EDITORIAL

Frederick Ludowyk started as editor of *Ozwords* with the October 1996 edition. In addition to performing the standard tasks of editing, Fred wrote many valuable articles on aspects of Australian English, as well as responding to letters and organising the competitions. He has now decided to hand in his quill as editor. We thank him for the wit and style that he has brought to the editing of *Ozwords* over the past fourteen years. This October 2010 edition has been put together by members of the Dictionary Centre.

When Fred started as editor, the Dictionary Centre had just moved into Linnaeus Cottage. Carl Linnaeus was the Swedish naturalist who devised the binomial system of nomenclature for the classification of plants and animals (as in *Acacia pycnantha*), and so Linnaeus Cottage was an appropriate name for a centre that includes among its tasks the defining of Australian flora and fauna. Linnaeus Cottage was demolished in 2009 as part of a new science development at ANU, and the Dictionary Centre moved temporarily in June 2009 to a demountable building in a beautiful setting on the edge of South Oval. In March 2010 we moved into a very new and attractive building, between the A.D. Hope and Haydon-Allen buildings, right in the very heart of the university— indeed, precisely where a dictionary centre should be!

These physical shifts went hand in hand with some administrative realignments. The Australian National Dictionary Centre is now formally aligned with the School of Languages, which is part of the Research School of Humanities and the Arts, which in turn is part of the College of Arts and Social Sciences. Our work, however, has not changed—we still aim to be the leaders in Australian lexicography and in the study of Australian English.

THE LANGUAGE OF TWO UP
BRUCE MOORE

Two up is a gambling game in which two coins are tossed in the air and bets laid as to whether both will fall heads or tails uppermost. Although illegal for most of its existence, *two up* has played an important role in Australian culture. Australian Rules Football was called the *national game* in 1936, but the term *national game* was applied to *two up* much earlier. At a military inquiry in 1919 into gambling in the army, an orderly-room sergeant insisted that *two up* 'should not be put in the usual category of gambling', and that 'it was a "fair gamble" and was practically a national sport' (*Brisbane Courier*, 15 January). The sub-editor implicitly endorses the sergeant's view by heading the article: 'A National Game. Officers and Two Up'. The date, 1919, confirms the fact that the First World War was significant in popularising the game, and emphasising its Australianness. A 1920 report indicates that the *national game* had become so entrenched that it could be part of an international joke: 'The Portuguese general staff was so impressed by the physique of the A.I.F. that a number of leading experts has been engaged to instruct the young Portuguese in the Australian soldier's national games. Private A. Digger has been appointed D.A.T.T.U. (Director of Army Training in Two-Up)' (*Argus*, 27 March). The association between *two up* and the Australian diggers of the First and Second World Wars continues in the tradition (now legalised) of playing *two up* on Anzac Day.

When the first edition of the *Australian National Dictionary* was published in 1988, the earliest reference to the term *two up* then known was in 1884. In researching material for my book *Gold! Gold! Gold! The Language of the Nineteenth-Century Australian Gold Rushes* (OUP 2000), I came across a much earlier reference, from 1854, which indicated that *two up* was a feature of the gold-rush communities, and which provided an interesting link between the diggers of the gold rushes and the diggers of the First World War: 'One evening in January, 1852, I was cook to our party at Fryer's Creek. ... Diggings was diggings then; a man lay down with his revolver within reach, and a knife under his pillow, if he had a pillow. Religion and pugilism competed. I've seen three fights, and two preachers within hail; heaps of notes on the ground waiting the result of 'Two Up' (*Geelong Advertiser*, 13 September 1854). It is therefore clear that *two up* has been part of Australian English since the 1850s.

An alternative name for the game was *swy*, first recorded in 1913. A 2009 article in a local newspaper argued that *swy* was an alteration of 'it's away': '"Swy" ... believed to be a corruption of the call "it's away" as the designated spinner flicked the coins' (*Hill Shire Times*, 21 April). There is no doubt, however, that our Australian *swy* is an alteration of German *zwei* 'two', rather than a blend of 'it's away' (a folk etymology that is curiously reminiscent of the fanciful claim that Australian *chunder* derives from the shipboard cry 'watch under'). It is not clear by what route this German word found its way into Australian English. There were certainly concentrations of German speakers, especially in South Australia and western Victoria, and they had some influence on Australian English. W.T. Goodge in his 1898 poem 'The Australian Slanguage' writes that 'a bosom friend' is called a 'cobber' and a 'lady-love' is called a 'clinah'. In C.J. Dennis's famous poem (1915) the sentimental bloke describes Doreen:

> But, 'er! Oh, strike me pink! She is
> a peach!
> The sweetest in the barrer! Spare
> me days,
> I carn't describe that cliner's winnin'
> ways.

The word *cliner* is now obsolete in Australian English, but it was a very common word for 'girlfriend' from the 1890s to the 1930s. Some early spellings with k- (rather than c-) give the clue to its origin. It is from German *kleine* 'little' or *Kleine* 'little one', and the earliest records trace it back to the German speakers of South Australia. A writer in the *Bulletin* in 1898 says: '"Clinah" ... is simply the German *kleine* (fem. of *klein* small, little and meaning "little" i.e. woman) Australised. I heard the term first in S.A. (where Germans abound) some years ago.' It is possible that *swy* has a similar origin in German-speaking enclaves in Australia. In addition to the two-up sense, *swy* was used from the 1920s to the 1980s for a 'two-shilling coin', and from the 1920s to the 1970s for a 'two-year prison sentence'. As with *cliner*, *swy* is now largely obsolete in Australian English, and the invariable name for the gambling game is now *two up*.

In the early records the term *two-up school* is used to mean 'a group of people who have assembled to play two up' and 'the place where such an assemblage is regularly held'. This sense of *school* goes back to British criminal slang, where it meant 'a company of thieves or beggars working together', and more specifically 'a group of

people meeting together for the purpose of gambling'. Newspapers at the beginning of the twentieth century give some vivid accounts of what these two-up schools were like:

> The 'two-up' room had apparently been intended for a store. It was in a curious situation. It had been admirably selected for flight. There was the western corridor, by which visitors entered. There was a staircase leading to upper regions. There was a corridor leading eastward. The only direction left was downward, and as respectable society believes that all 'two-up' men will go downward some day that also was provided for. The actual space for the gamblers was about 20ft square. The floor was of stone, and the betting ring had been laid with a crude sort of carpet or sacking. The ring was enclosed by circular seating accommodation. One set of men— about 20—sat round the ring, and the rest of the company stood behind them. A great flood of light came from half a dozen gas-burners. The ceiling was higher in the centre than at the sides, leaving plenty of air space for throwing up the coins. … There were from 200 to 250 youths and men present. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 September 1903)

Here are the essential features of the structure of the two-up site, which in turn generate some of its vocabulary. The site is circular in shape, and called a *ring*: this is 'the area within which the coins are tossed and must fall', and it is used more generally to refer to 'the assembly of players; the game itself'. After *ring*, the second structural term is *centre* (sometimes called *the guts*): 'the central part of the ring, where the spinner stands and bets with the spinner are taken'. The person who organises the game, and is in charge of it, is the *ringkeeper* (or *ringer* or *ringie*). He is sometimes called the *boxer*, although in some versions of the game the *boxer* is an assistant to the *ringkeeper*, involved in taking bets, settling disputes, and gathering a commission from the winning players. The term *boxer* probably derives from the fact that the general layout of the *two-up ring* resembles a boxing ring. In the 1950s there is some evidence of *boxer* also being used to describe a payment (a percentage of winnings) to the *ringkeeper*, which might hint at an origin in the *box* of *Christmas box* 'a box originally used by apprentices to collect contributions of money as a Christmas present (the source

of *Boxing Day*), although these associations are not there in the pre-1950 uses of *boxer*.

The 1903 newspaper account continues:

> A description of the game could be studded with many slang two-up school expressions that would only mystify the reader. In its essentials the game is simple. One of the bettors went into the centre and was handed the 'kip'. It is manipulated in turn. The 'kip' is merely a small piece of thin wood. … The man with the kip had the two pennies placed on it.

The man who comes into the centre is designated the *spinner*. He is handed the *kip* and the two pennies, the basic tools of the game. The *kip* 'is a small, flat piece of wood with which the coins are tossed'. The origin of this word is something of a mystery, but it possibly derives from British dialect *kep*, which means (in Scotland, Ireland, and northern England) 'to catch, especially to catch anything falling or thrown', with the specific meaning (recorded in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire) 'to throw up in the air; to throw up a ball and catch it'. The *kip* is sometimes called a *bat*, and occasionally a *kiley*—a transfer from the Western Australian word for a boomerang. In the 'classic' game of *two up*, two pennies are spun (although sometimes three pennies are used to achieve a swifter result), and the preferred pennies are of an older kind:

> A good Ringey has several sets of coins for players to choose from, and he will demand of the spinner whether he prefers to toss with 'Baldies', as pennies showing the head of Edward VII are affectionately known, 'Queens with the Veils', or 'Queens without the Veils' (being the 2 issues of Queen Victoria pennies). (*Argus*, 12 February 1944, Supplement)

While *two up* appears to be a very egalitarian form of gambling, from its early days there were the inevitable attempts at cheating. The clandestine introduction of a two-headed (or even two-tailed) penny was a great temptation. A counterfeit penny with a head on both sides is known as a *jack* (of unknown origin) or a *nob* (from Standard English slang *nob* 'head', in turn from *knob* 'something rounded'). A *grey* (of unknown origin) is a coin with two heads or two tails, and in *two up* it usually refers to a coin with two tails. A typical method of substitution is explained in 1908 in the Hobart *Mercury* in a report on 'mainland' two-up shenanigans:

> The gambling implements found on a prisoner by the police the other day show just how much chance an 'innocent', or one who wished to play fairly, would have of winning at the favourite game of 'two up' so extensively played on the mainland. This man had in his possession a 'kip stick' (a small flat piece of wood off which coins are tossed), and in one side of this was a slot or receptable into which a double-headed penny would fit. This latter is called a 'nob' among the profession, and would be released from the 'stick' when desired to do so, the operations requiring a little 'palming' and clever manipulation if detection is to be avoided.

The verb *to ring in* is used to describe the action of fraudulently substituting a double-headed or double-tailed coin for a genuine coin, the same term that is used in Australian horse-racing circles to describe the substitution of one horse for another in a race—as in the notorious Fine Cotton ring-in case of 1984. In a court case in 1903 a police witness averred that 'the only way "crook" business could be carried on in "two up" was by "ringing in" a "nob" or a "grey", the latter terms indicating a two-headed penny' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 October 1903).

Before the coins are tossed the bets must be laid. The *spinner* must always play for heads, and his wager must be matched by someone from the main surrounding group of gamblers, who will support tails. It is the *ringkeeper's* task to establish that bets have been set by the main participants—this is called *setting the centre*. Once the *ringkeeper* is satisfied that the bets are *set*, those in the *outer* can organise their own bets. Here is a description of the process from the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1947:

> The bank is set now, which is to say that whatever amount the spinner decides to bet on heads turning up (he must always back heads) has to be covered by tail bettors before any side-wagering is permitted. 'Have a bet', I say to my friend. He is a stranger to 'Swy', but is familiar with other forms of gambling. He has soon caught on. 'Three quid he tails 'em', he calls. Ten seats away he is heard and a little, elderly man with thick glasses is before him. 'You're set', he says, dropping three notes on the floor. My friend picks up two and lets a fiver fall.

Once all bits are laid, it is time to spin the coins. This is a moment when the language of two-up fully expresses its Australianness:

> The man with the kip had the two pennies placed on it, and at the words 'A fair go' he tossed them up a full 20ft. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 September 1903)

> The spinner handed his stake of five shillings to the boxer, who cried, 'Fair go!' (L. Stone, *Jonah*, 1911)

> So the kip you gather tightly,
> Watch the pennies put on lightly
> By the ringer, who then bellows:
> 'Fair go, spinner, let 'em go'. (H.M. Murphy, *Strictly for Soldiers*, 1943)

> The ringkeeper gives a swift look round. 'All bets set?' he calls. There is a momentary lull. 'Let 'em go, spinner', says the ringkeeper. 'Fair go, spinner', cries a voice. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 December 1947)

In the history of the game of *two up*, *fair go* begins simply as an indication to the spinner that all bets are laid, and then becomes both an appeal for fairness and a statement of the egalitarian fairness of the game. By the 1940s the phrase *fair go spinner* had moved out of its two-up specific use into a synonym for the general *fair go*: 'From two-up comes the expression "Fair go, spinner", which is a request for a fair deal' (*Sun* (Sydney), 26 August 1942). In the 1940s a variant of this phrase, as an instruction for the pennies to be spun, appeared in the form *come in spinner*, and this variant was popularised as the title of a novel by Dymphna Cusack and Florence James in 1951. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that the original phrase was *fair go spinner*, and that it linked *two up* to the core Australian value of the *fair go*.
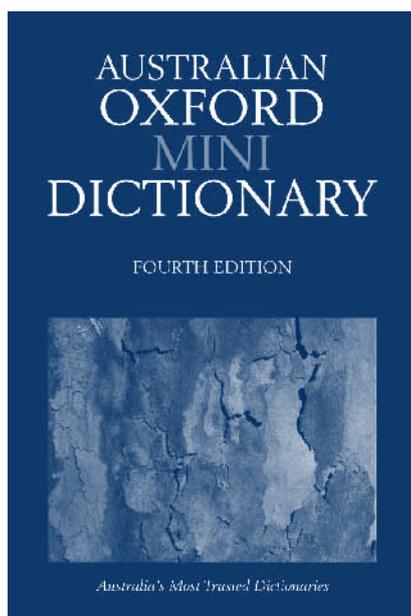
Once the coins are in the air, it is the task of the *ringkeeper* or the *boxer* to adjudge (often in response to interjections from the audience) if they have been spun fairly. A *floater* is a coin that fails to spin, and its wobbly but not spinning movement is called *butterflying*. A *floater* may be just the result of a bad spin, but it might also be the product of someone trying to manipulate the movement of the coins to fall either as heads or tails. The cry of *bar* from the *ringkeeper* indicates that the spin has been designated faulty:

> Anyone not satisfied with the fairness of the spin has the right to call 'bar 'em'. (G. Berrie, *Morale*, 1949)

> Slight shock put Gunner off his toss so that the coins drifted up sedately, not turning. 'Floater', several voices shouted. 'Barred', shouted the ringie. (R. Beilby, *Gunner*, 1976)

When the correctly spun coins reach the ground, there are three possible results: *heads* if the two heads face upwards; *tails* if the two tails face upwards; and *ones* if one coin has landed with the head facing upwards and one with the tail facing upwards. Thus *to head them* means 'to toss the coins so that they fall with the head side upwards' and *to tail them* means 'to toss the coins so that they fall with the tail side upwards'. The spinner continues to play until *tails* wins.

Of all the two-up terms, *come in spinner* is the one that has most successfully made the transition to general Australian English. It is so well-known that sub-editors assume readers will understand the allusion when a new spin bowler is welcomed to the Australian test team with the headline *Come in Spinner*, or when the latest political spin doctor for a political party is similarly trumpeted with *Come in Spinner*. It is possible that more terms will make the transition from two-up language to standard Australian. In a cheeky article in the *Age* newspaper (12 September 2010) Sam De Brito noted that 'there are few better ways to quieten a dinner party' than for a male to confess to kissing other males, and added: 'Confess to the same in a pub with a group of boofy blokes and you'll turn more heads than a two-up ring on Anzac Day.' Here is an idiom that should be encouraged.

MAILBAG

Letters are welcome. Please address letters to: *Ozwords*,
The Australian National Dictionary Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200
Email: andc@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.

ATLEAST?

I have been noticing that the two-word term 'at least' is sometimes appearing in newspapers as 'atleast'. Is this term going the way of 'alright'? I know it is possible that the running together of 'at' and 'least' is a typographical error, but if you check on the Web you will see that the form 'atleast' is very common. Is it here to stay?

B. Grant, Qld

Until you alerted us to this we had not noticed how common it is. A quick check proves that your observation is very accurate. Here are some extracts from Australian newspapers (electronic versions) in the past twelve months: 'History Tune (Career 93–8,12,9 $10862.5): Rarely far away and he has won 2 of 4 in this grade. Place atleast' (*West Australian*, 25 March 2010); 'The Magic Millions race day will headline, along with the Summafieldayze music festival, the National Rodeo Finals and Gold Coast United's match against Adelaide United at Skilled Park. Between them they will attract atleast 50,000 people' (*Gold Coast Bulletin*, 7 January 2010); 'In March, federal Education Minister Julia Gillard said the government wanted 40 per cent of those aged 25 to 34 to have atleast a bachelor's qualification by 2025' (*Australian*, 26 August 2009).

A similar instance, which we have been tracking for some time, is the 'solidifying' of *a lot* into *alot*. There is still debate about the acceptability of *alright* as an alternative to *all right*. Many of us can recall being taught that *alright* is *alwrong*, but it must be admitted that the spelling *alright* appeared at the end of the nineteenth century, and has become increasingly common, especially in newspapers and in books from some publishers. Many people argue that if it is acceptable for words such as *altogether* and *already* to be solid in some uses, why not *alright*? Perhaps it would enable some useful distinctions. We say 'it is already six o'clock', but 'the players stood all ready for the start of the game'. We could say 'are you feeling alright today?', but 'your answers to the questions were all right'. Moreover, separated words have a history of becoming solid in English: we all write *today* rather than *to day* or *to-day*. Many of us will continue to insist that *alright* should be avoided. *Alot* and *atleast* are substandard and, at least at the moment, wrong.

DOROTHY DIX

In the recent discussions about possible reforms of parliament, as instituted by the independents, there was some talk about Dorothy Dixers being banned. I know that these are set-up questions to government ministers from members of the government, but Dorothy Dix was an American writer. Why did her name become attached in Australia to this kind of parliamentary question?

L. Grace, Vic.

Dorothy Dix (the pseudonym of Elizabeth Meriwether Gilmer) wrote her 'agony aunt column' from the 1920s to the 1940s, and it was syndicated in newspapers throughout the world, including Australia. Evidence suggests that she received thousands of letters a week, but the suspicion arose with some that she may have written many of the questions herself, and this was the impetus for the transfer that occurred in Australia, where government ministers often seem to be answering questions that they have written themselves. Here is a typical question put to Dorothy Dix, this one appearing in the *Brisbane Courier* in August 1933:

> Dear Miss Dix.—Several years ago I married a young woman who was a teacher. Of course, I naturally thought that she would make the kind of wife who was a homemaker and who wanted children, but I find out that the only thing she cares for is her profession. She hates to keep house. She will not have children and she is away from home now, studying so that she can teach next year. I am amply able to support her in comfort and give her everything she wants, and I want a home and a family. What shall I do? A Disappointed Husband.

> ANSWER :

> The only thing you can do with a career-crazed woman is to let her go and try it. Sometimes, when she finds out that the price she has to pay for a career is husband and home and babies, she realises what a poor bargain she is making and turns back to the better worthwhile things, and is thereafter a contented wife and mother.

> Sometimes the career really does mean more to her than anything else in life, and in that case the husband is wise if he just lets her go, for there is no happiness or peace for a man with a part-time wife whose real interest is given to her outside work and not to her home.

> There are many women to whom Nature gave not the talents of domesticity, but talents for teaching or business or executive work or singing or acting, and so on. These women often spend years of time and thousands of pounds fitting themselves for the work they were destined to do, and that they have a passionate delight in doing. Then they fall in love and get married and the jig is up. For they find that they cannot serve two masters. They cannot manage a career and a husband and children at the same time. They must sacrifice one or the other.

> It is a hard and cruel choice, but an honest woman should make it before marriage, and then abide by her decision. She has not a right to sacrifice an innocent man and helpless little children to her ambition, or to her love of her profession or business. The woman who has espoused a career should never commit bigamy by marrying a man.

> DOROTHY DIX.

In addition to the parliamentary question sense, Dorothy Dix has also been used in Australian English as rhyming slang for a 'six' in cricket.

DIE AND DICE

In the April 2010 edition of Ozwords*, Bruce Moore wrote: 'a dice is rolled and bits of the beetle are constructed from the fall of the dice'. A number of people wrote to us questioning this use of* dice *as a singular form rather than the plural of a singular* die*.*

The original English word (taken from French) was *de* or *dee* with plural *des* or *dees*, leading eventually to the unusual plural form *dice*. The word ultimately goes back to Latin *datum* from *dare* 'to give'. The OED comments: 'It is inferred that, in late popular Latin, *datum* was taken in the sense "that which is given or decreed (by lot or fortune)", and was so applied to the dice by which this was determined'. *Datum* of course also produces our English *datum* versus *data* singular/plural problem. While historically it is true that *dice* is the plural of *die*, in modern standard English *dice* is now both the singular and the plural, and *die* survives only in a few fixed phrases, as in *the die is cast*.

WHAT'S THEIR STORY?

Bruce Moore's new book, *What's Their Story? A History of Australian Words*, will be published by Oxford University Press in November. This book examines Australian words from two main perspectives: the histories of particular words and the histories of thematically linked words. The core of the book is a collection of words that have interesting, challenging, and often disputed stories to be told about their origins. Lexicographers always have in the back of their minds the warning of the English philologist W.W. Skeat (1835–1912): 'As a rule, *derivations which require a story* to be told turn out to be false.' Australia's first lexicographer, E.E. Morris, felt compelled to quote this axiom (in his 1898 dictionary *Austral English*) in the midst of his attempts to sort out the origin of the Australian word *brumby* 'wild horse', when he was confronted with a series of ever-expanding stories about where the word might have come from. While the lexicographer is wary of the elaborate story, it is an inevitable fact that such stories become part of the popular understanding of the histories of words. In this book, for example, at the discussion of *pom*, the popular story that this word is an acronym from *Prisoner Of Mother (England)* is not ignored simply because, as it turns out, it is patently false. Such popular etymologies are closely addressed in this book, and the reasons for their rejection are explained.

The words fall into three main categories. First, the bulk of the headwords are core terms of Australian vocabulary, and words that have interesting or contested origins. These words are: *Anzac, Aussie, battler, billy, bludger, bodgie, bogan, bonzer, brumby, buckley's, chook, chunder, crook, dag, damper, digger, dinkum, dob, dunny, fair go, furphy, grouse, hoon, jackeroo, lamington, larrikin, mate ,ocker, plonk, pom, rort, sheila, tall poppy, true blue, wog, wowser.*

Second, there are headwords that act as a starting point for a larger collection of words that are linked thematically or that point to structural features of Australian English. In all of the following examples, the headword (such as *quoll*) acts as a starting point for a discussion of a number of related words. There are words that have similar language origins, such as Australian Aboriginal languages (*quoll*), Yiddish and German (*cobber*), British dialects (*yoe*), and Irish (*youse*). There are words that come from similar literary or other sources, such as eponyms (*Jackie Howe*), the world of popular entertainment (*ocker*), literary texts (*rooned*), and proprietary terms (*Vegemite*). There are words from particular historical periods, such as the convict era (*swag*) and the gold rushes (*fossick*). There are thematic linkings, such as swimming costumes (*budgie smugglers*), domestic words (*light globe*), money (*two bob*), alcohol (*plonk*), politics (*pollie talk*), sport (*rogaining*), folly

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and madness (*troppo*), figurative use of indigenous and non-indigenous animal names (*wombat* and *emu*), and even horses (*Phar Lap*). And there are groupings of words that have similar structural features, such as rhyming slang (*noah*), endings in –ie or –o (*rellie, rello*), and elision of vowels and consonants (*strine*).

Third, there are headwords that act as starting points for a discussion of regional words associated with the States and Territories. They are: *floater* (South Australia), *gidgie* (Western Australia), *govie* (Australian Capital Territory), *port* (Queensland), *steak and kidney* (New South Wales), *territory rig* (Northern Territory), *yaffler* (Tasmania), and *yonnie* (Victoria).

The book is designed so that it can be read through from beginning to end, or dipped into at any of the headwords. As a whole, it tells the story of Australian words through their histories and thematic and structural associations.

SCROUNGERS

Occasionally, although we have much evidence about the use of a term, this evidence does not tell us enough about a term to construct a definition. Our database of Australian English reveals many examples of the term *scroungers competition* and, what seems to be a variant of it, *summer scroungers*. Typical examples include: 'On Sunday there will be a scroungers' competition at the club' (*Collie Mail*, 4 June 1970); 'Mr Docking said the planned game, called a scroungers competition, was not likely to be a major event on the bowls calendar but the players would be having fun and would be in good humour' (*Mercury* (Hobart), 8 December 1999); 'Chris Carpenter birdied all four of the par-threes during the Scroungers' competition at Hartfield last month (*West Australian*, 16 August 2000); 'Ben Puvanendran took out the summer scroungers championship at the Hannans Golf Club on Friday'

(*Kalgoorlie Miner*, 10 April 2003). These competitions have the 'feel' of the *chook run* that we mentioned some time ago, which is 'a shortened form of the usual game of bowls, golf, etc.' Perhaps the *scroungers competition* is similar, but when it is mentioned in newspaper reports there is no explanation of what such a competition actually involves. We would be grateful for elucidation.

DOROTHY SAVAGE

After a long career in the diplomatic service, including posts in Moscow and Washington, Dorothy Savage joined the Dictionary Centre in the late 1980s, and worked for the next decade on the electronic database that stores the quotations that illustrate the history of Australian words. Dorothy died on 30 April 2010. She is warmly remembered by all who worked at the Centre during that period.

OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

People who have subscriber access to the OED online may be interested in some of the changes that are being made to the website. There will be regular commentaries on language issues. The most significant addition is the integration of the *Historical Thesaurus of the OED* (published in 2009) into OED Online. John Simpson, the editor of OED, writes: 'This means, for instance, that a user viewing the entry for *halberd* (the early modern weapon combining a spear and a battle-axe) can click to reach the related entries *langue de boeuf, glaive, budge, poleaxe, ox-tongue,* and *partisan*—to list only those first recorded between 1450 and 1611.' See www.oed.co.uk.

BEASTLY CARELESS

In his comments on the creation of a parliamentary committee to examine climate change policy, Greens' leader Bob Brown took a swipe at the Labor Party's election proposal for a citizens' assembly: 'He was less enthusiastic about Labor's doomed citizens' assembly proposal, saying he was "beastly careless" about it' (*Age* (Melbourne), 8 September 2010). *Beastly careless* exists in other Englishes (and may well be a coinage by Kipling) where it means 'extremely careless', but in Tasmania the 'careless' element has focused on an alternative sense 'having no care about' i.e. 'indifferent'. This usage appears very early in Tasmania (first recorded 1914 in the *Mercury* (Hobart), 4 February): 'Warden Evans said that he was "beastly careless" what the pier was called, but he would sooner have it called anything than "Hunter-street Pier".' It was good to hear evidence of this Tasmanianism, but one wonders what non-Tasmanians made of Tasmanian Bob Brown's 'beastly careless'?

BRUCE MOORE
DIRECTOR

When I logged into eBay recently, and searched for *dilly bag*, I found numerous items for sale, most of them associated with weddings. For the bride there were mainly small white drawstring bags. For the bridesmaid, there were similar bags in a much wider range of colours. There was one example of a 'burlesque punk goth lolita emo white leopard dilly bag': it had the white-and-black colouring of the white leopard, but in size, shape, and drawstring it was barely distinguishable from the wedding dilly bags. There was also an item available that was advertised as a 'morning tea bag/dilly bag', and described thus: 'The ultimate in useful kid's bags! Measuring 20cm by 25cm with a drawstring tie, these bags can be used for a multitude of things. They are the perfect size for taking morning tea to school. They will fit a couple of pieces of fruit or a little tupperware box. Also useful for marbles or storing all those toys with lots of little pieces.' There was also a 'button dilly bag' for storing loose and spare buttons. Dilly bags galore! All small, and all with drawstrings.

So what had drawn me to search for *dilly bag* on eBay? Certainly not wedding plans, or even a desire for a little drawstring number! We have been in the process of updating the evidence for the words that were in the first edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*. *Dilly* (and its fuller form *dilly bag*) is one of them. The word *dilly* came into Australian English from the Yagara language, spoken in the Brisbane region, and in that language it meant 'a bag or basket made from woven vine, grass, or fibre; a bag woven of this'.

In its earliest recorded uses in English, *dilly* refers to the Aboriginal object. The first recorded use of the word in English is in 1828, when in the Logan area of south-eastern Queensland the botanist C. Fraser notes: 'a dilly (a luggage bag which the females carry), this is formed of the leaves of a species of Xanthorhea, strong enough to hold any thing.' This use of *dilly* continues until the 1860s when it is joined and then replaced by the expanded version *dilly bag*, still with the same sense of an Aboriginal carrying bag. Typical is this use from 1870: ' "Dilly bags" were hung up to the trees; these are bags made of a sort of grass, and used by the Blacks for carrying ornaments in, such as coloured earths to paint themselves with, ochre, feathers, necklaces of glass beads, hair nets; also knives made of flint, small tomahawks, etc.'

By the early twentieth century the sense of *dilly bag* had widened beyond Aboriginal contexts, and the term was used to describe bags of various sizes. Figurative uses of the term indicate how firmly entrenched a part of Australian English *dilly bag* became. In 1954: 'Turning to the Labor party's financial proposals, Sir Arthur Fadden said Dr Evatt was distributing from "his bottomless and ever-expanding dilly bag an array of gifts which would make Father Christmas green with envy—or red with shame".' In 2009: 'Some suggest Labor is in with better than a fighting chance to bag three federal Liberal seats at the next poll—Swan, Cowan and Canning—in that order. ... If, however, none of the three falls into Labor's dilly bag, lots of Perth Labor heads will roll.'

One specialised sense of *dilly* (and *dilly bag*), which had emerged by the 1960s, was its use to describe a particular kind of fishing net or fishing pot. A version of the fishing net is described by E.M. Grant in *Guide to Fishes* (1965):

> Large quantities of Hardyheads can be captured in the vicinities of jetties and piers by using a dilly-net about 4 feet in diameter, with mesh ½-inch–¾ inch. The net is lowered several feet below the surface of slack water and the shoals of Hardyheads burleyed over it by dropping pellets of water-soaked stale bread upcurrent of the net; the net is slowly brought closer to the surface until with a final strong haul the fish are captured.

It is the bag-like net with mesh that looks like the texture of the traditional dilly-bag that leads to this net being called a *dilly net*. The *dilly pot* is used in catching crabs, yabbies, etc., and is similar in composition to the *dilly net*: 'the yabbies are lured into a seemingly innocent piece of netting which when lifted (sprung) becomes a basket in which they are held' (J. Mosig, *Australian Yabby Farmer*, 1995). The abbreviated form *dilly* is common in fishing and crabbing contexts: 'Another thing, don't stray too far away from your dillies because they'll get knocked off' (*Rex Hunt Fishing Adventures*, 1999).

We had one other interesting piece of evidence. The Centre's regional reading program had produced the following passage about the use of the term *dilly bag* from the *Sunraysia Daily* in 1970: 'The bride, given away by her father, wore a full length gown of nylon chiffon-over-satin with a guipure lace yoke and short sleeves. She carried a dilly-bag of roses and tulle'. This led to a search for clarification of what this bridal *dilly bag* was. A David Jones advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1970 gives: 'Kangaroo dilly bag $1.25. Drawstring style in blonde fur makes great gift.' This indicates that in various contexts a small drawstring bag could be called a *dilly bag*, but unlike the *Sunraysia Daily* passage, this David Jones *dilly bag* is not associated with weddings. It is proving difficult to find other evidence for the bridal *dilly bag* before 2000. But the Web is now awash with them, and a 2004 advertisement in the *Centralian Advocate* even offers a 'dilly bag garter': 'For the blushing bride there are tiaras, head-pieces, veils, hair pins, necklaces, earrings, dilly bag garters and bridal wedding dress hoops.'

One wedding site (http://www.cheboom.com/bags.html) provides some history for the bridal *dilly bag*: 'The Dilly Bag was originally called the Dorothy Bag and was carried by the bridesmaid to carry the confetti or flowers, petals, cakes, sugared almonds and rice. The modern use of the dilly bag is as a convenience wedding accessory for carrying some of the bride's personal effects e.g. hankie, tissues, lipstick etc.' The OED has an entry for *Dorothy bag*, with evidence beginning in 1907: 'A woman's handbag gathered at the top by a drawstring and slung by loops from the wrist.' Since *dolly* is a variant of *Dorothy*, it is not surprising that these *Dorothy bags* were also called *dolly bags*, although it is not entirely clear whether the *Dorothy bag* or the *dolly bag* came first. A recent development, at least in the UK, is the *Communion Dolly Bag*: 'A First Communion dolly bag, originally called the Dorothy bag, was carried by bridesmaids to carry the confetti in. The modern use of the First Communion dolly bag is as a convenience First Communion accessory for carrying small First Communion gifts of First Communion Missal, First Communion rosary and hankie' (http://www.firstholycommunionday.co.uk). In Australia, *dilly bag* has become a variant of the traditional *Dorothy bag* or *dolly bag*: 'Traditionally, the bridal purse (often referred to as the Dorothy bag, dolly bag, dilly bag, or bride bag) was used to hold confetti and was carried by the bridesmaid' (http://www.brideguide.com.au).

Did the Australian bridal *dilly bag* develop independently of the term *dolly bag*? Or was the term *dolly bag* modified in Australia under the influence of the Aussie *dilly bag*? This is probably a chicken–egg conundrum, but there is no doubt that the bridal *dilly bag* has given new life to an Australian term. Check it out at your next wedding.

In previous issues of *Ozwords* contributors have examined James Hardy Vaux's *Comprehensive Vocabulary of the Flash Language* (1812) and the anonymous *Sydney Slang Dictionary* (1882). The next dictionary produced in Australia was Cornelius Crowe's *Australian Slang Dictionary*, published in Melbourne in 1895. This dictionary is subtitled: *containing the words and phrases of the thieving fraternity, together with the unauthorised, though popular expressions now in vogue with all classes in Australia.*

Cornelius Crowe (1853–1928) was an Irish-born Melbourne police officer. The dictionary was his second publication, after his 1894 work *Manual on the Duties of a Constable.* Crowe was a crusader against what he saw as widespread corruption in the Victorian political and law enforcement realms—this was the period of the entrepreneurial underworld figure John Wren. After his retirement, Crowe published a number of pamphlets that sought to expose corruption, including *Bribery in the Federal and State Parliaments: unjust judges, perjured police, innocent people imprisoned* (1903), *Serious Tampering with the Course of Justice* (1907), and *Policemen and Politicians: a story of co-operative crime* (1921).

In the preface to the dictionary Crowe sets out his reasons for publishing it:

My aim in compiling this small Dictionary is to place in the hands of the police and the public a work through which they become conversant with the slang terms used by the rogue fraternity as a medium of communication with each other.

A number of these terms are used by criminals to act in a similar manner to pass words used by different secret and friendly societies. Although I have entitled this book the 'Australian Slang Dictionary', I would ask the reader to bear in mind that but few of the terms it contains have been invented by Australian criminals; the most of them have been brought into use by the criminal classes who have emigrated here from different parts of the world where criminals have had a language of their own for centuries past.

I trust the circulation of this work will have the desired effect of preventing criminals, rogues and gamblers from conversing with impunity in the presence of the police and public.

There is a long tradition of publishing dictionaries of criminal slang, beginning in the seventeenth century, and the argument is often put forward that the publication of such material, while perhaps bringing offensive material into the public domain, is ultimately for the public good, since the power of the criminal classes will be weakened if their clandestine language is known by all. A similar argument was put forward by James Hardy Vaux when he produced his vocabulary of criminal slang in 1812. Vaux was a convict, and he presented it to Thomas Skottowe, the Commandant of the penal colony at Newcastle, including in the dedication these words: 'I trust the Vocabulary will afford you some amusement from its novelty; and that from the correctness of its definitions, you may occasionally find it useful in your magisterial capacity'. The suggestion that the dictionary may help Skottowe understand the language of the convicts is no doubt subservient to Vaux's real purpose—to solicit Skottowe's assistance in gaining a position as a clerk. The earlier dictionaries of criminal slang were similarly more interested in making a profit from book sales than in advancing the public good. Cornelius Crowe's motives, however, were probably just as he set them out in the Preface—he thought that such knowledge would weaken the power of criminals.

Crowe's dictionary has often been criticised because, in spite of the 'Australian Slang' in the title, it includes much international slang. This is unfair, since Crowe states very clearly in the preface that few of the included terms are exclusively Australian. Judith Robertson, in her PhD thesis 'Australian Lexicography 1880–1910: An Evaluation' (researched at the Dictionary Centre), demonstrates that Crowe has followed lexicographical practice and has taken most of his entries from earlier dictionaries: 2574 of the 2688 entries are copied from British and American dictionaries, especially J.C. Hotten's *Slang Dictionary* (the 1865 edition), and A. Trumble's *Slang Dictionary of New York, London and Paris* (1880). Nevertheless, there are some 100 Australian words in the dictionary that are not copied from earlier sources, and they provide significant evidence about the history of Australian English.

The Australian entries include:

bag 'a horse is said to be **in the bag** when he is not intended to win, and given to the bookmakers to lay against.'

battler 'a broken-down backer of horses still sticking to the game.' [This is the earliest evidence for the noun *battler* in its various Australian senses, which, in the late 1890s, include 'a person who struggles for a living', 'a swagman or itinerant worker', and 'a prostitute'.]

blue duck 'no good; no money in it.' [This is the earliest evidence for what becomes *blue duck* in the sense 'a lost cause, a failure'. The origin of the 'blue' element is unknown, but the compound must be somehow related to the originally American *dead duck.*]

fizgig 'a spy for a detective.' [This is the earliest evidence for *fizgig* in the Australian sense 'a police informer'. It is perhaps a transfer from Standard English *fizgig* 'a light, frivolous woman, fond of running or "gadding" about'.]

Johnnie Woodser 'taking a solitary drink at the bar.' [This is usually *Jimmy Woodser* and means 'a person who drinks alone in a public bar'. In 1892 B.H. Boake published a poem in the *Bulletin* magazine about a character called *Jimmy Wood* (and *Jimmy Wood* was also the title of the poem). The poem includes the line 'Who drinks alone, drinks toast to Jimmy Wood, sir', and this is generally taken to be the origin of the term.]

quack 'doctor.' [*Quack* is a shortening of *quacksalver*, a Dutch word for 'a person who cures with home remedies'. In Standard English it came to mean 'a person who dishonestly claims to have medical or surgical skill, or who advertises false or fake remedies; a medical impostor'. In Australia the word lost its negative associations, and came to be used neutrally for 'doctor'. Crowe's dictionary is the first evidence for the shift to the Australian sense.]

Crowe's dictionary is by no means a comprehensive survey of Australian words, but its contents demonstrate the truism that Australian English is always in a continuum with other Englishes—that the words shared between different Englishes worldwide is by far the largest part of any national vocabulary. The importance of *The Australian Slang Dictionary* is that it records the words used by people of a particular time, and more specifically the words used by a particular class—in this case the criminal underclass. Crowe's title also insists, however, that the 'popular expressions' in his dictionary are 'now in vogue with all classes in Australia'. *The Australian Slang Dictionary* gives us a glimpse of a colloquial language rarely found in print, but one that was certainly uttered on the streets of Melbourne and elsewhere in Australia.

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 34: RESULTS

You were asked to create some 'witty and wise' acronyms that might help to explain the origin of some Australian words whose etymology is uncertain or unknown. There were many entries, and we can print only a small selection.

Honourable Mentions

BUNG
broken unconditionally never going again (L. Male); broken useless & no good (M. Mitchell); broken, unfixable, no good (L. & R. Calitz); buggered up—no good (A Heazlewood, A. Price, M. Ronan); buggered up, not going (L. Pattison); busted up, no good (M.W. Travis).

CROOK
can't rise out of kip (J. Dewar); carved replica of Orstralian kangaroo (R.H. Dettman); complaining ratbag, otherwise OK (A. Heazlewood); computers rule over our kids (L. Levens); crippled, rotten, or otherwise kaput (M. Ronan).

DAG
daft amusing gent (M.W. Travis); delightfully antisocial guy (L. & R. Calitz); dirty and grotty (C. Savage); disdains any grooming (K. Shooter); dishevelled and gross (D. Gobbett); dopy and gladdening (M. Mitchell); droll amusing gagster (M. Ronan).

DONGA
demountable on neighbours' (gratis arrangement) (L. Male); dingy over night goldfields accommodation (B. & M. Cornish).

HOON
has obviously 0 nous (A. Price); hooked on ockerish nonsense (M. Mitchell); hooligan out of nick (M.W. Travis).

NONG
naturally or nurturally gormless (A. Heazlewood); neurones out-numbered by ghetto blasters (L. Male); nitwit of no grace (M.W. Travis).

PLONK
palate lubricator—origin not known (J. Dewar); Parvenu Liquor Origin Not Known (J. Smith); poor liquor obviously not keepable (T. Burgess); preferred liqueur of naive koalas (R.H. Dettman); presentable label: oenophiles not keen (M.W. Travis); pretend liquor, often nearly kills (L. & R. Calitz); previously level off now kilter (K. Edwards); probably lots of nasty kicks (K. Shooter); problematical liquor—origin not known (M. Ronan).

RORT
rascals organise rotten trickery (L. & R. Calitz); really obvious rotten trick (R.H. Dettman); rip off real taxpayers (D. Gobbett).

SHEILA
sexy heroine exercising in lycra apparel (L. & R. Calitz); she holds every inch of leverage, alas(s) (A. Heazlewood); she holds everyone in leering awe (M.W. Travis); she humours egos in lads around (K. Shooter); sisterhood hates engaging in lewd activities (D. Tribe); sometime harlot engaged in lawful activity (R.H. Dettman).

SWAG
shouldered with a grunt (S. Robson); sleeping wagga and grot (L. Male); sole worldly ambulatory goods (A. Heazlewood); solo weary ambler's gear (M.W. Travis); strolling wayfarer's accumulated garbage (R.H. Dettman).

2nd Prize (books to the value of $50 from the OUP catalogue): L. Evans and P. Harley (equal) for 'sheila' acronym: she has everything I lust after.

1st Prize (books to the value of $100 from the OUP catalogue): M. Ronan for 'nong' acronym: nothing over neck guaranteed.

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 35

Madness, craziness, and sometimes plain eccentricity are conveyed by variants on the idiom *short of …* (as in the worldwide variant *a sandwich short of a picnic*). Although this is now an idiom that is known and used throughout the world, the most recent research reveals that it had its origin in Australia. The history of the idiom appears to begin with the British expression *a tile loose* meaning 'to be slightly crazy, or not quite right in the head' (OED). In Australia from the 1850s this was varied to *a shingle short* (obviously continuing the roofing metaphor). By the 1880s the idiom was even more Australianised by alluding to the sheets of bark that went into the building of a bark hut, and it became *short of a sheet of a bark*. From the mid twentieth century further variants occur in Australian and New Zealand, but as an international idiom, the *short of …* expression does not take off until the 1990s, suggesting that it was the Australian idiom that began the process. Australian English then produced more local variants, such as *a few snags short of a barbie* or *a stubbie short of a six-pack*.

It is your task to create one or more variants of this idiom, *with a strong Australian flavour*.

ENTRIES CLOSE 31 JANUARY 2011
Entries sent by email should also contain a snail mail address. All entries should be sent to the ANDC at one of the addresses at the top of the next column.

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