OZWORDS

EDITORIAL

2008 is an important anniversary year for Oxford University Press and for the Australian National Dictionary Centre. 2008 is the 100th anniversary of OUP in Australia, and it is the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the *Australian National Dictionary* and of the establishing of the Australian National Dictionary Centre. Some of the events that will mark these anniversaries are set out in **From the Centre** on p. 5, including the publication of Dr Bruce Moore's book *Speaking Our Language: The Story of Australian English.*

There have been many famous (and in one case, infamous) Australian dictionaries and dictionary-makers (lexicographers, to use the technical term). In the nineteenth century these include: a dictionary compiled in 1812 by the convict James Hardy Vaux; the anonymous *Sydney Slang Dictionary* of 1882, of which there are only two surviving copies (described as 'revised' editions, although we have no copies of any earlier edition); the German Karl Lentzner's entirely plagiarised *Colonial English* of 1891; Cornelius Crowe's *Australian Slang Dictionary* of 1895; the 'jewel in the crown', E.E. Morris's *Austral English* of 1898; and Joshua Lake's 1898 *Australasian Supplement to Webster's International Dictionary.* In the first of a series of articles on these dictionaries and their editors, Mark Gwynn examines James Hardy Vaux's *A New and Comprehensive Vocabulary of the Flash Language.*

Frederick Ludowyk

Frederick Ludowyk
Editor, *Ozwords*

THE FUTURE OF REGIONAL ENGLISHES
BRUCE MOORE

In the final chapter of my forthcoming book, *Speaking Our Language: The Story of Australian English*, I address the question of the future of Australian English. This question is inevitably part of a wider question about the survival of regional Englishes worldwide. *The Australian National Dictionary: A Dictionary of Australianisms on Historical Principles* was published in 1988, Australia's bicentennial year. There soon followed other regional dictionaries: *A Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles* (1996), *The Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (1996), *The Dictionary of New Zealand English* (1997), *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* (1998). Ironically, just as these dictionaries, which proclaimed and celebrated the significance of regional varieties of English, were being published, there were developing two closely related creatures that many felt would devour these regional Englishes—Global English and the Internet.

English is the language of international business, it is almost the sole language of international relations, it is the language of international popular culture, and it is the language of computing and the Internet. This political and cultural reality demands that there should exist a form of English that can operate in all these contexts without misunderstandings—and hence the development of Global English. This Global English is inevitably greatly influenced by American English due to the political and economic power of the United States, but we can envision it in the future as a language largely unmarked for region. Of course, language is never entirely politically or culturally neutral, but to the extent that some kind of neutrality is possible, Global English will be a language that can speak neutrally across national boundaries. Given the importance of this Global English, many people feared that it would overtake and make irrelevant regional Englishes such as Australian English, New Zealand English, Caribbean English, Canadian English, and so on.

This does not seem to be happening— in addition to speaking Global English in an international context, most English speakers are continuing to use a form of regional English in their own countries. Indeed, while English is now the global language, with about one quarter of the world's population competent in it, an expansion of the regional varieties of English is taking place. This expansion is most understandable if we look at one of the influential models of the state of world Englishes, the model proposed by the linguist Braj B. Kachru. Kachru described his model as the 'three concentric circles of English'. The innermost circle is made up of those countries in which English is the primary language: the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The second circle (immediately outside the innermost circle) is made up of those post-colonial countries in which English is an important second language or in which it plays a significant institutional role (for example, in education, law, government, etc.). This second circle includes such countries as Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Zambia. The third (and outermost) circle, called 'the expanding circle', is made up of those countries in which the importance of English as the international language is recognised, and in which English is learned as a foreign language. This very large 'expanding circle' includes such countries as China, Egypt, Greece, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and, as the name of this group suggests, an increasing number of countries that recognise the international importance of English.

The 'expanding circle', it seems, will soon embrace all the countries of the world. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the English they will speak in their own countries would simply be a form of Global English. Towards the end of the twentieth century there appeared terms such as *Singlish* (Singapore English), *Japlish* (Japanese English), and *Chinglish* (Chinese English) to describe local forms of English that had been modified under the influence of local languages. In a fascinating analysis in *The Oxford History of English* (ed. L. Mugglestone, 2006), David Crystal argues that such forms of English will proliferate; indeed, that they will develop in all countries:

> Just as South African English displays large numbers of words borrowed from Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu, and other local languages ... and a distinctive range of pronunciations which reflect the syllable-timed pattern of those languages (the name *South Africa*, for example, being pronounced by many speakers as four equally stressed

syllables)—so we must expect to find an evolving linguistic distinctiveness in China, Egypt, Sweden, and the other 120 or so countries where English has status only as a 'foreign language'.

Because these countries have their own unique cultural values and interests, it is inevitable that they will need to include in their version of English items of vocabulary that are not needed in any other English. There will be elements of pronunciation, and perhaps even of grammar, that will pass over from the first language to the second. What we have, therefore, is a massive increase in local dialects of English.

Just as the expansion of dialects has been a surprise, there has been a similar surprise regarding the effects of the Internet. Some had predicted that the Internet would lead to a reduction and levelling of voices under the linguistic and cultural power of the United States. Instead, there has been a *proliferation* of voices. First, there was the development of the language that is called Netspeak, used especially in real-time chatrooms and newsgroups, with its elaborate system of abbreviations and symbols for fast communication. Variations of this language are used in a variety of forms of electronic communication, especially in text messaging. Secondly, for the first time since the fifteenth century and the invention of line-type printing, there has been widespread publication of the printed word unmediated by the normative processes of editing. The Internet is replete with documents demonstrating how people actually write, and the range is quite extraordinary—an examination of readers' responses to opinion pieces in online newspapers, for example, shows how variable are spelling and pronunciation. Thirdly, there has never been a time when such a range and number of people have been able to publish their work and make it available to a similar range and number of people. This is especially true of teenagers, who surely have never written so often and so much! Fourthly, while much of the material on the Web is in English, it is also strongly multilingual, and in the future the Web may well provide a haven for those native languages that many have felt to be under threat from it.

In the previous paragraph I drew attention to a link between the invention of printing in the fifteenth century and the invention of the Internet at the end of the twentieth century. The invention of printing took western culture from manuscript to book. The invention of the Internet (and the whole world of electronic communication and publishing that is part of it) is taking global culture from the book into a world

that is as yet seen but 'through a glass, darkly'. When books were first produced, the pages of the first printed books looked very much like the pages of manuscripts. That is understandable, since it was the initial task of the printer to prove that books were at once like manuscripts (the competition), and better than manuscripts. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are at a comparable point of transition, as we move now from the *book* to the *electronic book*, the *e-book*, or whatever it will be called in the future. We are truly at a transitional point—*e-books* still look like *books*, just as books for some time looked like manuscripts. It will be interesting to see what happens, but as soon as someone invents an electronic book with the feel and flexibility of an actual book, that may well be the end of the conventional book.

With these significant transitional points (manuscript to printing, book to e-book), it is instructive to examine what happened to the English language with the first revolution—the invention of printing. After the Norman Conquest in 1066, in England the French language became the official language of the court, and (whenever Latin was not used, as it was in formal contexts) French became the language of religion and of the law. Yet English continued to flourish as the language of the people, and it continued to flourish in a great variety of dialects. English reasserted itself in the fourteenth century as the language of religion and the law except in formal contexts (and slightly later as the major language of the court), and a number of famous literary texts appeared, written in English. But 'English', at that stage, was not just one thing—it was a multitude of dialects, with no one dialect being dominant. The best known literary work of the period is of course Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (written about 1387). Equally famous in its time, was William Langland's long allegorical Christian poem *Piers Plowman*, appearing in the 1360s. Langland was a cleric in minor orders, born in the Malvern area of Worcestershire, but living and writing in London, and his language is a mixture of dialects including elements from the Midlands, the West, and the South of England. The London dialect of Chaucer is the origin of standard modern English, and although Chaucer's language is very difficult for a modern audience, most students are able to make a fist of it (at least they *were* able to do so in the days when students came out of an English course with at least *some* knowledge of literary works from the medieval to the modern period!). The language of Langland is much more difficult for a modern reader because modern English is not its direct descendant.

In the north of England, at about the same time, there was another poet known to us only as the Gawain-poet, who wrote a number of poems in the dialect of the North-West Midlands, probably from the Lancashire area. His most famous poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, tells how a mysterious green knight (he is coloured green, and rides a green horse) disturbs the festivities at King Arthur's court by demanding a 'game': he will allow someone to cut off his head if he is given the chance to do the same to the decapitator in twelve months time. Gawain takes up the challenge, and after the decapitation the Green Knight picks up his head and tells Gawain to meet him in twelve months time at the Green Chapel. The rest of the poem narrates Gawain's complex quest and testing before his confrontation with the Green Knight. In its original dialect, this poem is barely comprehensible to a modern audience, although it is contemporary with Chaucer.

These texts remind us of some salient truths about the history of English. In the fourteenth century there was not just *one* English. There were numerous Englishes represented by separate dialects. These dialects were associated with particular areas, and they produced their own literary texts. Regional identity was more important than national ('English') identity. A number of writers comment on this regional diversity. Chaucer, at the end of his poem *Troilus and Criseyde*, expresses his worry that the poem might be miscopied because 'there is so gret diversite / In English and in writing of oure tonge'. In the Preface to a translation of a French version of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which the first English printer, William Caxton, published in 1490, Caxton addressed this issue of the diversity of English. He tells the story of how some merchants, travelling in a ship down the Thames, were delayed by a lack of wind, and went ashore at a place in Kent to get refreshments:

And one of theym named Sheffelde, a mercer, cam in-to an hows and axed for mete; and specially he axyd after eggys. And the goode wyf answered, that she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no frenshe, but wolde have had eggys, and she understode hym not. And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde have eyren. Then the good wyf sayd that she understood hym wel. Loo, what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges or eyren? Certaynly it is harde to playse every man by cause of dyversite & chaunge of langage.

This passage is fairly understandable by a modern reader. Spelling variation causes a few minor difficulties: *theym* for 'them', *cam* for 'came', *hows* for 'house', *axyd* for 'asked', *speke* for 'speak', *marchaunt* for 'merchant, *coude* for 'could', *wolde* for 'would', *hym* for 'him', and so on. More tricky is the fact that *wyf* (our 'wife') has its older meaning of 'woman' (as in Chaucer's 'wife of Bath'), and that *mete* (our 'meat') has its older general sense of 'food' (as in 'meat and drink' or 'sweetmeats'). The major linguistic misunderstanding arises from the two different words for that item regularly supplied by chooks. In English the word for this item was *ey* or *eyer*, and its plural was *eyren* (with the -en plural ending that we have also in *oxen* and *children*). In the north of England, however, where Viking influence had been strongest, the Norse form of the word, i.e. *egg*, had taken over, with its regular plural *egges*. The merchant, Sheffield, is obviously from the north of England, and he calls these articles *eggs*, whereas the Kentish woman uses the southern form *eyren*. She wrongly thinks that the northern merchant must be speaking French, much to his annoyance!

This passage from Caxton shows that the northern and southern dialect forms were still battling against one another at the end of the fifteenth century, but, ironically, the passage indicates that we are coming to an end of diversity. Caxton asks whether we should say *eggs* or *eyren*, and English soon decides that it will be *eggs*.

It was certainly printing that played the largest part in the standardising of English. Books were printed for an audience that was much larger than the audience reached by manuscripts, and if the printing of books was to be financially viable there had to develop a standard form of English. This occurred, and the standard form of English was based on the most politically and economically influential dialect—the dialect centred in London.

Dialects continued to be spoken, but they quickly lost their regional and literary prestige. If a writer wanted to establish a literary career, there was little point in writing poems or plays in the dialect of Lancashire, or Yorkshire, or Kent, or Somerset. It was necessary to write in the language of London.

One of the results of printing, therefore, was that the linguistic and dialectal diversity of English shrank. One of the results of the new print revolution of our modern times (electronic communication and the Internet) is that English's linguistic and dialectal diversity is expanding. As Australian English has already done, the new regional dialects of English will no doubt develop their own literary traditions, and the form of English that the owners of these dialects write and speak will become an essential part of expressing their regional identities. In this age of electronic communication and the Internet (as David Crystal argues in the article mentioned earlier), regional dialects are starting to assume the kind of importance that they did in Britain before the first print revolution—the invention of the printing press.
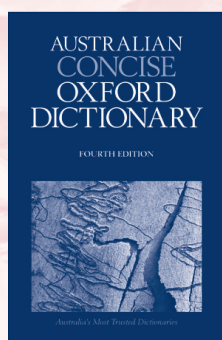
In this environment we can have every confidence that Australian English will continue to flourish.

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.

GEELONG IS OR GEELONG ARE?

As a visitor to Australia from Liverpool (England), I find sentences such as 'Geelong is likely to win the trophy' very strange. I would instinctively say 'Geelong are likely to win the trophy' or 'Liverpool are likely to win the trophy'.

John W., Vic.

The English linguist Mark Newbrook, who taught in Australia for a number of years, has suggested that this use of singular verbs with names of sporting clubs and teams is a feature of Australian English (though shared to some extent with American English). He points out, for example, that the sentence 'Collingwood has won its last three games' is standard in Australian English, but non-standard in British English. Conversely, the British 'Collingwood have won their last three games' would sound odd to some Australians. It would not be accurate, however, to say that the sentence 'Collingwood have won their last three games' is in any way non-standard in Australian English. A Web search showed that in Australian English the percentages were about 50–50 for the two constructions. **ED.**

WADING INTO WEIGHING INTO

I heard the following on the ABC AM program, and checked the quotation for accuracy on the transcript of the program available on the Web. On 11 August 2007: 'America's central bank waded into the money markets three times overnight, injecting more than $40 billion into the system in the hope of stabilising the jittery markets.' Similarly, on 16 February 2008 in the *Newcastle Herald* I read: 'New federal member for Charlton Greg Combet has waded into the NSW electricity privatisation debate.' In both cases I would have expected 'weighed into' rather than 'waded into'. Which is correct?

L. Brooks, NSW

This one is not as clear-cut as it might at first appear. The verb *weigh in* ('He weighed in with a few choice epithets') or *weigh into* ('He weighed into his opponent with a few choice epithets') is probably a figurative use of the horse-racing sense (where a jockey has his weight checked on the scales) or the boxing sense (where a boxer similarly has his weight checked before a fight). In its figurative use, *weigh in(to)* means (1) 'to bring one's weight or influence to bear; to make a forceful contribution to a discussion', and less commonly (2) 'to attack physically or verbally'. The first sense fits your two quotations. To confuse matters, the verb *wade into* has very similar senses, again figurative transfers, this time from the very literal sense of walking through water with some effort: 'to intervene in something or attack someone vigorously or forcefully'. In the form *wade into* it means 'to make a vigorous attack or intervention'. While it seems that the speakers in your quotations may be confusing *waded into* with *weighed into*, it seems that this confusion is one that is built into the language itself. **ED.**

ARTHUR AND MARTHA KEEP COMING UP

I have always used the phrase 'I don't know whether I'm Arthur or Martha' to mean something like 'I don't know whether I'm coming or going'. When I recently used it in front of my grandchildren, they looked at me in bafflement. Is this another phrase that is on the way out?

Neil Moore, WA

You are, in fact, using an authentically Australian idiom that is very much alive. It first appeared in print in Darcy Niland's 1957 novel *Call Me When the Cross Turns Over:* 'Don't try the Barcoo spews. A cow of a thing. Get a feed into you, and then you want to chuck it up again. You chuck it up and you're right as pie till you eat again. And so it goes on. You don't know whether you're Arthur or Martha.' As you suggest, the phrase means 'to be in a state of confusion'. Occasionally in the past the phrase was made icily literal: '"Probably freeze your knackers off", said Bill sceptically. 'I only tried swimming onceover here and didn't know if I was Arthur or Martha when I came out'" (J. Beede, *They Hosed Them Out*, 1965). More recently, the phrase has been used to refer to gender confusion: 'Male barramundi in far north Queensland have trouble making out whether they're Arthur or Martha... Changing sex is perfectly natural for Barra' (*Australian*, 15 May 2002). In spite of your fear that the idiom is obsolescent, the fact is that it is still widely in use—although it is difficult to judge the age range of users (your grandchildren, sadly, may be beyond the range; it is good that you are there to energise them into using the idiom). One of our recent pieces of evidence is this from the *Age* (Melbourne) on 25 January 2008: 'Would the real Wayne Swan please stand up? The Treasurer's statement—"We are well placed to ride out any turbulence happening in America"—was completely contradicted by his astonishing statement of a few days later—"We are heading for financial peril"... May I suggest that Mr Swan doesn't know if he is Arthur or Martha?' **ED.**

ROUTES SNOUTED

I was listening to television news recently where the reporter spoke of new airline routes opening up between Australia and the United States, and he distinctly pronounced *routes* to rhyme with *snouts*. I always thought that this pronunciation was an Americanism. Is it?

M. Wickremasinghe (via email)

The standard pronunciation of *route* in Australian and British English rhymes with *root*, although the *Oxford English Dictionary* points out that the *snout* pronunciation appears in early nineteenth century rhymes in England, and it is still retained in some military uses. In the United States and Canada, both the *root* and *snout* pronunciations are used. If I remember the song that accompanied the 1960s television series *Route 66* correctly (and I confess that my memory is less than adequate these days), the *root* pronunciation was used in that American series. The pronunciation question has become more complex with the development of computing senses. In computing terminology, a *router* is 'a device that forwards data packets to the appropriate parts of a network'. This *router* derives from *route* in the verbal sense 'send by a particular route', and is unrelated to *router* (rhyming with *outer*) in the sense 'a type of plane (tool) with two handles' (this latter *router* being related ultimately to the verb root, meaning '(of an animal, such as a pig) turn up the ground with the snout etc. in search of food'. Australian English (following American English) has come to pronounce the computing *router* to rhyme with *outer*, and therefore it has the same pronunciation as the 'plane with two handles', whereas British English continues to say *rooter* for the computing sense. **ED.**

GLOBAL COFFEE PLUNGING

Anecdotal evidence seems to indicate that what Australians call a *coffee plunger* is known as a *cafetière* in the United Kingdom and a *French press* in the United States. If this is true, what does it tell us about the globalisation of English?

Janet Mackenzie (via email)

It is true that there is wide variety in the name of this essential item. We are still doing our research to determine if *coffee plunger* is mainly Australian, although initial work suggests that it is used in at least some other countries. On 'globalisation', see the lead article by Dr Bruce Moore. **ED.**

OUP 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Oxford University Press Australia officially turns 100 in April this year and to celebrate this auspicious occasion OUP Australia will be launching a special program of centenary events and publications throughout the course of the year.

Oxford University Press is one of the oldest publishing enterprises in the world, as well as one of the largest. It is a department of the University of Oxford, although it is not subsidised by that University. It is not a company: it pays no dividend and it has no shareholders. It is committed to the dissemination of knowledge: all its surplus is devoted to publishing books that further scholarship and education, and to sustaining the research on which some of these books are based.

Since its establishment in 1908, OUP in Australia has functioned as a microcosm of the Press's worldwide organisation. As does OUP internationally, OUP Australia propagates the liberal objective of the University: to further education and learning. Like every other branch, it does so in a fashion that reflects the specific needs of the country it serves. Today Oxford University Press Australia has an unrivalled reputation for publishing dictionaries and reference works of excellence and authority, as well as being one of the foremost publishers of textbooks for primary, secondary, and higher education students.

FREE ONLINE DICTIONARY
A GIFT TO THE NATION

In addition to being the 100th anniversary of OUP publishing in Australia, 2008 is also the twentieth anniversary of publication of the *Australian National Dictionary* and of the establishment of the Australian National Dictionary Centre (jointly funded by the Australian National University and Oxford University Press Australia). In honour of these anniversaries, Oxford University Press Australia is proud to announce the launch of a new national language resource: the *Australian National Dictionary Online*.

Launching in mid-2008, this free online resource will be available via the new OUPA website and brings the wealth of information contained in the *Australian National Dictionary* within reach of a wide Australian and international audience. The *Australian National Dictionary* was the product of the fullest and most detailed research ever undertaken into the history of the Australian English vocabulary. It contains over 10,000 Australian words and meanings, illustrated by more that 60,000 quotations from printed material, including books, diaries, newspapers, and magazines.

SPEAKING OUR LANGUAGE

A second important anniversary event will be the launch in October of my new book *Speaking Our Language: The Story of Australian English.* The sub-title of this book, *The Story of Australian English,* derives

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.

in part from the chronological story that the book traces: the story begins with Joseph Banks and Captain James Cook collecting indigenous words such as *kangaroo* and *quoll* in northern Queensland in 1770, and it continues from there right up to the present day when Australian English is firmly established as the natural and national language of Australia. It is a 'story' in another sense as well: the story of the development of Australian English is inextricably intertwined with the stories of Australian history and culture, and of the development of Australian identity. In addition to a detailed study of Australian vocabulary, the book explains how the Australian accent was formed in the early days of the convict colony, how and why the accent added 'cultivated' and 'broad' varieties of pronunciation from the end of the nineteenth century, and how and why these 'broad' and 'cultivated' varieties are now in decline.

WORD OF THE YEAR

The naming of a 'Word of the Year' is a relatively recent phenomenon, going back to the early 1990s, when the American Dialect Society began to announce its annual choice. The words chosen by the American Dialect Society often have international significance or recognition: **information superhighway** (1993), **millennium bug** (1997), **weapon of mass destruction** (2002), **metrosexual** (2003). Some of their choices inevitably have an American bias, since a word that achieves prominence in one country does not necessarily do so in others—thus the Dialect Society's choice of **soccer mum** (1996), **chad** (2000) 'a piece of waste material removed from card or tape by punching' (a word that assumed some notoriety in the presidential election), and **truthiness** (2005). At times the choice has seemed a bit eccentric, as when the verb **pluto** was chosen in 2006 in the sense 'to demote or devalue someone or something, as happened to the former planet Pluto when the General Assembly of the

International Astronomical Union decided Pluto no longer met its definition of a planet'.

By 2007 there were other organisations joining the 'Word of the Year' game. Oxford University Press in the United States was first cab off the rank for the 2007 Word of the Year with **locavore**, a blend of **local** and the **-vore** element in words such as **carnivore**, **herbivore**, and so on, and meaning 'a person who buys and eats food grown in the local area'. The Merriam-Webster dictionary group chose **w00t** (note that the 'double o' is represented by 'double zero'), a term originally from online gambling, an exclamation functioning as an expression of joy and excitement. The Macquarie Dictionary group in Australia chose **pod slurping** 'the downloading of large quantities of data to an MP3 player or memory stick from a computer'. At the Dictionary Centre we started to wonder: where have we been in 2007? Had our collective lexicographical heads at the Centre been buried in the sand? The American Dialect Society restored some sense of credibility to the 'Word of the Year' exercise with their choice of **subprime**, used as an adjective 'to describe a risky or less than ideal loan, mortgage, or investment'. This was certainly closer to the mark.

In 2006 the Australian National Dictionary Centre chose the verb and noun **podcast** as its word of the year, acknowledging the fact that this international word had spread with extraordinary speed and ubiquity. For 2007, **subprime** was on our list of favourites, but in Australia there was one word that gathered to itself immense local significance—**me-tooism**. This word first appeared in the United States in 1949, and the political meaning was strongly to the fore: 'The practice of adopting or imitating a policy successfully or popularly proposed by a rival person or party; the practice of following a popular trend.'

Although **me-tooism** is not an exclusively Australian word, it certainly became a political buzzword in Australia in the election environment of 2007, and it was clearly used much more intensively in Australia than in any other country. In Australia, it was closely followed by **mortgage stress**, a term that has become even more common in 2008. **Me-tooism**, however, is our 2007 Australian Word of the Year.

NEW EDITION

G.A. Wilkes's dictionary of Australian colloquialisms, first published in 1978, will appear in a fifth edition in May (published by Oxford University Press Australia) under the new title: *Stunned Mullets & Two-pot Screamers.* There are over 300 new entries, and many of the previous entries have been updated. We look forward to seeing the new edition of this important book.

BRUCE MOORE

DIRECTOR

James Hardy Vaux

Pioneer Australian Lexicographer

Mark Gwynn

James Hardy Vaux is the only convict known to have been transported to New South Wales thrice. With this feat come the accomplishments of writing the first full length autobiography in Australia, and compiling Australia's first dictionary. While the dictionary is largely a compilation of slang terms from the London underworld, it does provide a glimpse of the language used by early Australian convicts and a window on the beginnings of Australian English.

The son of a butler and a house steward, Vaux was born in Surrey, England, in 1782. He was apprenticed to a linen draper in Liverpool and soon began a life of petty crime and infrequent employment. He was acquitted once for pilfering, and was later arrested and convicted to seven years transportation for the theft of a handkerchief. In 1801, at the age of 19, Vaux arrived in Sydney to serve his sentence. After various vicissitudes Vaux made it back to London in 1807. His stay there was quite short—by 1810 he was back in Sydney, this time his sentence being transportation for life for stealing from a jeweller's shop. In 1811 he was sentenced to twelve months hard labour for receiving stolen property, eventually ending up in Newcastle (NSW) where the more hardened and inveterate criminals were sent.

It was while serving his time in Newcastle that Vaux turned his hand to the compiling and defining of words that he knew from his criminal life in London and Australia. There was already a long tradition in England of publishing vocabulary lists, glossaries, and dictionaries of the slang used by criminals, beggars, and vagabonds. This in fact was the purpose of early dictionaries, to define obscure words or indeed to alert the reader to the existence of an underground and dangerous language. The one thing most of these dictionaries had in common was extensive borrowing from one another. However, in Vaux's *A New and Comprehensive Vocabulary of the Flash Language*, we have a glossary that is written from experience and one that shows little debt to other dictionaries for its content.

In the preface to Vaux's *Vocabulary* a note mentions that the author compiled the words 'during his solitary hours of cessation from hard labour; and the Commandant was accordingly presented by the Author with the first copy of his production'. The date of the preface is 5 July 1812, and the addressee is the Commandant of Newcastle, Thomas Skottowe. While it seems fairly certain that 1812 was the date on which the *Vocabulary* was completed and presented to Skottowe, it was not published until 1819, together with Vaux's *Memoirs*, and this time it was dedicated to the new Commandant at Newcastle, Thomas Thompson. Vaux's original purpose for writing the *Vocabulary* was given in his preface to Skottowe: 'I trust the Vocabulary will afford you some amusement from its novelty; and that from the correctness of its definitions, you may occasionally find it useful in your magisterial capacity.' Vaux claimed that his dictionary would be a tool for legal officers in the Colony to translate the unfamiliar words of the convict population. As early as 1793 Watkin Tench had written:

> In some of our early courts of justice, an interpreter was frequently necessary to translate the deposition of the witness, and the defence of the prisoner. This language has many dialects. The sly dexterity of the pickpocket; the brutal ferocity of the footpad; the more elevated career of the highwayman; and the deadly purpose of the midnight ruffian, is each strictly appropriate in the terms which distinguish and characterize it.

Vaux hoped that by writing the *Vocabulary* he could assist his overseer in his legal duties while at the same time earning for himself some kind of reward or job preferment.

Vaux's *Vocabulary* has some 700 words. It provides definitions ranging from a single word to a whole paragraph, and includes cross-references to show synonyms and to further elucidate the meaning of a word. The *Vocabulary* is basically a dictionary of London underground slang. It has words common to many such dictionaries of the time, including: *body-snatcher* 'a stealer of dead bodies from churchyards'; *charley* 'a watchman'; *pall* 'a partner, companion, associate, or accomplice'; *stick* 'a pistol'; and the verb *crib* 'to die'. There are numerous words for money and its denominations, including *bean, bender, bob, coach-wheel, crook, duce, rag, quid,* and *steven*. There are many terms concerned with different aspects of the criminal life, including terms for thieves, prostitutes, tools of the trade, punishments, and gambling. Many of these terms were common in both London and Australia. The word *plant* in the sense 'to hide or conceal any person or thing' had already been noted by Governor Hunter in 1793 when he commented on the theft of potatoes: 'the potatoes were (in the cant phrase) *all planted* [that is] buried in the ground, so as to be taken out as they were wanted'.

What does Vaux's *Vocabulary* tell us about Australian English? The simple answer is that Vaux's *Vocabulary* demonstrates that the early Australian Colony imported much of its language, and that some of that language was closely associated with the culture of the British 'lower classes' and of the criminal fraternity. Unlike many of his convict peers, Vaux had gained some education, but his *Memoirs* reveal that his main education was in the dark alleys and shady gambling houses of the criminal underworld that he inhabited—a world in which he would learn the language of the thief, the gambler, and the prostitute. This language was used in Australia for some time, as shown by the *Vocabulary*, but certain words began to change under the influence of a new environment in which the streets of London were now but a remote memory. While Vaux did not list any of the words that were particular to the early penal settlements, his *Vocabulary* does reveal that some of his transported criminal terms were developing meanings different to those back in England. One good example of this is Vaux's definition of *swag* : 'a bundle, parcel, or package; as a *swag* of snow [i.e. linen, clothes], a *swag* of anything signifies emphatically a great deal'. In other dictionaries of the time 'swag' was synonymous with 'booty', but Vaux is the first to indicate the more general sense, that is, a bag of personal belongings of the kind that would later be carried by the iconic Australian swagman. In the second part of his definition Vaux points to what is now a very common use of 'swag' in the sense 'great quantity', as in the sentence 'Australia won a swag of medals'. While the *Vocabulary* contains only a few words that are in transition, such as 'swag', it does show that within twenty-five years of settlement some of the 'transported' words were being modified and adapted in the new environment.

In Australian lexicography Vaux has the honour of being the first to compile and publish a dictionary. In the *Oxford English Dictionary* Vaux's work provides the first evidence for some 70 words—including the first citations for *yokel* ('a country bumpkin'), and *conk* ('the nose'). As for the man himself, by 1830 he had made it back to the Isles, this time to Ireland, and once again fell foul of the law—he was sentenced to death (commuted to seven years transportation) for passing forged bank notes. He was back in Sydney in 1831, where once again he combined clerical work with lapses into criminality, including an assault on an eight-year-old girl. After his release in 1841 Vaux disappears from the historical record, leaving his thrice published *Memoirs* and his *Vocabulary* as testimony to the life and words of an early Australian *public servant.*

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OCKER: noun, 1. (also **ock**) a rough, uncultivated, anti-culture, Australian male, often aggressively Australian in speech and manner. 2. Australian English spoken with a very 'broad' accent. *adjective*, characterised by a discernibly ockerish boorishness. *verb*, to speak or behave as an ocker. Hence various derivatives such as **ockerisation**, **ockerdom**, **ockerina**, etc.

Ocker is one of the most immediately recognisable Australian words. It evokes the image of a boorish, loud-mouthed, rough, and uncultivated Australian male (who had his heyday in the 1970s). We used to see **ockers** at the bar at airports with their pseudo-Akubras and thongs, all set for Bali. We sometimes see them at football matches and we may even hear them shout out epithets such as those described by a commentator in the 1970s: 'The Tigers were five goals down but pulling up fast. Professor Turner heard a thirtyish, beer-gutted supporter scream: "You bloody Commo, poofter, mongrel bastard." This, he said, brilliantly released racial, political, sexual and male chauvinist prejudices' (in Keith Dunstan, *Sports*, 1973, p. 232). All Australians know the term **ocker**, and since we know the stereotype we can all pick an **ocker**—that is to say, those of us who are *not* ockers can pick one. Ockers themselves, it would seem from the following quotation, are unable to recognise their stereotypical selves. The speaker is Ron Frazer, the actor who gave wonderful life to the character **Ocker** in *The Mavis Bramston Show* (see below):

> Back in the Ocker days, guys would come up to me in their thongs and shorts and with a can in their hand and say, 'Y'know, mate, I know a guy just like that Ocker character' (*Sun*, Sydney, 20 August 1975).

The **ocker** stereotype and its antithesis the **poofter** stereotype are neatly caught in a passage from the *Bulletin* in 1977:

> And you have the poofter problem. There seem so many poofs in Sydney as might cause serious concern about overcrowding to the housing authorities of Sodom. It is a statistical and biological impossibility for all these poofters to be homosexuals. They are refugees from the other tyrannical Australian myth, the ocker. Any young Australian man with a normal fondness for dressiness, an interest in the arts, a liking for a varied diet, a penchant for European travel, a preference for comfort, even a weakness for after-shave, measures himself against the ocker and instantly assumes himself queer. Once he thinks himself queer, he acts queer. (9 April)

The Noughties term for the non-ocker is of course **metrosexual**. Apropos ockers ockering off to Bali and such other places, the *Canberra Times* asked in 1979: 'After all, what self-respecting South-East Asian would wish to play host to a sloppy, noisy, ill-clad, boorish, boozy, insensitive ocker?' (9 September). On a revisit to Sri Lanka in 1976 I saw such an ocker, dressed in shorts and a shirt of highly Hawaiian hues, indignantly refusing to take off his thongs in order to enter the sacred precincts of the ancient Buddhist temple in Anuradhapura: custom demanded that he enter unshod and common civility should have ensured that he acquiesce in following custom. He had a loud voice and spoke Broad Australian of the (again stereotypical) '*Ow yer goin', mite, orright?* ilk. (He has become an *avis rara* these days, it would seem.)

As noun or adjective, **ocker** is occasionally used to designate the 'Broad Australian' variety of speech, especially ockerish English: 'Why must we suffer, increasingly in Australia, television and radio commentators, announcers and especially advertisers, who are obviously deliberately chosen for their pronunciation of our language, not in the pleasant modulated accents used by the majority of Australians, but in the most lamentable of ocker accents?' (*Age*, Melbourne, 'Green Guide', 7 April 1988).

Ocker can also be used as a verb (as I used it in the paragraph before last): 'Winter liked to ocker it up occasionally' (B. Bennett, *New Country*, 1976, p. 42). This verb gave rise to various offshoots, including the verb **to ockerise** ('to behave as an ocker') and from it the adjective **ockerised**: 'Both would writhe in their graves if they could see some of the modernized, deodorized, glamorized, Americanized, televisionized, Ockerized, social-serviceized, Aussies of the present permissive decadent era' (K. Garvey, *Tales of my Uncle Harry*, 1978, p.8). The noun **ockerisation** sums up the process of excessive Australianisation at its most gross. **Ockerdom** refers to the world of ockers collectively. **Ockerism** is 'behaviour characteristic of an ocker' or 'a distinctively ocker word or phrase': 'The new Australian boorishness is known as Ockerism, from a slob-like character called Ocker in a television series, the embodiment of oafish, blinkered self-satisfaction' (*Australian*, 5 October 1974); 'A few of 'em are adoptin' a few ockerisms that don't come natural to 'em,' says [Paul] Hogan (*Daily Mirror*, Sydney, 9 May 1975). The **ockerina** is the less often sighted 'female of the species': 'Ockerina of the week was surely the woman on the Eastern suburbs bus, studying a race guide while slurping down a meat pie' (*Sunday Telegraph*, Sydney, 27 July 1975). A relatively new formulation is **ockerist**:

> When former prime minister John Howard expressed the view that mateship should be recognised as an Australian virtue, the Labor Party's cultural queens tripped over their mardi gras tiaras in the rush to brand him as sexist, ockerist and *sooo* last century (*Sunday Telegraph*, Sydney, 27 January 2008).

What is the origin of the term **ocker**? The historian of slang, Eric Partridge, suggested that **ocker** has its origin in the term **knocker** in the sense 'a constant disparager, whose assurance matches his ignorance and prejudice'. Partridge supports this meaning with a 1975 letter he received from J.B. Gadson of New South Wales:

> This type of person, who drinks regularly with his mates at his favourite pub after a hard day's 'yakka' [i.e. work], has few but highly self-centred interests. He tends to disparage what he has not, what he cannot have. He is Master Sour-Grapes of classical vintage. He 'knocks' almost everything with an accomplished inverted snobbery. A 'knocker' is an 'ocker'.

It is doubtful, however, that the primary feature of an **ocker** was ever his constant disparaging, and the knocker hypothesis (which assumes that '**a kn**ocker' became by metathesis '**an o**cker', just as '**a n**adder' became '**an a**dder') is easily dismissed. All the evidence we have points to the fact that **ocker**, in the sense 'yobbo' or (more recently) 'bogan', did not exist in Australian English before Ron Frazer chose the name in his 1965–68 skit in the television series *The Mavis Bramston Show*. As a nickname for anyone with the personal name *Oscar* or *Horace*, the term Ocker has a history in Australian English that goes back to the early twentieth century. Ron Frazer transformed the term with his television character. Gerry Wilkes in *Exploring Australian English*, recalls the typical Frazer performance of the character:

> The talented comedian Ron Frazer appeared in a series of TV sketches from which I retain a mental picture of him leaning on a bar, speaking with a broad Australian accent, probably wearing shorts and thongs, and periodically sinking a glass of beer. As that character was called 'Ocker', *ocker* became the name of the type.

There is no doubt at all that the popularisation of the term, and its precise connotations, developed from the television show and its type.

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 29: RESULTS

Readers were challenged to compose a 'Tom Swiftie', a tautological construction in which 'the verb and/or adverb said much the same thing as the quotation preceding it' as in '"*I bought the drinks*", Tom shouted'. We added the rule that the Tom Swiftie should contain an Australian reference.

A number of entries gave us not 'Tom Swifties' but '*Untommed* Swifties'. Example: '"*Yes, I ate all the pies*", Warne scoffed'; but we accepted these since our instructions may not have been absolutely clear. We did, however, disqualify any entry that had no Australian reference.

Honourable Mentions. (Space will allow only a very small selection of these here. However, a complete list of (publishable) entries is available at <www.anu.edu.au/andc/pubs/ozwords/index.php>): 'I would never plant conifers on Kangaroo Island', Tom opines (**N. Birch**, Vic.); 'Big Chief Not Show Up for Friday Pow Wow', Tom tommed (**A. Bishop**, NSW); 'Keith and Nicole should get married', Tom proposed engagingly (**G. Bloomfield**, WA); 'I have sold my Ballarat gold mine', Tom exclaimed (**N. Bloomfield**, WA); 'I'm Premier of Queensland', Anna remarked blithely (**G. Case**, Qld); 'You're from Wagga Wagga!' Tom echoed (**C. Davis**, Vic.); 'I'm tired of Changi', said Ernest Dunlop wearily (**W.H.J. Edwards**, Vic.); 'We're happy little Vegemites!' the kiddies voiced inadvertently (**J. Ferguson**, SA); 'I can't find my Woop Woop address-book anywhere', said Tom listlessly (**L. Gregoriou**, Vic.); 'It's a toss of the coin whether Hewitt will win the match', said Tom flippantly (**C. Hartley**, Qld); 'Anzac stew isn't spicy like Indian dishes', said Tom currying flavour (**P. Jacovou**, Vic.); 'Want an insider tip on equine flu?' Tom whispered hoarsely (**P. Kelly**, WA); 'I caught the ball from Cazaly on the second attempt', Tom remarked (**J. Leverington**, WA); 'I'm a bloody good actor', Russell crowed (**D.W. Magann**, SA); 'The colt has got away!' Tom announced regretfully (**N. Moncrieff**, Vic.); 'That "little bridge" is called the "Coathanger"', Tom said archly (**P. Moncrieff**, Vic.); 'They're Grey Nomads', said Tom retiringly; (**A. Morice**, Qld); 'No, Dave, I'm saving myself till after we're married', insisted Mabel impenetrably; 'I'm unemployed but getting Centrelink welfare', said Tom dolefully (**M. Ronan**, Vic.); 'You may have the first three Gold Lotto tickets but I have the next one', he held forth triumphantly (**Mrs H. Schmidt**, Qld); 'I'm running for a seat in Canberra', said Tom breathlessly (**Mrs B. Stewart**, Vic.); 'I shot the possums', Dame Edna reported loudly (**D. Tribe**, NSW); 'Fran Bailey has just been elected', the Divisional Returning Officer recounted; 'Balmain Boys don't cry', the phrase from Neville ran (**G. Vagg**, NSW); 'Somebody stole my Holden wheels', yelled Tom tirelessly (**R. Yates**, Vic.).

Equal 2nd Prize (books to the value of $50 from the OUP catalogue): 'I've four mouths to feed—no, five', the battler recounted (**Eric Marsh**, Qld); 'I'm afraid I shot those Eastern Greys', Tom rued (**Martin Pikler**, ACT).

1st Prize (books to the value of $100 from the OUP catalogue): 'That may or may not be an herbaceous border', Edna Walling hedged (**Graham Vagg**, NSW). Edna Walling (1896-1973), for those who may not know of her, was the famous Australian landscape and garden designer. **ED**.

OZWORDS COMPETITION NO. 30

We are very grateful to reader Malcolm Ronan for (once again!) suggesting a topic for our competition. **Clerihews** is the topic. A **clerihew** is a witty, four-line verse that pokes fun at prominent (for our competition, prominent *Australian*) people. The form was invented by Edmund Clerihew Bentley who clerihewed the chemist and physicist Sir Humphry Davy as follows:

> Sir Humphry Davy
>
> Abominated gravy.
>
> He lived in the odium
>
> Of having discovered sodium.

The clerihew was gleefully taken up by many others, including G.K. Chesterton and W.H. Auden. Here is a classic example of the genre:

> Daniel Defoe
>
> Lived a long time ago.
>
> He had nothing to do, so
>
> He wrote Robinson Crusoe.5

Readers, please note the following rules: **1.** The poem must be of four lines only. **2.** The 1st line names the victim to be clerihewed. **3.** Lines 1 and 2 must rhyme with each other, and lines 3 and 4 must rhyme with each other. To which we add: **4.** The clerihewee must be lampooned wittily (wit wins as always). **5.** The victim of your clerihew must be a prominent Australian (at present or in the past). Go to it, ye clerihewers, and may the best wit win! **ED**.

ENTRIES CLOSE 1 AUGUST 2008.

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