DIGGERSPEAK
AMANDA LAUGESEN

EDITORIAL

Dr Amanda Laugesen's book *Diggerspeak: The Language of Australians at War* will be published by OUP this month. In the lead article, Amanda gives an outline of the history of the words that have been significant in Australia's wartime history. The book is timely, since 2005 is the ninetieth anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli. It demonstrates, too, how important the major wars have been in the development of Australian vocabulary. This is Amanda's second book for the Australian National Dictionary Centre. Her previous book was *Convict Words: Language in Early Colonial Australia.*

In our second article, Edel Wignell examines some of the language of Australian sports writers. Edel is a freelance writer, whose junior historical novel, *The Long, Sticky Walk* (University of Western Australia Press), was listed as a Notable Book in 2004 by the Children's Book Council of Australia. She has a monthly column, 'Edel Tells Tales', in the 'Bonzer!' e-journal: <www.bonzer.org.au>.

In our third article, Dr W.S. (Bill) Ramson, the editor of the 1988 first edition of *The Australian National Dictionary* and the first director of the Australian National Dictionary Centre, ponders the issue of Irish influences on Australian English.

Our website <www.anu.edu.au/andc> was recently revamped. The Web address is still the same, but some internal addresses have changed. So, for example, if you have bookmarked the *Ozwords* section, you will need to update it.

Frederick Ludowyk

Frederick Ludowyk
Editor, *Ozwords*

War has had a profound impact on the development of Australian English, from the first involvement of Australians fighting colonial wars in Africa, to the impact of the two World Wars, to fighting in the jungles of Vietnam. Some words were ephemeral and disappeared after war's end; some words came to be important icons of Australian national identity.

Australia's first overseas involvement was in colonial wars in Africa. In 1885, a contingent of Australian soldiers set off for the Sudan, and in 1899 Australians fought in the South African (Boer) War. The Sudanese campaign contributed no new words to the Australian lexicon. Few distinctively Australian terms emerged from the Boer War, but a special use of the Australian English **stoush** (recorded from 1893 as meaning 'fighting, violence') to refer specifically to military fighting, and the slang term for an army biscuit, **forty-niner** (apparently named from the fact that these biscuits had forty-nine holes in them), can be claimed as Australian. The relatively small number of Australian soldiers who served helps to explain the lack of lexical innovation.

The First World War, which began in 1914 and ended in 1918, had a huge impact on the world, and on Australia. Some 416,809 Australian men enlisted, out of a total population of four million people. Of these men, 80% served overseas, nearly 20% were killed, and another 45% were wounded. The war had a tremendous impact on World Englishes in general, and Australian English in particular. There was a definite recognition that Australian English helped to mark the Australian soldiers out from other nationalities, reinforcing the sense of Australian identity that developed in the context of the war.

Australian participation in the Great War is generally seen to be a key moment in Australian nationalism—the moment at which Australia became an independent nation. This is perhaps open to debate, but certainly the war was an important contributor to the development of Australian culture and identity. It is perhaps revealing that the significant Australianisms—**Anzac**, **Aussie**, and **digger** (in the soldier sense)—are all key products of this war.

Borrowings from other languages were common in First World War Australian English. Service in Egypt and the Middle East, for example, led to many terms being adopted from Arabic. Some of these include **faloosh** ('money'), **igri** ('hurry up'), **imshi** ('go away'), **magnoon** ('crazy'), **maleesh** ('never mind'), and **quiess kateer** ('very good'). Few of these words came back to Australia, but some soldiers continued to use them after their wartime service. French also offered a handful of words to the English that developed during the war—a popular term with the Australians was **napoo**, meaning 'finished' (a corruption of the French *il n'y en a plus* 'there is no more'), applied to many situations in the war.

The First World War saw the first usage of a number of iconic Australian terms. These include **furphy**, introduced through the use of the Melbourne-based Joseph Furphy and Sons water carts around which soldiers gathered to swap stories, the phrase (**his** or **her**) **blood's worth bottling**, and the terms **king-hit** and **good oil**, all of which still exist in Australian English. The popular term **possie** was also a new word generated on the battlefields of war (originally a 'position for firing').

Many words forged in the trenches and desert did not much outlive the war, however, except perhaps in the reunions of veterans. Many of these words had little use in everyday life. Nevertheless, during wartime, a distinctive 'slanguage' performed important functions for the Australian soldier, at least part of which was to create a sense of community among the soldiers, and thereby help bond the soldiers and keep up morale. Humour was an important means for keeping up morale, and soldier slanguage, as part of a general soldier culture, was part of this. Through slang, soldiers were able to deflect the horrors of war, allowing them to articulate their feelings through black humour and euphemism.

The Second World War (1939–45), for Australians, was a very different type of war from the previous one, with different experiences, different theatres of fighting, a major new enemy, and new types of warfare and military technology. The increased use of aeroplanes in warfare led to such terms as **Beauey** (for 'Beaufighter'), **biscuit bomber** ('an aircraft that dropped supplies to troops in remote parts of New Guinea'), **stooging** ('cruising around in an aeroplane'),

flying coffin ('an unsafe aircraft'), and the **waafery**, the place where the Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force gathered. New technology contributed terms such as **blitz buggy** ('an open truck, especially a personnel carrier'). The nature of warfare was perhaps so confusing as to contribute the very popular term **doover** ('a thingummyjig'), which was applied liberally to all sorts of things during the war and gained widespread popularity after the war.

Fighting in the Middle East and North Africa saw the revival of some of the Arabic borrowings and the revival of First World War terms for the German enemy, like **Jerry** and **Hun**, but the Pacific theatre and fight with the Japanese offered many more new words. Numerous terms for the Japanese enemy developed, most of them having racial overtones—they include **nip**, **nippo**, and **Tojo** (after the name of Hideki *Tojo*, Japanese minister of war from July 1941 and prime minister from October 1941). The New Guineans, who aided the Australians, were known as **boongs**, **Fuzzy-wuzzies**, and **Fuzzy-wuzzy angels**. The language reflected the prejudices of the day, and would also continue in the Asian wars of the post Second World War period. Fighting in the jungle environment also influenced the language: soldiers might go **troppo** or **jungle happy**.

Expressions such as **jungle happy** (and other 'happy' combinations, such as **slap happy** and **flak happy**) reflected something of an American influence on the development of Australian English in the Second World War. Yet an Australian flavour was maintained with the introduction of a number of popular Australianisms, such as **bodger**, **drongo**, to **ear-bash**, **no-hoper**, distinctive uses of **perv**, **bludge**, and **bludger**, and the popular phrase **wouldn't it…**? Some short-lived Australianisms of the Second World War included **goldfish** for tinned fish served as army food, **Lady Blamey** for a drinking glass made from the bottom of a bottle, out of which soldiers drank their beer, **Nackeroo** for a member of the North Australian Observation unit, and **spine-pound**, a variant of **spine-bash**. A few words from the Second World War appeared again in later conflicts, including **giggle hat** and **pissaphone** ('a makeshift urinal').

In the years following the Second World War, Australian involvement in overseas conflicts primarily focused on the Asia–Pacific region. Korea (1950–53) was a 'hot' conflict within the Cold War. The United States deployed troops to the region, and was assisted by a Commonwealth force that included Australians, although numbers were small. Participation in Korea was followed by involvement in Malaya. The Malayan Emergency (1950–60), as it was called, involved both some deployment of Australian ground troops and the support of the RAAF. Due to the small numbers of participating servicemen, and the more professional nature of the forces involved, few distinctive Australian terms emerged from these conflicts. Key terms, such as **Aussie**, **dig**, and **digger**, continued to be important. **Giggle hats**, first used in the Second World War, remained; other Second World War terms no doubt continued to circulate. **Eggbeater** was borrowed from the Americans in Korea for the new, and soon to be important, addition to warfare, the helicopter. **Hooch** or **hoochie** (for 'a shelter or tent' and deriving from Japanese *uchi* 'house'), probably borrowed from the Americans, first appeared in Korea, and would continue to be a familiar term in the Australian soldier's vocabulary. But real lexical innovations in these conflicts did not occur. The Vietnam War (Australia was involved from 1962 to 1972), with its much larger participating numbers and its much stronger impact on Australian society, politics, and culture, would offer much more to Australian English.

The Australian government decided to support the American fight in Vietnam and committed Australian troops to the war. Of all Australia's overseas conflicts, the Vietnam War was the most controversial and has had a complicated legacy in Australian culture and politics. Language had, by the time of the Vietnam War, become less censored, and some of the terms of the war reflect a much blunter approach to the realities of life in the service. Some of the distinctive Australian English terms created by the war include **blowfly** for the person in charge of the latrines, **heppo roll** for the Vietnamese bread rolls bought from street vendors, **punch a postie** (a popular phrase during the Australian postal strikes), and **stick-book** for pornographic material. Coarse language is a given in the language of soldiers at war—but for Vietnam it is more easily traced as compared to earlier wars, where few such words made it past self-censorship by soldiers and the censoring of publication. (The First World War produced **bullsh** as a euphemism for 'bullshit' and the Second World War used the term **cunt cap** for the forage cap worn by soldiers, apart from the already popular range of expletives and swear words that were not Australian-specific.)

The distinctive technology of the war, as with other conflicts, also produced many new words. Iroquois helicopters were known as **Hueys** (a borrowing from the Americans) and their crew members were **crewies**. Helicopters performed essential duties in medical evacuation—they were usually known as **dustoffs** when they performed **dustoff** duty (medical evacuation), or engaged in **casevac** (casualty evacuation). Armoured Personnel Carriers were also important in moving soldiers; they were known as **tracks**. Tanks and tracks were often crewed by **tankies**.

The enemy in Vietnam were known as **nogs** or **noggies** (both Australian terms from before the war, and now adapted to the Vietnamese), Australians in the backlines were known as **pogos** (probably short for *pogo stick*, rhyming slang for 'prick'), troops were either **nashos** ('soldiers trained under the National Service Act') or **regs** ('regular soldiers'). All troops looked forward to their last day of duty, expressed in the phrase 'so many days and a **wakie**'. This latter word was an adaptation of the American phrase that called the last day a 'wake-up'. Going back to Australia was known by the acronym **RTA** (**R**eturn **T**o **A**ustralia). Opposition to the Vietnam War saw the revival of **anti-conscription** (a term that had been used in Australia during the First World War), but the protest movement adopted new protest language from the Americans (such as 'moratorium') and did not create any of its own terms.

Few of the new Australianisms of the Vietnam War continued to be used after the war, or were translated into general usage within Australian English. This is largely due to the fact that most were war-specific and had little relevance in the domestic Australian context. However, these terms have served to define a distinctive culture of the Vietnam War, continued by many veterans and finding some currency within Australian popular culture.

Through borrowings and modifications from other languages and through new lexical creations, Australians have done much to create their own variety of English, and war has influenced this development. While many words produced by war have not remained within Australian English, all the words of Australians at war provide insight into the experience of war.

Sports Writers - The New Poets
Edel Wignell

Nowadays our lives are filled with poetry. Sports writers are the new poets, agreeing that the best way to describe a game or a sport is by means of metaphor.

Images of war are appropriate for any competitive activity. One weekend, Sheedy prepared his army to meet their foes while, in car racing at Bathurst, Brock was the hottest driver in a shoot-out. In fact, 'shoot-out' is one of the most popular phrases at present. Golfers gathered in Scotland for a shoot-out, while Hewitt won a match in a memorable shoot-out, and the Swiss star fired many aces. Another fell in friendly fire, having lost to a compatriot. A splendid medieval contest was conjured up when the Storm lost their joust with the Knights. Tiger Woods came out, fired a round, and cruised to victory—surely a delightful double image! And an even better one: laid low all week by the flu, the Hawks came out of the blocks, firing, in their match against the Brisbane Lions.

Every sport can be appreciated in parallels with others. Boxing provides the language for many predictions and reports. We are informed that, when the gloves are off, AFL coach Danny Frawley will get the most out of his team. The Bulldogs and the Cats squared-off at the Telstra Dome, and Sydney showed that it could climb from the canvas. Philippoussis, being on the verge of defeat, was on the ropes at Wimbledon, but soon he was back punching in the middle of the game. However, he was knocked out in the French Open. On another occasion Hewitt was on the ropes, too, being defeated by Agassi in the US. In test cricket, England was on the ropes; racing-car driver Rubens Barrichello drew first blood in the Grand Prix; and Greg Norman punched through to win at golf.
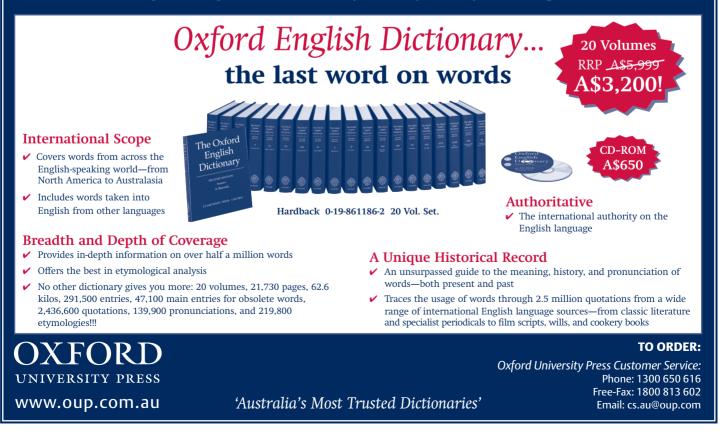
Like 'shoot-out', 'hit-out' can apply to any sport. Two racehorses, after being rested for a while, galloped around the Flemington Racecourse in a hit-out to prove their fitness. And, in July, our swimmers were in Brisbane for their final hit-out before the Olympics. Succinct and truly artistic is the following evocation: a Brazilian tennis champ—the Picasso of clay—defeated Hewitt.

Sometimes the less-competitive activities of accounting and fishing provide language for the more sedate sport of cricket. The English captain chose to bat first, hoping to square the ledger quickly, but, when the Australians batted, they reeled in a high total of runs. A 'digging' image is popular—overused, boring, and predictable. For example, Hewitt dug deep to beat Haas. It sounds like a gardening metaphor, but I'm mystified. Perhaps it relates to mining for gold. Startling news: having defeated Zimbabwe in Perth, the Australian juggernaut moved to Sydney. But the Australian cricket team as a wheeled monster overwhelmed my imagination.

At finals time, the importance of attitude is obvious. Recently, two football teams—St Kilda and Sydney—were analysed *ad infinitum*. Eventually it was agreed that each one had to *out attitude* the other. No doubt, this is the magical word. Sports writing, like writing poetry, is a matter of attitude, and metaphor is the key.

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.

PERGOLA—ITS STRUCTURE & SOUND

What is the origin of the word 'pergola'? Does 'pergola' mean the same thing in Australia as in the UK and elsewhere? And how do you pronounce it?
E. James, NSW

The word came into English via Italian in the seventeenth century. It ultimately comes from Latin **pergula** *'projecting roof', from the verb* **pergere** *'to come or go forward'. The* Oxford English Dictionary *defines it as 'an arbour formed of growing plants trained over trellis-work, especially a covered walk so formed'. The* Oxford Dictionary of English *(2003) defines it as 'an archway in a garden or park consisting of a framework covered with trained climbing or trailing plants'. The American dictionaries give much the same meanings. The British dictionaries give only the pronunciation PER-guh-luh, with the stress on the first syllable, whereas the American dictionaries allow per-GOH-luh as a second pronunciation. This second pronunciation is very common in Australia—indeed, our dictionaries recognise the fact that it is the more common pronunciation. If you look at illustrations of pergolas in Britain or America, they are often what we would simply call a 'garden arch'. In Australia, we have developed our own sense of* pergola. *In the* Australian Oxford Dictionary *(2004), our first definition is: 'a horizontal wooden framework with vertical supports. Attached to a house and usually with climbing plants trained over it, used for recreation.' Regional variations in English are easily missed!* **Ed.**

MARIJUANA

Regarding Bruce Moore's article 'How Do Words Get into Dictionaries', how did *marijuana* get into the American language? Noted American experts, language experts, and just plain punters give answers, but there is a hint that it does not mean 'cannabis' in Spanish, nor does it have any Spanish roots.
E. Webber, NSW

The word first appears in English in 1894. There is no uncertainty about its immediate origin. The online version of the Oxford English Dictionary *says that it comes from Mexican Spanish* **mariguana** *or* **marihuana**. *What is uncertain is where this word came from. The* OED *notes the suggestion that the Spanish word might be from Nahuatl (a language of southern Mexico)* **mallihuan** *'prisoner'. The notion that it might be from the Spanish personal name Maria-Juana is pure folk etymology.* **Ed.**

GOTTEN

Your *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* says that 'except in the adjective *ill-gotten*, the past participle *gotten* is non-standard in Australian English'. But it is extremely common and I have heard it argued that it has been present in Australian English since the nineteenth century.
D.K., Qld

The verb **get** *has an interesting history. It comes from Old Norse and was introduced to Anglo-Saxon England by the Vikings. The infinitive was* **geta**, *the past tense* **gat**, *and the past participle* **getenn**. *In the Middle English period, this pattern of vowel change (***e** *to* **a** *to* **e***) was influenced by another conjugation of verbs that had the pattern* **e** *to* **a** *to* **o**, *as in* **stelen** *(our 'to steal'),* **stal** *(our 'stole'),* **stolen** *(the same as modern English). So the verb became* **geten** *(infinitive),* **gat** *(past tense),* **gotten** *(past participle). In the seventeenth century, the vowel of the past tense was influenced by the vowel of the past participle, and so it became* **got**. *In England, except in some dialect use, the past participle* **gotten** *gradually disappeared and was replaced by* **got**.

But the **gotten** *form sailed across the Atlantic with the early American settlers, and it remained there. Although in 1864 Webster described it as 'obsolescent', this dictionary was wrong, and it is the standard form in the United States in some contexts. People often do not realise that American English uses both* **gotten** *and* **got** *as past participles. The* New Fowler's Modern English Usage *(ed. Robert Burchfield, OUP 1996) explains: 'In American English it is a fairly safe rule that* gotten *is used when the sense is "obtained", but* got *when it means "owned, possessed". It has also been suggested that* gotten *is preferred to* got *when a notion of progression is involved'. Thus: 'he had gotten us tickets for the concert' ('obtained'); 'people have gotten much healthier in the past 30 years' ('progression'); but 'he's got a large house' ('owned, possessed').*

How common has **gotten** *been in Australia? SETIS (Scholarly Electronic Text and Image Service at <http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/oztexts>) has a large collection of searchable Australian texts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a true past participle* **gotten** *appears only 41 times, and many of these are representations of dialect. It is clear, however, that it is becoming increasingly common in Australia. Robert Burchfield gives two examples from Tim Winton:* 'Has my reputation in town gotten that bad?; Been sewn up for a long time and the locals have gotten used to the idea'. *Winton notwithstanding, it is my view that* **gotten** *is not yet entirely naturalised in Australian English. It is still unnatural enough to make me wince.* **Ed.**

CROWEATER

I was tying to explain to my granddaughter why we South Australians are called **croweaters**. I always believed it was because times were so harsh in the early settlement that they were forced to eat crows. Is this too simple an explanation?
S.D., SA

Well, did you South Australians really eat crows? Or is this a scandalous furphy designed to take the piss out of staid and worthy sheep- and cow-eating persons whose only quirk is that they 'talk posh'? As with most etymologies, the simplest is usually the correct one. According to J.C.F. Johnson, writing in 1881 (our earliest evidence), it seems that (Once Upon a Time) the pommy-sounding South Australians did indeed eat crow (if not humble pie): 'I was met with the startling information that all Adelaide men were **croweaters** ... because it was asserted that the early settlers of "Farinaceous Village" [*farinaceous 'consisting or made of flour'; Adelaide had this nickname in the second half of the nineteenth century because it was the centre of a wheat district* **Ed.**], *when short of mutton, made a meal of the unwary crow'* (To Mount Browne and Back, *p. 13). Dorothy Jauncey in* Bardi Grubs and Frog Cakes: South Australian Words *(OUP 2004) reports:* 'Certainly provisions were so scarce in the early days that any fresh meat was welcome, and various settlers' letters mention "parrot" and "cockatoo" as a welcome part of their dinner. "The breast of a cockatoo was thought very good, and the parrots were very good in a pudding or a pie", related one pioneer.' ***Cockatoo-eater*** *or* ***parrot-eater*** *does not have the opprobrious power of* ***croweater***, *and this no doubt has something to do with the fact that the crow is a notorious eater of carrion, not excluding human corpses—as is evidenced in the Scots ballad* The Twa Corbies (The Two Crows). *The two crows find a new-slain knight and gloat as follows:* 'We may mak our dinner sweet. /Ye'll sit on his white hause-bane (*neck-bone*), /And I'll pike (*pick*) out his bonny blue een (*eyes*); /Wi ae (*one*) lock o his gowden (*golden*) hair /We'll theek (*thatch*) our nest when it grows bare.' **Ed.**

NEW DICTIONARIES

A new edition of the *Australian Oxford Mini Dictionary*, edited by Mark Gwynn, will be published in the first half of 2005, as will a new edition of the *Australian Student's Colour Dictionary*, edited by Tony Alderman and Mark Gwynn.

RESPONSES

We had many responses to the request for early recipes for Aussie food terms such as chocolate crackle, Boston bun, and white Christmas. Many thanks to all who sent in material.

In my discussion of 'how words get into dictionaries' I cast some doubt on the seeming 'ghost' sense of **joey** as 'an hermaphrodite or sodomite: applied generally to any foppish or effeminate young man'. I was interested, therefore, to receive an email from 'Lofty' of Queensland, who recalls this sense being used. He writes: 'For the meaning of the slang term **Joey** I rely upon my younger days, in the bush back in the early 1950s, when it referred to the act of sodomy. It definitely was in common use by the more vulgar at that time. It described the physical position adopted, usually by the younger of the two participants, to enable the act of sodomy to be performed while standing—a similar position to that adopted by a young kangaroo—a **joey**—when not standing fully erect. By way of illustration: "Here comes Bob with his Joey"'. So perhaps this sense is, or was, out there?

On the phrase 'to bet like the Watsons', meaning 'to bet heavily', one reader offered some interesting suggestions about the history of the term: 'It is amazing how, over time, the meanings of expressions can come to mean the opposite of what they set out to be. As told to me more than 35 years ago, the Watson brothers were two teetotal bachelors who were never known to have a bet in their life. They were members of the Victoria Racing Committee, attending every meeting, arriving by horse and sulky, and heading off after the last. On particularly bad days, when the bookmakers won everything and left the punters lamenting, the statement was often made that "anyone who had enough money left after the last race to buy a round of drinks must have been betting like the Watsons". The Godfrey Watson Steeplechase was named after one brother and was still called that for many years after their passing.'

On the phrase 'foreign order', which means 'using the resources of one's workplace to do private work' another reader provides a new meaning: 'Certainly in Tasmania, and probably other states,

the term refers to a dose of venereal disease picked up by a married man being away from home for a few days, such as going to a conference in a big city, and having casual sex with a prostitute etc. The resulting venereal disease is known as a foreign order.'

Another reader looks back to a 1998 number of *Ozwords*. 'I found a letter from Fred Parkes in the November 1998 Ozwords about the origin of the word "norks" for a woman's breasts. I can confirm that the word was so used in the 1950s in jazz circles in Melbourne, and that it was derived from the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, as Fred states. There was a 12 inch record album by the band which had the initial letters of the name in large capitals on the cover—NORK, a word waiting for a use. I was younger than the Fred Parkes/ Barnard generation, but the usage had certainly spread to the younger generation of jazz musos and fans by the time I was one, in the late 1950s.' Can anyone supply a photocopy or scan of this record cover?

SCROGGIN

Scroggin is 'a mixture of dried fruit, nuts, and other food taken as a snack by bushwalkers'. We have evidence for the term from the early 1980s, but the New Zealanders have evidence for it from 1940. A battle continues to rage across 'the ditch' about who invented the **pavlova**. The Kiwis have a recipe from 1927, just pipping us by two years. Will they win with **scroggin** too? Does anyone have any pre-1980 Australian references to **scroggin**?

BEECHAM'S PILL

A website <www.makingthemodernworld. org.uk/stories> explains the origin of the famous Beecham pills: 'Mr Thomas Beecham introduced his pills, which were composed of aloes, ginger and soap, in

1842. By the late nineteenth century they were among the best known medicines in the world. They were generally used as a laxative but much broader claims were also made. A book published by the British Medical Association in 1909, entitled *Secret Remedies*, described the claims: 'In a circular wrapped round the box it is stated that "these renowned pills are composed entirely of medicinal herbs", and cure constipation, headache, dizziness or swimming in the head, wind, pain, and spasms of the stomach, pains in the back, restlessness, insomnia, indigestion, want of appetite, fullness after meals, vomiting, sickness of the stomach, bilious or liver complaints, sick headaches, cold chills, flushing of heat, lowliness of spirits, and all nervous affections, scurvy and scorbutic affections, pimples and blotches on the skin, bad legs, ulcers, wounds, maladies of indiscretion, kidney and urinary disorders, and menstrual derangements.' In Australia, **Beecham pill** came to be used as rhyming slang for 'dill'. Most of our evidence for this, however, is from books of slang. Our only 'real' citation is from 1968 in J. Alard's *He Who Shoots Last*: 'Yer becomin' a bigger Beecham's pill dan yer cousin Horizontal'. Does anyone recall any similar usages in print?

FALCON

Former rugby league player, Mario Fenech, was nicknamed 'the Maltese Falcon' from his Maltese ancestry. Following an occasion when he was hit on the head by the ball, such an unfortunate incident came to be known as being 'falconed'. There is plenty of evidence on the web for the sense, in rugby, in touch footy, and even in cricket, but we have been unable to find the term in non-web publications. Can any rugby fans help us?

HIGH RISING TONE

High Rising Tone is a generally recognised feature of Australian speech. In standard English, a high rising tone is used towards the end of an utterance that is a question. For some time, it has been recognised that many Australians use this tone in utterances that are simply statements rather than questions. I have been doing some research into the Australian accent in the second half of the nineteenth century, and came across this interesting passage from 1865: 'There is a peculiar tone of voice observable in the children's answering, consisting of a throwing or jerking up of the voice at the end of each sentence.' If this is referring to high rising tone, it is by far the earliest evidence of its existence in Australian English.

Bruce Moore
Director.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Irish immigrants made up the largest and most pervasive minority in the population of the Australian colonies. It was also the most homogeneous, being substantially Catholic, working class, and poor. Yet, at first sight, this body of people seems to have made little mark on Australian English; and it is paradoxical that, despite the legendary loquacity of the Irish, it is hard to think of words that might join **larrikin** and **sheila** as examples of Irishisms—and even these two are only conjecturally Irishisms.

In what follows, I want to look at some words that are of Irish provenance, or that are mostly used with reference to the Irish, and that are familiar to Australians, with a view to establishing the ambience of these words and others that are similar to them. We should not expect to find evidence of occupational concentrations similar to that of the Cornish mining settlements in South Australia. And it is worth noting at this stage that in the greater number of instances in which an Irish word is used with reference to social mores, we find evidence of prejudice, **Irish** itself being used of all those who live **beyond the pale**, otherwise wild **Irishmen**, **black Irish**, or **mere Irish**. Most peoples can be represented on stage by their stereotypes and, among English speakers, the Irish are made instantly recognisable by the employment of a 'dialect', which is characterised partly by any of several widely current markers of general sub-standard English—an example is the ubiquitous de facto plural of the second person pronoun **youse** (a marker grossly overworked by Peter Carey in his assertion of the Irishness of Ned Kelly)—partly by the unconscious use of the speaker's normal accent (in the case of an Irish speaker, by the judicious use of one or two usually overworked speech mannerisms), and partly by a range of exclamations that have a time-honoured Irishness, and that have been sanctified as 'Stage Irish'—examples are **arrah** (the earliest of them, attributed to the Irish dramatist George Farquhar in 1705), **begorrah**, a euphemistic 'Anglo-Irish' formation on the oath 'by God' (from 1828, but long obsolete out of context), **bejabbers**, one of the numerous, and not only, Irish expletives formed on **bejesus** or, as it is more commonly pronounced, again only in the theatrical context, **bejaysus**—from 1908, and probably surviving through its use in the nonsensical expression 'beat the bejesus out of (someone)'. These expletives, and other 'Anglo-Irishisms' of their ilk, establish an ambience in which the picturesque profanity of their oaths

sits comfortably with their acknowledged facility for the **blarney**, usually cited as one of the more endearing characteristics of the Irish. **Blarney** itself has an interesting if fanciful history. It was supposedly coined by an exasperated Elizabeth I reacting to the prevarication and 'smooth talk' of one Cormac MacDermot MacCarthy, Lord of Blarney, who in 1602 refused to give up the Irish tradition of clans electing their chiefs and pay allegiance to the English queen. A second, later tradition has the gift of 'the Blarney' as a reward for kissing a stone in the castle grounds. This was apparently no mean feat but, as it seems to have been part of a promotion encouraged by the nineteenth century owners of the estate, it is not likely to be of much help in determining the intrinsic meaning of the word. The **gift of the Blarney** is also the **gift of the gab**, **gab** being a predominantly northern dialect form of **gob** mouth, used more often to refer to the fluency of than the articulator of speech and, according to the *OED*, not 'in dignified use'. What this pair does is demonstrate the ambivalence of attitude towards things Irish, which is perhaps lost in the case of **blarney**, where a romanticised view of the Irish has been much stronger than the converse.

Blarney, as it lost its attachment to the circumstances of its origin and became generally applicable, came to mean 'nonsense', and thus moved closer to the meanings of the two words that, with **blarney**, are offered by the OED as a definition of the noun **bother—humbug** and **palaver**. And it is worth remembering at this point that we are dealing with colloquialisms in a sector of the vocabulary that is notoriously unstable, and pausing to consider the implications of defining colloquialisms by attempted, but partial, synonymy. **Bother** is one of those words that seem unremarkable, until consulting the dictionary brings it suddenly to a hitherto hidden life. It had had almost a century of use as a verb, meaning 'to bewilder, confuse, or muddle', 'to pester, annoy, or worry', before being recorded as a noun, and its colloquial popularity is demonstrated by a proliferation of derivative forms, as **botheration**, **bother-headed**, **bother-headedness**, **bothering**, **botherment**, and **bothersome**, and by its use in the imperative, as a mild imprecation, and as an exclamation expressing annoyance. Two aspects of its history stand out: its early use by Sheridan, Sterne, and Swift, which makes it indisputably Anglo-Irish, at the same time as it ensures the word's popularity (as evidenced in its use by the next generation of writers, notably

Dickens and Thackeray). The only surprise to someone brought up by a mother whose strongest habitual oath was an under-the-breath '**bother**', is its rebirth in contemporary colloquial speech, in the phrase **no bother**, **not a bother**, as the Irish equivalent of the currently vogue exclamation and expletive **no worries**, **no problem**, etc., variously also **not a worry**, **no prob**, **no problems**, **not a problem**, etc. But in Ireland **no bother**, **not a bother**.

Now let us return to **blarney** and **palaver**, which, with **humbug**, are all the *OED* offers by way of defining the earliest sense of **bother**. **Palaver** was originally a word used in nautical slang, picked up from Portuguese traders on the African coast who used it to describe the talk, in particular the conferring and discussing, that went on among tribespeople, and between tribespeople, traders and travellers. But it deteriorates rapidly, and is used also of 'unnecessary or profuse talk', or 'talk intended to cajole or wheedle', where it has become, in every respect except context, a synonym of the Anglo-Irish **blarney**.

Blarney and **palaver** both admit the sense of 'nonsense', but both stop short of suggesting fraud or imposture, deception, hoax, or any other sort of dishonesty. **Humbug**, the *OED*'s third shot at the meaning and ambience of **bother**, is a word that aroused a good deal of mistrust when it was first used in 1751. As one commentator said:

> There is a word very much in vogue with the people of taste and fashion, which, though it has not even the 'penumbra' of a meaning, yet makes up the sum total of the wit, sense and judgement of the aforesaid people of taste and fashion! I will venture to affirm that it is neither an English word, nor a derivative from any other language. It is indeed a blackguard sound, made use of by most people of distinction. It is a fine make-weight in conversation, and some great men deceive themselves so egregiously as to think they mean something by it.

It is not, I hasten to assure you, an Irish word—in fact it has no known etymon and one might think the absence of any previous history and the furore that attended its early use combine to make it unsuitable for use as a defining tool. But it does introduce the element of fraud and dishonesty that is absent in the other two. Like **bother** it displays its popularity in its derivative forms, notably **humbuggery**, the practice of **humbugging**, and **humbug-**

gability, presumably the talent required for this, and nothing to do with the present application of **humbug** to a boiled lolly. How are the mighty fallen! The word is no longer used with any passion and the boiled lolly would appear to have won. Were it not for one thing. In the far north of Queensland, on the Daintree River, there is a Humbug Landing and a Humbug Reach. I have yet to find out when the Daintree was charted, and by whom, and I wonder what 'people of taste and fashion' they were, because my good friend, David Blair, has drawn on the fledgling resources of the Placenames project to reveal that there are thirty-eight Humbug Reaches in NSW and Queensland alone.

There are two other words that might be considered here: **hubbub** and **hullabaloo**. These are both Irish in origin, and both are representations of 'the confused noise of a multitude shouting or yelling, esp(ecially) the confused shouting of a battle cry or "hue and cry" of wild or savage races' (**hubbub** 1555). The form of the word remained unsettled into the twentieth century, but the identity of the 'wild or savage races' was never in doubt, the Irish frequently being cited as the exemplar, and the confusion and noise of a crowd shouting being sometimes described as an **Irish hubbub**.

But to come back to the Irish immigrants to Australia and to envisage a shanty where the hubbub suggests a shivoo is under way. A **shivoo** is a party or spree, of the sort that a gang of shearers indulges in, when, chequed up as they say, it hits town. No-one takes seriously the suggestion that it is originally French, being a transliteration of **chez vous**. This, though superficially attractive, is unlikely, but not as unlikely as the etymology preferred by those who derive it from (French again) **charivari**, meaning a musical miscellany of sorts, originally a word for a quite sophisticated piece of music, not at all like a hullabaloo, let alone a hubbub. **Shebeen**, on the other hand, though no etymon has been found, is as Irish as **colleen**. It means the same as **shanty**, though it is probably somewhat more seedy in its application. It comes into its own in South Africa where a **shebeen** proprietor is known as a **shebeener**. **Colleen**, incidentally, is matched by **squireen**, a neutral word for an Irish country gentleman and by **buckeen**, defined, without a hint of prejudice, as a younger son of a member of the lesser aristocracy, having no profession, but still 'aping' the habits of the wealthier classes.

The –*een* suffix, signifying a diminutive, also occurs with some frequency in the colonies, particularly as **dudeen**, a small clay pipe much favoured by Irish settlers and, like the **shillelagh**, tucked under the arm, a sure marker of a person's Irishness. An equally certain marker would be the reputation the Irish drinker enjoys for drinking and for his good taste in preferring Irish whiskey. This assumes critical importance in the case of **ball**, an apparently obsolete colloquial word for a short, sharp, shot of spirits, which is copiously documented in Australian usage, and provides the link with the otherwise independently developed modern Irish **ball of malt**, and being further substantiated by US **highball**.

And so to the entry for **bull** in *Australian National Dictionary*. I like to think of the entry for **bull** as one of the small triumphs of modern historical lexicography. Less fortunate settlers, and Aborigines, are less the subject of legend and more a comment on human desperation and ingenuity. The poor man's tipple was not a **ball** but **bull**, a liquid formed by rinsing a cask that had contained a spirituous liquor and hoping that the resultant drink would have more than a taste of the cask's previous contents. The *OED* records **bull** from 1830 as an item of 'general' English (in the sense of being shared by both the colloquial and the literary registers), which rather argues against its being Australian. Those who encountered it nonetheless toyed with the idea of its being of Aboriginal origin, and the spellings, which reflect the unfamiliarity of the word and the uncertainty of its users, have been unusually various, ranging from **baal** and **bal**, **beal,** and **biyal**, through **bilim** and **bool**, to **ball** and **bull**.

This brings us full circle on this little roundup of familiar Irish words in use in Australia, which might have been subtitled 'A load of bull'. Irish pubs like Kitty O'Shea's in Paddington, and self-styled Irish bars in Irish pubs like the Irish bar in Siobhan's Cock'n'Bull at Bondi Junction provide the milieu in which Irish culture continues to influence Australian multi-culture.

But the one great contribution was made in the nineteenth century and is now an essential part of the Australian fabric. **Irish Bull** is one of the most pervasive colloquial Irish expressions still in use and, in common with **Irish joke**, embraces both the view of those who are critical of the Irish and the ironical self-appraisal of the Irish themselves. It is often erroneously linked with the papal bull, which has a different etymology (it comes from Latin **bulla**, a locket or seal), or is linked with an eponymous Irish lawyer, one Obadiah Bull, but the **bull** that it is most likely to come from is the **bull** that has hidden on the periphery of the spoken language, probably for centuries, and which emerges as **bullshit**, or **bulldust**, or just plain, ordinary, unadulterated **bull**. **Cock** and **bull** exist both independently and together in the sense of a fable or far-fetched story, and what we are witnessing here is the emergence of **bull** from the sheltered world of fable into the ruder, cruder world of war. I leave the last word to Laurence Sterne, who himself yields the place of honour to the last words of his novel *Tristram Shandy*, 'Lord!' said my mother, 'what is all this story about?' 'A Cock and a Bull,' said Yorick—'and one of the best of its kind, I ever heard.'

OZWORDS COMPETITIONS

Your task was to choose one (or some or all) of the Aussie words and phrases below and provide an outrageously false (but witty) etymology or explanation of its origin: **shiralee**, **ridgy-didge**, **fossick**, **cunjevoi** (a sea-squirt), **cully** (a mate, pal), **not worth a crumpet**, **toe-ragger**, **illywhacker** (a small-time confidence trickster), **jackeroo**. There were some excellent entries. Among the best (alphabetical by author) were:

Cully: mate, friend, esp. as a form of address. Corruption of Kylie (girl's name), originally a 'neighbour'; influenced by traditional Australian folk belief that *good neighbours* become *good friends*. [**Gilbert Case**, Qld]

Jackeroo: From the French name: Jacques E. Roux, also anglicised to 'Jackie Roo'. The French frigate *Oo La La* under Capt. M. Chevalier called at Botany Bay in 1788 in order to restock and re-water, but was turned away by the English. Under cover of night, Capt. Chevalier returned to the isolated beach and dispatched a young marine, named Jacques E. Roux, to steal a horse, round up four or five head of

cattle, and deliver the beasts to the shore. Meanwhile the crew obtained fresh water from a spring. The young marine was so successful that five cows and a horse were soon delivered to the beach, butchered, taken on-board, and the *Oo La La* was well over the horizon by dawn. To round up cattle, while on horseback, has since been known as 'to do a Jackie Roo', and the rider called a Jackeroo. [**Peter Cox**, Vic]

Not worth a crumpet: this phrase was an importation from Northumberland during the nineteenth century and has over the years been slightly altered in much the same way as the game 'Chinese Whispers' alters phrases with repeated usage when the original is lost or not properly heard/understood. Geordies frequently call each other and everyone else 'pet'. So the original phrase was, simply, 'not worth a crumb, pet' and was a frequently used phrase by Geordie immigrants to convey anything that was worthless. [**Judy Ferguson**, SA]

Jackeroo: Billy Bong was a part-Chinese boundary-rider in western New South Wales who became a famous roo-shooter. He was said to have killed more kangaroos than anyone or anything else. But after twenty years in which he is estimated to have shot nine and a half million kangaroos he announced his decision to become an illywhacker. His fellow shooters said, 'Come off it, Billy. You're the most successful roo-shooter in the whole country. Why give it away?' And Billy replied, 'I'm just jack o' roos, aren't youse?' This is the origin of what was later misspelt and singularised as jackeroo, originally meaning any disgruntled roo-shooter. [**David Mercer**, SA]

Ridgy-didge: Real or genuine. Seems to have originated in South Australia in the Barossa Valley, probably in the late 1800s among the German settlers of that area. The earliest reference is found in *Fritz von Scrub*, Wilhelm Wagner (1869): 'Did you see really all dose rabbits disappear over dat ridge?' the grandfather asked. 'Sure', Willy said. 'Over de ridge dey went, **ridgy-didge**.' [**Colin Stiller**, Qld]

Fossick: When the Roman Empire was the dominant civilisation, one of the good things the Romans achieved was building serviceable roads, including a ditch or 'fosse' on each side to drain water and keep it mud-free. Peasant workers were used to do the digging and among the miseries with which they had to deal was a little parasitic mite that thrived in the damp conditions. Before they left for home each night, they had to search one

another's clothes, hair, etc. for the fosse tick so they wouldn't also infest their homes and families. This was called 'fosse-ticking'. In time, searching for anything evolved into 'fossicking'.
[**Heather Vockenson**, Qld]

Second Prize (books to the value of $50 from the OUP catalogue): **David Tribe** of Neutral Bay, NSW, for the following: **Jackeroo**: trainee station hand. A word derived from *jack* (truncated rhyming slang for *pox* via jack-in-the-box) and *roo* (abbreviation of kangaroo). It first appeared in 1890 when New Zealand guest workers in the Australian Outback, finding Australian sheep less accommodating than Canterbury lambs, turned their attention to kangaroos.

First Prize (books to the value of $100 from the OUP catalogue): **Judy Ferguson** of Gawler, SA, for the following: **Cunjevoi**: This word originated as a French phrase —*Quand je vois*—which means 'When I see…' and these were the first three words of a very famous phrase written by the early French explorer Baudin when he beheld the amazing southern Australian sea squirt. He wrote in his journal (16 Nov. 1824)—'When I see the marvels of the deep in the great southern sea' ('*Quand je vois les merveilles du fond de la grande mer sud*'). He would often repeat this phrase in the hearing of his English counterpart Matthew Flinders when they met in Encounter Bay, SA. Flinders' sailors, unfamiliar with French, began calling the sea squirt 'cunjevoi' in imitation of the French captain's phrase. They also discovered it made very good bait!

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 24

Australian English has often used personal names for rhyming slang—for example, the tennis player Adrian Quist was put into service as rhyming slang for 'pissed', the phrase 'to do a Harold Holt' is rhyming slang for 'to do a bolt', a cricketer provides the phrase 'your Wally Grout' meaning 'Your shout at the bar', and the entertainer Barry Crocker is rhyming slang for 'shocker'. Your task is to take the name of any prominent Australian politician, sportsperson, entertainer, ecclesiastic, etc., and provide a witty example of rhyming slang derived from that name.

ENTRIES CLOSE 31 AUGUST 2005.

Entries sent by email should also contain a snail mail address. All entries should be sent to the editor.