Canberra, and the story goes much the same. But it is the early Lieutenant (or Sergeant or Major) Brumby who pops up most often. Even so, there are some uncertainties in the historical record. In the *Bulletin* in March 1935 'Hobartian', a resident of Hobart, reported as follows: 'Digging up the early history of Tasmania recently, someone rediscovered the origin of a familiar Australian word. In 1803, a certain Major Brumby, interested in horse-breeding—he brought the first thoroughbred sire to the island—settled near Cressy, in the north. Some of the horses he bred got away in the bush; these were dubbed "brumbies", and the term presently became applied to wild horses all over Australia.' This story was 'corrected' in a May 1935 issue of the *Bulletin*: 'Hobartian' is not quite correct in saying that the word "brumby" originated in Tasmania. Major Brumby arrived in N. S. Wales in 1795, and there started horse-breeding. In 1803 he went over to the Speck, and in moving his horses naturally failed to muster them all. Those left behind were referred to as "brumbies", and the name sticks to their wild progeny. So really the term originally came from the plains of N.S.W.' I think there is no doubt

WILD HORSES RUNNING WILD

CHASING OUR BRUMBY

FREDERICK LUDOWYK

that this military Brumby existed, that he had cattle and horses on his land at Sydney (as did all the early landholders), and that he moved to Tasmania in 1803 (see <http://www.brumbywatchaustralia.com/Brumby_facts.htm>. But as far as I can see, there was nothing especially distinctive about his interest in horses. I smell a neenish

tart here (see my article in the November 1996 issue of *Ozwords*, where I discuss the attribution of the **neenish tart** to a purportedly eponymous Ruby Neenish of Grong Grong). The worrying feature here is the huge time gap between the wandering horses of 1803 and the first appearance of the term **brumby** in 1880.

There are, therefore, uncertainties about all the suggested etymologies for **brumby**. The Irish **bromach/bromaigh** is certainly another candidate, especially since its inflected form is very close to the Australian word. But this is one of those examples where it will probably be impossible to catch the ruddy horse, to come up with a definitive answer.

OZWORDS COMPETITIONS

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 19: RESULTS

The task set for this competition was to take an Australian word, or a word with an especially Australian flavour, alter it by adding, subtracting, or changing only one letter, and supply a new and witty definition. This competition attracted more entries than any previous competition. So many hundreds were there that I can give you only a few samples here, but a fuller selection has been posted on our web site. The judges (often with very different views of the best entries) were impressed by the following ones, but there are many other entries that could have been listed (there is a fuller listing on the ANDC website):

barramundy the sickie taken after Sunday, for the purpose of fishing
bendicoot a politician who makes non-core promises, 'Tampa's' with the truth, and the like
billabonk to make love by a waterhole
bludget an account of projected personal income and expenditure designed to allow a satisfactory standard of living without the need to work
bludgie a native bird noted for its lack of culinary appeal due to the fact that it simply can't be stuffed
bludgie a partner who doesn't work but is kept as a pet
boss socky the sock that decides to get lost in the wash
bushwanker a pretentious drongo who reckons he can handle himself in the scrub
crackie daks 'hipster' tracksuit pants
dodgeridoo a fake indigenous artefact
eucliptus complaint of sheep as they exit the shearing-shed, bleating the obvious
fair drinkum good quality wine
fair sinkum the straightforward Australian attitude to asylum seekers
flatypus a cat which has been run over by a vehicle
lickie a day off you get by asking the boss nicely
lyrebard Ern Malley
mateshit all your flatmate's belongings lying strewn around the floor
min-bin archive for reported sightings of

elusive Western Qld light [i.e. the min-min]
Parramutta audience participation rendition of 'Advance Australia Fair'
platopus creature with a philosophical view of its multi-cultural characteristics
podgie a pregnant widge
red back slider shamefaced recalcitrant
shagman a male roaming the country in search of sexual activity
shornbag a particularly attractive naked sheep
sledgling a young cricketer learning how to (mis)behave before earning the right to wear the 'baggy green'
technicolour lawn the front yard after a rave party
wall poppies very successful people who don't have a partner
yabba the hitherto secret language of Australian freshwater crustaceans

As the votes came in, equal third prize (a copy of *The Australian Modern Oxford Dictionary* to each) goes to **D. Leadbetter** of Victoria for **boss socky** and **L. Evans** of Western Australia for **sledgling**. Equal second prize (books worth \$50 from the OUP catalogue to each winner) goes to **A. Heazlewood** of Tasmania for **bushwanker** and **J.N. Birch** of Victoria for **bendicoot**. First prize (books worth \$100 from the OUP catalogue) goes to **P. Loftus** of Adelaide for **fair sinkum**.

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 20

Thanks to Dr Malcolm Ronan of Victoria for suggesting the form of Competition No. 20. He wrote, 'Is there scope for another competition using Australian place names?'

For example:

Dandenong A lair and a fool.
Tinnaroo A can of kangaroo meat.
Innajiinka How not to travel on an outback track.'

We accept his idea with delight. So there you are, wordsmiths. Choose an Australian place name and give it an apposite definition. You may add, subtract, or change one letter. The wittiest entry wins. **ED.**

ADDRESS FOR ARTICLES AND LETTERS

Frederick Ludowyk

Editor, *Ozwords*

The Australian National Dictionary Centre
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
Fax: (02) 6125 0475
Email: Fred.Ludowyk@anu.edu.au
Website: www.anu.edu.au/ANDC

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: 31 JANUARY 2004

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

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Joanna Black

Dictionary Marketing Co-ordinator
Oxford University Press
Phone: (03) 9934 9173
Fax: (03) 9934 9100
Email: blackj@oup.com.au

SUBSCRIPTIONS & BACK ISSUES

Ozwords is published twice a year and subscription is free.

To subscribe please send your name and postal details to:

Ozwords Subscription Manager

GPO Box 2784Y,
Melbourne VIC 3001
Fax: (03) 9934 9100 email: Ozwords@oup.com.au

OZWORDS

Ozwords is published by
Oxford University Press
253 Normanby Road
South Melbourne VIC 3205
Website: www.oup.com.au
Email: cs@oup.com.au
Phone 1 300 650 616
Publisher: Richard Harms

in partnership with
The Australian National Dictionary Centre
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
Phone: (02) 6125 2615
Director of the Australian
National Dictionary Centre: Bruce Moore
Editor: Frederick Ludowyk

© Copyright 2003 Oxford University Press
Photocopying of this newsletter is permitted provided that all copies include the name of the newsletter (which appears at the foot of each page) as an acknowledgment of source. All other forms of storage and reproduction are restricted under the normal terms of copyright law.

ISSN 1321-0858

Entries close 31 January 2004.

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