

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DICTIONARY CENTRE

Newsletter No. 1, 1989

The Centre and its membership

It is one of life's paradoxes that, while everyone has or professes to have an interest in words, lexicography remains a lonely business. (It is also a humbling business: a quick look at the AND entry for *paradox*, in an attempt to enliven this paragraph, revealed a hitherto unnoticed typographical error!). One of the Centre's ambitions - part of the point of giving it some visibility as a Centre and associating with it a body of corresponding members - is to attempt to *breast* this paradox, on the one hand by giving members the opportunity to express views, provide information, etc., on the other by providing what will always be a small group of practising lexicographers, symbolically located in a cottage on the periphery of the ANU campus, with the moral support of colleagues both in Australia and elsewhere.

James Murray defined a *corresponding member* (of a society) as 'one residing at a distance, who corresponds with the society by letters, but has no deliberative voice in its affairs', and it is an application of this sense that is intended here. The Centre has at present some 20 members, of whom only two are full-time. Some of the others are research assistants, engaged principally in citation gathering, some are the editors of current projects (see below), and some members of the Centre's advisory committee, who do indeed have a 'deliberative voice'. There is no fixed membership: those engaged on Centre projects are, for the time of their active association, regarded as members. The Centre has some 90 corresponding members, some of whom reside at no great distance, and not all of whom are Marghanita Laskis. But they are all interested in Australian English and we hope that, by keeping them informed of the Centre's activities, we will attract their comment and advice from time to time and, perhaps more importantly, they will know that there is somewhere to send that revealing or ante-dating citation, that word that was missed or newly coined, that correction.

And not just for AND: take *twerp*

The OED2 (or OEDS) entry for *twerp* is one of those masterpieces of lexicographical legerdemain. The etymology declares an 'uncertain origin' but invites users to 'see quots. 1944, 1957' and adds the information that a 'T.W. Earp of Exeter College, Oxford, matriculated in Michaelmas Term 1911'. Its first quotation is dated 1925. Quots. 1944 and 1957 (quot. 1944 from none less than J.R.R. Tolkien) identify T.W. Earp as the original 'twerp'. But Geoffrey Dutton, one of our corresponding members, has sent in an 1874 Australian citation for *twerp* from the letters of J.E. Neild (quoted in H. Love *James Edward Neild*, 1989). Which would seem to exonerate T.W. Earp.

The Centre as a resource

The Centre has had two visitors this year: David Blair, from Macquarie University, completing a period of leave the greater part of which was spent at the Dictionary Research Centre of the University of Exeter, and Gary Simes, from the University of Sydney. Both were working on material in the citation archive but both needed ready access to a range of dictionaries of English.

The citation archive on which AND was based is in three parts: citations included in dictionary entries, citations surplus to dictionary entries, and citations for words not entered. This archive is effectively closed - new files having been established for AND2, the regional programme, and Aboriginal English - but the cards are accessible, and have been copied on to microfiche, to ease access and as a precaution against loss. The new files are card files but will be keyed in to a computerised citation data-base when the Centre acquires equipment projected for 1990. The AND archive and the new files are the Centre's principal resource but visitors also have access to a reference library containing the major dictionaries of English, regional dictionaries, major Australian reference works, and selected lexicographical journals. In particular, through the generosity of OUPA, the Centre houses a set of OED2. Visitors are welcome - and there is usually desk space - but we are happy also to provide what service we can by correspondence.

Words we missed in AND

No reviewer worth his or her salt reviews a dictionary without finding words that should have been in but aren't! AND reviewers were no exception. Edmund Campion noted that we had *Anglo-Celt* but not *skip*. Rod Usher registered a Melbourne point of view when he found *cocky*, *cod*, *coldie*, *collared sparrowhawk*, *Collins Street*, and *colonial* but not *Colliwobbles*. Les Murray thought we had sold *chocka* a bit short by not including the sense illustrated in that 'immortal phrase' - 'Sorry, Ocker, the Focker's chocka!' Arthur Delbridge took us to task for not recognising *trading bank* as an Australianism (though we got points for including 'the more obvious *Reserve Bank*'). But the prize to date goes to Evan Jones who found that we didn't have *silver beet*! What haven't you found?

The new files

The most important continuing activity of the Centre is the updating and expansion of the Centre's citation holdings. This proceeds on three fronts. The latest citations included in AND are dated 1986 and a second edition will have to include contemporary evidence of use. To provide this the Centre's bibliographer, Pauline Fanning, continues to select titles from the National Library's accession lists and these are read on a regular basis, to supply updatings, to repair omissions, and to add new material.

We are conscious that 'standard' Australian English, as recorded in AND, has an east coast metropolitan bias and are seeking, as a next step, to improve our holdings of regionalisms and occupational terms. Four part-time research assistants, employed on an Australian Research Council grant, are engaged in a three-year programme to gather citation evidence from selected regional newspapers. One is making a case study of Mildura, as a mallee town and fruit-growing centre, two are reading a spread of Western Australian newspapers, and one a spread of Queensland newspapers. An earlier stage of this project is reported on in an article in the forthcoming issue of the *Australian Journal of Linguistics* (copies available on request). One difficulty we are experiencing is that of identifying newspapers which are genuinely local in their interests (the *Sunraysia Daily* and the *Kalgoorlie Miner* have proved very useful for some periods of their lives) and any tips would be appreciated.

The third front is that of Aboriginal English, and one part-time research assistant is working on the extensive holdings of the library of the Institute for Aboriginal Studies.

Collectively the new files contain some 15000 citations.

Neenish tart

Australian readers, and perhaps others, will from childhood have been familiar with the *neenish tart*, a small tart filled with mock cream and iced on top with two colours, usually brown and white. But dictionaries are remarkably silent about it - the *Macquarie* being the only dictionary on the shelf to include it. We would be glad of citation evidence - particularly anything that antedates 1943 - and of any hint of the name's origin.

The Centre and OUPA

The Centre is funded jointly by the University and OUPA and, in broad terms, its activities are divided equally between research and production. *First cab off the rank* after AND itself was a 'concise' version of AND, edited by Joan Hughes, completed in December 1988, and due to be published this year. The 'concise' (title yet to be decided) retains all headwords and full apparatus, achieving its concision through the deletion of the greater proportion of the citations. The first is retained and, usually, one other. Also completed in 1988 was the editing of an Australian edition of the *Oxford Paperback Dictionary*, by George and Beryl Turner, again for publication this year. The Centre, under whose auspices the full range of OUPA's dictionaries will be prepared, is greatly strengthened by being able to number George Turner among its members.

In preparation are two works in part deriving from AND, due for publication in 1990, and two 'Australianisations', due for publication in 1990 and 1991:

- (i) *Aboriginal Words in English* takes as its starting point the entries for words of Aboriginal origin in AND. Some 400 words were excerpted and their provenance analysed and described by Professor R.M.W. Dixon (who was responsible for the Aboriginal etymologies in AND) and Mandy Thomas (who drafted all but one chapter). The book has chapters on the nature of Aboriginal languages, the peoples and languages that provided the borrowings, the words borrowed, their history in Australian English and, as a counter-balance, words borrowed from English into Aboriginal languages. It is intentionally a popular book but has involved a substantial reassessment of the Aboriginal etymologies in AND.
- (ii) *Digger Dialects* is a glossary of Australian World War I slang, edited by W.H. Downing, a lawyer turned temporary soldier, and published in Melbourne in 1919. W.S. Ramson and Jay Arthur (one of the Centre's research assistants) have retained Downing's full complement of headwords and definitions but supplied an updating gloss (drawn in the main from AND, OEDS, or Partridge) and, where possible, illustrative citations. It is a remarkable period piece, recording military slang, early aeronautical terms, American colloquialisms entering English, early twentieth century Australian colloquialisms, and borrowings (often ephemeral) into Services speech from Arabic and French. Again it is intentionally a popular book, but one which captures a slice of lexical life and in doing so recognises the contribution of a singular amateur lexicographer.
- (iii) *The Australian Writers' and Editors' Guide* is an Australianisation of that indispensable little *Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors*, formerly *Collins' (but not the publishers!) Authors' and Printers' Dictionary*, edited by Shirley Purchase and due for publication in 1990. This is a dictionary to ensure that, writer or editor, you get it right. It tells you when it is *Northcote* or *Northcott*, *Armadale* or *Armidale*, *Lillee* or *Lilley*, and that, in legal contexts, *judgment* is preferred to *judgement* (a long story: see Fowler). It is *sui generis* prescriptive but, where there are valid options, not restrictive - so, all things being equal, *Aborigine* is only preferred to *Aboriginal*, and *-ise* to *-ize* (see below).
- (iv) *The Oxford Reference Dictionary* edited by Joyce Hawkins and first published in 1986, is an encyclopaedic dictionary of distinctive character. It is a one-volume, easy-access reference work which does not rigidly separate lexical entries from encyclopaedic and which allows considerable discursiveness. The Centre is preparing an Australianisation, the encyclopaedic entries edited by Janet Williams - examples are *Miles Franklin*, *Gondwana*, and the *Heidelberg School* - the lexical by Joan Hughes. It is due for publication in 1991.

In the longer term

Further down the track are a revision of the *Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary* (Johnson 1976, Turner 1984), being undertaken by George Turner, and a second edition of the *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Turner 1987), based on the forthcoming eighth edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* and edited by W.S. Ramson.

-ise or -ize?

In those words where there is a choice the OUP convention has been to use *-ize*. The usual Australian preference, as endorsed by the Australian Government Publishing Service *Style Manual* (1988), is for *-ise*. In so far as one can generalise American practice prefers *-ize* and British is divided. Our intention in future editions of Australian Oxford dictionaries is to give both, with *-ise* first. But we would be glad of comment.

The first acronym?

The practice of referring to an organisation like the Australian Broadcasting Corporation with an abbreviation formed from the initial letters - ABC - is very much a phenomenon of this century. Other familiar Australian examples are ACTU and AIF. When such an abbreviation is pronounced as a word, rather than as a sequence of letters, it is an acronym. So TAFE (Technical and Further Education) is a word whereas the status of TAB (Totalizator Agency Board), which looks like a word and is sometimes pronounced *tab*, is debatable. Some years ago George Turner, editor of APOD (*Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary*) and ACOD (*Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*) - both accorded the status of acronyms, at least within Oxford walls - aired the suggestion that ANZAC was the first word in English to be formed in this way. AND records ANZAC from 1915. AND admits FAQ as an acronym - on the ground that it behaves as a word. Used in the grading of wheat to mean 'fair average quality' from 1908, it has since been used loosely, in all sorts of contexts and even of the sort of day one has had at work, to mean 'average'. But if one sticks strictly to the rule, the honour must rest, for Australian and New Zealand words anyway, with ANZAC.

It is often said that the much older *cabal* is the earliest acronym, in the belief that the word was formed from the initial letters of the names of the five ministers (Clifford, Ashley, Buckingham, Arlington, Lauderdale) who formed the famous Cabal of Charles II's reign. But the word existed before this and only coincidentally matched the personnel. Are there any other candidates?