OZWORDS

OCTOBER 2011

VOLUME 20 NUMBER 2

PUBLISHED TWICE A YEAR

EDITORIAL

We were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Dr W.S. Ramson, AM, in Sydney on 6 October 2011. Bill Ramson was the editor of the first edition of the *Australian National Dictionary* (1988), the pre-eminent work in Australian lexicography. He was the driving force behind the establishment of the Australian National Dictionary Centre in 1988, and he was its first Director from 1988 to 1994. Bill's more recent book, *Lexical Images: The Story of the Australian National Dictionary* (OUP 2002), is a fascinating account of how the dictionary project came about it, and of its significance for Australian culture. Our deepest sympathy goes to his family, and especially to his wife Joan, the associate editor of the *Australian National Dictionary*.

Recently, the Australian National University and Oxford University Press announced the continuation of the funding agreement that supports the research activities of the Australian National Dictionary Centre. I retire at the end of this year, and the University has announced the appointment of Dr Sarah Ogilvie as the new Director of the Australian National Dictionary Centre. Sarah has great experience in Australian and international linguistics and lexicography, and she is currently Alice Tong Sze Research Fellow at Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge.

The continuation of the agreement between Oxford University Press and the Australian National University confirms the great research significance of the Australian National Dictionary Centre, and the importance of lexicography in charting the historical development of Australian English. The Dictionary Centre and the *Australian National Dictionary* are among Bill Ramson's great legacies.

BRUCE MOORE
DIRECTOR

TIN KETTLING: THE HISTORY OF AN AUSTRALIAN WORD

MARK GWYNN

A *tin kettling* is a noisy celebration of a recent marriage accompanied by the banging of pots, pans, and other improvised musical instruments, usually conducted at the home of the couple after the wedding ceremony. Although this noun and the associated verb, 'to tin kettle', were not included in the 1988 edition of the *Australian National Dictionary* (AND), more recent research proves that while the activities involved in a tin kettling were widespread in European traditions, the meanings and social manifestations in Australian language and culture make the word *tin kettling* a candidate for inclusion in the next edition of the AND.

In the following reminiscences of an 80-year-old woman we get a good picture of the practice of tin kettling as it occurred in rural areas of Australia in the mid-twentieth century:

> We would gather together and wait for the bedroom lamp to go dim. We would wait a few minutes for the couple to get cosy, and then, if we could stop giggling, would sneak up to the bedroom window armed with kettles, chains, pots and pans, anything that would make a racket. At a given signal we would let loose with as much noise as we could muster. It was then traditional for the newly wedded couple to get out of bed, and make us all a cup of tea. It was an honour to be kettled; it meant you were a valued part of the community. (*Canberra Times*, 7 August 2010)

In this description of a tin kettling we see a festive and friendly celebration of a newly-wed couple—the recipients of the tin kettling welcome the intrusion as part of a tradition of the celebration of marriage conducted by friends and neighbours. The light refreshments (in other accounts often including food and alcoholic drinks) are part of the transformation of the noisy and disruptive banging of tins into an overtly friendly communal activity that embraces the newlyweds.

It is therefore a great surprise to discover that accounts of tin kettling in Australia from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveal a very different practice—one that was widely condemned, and that sometimes resulted in violence and even death. The earliest account of what would soon be termed 'tin kettling' in Australia occurs in a letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1856:

> Sir.—I was married on Thursday last, and went peacefully to bed, but to my surprise was awakened early the next morning by the thunder of a set of drums (tin kettles). These warlike sounds, methinks are very improper in a marriage concert, and give great offence. They seem to insinuate that the joys of this state are short, and that jars and discord soon ensue. I fear they have been ominous to many matches, and sometimes proved a prelude to a battle in the honey-moon.

In a similar account to the editor of another newspaper, this time the *South Australian Register* of 1857, the complainant also adds that the 'object of this mark of attention is not solely to greet the newly-wedded, and to inaugurate their union, but for the purpose of extorting from them a gift of money for drink'. In 1862, in the same newspaper, we encounter the word *tin kettling* for the first time:

> I apprehend that the tin kettling system still exists in spite of the late judicial decisions and the fines imposed, for since then several parties immediately after they have been made happy have been annoyed with the all but harmonious dashing of kettles and pans. Nor is it likely to cease until the proper persons are authorised to quell it.

As these two quotations demonstrate, the early evidence of tin kettling is associated with disturbances of the peace and with unwelcome intrusions into the privacy of the newly-wedded couple. In this respect, they share some of the characteristics of the more ancient traditions of charivari and rough music as occurred in Europe.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines *charivari* as 'a serenade of "rough music", with kettles, pans, tea-trays, and the like, used in France, in mockery and derision of incongruous or unpopular marriages, and of unpopular persons generally; hence a confused, discordant medley of sounds; a babel of noise'. In a similar way, the OED defines *rough music* as 'extemporized music of a violent kind, made with any available tools, household utensils, etc., esp. to express public outrage at the behaviour of others'. In contemporary accounts of these activities, stretching from the medieval period into modern times, 'victims' are in most cases people who are regarded as transgressing the accepted norms of marriage or relationships. These transgressions included adultery, domestic violence, the remarriage of a widow, or a large disparity in the ages of the couple. While these transgressions did not necessarily attract any legal sanction from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DICTIONARY CENTRE
A JOINT VENTURE BETWEEN
THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY &
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

the authorities, the community sought by the practice of charivari and rough music to enforce an unwritten code of conduct, associated with traditional communal values and traditional notions of order.

In Britain, the practice of providing rough music to a newly-wed couple without the negative associations of the charivari probably dates from at least the seventeenth century. In its benign form, rough music in British evidence was often associated with an expectation that the groom, by participating good-humouredly in providing drinks and food to the participants, demonstrated his ability to provide for his wife and his desire to maintain familiar relationships with friends and the community at large. Similarly, in North America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the term *shivaree* (an alteration of *charivari*) was used of a practice that has close parallels to the Australian *tin kettling*. American studies of this practice show that it served as a rite of passage to celebrate the newly-wed couple's new status in the community.

While tin kettling evolved from various European traditions, it is clear that in nearly all cases the Australian practice was not a ritual of shaming or an expression of community opprobrium. The Australian ritual, in its early form and in its later manifestations, belongs to the tradition of allowing certain parts of the community to become involved in the wedding as a community event. In this form, it is more closely associated with the benign forms of rough music in Britain and shivaree in North America. A curious feature of the early Australian newspaper evidence, however, is that the people participating in the tin kettling often seem not to be friends of the newly-weds—they are usually groups or gangs of young men who are out for a good time for themselves. This suggests that the form of tin kettling typically described in the early Australian newspapers is in many ways an aberrant version of the British tradition—tin kettling in the early Australian evidence is not a negative ritual that chastises the newly-weds for social transgressions, but neither is it a practice that serves the social function of allowing the community at large (including the newly married couple) to participate in a ritual of welcoming.

If the newspaper evidence is to be believed, the *tin kettlers* (as they became known) were often associated with the 'lower classes', as the following passage from the *Queanbeyan Age* of 1868 makes clear:

> It is not an uncommon practice amongst the raggamuffin class in our country towns to annoy newly-married couples with what is known as tin kettling. Some severe warnings have now and again been afforded such offenders, either by fine or imprisonment. But they do not appear to desist.

Not only were these 'lower orders' associated with larrikinism (a pejorative term in this period), but from all accounts their members were out to elicit some profit in money or kind from the unfortunate bride and groom—'Grog, grog; give us grog, and we will go away' was the call of some tin kettlers. And of course, as we will see, the atmosphere created by rowdy tin kettlers (often strangers) with their demands, combined with the newly-wed couple's desire for some private space in the early stage of their nuptial life, could often lead to violence or at the least to the involvement of the police and the judiciary.

The verdict of newspapers in the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century is quite clear—tin kettling, in this Australian version of a traditional ritual, was unacceptable to respectable standards of decorum and an infringement on the privacy of the newly-weds. The newspapers of this period contain numerous examples where tin kettling ended in tragic results for either the tin kettlers themselves or for the recipients of the tin kettling, including their friends and family. The following examples are representative of the many newspaper reports of tin kettlings that ended badly in this period:

> An elderly man named Giddings was charged at Willunga to-day, with shooting a young man, who, with some others, was tin kettling a newly-married couple staying with Giddings. The young man was crippled for life. (*Melbourne Argus*, 14 September 1886)

> Boisterous Tin-Kettlers. The Bridegroom's Father Badly Beaten. (*Gippsland Times*, 9 February 1891)

> A serious shooting affray is reported from Ballarat. During Friday night a number of young fellows proceeded to the house of David Develin, aged 70 years, whose daughter that day had been married, and started tin-kettling the newly married pair. Develin ordered them away, and it is alleged that he threatened to 'put some lead into them if they did not clear out'. Upon their refusing to go Develin went into the house and reappeared with a gun. A scuffle ensued, during which the gun went off. The charge lodged in the left hip of a man named George Sims, who is in a serious condition. Develin has been arrested. (Perth *Western Mail*, 6 August 1897)

> Hugh Sinclair, who during the tin kettling episode at Napoleon Creek recently fired a rifle and wounded Charles Wedwalds, was before the Bathurst Quarter sessions to-day. It transpired that three of those engaged in the tin kettling were married men, and they had had to pay fines of £2. Judge Docker—I should have given you more; you should have been flogged. Judge Docker added that these men had been engaged in a gross social outrage. They had so little respect for decency that a flogging would have done them good. At the same time, Sinclair was not justified in shooting. (Launceston *Examiner*, 3 March 1909)

These accounts make it clear that tin kettling could end in violence, and that it often resulted in legal proceedings; indeed, in one account it concluded with the death of the bride from apoplexy. Australian newspapers in this period reported the activities associated with tin kettling as a threat to the norms of decent society and a disturbance of the peace.

Beginning in the years of the First World War, however, the accounts of tin kettling started to change, and by the end of the 1920s negative views of tin kettling had disappeared, to be replaced by accounts of the practice as an accepted part of the celebrations surrounding a marriage. It was no longer a practice carried out by young larrikins (the mention of 'married men' in the 1909 account above highlights the fact that it was unusual for males of married status to be involved in this activity), and no longer an unseemly infringement on the rights of the newly-wed couple, but an activity conducted by friends or acquaintances and generally accepted by the recipients.

One of the first examples of a change in the newspaper accounts of tin kettling occurs in the *Burra Record* of 22 November 1916. I quote this account at length because it demonstrates a number of important aspects of tin kettling—its origins in European traditions, the earlier negative aspects in Australian accounts, and an awareness that the practice (as now conducted) no longer attracted the kind of criticism revealed in earlier accounts:

> A newly married couple sometimes experience considerable difficulty in reaching the home haven of rest after the wedding, which they are justly entitled to expect and long for. There is the tin-kettle fiend to be reckoned with—the friendly fiend whose expressions of joy converts a home coming into a riot. And so it happened a few evenings ago in Casterton. The home-comers got into the guard's van at Sandford, and dropped out quietly at the back end of the train at Casterton, while the welcoming party was waiting at the other end and searching for its victims in all the carriages, looking under the seats and

> on the luggage racks. The happy pair meanwhile escaped to their home. Next day the trick was discovered, and the tin kettling was arranged to take place in the evening. It was a boisterous attack upon the quiet of the neighbourhood, but there was no response from within—all was quiet. Among the party of tin-kettlers was one who was more demonstrative than any of them. He had a Ned Kelly headgear on, consisting of a kerosene tin with eyeholes cut in. No one knew who he was. He was very determined to see the thing through and insisted upon the husband coming out. He vituperated him for his meanness, he threatened him with violence, and worked himself up into a rage that grew worse as time went on. Finally the others gave it best, and he took off his helmet and mask so that he could smile in comfort before going indoors where his wife was waiting for him. He had taken part in his own tin-kettling and no one suspected the joke.

By the 1920s tin kettling was increasingly seen as a positive and valuable part of a community's celebration of marriage—it had been reclaimed by the community and incorporated into the other rituals of celebrating a wedding.

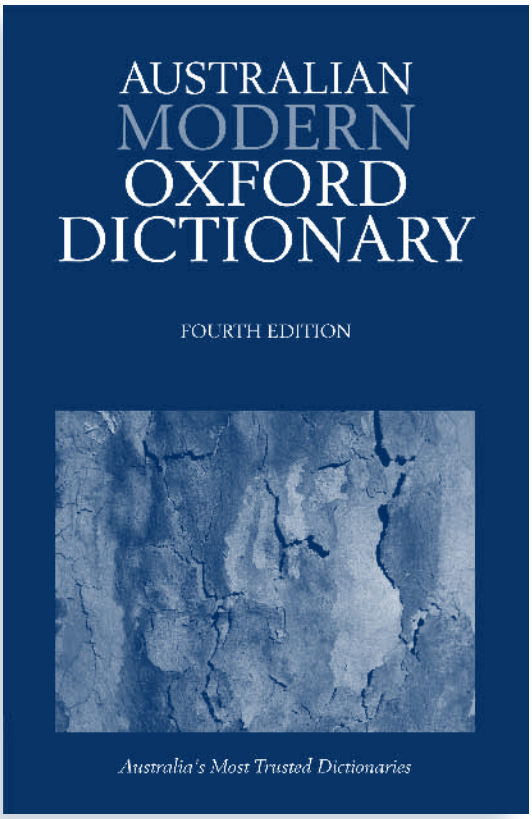
It is yet to be determined how frequent this benign form of tin kettling was in earlier periods, but it is quite evident that the term itself was now applied to the positive form and the days of larrikins, courts, and violence were at an end. From this period it becomes increasingly apparent from newspaper records that the practice of tin kettling was almost exclusively associated with rural and regional communities. The following accounts provide a picture of what would become the dominant portrayal of tin kettling until newspaper accounts of it almost disappear by the 1950s:

> A party of young men, probably lured out by lunar's silvery rays, went on a 'tin kettling' expedition on Monday evening. The recipient of this honor was a lady who was married recently, and is well-known throughout the district. Mr D. Lyons, with a single-seater car, carried 13 passengers. The objective was reached and the car stopped at a distance from the house. After a few minutes rattling the culprits came out, and were wished the best of luck by the 'kettlers'. 'For they are jolly good fellows' was sung, and three cheers given for the happy couple. The car safely carried the revellers back to the town, where the healths of the married couple were drunk. (Adelaide *Advertiser*, 4 May 1923)
>
> In the good old fashioned style, about 50 friends of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Poole, who were married in Melbourne recently, called on the young couple last Saturday night and tin-kettled them. The din was terrific. A most enjoyable evening was spent, community singing and games comprising the principal items on the programme. (*Eltham and Whittlesea Shires Advertiser*, 13 March 1942)

While the evidence for tin kettling becomes increasingly slim after the period of the Second World War, this does not mean that the practice itself had ended. The evidence for tin kettling in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s is largely contained in regional newspapers, of which there were many in this period, but in subsequent years most of these newspapers had ceased publication. But tin kettling continued in these regional areas and has continued in some form to recent years. This account related in the *Weekly Times* of 2008 is an example:

> A few weeks after my husband and I were married in 1983, I was in the sewing room making curtains and Lindsay was in the lounge reading the newspaper. About 8.30pm the lights went out and my sewing machine stopped. A power failure? No, a surprise party: a 'tin-kettling'.

In an episode of the popular television program *McLeod's Daughters*, broadcast in 2004, a tin kettling occurs, and in newspapers of recent years people not only reminisce about tin kettling in the past but suggest that in some form it still continues. While there is not much evidence for this, it suggests that the practice of tin kettling throughout all its permutations over the last century and a half still has some resonance and role in some of today's rural communities.



Australian Modern Oxford Dictionary
Fourth Edition

The *Australian Modern Oxford Dictionary* features a vinyl cover for durability and colour headwords for ease of usage. The fourth edition of the *Australian Modern Oxford Dictionary* includes many new words and meanings, including many from the realms of sport, health, society, the environment and electronic communication. All Australian words and meanings are labelled with an Australian marker. The definitions are straightforward with guidance provided where word usage is controversial. Up to date encyclopaedic entries for the names of famous people, places, events, and institutions are provided. This dictionary is the ideal reference for home or office use.

9780195578645
A$38.95 • NZ$49.99
Flexicover • 1,024 pp • 196 x 127 mm

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.

NOINTER

In Ozwords April 2010 you mention that you had found early evidence (from 1887) for the Tasmanian word 'yaffler', meaning a garrulous and loudmouthed person. Another Tasmanian word that I remember from my childhood is 'nointer', which was applied to a child who was being naughty. What is the evidence for this word?

S. James, Tas.

In *Ozwords* for April 2006 we put out a plea for early evidence for *nointer*, since our earliest evidence was from 1994. This term is recorded in a number of British dialects, where it means 'a mischievous fellow'. In British dialect it also appears in the form *anointer*, and derives its meaning from the notion of 'one who deserves an *anointing*, i.e. a thrashing'. The problem was that if this is a borrowing from British dialect, it should have been brought to Australia some time in the period about 1860 to 1910, when many words that we now regard as distinctively Australian found their way into mainstream Australian English from the dialects of migrants. 1994 was very late indeed! The newspaper archive of the National Library of Australia has provided us with some earlier evidence from the 1930s and 1940s: 'To-morrow Mrs Mary Collier, of 104 Bathurst-street, will be 100 years of age. ... She laughs a lot, especially when she goes back to her childhood days and tells you she was "a regular nointer" and led "the poor nuns a terrible dance".' (Launceston *Examiner*, 9 June 1934) This is not as early as the 1887 for *yaffler*, but there is one further piece of evidence that suggests the word goes back to the nineteenth century. In the Hobart *Mercury* for 1872 there is an interesting advertisement for a lost dog: 'Dog Lost from the schooner Kestrel. A black curly-haired half-bred New-Foundland Slut; answers to the name of "Nointer".'

VOICED AND UNVOICED

Have you noticed how common it is now for people to say 'pardee' instead of 'party', and 'thirdy' instead of 'thirty'? For some reason, they turn the 't' into a 'd'. I think this is becoming increasingly common in Australian English.

L. Martin, Vic.

As a preamble to a reply, I would like to start with the way we often fail to distinguish between how we write words and how we pronounce them. I sometimes ask students to think about how we form the past tense of most regular verbs in English. And they all say—by adding the suffix *-ed*. This is certainly true of what we write, but it is not true of what we say. Here is one group of verbs that all work the same way—*love: loved; thrill: thrilled; stone: stoned; rob: robbed; bag: bagged; hose: hosed*. They form their past tense in speech by adding *-d* (not *-ed*). Here is a second group, that all work the same way too—*cough: coughed; block: blocked; cop: copped; pick: picked; hiss: hissed*. In speech, they form their past tense by adding *-t*. Why do some verbs form their past tense by adding *-d* and some by adding *-t*?

There is a basic principle of sounds at work here. Sounds in English are all either 'voiced' or 'unvoiced'. Voiced sounds are produced with a vibration of the vocal cords. All vowels are voiced, and so are consonants like *b, d, g, v, z*, and the sounds *m, n, l*, and *r*. Unvoiced sounds make up a smaller group, and include *p, t, k, f*, and *s*. With some pairs of consonants, the tongue and teeth and any other bits in the mouth are in the same position when the sound is made, and the only difference between them is that one of the sounds has vibration of the vocal cords and the other does not. Go into the bathroom (for good echoing effect), put your hands over your ears, and say the following pairs of sounds: *b* (voiced) and *p* (unvoiced); *d* (voiced) and *t* (unvoiced); *g* (voiced) and *k* (unvoiced); *v* (voiced) and *f* (unvoiced); *z* (voiced) and *s* (unvoiced). With the voiced sounds, you should be able to hear the vibration of the vocal cords.

Sounds are a bit like people: they like to mix with similar sounds. If you look back at the lists of verbs above, you will see that the verbs that form their past tense with the *d* sound (a voiced sound) all end with a voiced sound: *rob: robbed; bag: bagged; love: loved; hose: hosed; thrill: thrilled; stone: stoned*. The voiced sounds are quite happy to sit alongside one another. But when the verb ends in an unvoiced sound, a 'battle' takes place between this unvoiced sound and the voiced *-ed* sound of the past tense. The unvoiced sound forces the voiced *d* to become its unvoiced equivalent, a *t*. Thus: *cop: copped; block: blocked; hiss: hissed; cough: coughed*.

If we now turn to some of the transformations of *t* into *d*, which worry the letter writer, the first thing we notice is that we are dealing with one of these voiced/voiceless pairs, *d* and *t*. The problem that the letter writer alludes to often occurs when the *t* sound has vowels on either side. The vowels are voiced sounds, and our vocal cords find it much easier to turn the voiceless *t* into a voiced *d*. Thus: *partner: pardner; party: pardee; meeting: meeding; later: lader; water: wader; daughter: dauder; got a: godda*. This voicing of the unvoiced consonant in these positions is of course a feature of some forms of American English. If we listen very carefully to our own very relaxed colloquial speech, we will probably have to admit that most of us do produce these pronunciations at times, even if we would never allow them in formal speech. It is an instructive lesson in the way speech sounds operate.

DAG: VERB?

Dictionaries cover the word 'dag' well when it is a noun. But the only verb I can find in the dictionaries is the sheep sense, of removing dags from a sheep. I can remember people talking about 'dagging out' for the weekend, meaning they would be having a relaxing time, doing no work , and usually dressing in extremely casual clothes like track suit and ugg boots.

S. Rankin, Vic.

This verb is certainly 'out there', and we have been gathering evidence for it, most of which starts in the early 1980s. The formulations include: 'dagging around on the streets'; 'we're going to talk, tell secrets, dance, dag out'; 'Beauty [a famous model] likes to dag out'; 'I dagged into work yesterday, adhering to my fashion rule "if it stretches, wear it".' As you can see, the form is usually with a preposition, as *dag out* and *dag around*. A scene from the *Kath and Kim* television program, transcribed on an ABC website, has Kath and Kel talking about their honeymoon at Tullamarine airport:

> **Kel:** You know what, I reckon it was the perfect honeymoon; I'll remember it as long as I live.
>
> **Kath:** Oh, ditto, doll. And you know Kim, what a nong I was to think you had to get on a plane and go somewhere.
>
> **Kim:** Well so you just dagged around the airport for two days?
>
> **Kel:** Got it in one, Kim.
>
> **Kath:** Oh, it wasn't dagging, Kim, it was cool. I mean, it's all there at Tullamarine: the Australis Counter, Chocolate Box.

There is also some evidence that *dag* could mean 'to tease', as in this sentence from J. Anderson's 1986 work *Jacko*: 'The two blokes who used to dag me most about my shorts are probably the reason I'm now playing VFL.' The main sense of the verb, especially as *dag around* or *dag about*, involves relaxing in casual attire, free from the usual pressures of everyday life.

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.

ANOTHER PAVLOVA?

The latest edition of *NZWords* prints some research from Stephen Goranson of Duke University, North Carolina, who points out that many of the early references to *Buckley's chance* (or *Buckley's show* or *Buckley's hope* or *Buckley's choice*) appear in New Zealand newspapers. Goranson had access to the Australian evidence via the *Australian National Dictionary*, where the evidence is *Buckley's chance* (1895), *Buckley's show* (1897), *Buckley's hope* (1908), *Buckley's choice* (1940). Goranson shows that the New Zealand evidence is *Buckley's chance* (1892), *Buckley's show* (1890), *Buckley's hope* (1890), *Buckley's choice* (1908). These dates would seem to suggest that Australia has *Buckley's* of proving that this is an Australian coinage! Goranson points to an incident in New Zealand in 1890 involving a George Buckley, a former director of the New Zealand Bank, who made some public criticisms of the Bank's finances. Buckley was ridiculed, and his criticisms were rejected, but a report in one newspaper in 1890 commented: 'The promptitude of the success which has attended the Directors plans has effectually destroyed all Mr Buckley's chance of a hearing.' So here is another Buckley to line up with Australia's eponymous William Buckley the convict and the firm of Buckley and Nunn. All is not lost. We have been able to find some earlier examples of the Buckley phrases, so the datings for Australia are now *Buckley's chance* (1892), *Buckley's show* (1890), *Buckley's hope* (1902), *Buckley's choice* (1904). I would call this running neck and neck. Perhaps I am biased? We shall fight on the beaches ... We shall never surrender! But we said that about pavlova!

NEW WORDS?

In a report in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* newspaper on 9 August 2011, which outlined the actor Jeremy Irons' comment that 'patting a woman's backside is nothing more than friendly "communication"', reference was made to an incident in Australia: 'Patting a woman's bottom created a furore in Australia when the late actor Bill Hunter held his hand on Nicole Kidman's bottom as she alighted from a boat in Darwin in July 2007. The act was called a "Territory handshake" on the front page of the *Northern Territory News*.' This is what the report in the *Northern Territory News* said: 'Nicole Kidman began work in Darwin yesterday and was promptly given what local girls call the "Territory handshake"—a tweak on the bum. ... "She's been given the old Territory handshake," said one onlooker. "Every Territory girl has had one of those."' We assumed that the evidence for this term must be widespread, but unfortunately all references to it lead back to this one report. We therefore do not have enough evidence to include *Territory handshake* in our dictionaries. The situation is somewhat different with *planking*—the activity of lying down flat out like a plank in unusual places. The prank has been around for more than a decade: it began in England and spread worldwide. But the new term for it—*planking*—seems to be Australian, and for a few months earlier this year both the activity and the term seemed to be everywhere. Unlike the *Territory handshake* example, for *planking* there was abundant evidence. The question about this word was somewhat different: it is certainly 'real', but will it last?

HEARD ISLAND

Earlier this year, the National Library of Australia published Dr Bernadette Hince's edition of the Heard Island diary of the Australian explorer John Béchervaise. Bernadette is a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National Dictionary Centre, and her book is titled *Unique and Unspoilt: A Year Among the Natural Wonders of Heard Island*. John Béchervaise (1910–98) had an extraordinary career. In addition to his expeditions to Heard Island in 1953, and then at Mawson Station in Antarctica in 1955 and 1959, he was a writer, historian, artist, and photographer. For many years he taught at Geelong College. The National Library website comments: 'Béchervaise's recorded observations of Heard Island's fascinating fauna and limited flora, the nuances of the changing seasons, and his weather-beaten attempts to scale its volcanic peak, leave us with a remarkable—and rare—picture of a bleak yet beautiful Antarctic island'.

TAMAMBO

Dr Dorothy Jauncey is a Visiting Fellow at the Australian National Dictionary Centre, and her book *Tamambo: The Language of West Malo, Vanuatu* was published by Pacific Linguistics in August this year. West Malo is one of the northern islands among the seventy-four populated islands that make up Vanuatu, and Tamambo is a dialect spoken by some three to four thousand people. Dorothy's book, based on very extensive field work, is the first published grammar of the language. Dorothy has also prepared a dictionary of Tamambo, and this is available online at http://paradisec.org.au/vandicts/Tamambolexicon/about/main.htm.

CONFERENCES

If you are interested in conferences dealing with languages, linguistics, and lexicography, Canberra is the place to be at the end of this year. The collection of conferences is being called Langfest 2011. Of special interest to the Dictionary Centre is the conference of the Australasian Association for Lexicography (Australex) at ANU on 28 and 29 November. Details of this and other conferences are set out at a special Langfest 2011 webpage: http://law.anu.edu.au/coast/events/langfest/conference.htm. Further details about the Australex conference can be found at: http://www.australex.org.

LENGTH-RUNNER

An article called 'The Bicycle in Australian English' by Kim Fitzpatrick, at http://www.starhillstudio.com.au, alerted us to the term *lengthrunner*, and its association with the Kalgoorlie pipeline, which was constructed between 1896 and 1903 to carry water from the Mundaring Weir to the goldfields, a distance of about 530 kilometres: 'The word "lengthrunner" refers to those men who for many decades after the completion of the Kalgoorlie pipeline, collectively patrolled its entire length daily, looking for and plugging leaks, and maintaining the support roads. Each rider typically rode a bicycle roundtrip along a 25 kilometre section or length.' Here is a relatively late record from the *West Australian* newspaper in November 1932: 'A further telephone message was received at the same station at 2.35 p.m. yesterday from Mr Leckie, a length-runner on the pipe-line from Mundaring Weir to Midland Junction, to the effect that he had seen a woman, answering to the published description, on the pipe-track about 2½ miles east of the Boya quarries'. In the early records, the 'length runner' is often associated with checking sections of railway lines in Western Australia: 'The safety of the line to a degree rested upon one man, who was called a length runner, and he started out per tricycle and had to examine every rail, bolt, sleeper and joint, and clean out cattle-pits, culverts, drains, and pack loose joints, see that the cant of curves was correct, that the road was in gauge, and roll up tarpaulins, and clean points at sidings, and in his spare time do a bit of weedin'.' (Perth *Sunday Times*, 2 June).

BRUCE MOORE
DIRECTOR

DINKY-DI: AUSSIE DINK

BRUCE MOORE

The word *dink* has a number of meanings in English. An English dialect word *dink*, meaning 'neat, nice, finely dressed', produced the British sense '(of an object or place) attractively small and neat', as in *a dinky little restaurant.* In North America, a slightly different sense developed, where *dink* can mean 'disappointingly small; insignificant', as in *I can't believe the dinky salaries they pay here.* This is probably the same word as the British *dink*, although it is just possible that it was influenced by a sense of *dinky* from Devon and Cornwall: 'tiny, very small'.

These senses no doubt lie behind the *dinky* that, in the early 1950s, became used as a trademark to denote 'a miniature motor vehicle of die-cast metal', as in *dinky car*, *dinky toy*. At the time of the Vietnam War another *dink* appeared, and this was 'a derogatory or contemptuous term for a Vietnamese person'. The origin of this *dink* is very uncertain, but it is just possible that it is a rhyme on *chink*, a derogatory term for a Chinese person (and *chink* was perhaps an alteration of *China*). Sidney Baker, in the first edition of his *A Popular Dictionary of Australian Slang* (1941), lists *dink* as an Australian term for a Chinese person, and this raises the possibility that there may have been some Australian influence on the later application of *dink* to a Vietnamese person.

From the 1930s a *dink* was a drop-shot in tennis, perhaps imitative of the sound of the shot. More recently, a *dink* has been either partner of a career couple with no children, both of whom work and who are therefore viewed as affluent consumers—an acronym from '*d*ouble (or *d*ual) *i*ncome, *n*o *k*ids'.

In Australia *dink* has sometimes been used as an abbreviation of *dinkum* (especially as *fair dink*), but a more common use of *dink* in Australian English is the sense 'a lift on the crossbar of a bicycle'. This *dink* is also used as a verb in the sense 'to give someone a lift on the crossbar of a bicycle'. In the *Melbourne/Yarra Leader* in March 2006, a cycling enthusiast asserts: 'it is so romantic *dinking* a woman on a bike.' The term can also be used of rides on a motorbike, as in the following mixed metaphor: 'The journey—in which Wayne dinked Michelle on his Yamaha XT600 motorbike—was not all smooth sailing' (Adelaide *Sunday Mail*, 9 April 2000).

Dictionary makers have puzzled over the possible origin of this Australian word, and the first edition of the *Australian National Dictionary* (1988) suggested that it might be from a British dialect word *dink* meaning 'to dandle a baby', 'to move (a child) lightly up and down in the arms or on the knee'. This verb appears in dialects from areas including Gloucestershire and Warwickshire, with typical uses such as: 'Er don't know the right road [i.e. way] to dink a babby.' I suppose there is some vague visual similarity between the child on the knee and the person being carried on the crossbar of a bicycle, but it is not a comparison that fills one with etymological conviction. Are there any other possible origins for this Australian word *dink*?

We might start with the observation that *dink* is not the only word used in Australia to describe the action of carrying a passenger on the crossbar of a bicycle. There are many alternatives, often with regional distribution. These include: *double dink*, *dinkie*, *dinkie double*, *double bank*, *double*, *dub*, *double donkey*, *donkey*, *donk*, *double donk*, *bar*, and *pug*. Whereas *dink* is heard mainly in Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia and the ACT, *double* is mainly New South Wales and Queensland, and *donkey* is South Australian. These regional boundaries are often somewhat fluid. *Donk* must be an abbreviation of South Australian *donkey*, but the following report in the Melbourne *Herald-Sun* on 9 November 2010 indicates its use in Ballarat in Victoria: 'Eileen has just returned from attending the canonisation of Mary MacKillop in Rome where she found herself in a conversation with some people from Ballarat. "We got talking about the old days and one of them said how they used to get 'donked' around on bikes. I knew it as being 'dinked', but in Ballarat they say 'donked'. Is this right and, if so, why is Ballarat different?"'

Of all these terms, the earliest is *double-bank*. This has its origin in rowing, where to *double-bank* meant 'to provide with two rowers on one bench for each pair of opposite oars, or with two rowers for each oar' (OED). This rowing term was then transferred to other contexts: 'to work or pull with two sets of men, horses, etc. (e.g. a rope with men on both sides, a dray with a double team of horses)' (OED).

Another slight shift of meaning then occurred in Australia, as illustrated by this passage from a Queensland newspaper in 1876: 'Down goes the mare, dead beat. So we unpacked her, and double-banked my other mail horse'. Thus *double banking* can now mean carrying a double load, and this is the start of the distinctive Australian sense 'to carry a second person on a bicycle'. In the earliest examples, the thing that is doing the carrying of the extra person is often not a bicycle but a horse. The earliest example of this new sense occurs in R. Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* (1888): '"We must double-bank my horse," whispers Jim, "for a mile or two till we're clear of the place." He jumped up, and I mounted behind him.' The transfer from horse to bicycle is evident just three years later in 1891, in an account in the *Brisbane Courier* of a ride by the Brisbane Safety Bicycle Club: 'Just before nearing Runcorn, however, Bennett's machine broke down, and he had to leave it at the station, and then to save a walk he double-banked with Naylor for a good portion of the remainder of the distance.' From *double-bank* we get the variants *double*, *doubler*, and the spelling variation *dub*.

There is little doubt, too, that *double donkey* is simply a variation of *double-bank*, enforced by the fact that when this 'double ride' was on a horse, a pony, or even a donkey, the formulation *double donkey* made a lot more sense than *double bank*. By 1914, the transfer from horse to bicycle was extended with a transfer to the motorcycle, as when a Victorian parliamentarian protested about the habit of young men carrying their girlfriends around on the back of a motorcycle: 'The practice of riding "double donkey" is an absolute danger, not only to the riders, but to the general public.' The fact that this usage comes from Victoria is initially surprising (since *dink* is now the standard Victorian term), until we realise that the term *dink* had not yet made an appearance.

And when *dink* finally makes its appearance, it takes the form of the compound *double dink* rather than *dink* by itself. Here are the earliest examples: 'Only last evening I overtook two small girls "double dinking" on a bike on a narrow road' (*West Australian*, 9 March 1926); 'Owing to the prevalence of serious accidents, the Traffic Department was enforcing the Act stringently and a drive had been started against "double-dinking" on push bicycles' (*West Australian*, 1 March 1928). *Dink* is therefore not the original term, but an abbreviation of *double dink*. *Dink* appears in 1934.

Once this becomes clear, we must reject the notion that the bicycle *dink* is from a British dialect word meaning 'to dandle a baby'. *Dink* is an abbreviation of *double dink*, and *double dink* is a kind of rhyming variant of *double donk(ey)*, and to a lesser extent of *double bank*. The synonym *bar* (used in northern coastal New South Wales and southern coastal Queensland) is an entirely independent formulation from the 'crossbar' of the bicycle. *Pug* is not well attested, but it is just possible that it is a variation of *dub*. But whether *fair dink*, *dinky-di*, or *dinks*, it now seems certain that the bicycle *dink* goes back to *double bank* via *double-donk(ey)*.

E.E. MORRIS'S AUSTRAL ENGLISH

Judith Smyth Robertson

In previous editions of *Ozwords*, slang and flash language dictionaries published in Australia in the 1800s have been examined. In the April 2011 edition, I discussed the unpublished manuscript of a dictionary of Australian slang that was compiled in the early 1900s by A.G. Stephens and S. O'Brien. This time I look at the work that prompted Stephens and O'Brien to compile the slang manuscript—Morris's *Dictionary of Austral English*.

Edward Ellis Morris, born in India of English parents and educated at Rugby and Oxford, moved to Victoria where he took up the position of Headmaster of the Church of England Grammar School, Melbourne, in 1875. In 1882 he was appointed Professor of English, French and German languages and Literature at the University of Melbourne. Morris 'loved dictionaries and owned hundreds of them', he was a literary critic who often published reviews and essays in contemporary newspapers and magazines, and he had a great interest in the exploration of Australia. He died in 1902 while in London discussing his last book *On the Tracks of Captain Cook*.

In 1898, four years before his death, Morris published *Austral English*. This Australian dictionary was the first attempt to record all the new and changed words in the Australian vocabulary, rather than merely collect the 'slang' element, as had occurred with the only other attempts at an 'Australian' dictionary. Stephens's criticism of Morris's work, discussed in the last *Ozwords*, had some foundation. Some entries in *Austral English* sound decidedly odd when read today, and they were sharply criticised by Sidney Baker, the writer of *The Australian Language*:

> **Christmas:** As Christmas falls in Australia in Midsummer, it has different characteristics from those in England, and the word has therefore a different connotation.
>
> **December:** A summer month in Australia.

Baker also felt that Morris included too much flora and fauna, although he later came to realise that 'Australian English' should not be defined primarily in terms of its slang and colloquialism, and that Morris's inclusion of flora and fauna in his dictionary was appropriate.

In the introduction to *Austral English*, Morris writes:

> 'Austral' or 'Australasian English' means all the new words and the new uses of words that have been added to the English language by reason of the fact that those who speak English have taken up their abode in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand. Hasty inference might lead to the remark that such addition is only slang, but the remark is far from being accurate; probably not one tenth of the new vocabulary could fairly be so classified. A great deal of slang is used in Australasia, but very much less is generated here than is usually believed.

In the introduction to *Austral English*, Morris discusses the nine categories of Australian words that he included:

> 1. Old English names of natural objects—birds, fishes, animals, trees, plants, etc.—applied (in the first instance by the early settlers) either to new Australasian species of such objects, or new objects bearing a real or fancied resemblance to them.
>
> **Magpie:** A black-and-white Crow-shrike, present all over Australia. He resembles the English Magpie in general appearance, but has not the long tail of that bird, though he shares with him his kleptomania.
>
> 2. English names of objects applied in Australia to others quite different.
>
> **Pure Merinoes:** A term often used, especially in New South Wales, for the 'very first families', as the pure merino is the most valuable sheep.
>
> 3. Aboriginal Australian ... words which have been incorporated unchanged in the language, and which still denote the original object.
>
> **Boomerang:** A weapon of the Australian aborigines.
>
> 4. Aboriginal Australian ... which have been similarly adopted, and which have also had their original meaning extended and applied to other things.
>
> **Bunyip:** (1) The Aboriginal name of a fabulous animal. (2) In a secondary sense, a synonym for an imposter.
>
> 5. Anglicised corruptions of Aboriginal words.
>
> **Pudding-ball:** A fish; corruption of the Aboriginal name of it, *puddinba*.
>
> 6. Fanciful, picturesque, or humorous names given to new Australasian natural objects.
>
> **Deepsinker:** (1) The largest sized tumbler; (2) the long drink served in it. The idea is taken from deep-sinking in a mining shaft.
>
> 7. Words and phrases of quite new coinage, or arising from quite new objects or order of things; British dialect.
>
> **Swagman:** A man travelling through the bush carrying a *Swag*, and seeking employment.
>
> 8. Scientific names arising exclusively from Australasian necessities, chiefly to denote or describe new natural orders, genera or species confined or chiefly appertaining to Australia.
>
> **Pardalote:** Anglicised form of the scientific bird-name *Pardalotus* generally called *Diamond birds*.
>
> 9. Slang.
>
> **Cornstalk:** A young man or girl born and bred in New South Wales, especially if tall and big.

Morris recognised the importance of Aboriginal words to Australian English. Morris used all the best sources on Aboriginal languages at the time he was collecting material for his dictionary. However, he did not have the knowledge or the resources to differentiate between the different languages, although he knew that the vocabulary used by the different groups 'varied greatly'. He supported a proposal for the detailed study of Australian Aboriginal languages, although he underestimated the research required: 'Probably a sum of £300 a year would suffice for an educated inquirer, but his full time for several years would be needed.'

Austral English, while not perfect, is a remarkable achievement. Morris produced a reasonably accurate and wide-ranging record of English as it was spoken in the colonies on the eve of Federation. The dictionary contains a total of 1929 entries. Of these, 1227 of the entries are flora and fauna. The flora and fauna entries are the strongest, and for these he depended on his associate from Melbourne Grammar School, Joshua Lake. Morris and Lake worked on several publications together, and Lake also published an Australasian supplement to Webster's 1898 dictionary.

The number of entries providing names for natural objects (flora, fauna, features of the landscape) is evidence that Morris recognised that Australian English, especially in its role of naming the distinctive features of the new land and a new society, had moved away from standard British English in quite significant ways. Only about ten percent of the entries could be classified as 'slang', but that is probably a fairly accurate percentage.

Morris was the largest contributor of Australasian words to James Murray's *Oxford English Dictionary*. *Austral English* is the basis for all contemporary work on Australian English. Perhaps the clearest confirmation of the value of the dictionary is that approximately ninety percent of the terms in it are in the 1988 edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*. *Austral English* is part of the Oxford revolution in dictionary making, but Morris has had little recognition for his enormous contribution to Australian lexicography.

OZWORDS COMPETITION

You were asked to create a contemporary version of those old Australian idioms that allude to various kinds of 'fullness'—*as full as a state school hat-rack, as full as a goog*, and so on. We received numerous entertaining entries. Many people came up with similar similes, and these included some of the best creations:

> as full as a bank CEO's pay packet (or wallet, etc.); as full as the MCG on grand final day; as full as a pair of budgie smugglers; as full as a people smuggler's boat; as full as a detention centre (or Christmas Island, Villawood, etc.); as full as Flemington on Melbourne Cup day; as full as Kevin Rudd's travel diary; as full as an RSL on Anzac Day

Alas, we could not award the prize to these duplicates, triplicates, etc. Other entries included:

as full as a bookmaker's wallet
as full as the swagman's tucker box
(J. Ferguson, SA)

as full as a wowser's flagon
(D. Lawrenson, Vic.)

as full as a pollie's ego
(B. Gelin, NSW)

as full as a bale of wool
(M. Travis, ACT)

as full as a Centrelink queue
as full as a fridge at Christmas
(B. Maley, WA)

as full as the Brisbane River
(E. Macleod, ACT)

as full as a politician's slush fund bucket
(K. Graham, WA)

as full as a wattle bird in bottlebrush season
(M. Gelin, NSW)

as full as a boxing day test
(W. Eggert, Vic.)

as full as a Crowded House
(R. Harber, Vic.)

as full as a country dunny
as full as a Hill's Hoist full of nappies
(S. Thomson, NSW)

as full as a bean-fuelled fart
(H. Smith, Tas.)

as full as a Family Law Court list
(A Heazlewood, Tas.)

as full as a bait-layer's larder
(M. Owen-Darcy, Qld)

as full as a bragger's boxers
(M. Sutherland, Vic.)

as full as Matt Shirvington's shorts
(B. Lee, NSW)

as full as a peak hour train
(H. Everett, WA)

as full as the pouch of a mother kangaroo with triplets
(A. Maley, WA)

as full as a chokker quokka
as full as an Easter esky
(S. Robson, Qld)

as full as a country pub in a heatwave
(J. Dennett, NSW)

as full as a pod of wattle seeds
(B. McPherson, Vic.)

as full as a politician's retirement fund
as full as a garbage-tip ibis
(A. Morice, Qld)

as full as a porta-loo at a rock concert
(W. Edwards, Vic.)

as full as John Kerr at the Melbourne Cup
as full as a pollie's lurks and perks list
(P. Harley, SA)

as full as a school speech day
(L. Pattison, NSW)

as full as Villawood on a Saturday night
(C. Macdonald, Qld)

as full as a race day dunny
as full as a Bunnings carpark
(R & L Male)

as full as Biz Class on a Pollie's Picnic!
(S. McCarthy, NSW)

as full as a hoon in a Holden
as full as a call-centre queue
as full as a TAB on Melbourne Cup Day
(R. Wilk, Vic.)

as full as a dunny blowfly
as full as a baby's nappy
(M. Fitzsimons, Vic.)

as full as Bondi Beach on Boxing Day
as full as a Westfield carpark
(Gilbert Case, Qld)

as full as a Greenie's recycle bin
(L. Evans, WA)

2nd Prize (books to the value of $50 from the OUP catalogue):

as full as a boozer's bladder
(M. Sutherland, Vic.)

1st Prize (books to the value of $100 from the OUP catalogue):

as full as a hospital waiting list
(D. Tribe, NSW)

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 37

Most readers will know the phrase 'things are crook at Tallarook'. Tradition has it that this, and other similar rhyming phrases, had their origin during the Great Depression, when they were part of the 'mulga wire' of the travelling tramp. Sidney Baker, in the second edition of *The Australian Language* (1966), lists a number of these:

There ain't no work in Bourke.
No lucre at Echuca.
Damnall at Blackall.
Things are crook at Muswellbrook.
Got a feed at the Tweed.
No feedin' at Eden.
Everything's wrong at Wollongong.
Might find a berth in Perth.
In jail at Innisfail.
Got the arse at Bulli Pass.

The lone survivor of these 1930s phrases is 'things are crook at Tallarook'. Surely there are other wonderful Australian place names that deserve to be memorialised in rhyming phrases that reflect a more contemporary Australia. It is your task to create one of these rhyming phrases with an Australian place name.

ENTRIES CLOSE 31 JANUARY 2012
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.

ADDRESS FOR ARTICLES & LETTERS

Ozwords
Australian National Dictionary Centre
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
Fax: (02) 6125 0475
Email: andc@anu.edu.au

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE:
31 JANUARY 2012

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

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Kaitlin Murphy
Oxford University Press
Phone: +61 3 9934 9131
Fax: +61 3 9934 9100
Email: Kaitlin.Murphy@oup.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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 2784,
Melbourne VIC 3001
Fax: (03) 9934 9100
Email: Ozwords.au@oup.com

OZWORDS

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

Publisher: ***Richard Harms***

in partnership with

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

Director of The Australian National Dictionary Centre: ***Bruce Moore***

© Copyright 2011 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

OzWords_oct2011_FA